

THE NONPROFIT SECTOR IN ITALIAN INNER AREAS¹

Stefania Della Queva, Valeriana Leporanico, Manuela Nicosia, Sabrina Stoppiello

Abstract. The Nonprofit Institutions (NPIs) provide social and economic support to local communities by offering services, goods and resources and fulfilling the purpose of building public benefit. Moreover, the nonprofit sector is a significant actor to cope with social and economic vulnerability, especially in fragile territories where it plays a key role in enhancing empowerment of local population and fostering communities' development. Half of Italian municipalities host the "Inner areas" which are fragile territories, far away from main centres of supply of essential services and too often abandoned to themselves, due to their rural identity according to the European classification of degree of urbanization. The Inner areas are mainly located in South of Italy, which represent the 44.8% of total: 1,718 municipalities overall (67.4%) where Region such Basilicata, Sicily, Molise and Sardinia show higher incidence (more than 70%). The paper aims to describe the spread of NPIs in Italian Inner areas, within central and peripheral contexts, by highlighting their role in terms of services offered and human resources employed, in connection with the local socioeconomic development and level of vulnerability. The analysis is based on the integration of the data gathered by the Statistical Register of Nonprofit Institutions with the main indicator provided by different data sources (Permanent Census of the population, ASIA Statistical Register of active enterprises, Frame SBS Register), allows studying territories by providing important insights to sectorial and territorial planning and reducing costs and statistical burden, as well. Socioeconomic characteristics of communities and level of vulnerability, in association with data on nonprofit sector are considered. The analysis of the provision of social services by non-profit institutions, including cultural and environmental amenities, human welfare services, along with their role in local employment, will allow to explore to what extent nonprofit sector's performance contribute to build a resilience process at local level, by fostering community economic development and enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

¹ Although the contribution is the joint responsibility of the authors, sections 1, 2 and 3 are attributed to Valeriana Leporanico, section 4.1 is attributed to Sabrina Stoppiello, section 4.2 to Stefania Della Queva, section 4.3 to Manuela Nicosia.

1. Introduction

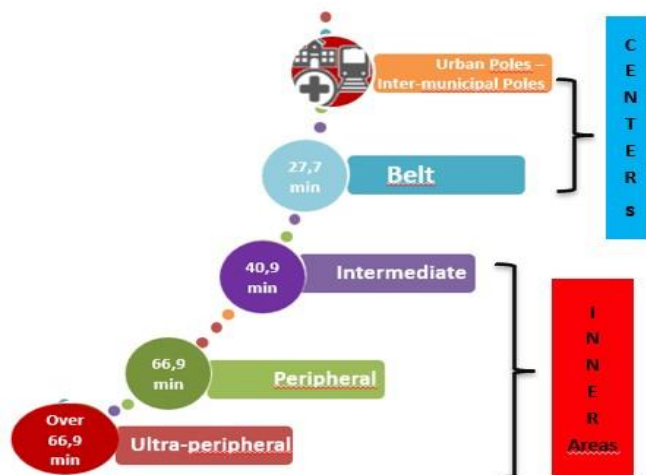
The National Inner Area Strategy represents (SNAI) an innovative national policy of development and territorial cohesion that aims to counteract the marginalization and demographic decline of the Inner areas of our country. The Map of Inner areas, of reference for SNAI and included in the Partnership Agreement (AP) 2014-2020, is a tool that looks at the entire Italian territory in its articulation at municipal level, identifying the municipalities which have access to essential services², called Poles and Inter-municipal Poles and representing all the other municipalities based on their distance from them (in terms of actual road travel times), classifying them in four bands to increasing relative distance (Belt, Intermediate, Peripheral, Ultra-peripheral) and, therefore, with a greater potential discomfort in the use of services. Municipalities classified as Intermediate, Peripheral and Ultra-peripheral represent the whole of the Inner areas of our Country (Figure 1). (Dip. politiche di coesione. 2022. *Criteri per la Selezione delle Aree Interne da sostenere nel ciclo 2021 – 2027*).

