

T5.2 Case study report (Code IT4A)

**Farming AgriCultures. The case of Apulian  
new entrants: Association and  
Agricultural Cooperative "Casa delle  
AgriCulture - Tullia and Gino"**

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## Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and exceptional commitment of the participants to the interviews, focus group, and restitution event. The University of Calabria would like to thank all the interviewees who have shared with us their personal and collective stories, their time, and their future expectations. Our wish is that this research was an opportunity to reflect on the way forward and may contribute to the proliferation of transformative projects of food systems and repopulate rural areas in the years to come.

## Acronyms & Abbreviations

<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>ISTAT</b>	Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica)
<b>LAG</b>	Local Action Group
<b>RDP</b>	Rural Development Plan
<b>SAI</b>	Italian Migrants Reception and Integration System

## Context

The Association “Casa delle AgriCulture – Tullia e Gino” and the Agricultural Cooperative “Casa delle AgriCulture” are located in a hamlet - Castiglione d’Otranto - of the Andrano Municipality, in the southern-east Lecce Province (Nuts 3 level) of Apulia Region (NutsS 2 level), in Italy. (Figure1)



Figure 1. Study area

### Lecce Province (Salento peninsula)

The territory is marked by small relief – the Serre Salentine- not rising above 200 metres. The climate is good and milder than in the rest of the Region due to the sea proximity. In the context of southern east Salento there are numerous small municipalities with a short distance from each other, characterized by depopulation and ageing. Most of them have lower than 5000 inhabitants. The nearest bigger municipality to Andrano is at 6,3 km and has more than 17.000 residents.

In the last decade the Salento peninsula has become a renowned tourist destination; it is a tourism mainly linked to the sea resource, therefore strongly seasonal. According to the Apulian Tourism Observatory data, between 2015 and 2019 data shows a great increase of international incoming (+60%), while overall arrivals grew by 23%. In 2019 in the region (Nuts 2 level) there were 4.2 million arrivals (+4% compared to 2018) and 15.5 million presences. Compared to the previous year, international arrivals (+11,5%) grew more than the national flow (+1%). Tourism in Apulia produces about 9 billion in terms of added value (13.6% of the total regional value).

The Province of Lecce, with the 32% of the regional touristic structures (2.608), has the highest number of presences and arrivals compared to the other Apulian provinces (presences are 30.9% and arrivals are 25.5% of the total) (Agenzia Puglia Promozione, 2020.) Agritourism activity has developed consistently over the last twenty years through the recovery of typical apulian farm buildings, the “*masserie*”, which over the years have become increasingly sought-after accommodation places. In 2019, in Apulia there were 933 agritourisms with a growth of 6.5% compared to the previous year. There were 148.248 arrivals, 44.2% of which were foreign guests (Fratto et al, 2020).

In the sixties of last century there has been a relevant out migration process. Many migrants return in the seventies and in the eighties investing their savings in the purchase of land and, to a lesser extent, in the development of craft and industrial activities. In the same years the agriculture, mainly based on olives and tobacco, due to the modernisation process began to register a high level of chemical inputs.

### **Andrano Municipality**

The Municipality of Andrano is located within the area of the Costa Otranto - Santa Maria di Leuca and Bosco Tricase Regional Natural Park( <https://www.parcootranto-leuca.it>).

The population in 2019 was of 4.666 inhabitants, with a density of 301 inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup> (see Annex 1- table 1); the resident population over 75 years old was over 12,5% of the total while the one up to 4 years old is 3%. In the hamlet of Castiglione d’Otranto the population estimated is less than 1000 inhabitants.

The percentage of migrants on the population is higher than at the provincial and regional level, either due to the presence of a Moroccan community established from many years in

the municipality and of a local reception project financed by to the National Reception and Integration System (SAI).

The population has a high level of education (see Annex 1- table 2) compared to the regional and the provincial level. Almost 4% of the population, higher than 9 years old, has a bachelor's degree and over 9% have a master degree.

The economically active population in 2019 was 42,91% of the population over 15 years old, less than the provincial (44,91%) and regional level (46,84%); even worst is the corresponding ratio related to women (35,2%), even if in this case is more or less in line with the regional (35,77%) and provincial (35,43%) data. Pensioners are over 29% of the population over 15 years old, 9 percentage points more than the corresponding regional data (see Annex 1- table 3 -4).

### **Agricultural sector**

In Andrano, the agricultural sector has been characterized by a high farmland fragmentation and very small farms, by a low diversification of crops, with a dominance of olives and cereals.

The data of the last agriculture census (2010) shows that in Andrano more than 79% of farms have minus than 2 Ha, in line with the Province data (78%) and higher than the regional one (63%).(see Annex 1- Table 5). Over 41% of the holding managers are women, which is much higher than the provincial (35,56%) and the regional (31,76%) data (see Annex 1- table 6). Young farmers (less than 39 years old) were only 4.53% of the total farm manager, less than a half of the corresponding data at regional level (8.83%). (see Annex 1- table 7)

In the last decade, the olive trees in the Salento peninsula have been detected by the Xylella bacterium, a disease that have desiccated millions of olives trees. As a respondent underline *"It is a very, very difficult time because for 10 years we have been hearing about an epidemic, ... we have a completely destroyed landscape, devastated economies, we are talking about 150,000 hectares of olive trees that are dying and millions of trees, an estimated 10 to 20 million trees. So it's a catastrophe"* (IT4A/Int.13).

This has further worsened the situation in the area as many fields have been abandoned and several farms, run by elderly people, have closed.

The serious impact on the Salento agricultural landscape, which today looks like an expanse of dried olive trees, has led to a discussion, including a public one, on the limits of a monocultural, pesticide-intensive agriculture.

While some continue to propose and implement uprooting and replanting new varieties of olive trees resistant to xylella, others are looking for alternatives and are leaving room for diversified agriculture, including the recovery of old traditional varieties of cereals and legumes, among others.

In the past, agriculture was experienced by small farmers as drudgery and self-exploitation, resulting in the figure of the farmer having a scarce social consideration.

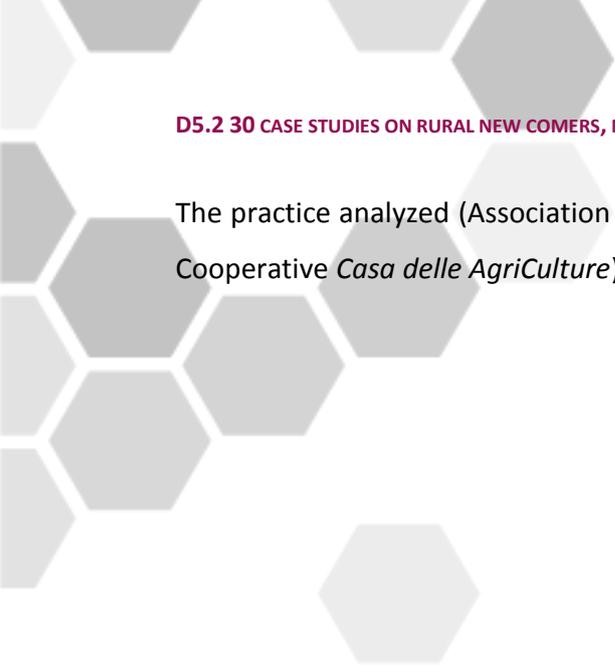
*“In the 50s also at the social level there was a form of discrimination if you were a farmer ... the farmer in the countryside earned, for example, 100 lire (per month) while those who came back from Switzerland after 2 months of work had earned 5000 lire” (IT4A/Int.4).*

In the 1970s and up to the 1990s, tobacco was also grown in Salento, a crop subsidized by the state, and so, alongside olive, this cultivation widespread. This experience, however, implied high levels of exploitation, particularly for women. Agricultural work, therefore, becomes a prospect to be disregarded, especially for women.

*“Even now there is a great distance from agricultural works ... it was a world of sacrifices ... especially for the woman ... to all the women that we know, even very young, the parents have said never be in the land, go to study, do other things. But never you, as a woman, go back to the land because they had this idea of almost slavery with respect to agricultural work” (IT4A/Int.13).*

Respondents highlighted that return to the land is mainly a male choice, more difficult for women, although with the adoption of a multifunctional approach, the skills required are increasingly diversified and this seems to foster young women in approaching agriculture, especially to activities related to social agriculture, processing and agritourism.

In recent years, a number of micro-organizations and associations based on the agroecological model, practicing multifunctional, natural and organic agriculture are emerging in the Salento area. These are new realities that are spreading and are also weaving networks among themselves, in the awareness that networks, particularly for realities of this type, can be very important both in terms of information exchange and cooperation on the production, processing and marketing activities.



**D5.2 30 CASE STUDIES ON RURAL NEW COMERS, NEW ENTRANTS TO FARMING AND SUCCESSORS**

The practice analyzed (Association *Casa delle AgriCulture "Tullia e Gino"* and the agricultural Cooperative *Casa delle AgriCulture*) is one of the first of these realities.

## Methodology

A desk analysis of secondary data was carried out. The main sources were grey literature; on-line evidences; website content of the Association “Casa delle AgriCulture-Tullia e Gino”; academic publications related to the practice analyzed and basic statistical data related to the context in which the practice is implemented.

