Article

Place-Based Rural Development and Resilience: A Lesson from a Small Community

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Abstract: Community resilience is central to reshaping the role and functions of rural areas; and development has increasingly come about via the capacity of communities to be resilient in the face of challenges. When policies designed and adopted in rural areas are place-based; these policies should rely on resilient actors; belonging to resilient communities. The aim of this article is to focus on factors that can trigger or re-activate mechanisms that help to actively build resilience in areas that are heavily economically and socially impoverished using as a case study a very active and dynamic rural community. From the case study; three aspects emerge; all of which are closely interrelated; as having been particularly significant for building community resilience. The first was the rebuilding of previously frayed social ties within the community (growth of social capital and increased trust). The second was the 'cascade effect' of the first project started in the community; which led to the creation of many other initiatives. The third was the adoption of a systemic approach; able to bring together areas and sectors that had previously been disconnected (breaking down technical-legislative barriers).

Keywords: community resilience; local development; social capital; rural areas

1. Introduction

In recent decades, inner rural areas have experienced major economic and social changes that have sometimes resulted in increasing marginalization associated with primary sector dominance, insufficient infrastructure in terms of roads and public services, economic and demographic transition and population decline, and, hence, rising unemployment, outmigration of economically active groups, and ageing (Copus et al., 2011 [1] in [2]) [3,4]. The insufficient provision of essential services, reinforced by the recent financial crisis, is the result of a concentration process also "re-enforced by an emerging and dominating policy intentionality associated with urban-based agglomeration and spatial interpretations of urban-based efficiencies through arguments based on 'economies of scale'" [5], (p. 605). Some of the changes have arisen from global economic restructuring measures [6] as well as human use and misuse of rural resources. In many cases, small local communities who view outside intervention with distrust have actively resisted innovation, and local authorities have often lacked the power or funding to prevent potential misuse of the local rural resources that prove so crucial to development. Furthermore, despite the targeting of investment to specific geographical locations, economic development policy has historically ignored the specificities of localities in favour of a policy approach intended to minimize the differences between places and create a system in which individuals rather than places are given the maximum chance for success (Johnson, 2001 [7] in [8]).

However, in more recent times, the role of localities and regions in fostering economic growth has increasingly taken centre stage [9] as well as the idea that achieving sustainable development goals and viable economic development strategies in rural areas is dependent on viewing the unique

aspects of the social, institutional, and economic fabric of localities as the filter through which all economic activity takes hold in a particular region [10–13]. This has led bodies like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to adopt a "place-based" perspective [14] where policy design is focused on increasing competitiveness in defined geographical areas by developing and enhancing the local community's unique assets and attributes [7]. This approach is seen by its supporters as the best chance to combat the historic underdevelopment and social exclusion of rural areas and to unlock their full potential [15]. For those localities caught in 'under-development traps', it is argued that external public policy action can be used as a trigger for endogenous change, in that local actors are tasked with developing their own development projects, which are tailored to the local reality, whilst general conditions for local actors to follow are set by levels of higher governance [6,15].The premise of the place-based approach, especially when dealing with rural development, is that creating local development strategies that capitalize on local uniqueness will enable territories to develop products and services matched to local assets, which can create a niche market in the increasingly globalised markets of modern times [16]. Local assets can be fixed attributes which policy intervention can in truth do little to change, e.g., physical geography, climate, natural resources, previous infrastructure investment, population structure, or more malleable attributes which can certainly be modified, e.g., leadership capacity, community ties, and quality of local governance [17].

The successful implementation of place-based rural development policies at local scale/community level is, however, highly reliant on local capacity for action, which in turn, is highly reliant on such aspects as quality of local resources, social ties, and leadership of local institutions. The more vital communities that already have better developed local institutional bodies and greater access to financial resources are in a much stronger position to capitalize successfully on local assets and achieve policy outcomes than are smaller, less developed communities, which tend to characterise inland rural areas [8]. Critics of this approach also point out that capitalizing on local attributes does not necessarily equate to the reversal of past trends of uneven development [8]. Indeed, this approach risks exacerbating existing hierarchies where regions that are already rich in attributes, thanks to such factors as geography, natural resources, infrastructure, previous investments, local leadership, etc., tend to get richer and those regions that are already attribute-poor tend to get poorer (Harvey, 2006: p. 109, [18] in [8]).

The contradictions raised from the place-based approach highlight just how important it is to promote and increase community involvement in policy design so that communities become protagonists of their own development. Development has increasingly come about via the capacity of communities to be resilient in the face of the types of challenges typically posed by "modernity" (integration, or lack thereof, in global markets, changes to the structure of society, etc.) [2]. Community resilience can be viewed, in fact, as both a theoretical framework and social process that explains community responses to external forces, such as economic downturns, natural disasters, or other threats to sustainability [19,20]. It depends on the ability of a community to utilise community resources to, firstly, overcome adversity brought about by social, political, and/or environmental change and, secondly, to exploit potential opportunities arising from change [21–23]. This ability to change, or adaptive capacity, is one of the three main properties of resilient systems [24,25], and, as such, communities that are well placed to adapt to changes underway or potential social, economic, or environmental future shocks are the most resilient.

