Tourism Planning and Tourism Development in the Italian Inner Areas: Assessing Coherence in Policy-Making Strategies

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1 Introduction

Peripheral areas are often linked to concepts like economic marginality, depopulation, and general unattractiveness for potential investors and prospect inhabitants (Barca et al. 2014). Consequently, regional development policies in these areas generally aim to provide tools and solutions facing these issues. Two main approaches have emerged in the last decades: spatially blind and place-based (Barca et al. 2012). The first relates to interventions implemented without explicitly taking into consideration the specific geographical contexts (World Bank 2009). The second, instead, is driven by the assumption that places' specificities matter, and these specificities could be used as triggers for development policies focused on local communities (Barca et al. 2012).

This chapter is the result of shared reflections of all the authors, as it emerges from the introduction and the concluding sections. Daniele Mantegazzi and Maria Giulia Pezzi contributed together to Sections "2 From economic spaces to social places: why culture and community matter in place-based regional development"; "3 A place-based approach to local development: the Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas" and "4 Tourism development policies within the SNAI framework: setting the context". Gabriella Punziano, instead, authored the Section "5 Intersecting policy narratives and tourism development in SNAI: theoretical evidence and empirical feedback from content analysis".

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This chapter aims to contribute to the current debate on this topic by analysing the Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas (hereafter SNAI[1]), launched by the Italian Government in 2012. The strategy is dedicated to the application of community and place-based interventions, whose objectives are implementing well-being and access to essential services in the so-called inner areas, namely areas located fairly distant from urban centres and urban hubs. The case study is relevant for three main reasons: (1) the peripheral areas involved in the strategy have not been selected on the basis of demographic or spatial criteria, rather on the basis of their distance from the nearest urban centres providing essential services; (2) the strategy applies an innovative approach to local development through the integration of bottom-up and top-down policy-making processes; (3) the process is implemented through the production of three consecutive policy documents that serve as "textual tools" for the implementation of the strategy itself. The analysis of these texts allows us to uncover how the issues linked with peripherality are discursively constructed by the local communities, in which terms and through which policy narratives (Stone 2002).

One of the possible "solutions to peripherality", frequently emerging from the policy documents produced within SNAI, is a transition towards a more tourism-based economy (Salvatore et al. 2018). The potential success of tourism development in peripheral areas is often taken for granted on the basis of their unspoilt territorial capital, regardless of their actual structural capacities (Andreoli et al. 2017). This view creates a short circuit between spatially blind assumptions within a place-based policy approach. From a theoretical perspective, tourism development studies and regional development policies analyse tourism transition in peripheral areas following two main streams of discourse: one seeing tourism growth as a main trigger for local development, and one considering tourism as only one of the possible elements of a more structured development policy aimed at fostering essential services for the population (see e.g., Brown and Hall 2000; Garrod et al. 2006; Kneafsey 2000; Lai and Li 2012; Ndivo and Cantoni 2016; Pike et al. 2011).

The purpose of this chapter is, thus, to contribute to the extant studies on tourism development as a component of local development policies, through a mixed research strategy, at the intersections of the qualitative and quantitative traditions. More specifically, we contribute to this debate by constructing a theoretical space on which the planning documents produced by SNAI's 22 pilot inner areas can be properly classified in order to assess the coherence with respect to their goals. This theoretical space was built on the basis of a literature review carried out through an anthropological lens, highlighting the role of communities and their cultures in bottom-up, place-based, and participative policy-making strategies. This review stresses the necessity of studying policy narratives to effectively categorise planned tourism interventions within the intersections between different policy approaches (spatially bling vs. place-based) and tourism development possibilities (based on emergent or existing resources). Hence, within the tradition of socio-statistical methods, we perform a content analysis of the planning documents using textual statistics techniques. This allows us to detect the real underlying policy conceptions of each of the 22 pilot

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[1] Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne Italiane (Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas).

inner areas under investigation. Consequently, we are able to assess the consistency between the outlined ideal development strategies for tourism—at the theoretical level—and the designed forms of tourism in the plan documents—at the empirical level.

The results of our analysis lead to unanticipated findings of unexpected forms of tourism in certain areas. Indeed, even though SNAI calls for approaches highlighting the centrality of place in the development strategy, often the forms of tourism planned by these areas reflect an imprecise knowledge of the territory and the needs of those living there. This could explain why some places succeeded more than others in drawing their development options.

2 From Economic Spaces to Social Places: Why Culture and Community Matter in Place-Based Regional Development

This section aims to introduce the reader to the conceptual framework underlying the analysis carried out in this study, identifying some key concepts related to place-based regional development policies which will be recalled throughout this contribution. In doing so, we analyse the literature on regional development through an anthropological lens. Exploiting the anthropological approach in this framework allows us to highlight how peripheries are discursively constructed, and the importance of cultural and economic factors for the implementation of local development strategies. Consequently, in the next section, we will be able to properly identify what Italian Inner Areas are and how their prospective development path has been conceived.

"Peripheries", "remote areas", and "marginal areas" are all terms that have often been used as synonyms indicating areas located at the fringes of urbanised areas, and experiencing a series of economic, cultural, and societal stresses because of their progressive depopulation trends, loss in social and economic capital, and general unattractiveness to potential investors, economic activities, and prospect inhabitants (see e.g. Barca 2009; Barca et al. 2012, 2014; Lucatelli 2015; Pezzi and Urso 2016; Pezzi and Punziano 2017; Rodríguez-Pose 2018). Indeed, peripheral areas, in contrast with more prosperous urban centres, seem to be conceived as spiralling into an increasing belief that decline and lagging-behind is a condition that leaves "no hope" for recovery (Rodríguez-Pose 2018, p. 190).

According to the sociologists Willet and Lang (2017), two main responses to the question of why peripheral areas are unable to pursue and succeed in exiting their condition are fuelling the academic debate on the issue: one is economic (their underperformance result because of structural reasons), the other has to do with knowledge/power dynamics negatively impacting on how peripheries are perceived and discursively constructed, in general state-led policy interventions (p. 258–259). The discursive/normative construction of peripheries and their inhabitants is endowed with performative agency: the definition itself of what is and what is not a periphery constructs and informs the way in which people relate to the world they live in.

A way in which such dynamics can be broken and overturned is by providing peripheral areas' inhabitants with spaces of possibility, defined as "discursive places allowing new things and ideas to emerge" (Connolly 2002). Willet and Lang (2017, p. 270) further explain this concept by stating that "if a structure is a repetition of a pattern, a space of possibility is the condition through which that pattern can be overturned". Therefore, the typical top-down development interventions could be inefficient because they tend to reiterate unbalanced knowledge/power relationships between the centre and the peripheries, subsidising a sort of paternalistic behaviour seeking to normalise a condition of economic distress perceived as not desirable (Pezzi and Punziano 2017).

From a different theoretical framework, Rodríguez-Pose (2018), in a heartfelt discussion on what to do about "places that don't matter", challenges the belief that big cities are the future. Consequently, the author also questions those policy interventions aimed at fostering development in the already "healthier" urban environments—a sort of territorial *triage*—leaving lagging regions behind (p. 191–192). More specifically, according to the author, these strategies are not advisable for two main reasons: first, not all declining areas have no economic potential; second, "shifting away attention from places in need of support to more prosperous and dynamic ones causes distress and resentment in neglected spaces" (p. 201–202).

