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## TUSCANY REGION

### EVALUATION SERVICE OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 2014-2020

Technical summary E1.2 First LEADER Report: Analysis e LEADER self-assessment judgment

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND KEY TERMS

**CEO:** Managing Authority

**Territorial areas of tourist destination (ADT):** established with L'adoption of the Implementation Regulation: DPGR 47 / R / 2018 of 7 August 2018 "Implementation Regulation of the regional law 86/2016 (Consolidated text of the regional tourism system)" are the places for planning and monitoring tourism strategies and activities in the territories of destination through the Tourist Destination Observatory (OTD), as a technical tool, at the service of local authorities, aimed at evaluating, on an ongoing basis, the sustainability and competitiveness of local hospitality activities. The OTD is the place dedicated to social dialogue on the territory. 28 ADTs have been identified covering the entire territory of Tuscany (Amiata, Versilia ... etc.)

**ARTEA:** Tuscany Regional Agency for Disbursements in Agriculture

**AT:** Technical assistance

**Chamber of Commerce:** Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture

**Coaching:** activity foreseen by the Specifications of the PSR Evaluation Service of the Tuscany Region, aimed at supporting the LAGs in the evaluation and self-evaluation process of the SISL

**Community Cooperatives:** are set up with the aim of satisfying the needs of the local community in which they operate, improving their social and economic quality of life, through the participation of citizens in the management of collective goods and services (LR 67/19).

**EMFF:** European Fund for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

**EAFRD:** European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

**DOES:** Focus Area

**FLAG:** Local Action Group responsible for programming and implementing local participatory strategies in coastal and lake areas financed by the EMFF

**Focus group:** a qualitative group technique used in social research, aimed at exploring and deepening concepts relating to a topic, concepts which in turn can be outcomes or inputs of a social research process

**GAL:** Local Action Group

**GO:** Operational Groups

**Group Concept Mapping (GCM):** it is a participatory social research approach that integrates group qualitative processes with multivariate statistical analysis to generate, structure and represent the content of a given topic

**LEADER:** Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale

**OT:** Thematic objectives

**Outcome mapping (OM):** Outcome mapping seeks to identify and evaluate changes in the behavior of people, groups and organizations on which a program interacts. It does not seek to demonstrate the causality or attribution of such changes, but instead seeks to show the logical links between the changes and intervention measures.

**PAC:** Community Agricultural Policy

**PIA:** Integrated Area Planning, envisaged by the Etruria LAG as a territorial planning method that preceded the publication of the tenders

**PIF:** Integrated Supply Chain Project - implementation methods envisaged by the Apennine Mountain LAG for the selection of sectoral and / or intersectoral supply chain projects among several private subjects

**PIT:** Integrated Territorial Project - implementation modalities envisaged by the Apennine Mountain LAG for the selection of thematic territorial projects among several public and private subjects

**PSR:** Rural Development Program

**CMEF:** Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

**QV:** Evaluation question

**RdM:** Head of Measurement

**SISL:** Integrated Local Development Strategy

**Health Society (SdS):** they are public non-profit entities, established by voluntary membership of the Municipalities of the same area-district and of the Local Health Authority with territorial jurisdiction, for the associated exercise of integrated territorial health, socio-health and social activities. On the territory of Tuscany, there are currently 15 Health Societies and 11 district areas without SDS which must sign the socio-health agreement referred to in Article 70 bis of Regional Law 40/2005.

**SWOT:** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

**Theory of Change (ToC):** it is a rigorous and participatory process in which different groups and stakeholders in the course of a planning articulate their long-term objectives [impact] and identify the conditions that they believe must unfold in order for these objectives to be achieved. These conditions are schematized in the outcomes to be obtained and are graphically organized in a causal structure.

**TO:** type of operation (the minimum level of identification of an intervention sub-measure contained in the SISL)

**UDE:** Unit of economic size

**EU:** European Union

**ULA:** Agricultural Labor Unit

**IT GOES:** Value added

**SPA:** Special Protection Areas

**Workshop:** it is a group meeting in which organizers and participants are both builders of a tangible and intangible "product" through forms of coded interaction and facilitation (brainstorming, goal oriented project planning .. etc.)

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## Introduction

This Report is the second of those provided by the Specifications for LEADER Assessment (hereinafter VL) has "the purpose of coordinating, guiding and supporting the LAGs in relation to the self-assessment of their performances and the results of the implementation of their SISL".

In particular, Report E.1.2 refers to the first two phases of the evaluation process

- the Analysis, which contains the activity of collecting basic information on beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and privileged witnesses to better focus on the concepts and related properties to be investigated during the evaluation research;
- the Judgment, during which the interviews were analyzed in order to build methods and tools suitable for carrying out field investigations.

This Report was prepared in accordance with what is indicated in the relevant Activity Sheet contained in the Specifications (Article 2), with respect to the individual sub-activities required, including those relating to the collection of primary data and the enhancement of secondary data.

The assessment activities were launched in October 2020 and ended at the end of February 2021. The survey activities envisaged by the Specifications provide for common activities involving the Evaluator, the LAGs and the Managing Authority, on dedicated days coaching, and joint evaluation sessions carried out through focus groups and workshops. These activities carried out until the end of February 2021 were carried out remotely taking into account the limitations imposed by the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic. The last workshop and focus group was carried out after the delivery of the Report, in agreement with the MA, to ensure an immediate transfer of the results of the self (evaluation) process.

This report is divided, consistently with the provisions of the specifications, into the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 discusses the substance of the method adopted. The phases of analysis and judgment, within the conceived evaluative research path, focus on the investigation dimensions, thus increasing the understanding of the concepts introduced by the judgment criteria. The chapter describes how this was done and why.
- Chapter 2 gives the reconstruction of the theory of the context and of the program through a mapping of the concepts to be investigated, of their properties and of the possible states they can assume. All this can be compared to a test on the evaluability of the SISL with respect to the questions and criteria introduced. The penultimate paragraph of the chapter is dedicated to group coaching, support activities for several LAGs aimed at discussing key issues for LAGs. Two contingent aspects relating to the activation of the new Measure on Community Projects (henceforth PdC) were addressed:
- Chapter 3 reports the main conclusions that emerged and the recommendations to be brought to the attention of the LAGs and the MA regarding the finalization of the methodological system. The conclusions and recommendations are presented in the form of a logbook.



