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Case Study Roccavaldina (ME)

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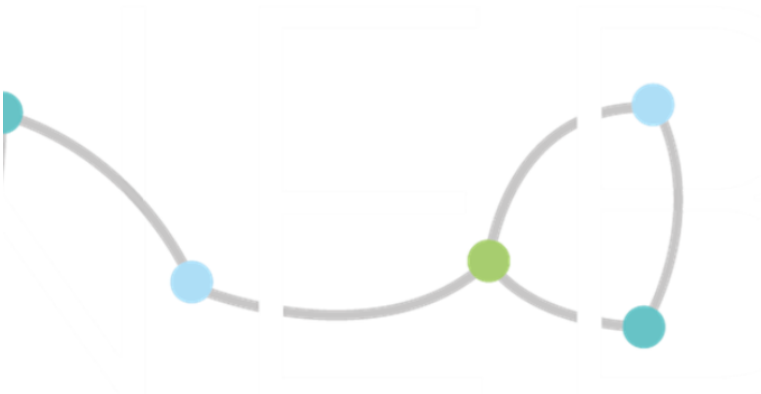
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Case study of good practice:

Roccavaldina (ME)

Thematic axis: prioritising the places and people that need it most

CONTENTS



05

CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF
HOW THE GOOD PRACTICE
HAS BEEN DEVELOPED

08

SUMMARY OF MAIN
CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD
PRACTICE APPROACH

16

EVIDENCE/JUSTIFICATION FOR
GOOD PRACTICE

19

MAP OF STAKEHOLDERS

21

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

23

PROJECT PARTNERS

CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF HOW THE GOOD PRACTICE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED

The global warming we have been witnessing in recent decades is unprecedented, and the Mediterranean seems to be one of the most sensitive and dramatically reactive areas of the planet to climate change. In response to this climate and environmental emergency, there is a social and economic emergency: the current economic approaches based on exclusively utilitarian assumptions have in fact led to growing economic, social and recognition inequalities, such as to adversely affect economic dynamics themselves.

There are two intrinsically intertwined and interrelated consequences that characterise the contemporary world today on whatever scale it is observed:

- An environmental crisis unprecedented in human history, bringing the entire planet into the midst of climate change;
- Economic, social, recognition and territorial inequalities above the threshold necessary for economic development itself.

In such a macro-context, the Mediterranean area and Sicily assume a paradigmatic value: it is the area that, more than others on the planet, is suffering the processes of global warming and is characterised by deep inequalities between its shores.

In particular, the Messina area appears to be characterised by contradictory signals, with a structural presence of multidimensional unease that concerns both personal freedoms and social cohesion.

In the city centre, the average per capita wealth is four times that of the northern suburbs and six times that of the southern suburbs, which suffer from a high degree of urban, social and cultural decay and structural housing discomfort. More than 2,000 families still live in the shanty towns that were initially created after the 1908 earthquake and after the bombings of World War II and then became an instrument of social segregation and mafia-style control. An example, people living in asbestos-roofed shanties live 3-7 years less than the city average.