Indeed, regional development interventions focusing on social, economic, and institutional diversity, as well as inclusiveness, have gained considerable momentum in the last decade. These strategies originated from a large debate stemming from four published reports: one by Barca (2009) tackling persistent underutilisation of potential for development in specific places; two OECD reports (2009a, b) dealing with the disparities between regions entailing unemployed potential for growth; and a Word Bank report (2009) acknowledging the unbalanced nature of growth in lagging regions. In particular, the Barca report and a subsequent article by Barca et al. (2012) have clearly set the main arguments behind the so-called spatially-blind or people-based interventions, in contrast with "place-based" interventions.

Spatially-blind "policies […] are designed without explicit consideration to space" (World Bank 2009, p.24), as if generating equal opportunities and enhancing the quality of life of citizens, could be achieved through one-fits-all interventions, regardless of where people live. This approach to regional development implies that the state designs policy interventions ignoring the specificities of the geographical contexts.

In contrast, a place-based policy "assumes that geographical context really matters, whereby context here is understood in terms of its social, cultural, and institutional characteristics" (Barca et al. 2012, p.139). Furthermore, this approach focuses on the potentialities provided by relying on the embedded local knowledge and/or culture, paired with a "sense of community" (Sen 2009). The reference to community here is functional to the understanding of the role played by community culture in place-based development policies. Acknowledging that both culture and community are two complex concepts lacking univocal definitions across disciplines, we follow Huggins and Piers (2015) and see community culture as the "overarching or dominant mindset that underlies the way in which places function in a broader societal sense, i.e. the ways and means by which individuals and

groups within communities interact and shape their environment" (p. 135). Hence, place-based development policies should not underestimate the role of culture in the outcomes of their interventions. Indeed, paying more attention to the role of community culture could help in explaining why some places succeed more than others in drawing up their development strategies. In the same way, it could explain why some communities lean towards certain development options rather than others. In fact, the desirability and feasibility of policy options are shaped by economic, political, institutional, cultural, knowledge, and power relationships, constituting the components of places as multi-layered "systems". Therefore, looking at how policy options are discursively constructed and performed, can help us shed light on the relational component between the building of economic spaces and the maintaining of social places—a process heavily relying on shared cultural norms and values, community cohesion, and collaboration. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that "due to their relative intangibility, cultural factors are often absent from analyses of economic change and development, divorcing the nature of social places from the economic spaces within which they are situated" (Huggins and Piers 2015, p. 131).

3 A Place-Based Approach to Local Development: The Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas

Building on the above definitions of peripherality and place-based regional development policies, in this section, we provide an overview of the Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), a place-based development strategy launched by the Italian Minister for Territorial Cohesion in 2012. It has developed from the acknowledgement of the existence of great disparities between urban hubs and their peripheral areas: the latter has indeed been facing a decrease in the services and economic capital available to the population. In fact, SNAI aims at finding an integrated approach operating as a trailblazer for the creation of a series of intervention policies to be applied to selected areas during the seven years (2014–2020) of the programme.[2] More specifically, the objectives of this strategy are implementing well-being and access to essential services in the so-called Italian Inner Areas, which have been defined as "areas at some considerable distance from hubs providing essential services (education, health, and mobility), with a wealth of key environmental and cultural resources of many different kinds, which have been subject to anthropisation for centuries" (Barca et al. 2014, p. 7).

From an operational perspective, the achievement of the objectives of the strategy is pursued through two types of actions. First, the improvement of essential services currently perceived as insufficiently accessible, and, second, the implementation of local and territorial development projects (Lucatelli 2015, p. 82). In particular, territorial development interventions may address one or more of the following issues: land protection and valorisation of natural and cultural resources (heavily relying on

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[2] For more detailed information see Barca et al. (2014), https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/it/arint/.

tourism-enhancing strategies); implementation of agro-food systems; safeguarding of traditional know-how's and craftsmanship; and renewable energy.

The innovation of SNAI, compared to the previously adopted policy-making strategies in Italy, relies on a mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches to local development. In particular, the strategy combines the involvement of national powers with the pre-selection of project areas and with the provision of general guidelines for the strategy with the engagement of local institutions and actors drafting their development plans. This multi-level and dialogic approach to local development is based on five core innovations: (1) adjusting the standards of services provided in these areas, starting from the assumption that citizenship should imply the same accessibility to essential services in every part of the country; (2) focusing on goals and results through the elaboration of specific documents; (3) fostering association and cooperation among municipalities of the same area; (4) concentrating human and economic resources in areas where they are scarce or not very well organised; (5) using an open and participatory method to select actors, entrepreneurs, stakeholders, etc. (Fondazione IFEL 2015, p. 36–39).

Interestingly, the identification of inner areas does not rely on the selection of specific demographic parameters, rather on the consideration of their distance from urban hubs serving as service providers (measured in terms of travel time, and targeting municipalities located between 20 and 75 min from these centres). In other words, it measures the distance from cities able to ensure access to high schools, health centres with first-level emergency rooms, and at least small-medium-sized train stations. Therefore, the strategy identifies 4261 Italian municipalities as inner areas (Data from 2012; Fondazione IFEL 2015, p. 22–23). These communes account for 53% of the total Italian municipalities, covering 60% of the Italian surface, and representing 23% of the Italian population.[3] Hence, by definition inner areas may be considered as peripheral, however, they do not involve a marginal part of the Italian territory, and neither a small portion of its population.

3.1 SNAI and Its "Textual Tools"

In this subsection, we will focus on some "textual tools" through which SNAI is realised, in order to specify which policy documents have been scrutinised to perform the empirical analyses presented in the next sections.

Within this strategy, the territories are required to produce three subsequent documents, constituting the "tools" enabling the implementation of the policy interventions. The first document is a *Draft* of the Strategy, highlighting the guiding ideas resulting from a first reflection on the territorial resources, main actors and interlocutors, and development vision. The second is defined as *Preliminary* Strategy and includes an analysis of the resources already available, the possible interventions, and the viable improvement options, which could favour long-term development. Finally,

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[3] https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/it/arint/.

the third is defined as *Area Strategy*, identifying specific actions, expected results, and indicators, constituting the reference base for the formal agreement (APQ). This final document is functional to the local implementation of the strategy and the allocation of funds.

The analysis presented in this contribution relies on the *Preliminary* documents, as they reveal the first systematised reflection on possible actions. However, a clarification on the characteristics of these texts is necessary. The territories were provided with guidelines[4] for the elaboration of their own strategy, which could be considered as a natural outcome of a policy process aimed at accomplishing both national and local development goals. The availability of these guidelines allows detecting the degree of coherence between two possible levels of analysis: the level of the existing resources, and the level of planned interventions. Nevertheless, the existence of such guidelines generated difficulties for local actors to set themselves free from this structure. This issue will be analysed in greater detail in Sect. 5.

4 Tourism Development Policies Within the SNAI Framework: Setting the Context

From the above overview of SNAI, it emerges how tourism is among the key territorial development interventions identified by the strategy in order to enhance well-being and access to essential services in these peripheral regions. Indeed, a first screening of the *Preliminary* documents produced by the 22 pilot areas highlights how most of them proposed a series of tourism-related strategies. Hence, this section examines the SNAI guidelines aiming at supporting local actors in their transitions towards a more tourism-oriented economy. This analysis highlights the importance of community participation and partnerships in the construction of planning documents, particularly, when the focus is tourism development. Collaborations, indeed, allow the holistic perspective to emerge, so that actions can be planned through their inter-sectorial connections with other aspects of the economic, cultural, and social life of an area.