1.1 Distribution of municipalities according to the classification of Inner areas

The IA 2020 Map, included in the new 2021-2027 Partnership Agreement, has followed the approach already defined for the IA Map 2014 considering new census data and more timely distance estimation procedures (SNAI 2020). The new mapping of the Inner areas counts: 182 Common Pole, 59 Inter-municipal Pole; 3,828 Common Belt (48.4%) placed at relatively small distances from a Pole or an inter-municipal Pole (lower than the median of the distribution of distances equal to 27.7 minutes); 1,928 Intermediate Municipalities (24.4%) which represent the first cluster of Inner areas (distance between the median and the 3 quartile someone equal to 40.9 minutes); 1,524 Municipalities Peripherals (19.3%), that is, whose distance is between the 3 quartile and the 95th percentile equal to 66.9 minutes; 382 Municipalities Ultra-peripherals (4.8%), which have a distance from the nearest common pole or inter-municipal pole greater than the 95th percentile (Figure 1). At the territorial level, the municipalities of the Inner areas are mainly present in the regions of the South of Italy (44.8% of the national total), with significant effects in Basilicata, Sicily, Molise and Sardinia.

In the Inner areas, which extend for a total area of more than 177 thousand km² (almost 59% of that of the entire country), reside a little more than 13 million people, that is less than 23% of Italians, with a population density of 75.7 inhabitants per km² (Table 1).

² Essential service centres are those municipalities able to provide simultaneously: schools with a full range of secondary education, at least one-grade one emergency care hospitals and at least one Silver category railway station.

Figure 1 – Spatial distribution municipalities - SNAI Classification 2021.

Source: Istat..

Table 1 – Number of municipalities, population, area and population density - SNAI Classification 2021. Absolute values and km².

SNAI Classification	Municipalities	Population	% Population	Surface	% Surface	Population density
A - Urban Poles	182	20,470,301	34.6	24,455	8.1	837.1
B - Inter-municipal Poles	59	1,576,586	2.7	3,728	1.2	423.0
C - Belt	3,828	23,756,465	40.1	96,344	31.9	246.6
D - Intermediate	1,928	8,059,454	13.6	75,838	25.1	106.3
E -Peripheral	1,524	4,653,355	7.9	79,394	26.3	58.6
F -Ultra-peripheral	382	720,052	1.2	22,310	7.4	32.3
Total	7,903	59,236,213	100.0	302,068	100.0	196.1
A+B+C - Centres	4,069	45,803,352	77.3	124,527	41.2	367.8
D+E+F - Inner areas	3,834	13,432,861	22.7	177,541	58.8	75.7

Source: Permanent Census of the population. December 31 2020.

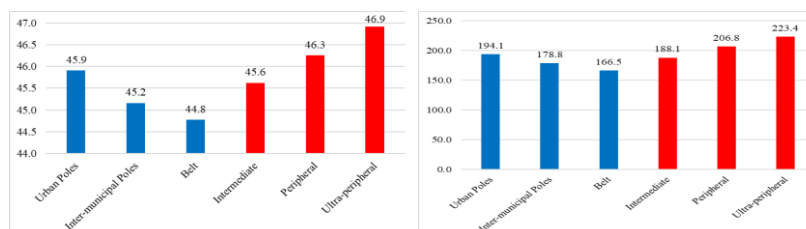
In particular, in the municipalities classified as Intermediate represent just over a quarter of the national territory and there resides 13.6% of the population (about 8 million inhabitants); in the Peripheral Municipalities resides 7.9% of the national population (about 4.6 million residents), on an area that covers more than a quarter of the national territory (26.3%, over 79 thousand km²); the Ultra-Peripheral Municipalities (the most disadvantaged category) represent just 1.2% of the population and 7.4% of the national territory.