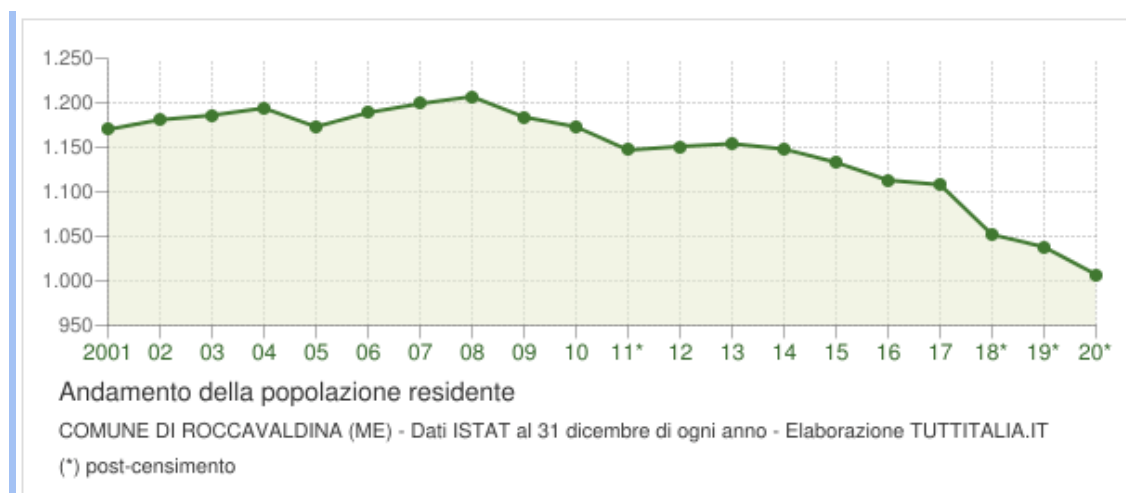
Sicily constitutes, therefore, an important frontier of global flows and tensions, and at the same time it is a territory that is dramatically sensitive to the processes of desertification, which could affect about 70% of its territory in the next 30 years. Precisely because of this double implication, the island constitutes a natural laboratory for new socio-economic-environmental experimentation.

On the south-eastern coast of Sicily, climate change is expected to result in a sea level rise of 1.1 metres by 2100.

The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified pre-existing economic, social and recognition inequalities at all levels. Economic studies estimate that in southern Italy, and in Sicily in particular, between 25% and 30% of micro-enterprises and businesses with credit ratings between B and BBB are at serious risk of default, just as people expelled from irregular forms of work will suffer dramatic new forms of exclusion.

In the province of Messina, just a few areas of full socio-economic development contrast with inland areas characterised in recent years by demographic trends that appear ineluctably 'sad'.

The historical series, reported below, of Roccavaldina's population trend over the last 20 years shows demographic stability until 2008. The cultural and socio-economic crisis that has hit Europe and Italy has led the territory of Roccavaldina towards demographic and socio-economic profiles typical of inland areas in decline, as shown by the fact that the population dropped by 20% between 2008 and 2020:



According to the latest available data, the number of local business units in 2019 dropped to only 35 micro-units, and the number of employees in the same year was only 83.

It is of course expected that the further deepening of the socio-economic crisis, caused first by the pandemic and then by the war, risks accelerating these processes of decline, giving them a dramatically irreversible character. Hence the need to innovate socio-economic paradigms to induce new forms of sustainable human development.

Roccavaldina is a village of great historical and architectural value, located on the Tyrrhenian slope of the Peloritani Mountains, and set in a position of great scenic beauty overlooking the Gulf of Milazzo and the Aeolian Islands like a terrace. Its foundation dates back to 260 BC immediately after the battle of Milazzo won by the Romans over the Carthaginians. After the Byzantine and Arab domination, the architectural stratification that today outlines the extensive and very well-preserved village shows important architectural signs starting from the Norman domination. The cathedral, churches and civil buildings of great value make up the extensive fabric of the village. The magnificent and perfectly preserved 16th-century

castle overlooks the central square, site of an equally ancient apothecary's shop. The great paradox of the socio-economic profile of the area lies in the fact that in contrast to these factors of identity, there is a deep social and economic fragmentation that is closely correlated with the progressive processes of decline.

The strong response, drawn up by the MeSSInA Foundation and the Distretto Sociale Evoluto di Messina (DSE), and supported by the Municipality of Roccavaldina, has been to include the village of Roccavaldina, its territory, landscape and historical capital within the network of the Parks of Beauty and Science (PBSs).¹

The creation of the park in Roccavaldina constitutes a solid basis for the implementation of the good practices already tested in two of the Parks of Beauty and Science that have been active for years, the Horcynus Orca Park and the Forte Petrazza Social Park in Messina. Before the process of social and environmental transformation was initiated, these sites were neglected areas of illegal dumps, occupied by organised crime, which over the years had made them two of the main drug dealing areas in the central and northern areas of the city.