4.1 Prospect Tourism Development in SNAI's Inner Areas

A document published by the Ministry of Heritage, Cultural Activities and Tourism (MiBACT) in 2016 (MiBACT 2016) provided a list of guidelines for SNAI territories, aiming at helping local actors and institutions to better frame their prospect tourism development path. The starting point is the acknowledgement of the fact that tourism

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[4] Available here: https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/it/arint/Documenti_di_lavoro/index.html and here: https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/it/arint/Documenti_di_lavoro/Linee_guida_amministrazioni_centrali.html.

in the Italian Inner Areas still plays a marginal role, despite the richness of cultural goods. Consequently, the document invites the territories to reflect on three basic elements:

1. *Homogeneity vs. Diversity*: the project areas are characterised by extreme diversity and by their internal variety. Therefore, the guidelines express the need to identify the real vocation of these territories to define the best differentiating strategies. These would lead to the development of specific tourism products, which could foster collaborations among different municipalities (ibidem, p. 2);
2. Focusing on the *existing and potential demand for tourism* in these areas: inner areas in many cases have the advantage of selecting from scratch the tourism-niches better reflecting their needs (ibidem, p. 3);
3. The possible *integration of tourism and hospitality services with the essential services aimed at the local community*: tourism should not be seen as a solution to the lack of development, rather as a viable option which should be selected after careful evaluation. At this stage, tourism does not seem to be able to create a sufficient critical mass to ensure long-term local development on its own. Therefore, particular emphasis should be put on the integration of tourism-based interventions with other aspects of local development (e.g. agriculture and other production sectors), as well as with essential services, such as, internal mobility and public transport (ibidem, p. 4, 7).

Shifting from a mostly rural economy to a more tourism-oriented economy, though, is not an easy process, as Randelli et al. (2014) showed in their study on rural tourism in Tuscany, "as it involves experimentation, learning processes, new capabilities, new policies, adjustments and reconfigurations" (p. 227). Brouder (2014), in his review of current research linking regional studies and tourism, identified two main concepts: *path-dependence* and *co-evolution.* The first incorporates a historical perspective on how regions are impacted by the evolution of tourism-based economies over time, also considering the involvement of stakeholders in breaking economic lock-ins (ibidem, p. 541–542). The second entails intra-regional and intra-sectoral dynamics between mature sectors and the emerging tourism sector. In this sense, it is straightforward to understand the processes behind the development of "small scale tourism in regions where it is not the dominant sector, or where it is made up of multiple (perhaps even contesting) paths" (Brouder 2014, p. 542). These important considerations highlight the need to carefully consider whether the tourism strategies that SNAI's peripheral areas plan to offer address specific needs, and whether they are coherent with the existing local capital.

4.2 Tourism Transition and the Revitalisation of Countryside Capital

In a recent study on tourism transition in SNAI rural areas, Salvatore et al. (2018) question whether tourism can actually play a positive role as a driver of socio-economic change in peripheral areas through the enhancement and revitalisation of countryside capital. They start their analysis by acknowledging the fact that, until recently, tourism emerged as a relevant sector in the Italian peripheral areas through a hierarchical core-periphery model. This generated tourism enclaves serving as extended leisure resorts for urban hubs and metropolitan areas (ibidem, p. 42). Through the implementation of place-based development policies and the emergence of new cultural trends, these areas could reconsider their positioning in the tourism offer. Additionally, these regions had the opportunity to reassess their positioning along the core-periphery continuum, in a new and more positive way (in terms of chosen development paths and of local agency). Therefore, the authors talk about tourism transition in these terms:

(a) firstly, a cultural transformation of the rural peripheries from places of dependency and/or abandonment to ones of symbolic consumption (Jepson and Sharpley 2015); (b) secondly, a paradigm shift related to a divergent conceptualisation of remoteness based on environmental, cultural, and societal quality of life, rather than on marginality; (c) thirdly, a meaningful re-organisation of the tourist supply shifted towards common tourist products (Fiorello and Bo 2012) that are the outcome of a new planning model focusing on "community-based" tourism (Jones 2005) (ibidem).

This conceptualisation is perfectly in line with the latest note by MiBACT (Andreoli et al. 2017), aimed at offering a mid-term assessment of the typologies of tourism development plans produced by SNAI areas until December 2017. This document stresses, once again, the importance of the construction of a local economy integrating tourism with other development strategies, particularly, where tourism can only remain a marginal activity due to structural and infrastructural issues which often hinder accessibility. Following this reasoning, the above-mentioned report identifies two macro-groups classifying each of the SNAI areas[5]:

1. Areas where tourism is a *mature economy* (particularly found in the Alpine area);
2. Areas where tourism is an *emerging economy*, although at very different stages, and where SNAI is indeed an opportunity to define goals, assets, typologies, and desired outcomes (Andreoli et al. 2017, p. 4).

Additionally, this document acknowledges the existence of some critical issues yet to be addressed, and in particular, a generalised lack of analysis on the demand for tourism in these areas. Consequently, there are difficulties in identifying a tourism development model coherent with the existing local capital. Moreover, this is paired with a relative lack of consideration towards the current trends in tourism, which are increasingly focused on experiential, slow, sustainable, and aware forms of tourism

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[5] For an earlier, yet more detailed, analysis on tourism development in inner areas, see Andreoli and Silvestri 2017.

(ibidem, p. 8). Hence, in order to properly develop integrated tourism strategies, a focus on the long-term sustainability of tourism projects and of tourism development is pivotal.

4.3 Tourism Development and Collaborative Efforts

The anthropologist Simonicca (2015), drawing on the long debate stemming from Jamal and Getz's (1995) analysis of collaboration theory in tourism planning, highlights the necessity for private and public actors to cooperate and build partnerships aimed at resolving conflicts between the desire for development and the protection of fragile environments and economies. Hence, cooperation and collaboration in tourism planning would simultaneously contribute to enhancing the local economy, as well as building and strengthening the local community, turning inhabited spaces into inhabited places (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003).

Although Simonicca does not directly refer to tourism in peripheral areas, he introduces an interesting perspective which helps the understanding of tourism planning processes in Italian Inner Areas. In fact, the writing of the three SNAI's policy documents (i.e. *Draft*, *Preliminary,* and *Area Strategy*) is the result of a collaborative effort between the local administration, local actors, and stakeholders, and a technical assistance, with the support of SNAI's committee. Hence, the produced texts could be analysed following an interpretive approach (à la Geertz 1973, 2008). This would allow detecting the significance that the everyday experiences of a territory, and the lives of those involved in the planning process, have on the construction of the area's Preliminary Strategy itself. In addition, SNAI texts mirror the rhetorical nature of the underlying decisional processes, which are built through the merging of collective discursive practices and dialogic spaces. These allow the construction of shared narrative identities among the actors representing local communities and places through a performative role (ibidem, p. 263).

5 Intersecting Policy Narratives and Tourism Development in SNAI: Theoretical Evidence and Empirical Feedback from Content Analysis

Building on the concepts highlighted in the above overviews on SNAI and its specific tourism development policies; in this section, we perform a content analysis on SNAI's textual tools. This allows investigating if and to what extent the actions contained in the *Preliminary* documents are coherent with the wider SNAI framework, and if the produced narratives overlap with the proposed tourism development paths. Interestingly, despite MiBACT has suggested SNAI's inner areas to reflect on their identity, on their local community, on their material and immaterial heritage and

on their economic assets in terms of prospect tourism development, and the outcomes have been diversified and, to some extent, unexpected.