2. Demographic dynamics: analysis of the main structural indicators.

In the long term, the dynamics of the population in the Inner areas, with its effects on the depopulation of the most marginal and isolated municipalities, is one of the elements that helped to launch the appropriate National Strategy. Between 1951 and 2020, the Municipalities of the Centres recorded a growth of 4.9 residents per thousand while the Inner areas each year lost an average of 1.3 residents per thousand inhabitants. In total, in the last seventy years the Inner areas have lost 8.8% of the population (from 14,730,499 residents in 1951 to 13,432,861 residents in 2020), which therefore tends to move to the Centres that are able to offer more services. In this context policies to combat these phenomena affecting such a large part of the Italian territory.

Depopulation is accompanied by the progressive ageing of the population of the Inner areas: the population resident in the municipalities of Belt is on average younger than the other areas of the rest of Italy while the least young are resident in the municipalities Ultra-peripheral with an average age of about 47 years (Figure 2). Italy now has a stable population structure of regressive type, with a clear prevalence of elderly population compared to the young: in 2020, the old age index of Italy is 182.6 and is significantly higher in the Inner areas than the Centres (196.1 against 178.8). In the classes of the peripheral and Ultra-peripheral Municipalities the resident elderly population is more than double that of the young (206.8 and 223.4, respectively) while the lowest value is observed in the municipalities of Belt (166.5).

Figure 2 – Middle age and old age index in Italy.



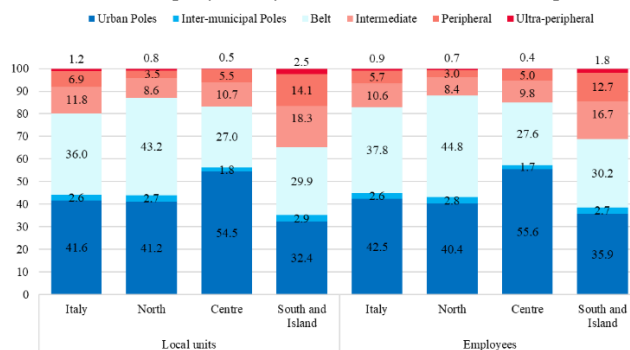
Source: Permanent Census of the population. December 31 2020.

3. Productive system: Local units and employees by SNAI area

Although accounting for 69.8% of the area, in the Inner areas of the South is located just 34.9% of the local units of active enterprises (nationally the Inner areas cover 58.8% of the area and host 19.9% of local units). In terms of employees, the

Inner areas account for 17.2% at national level and 31.2% in the South and Island (Figure 3).

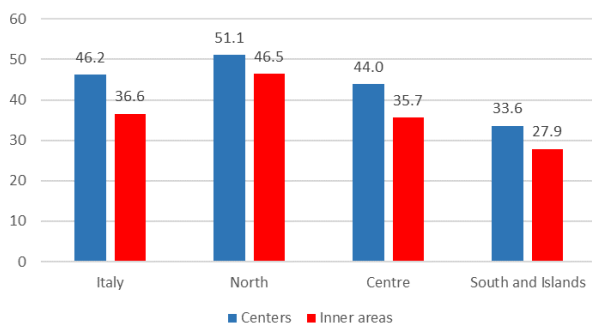
Figure 3 – Local units and employees by SNAI areas. Year 2020 (percentage value).



Source: Our data processing from Istat - Statistical Register of active enterprises 2020.

The productivity of the enterprises, expressed in terms of value added for employee, decreases appreciably moving towards the Inner areas both in Italy and in the macro regions. The enterprises located in the Inner areas of Southern of Italy show the lower value of productivity compared to the other macro regions (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Productivity index by SNAI area and macro regions, in thousands. Year 2020.



Source: Our data processing from Istat- Frame SBS Register.

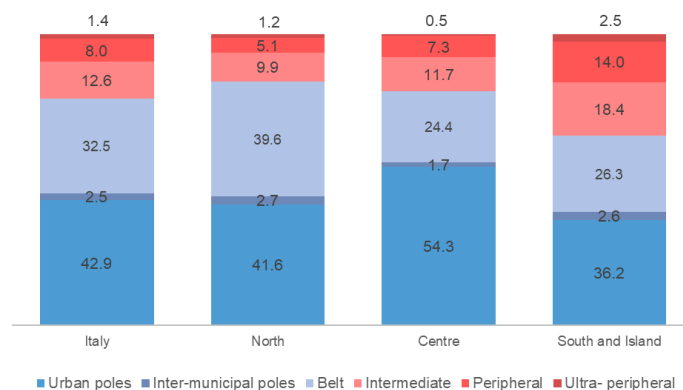
4. Nonprofit sector in Centres and Inner areas

4.1 Nonprofit Institutions by SNAI areas

The nonprofit sector plays an important role in spreading solidarity by stimulating social relationship, trust and social capital. Nonprofit Institutions provide support to difficult or vulnerable people and build proximity relations, which provide crucial resources for both individuals and communities. The nonprofit sector can thus become a factor of cohesion and socio-economic development at local level. As manner of fact, the associations create a virtuous circle of reciprocity by fostering the participation between their members. Wherever relationships are based on solidarity, a virtuous process is triggered by leading to the growth of the social capital and creating a fertile ground for the development of a valuable asset: trust (Bassi 2000; Sciolla e Maraviglia, 2016).

According to this prospective, the paper aims to explore the presence of nonprofit sector in the Inner areas (AI) of Italy, defined as municipalities far away from essential services, peripheral contexts where situation of vulnerability and social and economic disadvantage can find place. The analysis is based on data from the NPIs Statistical Register³, which provide yearly updated data on the structural characteristics of the sector at municipality level.

Figure 5 – Nonprofit Institutions by SNAI areas and macro regions. Year 2020 (percentage values).



Source: Our data processing from Istat – NPI Statistical Register.

³ The Statistical Register is by through integrating several administrative and statistical sources. According to international definitions (SNA 1993, 2008), Nonprofit Institutions are «legal-economic units with or without legal personality, private in nature, which produce marketable or non-marketable goods and services and which, according to applicable laws or their own bylaws, do not have the power to distribute, even indirectly, profits or other gains other than remuneration of work performed to the persons who established them or to their members».

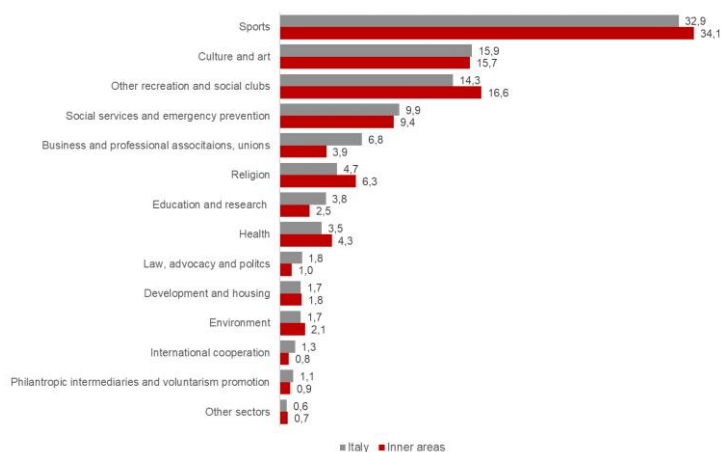
At the 31st of December 2020, the nonprofit organizations active in Italy were 363,499 with 870,183 employees. At the geographical level, 50.2% of NPIs is located in Northern Regions, 22.2% in the Centre, 18.2% in the South of Italy and 9.4% in the Islands. The distribution of employees presents the same concentration, with 57.2% of them in the North of Italy and 20.0% in the South.

As shown in Figure 5, the quota of NPIs gradually decreases from the Centres to the Inner areas, where is located 22.1% of NPIs. In particular, 12.6% in the intermediate municipalities, 8% in the peripheral ones and only 1.4% in the ultra-peripheral. The composition between Inner areas and Centres is different by looking to macro regions. In the Inner areas of Southern Italy NPIs account for the 34.9%, which is higher if compared to the national level (22.1%) and to other macro regions, as well (19.5% in the Centre of Italy, 16.2% in the North). Looking to the sector through the legal form of NPIs, although it reflects the composition at national level, the presence of social cooperatives is a bit higher in the Inner areas (4.3% compared to 4.1% at national level, 4.5% in peripheral municipalities). Moreover, NPIs with “other legal form” (which include ecclesiastical bodies, social enterprises, institutions providing education, health, or social assistance services) account in the Inner areas for 8.9%, compared to 8.1% at national level.

4.2 Nonprofit Institutions by SNAI areas and sector of activity

The nonprofit sector covers a huge quantity of activities, providing specific services able to face the local population’s needs.

Figure 6 – NPIs in Inner areas and Italy by sector of activity. Year 2020 (percentage values).



Source: Our data processing from Istat – NPI Statistical Register.

NPIs in the Inner areas are mainly active in Culture, Sports and recreation activities (66.4% compared to 63% at national level). Within the main sector, NPIs active in Sport are prevalent by accounting for 34.1% (compared to 32.9% in Italy) followed by NPIs active in Other recreation and social clubs which account for 16.6% (14.3% in Italy). Moreover, in the Inner areas NPIs active in Religion show a higher quota (6.3%) if compared to the national level (4.7%) as well as NPIs active in Health (4.3% compared to 3.5%) (Figure 6).

Table 2 – NPIs by sector of activity and Inner areas/Centres and macro regions. Year 2020 (percentage values).

	South and Island		Centre		North	
	Total	Inner areas	Total	Inner areas	Total	Inner areas
Culture	14.2	14.7	16.8	16.7	16.3	16.3
Sports	36.0	37.4	33.6	36.1	30.8	29.1
Recreation	10.1	11.7	12.8	16.1	17.3	22.7
Health	3.5	4.4	3.5	5.2	3.4	3.7
Social services, emergency prevention	11.7	11.5	9.5	7.6	9.0	7.8
Environment	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.4
Religion	3.9	4.2	4.9	7.4	5.1	8.2
Other sectors	18.7	14.2	17.2	9.0	16.3	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Our data processing from Istat – NPI Statistical Register.

Other sectors include Education and research, Development and housing, Law, advocacy and politics, Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion, International cooperation, Business and professional associations, unions, other sectors.

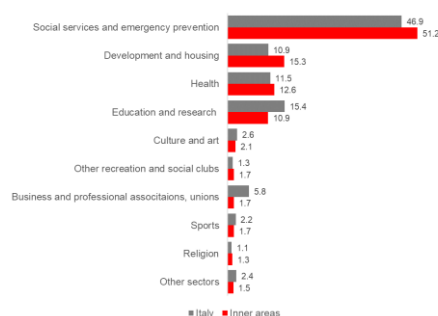
Looking at the macro regions, NPIs active in Sports are much more in the Inner areas of the Centre of Italy (36.1% compared to 33.6%) and in the South (37.4% compared to 36.0%). The nonprofit sector contributes to fill the gap of health services of the Inner areas by providing service of health assistance (NPIs account for 5.2% and 4.4%). In some contexts, according to data comparison at European level and among Italian regions as well, the development of the sector goes together with the public intervention growth (Memo 2023, 18). In other cases, NPIs represent a key resource within the welfare state services, by generating employment (including job placement of disadvantaged persons). Indeed, within their role of subsidiarity and integration, Nonprofit Institutions carry out activities that strongly affect the quality of life and the country's social cohabitation (Barbetta, 1996).

Beside the attention to the community wellness, in the Inner areas of North of Italy the nonprofit sector plays an important role in creating opportunities of socialization and participation to the recreation activity of social clubs (22.7%) (Table 2). Along with the fulfilment of expression needs, in the Inner areas of North NPIs take part in protecting the environment (2.4% compared to 1.7% of the North), according to the “reforming strength” which nonprofit organizations represent with its collective action to common goods protection (Cotturri, 2013).

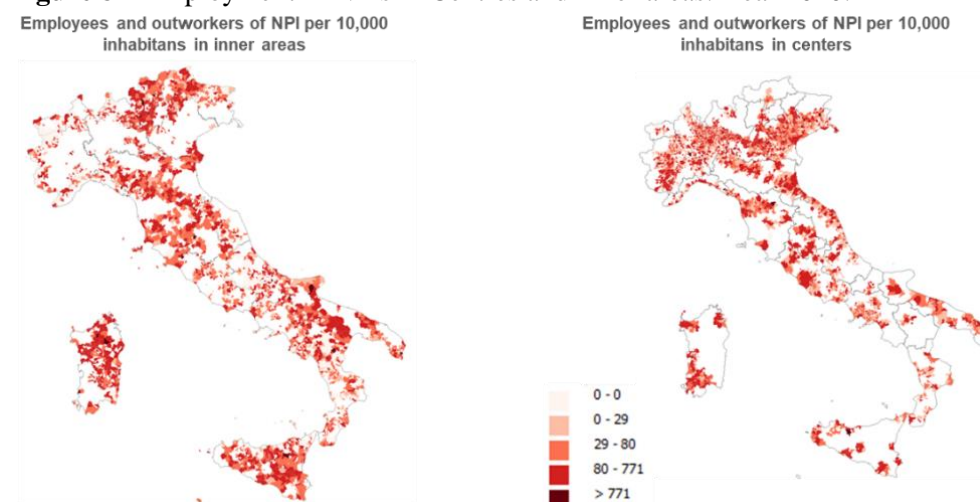
4.3 Human resources of NPIs in Centres and Inner areas

In order to qualify the impact of the nonprofit sector in the local employment by SNAI area, the distribution of paid Human Resources (including employees and outworkers) can be analysed (Figure 7).

Figure 7– Employees and outworkers of NPIs by sector of activity. Year 2020 (percentage values).



In the Inner areas compared to Italy, a concentration of paid human resources is observed in more structured sectors. The employees and outworkers in Social services and emergency prevention in the Inner areas represent more than 50% of the total of human resources in NPIs, showing a higher quota compared to the national one (51.2% and 46.9%). Moreover, the percentage of NPIs employees in the Inner areas present higher value in sectors such as Development and housing (where job placement in enterprise or social cooperative represents the most provided service) (15.3% compared to 10.9% at national level) and Health as well (12.6% compared to 11.5%).

Figure 8 – Employment in NPIs in Centres and Inner areas. Year 2020.

Source: Our data processing from Istat – NPI Statistical Register.

The number of paid human resources per inhabitants shows the different role of nonprofit at local level, by distinguishing between Inner areas and Centres (Figure 8). In the Inner areas higher values can be observed in Lombardia (with 150 paid human resources per 10 thousand inhabitants), in Sardegna (with 122 paid human resources per 10 thousand inhabitants) and in Trentino Alto-Adige (with 120 paid human resources per 10 thousand inhabitants). Lower values can be observed in the Southern Regions Inner areas such as Calabria (36 paid human resources per 10 thousand inhabitants) and Campania (51 paid human resources per 10 thousand inhabitants).

5. Final remarks

The relational capital, as result of the interaction between local socioeconomic actors, is a driving factor in local development processes when is closely related to the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the local context (Trigilia 2011; Camagni 2009, 118-132). According to the literature about the role of Inner areas in local development (Barca, 2015), these territories differ from the poles not only for the disadvantages but also for the opportunities to be carried out. Despite the character of peripherality of inland areas, which is not only geographical but also related to the socio-economic and political connections (Noguera and Copus, 2016) (Mantino eand Lucatelli, 2016), the presence of nonprofit sector is thus a positive factor for the quality of life of these places. The challenge to explore these contexts

through official statistical data on nonprofit sector represents an important step in the process of recognizing these places. The analysis of nonprofit sector within the Inner areas, along with the socioeconomic characteristics of local communities, allowed to better describe the role of the sector in the community economic development. The provision of social services by non-profit institutions, including cultural and environmental amenities, human welfare services, plays an important role in enhancing the quality of life for residents. Moreover, the contribution of nonprofit sector in local employment allowed to explore to what extent nonprofit sector's performance contribute to build a resilience process at local level. Nonprofit sector represents an important resource at local level, where is necessary to deal with socio-economic vulnerability, and can have a strategic role for the empowerment of local population and for the development of the territory, as well. From this point of view, Nonprofit Institutions are part of the "territorial capital" from which the National Strategy for Inner areas (SNAI 2020) intends to start from for the development of Inner areas. The paper represents the first step of a preliminary analysis to be study in-depth in order to explore the role of NPIs in association with the other socio-economic actors.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks for our colleague Agata Maria Madia Carucci, from the Territorial office for Southern regions of Istat, for her scientific contribution.

References

- BASSI A. 2000. *Dono e fiducia. Le forme della solidarietà nelle società complesse*, Roma, Edizioni Lavoceo.
- CAMAGNI R. 2009. *Territorial Capital and Regional Development*, in CAPELLO, R., NIJKAMP, P. (a cura di), *Handbook of regional growth and development theories*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.
- BARBETTA G.P. (a cura di) 1996. *Senza scopo di lucro*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- BARCA F. 2015. *Disuguaglianze territoriali e bisogno sociale. La sfida delle aree interne*. Lettura annuale Ermanno Gorrieri, Modena, Fondazione Gorrieri.
- COTTURRIG. 2013. *La forza riformatrice della cittadinanza attiva*, Roma, Carocci Editore.
- DIPARTIMENTO PER LE POLITICHE DI COESIONE. 2022. *Aggiornamento 2020 della mappa delle aree interne. Nota tecnica NUVAP*.
- DIPARTIMENTO PER LE POLITICHE DI COESIONE. 2022. *Criteri per la Selezione delle Aree Interne da sostenere nel ciclo 2021 – 2027*.

- MANTINO F., LUCATELLI S., 2016. *Le aree interne in Italia: un laboratorio per lo sviluppo locale*, Agriregionieuropa, Anno 12 n°45.
- MEMO G. (a cura di) 2023. *Il Terzo Settore nel Mezzogiorno*, Soveria Mannelli (CA), Rubbettino Editore.
- NOGUERA J., COPUS A. 2016. *Inner Peripheries: What are they? What policies do they need?* Agriregionieuropa, Anno 12 n°45.
- SCIOLLA L., MARAVIGLIA L. 2016. *La forza di una relazione. Attività volontarie e fiducia*, in GUIDI R., FONOVIC' K., CAPPADOZZI T. (a cura di), *Volontari e attività volontarie in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- MINISTERO DELL'ISTRUZIONE E DEL MERICO. 20123. *Strategia nazionale per le Aree interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance. Accordo di Partenariato 2014-2020. Documento tecnico collegato alla bozza di Accordo di Partenariato trasmessa alla CE il 9 dicembre 2013.*
- TRIGILIA C. 2011. *Sviluppo locale. Un progetto per l'Italia*, Roma, Ed. Laterza.

Stefania DELLA QUEVA, Istat, dellaqueva@istat.it
Valeriana LEPORANICO, Istat, valeriana.leporanico@istat.it
Manuela NICOSIA, Istat, mnicosia@istat.it
Sabrina STOPPIELLO, Istat, stoppiel@istat.it