¹ PBSs are social, educational, economic and research network infrastructures connecting territories that are key players in important processes of metamorphosis. All PBSs are born and evolve around major contemporary needs: combatting economic and social inequalities and recognising processes of climate change.

SUMMARY OF MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD PRACTICE APPROACH

The strategy is to create in Roccavaldina a Park of Beauty and Science (PBS), which will be systemic, holistic, multidisciplinary, closely connected with the other areas in which the DSE operates, and will focus on the themes of new biomaterials and bioplastics from circular economies.

The project has three interconnected strands:

- Rehabilitation and revitalisation of the abandoned craftwork area;
- Enhancement of the architectural heritage of the hill centre of Roccavaldina, to make it adequate and welcoming with respect to the internationalisation processes promoted by the research pole;
- Beginning of reforestation and other interventions that can bring the area to zero emissions.

The Roccavaldina case – Renovation and repurposing the abandoned craft area

The abandoned handicraft centre in the municipality of Roccavaldina, an inland area of the Metropolitan City of Messina, is being transformed into a production hub that promotes the principles of the circular economy and the Olivetti approach, which sees companies not as islands of profit for the few, but as opportunities for development for the entire territory in which they are located and for the community around them. According to this approach, the factory is no longer just a place of work but also a place for sharing knowledge, values and pluralistic confrontation.

The abandoned handicraft centre is being regenerated and will be transformed into a pole for research, training and production. Specifically, the pole will house:

1. **A research and development centre** on bio-materials and in general on the just green transition, which supports a new strategic plan for the built environment to connect the green transition with inclusive local development practices benefiting the most vulnerable segments of the population. Redevelopment of the historic centre and promotion of sustainable tourism, electric mobility from renewable sources, economically sustainable reforestation, policies to attract creative talents and social-green enterprises are some of the areas of intervention already being implemented.;
2. **Production:** a factory producing granules and finished products in bioplastics made from waste and by-products of the area's agro-industrial supply chain; an innovative company working with robot 3D printing; an artisanal pasta factory using 100% Sicilian wheat;

3. A **fab lab** where prototypes and design product lines made of bioplastics will be produced using 3D printers, and a training space where young people in the area are trained in design, entrepreneurship and social green business ideas in building sustainable business plans.

Through production practices, forms of pre- and re-distribution economies will be tested: people with health and social needs will be put to work and all profits will be allocated to support research actions on biomaterials and programmes to combat educational poverty in the area.

A co-working space will be set up in the Roccavaldina craft warehouses to attract other companies that wish to act in synergy for the development of the territory.



Instruments used – TSR^{®2} process

In order to effectively implement the policies developed by the strategic plan, the Socially Responsible Territories (TSR[®]) methodology was used. It consists of a participatory approach aimed at ensuring that the policies and practices of public bodies, organisations and enterprises converge towards the principles of local communities. This characteristic of building progressive proximity and mutual recognition of significant actors and citizens makes it an extraordinary tool for building cohesion and social capital, and precisely because of this intrinsic feature makes it a strategic instrument in those areas, such as Roccavaldina, where the lack of trust makes horizontally shared social norms and cooperation networks capable of going beyond family-based networks.

² This brochure contains a short introduction of Territorial Social Responsibility[®]: https://www.revesnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Giunta_imp.pdf

The methodological cycle of the participatory process distinguishes four phases before progressive iteration:

1. The participatory **context analysis** phase aims to identify the key elements that describe an area and to define the universe involved;
2. The **elaboration** phase includes the whole process of participatory pedagogy that will lead to reconstructing the framework of principles in which local communities identify themselves;
3. The **evaluation** phase descends from the questions, which are precisely evaluative, arising from the thematic areas connected with the intertwining of principles and areas of activity of the various actors who wish to take the TSR® approach;
4. In the **reprogramming** phase, each actor involved will propose some scenarios of change that go in the direction of converging towards the principles of local communities. These scenarios will have to be supported by quantitative and verifiable objectives.