In light of these considerations, this paper focuses on what can trigger or re-activate mechanisms to help actively build resilience in areas that are heavily economically and socially impoverished. Our aim is to achieve better understanding of the interactions between factors and mechanisms leading to greater resilience. As noted by Matarrita et al. [26], these aspects are still not covered well in the literature on community resilience. On this basis, and also with an aim to provide the necessary input to draw up more effective place-based policy, this paper examines the case of a Southern Italian rural community. Here, a combination of economic depression and economic restructuring [26] started in

the 1960s, and reflecting the common modernization paradigm of Western economies, has profoundly impacted on both economic and social community features (progressive dismantling of the agricultural sector; lack of alternatives in other economic sectors; reduction of public expenditures; demographic impoverishment among the others). Nevertheless, the particular community is bucking the local trend and is showing signs of vitality and growth in comparison to the performance of other communities in the wider area. One local project in particular, which has in turn led to a series of other initiatives, will be analysed in light of its impact on community resilience.

The paper is structured as follows: a literature review on the factors shaping the resilience of communities is followed by a discussion of the study's methodologies; in the next section, the results of the case study are presented. The paper closes with a discussion of the results and draws conclusions that summarize the main topics covered in the study, describes the limitations encountered, and offers some suggestions for future research.

2. Factors Shaping the Resilience of Communities

The resilience concept has now been applied to a vast array of different fields from ecology to psychology and economics. The wealth of approaches to measuring resilience has improved our understanding of the complex inter-linkages between the factors that contribute to building resilience, and has promoted the inclusion of more subjective and contextual factors to resilience research [27].

The concept of community resilience is rooted in a social-ecological systems (SES) approach where resilience is most commonly defined as the ability of a system to sustain or absorb external shocks while maintaining the same functions and form of the system [28–30]. The SES approach is based on the assumption that social and ecological systems cannot be considered as separate entities and takes a non-linear approach to systems development, as exemplified by the adaptive cycle heuristic that identifies four phases that systems pass through to either return to their original state, or reach a new state following a shock [29,31]. The three properties of resilience in SES have been defined as: (1) the amount of change the system can undergo whilst maintaining the same functions and structure; (2) the capacity for self-organization, and (3) the ability to build its capacity for learning and adaptation at both an individual and collective level [32]. The latter property emerges as a key element to define community resilience [33–35]. Magis [22] describes members of resilient communities as possessing the "personal and collective capacity to respond to and influence change in order to renew the community and develop new future trajectories" (Magis, 2010: p. 402, [22] in [36]). In this context, resilience in communities requires that members of communities are willing and, crucially, able to influence their local situation and bring about significant change in response to external or internal shocks rather than simply hit 're-set' and return to the old order [36]. The association of resilience with change, and strategies to address change, are key aspects of the resilience approach, as outlined by Matarrita-Cascante et al. [26]. Their conceptual definition is that "community resilience is a notion that seeks to explain a community's ability to respond to shock. Its conceptualization requires the understanding of the nature of stressors and communities, and of the ways of steering away from a stressed state" [26], (p. 109).

Whilst debate is still ongoing over what precisely constitutes a resilient community, there is a consensus amongst scholars that community resilience can be conceptualized in terms of the degree to which specific capitals are developed [22]. Three principal capitals emerge as essential for understanding resilience at community level: social, economic, and environmental [34,37,38]. The capitals approach is based on the understanding that resilience and vulnerability should be seen as two ends of a spectrum [34,37,39], where strongly developed capitals increase a community's resilience and weakly developed capitals reduce resilience. Capitals rarely tend to be equally developed in any given community [38] and are intrinsically interlinked and, as such, changes to one capital can directly influence another, e.g., reduced economic capital decreasing social capital. As a result, the myriad of factors shaping community resilience should be considered as non-linear, complex, interlinked, and cumulative [37,40]. Going further in developing the concept and specifically linking community

resilience to land degradation issues, Kelly et al. [41] discuss the key factors affecting community resilience. The authors use as a framework the factors that form and shape the economic, social, institutional, cultural, and natural domains that characterize SES.

Economic factors include both external economic drivers, e.g., global food prices, pressures from the global capitalist market, and internal economic drivers, e.g., local available financial resources and options for alternative incomes within the local community. Social factors, which mediate the relationship between the economic and environmental components of the SES, include levels of trust, learning and communication pathways, cooperation, strength of networks, bonding and bridging capitals, and community cohesiveness [22,38,42]. Social capital is weakened significantly by out-migration and population ageing in communities because intergenerational communication and knowledge transfer between the generations is restricted [37]. Institutional factors can be perceived as negative "outside" forces which severely constrain autonomous decision-making at community level [43], as is seen in the case of entrenched local politics. However, institutional factors can also be seen as a force for good in the case of policy change bringing about positive impacts, locking in development to more sustainable pathways [44]. Cultural factors make up the collective social consciousness over time and include moral, social, and religious values. Natural factors include water and land availability, its quality and quality, and climate and geographical features of community, i.e., lay of terrain, and they inevitably play a large role in shaping all the other domains of the SES.