The SISL theory, as expressed by the LAGs (the red circle on the figure), is therefore also theory on the context. This theory must be able to relate to the meaning that the relevant actors in the territory attribute to the dimensions identified by the Evaluator-LAG interaction; the judgment criteria that emerged during the term of office. In this way the evaluation design incorporates a more detailed map of references that can guide the evaluator in the continuation of the evaluation activities (the path identified in the figure above).

This process of reconstructing the theory will allow us to focus on:

- the relevance of the strategies with respect to the needs of the territories and the visions of local actors;
- the ability of strategies to intercept needs and to support communities (in a broad sense) in monitoring their territories. We replace the concept of development (endogenous, sustainable, etc.) with that of supervision precisely because, from the interviews carried out, a recurring theme that emerged is that of ensuring that communities are custodians of the territory in favor of future generations;
- the ability of strategies to intercept the visions of local beneficiaries and recipients of interventions in designing a future that makes sense for those communities.

The evaluation research process, as will be better explained in the following chapter, will look for the impact on a broad unit of analysis, the territory, which may contain sub-units of analysis, for example supply chains, socio-educational services ... etc., investigating survey units that include the plurality of actors represented in the figure (► Figure 1).

The following table shows, by macro-categories, the subjects involved in the in-depth interviews during the coaching activities carried out with the LAGs. 51 subjects were interviewed, 41 beneficiaries and 10 non-beneficiaries.

**Table 1 Local actors interviewed for the drafting of the report**

GAL	BENEFICIARIES							OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS			TOTAL
	MAYOR	FARM	OTHER TYPE OF COMPANY (TOURISM, COMMERCIAL, HANDICRAFT)	PROTECTION CONSORTIUM / PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION	THIRD SECTOR ENTITIES ASS	PARK AUTHORITY	RESEARCH CENTER	PRIVILEGED WITNESS (BRINGING OF INTERESTS)	PRIVILEGED WITNESS (SINGLE SUBJECT)	DESIGNERS	
Gal MontagnAppennino	1	2	3					1		2	9
GAL Aretino	3	2						1			6
LAG Leader Siena	2	3						1			6
GAL START		5					1				6
Gal Etruria	3	2							1	3	9
FAR Maremma	3	2						1			6
Gal Lunigiana	3	2	1	1	1	1					9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>51</b>

Among the beneficiaries, taking into account the evaluation questions and the measures activated, mainly mayors and agricultural companies were interviewed, among the non-beneficiaries privileged witnesses with collective interests and planners.

This report therefore describes the outcome of a (self) evaluation process, in which the term "self" is linked to the concept of Collective impact (► Par 1.4), to the proactivity of the LAG in the evaluation

process led by the Evaluator, who is the drafter of this Report and the one who is able to complete the evaluation research with the methods and techniques illustrated in the following paragraphs. In this process, the LAG will be able to learn how to do evaluation but above all what it is necessary to ask and expect from it.

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## 1.2. The process of analysis and judgment

The interviews collected were encoded through textual analysis software<sup>1</sup> which allowed the evaluator to build a map of the key concepts underlying the evaluation questions and the relative response criteria, decreasing in intension<sup>2</sup> in the generality scale.

The evaluation questions were organized by tags below:

- what does the action of the LAG generate in the local production system? (**#local production system**)
- to what extent have interventions in favor of processing companies enhanced local production? what have they generated in the LAG territories? (**#local production system**)
- Has the SISL been effective in promoting the agri-food production of the area with a view to local development of a participatory type? (**#local production system**)
- which strategy is more effective in responding to the development needs of the different territorial systems included in the LAG area? (**#sistemiterritoriali**)
- to what extent has SISL been effective in fostering the growth of attractiveness for tourists (non-residential) and for residents (services and local economy / neighborhood trade)? (**#life quality**)
- What does the action of the LAG generate in the area in terms of quality of life (residential and attractiveness)? (**#life quality**)
- to what extent has the action of the LAG generated tangible change over time? (**#tangibility**)
- to what extent does the action of the LAG support local communities by stimulating and preserving social and economic relations? (**#social ties**)
- what has the integrated territorial planning generated in the area? (**#social ties**)
- what has the integrated supply chain design generated in the area? (**#social ties**)
- to what extent does the SISL favor or stimulate cooperation between the subjects who could benefit from the effects of tourism in the area? (**#social ties**)
- what did the pilot project generate in the area? (**#social ties**) (**#diffusioninnovation**)
- to what extent do the pilot projects favor the creation of stable relationships between companies and the world of research? what do these relationships generate in territorial contexts? (**#social ties**) (**#diffusioninnovation**)

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<sup>1</sup> MaxQDA pro analytics license

<sup>2</sup> the conceptual or cognitive content of a linguistic expression

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## 2. The self-assessment model of the SISL of the Tuscan LAGs

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### 2.1. The map of the dimensions of the SISL self-assessment

The summary matrix proposed on the following page contains the elements to be investigated to return an evaluation judgment on the impact of SISL based on circumstantial evidence (► *Process tracing* Report E.1.1 Par.1.1).

The matrix contains 33 properties that will be surveyed in order to be able to answer the evaluation questions posed by the LAGs in an exhaustive manner.

Each property can covariate together with the others, be affected by them and be influencing with respect to the others. Data processing techniques may also include mixed methods<sup>3</sup> to relate statements relating to different properties. The following matrix shows, by way of example, 10 by influencing dimension (Tag representing the evaluation questions).