The process will enable the local community to develop a deep and shared awareness of the territory's tangible and intangible cultural heritage, guaranteeing an alignment of intentions and vision, which is fundamental for the protection and promotion of cultural assets.

By reinterpreting in more strictly economic terms, within relational paradigms, the impact that participatory democracy processes oriented to the construction of cohesion and social capital can generate, we emphasise that:

- from the point of view of supply, the enlargement of the DSE generates attractiveness and creates opportunities and alternatives for everyone, starting with the fragile;
- from the point of view of demand, a fruitful relationship is created between potential markets, both local and non-local, that choose products that tell stories of freedom and environmental responsibility.

Synergy and integration between the different initiatives

The main value of the good practice being implemented in the Borgo di Roccavaldina is an initiative that has been set in motion thanks to cooperation between the local authority and a number of social private actors in the area. These actions aim to attract creative and scientific talents, complex programmes of urban regeneration and rehabilitation of common goods, and enhancing the social capabilities of the territories, in synergy with the values promoted by the fundamental principles (sustainability, inclusion, aesthetics) of the New European Bauhaus.

The programme is structured as a public-private partnership. The entire strategic programming phase of the socio-economic system of Roccavaldina was designed through the methodology of co-programming and co-planning envisaged by the Codice del Terzo Settore (Third Sector Law). The programme theories underlying the local development hypotheses

and the operational proposals defining the evolutionary trajectories of the territory and the local community were put forward in a bottom-up approach by the MeSSInA Foundation – Philanthropic Body, which is the promoting and managing body of what is defined as the Evolved Social District.

The entire planning phase was accompanied by a participatory democracy process called Socially Responsible Territory as described in the previous paragraph.

The organisational model envisaged in Roccavaldina is inspired by the system of governance and control implemented by the main member of the DSE, the MeSSInA Foundation – Philanthropic Body as the most representative example of the organisation's political and management structure, how it involves local communities in each territorial intervention and the congruity between its investments and activities implemented and its statutory objectives.

The foundation is administered by its secretary general who is also its legal representative. The fundamental lines, the strategic guidelines, the appointment of the secretary general and the budgets are approved by the foundation's board, whose members are appointed by:

- the DSE Committee composed of Ecos-Med soc. coop. soc., the Sol.E. Consortium and the Horcynus Orca Foundation
- the Founders' Committee consisting of the foundation's founding members
- the Committee of Networks consisting of the national and international networks to which the foundation belongs
- the Committee of Territorial Clusters outside the Messina Metropolitan Area
- the foundation board and the secretary general are assisted by the board of trustees and the scientific committee.
- the Committee of Trustees is made up of representatives of the local authorities in the operating area of the foundation, representatives of the group of grantors and representatives of institutions and bodies of the third system of advocacy of the people and communities benefiting from the foundation's activities. The main task of the committee of trustees is to assess the consistency of the investments and activities implemented with the foundation's statutory objectives. The committee contributes to the definition of the foundation's fundamental lines and strategic guidelines;
- the Scientific Committee, whose members are chosen from among personalities from the world of science, art, culture, institutions, labour, business and public and private finance, of Italian or foreign nationality, who have acquired particular credit for the local, economic, social and cultural development of Southern Italy, Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean area. The committee is an advisory body and contributes to the definition of the foundation's fundamental lines and cultural guidelines.