Studies into social and community resilience also show considerable consensus in their identification of factors that contribute to building resilience. Amundsen [27], in a study into community responses to change in a Norwegian village, draws heavily on the indicators of community resilience developed by three studies in the field: Buikstra et al. [21], who identify 11 components of community resilience in a rural Australian community; Ross et al. [23], who develop six indicators of social resilience at a regional level in Australia; and Magis [22], who identifies dimensions of community resilience developed in a study in the United States. The first two studies are based on individuals' perceptions of resilience whereas the Magis [22] study is mainly based on expert evaluation, which perhaps explains the fact that Buikstra et al. [21] and Ross et al. [23] emphasise social values in the community whilst Magis [22] focuses more on local resources and action. However, all three studies found certain common factors that contribute to community resilience. These include: leadership, termed "active agents" by Magis [22] who can be acting both in a formal and informal capacity or behind the scenes to bring about actions of change in the community; strength of social networks; community ties; and the availability and quality of local resources, including infrastructure and natural, social, and economic capitals. These dimensions of community resilience have also been seen as a lens through which we can assess public policies and their capacity to enhance or erode rural resilience in the face of unpredictable events [19].

3. Context and Methods

3.1. Brief Description of the Community

Caggiano (Figure 1) is a township with a population of 2780, made up of 1149 families, located in the Campania region of Southern Italy [45]. Caggiano is part of the Territorial System of Development (*Sistema Territoriale di Sviluppo—STS*) AnticaVolcej. Territorial Systems of Development are local land units defined at sub-provincial levels for the implementation of the Campania Region's Rural Development Plan 2007/2013. To integrate the guidelines set out under its Regional Development Plan (RDP), planning period 2007/2013, the Campania Region has adopted a spatial mapping system of the region based on dividing the entire territory into **'Territorial Systems of Development STS'.** The territorial systems are designed to prevent potential overlaps and/or conflicts between instruments (and partnerships) for rural development in operation across the region. Two principal variables were considered in identifying the systems: the relationship between utilized agricultural surface (UAS) and total surface area; and the "degree of rurality" calculated on the basis of an adaptation of the

methodology proposed by the OECD. Other indicators were added to represent the environment (protected areas, areas vulnerable to nitrates from agricultural sources); the models of agriculture (Gross Standard Income; average UAS of farm); and degree of territorial vocational specialization (indices of agricultural and food processing specialization). Collected data was processed for each STS. Forty-five STS were identified, each of which was defined by its dominant characteristics (i.e., economic, social, and environmental) and where appropriate the STS have been linked to their altitudinal ranges. The STS AnticaVolcej falls into the category 'rural territories of high landscape, natural, and cultural value' and includes hilly areas and middle and high mountain areas. The territory is quite well connected through a secondary road network to the highway about 5 km distant. The population structure is typically dominated by elderly people (according to official statistics 24% were over 65 years old while people under 14 years only represented 13% of the total population in 2015 [46]). Due to recent regeneration of houses in the historical centre of the township, and the proximity of the main urban centre of Salerno, reachable in half an hour, Caggiano has a steady population that is expected to increase in the next few years.
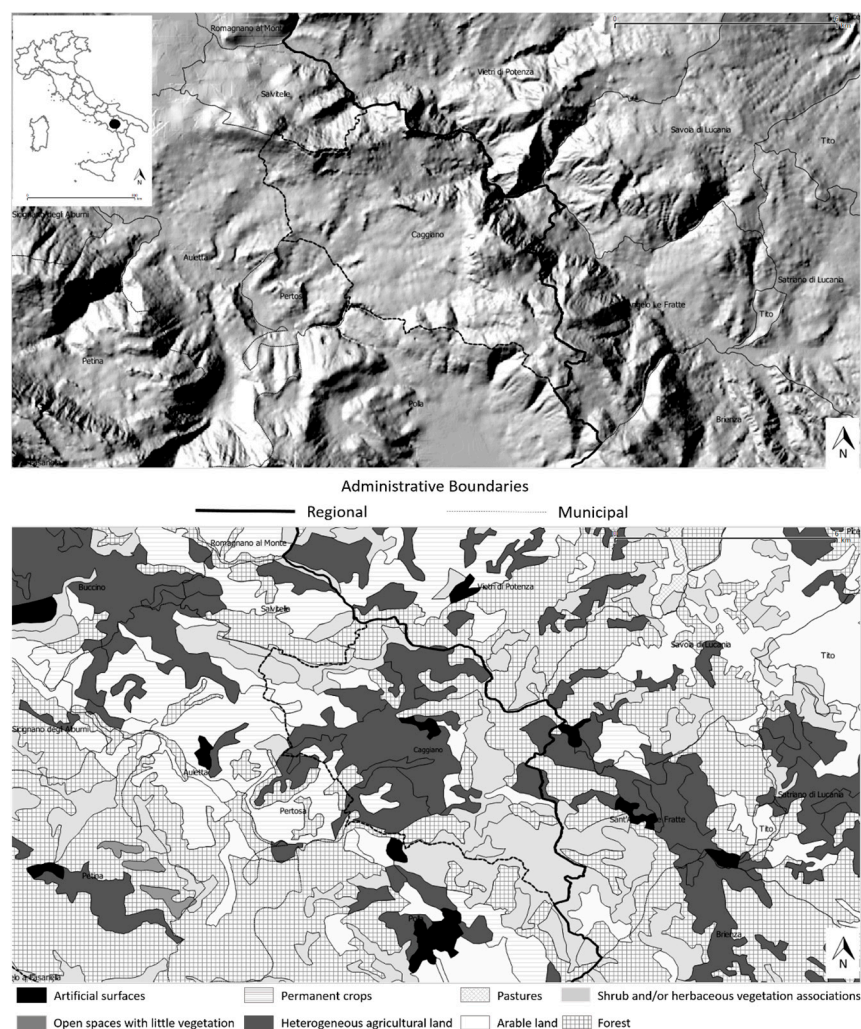

Figure 1. Study area, administrative boundaries, and land use. Source: authors.

The local economy shares many of the characteristics of inland rural areas: elements of extreme underdevelopment and natural disadvantage are coupled with valuable environmental, productive, and human resources that could drive integrated development processes.

Generally, local economic activities are very poorly diversified. The productive structure is still largely based on farming as industrialization never really took hold in the area, and the tertiary sector cannot be considered a leading force in the local economy. The unemployment rate is the lowest in the area and, although quite high (11%), is far below the STS average (18%) [46].

However, the community of Caggiano is perceived as a thriving community by all the other townships within the STS. A series of initiatives that have been implemented since 2011 have made this township into a sort of laboratory of ideas. A description of each of the various initiatives started in the Community follows.

3.2. Description of Projects

The first initiative started in the town of Caggiano, which will also be the principal focus of the paper, saw the school canteen introduce local agricultural produce in the preparation of school meals for local children.

0 km School Meals. The project, started in 2011, promotes the use of local products (potatoes, chickpeas, beans, extra virgin olive oil, and tinned tomatoes) in the local school canteen. The families of the students using the canteen supply the products. Each farmer/family delivers their produce to the school canteen following a schedule set out by the town council. For the processed products, (olive oil and tinned tomatoes), parents use certified local processing facilities that in turn deliver the processed products directly to the school. In 2014, plastic was also banned in the school canteen and replaced by china and glass. A special organic waste disposal unit was also fitted in the canteen for food waste.

In 2015, the school canteen was opened to the public, mainly to supply lunches for students from other towns visiting Caggiano or surrounding areas on school trips. At present, the project is also investigating the possibility of adding meat products to the school menu, although the certification and preservation of these products is proving more complicated.

Parties involved: Town Council, farmers, families, consumers, ASL (Local Health Authority), and the school.

Caggianese Bread. The project, started in 2014, provides bread for the school canteen made using flour produced with local traditional grain, which is particularly suited to be grown locally and produces a top-quality bread. The grain is milled mechanically in a traditional mill with stone grinders that conserve all the taste and health properties of the grain. The project has involved the whole community. The town council buys the grain, grown locally, which is then milled. Thanks to a partnership between the town council and the Association of Bakers of the Province of Salerno, the flour produced is also distributed to local bakers who prepare the bread using traditional methods.

Parties involved: Town Council, farmers, ASL (Local Health Authority), consumers, and bakeries.

"The Water Hut". Started in 2014, the project funded the installation of a small water distribution centre for all local residents to fill up empty bottles with flat and sparkling water at very low cost. The town Council has estimated that this system of water distribution could save 350,000 plastic water bottles, the equivalent of around 14 tons of plastic, and could reduce atmospheric emissions of carbon dioxide by around 15 tons. The water undergoes strict checks by the health authority.

Parties involved: Town Council, ASL (Local Health Authority), and consumers.

Recycling Projects. Since 2013, there has been a drive to improve the recycling system already in place in the town. This has included attempts to reduce the amount of plastic consumed (through the projects "The Water Hut" and "0 km school meals") and a drive to promote home compost bins to reduce the amount of organic waste entering the system and to promote the spreading of organic compost on local land.

Parties involved: Town Council, farmers, families, and schools.

