



The ecomuseum as an educational device for sustainable territorial development

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INTRODUCTION

Inner Areas (60% of the Italian territory) face declining services, demographic shrinkage and a **learning exclusion equilibrium**: low educational investment, weak local demand for skills, youth out-migration, reduced transformative capacity.

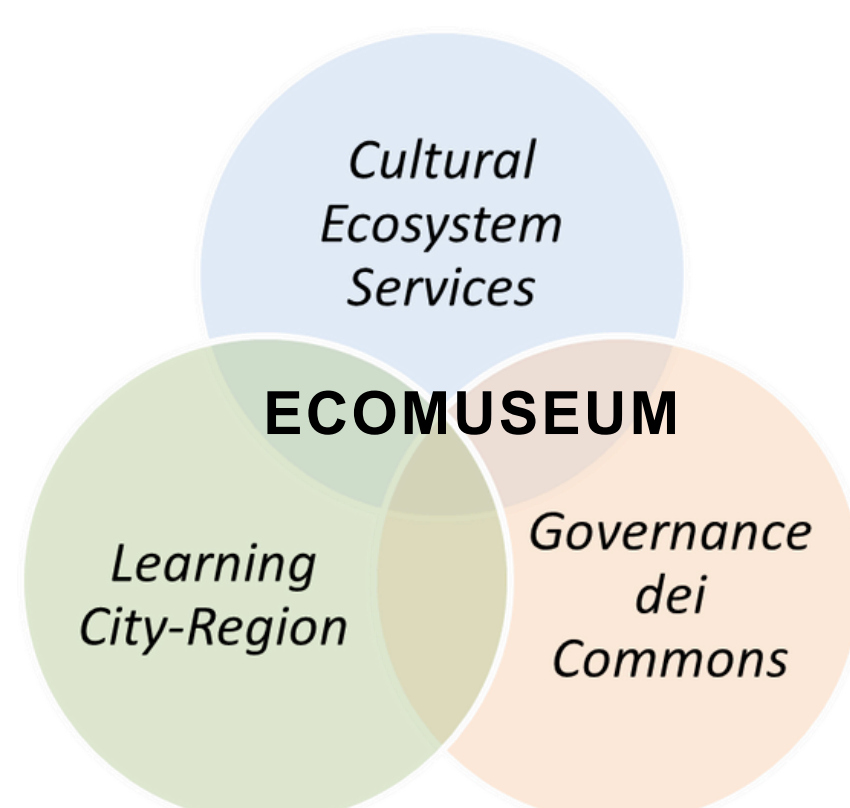
Yet these territories are rich in cultural heritage and community knowledge.

Within the **REACT | Regenerating the cultural landscapes of inland areas from a people-centered perspective. Historic villages and rural areas of Casentino as a laboratory of creativity and innovation** (2022–2025), this research investigates how heritage can work as a driver for development and a lifelong learning device, enabling communities to imagine and shape their own future.

The aim is to analyse two Ecomuseums as potential infrastructures to activate the social capital and latent resources through collective learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK THREE COMPLEMENTARY LENSES

This research is grounded in three interconnected frameworks that explain why heritage matters, how it is governed, and where learning takes place.



1. Cultural Ecosystem Services (MA)

Heritage as a dynamic source of immaterial benefits: learning, beauty, freedom, belonging, wellbeing and social cohesion.

2. Commons and participatory governance (Ostrom)

Heritage as a common good, managed through bottom-up, negotiated, community-based arrangements

3. Learning City-Region (UNESCO UIL)

Territory as a lifelong learning environment, where institutions, communities and spaces are connected in a learning system.

Meta-framework: Territorial Intelligence and Bernstein's Rules

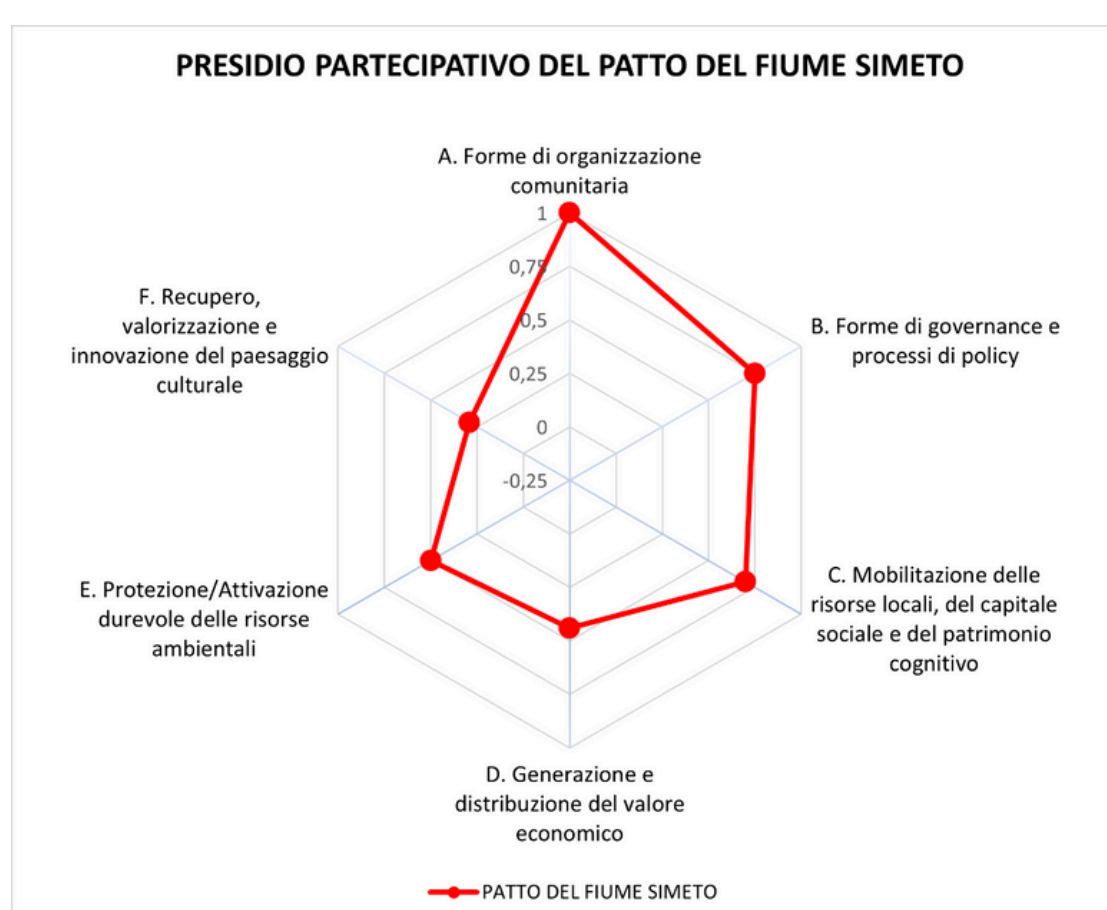
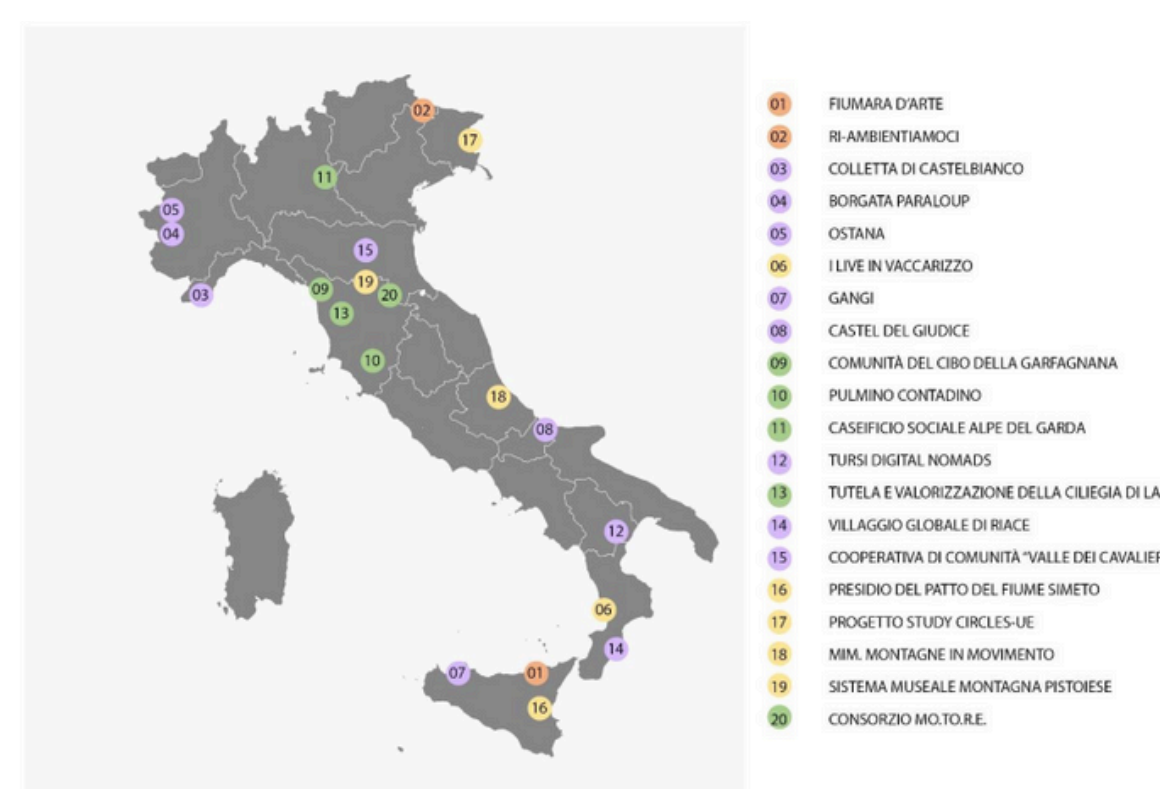
Distribution – Recontextualisation – Evaluation

CASE STUDY SELECTION EXPLORATORY PHASE

The exploratory phase of the REACT project developed a multi-criteria methodology to identify Good Practices of cultural heritage regeneration in Italian Inner Areas:

- **interdisciplinary matrix** of metacriteria and criteria
- 0–1 binary scoring (**presence/absence**)
- 46 initiatives screened → 20 **Good Practices**

Selection of relevant cases with Learning City-Region potential.



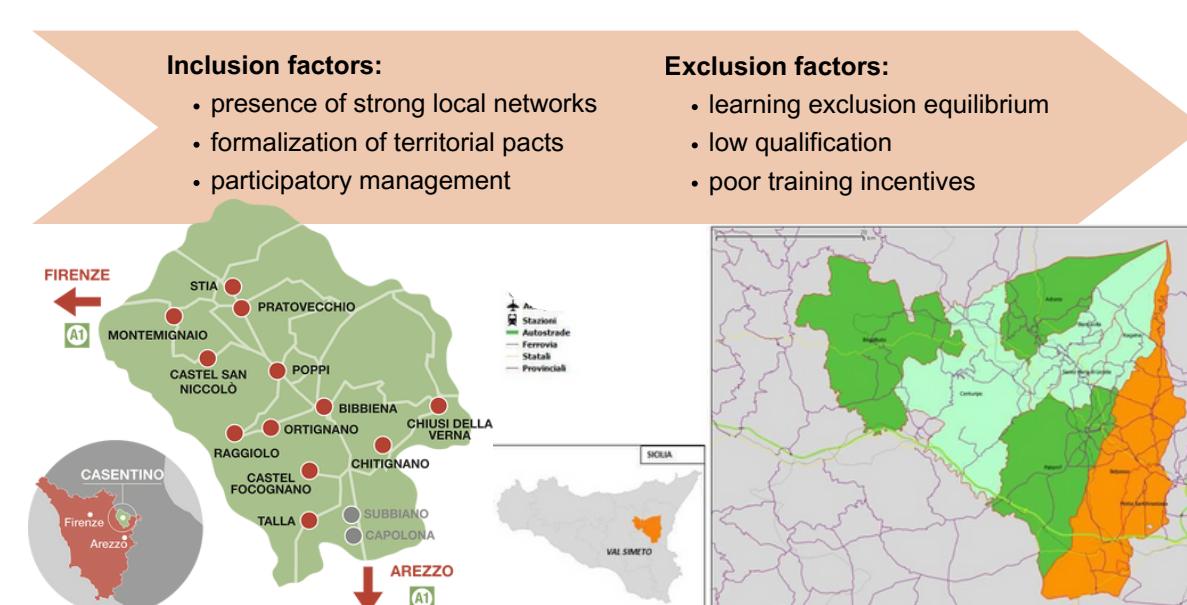
RESEARCH QUESTION & DESIGN

Under which conditions can ecomuseums enable community networks and contribute to the development of a learning city in Inner Areas?

MULTI & MIXED-METHODS COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

- **Main case: Ecomuseum of Casentino** → rooted in an Apennine context, with an integrated cultural-educational governance model.
- **Comparative case: Ecomuseum of the Simeto Valley** → emerging on the slopes of Mount Etna, driven by civic activation and participatory agreements.

The theoretical replication logic (Yin, 2009) enables the identification of patterns and divergences, testing the transferability of the model across heterogeneous Inner Areas.



METHODOLOGICAL PHASES

1. Exploratory (REACT)

Stakeholder mapping + Good Practices matrix

2. Qualitative inquiry (ongoing)

Participant observation • Interviews • Focus groups

3. Comparative analysis (next steps)

Fieldwork (Casentino) → Comparative assessment (Simeto Valley).

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