The whole community is the stakeholder of the foundation

The organisational and management model prepared for the activities of the Roccavaldina Cluster is detailed below:

- **Municipality of Roccavaldina**, local authority responsible for public policies in the area, and owner of the warehouses. The municipality, by a notarial deed dated 29 November 2021, granted the MeSSInA Foundation the right to use the building complex free of charge, for a period of no less than 15 years;
- **Fondazione Messina – Ente Filantropico**, manager of the property used to create a co-working centre, involved in the design and activation activities of the 'Olivetti' type of educational-industrial centre. The foundation has also earmarked a dedicated fund for the development of the Borgo di Roccavaldina. The same foundation, by a deed registered at the Inland Revenue Office on 9 March 2022, has granted a part of the real estate complex to Ecos-Med Società Cooperativa Sociale, the body managing the bio-plastic factory, as a free loan;
- **Ecos-Med Social Cooperative**, implementing body and manager of the 'Olivetti' type factory, socio-economic activator, TSR process facilitator, promoter of economic and financial training activities and developer of the co-design workshop paths.
- **Horcynus Orca Foundation**, body responsible for the implementation and management of the artistic/educational workshops, organiser and coordinator of the Land Art activities, promoter of workshops aimed at fostering the aggregation and socialisation of the people involved.

Funding and attractiveness of the (strategic planning and fundraising)

The good practice of Roccavaldina, currently being implemented, is integrated with:

- The **National Recovery and Resilience Plan** (NRRP), Mission 1 Component 3, Intervention 2.1, promoted by the Ministry of Culture and financed through the European NextGeneration EU funds: Attractiveness of Historic Villages – Ghadan Project;
- The intervention line financed by the **NextGenerationEU** fund, which aims to carry out urban and social regeneration projects in at least 229 historic Italian villages. Specifically, €380 million will go to support proposals submitted by municipalities and €200 million will be directed as an aid scheme to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises located or intending to establish themselves in the villages selected. Local economies will be revitalised through support for cultural, tourist, commercial, agrifood and craft activities, as well as for enterprises operating in the hospitality services sector and the development of local products, knowledge and techniques. The Municipality of Roccavaldina obtained €1.6 million in financing from the Ministry of Culture for this action;

- The **Inner Areas Strategies programme** and the **National Health Plan**, financed by NRRP through the Provincial Health Authority (ASP) of Messina, which supports the testing of Community Hubs, integrated with the planned interventions. The programme is financed by the State-Regions Conference and sees the participation of the three Departments of Mental Health of the ASPs of the Sicilian region, acting as an implementation proposal of the NRRP and as a contribution to the development of the Regional Health System and the relaunch of the socio-health system in the post-Covid-19 phase. The implementation of a local development hub is envisaged in the Roccavaldina area to promote socio-economic systems capable of generating alternatives for the most fragile people, more specifically for the beneficiaries of the Mental Health Department of the ASP of Messina;
- The **Metamorphosis** project implemented by the municipality within the framework of the National Plan for the Social and Cultural Regeneration of Degraded Urban Areas approved by prime ministerial decree on 15 October 2015. The plan consists of a set of regeneration projects to reduce marginalisation and social degradation, and improve the quality of urban design and the social and environmental fabric. The programme consists of several elements. Alongside the regeneration of the historic village, a research and training centre for the production of new bioplastics created from the processing of waste materials from the agro-food industries will be set up in the former artisanal area on the outskirts of the town. The shells of the warehouses intended for the research centre will be transformed through a Land Art operation by Martina Corgnati. The roofs will also house photovoltaic systems that, in addition to powering the factory, will be the main production hub of a Solidarity Energy Community. The urban regeneration and economic revitalisation programme is intertwined with educational and participatory processes so that the 'metamorphosis' of Roccavaldina is oriented towards what the community recognises. The programme obtained funding of €944,755.10 from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers;
- The creation of the '**Valle del Tirreno**' Union of Municipalities.³ The objectives of the union, which the Municipality of Roccavaldina has joined, include: 'to promote and contribute to the socio-economic development of the common territory by fostering the participation of economic initiative of public and private subjects in the realisation of programmes and structures of general interest compatible with human and environmental resources';
- The recognition of the municipality as an **internal area**. Roccavaldina benefited from the sum of €59,884 for the three-year period 2020-2022. The €25,665 financial share

³ A union is a form of association between neighbouring municipalities. It does not provide for the merger of administrations but for the shared management of certain functions and services, while they keep their autonomy in other aspects. At the legislative level, the functioning of this body is established by Article 32 of the Consolidated Law on the organisation of local authorities – Law Decree 267 of 2000. The union is a real body with a statute and the necessary representative bodies to perform its functions with stability. It is established at municipal council level at the instigation of the region, which may also provide specific grants for it.

for 2020 was allocated to the economic support of small and micro enterprises in the area.