Local shop (Ortofru project). The shop was opened in 2014 in an attempt to better integrate residents with disabilities by giving them employment. From very humble beginnings, the project, funded by a regional law, slowly grew into a strong business with the shop suppling local products

to the community and beyond. This initiative, and many others, has benefited from the recent improvements to the road infrastructure and, in particular, the motorway exit which is only 4 km away from the town centre.

Parties involved: Town Council, farmers, families, and consumers.

Local Processing House. In 2015 Caggiano was the only township to apply for funding under the Local Action Group for the creation of an advanced local processing unit. The unit, equipped with the latest technologies in food processing, which are able to process any type of agricultural produce from fruit and vegetables to top quality meat, is open to the entire local community and outside residents too. The town council has also made technicians available who can assist local farmers in using the equipment. The project aims to reduce food waste significantly by allowing famers to conserve their produce, thereby creating a virtuous cycle of ecological and socio-economic sustainability.

Parties involved: Council, farmers, families, consumers, and the Local Health Authority (ASL).

High quality restaurants. Caggiano has been famous for its cuisine since ancient times. Recently, several new business initiatives in the gastronomical sector have revived its culinary tradition and have put Caggiano firmly on the map for even the most discerning foodies. The opening of a new restaurant in the historical centre in 2010 spurred other restaurant openings, which have helped foster a return to traditional local cuisine and increased consumption of locally grown produce.

Parties Involved: Restaurant owners, farmers, and consumers.

Food Festivals. At various times in the year, the town organizes four local food festivals (*sagre*). The festivals typically last several days and involve the participation of the whole community. Each of the festivals is linked to a local religious festival. Increased interest in the food festivals from outside consumers is helping turn them into important dates in the calendar for the wider territory.

Parties Involved: Council, community, farmers, consumers, and the Local Health Authority (ASL).

Public Winery. In 2013, a town council initiative saw the opening of a public winery. The same year, the council took over the running of a local vineyard to meet two principal aims. These are the conservation of the biodiversity of local grapevines (the vineyard contains 50 different varieties taken locally from specialized research institutes) and the conservation of the traditional landscape, especially important given the vineyard is located in the town's historical centre.

Parties Involved: Council, farmers, and the Local Health Authority (ASL).

Mums on Board the School bus. In 2015, the Council started an initiative that encourages mothers of children who use the school bus to ride along with the children on the school run to keep an eye on the youngest students. This initiative is amongst the social initiatives intended to promote "social solidarity" in the community.

Parties involved: Council and families.

3.3. Methods

A broad range of data was collected. Multi-method studies, also referred to as mixed methods, allow for the generation of data from different sources to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the research question [47].

Primary qualitative data was collected at community level through a stakeholder forum attended by stakeholders involved in the school meals project and the other projects developed at the community level. The forum involved all the 120 families with children attending Caggiano schools (pre-school, elementary, and middle schools), the local health authority, local processors, local administrators, and civil society. The collection of primary data was conducted in 2015, starting at the beginning of the school year (September to December).

During the forum, a brief questionnaire was given to the parents of the children involved in the project.

Following the forum, 11 semi-structured interviews were carried out. The interviewees were: mayor; town councillor; school canteen worker; teacher; doctor ASL; two parents (one mother, one

father); farmers; processor from food/wine sector; member of the tourism sector (restaurant manager); and member of the *Pro-Loco* (Organization for the Promotion of the Local territory).

The interviews were designed to take the form of a conversation guided by the researchers [48]. Although the interviews were semi-structured, the respondents were encouraged to talk freely on the prepared discussion points. These included questions about interviewees' level of involvement in the projects and a discussion of perceived strengths and weaknesses. All the interviews were carried out at the homes of the local residents in the winter of 2015 and lasted from an hour and a half to two and a half hours. An audio recording of the interviews was made and immediately transcribed after the interview. The interview transcripts were then thematically categorized.

This primary data was further supplemented with quantitative and qualitative data from secondary sources, including existing statistical data, to contextualise local-level findings (Census data, published statistical data, historical records, newspapers, and municipality internet site). Triangulation with other sources of data was conducted to ensure adequate representation from multiple viewpoints, complementing the information provided by both questionnaires and interviews.

4. Results

4.1. Questionnaires

The results of the 118 questionnaires completed during the forum are summarized in Table 1 (two were not properly completed and, therefore, not considered in the analysis).

Table 1. Level of involvement and evaluation of projects by respondents.