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<sup>3</sup> Provided by MaxQdA

Table 2 - Map of the properties under evaluation

PROPERTY CHECK LIST TO INVESTIGATE	DIMENSIONS AFFECTED (TAG)	THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS	THE DETECTION UNITS	METHODS	TECHNIQUES	SECONDARY DATA
Accessibility / usability terr.	# quality of life # social bonds # diffusion of innovation	Municipalities and their aggregations	Mayors Entrepreneurs Privileged witnesses Citizens	Case studies	DelphiFocus Group interviews Group Concept mapping	Infrastructure context data Municipal splitting
Attegg. towards PA funds	# diffusion of innovation # quality of life	Municipalities and their aggregations	MayorsEntrepreneursPri vileged witnessesDesigners	Case studies	Interviews Focus Group	Monitoring data on projects financed by municipality
Self-containment of value	# territorial systems # local production system	LAG area supply chains	Entrepreneurs Privileged Witnesses GAL	Case studies	Interviews Focus Group GCM (collective / individual long range short range)	Presence of certified productions Cooperatives Protection consortia Production districts Monitoring data
Level of collaboration / intensity of local actors links	# territorial systems # local production system # quality of life # tangibility # social ties # diffusioninnovation	Municipalities and their aggregations LAG area supply chains	MayorsEntrepreneursPri vileged witnessesDesigners	Case studies	DelphiFocus Group interviews Group Concept mapping	Presence of certified productions Cooperatives Protection consortia Production districts Monitoring data Adhesion to unions of Municipalities Presence of area brands

PROPERTY CHECK LIST TO INVESTIGATE	DIMENSIONS AFFECTED (TAG)	THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS	THE DETECTION UNITS	METHODS	TECHNIQUES	SECONDARY DATA
Demographic dynamics	# territorial systems # local production system # quality of life # tangibility # social ties	Municipalities and their aggregations	Mayors Entrepreneurs Privileged Witnesses	Case studies	Focus Group Interviews	Context data (births / migration mortality)
Local supply chain dynamics	# social ties # local production system # territorial systems	Municipalities and their aggregations	Mayors Entrepreneurs Privileged Witnesses	Case studies	Interviews	Presence of certified productions Cooperatives Protection consortia Production districts Monitoring data
Diffusion / adoption of innov.	# social ties # local production system # quality of life # territorial systems	Municipalities and their aggregations	Entrepreneurs Privileged Witnesses	Case studies	Interviews Focus Group	Context data (Patent context data)
Aggregation mechanism (eg. PIT / PIF / PIA)	#social ties	Municipalities and their aggregations LAG area supply chains	Mayors Entrepreneurs Privileged witnesses Designers GAL	Case studies	Delphi Focus Group interviews Group Concept mapping	Tracking data
Relapses: Funz. landscape / amb.	# territorial systems # local production system # quality of life # tangibility # social ties # diffusion innovation	Municipalities and their aggregations LAG area supply chains	Mayors Entrepreneurs Privileged witnesses Citizens Tourists	Case studies	Delphi Focus Group interviews Group Concept mapping	
Relapses: Funz. garrison terr. marg.			Mayors Entrepreneurs Privileged witnesses Citizens	Case studies	Group Concept mapping	

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## 2.2. Some insights into the properties of the (self) evaluation model

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### 2.2.1. The attitude towards the Tuscan LAGs on the part of the local actors

From the interviews an altogether positive vision of the Tuscan LAGs emerges, however it is also possible to highlight a series of positive and non-positive aspects that should be considered.

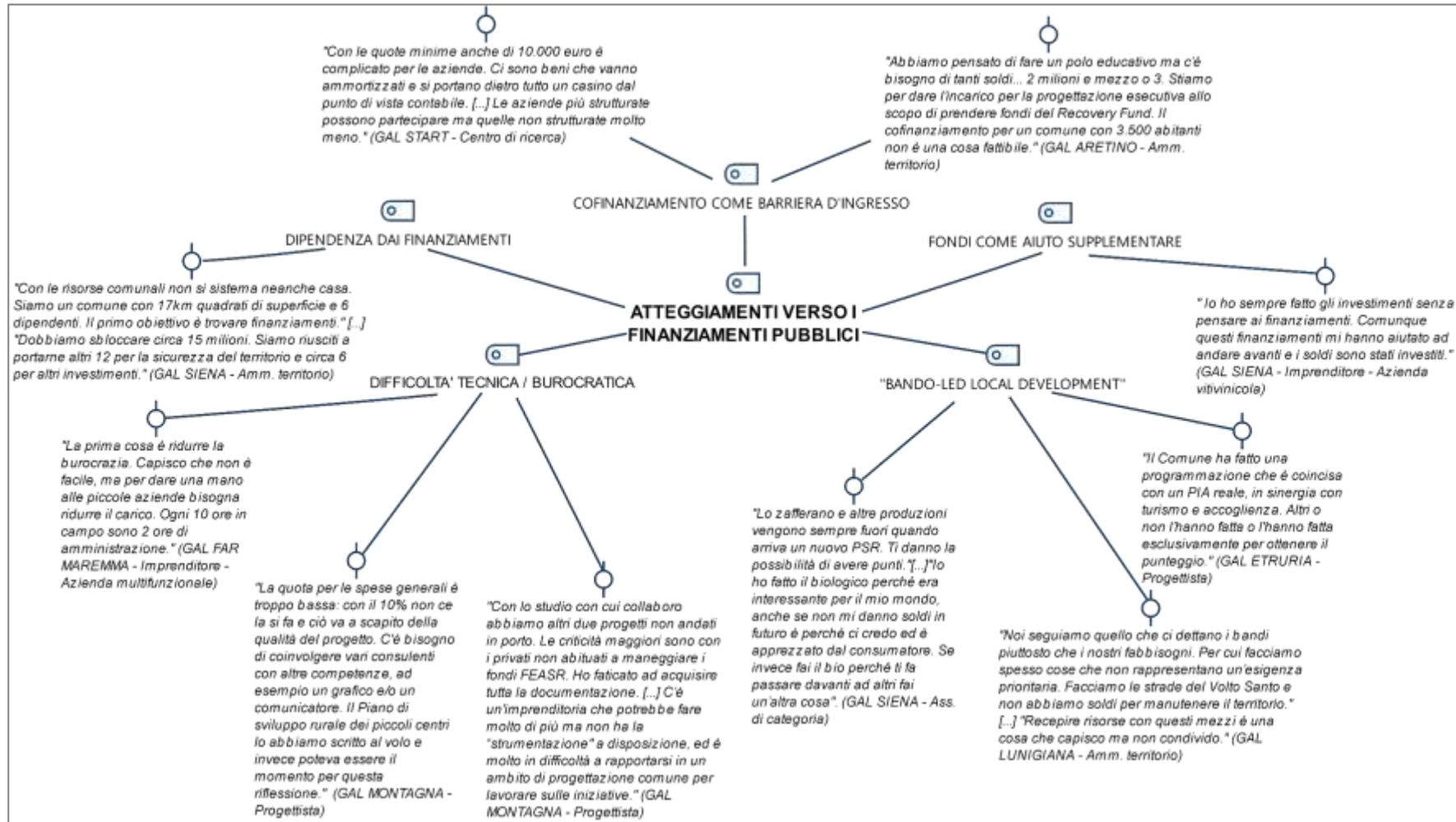
- a limited capacity for bottom-up design., the role of the LAG is reduced to being “a safe”, around which revolve people “who try to take home some resources”. It therefore happens that the strategic direction function implemented by the LAG through its programming does not find an effective outlet in the design practice<sup>4</sup>, for which - according to some qualified witnesses - the dedicated resources would still be too scarce.
- A positive perception of the competence of the technical structures of the LAGs and of their work, sometimes, allows for the construction of "a protection network for small municipalities", think of "all the animation activities that they have been doing in recent years. up to the most remote hamlet. [...] There is not only the communication of calls but also to re-activate the leadership of the communities. "
- An invitation to go further. The LAGs should act as "simplifiers and facilitators" able to "immerse themselves" in their territory not only from a strategic and technical point of view but also from an operational and relational point of view, so as to mitigate conflicts, unhinge prejudices and "shake off parochialism "Helping to" overcome the asperities present in every community. "

ISIt is useful to consider the influence that the general attitude towards public funding can exist precisely in relation to the mandate that the LAGs are called to pursue with a view to local development of a participatory type. Yet it is precisely this last aspect that emerges as one that is often endangered by a practice far from the inspiring principles of the LEADER approach, namely the one whereby potential beneficiaries "bend" their design requests to the award criteria of tenders, sometimes even completely basing the entire project proposal "in search of the score", thus leaving the real priorities of the territory uncovered, knowingly or not (and inevitably or not). This is an extremely relevant and risky phenomenon for the Tuscan LAGs, as being "driven by the call" instead of by the community - as well as being against the very nature of the LEADER - is something that has the ability to compromise a variable share (and potentially even very broad) of external effectiveness<sup>5</sup> of an SISL. In addition, the following figure illustrates other elements useful for understanding the dynamics that influence the participation of beneficiaries in the context of public funding. In addition to the common technical-bureaucratic and co-financing difficulties, it is also worth noting the actual degree of need for funding in question, often very high for small municipalities and much lower for businesses.

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<sup>5</sup> That is, the effectiveness in responding to the real needs of the beneficiaries.

Figure 2 Examples of statements indicating respondents' attitudes towards public funding



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## 2.2.2. The perception of the interviewees on the demographic and tourist dynamics of the area

The territories of competence of the Tuscan LAGs vary greatly in demographic, employment and production terms and, even within the same territories, different actors have different perceptions with respect to the evolution of the social and economic fabric in which they find themselves. Different perceptions give rise to different attitudes which in turn, according to the type of subject, generate different intentions, propensities and preferences. In very low density contexts, characterized by hamlets, villages and small urban aggregates, the perception emerges transversally that the process of abandonment and depopulation will exacerbate the difficulties in terms of availability of public services.

"The school is an engine for new residentiality. In absolute terms we have remained stable, but every year we have families who move here ". Under certain conditions, schools are one of the elements capable of "keeping families anchored",

It is not just about attracting new inhabitants, but also about attracting tourists. Some entrepreneurs of these inland areas, those who "withstood" the impact of the lockdowns, are confident, since in the pandemic crisis they saw a new opportunity: to create a slow tourism offer that responds to the increased demand for experiences "evasive" and the customs clearance of smart working.

**Not everyone, however, agrees on the role of tourism as a lever to trigger repopulation processes**, because the increase in tourist activities can determine 'replacement' side effects, as in the case of a Sienese municipality of about 5,000 inhabitants in which the recent exponential growth of tourism activities (about 350 in the last 15 years) has "transformed the houses in B&B, making the country depopulate" and also causing an increase in the cost of living for residents.

Even with respect to other sectors, situations vary a lot and with them the perceptions and balances of the interviewees on demographic evolution and the dynamics that have characterized it. From this point of view, the replacement of direct farmers for the benefit of multinationals connected to large-scale distribution is an element that is negatively mentioned by several voices.

Nevertheless, the influence of the agricultural productive fabric on population dynamics is considered decisive only by some actors. The majority of interviewees, on the other hand, believe that the virtuous combination of good administration and enhancement of local identity is the truly fundamental element to create the conditions necessary for economic development and quality of life scenarios such as to make their territory attractive and lively, for both locals and tourists. It is therefore a question of offering quality tourism, sometimes for specific niches of visitors (alongside the food and wine, for example, tourism and the environment as well) to be accommodated perhaps in the structures of the so-called 'widespread tourism', which is well suited to the villages of Tuscan rural areas.

Right within the villages, some types of investment (for example, those for the redevelopment of historic centers) are perceived by some mayors as particularly functional with respect to specific territorial marketing strategies. It is about giving a new face to one's municipality and at the same time stimulating a 'leverage' effect on the private sector, so that it in turn decides to make improvements that generate critical mass. As a premise to strategies of this type, the ability to network, create meaningful links and translate them into useful projects emerges as fundamental. And this includes the role of the LAG and all those other actors who can play an important role in the development of their own territory.

### **Collaboration and networking experiences between local subjects**

There are many collaboration attempts between local subjects that emerged from the interviewees' stories. In most cases they were narratives of "incomplete" experiences, begun but never completed because they gradually decayed or because they were cut off from a contingency (perhaps more or less random like the one that had given rise to the attempt) of a political nature, administrative, corporate or - more simply - interpersonal or personal.

With the advent of Covid-19, keeping a collaborative network or experience alive has become even more difficult. However, even without a pandemic, other risk factors appear to threaten collaboration within CLLD.

On some occasions, however, things work and integrated planning becomes a tool to overcome "hesitations and misunderstandings" and to generate a strong enthusiasm which in turn has a positive impact on the quality of the content at the center of the initiative. Dynamics not entirely dissimilar, albeit quite different, are those outside the production chains (agricultural, forestry, livestock and tourism), in which the private social sector moves together with the world of culture and the safeguarding and promotion of material and intangible heritage.

In both cases, a dominant role is assigned to territorial animation and this emerges transversally from the interviewees, both in geographical and sectorial terms. The jumble of information, promotion, training and (inter) mediation functions between different interests, desires and requests therefore appears as an essential element to allow local actors to give themselves "a perspective beyond the everyday".

But this animation, to be effective, must be widespread, in such a way that "as soon as it comes out or there is a tender, word of mouth begins that ensures that the project is taken into consideration." and possibly carried out by subjects who know the territory and are competent in facilitation and planning, as well as in the topic in question. The spending limits for professional figures of this type often constitute a significant obstacle and can only be overcome on specific occasions by resorting to equally successful alternatives (for example, by entrusting the role of animator directly to the mayor).

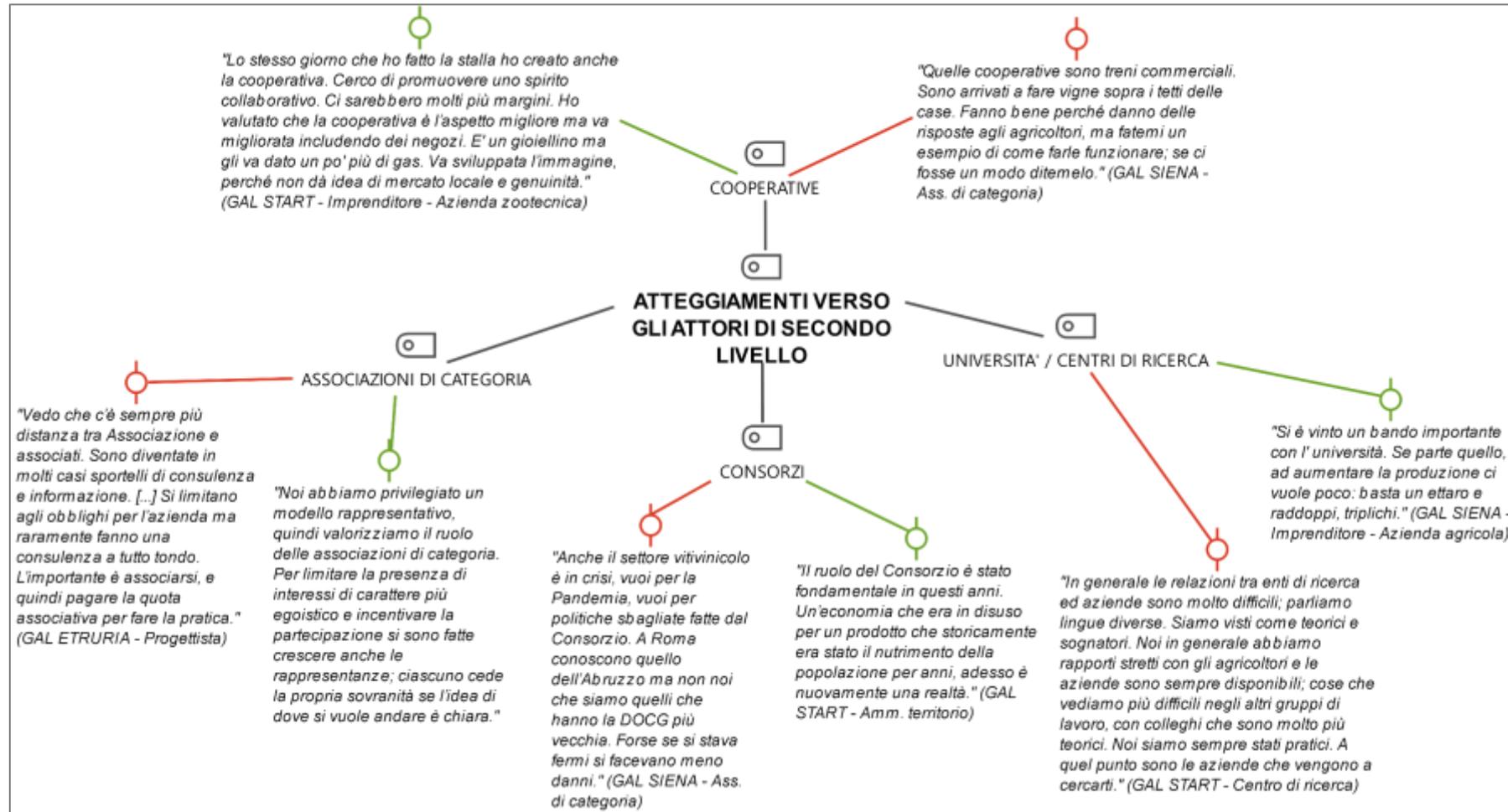
A couple of examples that emerged from the Tuscan reality can better clarify the typology. A network of companies that promotes indigenous products and proposes wine tourism routes with the active involvement of restaurateurs and hoteliers from their own territories and neighboring territories certainly has an intersectoral and interterritorial dimension. The two types of subjects have multiple and different specific objectives (promoting indigenous wine production on the one hand and increasing tourist attractiveness on the other); they also cover different roles (production, promotion and marketing) with direct repercussions both internal and external to the network (respectively, for example, the increase in turnover and the interception / retention of new customers and, at the same time, the improvement of the visibility of the localities involved with a view to strategic positioning within the reference market). A different discourse is necessary if we are talking about a network made up of a university department, a municipality and a community cooperative, dedicated to the recovery of a centuries-old plant still productive in Mugello:

In this case it is a collaborative network of an intersectoral type (fruit growing, manufacturing and tourism) and mainly intra-territorial. Each subject has a specific and very different task, although they all tend to share a single objective, namely the enhancement of local identity through the use of the centuries-old plant as a symbol of the territory.

There are other types of entities on which it is worth dwelling when it comes to collaborations and links between local actors. They can be called second level local actors and include cooperatives, consortia, trade associations and universities (or research centers). The interviewees' experiences

with these categories of subjects are varied and, both positively and negatively, seem to have profoundly influenced the attitude towards them, forming a deep-rooted and stable belief system. In the next figure, there are some exemplary statements that illustrate the differences in perspective in question. Compared to cooperatives, for example, both optimistic and pessimistic visions emerge regarding the same aspect,

Figure 3 Examples of statements indicating positive (green) and negative (red) attitudes of respondents towards second level actors.



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## 2.3. THE *coaching* group

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### 2.3.1. Thematic insights: the community project

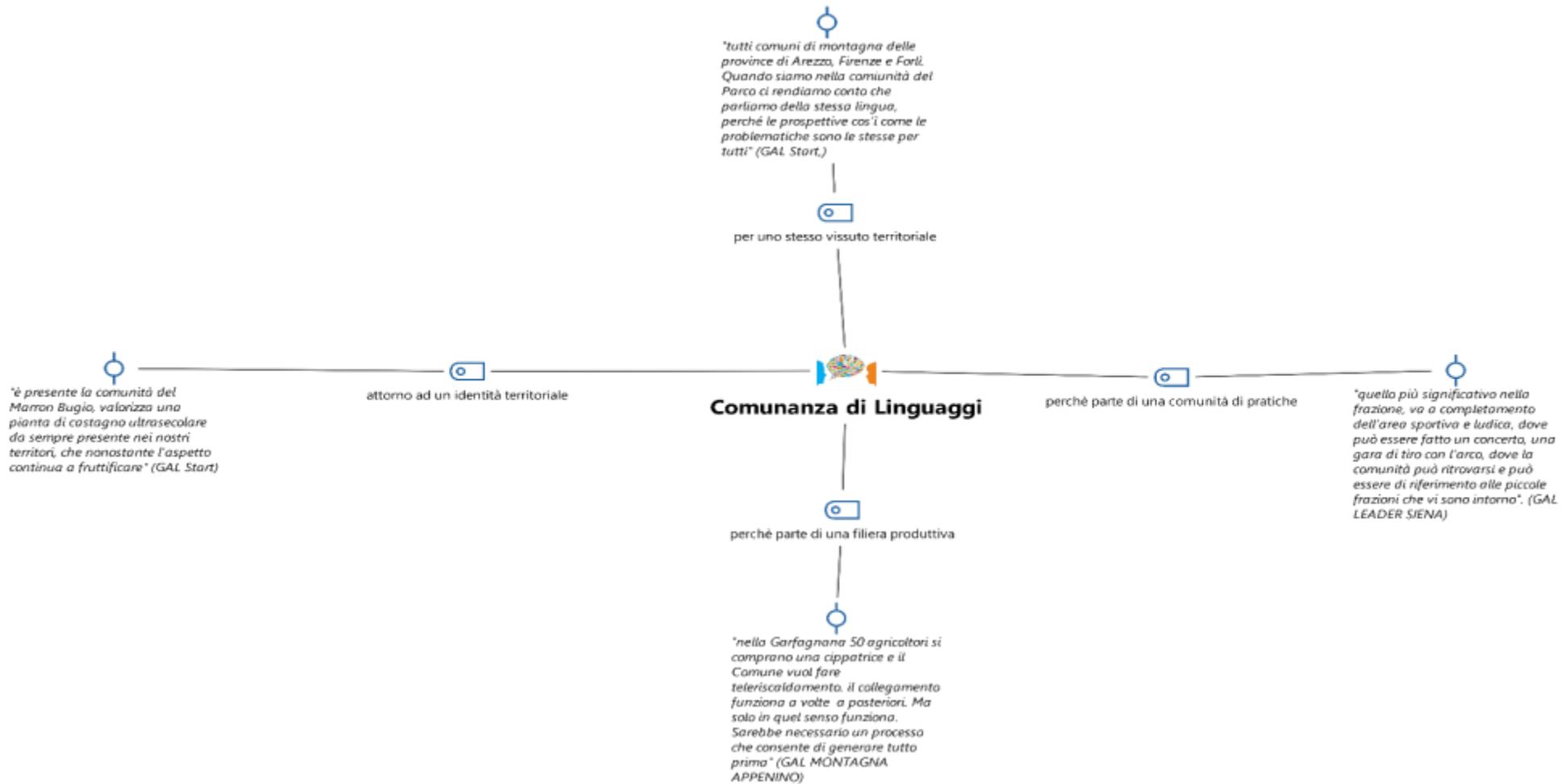
The reflection that was carried out during the first coaching concerned the focus of the PdC, and in particular two perspectives for the enhancement of common goods were identified:

- the project for the community, understood as a type of project already mature within the territorial contexts, characterized by the fact that the proponents are individuals (entrepreneurs) and associated with public and private character who develop projects in favor of the community;
- the community project, which arises from below from groups that join forces with stronger ones to consolidate existing practices or to develop new ones around the enhancement of common goods.

With respect to these two perspectives, a proposed community project could concern, following what is already happening with other SISL Measures, a parking lot close to the historic center of the Municipality to facilitate access and use of the center for tourists. What is being brought to the attention of the LAGs is that the same project can have different connotations of meaning than those who propose it and, above all, it can have a different pragmatic use observable through its usability. In the properties introduced relating to the PdC, the commonality of languages expresses the importance of the tuning of meaning between the actors who promote the community project (figure below).

Figure 4 map of possible common languages

## Comunanza di linguaggi



Other relevant properties, especially in the phase of selection of the PdC, concern the modalities of communication and animation in the territories. In all the LAGs, thanks also to the coaching activities, it is clear that traditional / artisanal communication and animation is not a viable path for the PdCs.

There are not only different languages but also different programming skills, which imply a reasoned and professional way of communicating and a way of animating and accompanying potential partnerships in a different way.

The following figure shows the map relating to the "bottom programming level" property, three distinct characteristics emerge from the system of the interviews:

- a mature programming level, with respect to which the communication and facilitation actions could partly follow what the LAGs already do for the other RDP Measures; communicate the opportunity and animate the realities through facilitation processes with respect to the requirements of the call;
- a programming level to be facilitated, which implies a more targeted communication on themes and an animation that incorporates more evolved facilitation processes around an idea that has in any case already been outlined;
- a programming level to be facilitated, which implies a more generative communication of meaning around the theme of the PdC and an animation that incorporates accompanying and coaching processes to develop more nuanced project paths.

Figure 5 Map of the possible programming levels from below

## Livello di programmazione dal basso



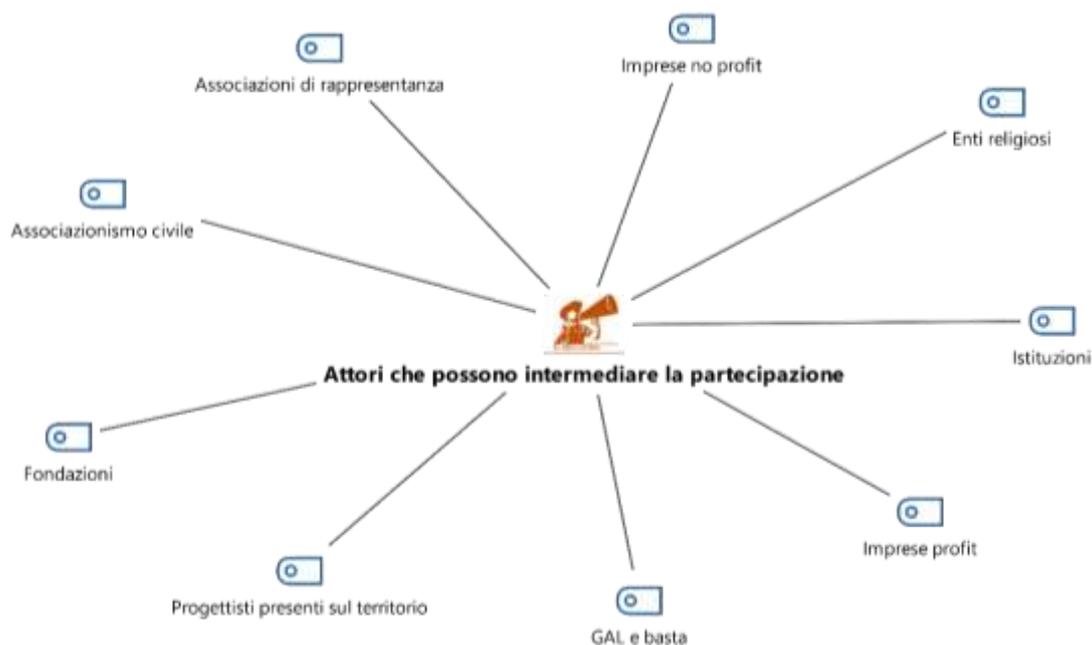
Sharing these maps guided subsequent coaching. The first on the focus on the subjects that can be intercepted to promote the PdC. The following figure summarizes the results of the process, reconstructing a sort of customer journey of the PdCs.

Figure 6 Customer journey of community projects



This representation also makes it possible to identify who may be the subjects within the territory who could be the target of the communication of the LAGs, some of them are intermediate bodies that could convey it on a lower level by carrying out an intermediary function of the message (see figure following).

**Figure 7 Map of the actors who can convey the communication on the PdCs**



Underestimating a phase of guided listening to the territory, believing that it is necessary to leave it free to express itself, could put formal and informal actors in "competition" in the same context with very variable starting conditions with respect to the ability to build projects, also running the risk of dissipate the energies of the LAGs<sup>6</sup> during the selection and accompanying phase of applications.

<sup>6</sup> It should be remembered that the LAGs are made up of technical structures that can employ between two and six people (almost never full time).

## 2.4. THE WORKSHOPS AND THE FOCUS GROUP

### 2.4.1. The transversal insights: Community Projects the selection procedure

The first focus group was carried out at the start of the evaluation activities and also focused on community projects. In October 2020, in a situation in which the LAGs have begun to organize and divide up tasks according to the activation of the new Measure.

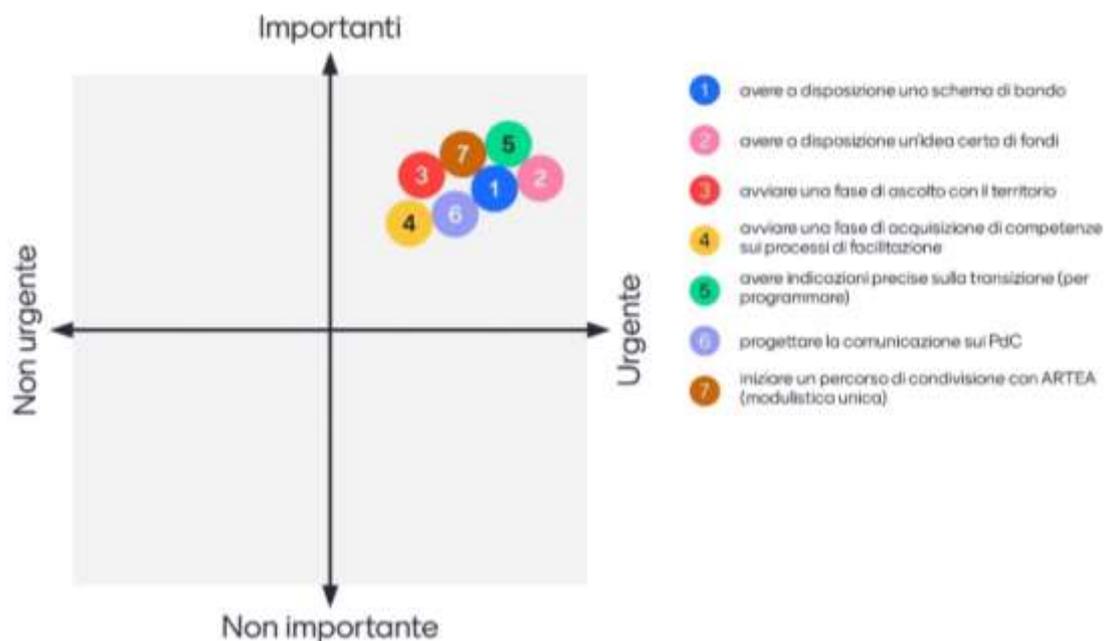
In February, the second focus entered into the merits of a more consolidated Measurement form and a more outlined activation path consisting of four sequential phases, →I listen→expression of interest→announcement and accompaniment→implementation and accompaniment, and a well-defined time schedule.

The focus included three rounds:

- First Round: OPEN QUESTIONS ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS
- Round Two: EXPECTATIONS ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS
- Third Round: RESPECT TO THE COMMON ELEMENTS. HOW DO YOU THINK OF MOVING?

The system was set up and the related voting on the priorities for action was done through remote voting software within the Eisenhower matrix.

Figure 8 Eisenhower Matrix on Action Priorities



All the elements identified by the LAGs have a connotation of urgency and importance for them. Some preferences can be highlighted:

- on the scale of importance (what must not be missing now and later), the indications on the transition, the sharing of the path with ARTEA (OPR), the start of the listening phase of the territory, the certainty of resources and a consolidated scheme call for proposals (for the selection of PdC);
- on the scale of urgency (what we need now to leave), the certainty of resources, certain ideas on the transition and the tender scheme.

With respect to the perceptions of the LAG, the Evaluator reiterates what has already been expressed in the course of the coaching on the PdC (► Par. 2.3.1), regarding the particular attention

that must be placed on the communication and animation phase of the territories before the manifestation of interest, despite the three aspects (planning communication, listening to the territories, acquiring skills) a lower level of urgency.

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#### **2.4.2. The transversal insights: community animation and communication projects**

The focus group on communication was preceded by a presentation by the evaluator who introduced the topic of communication evaluation. The presentation was the mechanism to introduce and discuss complex elements related to the evaluation of public communication that have to do with the intentionality of the same in generating a change on the target of the communication, for example on:

- knowledge of the PdCs → retention of communication, emotional attitude towards the message ... etc.
- the attitude of local actors towards the PdCs → behaviors that could be adopted in the expression of interest phase.

In the communication strategies and related communication plans of the LAGs, there are precise objectives and indicators (mostly linked to the number of visitors, followers, interactions and newsletters), however, the nature of the message that wants to be conveyed is poorly defined and the how (the medium). In light of the topics covered, the focus group focused on the communication strategies that the LAGs are imagining in order to be able to convey the PdC in their respective territories.

Some LAGs would like to continue in the wake of activities already carried out on area planning or integrated planning.

Everyone is aware that the required professionalism is not present in the LAGs. The LAGs are able to guarantee “artisanal” communication on social networks, through the website and traditional media, press and local radio and television.

In this sense, a recommendation from the Evaluator goes in the direction of thinking about a shared format at least for the "launch" of the community project at the regional level. The LAGs could pool the resources to select a single subject capable of developing the part relating to communication, as they have already imagined for the part relating to animation / facilitation (ANCI Tuscany and NRN).

### 3. Conclusions and recommendations regarding the self-assessment process

In line with the requirements of the Specifications, the main recommendations are given below in the form of a "Logbook". This framework was the subject of the final, planned workshop and focus group. after delivery of the Report to facilitate the transfer of the results of the (self) evaluation process.

THEME	CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION
The PdCs and the pre-expression of interest phase	<p>The coaching activities carried out with the LAGs have brought out a still not very mature strategy of communication and animation of the territories in a phase preceding the expression of interest.</p> <p>On communication, in particular, there is a widespread awareness on the part of the LAGs of not being able to build a professional communication campaign on Community Projects.</p> <p>The evaluator invites us not to underestimate this phase of guided listening, believing that leaving the territory free to express itself could put formal and informal actors in "competition" in the same context with very variable starting conditions with respect to the ability to build projects, even running the risk of dissipating the energies of the LAGs in the selection and accompanying phase of applications.</p>	<p>Provide territorial workshops at the regional level as a mechanism to generate meaning on the concept of PdC. (To the LAGs)</p> <p>Provide for the acquisition of external skills to design a common communication strategy (To the LAGs)</p>
The PdC and the timing	<p>As emerged from the Focus Groups, the climate of uncertainty linked to COVID and the experimental nature of the PdCs may need more time to be able to carry out both the selection phase and the accompanying phase during implementation. The deadline set at 31.12.2022 on the reporting of expenses could push the LAGs to skip important phases foreseen in their time schedule.</p>	<p>Take into account the postponement of the 2021-2027 programming to give more breath to the action of the LAGs with respect to the implementation of Community Projects by postponing the reporting of expenses to 31.12.2024 (To the CEO)</p>

THEME	CONCLUSION	RECOMMENDATION
<p>The transition and resources to the LAGs for 2021-2022</p>	<p>During the coaching activities 51 subjects were interviewed, of these 15 mayors and another 10 stakeholders with collective interests. The picture that emerges with respect to the so-called internal areas is of a need for resources without which it is increasingly difficult to plan the future of communities. The planning effort made by the Municipalities in the presentation of applications that cannot be financed due to lack of funds is perceived as a missed opportunity to be able to consolidate local policies. Many mayors and privileged witnesses hope that a scrolling of the rankings can be guaranteed in the face of additional resources dedicated to LEADER territories.</p>	<p>Think about the redirection of part of the resources of the Next Generation EU in favor of the LAG territories, providing where possible a shift in the rankings for those interventions proposed by public and private in line with the objectives of the strategy. (To the CEO)</p>