The following table shows the main planning and fundraising results, related to the dedicated fund provided for in the project and obtained from the start of the project to date to support the long-term village development programme.

Objective	Project	Programme	Amount in €	Co-financing bodies and main partners and stakeholders
To give three-year continuity to the research and development actions centred on the Olivettiano pole in Roccavaldina	ENV-IT-Life-Restart	LIFE	2,950,398.60	European Commission - MeSSInA Foundation MeSSInA Foundation, UniME, Crossing (UniVE), EcosMed, Birrificio Messina, Bibetech Heineken Italia, Hape, Italtrike, Clementoni, Quercetti
Support for the start-up of the production and training activities of the Olivettiano pole in Roccavaldina	COF-00563	Co-financing Initiatives	972,716.30	EcosMed, ASP Messina, Hic et Nunc Association, LavorOperAzione Association, CEVAS Research Centre, Roccavaldina Municipality, Crossing, EcosMedia
Creation of centres for the promotion of advanced community welfare models	Community hubs in the Parks of Beauty and Science	NRRP funds - ASP Messina	680,000.00	EcosMed, MeSSInA Foundation, SoIE Consortium, CEVAS Research Centre, MECC microcredit operator
Strategic Programme for the Enhancement of the Borgo di Roccavaldina	Ghadan (tomorrow)	NRRP Funds M1C3 Intervention 2.1 - Attractiveness of Historic Villages	2,131,000.00	Roccavaldina Municipality, MeSSInA Foundation, EcosMed, Horcynus Orca Foundation, Circuito Castelli, Pan Travel
Workshop and experiential vocational training preparatory to job placement	coNEETtORI	San Paolo Charitable Fund	224,040.00	EcosMed, MeSSInA Foundation, Cometa Formazione, Contrada degli Artigiani
Attraction, promotion and consolidation of entrepreneurial initiatives in the historic village of Roccavaldina	Imprese Borghi - NRRP	Imprese Borghi - NRRP	768,647.65	Micro enterprises and business concept developers who presented social green initiatives

EVIDENCE/JUSTIFICATION FOR GOOD PRACTICE

A *necessary disclaimer*: most of the activities involving the territory of Roccavaldina municipality have been initiated and have a funding plan that will ensure their full development. Nevertheless, the results obtained so far are not able to provide hard evidence, as they are still at an embryonic stage. Most of the results that can be presented at this stage are still predictions.

The actions are being implemented through the restoration of abandoned commercial warehouses and the redevelopment of the Borgo through urban rehabilitation actions aimed at enhancing its architectural, natural and socio-economic heritage. These actions involve the group of private social actors of the DSE, the local authority and other social and economic partners in the area which are actively participating in the process of co-creating new social and productive entities.

The planned lines of action and interventions are as follows:

- 1. Creation/enhancement of cultural services and infrastructure:**
 - a. Redevelopment of the urban fabric linking the borough's main cultural attractions (Piazza del Popolo - Cathedral - St. Peter's Church)
 - b. Renovation of a building in Viale Regina Margherita to house a tourist service centre
 - c. Land Art operation 'Olivettian Pole' warehouses
- 2. Implementation of initiatives to protect and enhance intangible cultural heritage**
 - a. Observatory on Intangible Cultural Heritage
- 3. Implementation of initiatives to increase cultural participation and heritage education in local communities**
 - a. TSR® Process
 - b. Horcynus Festival
 - c. "Andron" IT platform
- 4. Implementation of activities to improve and rationalise the management of goods, services and initiatives**
 - a. Organisation and management of guided tours and educational workshops
- 5. Realisation of infrastructures for cultural-tourist use**
 - a. Immersive and interactive architectural stage sets