21 interviews were conducted with: the promoters and members of the Association and the Cooperative; farmers and representatives of association and local entities cooperating with them; key informant (see Table 8 in Annex 2). All the interviews were conducted online due to the epidemic situation. A focus group and a meeting to present research findings were carried out in Castiglione d’ Otranto.

## Origin of the practice

### Origins of the idea

The idea stems from the desire of a group of friends to create the conditions to be able to live in their own village - Castiglione d'Otranto- not being forced to emigrate, as it has happened to their families.

*"The group is made up of different personalities. Each one ... has interesting, unique facets. And at the base of all it is the strong friendship between them. At least between 3- 4 of them, the friendship is really strong, let's say able to overcome any obstacle"* (IT4A/Int.20).

They are young people who had left Castiglione d'Otranto, either for studying at the university either for finding a job, but are strongly motivated to return and build a future in their own village.

*"Let's say we left to study but with the idea of coming back"* (IT4A/Int.2).

*"I moved around until I was 18 to get to know and see different areas of the territory. After the age of 20 I had to move because there was not so much work here, I had to support my family and my work took me to travel... but neither I nor my wife ever had ... that vision of moving the whole family"* (IT4A/Int.4).

The conceptual reference, often mentioned by the interviewees, is that of *"restanza"* (the *"remaining"*) as defined by the anthropologist Vito Teti as a creative and dynamic act. Those who remain and those who return are people that, making alternative choices and developing new relationships, give new life to the localities. Remaining *"requires the capacities to link the past with the future"* being able to build *"here and now a new world, even starting from the ruins of the old"* (Teti, 2019, p.23-24). It is a political choice of life, in the sense that who remains aims to build a *"new polis, a new way of living organizing spaces, economies, relationships"* (Teti, 2019, p.22). Remaining is often more difficult than going, it is an act of courage that involves putting oneself in the game and working to preserve places by giving them a new meaning.

*““Restanza” is this idea of staying on the land not with a conservative approach.... but ...with a view that binds together past and future, tradition and modernity and builds real alternatives for the young men and women who want to stay” (IT4A/Int.12).*

*““Restanza” ... is the concept of remaining and building, giving value to what you have, doing something ingenious...; for those who have remained, the concept is ... more visceral because there is a stronger bond with their places; for those who have been outside ... and after a while decide to come back, having seen more virtuous realities, returning means working locally to enhance the motherland. ... therefore the concept of “restanza” can be seen in different ways” (IT4A/Int.18).*

This group of friends is united by the stories of their families: the peasant life of the grandparents, sometimes of the parents; the migration that many of them faced, in order to escape the conditions of exploitation and fatigue related to agricultural work and finally the return to their native village.

*“We are bound by history, by the destinies of our parents' lives ... we always felt the need to fight for the principles of freedom, for the values related to having care of the land ..., for the principle that the land has to be of those who cultivate it and not to be forced to migrate again to bring home the bacon with dignity and then we were absolutely grateful for these immense sacrifices that our parents have done” (IT4A/Int.21).*

The migration process, which drove many of the villagers to seek new opportunities elsewhere, is strongly fixed in their minds.

*“Our village emptied itself between the late 1950s and the 1960s, in an attempt to acquire freedom, dignity and even let's say economic autonomy” (IT4A/Int.21).*

During their university studies they continue to deal with the theme of land and the exploitation of farmers. Some of them shoot documentaries on their land, the cultivation of olive trees, the need to take care of them, but also on the abandonment of this cultivation; they deal with the theme of migration to Switzerland and the conditions that their parents had experienced; they film the stories of Italian farmers working with grains, the “rebels” of today, as they defined them, who, in an often-invisible way, fight against “the abuses of ... big multinationals companies” (IT4A/Int.21). It is especially this last work that prompts them to reflect on what to do and how to capitalise on all the knowledge and experience acquired in their studies and works.

*“The rebels exist and work, in the sense that they create a system of local economy. They are on the right side and can continue ... to pursue values and objectives that can be transferred by practical examples and not by words to the people around them” (IT4A/Int.21).*

After these years, in which they have experienced an urban way of life, most of them return in their native village that was even more depopulated and where essential services have been closed, as in many other small towns of Salento.

This group of friends, getting closer to agricultural production, discover that ancient varieties of tomatoes and grains were no longer cultivated; they start a research of the local, traditional biotypes and in doing so they realized that land abandonment was becoming increasingly widespread.

*“With a group of close friends, we began to search for ancient seeds ... where others saw nothing, we saw all this abandoned land and said that it should be made available to those who wanted access to the land to create good, healthy, food, accessible to all, to make food for the local territory” (IT4A/Int.4).*

*“At the beginning it was really a hobby, it was to go to the countryside and make salads for ourselves, we were always friends and we already had an association we were involved in culture; we did cultural events ... and on those occasions we ... started to ask ourselves all together about the local bio-type varieties of tomato we started to understand that they were no longer there, that they had disappeared” (IT4A/Int.2).*

Consciousness of the disappearance of local biotypes, of the new opportunities that the agroecological and strong multifunctional model can offer and the presence of abandoned land and of young people who, like them, want to remain in their territory, spur them into action.

*“When we told ourselves that we wanted to remain in this area but also create job opportunities because otherwise we would always be forced to leave, we looked around and we start to act ... we have two “raw materials” to start with, which are the abandoned lands, which are also extremely parcelled ... and we have ... young resources that do not want to leave ... and we asked ourselves how can we put them in a system, also considering the fact that these young people have very diversified skills” (IT4A/Int.1).*

*“In the chats we used to have... about how we could imagine our remain... we started like that, also for fun, but focusing all on food, on food production, which we already understood had completely changed” (IT4A/Int.2).*

They decided to organize a trip, in a small village in the Marche - a central Region of Italy, to visit and understand how was implemented a flourishing organic agricultural model based on local resources promoted, by Tullia and Gino Girolomoni, which are considered among the founders of Italian organic agriculture.

*“We took a trip ... all together in Montebello Isola del Piano in the Marche, ... a trip with a minibus ... 25 years old, all together as friends, we went there to understand what they had done and we understood that 40 years before they had done exactly what we wanted to do now, that is they had stayed inside their hills which were depopulating and they had created a model of absolutely organic agricultural development ... which, above all, created job opportunities in the village, with a great ethic at the base of their economic activity” (IT4A/Int.1).*

This journey is recounted as an enlightening experience that has further motivated them in their actions and led to the establishment in 2013 of the Association Casa delle AgriCulture "Tullia e Gino" (The Home of AgriCulture – Tullia e Gino Association) (<https://www.casadelleagricolturetulliaegino.com>). The name is a very precisely choice, on the one hand is an acknowledgement of the Girolomoni family, their source of inspiration with whom they are still in relation; and on the other, is the consciousness that dealing with the land does not mean only cultivating it but also developing a new narrative on farming activities and on rural in general, a narrative different from the one that until then characterized their context.

*“When we returned home (from the trip) we said ok if they made it possible then this means that it depends from us to make it or not to make it in our territory; from there we started with many attempts, some of which also failed ... our activity was born in this way” (IT4A/Int.01).*

It was decided not to set up an economic entity immediately; the primary objective was not just to return to the land but to work in the context to create the conditions for a collective rather than individual *restanza* (remaining).

*“We first founded the association because we conceived it as an incubator of the project, also of the economic project ... of sensitization of the community around what we were doing” (IT4A/Int.1).*

The Agricultural Cooperative “Casa delle AgriCulture” was established in 2019 to manage all the agricultural activities that in the years the association have promoted. It adopts the same name of the association, in order to underline the strong link between the two entities, which is further strengthened by the fact that the president of the association is the vice-president of the cooperative.

*“It's as if the cooperative ... represented, let's say, the agricultural arms ... of everything that we say ... at the associative level, and so we decided to create it from a nucleus of 10 people, the core group of the association, the one that had always taken care of the fields” (IT4A/Int.2).*

### Promoters, motivation/targets

The promoters are civically and socially committed, have a strong environmental consciousness and are attentive to social issues, matured also through their own family histories, are open to contamination and diversity; over the years they have developed a strong awareness of the opportunities that multifunctional agricultural practices can offer today, also in terms of social inclusion and environmental protection.

Perseverance, tenacity, conviction and transparency characterise their common agency.

They are determined in developing a new narrative and a new way of living the countryside. Safeguarding the landscape and the production of a healthy and good food, caring for the land and organic farming are all elements of this new narrative that can be an opportunity for those who choose to remain or to return, an option that allows to have a decent job that is no longer, as in the past, associated with hard work and exploitation.

First of all, the promoters have to face with the common idea that the only way of farming was the one based on an intensive use of chemical inputs. An agricultural model that had impoverished the soil and poisoned the environment.

*“From the 1970s to the 2000s, large quantities of herbicides were used, especially in the Salento area. When we returned to Apulia between 2011 and 2012, the situation was as*

*follows: land was abandoned ... and the soil was completely impoverished at an organic level” (IT4A/Int.2).*

*“It is not so easy to find fertile land, because the senseless use of pesticides in recent years, because it was a very comfortable job ... it has impoverished the land; so if you take a piece of land today ... you have to restore, let's say, the ecosystem of the land ... then after two years put the land into production” (IT4A/Int.04).*

The local community at the beginning does not understand and agree on their ideas. They are alternatively considered crazy or utopian.

*Here everyone called us utopians, the dreamers; ... a guy of 30 years old who has done everything else ... and wants to be a farmer, where is he going? They took us for a crazy guys (IT4A/Int.04).*

But their determination is strong and they are aware that *those who sow utopia reap reality (IT4A/Int.04).*

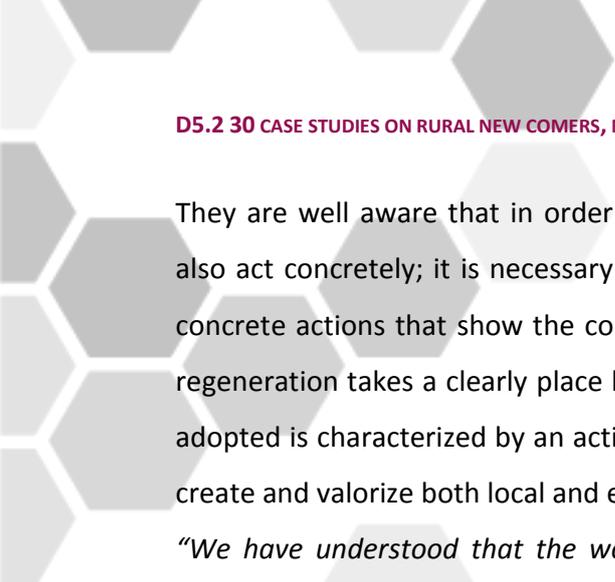
The association has been working since the beginning on two levels: narration and action.

As stated on their website, their aim is to promote "the defence of agro-biodiversity, inclusive practices and the experimentation of new models of restoration in marginal territories", reviving abandoned land, repopulating the countryside, generating a sustainable economy and strengthening community ties.

*“All the activities go in the direction of building a community, a community where no one feels excluded, where everyone can do something” (IT4A/Int.11).*

At the level of narrative, aware that agriculture has been synonymous with hard work and exploitation for thousands of Salento farmers, they work to build a new imagery of the agricultural practice, not a nostalgic one. A new imagery focusing on the inclusive capacity and environmental sustainability of the agroecological and strong multifunctional agricultural model, in which women may have a satisfactory leading role.

*“There is still a cultural heritage on the land and the countryside that with the association we clearly try to dismantle ... it is difficult to see a woman in the fields, who cultivates the land ... with these new forms that are pet therapy ... and education to environmental eco-sustainability ... many girls ... are approaching the association ... finding new jobs in these” (IT4A/Int.17).*



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They are well aware that in order to develop trust and territorial social capital, they must also act concretely; it is necessary to accompany the narrative with the implementation of concrete actions that show the community the opportunities that the context offers. Rural regeneration takes a clearly place based approach in this practice. The bottom-up approach adopted is characterized by an active agency on the territorial level and by the capacities to create and valorize both local and extra-local networks-

*“We have understood that the world could be changed by examples, it is almost always necessary to combine narration with concrete examples” (IT4A/Int.13).*

*“It has to be a bottom up change, otherwise it won't work and it won't stand up” (IT4A/Int.04).*

They have clear that the two levels, narrative and action, are strictly interconnected. The action must be explained and narrated so that it can be understood and imitated. The choice of a narrative that allows everyone to understand and approach their action is what distinguishes this experience.

## Actors involved

The high level of commitment shown by the promoters led to more than 80 people being associated in 2020. These new members include also people not living in Castiglione d'Otranto, nor in the Salento area. Indeed, Members have different jobs, skills and competencies and their participation in the association's activities is on a voluntary basis. However, about ten the individuals are fully involved in all the activities.

The association has a Board made up of members under 35s. This choice has been made to favor the involvement of younger generation in the association activities, raising awareness for them on the opportunities that the local area offers.

*“an under-35 board ... means supporting younger of 15, 20, 25 year-olds and bringing them along our path, and this may mean taking on extra work, but we do it because we obviously want to build a future for this reality” (IT4A/Int.1).*

In 2021, with the aim of further expanding and encouraging the active involvement of youths the "Casa delle AgriCulture Giovani Association" (Home of AgriCulture Youth Association) was set up. The membership is restricted to people under 20 years old. Currently, has around 20 members. The activities that have been already carried out are a demonstrative cleaning action of the countryside and the production of press reviews on the theme of agriculture and *restanza*.

*“This group of under 20s have their own budget, their own management, therefore more autonomy, clearly, they are supported by the older group... The villages are depopulating and the young people do not want to remain or at least they do not find opportunities to remain and the Association ... could explain that here it is possible to remain even rolling up one's sleeves ... the objectives are clearly those of the Association Casa delle AgriCulture” (IT4A/Int.17).*

The Cooperative, which consists of about ten members, has a Board made up of the promoters of the Association.

The Association and the Cooperative are supported by numerous volunteers; they have been able to involve in their activities numerous actors operating not only at local level. A partial list of these subjects includes the following:

-  *Gruppo Umana Solidarietà "Guido Puletti"* (GUS) (<https://www.gus-italia.org/en/>); an NGO that manage in Andrano the reception project<sup>1</sup>, funded by the national programme SAI (Reception and Integration System - <https://www.retesai.it/english/>) and all the migrants hosted by them.
-  *Cooperativa Sociale "L'Adelfia"* (<http://www.ladelfia.org>); a social cooperative that manage a socio-rehabilitation community for severely disabled people located in Castiglione d'Otranto and all their hosts.
-  *AUSER Ponte Andrano - Castiglione* (<https://www.spicgilpuglia.it>); a voluntary association promoted by the Italian Pensioners' Union (Spi) which is a member of CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) - the most important Italian trade union with over 5.5 million members.
-  Municipality of Andrano (<http://www.comune.andrano.le.it>).
-  *Parco Naturale Regionale Costa Otranto – Santa Maria di Leuca e bosco Tricase* (<https://www.parcootrantoleuca.it>); a Natural Regional Park that covers a surface of 3,227 hectares, covering an area of about 57 km along Salento's eastern coast. The Park headquarters is located in Andrano.
-  Free Home University (<https://www.fhu.art/about>); a very interesting artistic experiment focused on generating new ways of sharing and creating knowledge. The artists that are involved have opened their way of making art to an ethical, anthropological and philosophical reflection.
-  Salento km zero network (<https://www.salentokm0.com/en>); an association established in 2011 with the aim of promoting knowledge on traditional agricultural varieties and building a network of solidarity economy based on the production of a "healthy, fair and good food" marketed through short food chain. It involves farms, restaurants, Solidarity Purchasing Groups and small shops located in Salento. In 2015, the network "*Rete coltivatori di*

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<sup>1</sup> The Andrano reception project actually could hosts a maximum of 40 refugees and asylum seekers, ten of whom are people with mental or physical disabilities or other pathologies.

*cambiamento*”(Farmers for change) was created and in 2017 more than 50 farmers have undersigned a “Manifesto for Natural Agriculture in Salento “.

☐☐ *Tela Artisti in Comune* (<https://www.telaartistiincomune.it>); an association that promotes new theatrical, musical and expressive projects and manage in Botrugno (a municipality of around 2.500 inhabitants, about 12 km from Castiglione d’Otranto) a theater house.

☐☐ *Laboratorio Urbano Aperto* (LUA) (Urban Open Laboratory) (<http://www.laboratoriourbanoaperto.com>); an association, located in San Cassiano (a municipality of less than 2000 inhabitants, about 10 km from Castiglione d’Otranto), that promotes participatory planning using creative modalities.

☐☐ Organic farmers, mainly operating in the south east of Salento.

☐☐ *Cooperativa Agricola Gino Girolomoni* (<https://www.girolomoni.it/en/>); is an agricultural Cooperative located in a small village (less than 550 inhabitants) of Marche.

☐☐ *COSPE Onlus* (<https://www.cospe.org>); is a non-profit association, located in Florence (Tuscany), that promotes international cooperation operating in 25 countries and managing about 70 projects.

☐☐ *Musei, Tradizioni & Territorio* (Museum, Tradition & Territory); is a cultural association, located in San Mauro Forte (Basilicata), which has been set up by a group of young people to mainly promote a touristic territorial development.

☐☐ Educational institutions as *Istituto Comprensivo Statale* of Andrano (<https://www.istitutocomprensivodiso.edu.it/index.php>) a primary school and *Ipsar Luigi Veronelli* (<https://www.ipsarcasalecchio.it>) - a high school located in a medium municipality (more than 36.000 inhabitants) of Emilia Romagna Region.

## Activities promoted

### Resources activated

The practice analysed was developed not on the basis of a pre-established project. The search for a perspective of *restanza*, linked to a new vision of the rural, was the driving force behind their action. Over the years, the activities have been added to and enriched on the basis of the needs and opportunities that have arisen.

The Association, as we already note, is very much based on volunteering work. A group of about 10 people conceive and promote most of the activities. They are almost all pluri-active, having several jobs. This allows to refer to diverse skills, knowledge, networks that are fruitfully employed in the Association.

The action of the promoters has also been characterized by their ability to welcome and integrate people who have approached the association over the years and who have brought new ideas and new perspectives.

The establishment of the Cooperative has allowed the creation of 3 permanent jobs.

Over the years, they have been able to increase trust in their action and thanks also to their networking capacities they could raise financial contributions through crowdfunding and donations.

*“We sent a message on whatsapp...and then this money arrived .... we are happy with the credibility we have managed to achieve, because if a lady gives us her severance pay, for example, or writes us a cheque for € 5,000 and doesn't ask us for anything in return, that's something we would never have imagined” (IT4A/Int.01).*

They receive also financial support from local institutions (mainly Andrano Municipality and the Regional Natural Park). They have a good project planning capacity that allow them to win mainly regional tenders. But there is also an ongoing project, named “Confederation of Villages” (<https://www.creativeeuropeuk.eu/funded-projects/confederacy-villages>), funded by the Creative Europe Programme. Is a network, led by the Spanish Asociacion Campo Adentro, that "connects five socially engaged art initiatives operating in rural communities across Europe through a programme of artistic residencies and professional exchanges that

develop innovative concepts for creative problem-solving and collaborative working outside urban centres". It is a project perfectly consistent with the aims and methods adopted by the Association.

*"There are 5 rural realities in which this aspect of culture, of art, is always very present; there is always an artist, a person working in this field, who is always an activator of social dynamics"* (IT4A/Int.13).

## **Access to land**

The farming activities of the Association, and now of the Cooperative, are carried out on abandoned land that has been acquired on free loan.

*"We did not inherit the land, we did not have and do not have the capacity to acquire the land so we looked around to see by what means we could acquire it"* (IT4A/Int.1).

At the beginning it has been difficult to find land as the owners, even though they did not cultivate it, preferred to maintain their fields. In the local context, as in many areas of southern Italy, land is still considered a family resource, even when it is not productive, even when it only entails the cost of keeping it clean; there is a sort of "jealousy" as it is a heritage that has been acquired with hard work and sweat and must be maintained.

Land renting is not widespread, on the one hand because of the fear that it could be acquired by prescription or adverse possession and lost; on the other hand, because with the system of decoupled CAP premiums, landowners prefer to keep their land, even if they do not farm it, in order to receive European subsidies. The land market therefore is standstill and there is still a difficulty of accessing it.

*"We have had the difficulty of contracting this land because ... when there is a contractual obligation someone fears, and we still find it difficult to find land ... there are few people who commit to contracting their land"* (IT4A/Int.1).

*"There are still those who don't give the land to me or anyone else because they say it's mine so I keep it as I want, whether I cultivate it or not, but it's mine"* (IT4A/Int.4).

*"It is easier (to have land) in free use than in rent this is because the free use is a piece of paper that is renewed every year ... and the owner ... feels more secure"* (IT4A/Int.3).

Another problem faced by the promoters was the lack of trust in them, as they were considered young and inexperienced and therefore not creditworthy (IT4A/Int.4).

In order to address both difficulties and secure access to land, the association has promoted a strong awareness-raising action towards landowners. The work of denouncing the phenomenon of abandonment of the countryside and environmental issues has allowed to place the emphasis on the problem of access to land, which was always presented as a collective problem, not as one of the Association.

Nevertheless, it was not just a matter of having access to land, but of promoting a new agricultural model that is inclusive and environmentally sustainable, characterized by a strong multifunctionality. With this in mind, for example, elderly landowners were asked to go in the fields with the association's activists; over the years, this has fostered an increase in trusting the Association, allowing it to have greater access to the land.

*“It gave us the possibility ... to help them ... in the activities of maintaining the countryside and ... to bring them back ... to the fields ..., it wasn't a free loan that meant just taking their land ... no, for us it was taking the land and asking them to come ... with us in the fields”* (IT4A/Int.2).

What is evident in this way of action is that even before being an economic process, it has been a cultural process that has “designed” another way of experiencing the countryside.

From 2019, farming activities are carried out by the Cooperative, which cultivates about 15 hectares of arable land and cereals; two hectares of tomatoes and two hectares of vegetables. They also have a small olive grove, affected by Xylella, on which they plan to plant traditional fruits. The land is fragmented but all the fields are located within a radius of about twenty kilometers from the town of Castiglione d'Otranto. (IT4A/Int.04). Various varieties are produced, from spelt monococco to bicocco, diverse traditional grains as senatore cappelli, gentil rosso, capinera, majorca, saragolla lucana, as well as vegetables. They also breed a donkey of Martina Franca, a traditional Salento breed, and some goats.

## Activities and innovation

Currently, the Association promotes artistic and cultural actions related mainly to the themes of social inclusion, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and agro-ecological production; while the Cooperative manages all the agricultural activities.

*“Now ... the cooperative ... does purely agricultural activities, the association does activities of social and cultural inclusion obviously always combined with the agricultural sphere” (IT4A/Int.1).*

Over the years, they have been able to implement various activities, experimenting and introducing innovation in the area.

Socially engaged art and cultural mechanisms are considered a tool for social and political change. They have clear in mind that it is not just a matter of organising events, but of acting to construct a sense of place. For the community who remains. One of the respondents points out:

*“When a cultural, imaginary action stops acting, it also ends up living the place; too often economic development and rural development activities are placed at the center of the actions, and very little is understood about the value of cultural actions as regenerative within territories... giving oneself a narrative about the present and the future may seem a secondary issue but if politics are not able to provide it, nor the institutions, the people must create it themselves from below, and this narrative from below must shape the political agendas” (IT4A/Int.13).*

With this perspective, over the years, in collaboration with the Free Home University, they have organized **social-practice arts residencies**, involving artists from all over the world (Armenians, Canadians, Mexicans, Americans, Argentinians, etc.), who stay up to one month in Castiglione d’Otranto. Various activities have been realized ranging from cleaning up *tratturi* (the old sheep tracks), planting trees, building dry stone walls, creating new signed routes in the countryside, realizing murals in the city park. The presence in the small village of foreign artists and their socially engaged actions, carried out with the members of Casa delle AgriCulture, have been a powerful tool for stimulating interest and curiosity about the themes pursued by the Association and have favor the construction of a common imaginary. Another innovative awareness-raising action is the organisation of the **Green Night**, at the end of August. This period was chosen as the target audience is not tourists passing through but the local community (IT4A/Int.4). The event focuses on the issues of natural agriculture, biodiversity protection and social inclusion. Narrative and concrete actions are always interconnected, so, for example, the event is organized in such a way as to make it accessible to people disabled.

*“If we say social inclusion, it means having to ... completely revise a format such as ... the green night to ensure accessibility for people disabled, which means paying for platforms to access the churches, which means paying for menus in Braille format ..., which means paying the person who comes to ensure the sign language for the deaf, it means giving up parking spaces to make them available to pregnant women, inventing the corner of the nursery, in short all these things” (IT4A/Int.1).*

The Green Night is preceded by three to four days, the so-called Preludes, during which concerts, a market of local products and debates are organised with the participation of speakers from abroad. It is a very successful event and participation has grown over the years to reach peaks of 30,000 visitors. As underlined by one of the respondents:

*“It is an event that really impresses... impresses for the quality, for the international openness that it has, for the quality of the meetings, of the workshops and the link with the territory... there is this wonderful green night, where Castiglione d'Otranto becomes, how can I say it becomes an exhibition, a living show of an idea of development linked to the territory, linked to the farmers and their traditions, linked to the quality of the products, from food to sustainable tourism, to handicrafts, to inclusion... Each street is dedicated to a theme. And all this ... at a very low cost ... because behind it there is an organisation with dozens and dozens of volunteers who worked and made it possible ... to keep the costs very low” (IT4A/Int.12).*

The whole village is animated by initiatives and a large part of the population of Castiglione has begun to participate and support the initiative.

*“They open their doors to us, so that the stalls can be connected to the electricity without asking us for anything in return... and so that we don't have to use the polluting motors of the generators, and they invite relatives and friends to stay with them for a few days to participate at the green night” (IT4A/Int.1).*

The event also enabled new relationships to be built with numerous local and non-local actors, which generated collaborations and new projects in which the Association was involved.

Food democracy is another issue they work on.

*“We cannot accept that families who have less have as their only option that of going to the discount store” (IT4A/Int.1).*

Therefore, *Casa delle AgriCulture* Association has promoted the creation of a **Popular Purchasing Group** (GAP) to facilitate the access to a healthy and good food and to encourage the creation of a network of small Salento organic producers. It is a way to connect producers and consumers, which in Italy is mostly widespread in cities, much rarer in rural areas. The products are ordered weekly, based on the availability indicated by the farmers, using a WhatsApp group. Over a hundred families participate in the GAP, not only from the small village of Castiglione d'Otranto but also from neighboring areas.

Over the years, the Association and the Cooperative have promoted numerous activities involving children, elderly, migrants and disabled people. Among them the most innovative are:

 The **Agri- recreation center** (*Agriludoteca*). It has been set up in some classrooms of the hamlet former primary school and has been co-financed by the Region. Two or three times a week, children laboratories, related to the theme of caring for the land, were organised. The project, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was suspended, but the aim is to reactivate it as soon as possible. This is a community service that was not present in the small village of Castiglione d'Otranto.

 The **Inclusion Plant Nursery** (*Vivaio dell'inclusione*). It has been set up on the fields where, in previous years, was located the Biodiversity Plant Nursery, that was created with the aim of preserving local biodiversity and breaking the monoculture model by recovering traditional varieties. Twenty-seven varieties of tomatoes, two varieties of peppers and mixtures of courgettes were recovered and tested. The Inclusion Plant Nursery consists of about 2 hectares of land with a small greenhouse and a rural building, renovated with regional funding. There are also seed reproduction plots, a catalogue field of traditional varieties and parcels where new mixtures are tested. Many events, workshops and activities are organized involving disabled people (in collaboration with the social cooperative Adelphia), migrants (in cooperation with the association GUS), inactive young people, elderly (with the support of AUSER) and school

groups. During the summer period, a school camp named "Hands in the Land", in collaboration with the Comprehensive Institute of Andrano is also activated.



**Collective sowing** involving children, families, elderlies and migrants. This action has become an increasingly popular and participated ritual.

*"Hundreds of families, of children now participate in this ritual" (IT4A/Int.2).*

*"It becomes a means of fostering knowledge and know-how intergenerational exchange and allows children, but also adolescents, to experience work in and with the land" (IT4A/Int.4).*

## Farming Activities

Farming activities, which were first promoted by the Association and are now carried out by the Cooperative, are characterised by an agro-ecological approach and by a strong multifunctionality. All the strategies (broadening deepening and regrounding) aimed at increasing locally retained added value described by Ploeg (2008) are implemented.

This style of farming is an innovation in the local context as agriculture since the 1950s had been characterised by a high use of chemical inputs. One of the first actions they implemented was the cultivation of traditional biotypes. At first, the other farmers were very sceptical but when they saw the harvest they changed attitude.

*"If you plant tomatoes there, you won't harvest anything, he told me ... we grow tomatoes in arid culture, we only water them when transplanting, then they grew only with water from the sky, but it's the varieties that allow me to do so, it's the varieties I use .... His tomatoes were dead, attacked by downy mildew, which killed them; we did treatments with nettle, garlic, ... So he saw the results ... and when you are faced with something that is concrete, you can't say no, you have to say yes. And the following year he started to come and get the seedlings from me" (IT4A/Int.4).*

Indeed, pesticide use in the area seems to have decreased in recent years

*"The thing we are noticing in recent years is that there is a significant decrease in the use of herbicides and this is very important" (IT4A/Int.4)*

Production is not certified organic. The respondents highlight two main reasons. The first is related to the legislation that obliges to own the land for at least three years, the time needed to acquire certification. The contracts they have for accessing the fields are not all

lasting for the required period of time. The second is the cost of organic certification, which would be unaffordable for them.

However, their primary objective is to produce food for the local territory, so while organic certification may be relevant for sales on national and international markets, it does not seem necessary for a local context. They therefore preferred to make cultivation methods visible and transparent; for example, on their website, cultivated plots are visible through geo-referencing. In this way they have built a lot of credibility on their way of farming.

*„There must be no doubts about what we do, not least for one reason we are not certified organic, ... we have built a lot of credibility by putting our face on ...I wouldn't go out of the house if we did something that's opposite to what we say" (IT4A/Int.1).*

*“We don't have organic certification, but anyone who knows us, recognize the systems we use ... 10 years ago we started to launch the identification through Google Maps of our parcels of land cultivated with grains, to give the possibility to anyone to go and see what kind of interventions we did ... and we started to do this work of transparency” (IT4A/Int.2).*

It is with the same aim that in 2017 they signed the Salento Natural Agriculture Manifesto<sup>1</sup>, promoted by the Salento Km0 Network.

An important step to offer new services to the local farmers and to process cereals directly was the opening of a **Community Mill**, which became operational in 2019. Today it is managed by two employees of the cooperative supported by the association volunteers.

*“There was a strong demand and it was our wish to solve this enormous need ... both ours and that of the whole network of Apulian farmers in the province of Lecce” (IT4A/Int.2).*

The Mill was financed through crowdfunding (raising 37,000 €), a Regional contribution of 50,000 € and a loan of 110,000 €.

*“We didn't start by asking the region or the european community for funds, but we started by crowdfunding... from the bottom up to build a collective narrative that has been very successful ... the territory has expressed the will to build an infrastructure” (IT4A/Int.13).*

Many of the renovations and adaptations of the building were carried out with the support of technicians and designers who offered their services free of charge, allowing to complete

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<sup>1</sup> The Manifesto is available at the following link: <https://www.salentokm0.com/it/blog/firmato-il-manifesto-del-salento-che-cambia>

it, saving a lot of money. In addition to an artisanal stone mill, there is also a machine for cleaning cereals, a packaging machine and a spelt dehuller.

Several interviewees pointed out that the presence of processing infrastructures can have an impact on farmers' production choices. For example, the spelt dehuller has allowed the resumption of spelled cultivation in the area, which had been abandoned in the past due to the high transport costs associated with its processing and to the low food industry demand.

*"The purchase of a dehuller is a political issue, not just a question of, let's say, agronomic needs ... it's really a matter of managing to change the internal production system, because in the past spelt was not sown because the processing industry was not interested in it because it cost too much"* (IT4A/Int.2).

The production (vegetables, tomato sauce, biscuits, several flours of traditional grains and spelt, *taralli*, *fresine*<sup>1</sup>, crackers, etc. ) is mainly marketed locally in the Community Mill shop, through the GAP (Popular Purchasing Group) and to local restaurateurs. There is also a network of small shops that sell their products and, on request, shipments are made to Italy and abroad.

The respondents highlighted that the Community Mill has become an important meeting place, where producers talk to each other, exchange knowledge and share the problems they have in their farming activities. As a farmer pointed out:

*"I used to bring them the grain to grind ... when you start meeting several times at the end you chat, you talk, ...my problems are their problems... let's say with them there is not only the milling of the grain, with them there is a discourse that ... goes beyond the farm business, but it is precisely a look at the territory and I embrace the cause. So I go to them"* (IT4A/Int.05).

During the first year of the mill's activity, the Cooperative quickly run out of production and have been forced to buy cereals from Sicily. The following year, they could look for new land to expand their production, but they are always looking for ways to encourage a collective return to the land. They try, even in the face of their own individual problem, to find an innovative solution that has a collective breath, involving and offering support to other realities of Salento. Therefore they launch, in a very participated meeting, the idea of **Supply**

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<sup>1</sup> Taralli and fresine are common in southern Italy. The main ingredient is wheat flour.

**Chain Pacts** (*Patti di filiera*) among farmers, the Cooperative and the Natural Regional Park (*Parco Naturale Regionale d'Otranto Leuca e Bosco Tricase*).

*“We could have started asking for new land ... or say well, community mill done, now we can distribute seed around for the production for the Cooperative or change the discourse ... the supply chain pacts guarantee that more people will return to agriculture, not just Casa delle AgriCulture” (IT4A/Int.02).*

These foreseen the collective purchase of grain seeds, cultivation using natural (organic) methods, land rotation, the introduction of melliferous plants to encourage the return of bees to the fields, and the purchase by the cooperative of the production at a price almost three times higher than that of the Commodity Exchange. The Natural Regional Park is the guarantor of these pacts.

*“The Park ... is not a certifying body ... it is an entity that by putting its own logo ... takes responsibility for giving credibility to that product. And in this sense, there is also an attempt to go beyond purely formal certifications, ... in the supply chain pact (the Park is) a third party, nor a producer nor a processor, but through a shared process that lasts over time, can say that those who are part of the supply chain pact ... comply with the rules ... written in the specifications” (IT4A/Int.14).*

Five supply chain pacts have been signed for a total of about 30 hectares of cultivated land. In order to give more farmers the opportunity to participate, it was decided that each of them would cultivate no more than 8 hectares under the pact.

This innovation, that encourage the cultivation of traditional biotypes, is viewed very positively by the farmers involved, ensuring them a market at a remunerative price, at least for a part of their production

*“With the Cooperative we have established a price that adequately remunerate me and them... So I know that ... about two hectares ...they will take it all... with them we reach 50, 60 € per quintal, which is another matter” (IT4A/Int.5).*

## Environmental issues

Cooperative and Association members are strongly sensitive to environmental issues, that are taken into account in all the initiatives promoted.

#### D5.2 30 CASE STUDIES ON RURAL NEW COMERS, NEW ENTRANTS TO FARMING AND SUCCESSORS

*“There is no event that we do ... that does not represent ... a strong focus on the fundamental elements ... of biodiversity and environmental protection, of the ecosystem in general but also of the rights of workers” (IT4A/Int.2).*

Recovering and cultivating traditional varieties, experimenting mixtures to identify the most suitable species for the area, organic fertilization, weeding with animals and organic farming are all measures to protect and revitalize local biodiversity and the ecosystem in general.

They have also promoted numerous actions to raise awareness among the local population. For example, murals have been created in public spaces on environmental themes; streets have been named after people who have distinguished themselves for their environmental and social struggles, etc.

These actions are *“aimed at reactivating a different relationship with the everyday urban spaces ... it is a way to take care of the village that is first and foremost made for those who live there” (IT4A/Int.8).*

## Synergies and networking

### Relationship with the local community

The local community was not particularly keen on supporting the Association's activities at the outset. The typical mechanisms of small communities were displayed: jealousy, suspicion, a tendency to preserve established habits, distrust. However, the association continued to work, with patience, tenacity, and coherence, to break down these mechanisms. The challenge was "to interpret community spirit as a resource, working daily to overcome the obstacles it poses". (Salento, Dell'Abate 2019, p.428).

It was useful to organize collective events also linked to farming, unhinging the individualisation process that characterises the industrialised agricultural model. The countryside was sociality, and it is this sociality, which also implied the possibility of exchanging knowledge, that was sought after.

*"We have tried to collectivize all the events, all the work done in the countryside, which until now was practically individualistic: everyone looked after his own garden, there was no exchange of ideas" (IT4A/Int.4).*

*"These collective moments ... the sowings, the concerts or the presentation of books make it possible to create a community of reference, which is the one that participates in these initiatives, with which we always have the ability to dialogue and question ourselves on the things that need to be done... on a series of other issues, not only strictly ... agronomic issues, but also on ... political ones" (IT4A/Int.02).*

To foster this process, several relationships were established with local associations.

In particular, the elderly members of the local Auser supported the association with voluntary work and actively participated in several events organised.

Numerous recreational activities were carried out with the GUS, which manages the local SAI project, to foster the socialization of migrants with the local population. In addition, in order to facilitate their integration into the labour market, internships were set up. Another activity carried out together was the 'Orti in Comune' project. The aim was to encourage self-production of food through the creation of vegetable gardens by immigrant families, to

whom *Casa delle AgriCulture* donated seedlings. The relationships established with migrants have allowed, among other things, an exchange of knowledge and skills, including from the point of view of agricultural production.

*“There has always been an exchange relationship, in the sense of discovering how in Ghana they grow tomatoes and how the furrows in the ground are made ... it has always been a sort of exchange of knowledge and skills with the aim of giving the possibility that these beneficiaries become citizens of the community, active citizens and that they remain”* (IT4A/Int.11).

A Memorandum of Understanding "*La terra che cura*" (The land that heals) was signed with the social cooperative *l'Adelphia*, allowing the involvement of people with disabilities in the agricultural and recreational activities carried out.

Over the years, the relationships with the local community, thanks to all these activities, have improved and become more collaborative.

*“They (Association and Cooperative) have been great, they have resisted, ... they have managed to create... consensus in the village, which was not easy because is a village, let's say, like so many other rural ones, substantially asleep ... lying on its routine ... but they have managed to be loved ... starting with the elderly”* (IT4A/Int.20).

## Synergies enabled

Synergies were activated with several other practices and institutions.

The interviewees focused in particular on the following actors:

-  The Laboratorio Urbano Aperto (LUA- Urban Open Laboratory) which operates in a municipality near Castiglione d'Otranto. As the practice analysed, the LUA promoters use creative ways to foster transformative processes in rural area, involving the local community. A participatory process had led to the creation of Parco Paduli, which is configured as a multifunctional agricultural park (<http://www.parcopaduli.it/parco/home.php>); within it has been experimented, among other things: sustainable agricultural production; Land Art interventions, reusing agricultural waste material, to build small shelters that

are rented out as temporary accommodation during the summer months; taste and smell laboratories. LUA has also promoted the project "Ruralia, the Parco Paludi Rural Festivals" in which *Casa delle Agricolture* has been involved. The aim was sensitising the local population to rediscovery local products, underlining their productive, environmental and social sustainability. Art, narrative and concrete actions were the tools employed in this project. For example, during the feast of St. Joseph, theatrical and artistic performances were organised, also with the support of the "Tela in Comune" association, focusing on the theme of local food and bread.

*"Bringing contemporary art to a small rural center... and see the grandmother or the aunt who is curious about contemporary art, who wants to know, is for us an important result and makes the rural villages feel, not an internal area, but an area capable of having all the potential to support a more equitable development"* (IT4A/Int.16).

In the preparation of the traditional feast foods only flour from ancient grains, supplied by the Cooperative, were used. This activity had an impact that went beyond the fest period; there has been an increase in local consumption of these products and their use by local operators.

*"Only products that are milled in the Community Mill are used ... this has raised awareness, more people are starting to plant cereals of a certain type ..., doing organic farming"* (IT4A/Int.13).

*"Today, even the pâtisserie has begun to ... convert most of its production, using flour from ancient grains, produced and milled ... in the Community Mill of Castiglione.... after two years of work, in the Feast we really used only local products and people discovered that the taste is completely different ... it also happened that these families started to buy cereals and flours no longer from the supermarket but from the mill or from the farmer"* (IT4A/Int.15).



*Tela in Comune* association, located in a municipality near Castiglione d'Otranto. It promotes experimental theatre actions and performances, very much linked to improvisation but also to local history. The aim, as *Casa delle AgriCulture*, is to foster the remaining (*restanza*) in rural areas, being aware that

a socially engaged art can play a role in creating new imaginary and new narrative of places.

*“The other great thing we managed to find was a network of relationships, made up of people who, like us, wanted to invest and be in these small areas, despite the fact that there is no cinema, despite the fact that there is no theatre” (IT4A/Int.9).*

One of the activities carried out together concerned the project "Il profumo del pane" (The scent of bread); theatre workshops were held on the theme of bread and its production, involving migrants hosted by the Andrano reception project and the local population.



*Istituto scolastico Ipsar “Luigi Veronelli”, an high school located in Casalecchio di Reno (Emilia Romagna Region). The project “Cibo per la restanza” (Food for a remaining) have been promoted. The aim was to sensitize students to the use of local products in catering, paying attention to the methods of their production. The activities carried out involved the setting up of a laboratory aimed at understanding agri-food chains, the production of local biotypes and their use in cooking. The Cooperative's products were used in these activities, meetings were organised with representatives of the Association and an educational trip to Castiglione d'Otranto was organised. In 2022, another project "Ethical, legal and fair food" is planned, also in collaboration with a high school located in a small village near Castiglione d'Otranto.*

*“For us (The High School), Casa delle AgriCulture has been an example and a guide ..., it makes us think when we approve the laboratories” (IT4A/Int.18).*

## Networking established

The association and the cooperative agency is characterised by a strong networking capacity. They continuously seek connections with practices, individuals and associations with whom share aims and modalities of action. They are aware that networks foster the development

of new ideas, offer new opportunities, enable them to solve problems collectively and help to consolidate their action.

*“The question of the network is always present in the action of Casa delle AgriCulture... We have grown, because we have this constant ability to take energies from outside and bring them here...there is this idea of building important networks based on many common feelings” (IT4A/Int.13).*

*“Casa delle AgriCulture association or another association alone does little or nothing, therefore, the effort is to remain in the network; it is an effort that is being seen in Salento and is bearing fruit ... In the network you can do something that individually you would not be able to do” (IT4A/Int.17).*

The practice analysed is part of the Salento Km0 network and of the connected “Farmers for Change Network” which have allowed to exchange knowledge, information and service.

*“It's a daily training that you have... We have a whatsapp group, we have regular meetings...to exchange problems and ...knowledge... Being together always gives strength” (IT4A/Int.4).*

*“Being able to be in contact with other farmers who do the same thing ... the same way of growing, the exchange of opinions, ... of information and also the possibility of helping each other with equipments is what made me stay in the network because it's something useful and in fact important collaborations were born” (IT4A/Int.03).*

*Casa delle AgriCulture* collaborate with numerous local associations and many experiences located in other Italian region as, among others, the Girolomoni Cooperative in the Marche region, which is a reference point for their actions; the Rural Seeds Network, a national association promoting biodiversity and agroecology and *Simenza* which is an association promoting biodiversity in Sicily.

It has stable relations with COSPE, a Tuscan non-profit organisation; in 2020 the vice-president of the Association became part of their board.

*“This relationship with Cospe is above all linked to the themes of cooperation, social inclusion and... it has helped us... also to ... not to remain focused on our territory... we also try to collaborate on the theme of migrants” (IT4A/Int.17).*

## Policies and Institutional supports

### Constraints and new policies needed

#### Constraints

Respondents highlighted the limitations of the current model of EU and national agricultural policies. The main issues raised are the following:

- ▣ the agro-ecological approach and small-scale farmers are not adequately supported.

*“From my point of view, the CAP cannot look only at large landowners but must start to take account of those who produce in a certain way; it cannot reward ... those who have a water well and instead consider those who start working in drylands farming as second class farmers” (IT4A/Int.02).*

- ▣ The formulation of RDP measures does not take into account the differences within the region. For example, in the case of Apulia, the agricultural structure in the province of Foggia is characterised by medium-large farm extensions, while in Salento farms have a limited average extension.

*“The territories are very different from each other, coherent actions must be taken” (IT4A/Int.04).*

- ▣ Difficulties in accessing information on the RDP opportunities.

- ▣ RDP measures are unclear and often difficult to understand without technical support.

- ▣ Access to RDP measures is very cumbersome and takes a long time to receive funds.

- ▣ Excessive bureaucratization of agricultural. For a small farm, meeting all the regulatory requirements and filling in all the required documents is a very time-consuming activity.

*“A great job would be to eliminate a lot of bureaucracy ... I am more in front of the computer than on the fields” (IT4A/Int.2).*



The current organic certification system does not seem to meet the needs of those who choose to adopt an agro-ecological model and work on recovering ancient seeds. If ancient seeds are non-certified farms have to opt out of certification.

*“We have had contacts. ... with these other guys from Altamura who are really passionate about researching ancient grains, .... Small plots of land, small quantities that are passed down from farmer to farmer, but we were forced not to follow this path because we would have had to leave the organic sector” (IT4A/Int.6).*



Training is important for new entrants into agriculture. The public system does not seem to provide adequate support. Existing training courses do not seem to meet the needs of those interested in adopting agro-ecological models and strong multifunctionality and often have a theoretical approach. The courses that the interviewees have attended are almost all self-organised by the various Salento realities that adopt or promote the agroecological model.

*“The vast majority were self-organised courses ... for example, Salento Km0 network ... organised courses on regenerative agriculture, finding ... teachers in the area or even from outside who responded to our requests” (IT4A/Int.04).*

## **Need of new policies**

*Casa delle AgriCulture* is aware of the opportunities that good policies could offer by promoting processes of rural regeneration, even if they underline that so far, the institutions do not seem to have been ready to adopt transformative and innovative policies.

*“We have shown that the difference can also become an opportunity and a chance to work and build new possibilities, but we do not see a follow-up from the institutional point of view... public policies are essential to reverse the processes, including depopulation processes, which are not inexorable, and there is a lot of effort in this because very few listen, we must try as we have chosen to remain here” (IT4A/Int.01).*

The main changes suggested refer to new agricultural policies addressing the issues reported.

Respondents also indicated the need of more local services that policies can incentivize.

In particular, reference is to interventions related to childcare services, given their rare presence in rural areas. The creation of agri-kindergartens and agri-day care is suggested.

Tourism policies should also be diversified, taking into account the specificities of the places.

The respondents propose, for example, donkey trekking services and the promotion of an accessible and inclusive tourism.

Public canteens supplied with ethical, local and organic products is another measure suggested. It is not simply a matter of promoting zero-km and/or organic canteens, but rather of supporting small local producers adopting an agro-ecological approach. The interviewees point out that are the rural Municipalities that should be the first to act, instead of issuing calls for tenders for canteens that are often a cut and paste of those of the big cities. The example given is that of Melpignano, a Salento municipality of about 2,000 inhabitants located more than 20 km from Castiglione d'Otranto. Here, through an innovative project, promoted by the municipality, the nursery school canteen is supplied by the farmers belonging to Salento km0 network.

*“We (the Municipality of Melpignano) choose Salento Km0 Network, because we needed a criterion for certifying the products that could not be organic, because it would have excluded many micro realities that have land in conversion; it could not be zero kilometer because it would have included many realities that have nothing ethical and organic and therefore ... so we have made the choice of a group of people who had signed a Manifesto in which they discipline themselves ..., both in ethical terms and in terms of production, ... choosing to produce in a sustainable way, in an ethical way also re-using abandoned land.”* (IT4A/Int.19).

It is a small pilot experience, involving 33 children, but which has shown how similar actions can support sustainable local micro-economies and at the same time are effective in raising awareness of local and healthy food consumption.

## Institutional support

Initially, the Association had no confidence in the way institutions, particularly local ones, acted, and began to operate without asking, and even seeking, institutional support.

*“We start from a very deep disappointment with politics and institutions, especially local ones, ... So there was a really alternative approach at the beginning, ... for many years... we did everything from the bottom ... in a voluntary way ..., precisely because there was a lack of trust” (IT4A/Int.13).*

*“The municipalities often...did not support us, they did not believe in what we were doing” (IT4A/Int.17).*

Over the years, the Association and the Co-operative, gaining visibility and strengthening its capacity of action, changed their attitude and today are more open to collaboration and dialogue, aware that there is no longer any risk of being subsumed by the institutional system.

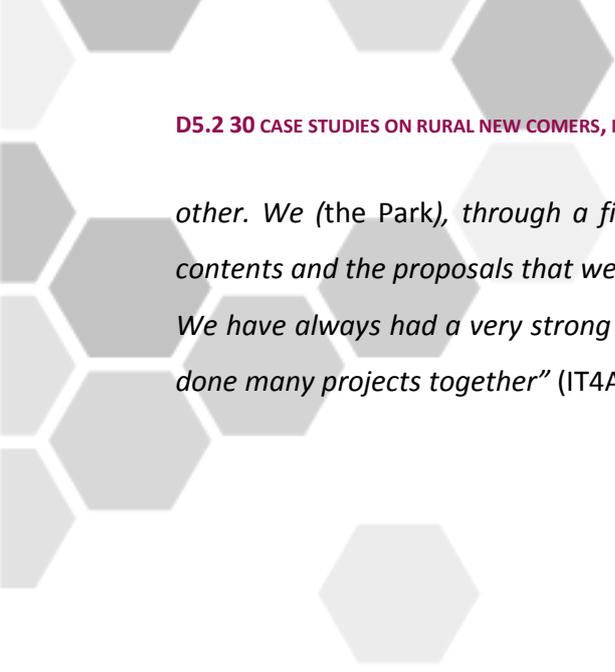
*“After years of work ... now we are in a phase in which we have our idea, our actions, and we know that in any case we will do them, if the institutions want to be close to us, we try to work together ... we are working with different institutions, there is no fear of being absorbed” (IT4A/Int.13).*

*“Let's say this is their skill, they remain radical in content, but conciliatory in method, but moderate in method. So, they have manners that are always very soft and able to interact with the local context” (IT4A/Int.20).*

In recent years, a number of projects have been carried out with the financial support and/or the collaboration of the Municipality of Andrano.

*Casa delle AgriCulture* has very good relationships with the Costa Otranto - Santa Maria di Leuca and Bosco Tricase Regional Natural Park, with which it has carried out several initiatives related to the recovery of local biotypes and the care of the landscape. They are, for example, carrying out an ecological weeding in an area of the Park, with the grazing of goats and donkeys, without using pesticides.

*“In some cases, the association has done things that the park itself should already be doing, ... let's say, to promote models of sustainable development, concrete practical actions..... the Park and Casa delle AgriCulture have been two entities that have in some way fed off each*



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*other. We (the Park), through a financial support ...in many cases they have provided the contents and the proposals that we have included in some projects. (IT4A/Int.14).*

*We have always had a very strong relationship with the Park and therefore we have already done many projects together” (IT4A/Int.1).*

## Impact and Perspectives

### Impact

Working on narrative and at the same time implementing concrete action has produced a new imagery of farming and rural life in general. It has been a long and complex work of re-signification of places that has left no room for compromise, while always seeking dialogue and confrontation. It has been a collective “utopian thinking” that imagining the future identified the ways to get there and dislodged the status quo (Shucksmith 2018).

*Casa delle AgriCulture* activities have shown the local community how rural regeneration can be based on socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable actions; opened up new perspectives to people, with different skills and interests, who are motivated to remain in the area; fostered an increase in new entrants into agriculture; boosted the cultivation of traditional biotypes and the re-use of abandoned land; raised awareness on agroecological and multifunctional model.

*“The ability to move souls and capital totally from below, through its own image which is totally clear, transparent and close to everyone... it's not a reality (Casa delle Agriculture) which only talks about land, agriculture, it's a reality which talks about the community in all its complexity, so it's clear that for realities like this it's normal that moving so many things from below takes a lot of energy... these are processes that by nature are long” (IT4A/Int.8);*  
*“They (Casa delle Agriculture) were the example that sometimes you don't just need words but you need actions and they certainly managed to show before anyone else that you can make a community ... they believed and invested” (IT4A/Int.3)*

Cultural actions have played an important role in this process, as evidenced also by the activities carried out with Free Home University, Tela in Comune Association, Laboratorio Urbano Aperto – LUA Association and the ongoing 'Confederation Villages' project.

*“We realised that without all that work on cultural action we would not have been able to carry out that development action ... of economic sustainability, they're completely connected ... we created the cooperative, the community mill, very concrete examples of economics... but of course we know, and people who look at the complexity know, that*

*without that previous work of sowing the seeds of utopia we could not reap the reality” (IT4A/Int.13).*

Other winning elements in fostering local innovative transformation were: their impressive networking capacity that have been helpful in mobilizing resources and overcoming local limitations (Li et al, 2019) and the ability to welcome and integrate into their action actors from outside the local community, who bring different skills, knowledge and points of view.

*Casa delle AgriCulture* always seeks solutions to problems from a collective perspective; for example, to retain greater added value and ensure quality production, a common goal of several farmers in Salento, they promoted the construction of a Community Mill; they encouraged collective seed purchase, which not only saves individual farmers money, but also strengthens the relationships between them; they launched the idea of supply chain pacts to encourage other farmers to grow traditional grains; the training courses were organized collectively, based on the needs of the farmers of the Salento Km0 network. These are just a few examples of their modalities of action, which had a significant impact on the local context, as recognized by many respondents.

*“If you dream alone it is only a dream, if more people dream it is a reality that begins... I fully support their projects (of Casa delle AgriCulture), so knowing that there is another reality helps a lot to deal with problems. And the collaboration has also led to an opening up of the market... because they are more present everywhere and they help me to enter the market together” (IT4A/Int.05).*

Castiglione d'Otranto is now acknowledged, at regional and national level, as the Village of the Green Night, a place where there has been a “virtuous return to agriculture, thanks to the recovery of ancient varieties”

<https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/at/144/localita/4438/it/Castiglione%20d'Otranto>).

Casa dell'Agricoltura has contributed to the introduction of issues such as social inclusion, agroecology and *restanza* (remaining) into the local public discourse.

*“We have built up our own identity and so now there is also an economy of return... We are used to the idea that we are nothing, that we have nothing, we are convinced that we are worth less than zero, and then the fact that we have worked hard on identity and that we can be a counter model for tourism makes a difference. ... we have helped to create a greater awareness from the point of view of social inclusion ... we have brought new themes, that of*

*depopulation was a theme that was completely ignored in Salento and now everyone is talking about it and it is obvious that they see in Castiglione a laboratory, the forge of “restanza” (remaining) practices” (IT4A/Int.1).*

Their action has stimulated the local economy. For example, through the relationship established with local restaurants; the organisation of many events involving several people who are hosted by local B&Bs; enhancing local biodiversity and impacting on the production choices of other farmers.

*“I started out as a legume producer. Then I had a grain, which was a modern cultivar, and knowing the guys from Castiglione I got closer to the ancient cultivars. So now I produce Saragolla durum wheat, Senatore Cappelli durum wheat, Majorca soft wheat and spelled” (IT4A/Int.5).*

The possibility of germinating new and other experiences in other regional contexts is an interesting challenge that has been taken up by *Casa delle Agricolture*. The **Patto delle Saragolle** (Saragolle pact), signed with an association of young people operating in the small village of San Mauro Forte in the neighboring region Basilicata, goes in this direction. To encourage them in starting a process of recovering traditional Lucanian grain, *Casa delle AgriCulture* donated the seeds of Saragolla wheat. The first harvest was made in 2021. The ultimate goal of the Pact is to create another community mill in the lucanian village, in order to be able to grind wheat locally.

As one of the young people involved points out:

*“Casa delle AgriCulture is a reality that has surprised us in a positive way and has given us the strength to believe in our territory in the logic of networking these two territories... they have bet 100% on our territory not only with fine words, but with concrete actions... it is also a cultural investment on their part to allow us to create wealth through this resource that is the grain” (IT4A/Int.10).*

## Perspectives

Respondents report that the next objectives of the Association and the Cooperative are: to strengthen and further expanding networks with the aim of creating new jobs and market opportunities (IT4A/Int.2); to stimulate, as has already been done with the experience of the



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Saragolle Pact, other rural territories to imagine and practice another way of living the countryside based on agricultural multifunctionality, attention to practices of social inclusion and preservation of the ecosystem. The continuous enlargement of their networks and constant openness to the practices of other territories, which share the same aims and values, can further consolidate this practice.

Among the next steps that have been identified are the construction of an e-commerce platform, the opening of a restaurant where it will be possible to taste the Cooperative's products (IT4A/Int.4) and the creation of a network between bakers and small producers of ancient cereals in the area in order to achieve the production of the "Bread of the Regional Natural Park Costa Otranto - Santa Maria di Leuca and Bosco Tricase".

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## Annex 1. Statistical data

2019	Apulia Region	Lecce Province	Andrano
Density (Population/km <sup>2</sup> )	205	283	301
Population	3,953,305	782,165	4,666
Average members of the household (N°)	2,48	2,38	2,52
Resident population until 4 years years (% of resident population)	3,71	3,44	3,02
Resident population 75 years and over (% of resident population)	10,96	12,30	12,54
Resident population 85 years and over (% of resident population)	3,33	3,84	4,24
Women 85 years and over (% of the resident population 85 years and over)	65,14	66,67	69,19
Migrants/population %	3,38	3,27	4,52

**Table 1. Demographic characteristic - comparison Andrano Municipality, Province of Lecce (Nuts 3), Region Apulia (Nuts2) - 2019**

Source: our elaboration on ISTAT data

Educational attainment	Apulia Region	Lecce Province	Andrano
Illiterate	1,01	1,30	0,96
Literate but no formal educational attainment	5,20	5,86	5,37
Final assessment (primary school)	18,53	18,06	19,19
Diploma of lower secondary education	31,62	30,17	28,71
Diploma of upper secondary education and Certification of higher technical specialisation	31,54	31,51	32,29
Bachelor's degree or first level academic diploma; Diploma of Higher Technical; University Diploma	3,21	3,23	3,94
Master's degree or second level academic diploma (and Academy Conservatory old programme)	8,63	9,60	9,34
Research Doctorate (PhD)/ Advanced research academic diploma	0,26	0,28	0,20

**Table 2. Educational attainment (% on resident population 9 years and over) comparison Andrano Municipality, Province of Lecce (Nuts 3), Region Apulia (Nuts2) – 2019**

Source: our elaboration on Data extracted on 05 Jun 2021 18:15 UTC (GMT) from I.Stat

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Current activity status		Apulia Region	Lecce Province	Andrano
Current economically active		46,84	44,91	42,91
Current economically active	Employed person	38,55	37,30	36,85
	Unemployed person	8,29	7,60	6,06
Current non economically active		53,16	55,09	57,09
Current non economically active	pensioner or capital income recipient	20,39	24,38	29,02
	Student	8,68	8,57	10,20
	Housewife	15,81	12,69	9,46
	Other condition	8,28	9,46	8,33

**Table 3. Current Activity Status (% on resident population 15 years and over) comparison Andrano Municipality, Province of Lecce (Nuts 3), Region Apulia (Nuts2) – 2019**

Source: our elaboration on Data extracted on 08 Jun 2021 17:45 UTC (GMT) from I.Stat

Current activity status		Apulia Region	Lecce Province	Andrano
Current economically active		35,77	35,43	35,20
Current economically active	Employed person	28,12	28,18	29,41
	Unemployed person	7,65	7,25	5,79
Current non economically active		64,23	64,57	64,80
Current non economically active	pensioner or capital income recipient	18,48	23,87	30,06
	Student	8,98	8,77	10,00
	Housewife	29,45	23,30	17,46
	Other condition	7,32	8,64	7,27

**Table 4. Women current activity Status (% on women resident population 15 years and over) - comparison Andrano Municipality, Province of Lecce (Nuts 3), Region Apulia (Nuts2) – 2019**

Source: our elaboration on Data extracted on 08 Jun 2021 17:45 UTC (GMT) from I.Stat

## D5.2 30 CASE STUDIES ON RURAL NEW COMERS, NEW ENTRANTS TO FARMING AND SUCCESSORS

Hectares	Apulia Region	Lecce Province	Andrano
0-0,99 ha	110.323	37.443	295
1-1,99 ha	62.474	18.029	180
2-9,99 ha	72.957	13.320	111
10-19,99	13.119	1.255	6
20-49,99	9.393	739	4
More than 50 ha	3488	274	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>271.754</b>	<b>71.060</b>	<b>596</b>

**Table 5. Number of farms by class of total holding land -2010**

Source: our elaboration on data extracted on 05 giu 021, 16h38 UTC (GMT), da Agri.Stat

Farm manager gender	Apulia Region	Lecce Province	Andrano
Males	185.433	45.794	346
Females	86.231	25.266	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>271.754</b>	<b>71.060</b>	<b>596</b>

**Table 6. Number of holdings managers by gender - 2010**

Source: our elaboration on data extracted on 05 Jun 2021 17:44 UTC (GMT) from Agri.Stat

Farm manager age	Apulia Region	Lecce Province	Andrano
Until 39 years	8,83	7,11	4,53
40-64 years	54,01	52,94	39,96
More than 65	4,53	58,22	37,25

**Table 7. Farm manager age (% on total farm manager) - 2010**

Source: our elaboration on data extracted on 05 Jun 2021 17:41 UTC (GMT) from Agri.Stat

## Annex 2. The list of interviews

Code	Interviewee (Pseudonym)	Gender	Role	Place and date of the interview
IT4A/Int.1	Tatiana	Female	Casa delle AgriCulture promoter	Skype, 1.02.2021
IT4A/Int.2	Paolo	Male	Farmer cooperating with Casa delle Agricoltura	Skype, 18.03.2021
IT4A/Int.3	Davide	Male	Casa delle AgriCulture promoter	Skype, 18.03.2021
IT4A/Int.4	Roberto	Male	Casa delle AgriCulture Cooperative member	Skype, 30.03.2021
IT4A/Int.5	Carla	Female	Farmer cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Skype, 7.04,2021
IT4A/Int.6	Simone	Male	Farmer cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Skype, 9.04,2021
IT4A/Int.7	Roberto	Male	Association cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Google Meet,12.04.2021
IT4A/Int.8	Cinzia	Female	Member of Casa delle AgriCulture Association, researcher	Skype,13.04.2021
IT4A/Int.9	Sonia	Female	Association cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Skype,13.04.2021
IT4A/Int.10	Matteo	Male	Association cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Google Meet,13.04.2021
IT4A/Int.11	Piera	Female	Association cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Google meet,17.04.2021
IT4A/Int.12	Giovanni	Male	Association cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Skype,19.04.2021
IT4A/Int.13	Lino	Male	Member of Casa delle AgriCulture Association	Skype,20.04.2021
IT4A/Int.14	Federico	Male	Costa Otranto - Santa Maria di Leuca and Bosco Tricase Regional Natural Park	Skype,21.04.2021
IT4A/Int.15	Michele	Male	Association cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Jitsi,22.04.2021
IT4A/Int.16	Gino	Male	Association cooperating with Casa delle AgriCulture	Jitsi,22.04.2021
IT4A/Int.17	Giorgia	Female	Member of Casa delle AgriCulture Association	Skype,22.04.2021
IT4A/Int.18	Emilio	Male	Member of Casa delle AgriCulture Association	Skype,23.04.2021
IT4A/Int.19	Antonio	Male	Key Informant, researcher	Skype,26.04.2021
IT4A/Int.20	Viviana	Female	Member of Casa delle AgriCulture Association and local politician	Google Meet,3.05.2021
IT4A/Int.21	Iacopo	Male	Promoter of Casa delle AgriCulture	Teams, 12.05.2021

Table 8. Interviews