5.1 Defining Policy Narratives

In the first part of our empirical analysis, we perform a content analysis on the *Preliminary* documents draft by the 22 SNAI's pilot areas. In particular, we conduct a lexical correspondence analysis (LCA) on these "textual tools" in order to detect their core tourism policy. This allows analysing how the actors who produced these documents understand and try to cope with policy problems, exploring the interactions between their knowledge of the structural features of the area, and the objectives of the policy. In doing so, we aim to posit a methodological innovation in the analysis of strategic policies by introducing a new lens in the understanding of policy narratives. More specifically, according to Krippendorf (2018, 13), content analysis extracts new meanings from a well-identified set of texts following precise structures and rules. Hence, by controlling for the regulatory structure imposed to the *Preliminary* documents, we analyse these texts as if they were real narratives, in order to extract the knowledge on existing resources and vocations of the local actors involved in the drafting of the strategy. Consequently, the application of content analysis techniques on planning textual tools can offer new perspectives in investigating policy processes. Indeed, as clarified by Stone (2002), policy narratives use storytelling to construct political tactics and typify policy matters entangled in larger cultural issues, or—alternatively—grounding such issues in the centrality of scientifically deduced numbers and facts. The goal of this strategic problem definition, asserts Stone (ibidem, p. 229), is to portray a political problem so that one's favoured course of action appears to be in the broadest public interest. Narratives in the strategic policy design are value-, community- and emotional-based; they are the lifeblood of politics, the visible outcome of differences in policy beliefs, and the visible outcome of political strategising like a socially constructed narrative.

Starting from an analysis of the strategies in tourism-related policies within SNAI, we detected five main narratives related to questions on specific tourism planning processes:

1. The *strengths and weaknesses* on which the planned strategy is built on. This links to the question: what is the strategy about? The possible answers lay between the development of new elements of attraction and strengthening the existing resources.
2. The *pursued objectives* in terms of benefits and costs. In other words, it implies asking the following question: what are the aims of the strategy? The answers range between increasing inclusiveness and sustainability of predictable costs.
3. The *dissemination* of the strategy, which relates to the question: how are the strategies communicated? The possible options are to leverage on a concrete or direct versus symbolic or abstract language.

4. The *rhetorical component*, i.e. wondering what these strategies aim to stimulate. The trade-off here is between emotionality and rationality.
5. The *level of abstraction* of the narratives, leading to the question: what are the prospect solutions? The possible answers range between objective and imaginative.

In the next subsection, thanks to the identification of these five narratives, along with their trade-offs, we will build a general theoretical scheme. This will enable us to classify the different types of tourism planning strategies emerging from the *Preliminary* documents.

5.2 Constructing a Theoretical Framework for Tourism Development Strategies

Re-elaborating the theoretical concepts addressed in the previous sections, we represent them using the *conceptual matrix tool* developed by Calise and Lowi (2010). This tool enables us to lay them on two perpendicular axes (as in Fig. 1). In particular, on the horizontal axis, we represent the opposition between the *essence* of the elaborated strategies: *place-based* or *spatially blind*. On the vertical axis, we contrapose two *perspectives* in tourism development: *path-dependence* and *co-evolution.* Consequently, we can identify four different spaces of attributes (as shown in the white rectangles of Fig. 1), each representing a different ideal-type of tourism configuration. Graphically, the conceptual matrix can be represented as follows:

The identification of these four ideal-types of tourism configuration allows us to classify the different strategies emerging from the SNAI's textual tools. In the lower-left side of the conceptual matrix, we identify those strategies adopting a *place-based* and *co-evolutive* vision of development. This type of approach is in accordance with the MiBACT's guidelines, which enhance the importance of the construction of a local economy integrating tourism with other development opportunities. This specific space of significance involves the type of tourism focusing on community-based production; sustainable and non-intensive development; and long-term vision of policy planning. This policy vision exploits tourism activities to act on the quality of life of the inhabitants and the symbolic consumption of the inhabited places. This ideal-type of tourism configuration is expected to be expressed in forms of narratives which are based on emotionality, symbolic or abstract language, and focusing on strengthening existing resources. Moreover, we predict that these narratives are strongly related to the MiBACT's guidelines, by emphasising the role of diversity, the existing demand for tourism and the integration of tourism and hospitality services with essential services for the local community. This tourism configuration, with its connotations, could theoretically be labelled as a strategy focusing on *community-based tourism.*

Moving to the upper left side of the scheme, we find those strategies adopting a *place-based* and a *path-dependence* vision of development. According to the
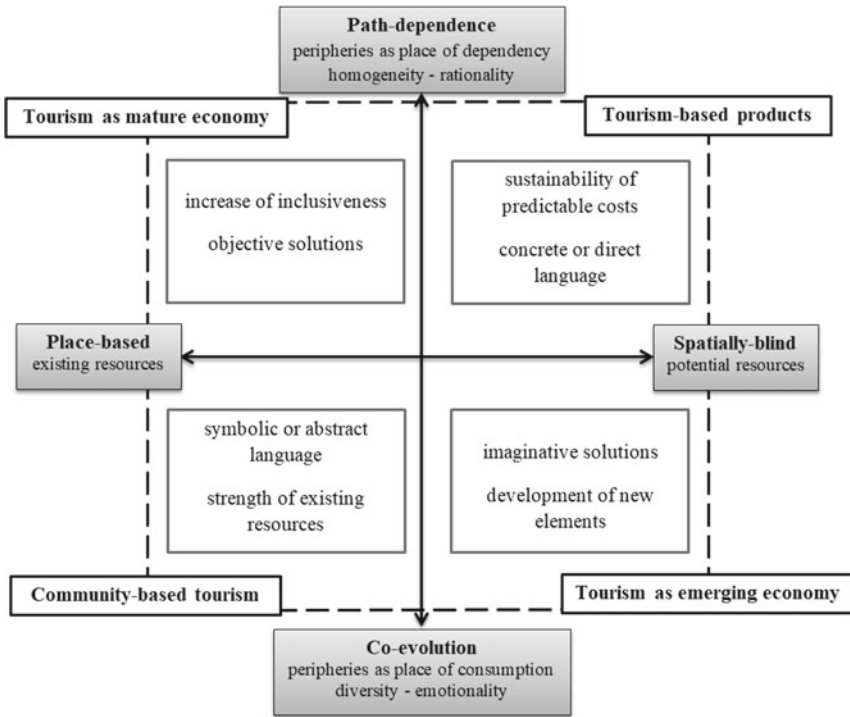
Fig. 1 Conceptual matrix showing the contraposition within the essences and the perspectives in tourism development strategies

MiBACT's guidelines, this type of approach is characterised by a tourism sector which has reached a sort of economic stability but cannot further develop due to structural and infrastructural issues. This is related to the concept of tourism niches, where the existing resources are conceived in their heterogeneity and aim to generate changes in those peripheral areas which are generally seen as places of dependency or abandonment. We expect that the policy narratives of this second ideal-type of tourism configuration are based on rationality and focused on the increase of inclusiveness, and the proposal of objective solutions. The particular connotations of this tourism configuration highlight how this approach sees *tourism as a mature economy*.

In the upper-right side of the conceptual matrix, the perspective of *path-dependency* in tourism strategies is linked with a *spatially blind* vision. In this case, the development is envisioned in the classical economic heterogeneity as a mean to identify the real vocation of territories. These types of approach deal with economic-dependency and/or abandonment of peripheral areas by insisting on intensive exploitation and a short-term policy planning strategy. The related expected policy narratives should rely on rationality, sustainability of predictable costs, and a concrete or direct language. This tourism configuration could be labelled as a strategy focusing on *tourism-based products*.

On the lower-right quadrant of the scheme, we find those strategies adopting a *spatially blind* and a *co-evolutive* vision of development, focusing on local potential, which is intended as a generic group of possible options for peripheral areas, without considering local specificities. As argued in the MiBACT's guidelines, these types of approach identify territories as places of consumption through the valorisation of potential resources. In this type of tourism configuration, we expect the policy narratives to be characterised by emotionality, imaginative solutions, and the implementation of new elements of tourism attraction. Hence, this tourism configuration, highlighting the need for innovation and novelty, is characterised by strategies seeing *tourism as an emerging economy.*

In order to properly classify the SNAI strategies according to these four ideal-types of tourism configuration, it is important to further refine our analysis by taking into consideration what Taleb (2007) called "narrative fallacy". This issue relates to the tendency of policymakers and common people to impose a coherent and plausible story on a set of facts regardless of the veracity of the story itself: a form of post hoc rationalisation devoted to connecting visitors and potential visitors. However, a good tourism strategy needs to be planned by developers or policymakers by, first, understanding the whole story of a territory, and then choosing which part of this story can be used to enhance local tourism as a trigger for local development. This is particularly important in the SNAI context, as it emerges in the MiBACT's guidelines, highlighting how one of the critical issues in the implementation of the strategy is the lack of tourism development models accounting for the existing local capital.

Indeed, considering the tourism strategies emerging from the SNAI's *Preliminary* documents imply considering policy narratives intensively focusing on a place-based approach, highlighting the centrality of place in the development strategy. Consequently, we would classify them as strategies anchored to places, and texts organised to give prominence to local and territorial resources. Hence, referring to Fig. 1, we would locate most of these strategies into the bottom-left quadrant (i.e. strategies focusing on a *community-based tourism*). Yet, we have seen that often the forms of tourism planned by the areas belonging to SNAI seem to lack a precise knowledge of the territory and the needs of those living there. As we will see later in this section, this has important implications, leading to unanticipated findings of unexpected forms of tourism in certain areas. Therefore, to properly account for the "narrative fallacy" issue, we detect the consistency between the outlined ideal development strategies for tourism—at the theoretical level—and the designed forms of tourism in the plan documents—at the empirical level—by applying a procedure of statistical text mining, developed in the next subsection.

5.3   Strategies as Narratives

From a technical perspective, the tourism strategies emerging in the SNAI documents can be considered as narratives. In fact, they are reported as written words which can

easily be documented and tracked, allowing us to analyse the related local policy-making and design processes. More specifically, these SNAI's textual tools could be conceived as narratives linked to two main levels: (1) the *level of existing resources*; (2) the *level of planned strategies*. In this sense, narrative policy analysis allows us to show how policymakers could strategically act through narratives by recognising, using, and constructing their own idea of tourism in inner areas. Acknowledging the role of political subsystems in influencing governmental decisions and resource allocation, the specific aim of this analysis is to show the power of tourism local development policies in fostering policy learning processes (Punziano and Urso 2016).

### 5.3.1 The Level of Existing Resources and the Level of Planned Strategies

In order to properly understand the emerging narratives from the SNAI policy documents, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the initial local level of development and the concrete possibility to implement the strategy. To do so, we perform a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA)[6] on a set of indicators structurally describing the places involved in the strategies. In particular, this analysis allows us to synthesise the variance among the different levels of development of each involved area, i.e. the *level of existing resources*, with only two latent dimensions. These two dimensions can be graphically combined to construct a factorial plane[7] (see Fig. 2), crossing:

1. The *level of development* (on the horizontal axis), with high performances in school, health system, hospitality on the right side, and low performances in the same areas on the left side;
2. The *relevant resources* (on the vertical axis), with high levels of the importance of the agricultural and productive sectors on the lower side, and high levels of the importance of the service sector, and cultural and environmental heritage on the upper side.

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[6] MCA is a statistical technique summarising and visualising data tables containing categorical variables (Abdi and Williams 2010). It can be considered as an extension of the simple correspondence analysis or a generalisation of principal component analysis. Hence, we decided to use MCA because our set of indicators contains either discretised information ranging from a low to a high level (as in the case of indicators capturing the *extension of the area, population density, relevance of agricultural sector, relevance of productive sector, relevance of natural heritage, school adequacy, health system adequacy, mobility sector adequacy, digital divide level, and receptivity level*) or using qualitative indicators (such as the *kind of area*—mountainous, hilly, mixed—*associationism ability of municipalities*—simple or difficult—*presence of prospective vision of development*—if there is, or not—*existence of a leadership*—if there is, or not—*geographical area*—in the north, centre or south of Italy).

[7] We develop a factorial analysis on text with the overlap of a mixed non-hierarchical classification on the statistical software SPAD, created in the framework of the French school of *analyse des données* (Benzécri 1973).
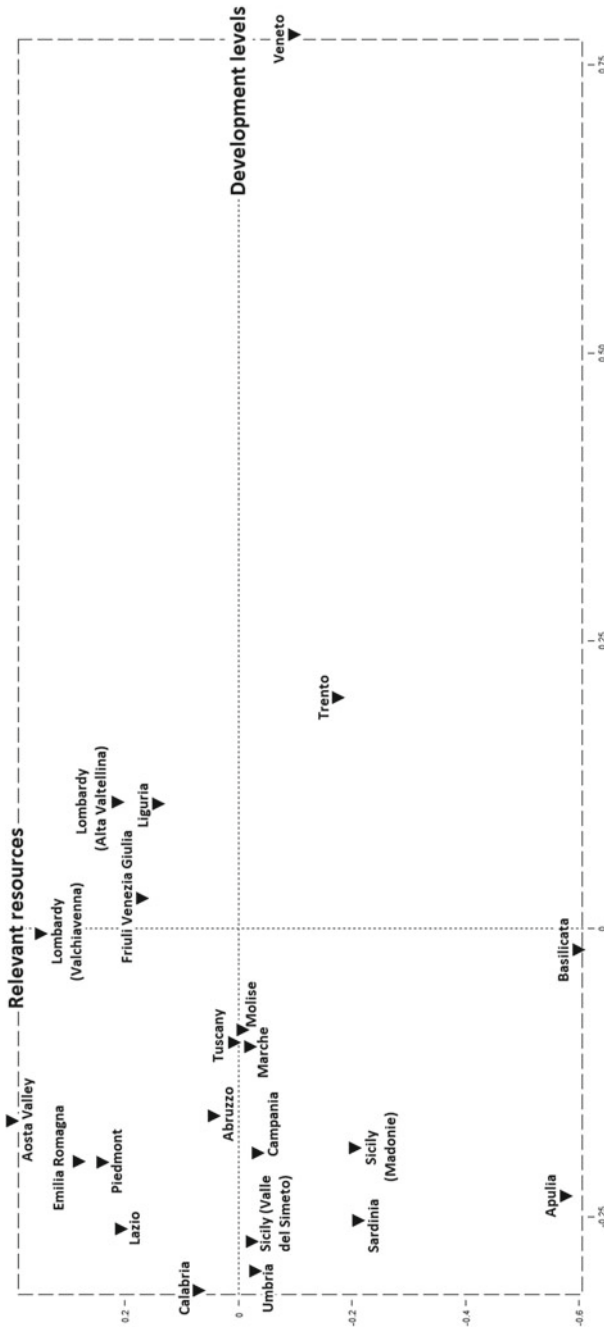
Fig. 2 Simplified factorial plane (The complete factorial plane is available in Appendix 1.) from multiple correspondence analysis on structural features and documents' characteristics of the involved SNAI inner areas. Explained inertia of the plane: 45% with two factors (32.5% on the horizontal axes and 12.5% on the vertical axes). Active variables (hidden in this simplified version): structural features. Supplementary variable: Italian regions where the SNAI inner areas are located

In the factorial plane,[8] we insert the position along these two dimensions for each of the 22 pilot inner areas. Additionally, we also include the position of the structural and territorial indicators used to give meaning to these two latent dimensions. Finally, we also perform a content analysis (Johnson et al. 2015) on the tourism strategies contained in the *Preliminary* documents, in order to classify the strategy of each inner area along a new set of conceptual categories.[9] The results of this process are also projected on the factorial plane. This allows us to identify four different types of inner areas, characterised by different levels of development, which can be described in terms of specific strengths and weaknesses, different relevant resources, which can be distinguished in terms of specific economic orientation, and different levels of planned strategies, which can be described in terms of maturity and degree of conceptual development of their tourism strategy.

More specifically, looking at the lower-right quadrant, we find the inner areas located in Trento (Trentino-South Tyrol) and Veneto—both located in the north of Italy and generally conceived as the most developed among the Italian Inner Areas. These areas are not particularly vast or populated. However, due to their mountainous configuration, they encounter significant problems in developing adequate mobility and transport sectors. On the contrary, the productive, health, and hospitality sectors are way more developed. These areas are also characterised by a low planning maturity. Nevertheless, their *Preliminary* documents show a great emphasis on tourism development strategies. Moreover, they show a great level of coherence with their initial development level. In particular, they acknowledge the inadequacy of their transport sector and plan a tourism development strategy fully integrating the development of the mobility sector.

In the upper-right quadrant, we find the inner areas located in Lombardy, Liguria, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia—again in the north of Italy. These areas show a low relevance of the agricultural sector and a high relevance of the environmental heritage and the school sector. They also encounter significant difficulties related to the ability to create associations of the involved municipalities, probably because these areas might be less cohesive. Additionally, their tourism development strategies are characterised by high levels of coherence, linking the inadequacy of the health sector with a policy design integrating its development with tourism development (through health and thermal tourism).

On the upper left quadrant, we find the inner areas located in Aosta Valley, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont, Lazio, Calabria, and Abruzzo—all located in different geographical parts of Italy. They are characterised by low levels of development

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[8] Due to the graphic complexity of the output produced with the SPAD software, we present in Fig. 2 a simplified factorial plane, highlighting only the position along these two dimensions of the 22 pilot inner areas. The complete factorial plane is available in Appendix 1.

[9] The conceptual categories describing the tourism strategies contain the following qualitative variables: *design maturity, awareness of local development planning, supporting materials, imagining of the future, integration with mobility, integration with health system, integration with educational system* (all registered in a dichotomy way: yes or no), *section length* (short, medium, long), *text author* (anonymous, generic local actors, municipality union, technical agencies), *timing presentation* (first, intermediate, last), position inside the plan document (alone, scattered, in the section dedicated to local development).

and low relevance of the productive, health, and educational sectors, as well as low environmental heritage. These are middle-sized, hilly, or mixed areas, having a moderately developed transport sector and suffering from high degrees of digital divide. These areas are also characterised by a high tourism maturity, however, the integration of their tourism development strategies with other suffering sectors is not evident. Moreover, their *Preliminary* documents dedicate little space to express their specific tourism development strategy, which are partly included in other, yet more general, sections dedicated to local development.

Finally, in the lower-left quadrant, we find Tuscany, Molise, Marche, Campania, Umbria, Sicily, Sardinia, Apulia, and Basilicata's inner areas—covering the centre and the south of Italy. These are generally vast areas characterised by high levels of population density. These areas have a strong focus on the agricultural sector, with a moderate development of school, health, and productive systems, as well as low levels of digital divide, hospitality, and mobility sectors. In these areas, the tourism development strategies appear to be scattered throughout the entire *Preliminary* documents, showing that tourism is considered to be fairly connected to the other sectors. However, this does not consider the difference between the planned strategy and its concrete implementations.

5.4   Which Tourism Strategies Are Italian Inner Areas Planning?

In order to effectively derive from the texts the different types of tourism strategies programmed by SNAI's policymakers, we perform a lexical correspondence analysis (LCA)[10] on the above-illustrated factorial plan. The aim is to compare the latent meaning dimensions related to the various tourism development strategies, allowing us to classify the actual conceptualisations of tourism development strategies. Indeed, from the lexical correspondence analysis (LCA), we obtain the following two results: the *emerging planned tourism strategies* and the *strategical ideas that the policymakers have in mind when they are called to plan local tourism strategies*. These strategic ideas are the policy narratives through which we should be able to answer the following questions: do the narrative strategies of local policymakers explain how these groups developed alternative strategies within a pre-established regulatory framework (i.e. the provided guidelines)? How could the emerging tourism development strategies in inner areas be classified? And, how could these be classified within the produced theoretical scheme?

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[10] LCA is a factorial analysis technique on textual data, devoted to produce a synthesis of the information contained in the analysed texts. It also allows graphically representing the network of associations between words and between words and texts, as well as connecting textual data and context data (Benzécri 1973; Amaturo 1989; Lebart et al. 1998).

Figure 3[11] graphically represents the results from the analysis of the *level of existing resources* and the *level of planned strategies*, upon which the words composing the sections dedicated to the tourism strategies in the analysed planning documents are projected. These words become attributes and contribute to create concrete spaces of meaning. Following this process, we highlight four classes of tourism strategies, corresponding to the planning strategies for tourism development defined in a theoretical way in Fig. 1.

In particular, in the lower-left quadrant, we identify strategies focusing on *community-based tourism*, where *co-evolution* strategies also involve education and youth occupation (highlighted by the presence of words like didactic, young, occupation). Moreover, the *place-based* vision of these strategies emerges from their enhancement of local culture and natural heritage (underlined by the presence of words like naturalistic, culture, and ground) and the incorporation of improvements in the mobility and availability of basic services for residents (related to words like resident, connectivity).

In the upper left quadrant, we identify strategies focusing on *tourism-based products*, where a *spatially blind* planning strategy is combined with a *path-dependence* perspective. This type of strategy strictly declines generic vocations—interchangeably adaptable to different internal areas—into the core of the tourism strategy: this is evident by the use of words as agro-food, wood, agriculture, local production, cultural and architectonic heritage, environment, naturalistic travel itineraries, rural, park, identity, and so on. Here, instead of a symbolic use of the narrative, we find a greater rationality and concreteness of language, particularly, focused on economic reasoning. Indeed, the narrative here is particularly focused on the following types of tourism:

– Geo-tourism or natural tourism: sustaining or enhancing the geographical characteristic of a place, along with its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents (here the relevant words are environment, citizens, cultural heritage).
– Culinary tourism: based on agriculture and cuisines, which become the part of the region's brand (highlighted by the presence of words like agro-food and similar).
– Attractions-based tourism: focusing on specific facilities or sightseeing areas, often involving permanent structures or sites, e.g. museums, national parks, cityscapes, and landscapes (emphasised by words like parks, landscape, architectural heritage, UNESCO).
– Tourism with economic benefits: aiming at challenging the seasonality and the variations in employment opportunities or business revenue streams (underlined by words like entrepreneurship, innovation, reuse, and economy).

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[11] Due to the graphic complexity of the output produced with the SPAD software, we present in Fig. 3 a reworked and simplified graph, highlighting only the decisive elements in the characterisation of the produced factorial space. The full graph is available in Appendix 2.
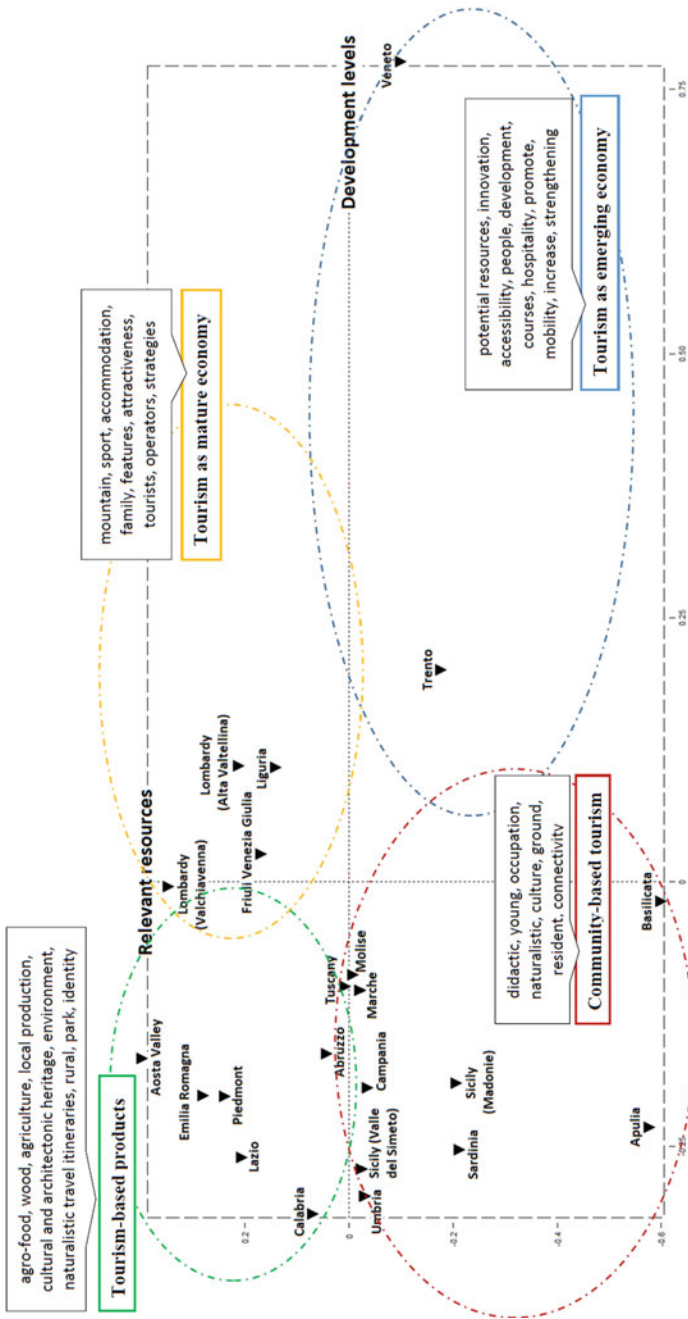
Fig. 3 Simplified factorial plane (The complete factorial graph is available in Appendix 2.) from lexical correspondence analysis with cluster analysis on tourism strategies defined inside the analysed SNAI's plan documents. This factorial graph summarises the results of the lexical correspondence analysis (about 40,000 words, 6500 words, 250 different graphical forms, the percentage of distinct words 17.3%, final vocabulary made up of 250 clean graphical forms with a cut-off frequency equal to 20, 45% of extracted inertia from the first two showed factors. A non-hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted, cutting the dendrogram in four classes—representing, respectively, 18, 22, 28, and 32% of total variance—with 59% of extracted inertia. Active variables (hidden in this simplified version): words and structural features. Supplementary variable: Italian regions where the SNAI inner areas are located and the characteristics of their tourism strategies

The strategy of tourism as a mature economy fits well with the upper-right quadrant, where the place-based vocation is combined with a path-dependence perspective. In this case, the narrative emphasises the inclusiveness and objectivity of the actions put in place, and the policy governance highly depends on local actors and institutions. The relevant resources are connected to the physicality of the areas (typically mountainous) and the emerging kinds of tourism are: geo-tourism or natural tourism (specifically focusing on mountains), attractions-based tourism (through the explicit linkages to local attractions), tourism with economic benefits (through the focus on the tourism market). Moreover, this type of strategies is also focusing on:

– Experiential sportive tourism: based on local environmental heritage and opportunities to take part in sportive routes, programmes, and activities.
– Receptive tourism: developed on the realisation of accommodation facilities.

Finally, the lower-right quadrant groups strategies focusing on *tourism as an emerging economy*. In this case, a *spatially blind* planning governance, combined with a *co-evolutive* and integrated strategy, generates a space where, despite the already high performance in the touristic sector, much more could be done. The emphasis is posed on potential resources, innovation, new features, and imaginative solutions. In this kind of strategy, the focus is on the following types of tourism: tourism with economic benefits, attractions-based and event-based tourism, and geo-tourism or natural tourism. Moreover, two more complex kinds of tourism emerge from this approach:

– Ethnic or indigenous tourism: a cultural tourism appreciating or consuming visual arts and crafts, performing arts, festivals, displays and performances at museums and galleries, archaeological and historical sites and interpretative centres, heritage districts in cities. Additionally, it seeks the immersion in another culture, observing and perhaps interacting with residents and institutions.
– Tourism for specific categories: fostering improvements in accessibility for specific categories (e.g. disabled people, families), as well as enhancing and increasing networks of strategic services for the better functioning of the tourism sector.

6 Conclusion

Exploiting the tourism-related policy-making processes within the SNAI framework as a case study, this chapter examines the use of narrative strategies in defining tourism development policies, starting from local planning practices. The main objective was to investigate whether and how the planned tourism development strategies in the 22 pilot Italian Inner Areas are coherent with the more general SNAI policy framework and with the guidelines proposed by the National Strategy. Building on a literature review carried out from an anthropological perspective, we construct a theoretical space combining different policy approaches (spatially blind vs. place-based) and various tourism development possibilities (based on emergent or existing

resources). This allows us to properly categorise, through the application of textual statistics techniques, the tourism development strategies produced by the 22 pilot inner areas, considering their ability to address specific local needs and the coherence with the existing territorial capital. The results are drawn from a comparison between the structural characteristics of these areas and the textual characteristics of their produced policy documents and show different degrees of coherence. Indeed, the findings collected from our narrative analysis indicate that, in some cases, there is a mismatch between the requirements of the national policy and the actual ability of these areas to adopt the advised place-based development approach. This could explain why some places succeeded more than others in drawing their development options. Hence, even though the development strategies of these areas share the same pre-established regulatory SNAI framework (suggesting, therefore, the existence of many overlaps and similarities among the documents of these strategies), our findings highlight important differences among the analysed local strategies, mainly related to the underlying narrative approaches. This shows how the strategies outlined at the local level are characterised by distinctive peculiarities. In particular, a specific knowledge of the territory and its potentialities emerges as the key characteristic of the more mature strategies (i.e. those located in the right part of Fig. 3), while a more innovative and inclusive approach mainly characterises the other strategies, developing new spaces of possibility (i.e. those on the left side of the same figure).

Our approach identifies four ideal-type of tourism configurations, reflecting dominant concepts within the field of regional science. The first configuration is *community-based tourism*, focusing on the specific needs of the inhabitants, so that the planned tourism development strategies include a possible enhancement in the perceived general quality of life (Okazaki 2008). The second ideal-type of tourism configuration sees *tourism as a mature economy*, assuming that policymakers know the local environments, resources, potentialities, and how to give more and more centrality to places in tourism development strategies and their institutional narratives (Barca et al. 2012). Furthermore, the third and fourth ideal-type of tourism configurations are *tourism-based products* and *tourism as an emerging economy*. Both configurations highlight the need to emphasise potential resources and imaginative development scenarios when drawing tourism development strategies. In particular, these tourism configurations see innovation as the necessary element for development and growth (Backman et al. 2017). In this sense, our analysis suggests that *tourism-based products* link to place-innovation strategies, while *tourism as an emerging economy* relates to sector-innovation strategies.[12]

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[12] "Product or service innovations refer to changes directly observed by the customer and regarded as new; either in the sense of never seen before, or new to the particular enterprise or destination. Product or service innovations are perceptible to tourists to such an extent that they may well become a factor in the purchase decision" (Hjalager 2010, 2).

Building on the different empirical results emerging from this analysis, together with their connections at the theoretical level, new study-paths and many other research questions can be developed, helping us to shed light on the relational component between the building of economic spaces and the maintaining of social places.

Appendix 1

Multiple Correspondence Analysis on structural features and documents' characteristics of the involved SNAI inner areas
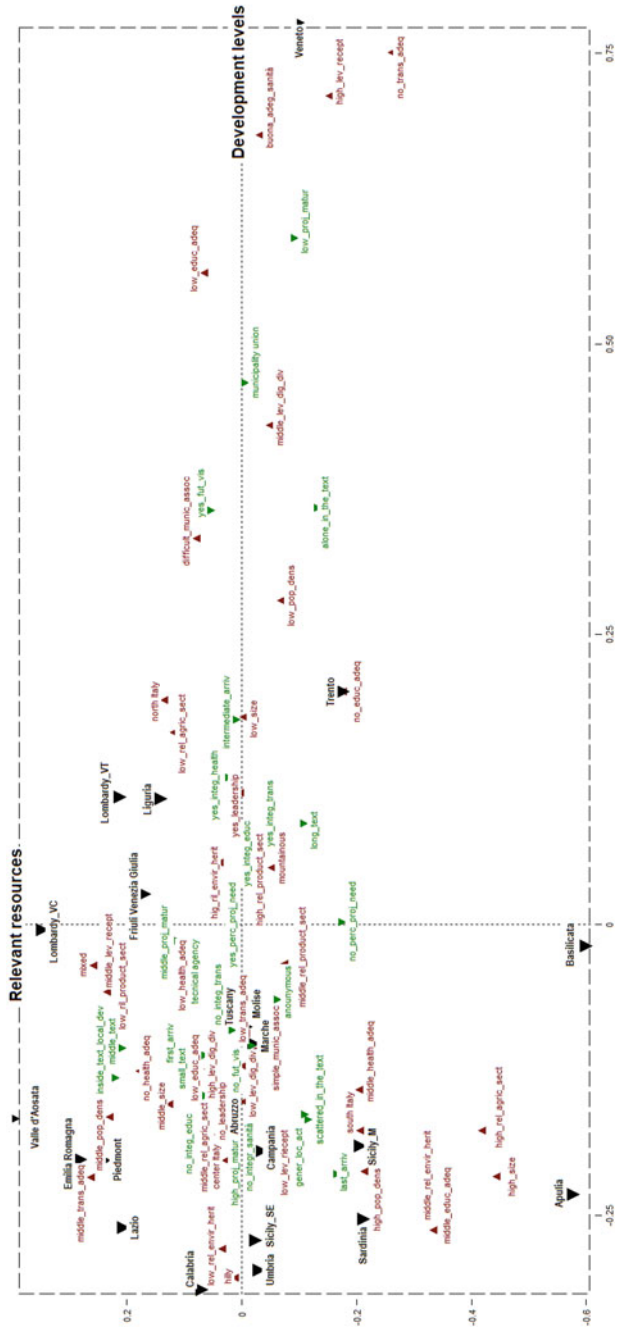
Explained inertia of the plan: 45% with two factors (32.5% on the horizontal axes and 12.5% on the vertical axes). Active variables: structural features. Supplementary variable: Italian regions where the SNAI inner areas are located and the characteristics of their tourism strategies.

Software used: Spad 5.5.

Appendix 2

Lexical Correspondence Analysis with Cluster Analysis on tourism strategies defined inside the analysed SNAI's plan documents.
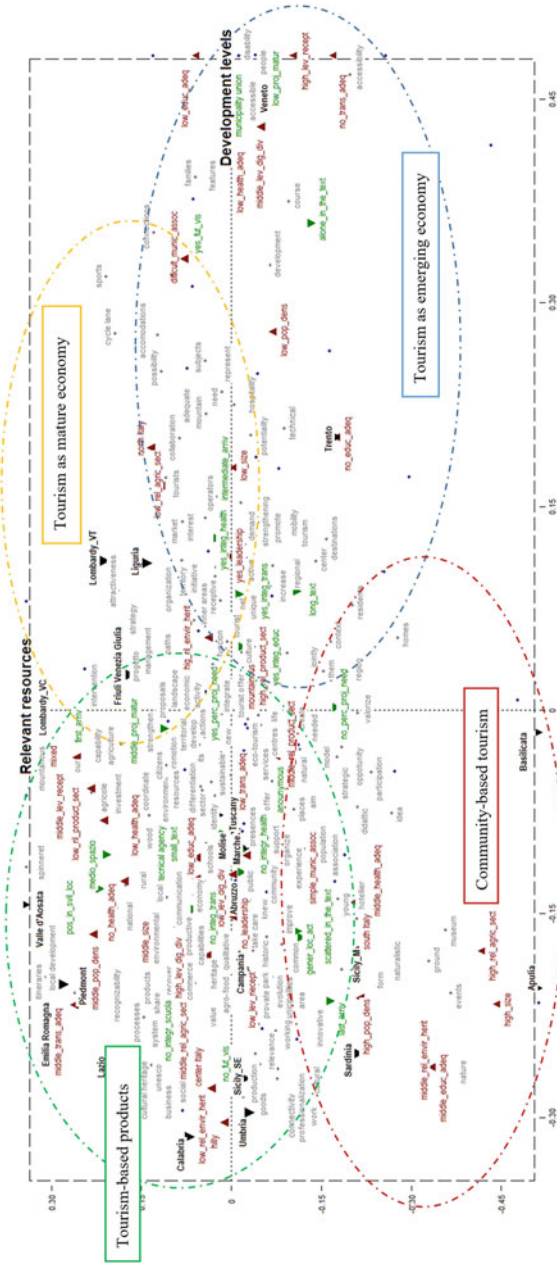
This factorial graph summarises the results of the lexical correspondence analysis (about 40,000 words, 6500 different graphical forms, the percentage of distinct words 17.3%, final vocabulary made up of 250 clean graphical forms with a cut-off frequency equal to 20, 45% of extracted inertia from the first two showed factors. A non-hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted, cutting the dendrogram in four classes—representing, respectively, 18, 22, 28, and 32% of total variance—with 59% of extracted inertia. Active variables: words and structural features. Supplementary variable: Italian regions where the SNAI inner areas are located and the characteristics of their tourism strategies.

Software used:Sspad 5.5.

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