- b. Sustainable mobility
- 6. Implementation of initiatives to increase residential attractiveness and counter the demographic drain**
 - a. Creation of the "Olivettian Pole" as the centre of gravity of the Park of Beauty and Science
 - b. Ethical finance services to attract and create enterprises in Roccavaldina
 - c. Solidarity Energy Community
- 7. Implementation of actions to support communication and dissemination of information on the attractions of the territory (village)**
 - a. Agency for the promotion and marketing of Parks and Beauty and Science products
 - b. Enhancement of the historic churches in the borough
- 8. Natural and landscape regeneration**
 - a. Reforestation process aimed at creating a zero CO₂ territory

Development of the social and solidarity-based economy

The DSE, in addition to supporting the start-up of bioplastic production, is working in the Roccavaldina area by accompanying seven new social green enterprises for which business plans have been drawn up and applications for funding have been submitted under the 'Imprese Borghi - Attraction, promotion and consolidation of entrepreneurial initiatives in the historic village of Roccavaldina' call for proposals provided by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

This will expand the development opportunities of the territory.

The DSE, which has been operating since 2010, has supported and financed the start-up and consolidation of more than 200 enterprises and micro-enterprises, and the creation and maintenance of more than 600 jobs (among which many are held by people with histories of exclusion and fragility). Of particular note are the experiences of supporting businesses re-generated by workers – workers' buyouts.

Here are some examples of the sectors supported:

- **Renewable energy:** for example, through photovoltaic technologies, the foundation has created a 1.4 MW widespread solar park, involving numerous families, local organisations and institutions that have made their roofs available. An economic-social chain has been created around this initiative in the broad area of the Strait of Messina;
- **Food and beverages:** the foundation has, among other things, supported the relaunch by its workers of the historic Messina brewery, founded in 1923 and driven to bankruptcy in the early 2000s. The foundation accompanied 15 former workers

through all the stages, creating a cooperative that successfully restarted beer production and now employs over 30 people;

- **Technological and cultural innovation:** a number of cultural enterprises have been promoted, focusing on innovation for the enhancement of architectural heritage, for example through the production of immersive and interactive stage sets;
- **Design and fashion:** the foundation has supported the creation of women's enterprises in ethical fashion (wedding dresses, sustainable fashion accessories, traditional bobbin lace etc.).

MAP OF STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder involvement is of critical importance for the success of any local development initiative, as regards the active involvement of individual citizens as well as civil society organisations and the business community.

Below, a mapping of the main stakeholders in the local community has been carried out, assuming their level of interest and potential involvement in local environmental and social transition initiatives. For each specific initiative this can then be deepened by verifying in detail the actors involved from time to time.

- **Roccavaldina Municipal Technical/Administrative Office:** involved at a local level, its activities are significantly influenced by the project activities. Its experience and competence is required to advance the various initiatives. Its ability to collaborate with entities outside the municipality may determine the success of the activities. The greatest risk it may incur is of overloading and slowing down practices;
- **Citizens:** involved at local level. All initiatives, in their essence, aim to improve the living conditions of people living in the borough. In some initiatives, such as Renewable Energy Communities, they may be directly involved, while in others they will have a more limited role. Their activation is, however, essential to design and implement a broader environmental and social transition programme for the area. Long implementation times may demotivate citizens; low involvement may reduce their interest;
- **Local companies:** involved at local level. Most of the companies complain of serious difficulties related to high energy costs, the management of product distribution and the international market. The companies that are present (agricultural sector, reception and catering) represent a strong economic reality in the area; their involvement is essential but is jeopardised by possible long implementation times and the costs that they would eventually have to bear;
- **Local associations:** they must be motivated and supported in order to involve them in the promotion of local culture, its preservation and its development in the future. They could have a strong capacity to activate the inhabitants and a better knowledge of the area's needs.

Stakeholders were identified and involved through the TSR questionnaire tool and market research to elaborate on the entrepreneurial initiatives launched or soon to be implemented in the village.