Questions	Answers
What are the biggest problems facing the community of Caggiano?	49% of the sample perceive economic problems as the most important, followed by social problems, 40%, and environmental problems, 11%.
What are the positive characteristics of Caggiano?	Opportunities linked to farming and tourism (31%), quality of grape vines (30%), environmental quality (18%), and the chance to live in a community where people help each other out (19%).
On which aspect of the community has the initiative had the biggest impact?	Improving children's and parents' education and awareness around food and nutrition (29%), supporting local production and, therefore, improving the local territory by helping prevent land abandonment (16%), alleviating economic pressures on families (10%), increasing the consumption of local products (8%), strengthening environmental awareness (6%), strengthening trust in the community by finding common solutions to common problems (5%), strengthening community ties (5%), and contributing to "insulation" of the community from potential outside problems (3%). Other (14%).
Which actors (council, school, health authority etc.) have proved particularly influential in the development of the project?	Council (48%), school (29%), Health Authority (13%), and no answer 10%.
With which actors did you have the most fruitful collaboration?	Council (39%), school (36%), farms (21%), Health Authority (1%), and other (3%).
Were the partnerships in place during the project pre-existing or newly formed thanks to the initiative?	52% of the interviewees said newly formed, 48% said pre-existent.
Were the partnerships at times conflictual?	26% yes, 74% no.
Where did you receive your information from during the project?	School (49%), council (21%), other bodies (18%), and 11% did not receive information from any source.
Would you have liked to have been more involved in the decision making phase of the project's development?	No (39%), yes (55%), no reply (6%).
Have successive projects in the town been influenced by the school meals project?	A lot (46%), a little (30%), 22% no influence (2% did not know).
Are you very involved in other social activities in the community?	71% of parents responded that this was the first time that they had been involved in a social activity whilst 29% stated the opposite.

Source: Authors elaboration on questionnaire results.

It is clear from the questionnaires that the most significant problems experienced by the community are economic. This is reflected in the positive impact assessment of the initiatives in terms of support for the local economy and support for families. The catalyst role of the Council is also clearly recognized by the questionnaire answers. Another important aspect is the role recognized by respondents in the School Meals project and the role it has had in activating or strengthening social ties and relationships within the community.

4.2. Key Themes Emerging from the Interviews

Resource endowments. As with the results gathered from the questionnaires, the interviews are also characterized by a unanimous feeling amongst the interviewees that the town has many valuable economic and environmental resources. The quality of the environment, the wealth and variety of agricultural produce and local food products, and local traditional knowledge, which is strongly linked to the valuation of territorial resources, are all common themes from the interviews. As the restaurant manager points out "*Caggiano could be an ideal location to attract high quality gastronomic tourism. Our frustration is that we are currently only able to exploit a small part of the demand for food and wine tourism, despite the fact that we know the sector is growing rapidly*".

Re-localization and diversification of production. Another recurring theme is the need to shorten the distance (physical, social, cultural, and economic) within the world of local agricultural production and local consumption. The comments made by the mayor on how the idea for the school meals project first came about were very insightful. Mayor: "*I was listening to the news about the latest food safety scandal surrounding a large well-known national olive oil producer when I realized that that was the same brand we were using in the school canteen at the time! It was then that I decided to start this mini "revolution" in our schools*". In contrast, the farmer highlights how small farms have seen a reduction in the choice of crops to cultivate or livestock species to rear over the years as a result of a technical and legislative system geared towards crop simplification and mass market production. This process is also reflected in the tourism sector and in the processing sector, both of which had slowly moved away from local products over time. The fact that the recent local initiatives have been so well received and supported by the community is because the projects are largely centred on rebuilding the link between production and local consumption and came about in a climate of growing awareness in the community that the fundamental balance needed for local well-being and development had been lost. Community projects can be considered as responsive strategies [49] towards slow and steady changes felt by the community, questioning previous perceptions of inevitability. The small project promoted within the school is revolutionary, even though it is very simple, because of its high symbolic value as a breakthrough, leading to reassessment of previous expectations.

Breaking down "technical-legislative" barriers. Closely tied to the previous argument is the rigidity of the technical-legislative system, which was identified by most of the interviewees as an obstacle to the socio-ecological system's capacity to manifest resilience in the face of external stress. In this sense, the school meals project was innovative in that it was able to introduce some flexibility in a highly regulated field. In the words of the Local Health Authority doctor, "*We worked together, us from the ASL, the school, the council and parents, to find a solution which allowed us to respect all health and hygiene regulations, as required by law, and, at the same time, allowed us to use local agricultural produce*". It was a long and complex process because, as the town councillor comments, "*the legislation is designed to respond to the requirements of the majority*". The overwhelming sensation, in fact, is that in the majority of cases (also in the case of the processing of agricultural products and the valorisation of locally produced foodstuffs) the bureaucratic mechanism is specialized in resolving the type of problems found at large scales. The mechanism proves poorly equipped to deal with the kind of issues that emerge at a very small scale or at local/farm level.

Self-reliance. The fact that the series of initiatives carried out in the local area have largely been possible without external financial resources has been perceived by the interviewees as a chance for the local community to "free itself" from an entrenched idea that the community was reliant on wider

public policy for its survival. As the mayor underlines, "*waiting for some form of outside help had become ingrained in the local community after years of public intervention on a large scale in the community*". Now, a greater sense of self-reliance and self-belief has slowly formed. Again, in the words of the mayor, "*Now it is the townspeople who come to me with ideas about what we can do to bring about positive change*". The processor from the food sector highlights that, "*I participated in the bread initiative putting my own money on the line*!"

Connection with the outside. A fundamental need that was identified by all the interviewees was the need to build better ties with outside communities, especially with the surrounding urban areas that represent a potential market valuing local products and resources. However, a break with cultural, economic, and social isolation is considered strategic as long as mutually beneficial relationships are formed, without the small community of Caggiano taking a subordinate role. Both the school canteen worker and the restaurant manager point out that both the collective initiatives (opening the school canteen to the public) and private initiatives (investments in high quality restaurants) show a maturity in this community that has learnt to re-invent itself in a more positive light. The marginalization, and especially psychological marginalization, of rural locations and their value systems has been turned into a positive in the case of Caggiano as they can be valued highly in an increasingly more consumer-savvy marketplace, leading to a process of recovery of previous healthy functioning (Brown and Westaway, 2011 [50] cited in [26].

Sense of Community. All those interviewed highlight that the projects have brought about a greater sense of community. A sense of identity has also been strengthened, whilst feelings of isolation, triggered by the idea that cities are much more successful, have reduced. In the words of the member of Pro-loco "*the events organized in the summer months are no longer an expression of a part of the community but belong to the whole community. For the last day of the festival "Cavtiedd" (a local hand-made pasta specialty) the whole town was out on the streets*".

Networking and trust. The school meals project and those that followed have allowed for greater dialogue and interaction between different members of the community. Levels of trust also seem to have improved. In interviews with canteen staff and teachers it emerged that some parents were very cynical at the start about the project's chance of success. Many meetings were required, at times tense, before this scepticism could be set aside. One of the parents interviewed (mum) said, "*I remember a group of mums who wanted to continue using products bought at the supermarket because if any sort of problem should arise they had someone specifically they could complain to*".

Education. All interviewees agree that there has been an increase in environmental awareness and better food and nutrition education within the community.

5. Discussion

The aim of the work is to try to identify, through the analysis of a case study, which elements, and in which combination, can prove critical to reactivate communities that are struggling in socio-economic terms, in light of the need for those same communities to play an active and central role in the definition of development projects, thereby becoming less marginalized.

Elaborating further on the findings coming out from both questionnaires and interviews, the emerging factors can be synthetized in three closely related facets that stand out as being particularly significant in shaping the community strategies towards the changes brought about by the restructuring of the local economy and the economic downturn. The first standpoint is the rebuilding of previously disintegrated social ties within the community (growth of social capital and increased trust). Secondly, there is the 'cascade effect' of the first project started in the community, which led to the creation of many others. Finally, there has been the adoption of a systemic approach able to bring together areas and sectors that had hitherto remained disconnected (breaking down technical-legislative barriers). These three circumstances happened almost simultaneously and addressed both economic and social dimensions of the community. The systemic vision acts as a methodological approach framing the entire evolving process.

The emphasis put on the importance of re-localization and diversification of production all converge towards the rebuilding of social ties within the community in the following ways: the acknowledgement of self-reliance and the identification of connection with surrounding areas as an opportunity, together with an increased sense of community with more robust networks and trust. From this perspective, the trigger point was the reinvention of *community and "relational" agriculture* in the town, which opened a dialogue first with the local school and then with the outside market. It proved to be the right strategy to heal the cultural rift both within the community and between the community and the outside world. Very clearly, this worked to halt the effects of the cultural devastation wrought by "modernity", which saw the expropriation of identity, the erosion of a sense of community, and the breakdown of close-knit ties. Rebuilding this sense of community and ties, usually described as social capital [22,37,42], is a prerequisite for any type of intervention to foster development. The social innovations introduced within the community, built mainly on the re-activation and re-connection of disconnected elements of natural, economic, social, and institutional capitals, proved effective in interrupting or, at least, counterbalancing the effects of rural marginalization [2].

The second aspect that emerges from the analysis of the case study is a kind of "cascade effect", i.e., the generation of a sequence of initiatives that, at the same time, amplify and are fed by the re-appropriation of a sense of self-reliance and by the revaluation of community resources. The cascade effect seen in the case study translates potential links among sectors in factual economic and social integration. The cascade effect shows, also, how the rebuilding of community ties and the creation of a climate of trust and cooperation that extends beyond the community itself is central to revitalizing weakened rural communities, providing a fertile ground for innovation and creativity.

In the case study community, the climate of cooperation that was created between the town council and the Local Health Authority proved fundamental for the successful implementation of the projects, revealing the importance of a non-compartmentalised approach. In this light, the third aspect that emerges from the analysis of the case study coincides with the role played by the adoption of a systemic approach. The deepening of sectoral specialization and the compartmentalization of the administrative-bureaucratic mechanism has fragmented the approach to problems and hindered the search for solutions [51]. This is a common trait of many territories and has far-reaching impacts, from the management of innovation transfer [52] to the definition of hygiene and quality standards. As the case of Caggiano shows, a blanket application of hygiene regulations surrounding agricultural products could prove short-sighted and exacerbate the disconnection between places of production and consumption. An intelligent and shared interpretation of regulations, suited to the context in which they must be applied, avoids regulatory frameworks becoming barriers to local enterprises and fosters the successful implementation of an integrated rural development.

Furthermore, and in line with what has already been found by many scholars, the analysis of the interviews and questionnaires from the case study confirms the importance of aspects such as leadership [21], (the mayor of Caggiano particularly exemplifies this well), availability of resources [22], diversified and innovative economies [21,23], and the role of education and environmental awareness in explaining community resilience [53].

As mentioned previously, the three main standpoints were in force almost simultaneously and strengthened each other. The new and positive interaction between different community actors and the central role attributed to the participation of different social categories definitely break the vicious cycle of dependence and delegation within the community and start concrete and cascading processes to make the community more autonomous, responsive, and able to revalue its resources in a systemic and multifunctional way. The innovative solutions promoted within the community are based on quality partnerships and collaboration, on the reinvention of local agricultural and rural culture, and on the revival of joint actions and traditional rural community solidarity.

The key message emerging from the case study relies on the effect produced by the set of new rules, procedures, social practices, and protocols that catalyse interactions between actors developed within the Caggiano community. They act as a type of "institutional starter" [54] by fostering the emergence

of nascent institutions that facilitate the production and mobilization of social capital toward improved social, economic, and ecological conditions. Viewed through this lens, communities have to focus projects on actions that create a set of conditions that facilitate institutional emergence, such as social networks, rules, and norms, and help to sustain communities such that they may be responsive and resilient to disturbances that threaten the viability of the systems within which they operate.

The necessity to consider "institutional starters" comes from ongoing discussion on transformations in social-ecological systems [55]. A system's ability to transform is based on its capacity to evolve alternative ways of living from new beginnings in the face of unsustainable stress to ecological, economic, or social components [30]. However, the relative lack of detailed insight into the exact nature of the mechanisms that ignite change and foster capacity in these systems [5,56,57] calls for a deeper knowledge that can be acquired by analysing success cases like the Caggiano community. In this perspective, what emerges clearly from the case study is the development and strengthening of community adaptability [26] through the implementation of actions that address social, economic, and environmental spheres simultaneously. This helps the community to navigate ongoing and future changes and in doing so helps the community to manifest its resilience.

6. Conclusions

The study has shown how resilience provides a "strategic lynchpin" [58] underling the importance of the social and relational aspects of rural development as well as its locally driven character [49]. Adopting a resilience lens could prove beneficial to a better identification, definition. and implementation of place-based interventions, helping rural marginalized territories in framing participatory and inclusive alternatives to the technocratic and top-down approaches that still dominate rural development. The case study testifies how place can play the role of an active agent in shaping transition towards eco-economic development strategies, through a re-ordering and combination of social, economic, and ecological practices [59], as a way to deal with change. Furthermore, the case study shows how the community level can act as a functional unit by being at the appropriate scale to overcome the significant limitations identified for rural areas wishing to implement successful regional economic networks, especially those linked to high levels of fragmentation, poor coordination [60], and added value capture [5]. Elements from the case study support the identification of the community as the appropriate territorial dimension of a socio-technical niche [61] to practice and experiment with such system/structural changes, alternative and more diverse supply chain structures, and new institutional governance and market arrangements. These identify and promote new relationships between actors [54,61]. The analysis suggests consideration of place in a holistic perspective, considering all the interrelationships among the different components. In this sense, the resilience approach, having at the core the balance and the quality of each component of a socio-ecological system as well as their quantity, can support development initiatives and contribute to long term sustainability. This helps shape development processes where systemic interdependencies and interests influencing decisions and outcomes are fully considered. The story of Caggiano seems to encourage this direction, highlighting how important it is to connect the economic system, perceived as very important by all the community members, with other aspects such as the environmental and social dimensions of the initiatives. Promoting and maintaining trust, as a key aspect of the social system, is at the heart of the success in rural development initiatives. As the case study clearly shows, efforts should be put into fuelling the optimism that usually accompanies the very beginning of civic initiatives. The initial optimism can easily be reduced by slow progress, fatigue among volunteers, or mistrust of the motivations of any key actor, resulting in reduced cooperation or even a complete halt to actions. Long-lasting co-operation depends on people being comfortable with the aims and actions of the leadership and on the capacity to share a common vision. Another key aspect connected to this is the possibility of mechanisms of social learning where the results of an initiative are integrated into society and become the building blocks to promote further initiatives.

Although the current initiatives have not been in operation for very long, the systemic place-based approach that has been followed in such a marginalized area proves how critical it is to address the social dimension of development. It would be beneficial to repeat the same study in a few years' time and then evaluate the extent to which the projects in place have fully affected the economic, social, and environmental structure of the community as a whole and, especially, the impact on population structure and agricultural production.

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