In the face of a more or less strong sensitivity (and more or less justified by the mission of each one) to issues such as the protection and promotion of local culture, social inclusion, clean energy and energy saving, new forms of poverty, the protection of biodiversity and

ecosystems, all the citizens, associations and companies seem to agree in expressing the need for their greater involvement and that of the civil fabric in the area's development strategies and policies. Upstream, they stress the need to raise awareness of the importance of participation and issues of common interest.

Main outcomes

- Regeneration of a neglected area and start-up of productive activities in the area that open up new opportunities for local, cultural and economic development;
- Aggregation of social and productive organisations, pre-existing and/or co-generated by the policies of the new design;
- Accompanying and supporting progressively broader processes of territorial metamorphosis;
- To complete and characterise the local cultural and educational offer around the PBS themes, promoting educating communities and making the area attractive to an educational tourism target;
- Promoting evolved models of community welfare, favouring social demand being met through the supply of a territory generating opportunities;
- Promoting international research and development;
- 16 local rehabilitation and regeneration interventions planned, 9 of which have already started and are in progress;
- Reforestation interventions to reduce CO₂ emissions to zero;
- 7 entrepreneurial initiatives planned and accompanied to raise start-up funds;
- 1 work placement implemented (resident of the village of Roccavaldina, maintenance worker at the industrial centre);
- 8 job placements planned (2 residents of the village of Roccavaldina, as technical staff for the bio-plastics factory activities).

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths

- Clear, defined and well-structured management plan for the Olivetti-type pole;
- Strong cohesion among the players involved;
- Excellent level of collaboration with the local authority and shared territorial development plan;
- Planning of necessary resources and defined fund-raising plan;
- Attention to the preservation of crafts and economic activities in the area;
- Tourist attractiveness: the municipality is characterised by its geographical proximity to centres of great cultural and tourist interest, known internationally (Milazzo, Aeolian Islands, Nebrodi Natural Park), and by a natural setting of great landscape value.

Weaknesses

- Lack of adequate job opportunities for the younger generations: the local economic fabric fails to properly integrate young people in the area;
- Demographic decline: also motivated by the lack of adequate job opportunities, young people tend to emigrate to Messina, the nearest provincial capital, or to northern Italy, so that the birth-death balance has continued to be negative for the past 20 years, resulting in a sharp drop in the population;
- Distance from the motorway junction and the inadequacy of many roads: these two aspects are disadvantages for the logistical links between the 'Olivettian' pole at Roccavaldina and the Sicilian territory and also for the use of the territory by visitors and possible customers of the reception services that Roccavaldina also offers;
- Low capacity of the municipality's technical/administrative structure, in view of its limited size, to guarantee services and interventions that can fully meet the territory's needs and to intercept and manage public funds that could bring in new resources.

Opportunities

- Recently, there has been an increase in the availability of economic resources at national (NRRP) and European (PR ERDF Sicily 2021-2027) levels for small municipalities and inland areas, which can be used to support local development;
- Development of new international relations with other communities that face problems similar to those of Roccavaldina, thanks, for example, to the SEA4NEB

European project, allowing access to other experiences and exploring potential synergies for collaboration;

- Strong potential for energy efficiency and production from renewable sources;
- Greater attention and sensitivity on the part of institutions and citizens to environmental and social sustainability issues, favouring the development of projects along these lines, including the production of goods and services that are focused on these values.

Threats

- Climate change: the risk of desertification with prolonged drought and soil impoverishment, as well as extreme weather phenomena, threaten to hit the economic fabric hard and cause social problems at the same time;
- The rising cost of energy and many products creates a risk for the economic stability of businesses and households;
- The demographic change and ageing of the population entails a risk for the sustainability of the local economic fabric in the medium term;
- Demographic decline also entails a risk of losing traditional knowledge, arts and crafts, an intangible heritage that is fundamental for community stability.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The SEA4NEB project consortium is composed by:

