A Trans-Disciplinary and Integral Model of Participatory Planning for a More Sustainable and Resilient Basilicata

Simona Loperte

Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Institute of Methodologies for Environmental Analysis (CNR, IMAA), Tito Scalo, 85050 Tito, PZ, Italy; simona.loperte@imaa.cnr.it

Abstract: This article focuses on the importance of a trans-disciplinary and participatory planning approach aiming at promoting a more resilient community. The COVID-19 outbreak is not just a health pandemic, but also a compound crisis in a globalized world, which emphasizes the need for, and urgency of, an ecological transition towards a new development model. This paper presents the outcomes of a research experience aimed at implementing a new development model inspired by integral sustainability for a transformative resilience of Basilicata region (Southern Italy). The research approach was implemented according to a participatory planning methodology to overcome the significant impacts of the pandemic and guide the transition towards real, sustainable development in all its dimensions (economic, social, environmental, and institutional). Community engagement in a research partnership allowed stakeholders to benefit from collective wisdom, creating more meaningful findings in preparing the regional community to face the challenges of the ecological transition. Scientific support of the research was fundamental in supporting political decision making in identifying strategic actions for a more sustainable and resilient Basilicata in this delicate historical moment of awareness, where the future will depend on today’s choices.

Keywords: sustainable development model; transformative resilience; participatory planning; community involvement; trans-disciplinary approach

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath have caused significant changes in values, lifestyles, ways of thinking, and societal and economic systems. This crisis has revealed many weaknesses and fragilities in our societies, especially in poorer ones, emphasizing the significant limitations of the current model of globalization with its social inequalities and ecological destruction, not only in terms of climate change, but also in terms of pollution and the destruction of biodiversity and habitat [1].

The coronavirus pandemic has clearly shown the interconnection between human health and ecosystems [2]. After this pandemic crisis, the need for a swift change towards a greater public awareness of the relationship between human beings and the Earth is required. This translates into a new and widespread sensitivity, which deserves a structured approach. This is also the basis of the One Health approach: events affecting the environment can have effects on animals and humans, and vice versa. This is a broad concept, including topics such as antimicrobial resistance, mental health, biodiversity, climate, and more [3]. In other words, everything is connected. This is the axiom underlying the concept of integral ecology, an integrated and holistic approach to political, social, economic, and environmental problems, proposed with the encyclical Laudato si’ [4]. Being that everything is connected, issues must be faced as a whole and not just in part. This is a new paradigm of justice, an ecology “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings” [4]. Pope Francis also emphasized the need to courageously question some models of development, production, and consumption and to honestly identify what is really needed for the survival of society. He calls for
an “integrated approach to a complex crisis” [5]. This is the context in which the 49th Social Week of Italian Catholics arises, the purpose of which was to foster a concerted approach towards environmental issues, both at global and local levels, and to societal issues, moving from an individualistic perspective to that of a community in pursuit of the common good of society [6]. It is a moral obligation and the responsibility of societies to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic and try to build a new world [7]. The magnitude of the upcoming transition will require societal cooperation, and governments should consult with stakeholders to develop ideas for how to respond to the challenges from the COVID-19 crisis [7]. The response to this disaster requires a multilevel governance system (from global to local) based on transparency, the defense of collective and individual rights, and the proper inclusion of stakeholders [7]. The role of scientific research, which the pandemic has properly emphasized [1,8], is crucial to this end. Scientific results must be transferred to policymakers and society to successfully face current and future sustainability challenges, strengthening their resilience.

In this historical moment, it is very important to support integrated political action, in which the scientific trans-disciplinary and participatory approach is aimed at identifying sustainable pathways to build resilience and increase livability in a territory.

The pandemic represented an important moment of reflection; it accelerated the political debate on the regeneration of the sense and the identity of a community and participatory processes are, to this end, a tool for regenerating the community itself [9]. Active citizenship must, therefore, become an engine of change; however, it is necessary to increase the very concept of participation, in which involvement and co-planning take place before the decision-making process begins. Community involvement to reach shared decisions, to carry out co-planning, as well as adequate levels of consultation to activate dialogue mechanisms, are strategic to increase the resilience of a community. Research shows that resilient communities are best achieved by enhancing active public participation and taking advantage of the state government’s position to connect local needs with public funding. Furthermore, more viable resilience plans are potentially produced by utilizing expertise and funding support to guide and translate local knowledge [10].

The Next Generation EU Plan and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) represent, for Italy, the potential to use its funds to invest in a new development model that will trigger renewed growth—a new way forward. Particularly, in the worst-hit areas of the South, this opportunity should allow us to relinquish the idea of recklessly exploiting resources as if they were unlimited and respecting the dignity of labor and workers [6].

The analysis of the main socio-economic indicators of Italian regions for the two-year period of 2020–2021 points to a strongly differentiated recovery, to the detriment of the South. In fact, only some Northern regions are proving to be resilient, while the South appears to be quite far from achieving this recovery. The Italian system is not proving to be resilient [11].

According to the Association for the Industrial Development in Southern Italy (SVIMEZ), it is necessary to strengthen the planning of local and regional authorities of the South by establishing territorial competence centers with the involvement of specialists and universities and research centers [11], and to support shared governance to provide a unified strategy to the different programming levels.

For this purpose, participatory planning is extremely useful.

Participatory planning is a process through which a community attempts to reach a given socio-economic and environmental goal by consciously diagnosing the problems and charting a course of action to resolve those problems. The development process has been managed as a natural organic process and has aimed to increase local development management capacity. It must start with a few schemes to solve some immediate local problems to build local confidence and experience. The development process is supported by local institutions and representation by social actors (political institutions and parties, trade associations and trade union representatives, exponents of the business world, so-
cial movements, environmental associations, religious, youth, community-based users’, environmental associations, etc.) [12,13].

The participatory planning method is a mechanism where beneficiaries become involved in the planning and implementation of the interventions that affect them. The intent of the participatory planning approach is to empower the beneficiaries so that they develop resilience [14].

The type of resilience needed is not only the ability of an individual, a community or a country to cope, adapt and quickly recover from stress and shocks caused by a disaster, violence, or conflict [15], but also the ability to face and adapt to challenges to overcome them, developing new skills in a pro-active perspective. The changing socio-ecological systems require new community-based planning processes.

It is necessary now, more than ever, to look to the future with a generative approach and to rebuild a society capable of resisting, being resilient in the face of the unknowns of the future [16].

This research activity provides the experience gained in the implementation of a participatory planning model using the Basilicata region as a case study.

2. Case Study

Basilicata, otherwise known as Lucania, is a region of South Italy (Figure 1) that covers 9992 km² (about 3850 sq. miles), just 3.3% of the Italian surface. Bounded by the regions of Puglia (north and east), Calabria (south), and Campania (west), Basilicata is approximately divided into a western mountainous section (47% of the entire territory) and an eastern section of low hills (45%) and wide valleys and coastal plains (east) (8%).

![Figure 1. The Basilicata region in the South of Italy with a zoom on two provinces, Potenza and Matera.](image)

Basilicata is characterized by peculiar environmental as well as biological and cultural heritage features that are evident in two national parks, three regional parks and seven nature reserves and oases, as well as places of monumental and archaeological relevance, including the Matera UNESCO Site [17]. Due to its geological features, it hosts the largest hydrocarbon reservoir in continental Europe. Its subsoil constitutes 33% of all-natural gas extracted in the country, 83% of oil and 100% of LPG. Basilicata is, in fact, the most productive oil area in Italy and continental Europe, with Alta Val d’Agri and Tempa Rossa productive oil fields [18]. For the state of the environment, reference can be made to [19].

Despite the abundance of such natural resources, Basilicata is one of the less developed Italian regions [20]. It is sparsely inhabited with a population of about 547,579 inhabitants [21], and its main socio-economic characteristics are shown in Table 1.
A demographic decline of $-7\%$ is evident from 2010 to 2020 with a loss of 27,000 people. This constant negative trend of the resident population has been caused by a significant depopulation especially of young people, which has not been adequately compensated by new births, and by a significantly lower regional index of attraction from outside its territory for study or work reasons, compared to the national average [26].

SVIMEZ found that the “New Emigration” is the result of the profound changes that have taken place in Southern society, an area that is aging and that is unable to retain its younger component—belonging to the 25–29 and 30–34 age groups—including those with a high level of education and training and those who have oriented training towards the arts and crafts [27].

The socio-economic scenario of Basilicata fits into this context. In Basilicata, the direct consequence of this dynamic is represented by a notable phenomenon of aging. The analysis of the age structure of the population, in fact, reveals that in the period between 2010 and 2020, the population aged 15–64, which represents the active age group, decreased by $-8.3\%$. The number of people over 65 increased by 9.9% from 118,274 to 130,001 units. A significant decrease has affected the population under 15, which has suffered a contraction of $-18.8\%$ [28].

The effects of this pandemic crisis have accelerated this negative trend. In fact, the pandemic has had a dramatic effect on mortality, not only for deaths caused directly, but also for those due to the worsening of the fragile conditions of the population, especially the elderly [29].

The spread of the COVID-19 epidemic in Basilicata, although more contained than other areas of the country, nevertheless had a significant impact on the regional economy, which had already slightly shrunk in 2019. As proof of this, the SVIMEZ 2020 Report assigns “Basilicata the negative record of the collapse of GDP ($-12.8\%$) in the year of COVID-19, but also assigns it the primacy of the most reactive region among the Southern regions, in 2021, with a growth in GDP of 2.4. However, this only partially compensates for the collapse of 2020 [30].

The most recent available data show that the economic effects of the pandemic have spread to all the main production sectors. Besides that, the health emergency has exacerbated difficulties in finding work, especially during the lockdown. The joint decline in the number of employed and unemployed has been reflected in a sharp fall in the workforce and in the activity rate [28].

In the first half of 2020, the employment trend only partially reflected the sudden worsening of the economic situation, as the decline in employment was mitigated above all by the freezing of layoffs and the extension of the beneficiaries of the wage supplement. Social safety nets and support measures cushioned the decline in incomes [29].

### 3. The Participatory Planning Model

The methodological approach to carry out the participatory planning for the Basilicata region was implemented based on guidelines and principles set out in [31,32], and considering the original contribution provided by *Laudato si* to the environmental issue, and it is internationally recognized [33,34]. This methodological framework also supported the analysis of the most relevant issues and strategies considered priority for the development of Southern Italy in the context of [35].
Right from the design of the research activity, it was immediately clear that the purpose should have been to go beyond knowledge generation and into real-world impact, supporting institutions and stakeholders to advance their missions.

For this reason, it was basic researchers and nonacademic participants who had been collaborating in each phase of the research process, forming a mutually reinforcing partnership to prioritize what was most important and choose methods that best represented stakeholder interests and maximize the potential for real-world impact [36]. This partnership led to structured activities used to facilitate participation, shared decision making and mutual learning.

According to the flowchart reported in Figure 2, the methodological approach involved three main steps: a strategic diagnosis (bibliographic research, working group, territorial investigation, identification of good practices, building visions of the future), some thematic focus groups and a final plenary session.

Figure 2. The implemented methodological approach for the participatory planning model.

The strategic diagnosis of the system under analysis was aimed at improving the existing understanding of the socio-economic and environmental system. This first methodological step was a tool for territorial investigation supported by the collection of qualitative and quantitative data and information to guarantee the objectivity of the study. As a main output, it allowed the identification of the priority needs, namely, the challenges to be faced. Through the implementation of a logical model, it was possible to reconstruct the cause–effect mechanism for the identification of strategic lines of action for the satisfaction of these needs. This was possible by promoting consultation and constructive interaction of key stakeholders through focus groups. As a final methodological step, a plenary session was planned for the achievement of shared conclusions and the promotion of deliberative processes. The results constituted the action plan contained in the final position paper. This one represented the official document of Basilicata region for the 49th Social Week of Taranto.

3.1. I Step: Strategic Diagnosis

This first methodological phase provided a deep knowledge of the bottlenecks, knots to untie, and the problems most felt by the population, discovered through the collection and comparison of the main cognitive elements held by the different groups of local actors. This step was also useful to share community views, prioritize problems and obtain suggested solutions. The strategic diagnosis of the Basilicata region was carried out by achieving five methodological steps.
3.1.1. Bibliographic Research

Bibliographic research aimed at a targeted collection of studies and literature data, considering both scientific knowledge and those coming from the experiences of social commitment (trade unions, associations, etc.). To this aim, in fact, the most important data sources were queried, and the main significant publications and reports on the current socio-economic and environmental situation of the Basilicata region were analyzed.

Very detailed research was conducted with the consequent structuring of a large database.

3.1.2. Working Group

To promote consultation and constructive interaction between researchers and community partners, thus generating ideas, a working group was set up. Different professional skills (from, e.g., legal experts, economists, development policy experts, active labor policy experts, environmental engineers, etc.) as well as those of some local officials were engaged with the purpose of a trans-disciplinary analysis and comparison of data, thereby drawing inferences and outlining possible future scenarios. On a weekly basis, for six consecutive months, this working group met to analyze the economic and financial documents of the Basilicata region, the documents relating to programming on EU funds (ERDF, ESF, Agriculture, etc.), the annual reports on the state of implementation of community programs, and the Regional Development Program.

By carrying out this activity, an in-depth knowledge of the main issues afflicting the Lucanian territory was achieved. Moreover, priority areas of action considered strategic for the sustainable development of the region were identified. This working group was helpful also in implementing a contribution of ideas to support regional government in the delicate phase of planning strategies, in the light of the recovery fund opportunities.

3.1.3. Territorial Survey

The further methodological step was the territorial survey. Each individual territorial area is characterized by internal dynamics that depend on history, cultural and social phenomena, the geomorphological structure of the territory, the combinations of objective and subjective factors. A methodology of territorial analysis that wants to take into account the multidimensional character of a territory, must be characterized by a multidisciplinary approach capable of highlighting the territorial diversity.

The territorial survey was aimed at assessing the community needs, resources and priorities, identifying the knots of the analyzed system that, in a pro-active perspective, will represent the most exciting challenges to be faced. To identify the problems most felt by the population, to know their ideas and perceptions and what they see as possible solutions to their problems, a qualitative survey questionnaire was developed. The research questions were co-designed by a specific partnership with the involvement of some community partners. The questionnaire, in fact, is the fundamental tool for collecting data and information relevant to research [37].

Two types of questionnaires have been developed, adopting very simplified language which is easy to understand for most people, one for parishes and the second one for all the others. The parishes were chosen as reference territorial community units because they are widespread throughout the territory and, today, are still playing a fundamental social role during the pandemic in the region. The conceptual scheme of the two questionnaires are reported in Tables 2 and 3, the first one being structured according to eight different areas, while the second one was characterized by two open questions on the topics reported on Table 3.
Table 2. Thematic nuclei of the questionnaire addressed to parishes.

| Questions | Answers (for Keywords) |
|-----------|------------------------|
| 1 Knowledge and awareness of the values and message of the encyclical *Laudato si* | 76% yes |
| 2 The pandemic: consciousness and change | impacts on relationships |
| 3 The future: young people and everyone’s responsibility | 55% young people involvement |
| 4 Work and environment | necessary change of mindset |
| 5 The frailties of modern society: the elderly | increase their inclusion |
| 6 The responsibilities of politics: promoting change | training for politicians |
| 7 Integral ecology: a goal whose achievement can be conveyed through the use of different languages | enhancement of regional resources |
| 8 The Church’s challenge to lead an ecological transition in Basilicata | proposal of educational paths |

Table 3. The two open questions addressed to the other social actors.

| Questions | Macro-Areas |
|-----------|-------------|
| Which are the main issues, i.e., the most significant problems to be solved to date, briefly motivating their choice? | • Work |
| | • Infrastructures |
| What do you think are the main challenges to be faced in building a more sustainable growth model in the Basilicata region? | • Environment |
| | • Training |
| | • Local Development |

As regards to the method of administration, both questionnaires were accompanied by a letter introducing and explaining the aim of the research activity, to raise awareness establishing also a common ground of understanding with the interviewed people. Representatives of different local categories of social actors were identified and interviewed, in order to obtain a factual baseline picture of the regional society; these ones are reported on Figure 3.

Figure 3. Different categories of target social actors of the territorial survey.
The questionnaires were administered by e-mail, using a dedicated account, to capture and collect the answers; participants’ information was afterwards encoded and organized in a dataset. This latter was interrogated by keywords and data were interpreted also with the support of the partnership with the subsequent drafting of an extended report.

Regarding the questionnaires received from the parishes, it was interesting to know the degree of diffusion of the *Laudato si* message. Overall, 76% of the interviewees affirmed that they deepened this message, and 70% of these have consequently been modifying the formative and catechetical proposal.

The pandemic has become a significant part of the experience of our communities, with impacts on relationships at a personal and family level (70%) and at a community level (93%).

As regards to the leading role of young people, 55% of parishes have implemented initiatives within the communities that involve young people in the promotion of integral sustainable development, reaching the conclusion that to ensure effective environmental protection, a mindset change is necessary. This can be achieved through training, education, and awareness-raising initiatives to support eco-sustainable supply chains. Furthermore, as to the elderly, it is necessary to guarantee personal care, social inclusion and facilitate inter-generational exchanges. Finally, formation in the Church’s social doctrine was identified as a lever to promote change and empower the political class.

As regards integral ecology and the different languages to spread it, all the suggestions converge in the opportunity to promote and enhance natural, artistic, and cultural resources of the area.

The parishes should aim for education in integral ecology, renovation of training courses integrating them with the teachings of *Laudato si*, involvement of young people in promoting sustainable and resilient development.

As far as the other questionnaires are concerned, Figure 4 reports the most felt problems and Figure 5 summarizes the main suggested challenges both classified for the macro area.

**Figure 4.** The most felt problems individuated by the territorial survey.
3.1.4. Good Practices

Another methodological step was represented by the identification of the Good Practices (GPs). In fact, the knowledge and dissemination of those GPs able to build a “transformative resilience” in an ecological transition towards the justice are fundamental [32].

The identification of GPs allows the dissemination of quantitative and qualitative information that can be used by local socio-economic actors to develop new project ideas and/or improve existing projects [38].

For the identification of GPs, a participatory self-assessment model was developed by Next Nuova Economia per Tutti [39] through a common sustainability index for BP [40], obtaining the integral ecology indicators [41] with references to some of the Sustainable Development Goals-(SDGs) of the UN Agenda 2030 [42], to the ISTAT BES domains [43] and to the Social Doctrine of the Church [44] with a focus on the encyclical Laudato si. Despite national guidelines, which concern companies, municipalities, people, and lifestyles and third sector entities, the calibration of this methodology at the regional level required the restriction to the entrepreneurial sphere only, and the selection of a subset of questions more useful and suited to local needs. These were organized in an online questionnaire with seven macro areas of investigation reported in Table 4.

Table 4. The seven macro areas of investigation for BPs.

| Thematic Nucleus                              | Answers                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Company registry                           | atecocodes/NACE class: 85.52 1; 46.47.1 2; 01.2 3; 25.11 4; 96.01 5; 59.11 6; 91.03 7; 79.90.19 8 |
| 2 The company and the government of the organization | maximum transparency of the shareholders and of the origin of the capital |
| 3 People and the work environment            | collaborative, participatory and supportive working climate             |
| 4 Relations with citizens and consumers      | direct relationships and through web 2.0 channels                       |
| 5 The supply chain                           | the traceability of the supply chain is guaranteed                      |
Table 4. Cont.

| Thematic Nucleus                                  | Answers                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 Behaviors towards the natural environment      | almost all of them have adopted measures to combat climate change to reduce polluting and climate-change emissions |
| 7 Behaviors towards the local community          | 75% work with and for the community in which the company operates       |

1 cultural education; 2 wholesale furniture trade; 3 cultivation of citrus fruits; 4 manufacture of metal structures and parts of structures; 5 activities of industrial laundries; 6 Motion picture, video, and television program production activities; 7 Operation of historical sites and buildings and similar visitor attractions; 8 other booking services and other tourist assistance activities not carried out by travel agencies.

The distribution of the questionnaire by e-mail was preceded by an explanatory letter and by resorting to the mediation of employers’ associations, such as Confindustria and Confooperative Basilicata.

The procedure of self-nomination of GPs led to the implementation of a model with nine companies with about 808 total employees. Despite the maximum diffusion of questionnaires for the identification of GPs, the number of self-nominated companies is very low probably for the pandemic-driven economic downturn and the atavistic distrust to provide their data.

Despite the small number of obtained self-nominations, it is useful in any case to provide a mainly qualitative analysis of the received responses. In fact, they contribute to providing an extremely interesting picture full of food for thought.

As regards the company and the government of the organization, all GPs claim to adopt the maximum transparency of the shareholders and of the origin of the capital. They declare full sharing and participation of workers in corporate objectives and strategic choices through periodic planning and verification meetings.

GPs are characterized by a collaborative, participatory and supportive working climate, although for some there is room for improvement for a fairer remuneration.

Most do not have a company professional development plan for the recognition of personal skills and experiences, through training and lifelong learning.

About the third nucleus, all GPs handle direct relationships and through web 2.0 channels (via website, Gmail, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, TripAdvisor, etc.).

All GPs adopt co-design techniques for products and services in partnership with their customers to maintain high levels of innovation. Almost all companies operate in B2B (business to business) and B2C (business to customer) mode and can guarantee the socio-environmental sustainability of the chain and of the product. However, there is still room for improvement in the complete and documented information to customers on the sustainability of products and the supply chain.

Almost all of them have adopted measures to combat climate change to reduce polluting and climate-change emissions. All GPs have embraced the circular economy approach through proper management of packaging, scraps/waste, and reduction in used raw materials. As showed in Figure 6, 75% of GPs have a program to reduce energy consumption and supply from renewable energy sources (RES).

Overall, 66.7% promote activities towards consumers to increase their environmental awareness.

All GPs declare that they embrace responsible consumption of natural resources, water, and soil/land. Many of the GPs in partnership with other stakeholders operating in the area support the development policies of the territory through projects for the enhancement of the local community’s heritage. Lastly, 75% collaborate with other companies to carry out their mission in a network logic.
3.1.5. Visions of the Future

The last methodological step for the strategic diagnosis of the Basilicata system was represented by the “Visions of the future”. The new development model cannot be based on a top-down approach but must respond to the dreams of those who will be its protagonists. For this reason, the involvement of young people was essential to know their points of view, expectations and, in this way, to give shape to a corresponding model. For this purpose, the questionnaire concerning the seven thematic nuclei, reported in Table 5, was structured. The aspects dealt with were considered essential to receive input on their wishes and to consider the socio-economic–environmental context in which the children interviewed find themselves living. The questionnaire was administered for electronic self-compilation (Google survey form) for anti-COVID-19 restrictions and to minimize conditioning risks.

Table 5. The seven macro areas of investigation for young visions of future.

| Thematic Nucleus                                      | Answers                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Level of satisfaction with educational pathways   | 75%                                          |
| 2. Importance of relationships                       | Yes—family the most important               |
| 3. World of work                                      | 61% are afraid of it                         |
| 4. Visions of future                                  | Education system more responsive to labour market needs |
| 5. Levels of importance of the following aspects: family, friends, economic well-being, environment, health | 99% environment-health quite important     |
| 6. Factors of well-being of the community in which you live (economic well-being, healthy environment, social relationships, job opportunities) | 60.9% job opportunities                      |
| 7. Impact of the pandemic on their lives              | 65% are not confident that the crisis will be overcome |

In total, 257 questionnaires were obtained from high school students to build their visions of future. Figure 7 shows that 75% of interviewed young people are satisfied with the school for the level and quality of the training received, the capacity for social inclusion and the environment from a human point of view. Of these, Figure 8 presents that 94% intend to continue their studies.

As far as relationships are concerned, young people see the family as the most important aspect of their life. Regarding the world of work, 61% of young people look to the future in a worried way “for fear of not being ready to fit into this reality”. A total of 87% believe they cannot find adequate job opportunities because the socio-economic fabric of Basilicata is backward due, among other things, to a lack of technological development. In total, 83% of youngsters imagine their future work outside the region.
However, they believe this territory is rich in natural and human resources, which can be suitably exploited by rethinking a renewed work–human relationship. For the future, young people imagine a new development model in which the school is more responsive to the demands of the world of work. They hope that cultural growth will be encouraged, that civic sense will be increased and the formation of a new, more responsible political class. Young people want investment in training/education and tourism. They believe they can contribute positively to building a better future, which they hope will be more responsive to their dreams. In total, 99% of the interviewees consider the relationship between environment and health to be quite important. Job opportunities (60.9%) and the quality of social relationships (59%) are the most important factors for the well-being of the community in which they live.

Overall, 65% of young people have no confidence in overcoming the economic difficulties caused by the pandemic. The commitment of politicians is not considered adequate and up to the current challenges; however, despite everything, “Dreams do not get infected, so why not continue to believe in a better tomorrow?”

3.1.6. Outputs of the Strategic Diagnosis

The analysis and interpretation of the collected data and information across different methodological phases of the strategic diagnosis of the Basilicata system allowed us to obtain, as output, the identification of priority challenges necessary to guarantee an integral sustainable and resilient development of the region, while supporting a just ecological transition. These challenges relate both to personal and social dimensions of action. The personal dimension concerns the assumption of responsibility for the duties that each individual is called to exercise, also making their own sustainable lifestyles in the daily choices of life. The social dimension concerns the capacity for institutional and public policies dialogue and refer to the macro areas reported in Figure 9:
3.2. II Step: Focus Groups

Once the priority challenges had been identified, to ensure a level of consultation such as to acquire the knowledge and enhance the experience of experts and key stakeholders, the Focus Group (FG) method was chosen as the II step of the methodological framework. With the exception of infrastructures, which were considered too technical and with a lower level of society involvement, all the other priority challenges were the subject of thematic FGs.

The purpose was to activate a dialogue mechanism, a social interaction aimed at outlining strategic action lines to bring about positive changes in the region.

These were identified as innovative, feasible and fundable lines of regional sustainable development to implement transformative resilience and support the ecological transition of the Basilicata region.

This methodological approach makes group interaction the main source of information, so it can be considered, according to a classic definition by [45], to be characterized by: (1) people (2) gathered in a series of groups (3) which possess certain characteristics and which (4) allow information to be collected (5) through a discussion focused on a specific topic [46]. Methodologically, the work of the focus groups was carried out according to the [45–49]. As a first step, specific partnerships for each FG among researchers and a small number of experts and stakeholders were established. These partnerships have been entrusted with the task of co-designing and co-managing the different phases. Specifically, it was necessary to proceed with the analysis and interpretation of the results of the strategic diagnosis, specializing them for each FG. For example, for the topic of Environment, we proceeded to analyze the results of the bibliographic research, the working group (contributions of ideas), the territorial survey, visions of the future and the existence of any BP belonging to this area.

In this way, the thematic summaries were elaborated. This documentation, together with the purpose of the research project and the key questions to be faced during the debate, was given to the FG participants.

For each FG, a list of political institutions, main experts and significant stakeholders at regional level was identified according to the thematic relevance. The participants reported in Table 6 were invited to meet online in dedicated meetings, one for each FG.

The work of the FGs was guided by the aim of stimulating the participants to question themselves on the possible development model of the region that knows how to combine long-term sustainability, adherence to the paradigm of integral ecology, and responsiveness to the vocation of the territory.
Table 6. List of participating institutions and experts divided by focus groups.

| Focus Group | Institutions/Experts |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Agriculture | Local Official Department of Agriculture of the Basilicata Region |
| Environment | Councilor for the environment and energy of the Basilicata Region |
| Education and Training | General directorate of the Development, Work, Training and Research Policies Department of the Basilicata Region |
| Industrial Policies and Environmental Sustainability | General directorate of the Development, Work, Training and Research Policies Department of the Basilicata Region |
| Tourism | Territorial Promotion Agency of Basilicata—APT |
| Agronomists | Research Institutions |
| | Responsible for territorial planning and civil protection of the Province of Potenza |
| | National Agency for Active Labor Policies (Ministry of Labor and Social Policies)—ANPAL |
| | Confindustria (the main association representing manufacturing and service companies in Italy) |
| | Destinazione Basilicata (innovative start up) |
| Agricultural entrepreneurs | Agronomists |
| | Coordinator of the energy office of the Province of Matera |
| | Basilicata ANPAL Services |
| | Sviluppo Basilicata (in-house financial company of the Basilicata region for the creation and the development of the regional entrepreneurs fabric) |
| | Nuova Atlantide Contact person for Basilicata of Alliance of Cooperatives ACI Legacoop |
| Teachers | Environmental association (Legambiente Basilicata) |
| | Confindustria (the main association representing manufacturing and service companies in Italy)—Training and Employment Sector |
| | Regional Agency for the Protection of the Environment of Basilicata (ARPAB) |
| | Italian association of hiking and environmental guides-AIGAE |

The participants were stimulated to express their opinions on the issue and to propose ideas and solutions guaranteeing all interlocutors maximum freedom of expression.

As outputs of these thematic FGs and for each of them, relevant “Discussion Papers” were drawn up with the auxilium of the partnerships, then shared and approved by all the participants. These preliminary documents contain an introduction of the theme, the main outputs of the strategic diagnosis, a detailed report of the work of the FG reporting the suggested action strategies.

3.3. III Step: Final Plenary Session

As a last methodological step of the participatory planning method, a final plenary session was planned. The primary purpose was to maximize the level of community participation through the involvement of the most significant representatives of the company (interviewees of the territorial survey, stakeholders, political institutions, experts, and regional civil and religious society). Another purpose was represented by the opportunity to inform them by disseminating the results of steps I and II. Namely, the most significant results coming from the strategic diagnosis and the works of FGs. For each FG, the results of the Discussion Papers were showed by one of the participant stakeholders in the framework of a synergic and effective partnership.
At the same time, the final plenary session pursued significant training purposes with a training moment on *Laudato sì* and two specific issues on integral ecology and on the correct conception of decent work.

Interactive dialogue and constructive confrontation were guaranteed in all phases of the plenary session.

The public was given, in fact, the opportunity to interact live through the chats of social channels and to send by email proposals and suggestions, between 13 July and 30 September 2021. The main results of I and II methodological steps, appropriately integrated with the solicitations emerged during the discussion in plenary, were filled in a position paper, whose draft was showed, submitted to a vote, and approved during the session for a first approval phase. It represented the official position of the Basilicata region at the 49th Social Week of Italian Catholics.

The position paper for the region was entitled “The Basilicata we hope for”.

This document was implemented to address the problem of a more sustainable and resilient Basilicata, with the solutions identified by the participatory planning model. It provided useful information to aid in decision making by the regional government, helping it to advance its institutional mission in this complex historical period.

It addressed key components of the issue and showed it in a simple manner which was easy to understand. In fact, the position paper fulfills the function of transferring the knowledge and understanding acquired through the first two methodological phases and at the same time developing an action plan to implement the identified strategies.

3.3.1. The Action Plan for “The Basilicata We Hope for”

This document schematically reports the strategic actions identified as outputs of the participatory planning process. They represent priorities, labelled from “0” to “7”. In fact, there is no hierarchical order among them even if the “0”, “1” and “2” represent necessary preconditions for the development of Basilicata. They can be considered as preparatory and transversal to all the other challenges. Figure 10 shows the structure of the action plan.

Priority 0: Infrastructures

The Basilicata region is characterized by an atavistic lack of infrastructural equipment, which could be overcome by upgrading the high-capacity, high-speed rail system and logistics works. The road system, broadband and ultra-broadband should be strengthened, as well as local public services (care for the elderly and children) and territorial (water schemes and integrated waste cycle) [50]. Tangible and intangible infrastructural investments are the preconditions for development and for increasing social inclusion in the region. This constitutes the first strategic action for the future of Basilicata.

Priorities 1, 2 and 3: Education and Training

In a rapidly evolving world, characterized by increasingly complexity, unprecedented social, economic, and environmental challenges must be faced. It will be a shared responsibility to seize myriad new opportunities and find solutions for human advancement. To navigate through such uncertainty, students will need to develop curiosity, imagination, resilience, and self-regulation. Their motivation will be more than getting a good job and a high income; they will also need to care about the well-being of their friends and families, their communities, and the planet [51]. As highlighted by the OECD, education can equip learners with agency and a sense of purpose, and the competencies they need, to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others [51].

Considering the significant mismatch between education and the workforce requirements in demand today in Basilicata, with major social impacts (unemployment and youth emigration), education and training are crucial in outlining a sustainable and resilient development model for the Basilicata region.
Figure 10. The action plan containing the strategic actions for each priority individuated as outputs of the participatory planning process.

Based on the strategic diagnosis, action strategies aimed at guaranteeing the capacity for “complex critical thinking” skills for the Lucanian population resulted in being indispensable. According to [52], culture should be considered to promote and implement sustainable consumption and adequate production patterns (point 10) playing an important role “… in strengthening social participation and the exercise of citizenship” (point 38).
Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development [53].

To this aim two pre-eminent strategic actions were identified, which aimed at spreading a new “decent work culture” [54] (Priority 1) and greater environmental awareness (Priority 2). This time calls for a cultural conversion, a change of mentality, a change of course, because it is necessary to change lifestyles and the common understanding of development. Putting the value of the human person at the center and integrating ecological with socio-economic aspects are key.

This could be achieved through the implementation of training courses based on a multidisciplinary and holistic approach to achieve an epistemic revolution, as hoped for in *Laudato si*.

The implementation of education and training courses with a greater interdependence among technical knowledge, digital skills and interpersonal skills, a correct work culture and an increased environmental awareness are essential to fix this misalignment, and to support the worker retraining of workers.

According to the programmatic platform of small and medium-sized enterprises, public investments at regional level should enable the consolidation and renovation of traditional sectors, such as construction, plant engineering, and mechanics. In the meantime, the professional skills of entrepreneurs, workers and students should be improved, with workers better qualified to promote innovative job profiles more in line with the identified regional development axes.

Both the employers’ associations and the trade unions agree that a reform of social safety nets and the world of work is necessary. Alongside the welfare system, economic growth, and the re-employability of the unemployed must be increased.

Just as the gap between public research and industrial production must be bridged, training must also be more aligned towards new green skills. To simplify procedures and make the public administration more efficient is more than hoped for.

The interviewed research institutions also stressed the importance of activating virtuous circles that might link higher education, not just university, scientific development, innovation, and technology transfer to businesses. This involves strategic co-projecting training and business development. The lack of adequately specialized operators has been highlighted in the main economic sectors (agriculture, tourism, automotive, mining, construction, environment, care for the elderly), as well as a proper job education.

As previously said, young people are engaged in parishes and in studies, although most of them envision their future outside the region. However, the number of young Lucanian NEETs, i.e., people who do not work, do not study, and are not involved in training courses, in the age group 15–29 years, is on average (the last five years—pre-COVID data) lower than the equivalent figure for the South, while it remains higher than the national one. Finally, the unemployment rate is high, especially for young graduates or highly trained young people. The number of employed in the region is, in fact, higher for low skills. About the school population, it should be emphasized that the share of students enrolled in upper secondary school largely exceeds the national average value, while the incidence of those enrolled in other school orders tends to be lower [25,55].

As highlighted by the FGs, in this direction several initiatives have been implemented by the Department for Development, Employment, Training and Research Policies of Basilicata Region. In particular, the over-35 call (Destination Over 35 Paths of Labor Policies and Active Inclusion) and the “Youth Guarantee 2” Fund (NEET and non-NEET up to 35 years old) were carefully described. Among others, the implementation of Superior Technical Institutes—STI (mechatronics, logistics, etc.)—were showed as a good opportunity to match job profiles. At present, in fact, there is only one STI on renewable energy sources and energy efficiency in the whole region. Similarly, this is also case for the strengthening of employment centers.

In a development model for a transformative resilience of Basilicata, resilience cannot merely be considered as the capacity for resistance, but also as the ability to acquire new
knowledge and skills. The personalization of projects significantly contributes to this purpose. Starting from the analysis of needs, individual attitudes are verified by applying the in-depth learning or collaborative learning principles.

The learning management system goes in this direction with the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) approach. The ANPAL Services stressed the need to facilitate the apprenticeship contracts (I and III levels) to connect the world of training and businesses, to strengthen active labor policies, so the pro-activity of all actors. To this purpose, the industry academies are well suited to a new public–private partnership approach that aims at a more effective synergy between the network of services for employment policies and the demand system.

According to the experience of the regional school office, it emerged that the Lucanian school system has never had a notable early school leaving. It is characterized rather by a more widespread problem of demotivation and of scarce interest from students because of the absence of a meritocratic world of work. They are not adequately stimulated to give the best of themselves.

Despite the problems caused by the pandemic, workshops for inclusion and orientation, teaching civic education, community pacts (interaction based on specific objectives) as well as integrated digital teaching have been implemented. It is also necessary to enhance the provincial centers for adults, to ensure professional retraining.

The Confindustria Basilicata Training area fulfills the function of reducing the distance between demand and supply at work in labor markets. This is achieved by organizing advanced training courses, masters for entrepreneurs, and through Fondimpresa Basilicata, which seeks to meet the needs of companies—namely, streamlining, speed, clarity—by clear planning and adhering to certain times.

To better calibrate the strategies, it is necessary to monitor the results of the actions put in place and to aim for a professional orientation starting already in middle school.

The students at these schools are then the ideal targets for scientific dissemination and school–work alternation projects, according to the Italian Space Agency (ASI) experience.

Basilicata Anpal Services underlined the strategic importance of professional orientation as a process that allows for the creation of relationships between skills and attitudes, starting from the age of three, within the family first and then in lower secondary school. This is crucial both in the context of studies to be undertaken after the 8th grade, and in the context of professional choices and the labor market. In Basilicata, orientation activities have been carried out so far exclusively in high schools.

They provide for learning in a dual mode (co-planning, sharing and co-evaluation between business and training institution) which aims at the integration between school and work, in which the educational value of the skills acquired during the practical experience within companies (paths for transversal skills and orientation—PTSO—and first level apprenticeship) is recognized.

Considering this dissertation, in Basilicata it is necessary and urgent to achieve the following: increase the level of correspondence between education and business needs; overcome the obsolescence of skills; extend the paths and practices of school–work alternation and strengthen the dual system; increase the training offer, including the tertiary one, enhance STI.

The list of identified strategies for education and training is shown in the section Priority 3 of Figure 10.

Priority 4: Agriculture

According to the strategic diagnosis, agriculture has been identified as a priority for the importance it covers in terms of contribution to regional GDP and for the role that this sector can play in rebalancing regional development between inland and coastal areas.

Agriculture, together with the agri-food sector, can boast numerous examples of productive excellence in Basilicata. Its further development, if properly addressed, can play a decisive role in the growth of the region and to combat the phenomena of loss of human
capital, such as the continuous youth emigration. The topic of regional agricultural development represents not only a political priority, but also a perceived need that challenges the local community to support the ecological transition, as outlined by the strategic diagnosis carried out in preparation for Taranto 2021. Agriculture is a sector with a huge capacity for innovation and can significantly contribute to the implementation of a sustainable and resilient regional development model.

The natural wealth of Basilicata offers unique opportunities for the development of local communities. Furthermore, innovative, and sustainable cultivation systems can combine development and care of the territories as well. The development of a “good agriculture” is important because it not only produces quality food goods, but also builds and conserves the landscape, safeguards natural capital, and helps mitigate the effects of climate change. The depopulation, especially of inland areas, must prompt the political institutions to promote agricultural training programs for new generations. These new generations could become expertly aware of new production methods, while being able to recover the ancient knowledge of cultivation at the same time.

It is also through a revitalization of agriculture that it is possible to promote an ecological conversion in the Lucanian region.

On the territory, there is a high number of farms with intensive cultivation (76%), mainly cereal, especially in the Metapontino area and Matera hills. There are, then, flat and irrigated areas, where fruit and vegetable production are concentrated and areas suited to wine growing (Vulture-Melfese). Finally, there is the “heroic” agriculture of the high hills and the Lucanian mountains.

The agricultural sector of Basilicata is characterized rather by small and fragmented business units. The prevalence of farm owners of an advanced age is high, with a low percentage of young entrepreneurs (about 10%). The educational and training level of agricultural entrepreneurs is rather modest. Low is the adhesion of Lucanian agricultural companies to development processes and crops that make sustainable use of plant protection products and fertilizers, as evidenced by the meager responses to the “integrated production” agri-food measure (measure 10 of the Basilicata Rural Development Plan-RDP) [56].

In Basilicata, the development process of the sector, beyond the issue of sustainability, must address and solve three key issues:

- The development of inland areas.
- The existing manpower consists of primarily of immigrants often forced to live in precarious conditions. The serious phenomenon of illegal hiring still weighs on this, and it should be overcome by guaranteeing these people paths of real social inclusion.
- The access to the market is still limited, due to an individualistic approach by the producers and inadequate commercial and logistical structures.

The first step to be considered in the development of eco-sustainable agriculture in Basilicata is the need to overcome the training and information deficiencies of agricultural business owners, to implement more sustainable production techniques. The correct use of plant protection products that can have a high environmental impact is essential.

The revitalization of inland areas is also important for a more balanced regional agricultural development. This can also reduce the fragility and vulnerability of the territory. Essential, in this sense, is the provision of adequate water services to encourage the development of crops in hilly areas. This development could appropriately benefit from the creation of small and multi-farm reservoirs to provide water to all farmers.

Rural development in Basilicata region must be promoted by a proper combination of tradition and innovation. It will be necessary to work and commit to the implementation of a common project through which the development of the strongest areas will have to serve as support and driving force for the weaker ones. In this region, there are agricultural realities that lend themselves to a conversion to the “closed cycle”, where they can promote the use of organic fertilizers and soil improvers by creating “0 km” supply chains between farms and composting plants.
Territorial protection policies must also be implemented to avoid the generalized decline of soils and of their carbon content.

Today, in many agricultural soils in Southern Italy, the soil organic carbon is around 1%, a limit value for classifying desert soils from a microbiological point of view.

The adoption of sustainable cultivation techniques (possibility of grassing, rational and annual pruning, irrigation with adequate wastewater, restoration of hedges on the edges of fields, recycling of mowing and pruning plant residues, addition of organic amendments) favors the restoration soil fertility by increasing the carbon content and microbial biodiversity.

The recycling of resources and by-products considered up to now as simple waste, the use of natural manure and compost mixed with charcoal (biochar), and all materials to be produced in local plants are to be envisaged.

The need to recover the agricultural land of the Basento Valley (one of the two regional Sites of National Interest—SNI) still characterized by high concentrations of heavy metals is also noteworthy. It is necessary to think about the possibility of using these soils that are not yet reclaimed today, to produce alternative energy with the support, for example, of research centers such as Enea.

Proper strategic choices of the Basilicata region, to which it is delegated the management of business support activities, the modernization of a monitoring infrastructure and decision support systems could be of great use. The decisive turning point for progress in this direction should be the implementation of a plan for the development of Basilicata, in which the sustainable and innovative development of agriculture is integrated into a more general vision. The list of identified strategies for agriculture is shown in the section Priority 4 of Figure 10.

Priority 5: Tourism

The strategic diagnosis of the Basilicata region has identified tourism as a tactical development sector. In recent years, before the pandemic, this sector had reached high levels of expansion, also thanks to the APT. There has been a constantly growing attractiveness both for the good standard of living linked to the scarce presence of organized crime and thanks to the good environmental status that characterizes the region. The peak was reached with Matera, the capital of European Culture 2019, an event that could have achieved much more evident economic and social impacts for the whole of Basilicata if managed with greater entrepreneurial initiative. All this was achieved despite the absence of significant investments aimed at increasing the infrastructural capacity of the region and improving its mobility.

Unfortunately, today, the tourist resource is not yet a cultural factor of the Lucanian people and their political class, although also the new generations, in their visions of the future, have understood its considerable potential in creating job opportunities.

There is a lack of an overall vision capable of increasing the perception by the population of the value of cultural heritage, together with better specialized skills of the operators. All this might trigger virtuous mechanisms of economic enhancement of these resources with a consequent increase in the attraction of private investments. In particular, the need emerged to develop local tourism opportunities, the enhancement of the agri-food and tourism supply chains as local, national and international “attractors”.

Culture and tourism are the winning combination for the attractiveness of Basilicata post Matera 2019. The great regional tangible and intangible heritage plays a very important role not only for tourism in general, but also as an educational tool and for the reactivation of communities.

For this reason it is necessary to achieve the following:

- Build innovative models of use and management.
- Work on a strategic project to support and enhance the tourism, artistic, creative and cultural sectors that had been defined in recent years.
• Improve the infrastructure and regenerate the peripheral areas and villages, taking into account also the changed needs due to the pandemic (e.g., preference for smaller accommodations surrounded by nature), thus also allowing the safety of the territories, the recovery of commercial and artisanal activities.

It is appropriate to find incentive mechanisms for sustainable tourism with the support of companies working in the sector.

The work of the FG highlighted the need for a long-term vision that can only be built by triggering cultural processes aimed at increasing the culture of hospitality supported by adequately trained staff, as well as more effective coordination between bodies and institutions and a synergistic collaboration with the resident population is desirable. The quality of the region’s tourist offer is in fact a function of the overall attractiveness of the entire Lucanian ecosystem that enjoys the reputation of the territory, the rendered services, the welcoming capacity of the community and the cultural processes.

For this purpose, substantial material infrastructural investments are necessary to increase the attractiveness from the outside but also the degree of mobility within the region, making internal roads, especially the mountain ones, safer and adequately maintained.

At the same time, it is necessary to ensure adequate internet access throughout the region, also in light of South working, i.e., the return to the South of many workers who emigrated to the North thanks to the smart working granted due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

The transport system must be effective, the accommodation facilities adequate, the urban decorum guaranteed and, more generally, the environmental protection assured. Besides that, the services rendered must be of a professional nature, the communities must be adequately educated in the culture of hospitality (reinvigorating ancient Greek traditions), and museum and cultural journeys must be fluid.

The experience of the most recent years teaches, in fact, that the intuition of cultural attractions, such as museums, archaeological areas, and historical and architectural complexes already currently (or with the potential to become) attractors of quality and high added-value tourist demand, and of the relative territorial cultural system (e.g., Flight of the angel, Tibetan bridge, etc.), has been successful.

In this sense, the term “food and wine” must also be added to the combination of tourism and culture, with an adequate enhancement of regional food and wine resources.

In order to increase not only the resilience of Basilicata, but also its anti-fragility, as a possibility of improvement and adaptation of the territory, the vision of its development can only be based on a major protagonism, on the exercise of individual responsibility and on the principle of autonomy. These must characterize the dynamics not only in Basilicata but also throughout Southern Italy.

This would entail an entrepreneurial impetus with the leading role of young people in virtuous relationships with the public also regulated by public–private partnerships.

The latter would also contribute to improving the conditions of those who, for years, have chosen to be entrepreneurs in Basilicata, managing to build realities of absolute value, even in internal areas.

Despite unfavorable system conditions, in fact there is a significant private entrepreneurial dynamism that has also led to the implementation of digital platforms, such as, “Made in Basilicata”.

Additionally, thanks to the experience of the 130 environmental hiking guides of Basilicata, who are carrying out a meritorious job of promoting the region, it was possible to obtain a profile of the average tourist who comes to Basilicata: a returning tourist interested in the quality of the environment (links with research groups on black storks, orchids, etc.), sports, religion, and food and wine tours.

There is a strong demand for authenticity with a recovery of authentic relationships with people and with the territory, the use of which in a scenario of “slow” tourism could be improved with targeted investments and greater endowments.

Finally, planning and governance tools are indispensable in the support of territorial policies, e.g., a strategic tourism plan.
The selected strategies for tourism are reported in the section Priority 5 of Figure 10.

Priority 6: Environment

Consistent with the main Sustainable Development objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda and the wishes of Laudato si, the strategic diagnosis of the region has identified environmental policies as an instrument of strategic importance for the “green” development of the region’s economy in favor of an integral ecological transition that makes the social economic fabric more resilient.

The concept of resilience is used more and more frequently in the debate on the innovation of models of management, care, and maintenance of the social and natural environment and of projects for the transformation, regeneration, and development of the territory [57].

In this, the control of the natural environment and its management as a resource for local development and the quality of life play a fundamental role in building the resilience of a territory, contributing significantly to its economic development (tourist attractiveness and qualification of local productions).

Territories such as that of Basilicata are characterized by the coexistence of significant natural resources to be safeguarded and important anthropic activities with consequent pressures on environmental matrices. Among these can be counted the already mentioned extractive activities on shore, for example, SNI of Tito and Val Basento, which are to be reclaimed.

In addition to the intensive exploitation of fossil sources, the Basilicata region has also increasingly combined that of Renewable Energy Sources (RES). In 2019, the share of total energy consumption covered by renewable sources was 49.5%; the figure is higher than both the forecast of the Ministerial Decree of 15 March 2012 for 2018 (27.8%) and the target to be achieved by 2020 (33.1%) [58]. However, there are still margins for increasing the level of penetration of RES as well as in the governance of the territory, minimizing the environmental and landscape impacts due to wind farms and ground-mounted photovoltaic plants.

According to the strategic diagnosis results, various sources attest the need to increase the environmental culture through awareness raising and information and training actions. These can be adequately carried out starting from the youngest (within schools, families, parishes, etc.), making one’s lifestyle more sustainable and increasing citizen participation, without which no environmental policy is truly sustainable.

Proper environmental information by the institutions in charge is therefore fundamental. First, through the ARPAB, for which the interviewed stakeholders hope an enhancement to ensure adequate monitoring of environmental matrices and an increasingly effective environmental control and inspection actions. This is also considering the current planning phase of new investment.

In this sense, much can also be achieved by the Research Centers present in the region. They can support local institutions in the sustainable development of the territory by implementing also a more effective technology transfer. The Lucanian production system, then, should be able to count on authorization procedures not so slowed down by bureaucratic delays and by mechanisms for rewarding environmental sustainability.

Remarkable concern was expressed in relation to extractive activities, perceived as considerably dangerous and harmful to human health. The creation of independent observatories for monitoring environmental matrices in territories characterized by significant environmental pressures, such as the Alta Val d’Agri, Tempa Rossa and Val Basento, was hoped for.

It transpires that the perception of environmental risk, from the consulted sources and the questionnaire administered to young people, is illustrated by the figure of 99% of the interviewees considering the relationship between the environment and health to be “very/fairly” important.
The main identified criticalities or knots to be solved are represented by the sustainable management of environmental resources and the need for territory planning and management tools.

In fact, an energy transition towards decarbonization is hoped for, with a consequent reduction in hydrocarbon extraction and an increase in the RES penetration level, although wind and ground-mounted photovoltaic fields have been already perceived as causing significant environmental damage to the Lucanian territory and community.

The Province of Potenza has retraced its commitment since the 2000s in structuring the relationship with the territory and the different stakeholders at all levels in an extremely decentralized Italian system. It started with the collection of data for the Civil Protection, with a cognitive action aimed at characterizing risks, information, and models of intervention, sharing and territorial governance. To this aim, in fact, it is essential to be able to count on a cognitive framework for the main natural risks and anthropogenic pressures that can be updated over time.

Considerable effort was made in the implementation of the Provincial Structural Plan, as a basis for government actions aimed at increasing resilience not only in terms of civil risks but also in terms of territorial development, i.e., sustainable development and reduction in the risk of disasters and actions on the climate. In line with the most important international agendas, a model for territorial resilience was created, which also made use of experiences on energy policies, and community and stakeholder engagement.

The coordination of territorial policies was carried out by the Province of Potenza with an integration and partnership approach aimed at improving internal and external governance. A significative expertise was made through the Covenant of Mayors and the connection with the territory to pursue the objectives of sustainable development. The digital agenda on the issue of resilience was implemented as well as the strategic development plan according to a medium- and long-term vision.

The Department of Energy and Environment of the Basilicata Region has structured its activities aimed at (1) environmental control, (2) planning and (3) sustainable development.

Alongside these initiatives, measures have been taken by the Regional Council for the Inspection Plan for companies subject to Integrated Environmental Authorization, such as the Air Monitoring Plan. Further measures are being drawn up as regards odor and non-metallic emissions. Regarding planning activities, a staff dedicated to the implementation of the Landscape Plan has been created and the Coastal Plan for the Ionian Sea is about to be processed, followed by that for the Tyrrhenian coast.

Furthermore, regarding (2), the management plans for water, waste and the Regional Environmental-Energy Plan (REEP), which expired in 2020, have to be updated. As regards (3), agreements with oil companies with 220 million euros environmental compensation every five years for initiatives for the sustainable development of the region should be included. Among these, a Center of Excellence for drones will also be built in Stigliano (to be completed in 2022), with an occupational impact of 50 jobs.

There is also the desire to structure a “single control room” for the enhancement of Lucanian resources, in particular, protected areas and parks, with the prospective to promoting their tourism. Finally, in order to enhance the percentage of renewable energy in electricity production, an increase in hydroelectric plant capacity and the implementation of biomass supply chains from public forestry are being studied. These strategies represent the basis of a new “community vision” towards environmental issues.

The Province of Matera provided a representation of the main planning activities carried out since the 2000s, with the implementation of the Provincial Civil Plan, this through the creation of an interactive computerized network common among the province and the municipalities of the province itself. To overcome the lack of dynamic planning tools, the Provincial Structural Plan (PSP) was created. The Province of Matera has also adhered to the Covenant of Mayors through a memorandum of understanding with the European
Commission, carrying out the function of provincial coordinator of the 31 municipalities. For each of these, and by dividing the territory into five districts, action plans for sustainable energy have been developed, with the physical measurement of energy consumption. Work is underway on updating the PSP and the Civil Plan, as part of the strategy of the NRRP and aimed at the digitization of the entire provincial territory. To make the actions pursued by this plan as concrete as possible, it would be desirable to implement a regional cockpit with the two provinces.

In fact, a comprehensive knowledge and a more efficient territorial governance can be implemented through a coordinated management of the institutionally competent bodies. These must be able to work together. In summary, the PSP and digitization are necessary tools for obtaining serious, timely and in-depth knowledge of the territory.

ENEA recently, under the direct control of the Ministry of Ecological Transition, shared its commitment as a knowledge base, in particular on the exploitation of RES, reporting, by way of example, the publication of the Atlas of Biomasses with the territorial analysis of the local bioenergy potential.

The research activities carried out by the Enea Trisia center in the context of environmental monitoring on man-made areas, also in support of the Public Administration, such as those conducted on the landfill of the municipality of Matera, were also illustrated.

For the latter, a public transport electrification project was carried out with fast charging systems from photovoltaic sources.

The assessment of environmental exposure to contaminants in the SNI of Val Basento was also presented. For this, the Hg concentrations coming from the washing beds of the materials of some industrial processes were measured. This industrial activity contaminated several environmental matrices, whose exposure to risk is still present, as evidenced by the high concentrations measured in the plants present. In this way, the fundamental role of research in producing knowledge, in supporting applications aimed at solving real problems, was emphasized.

To pursue this goal, effective collaboration between stakeholders is needed because it is necessary to promote a comprehensive vision of the future to address the complexity of the environmental problem.

Finally, proposals were made relating to the monitoring of contaminated sites and coastal erosion, as well as the management of water bodies.

The ASI, with its Geodesy Center in Matera, is deeply committed to the sustainable economic development of Italy and Basilicata. In fact, the know-how acquired on the use of satellite navigation systems enables the study of seismicity, landslides, the erosion of the coasts, as well as supporting the implementation of the cartography of the territory.

They are ultimately strategic in monitoring environmental risks and managing emergencies, highlighting the fundamental role of research centers in technology transfer to companies.

Legambiente Basilicata, with the regional coordination of the twelve local clubs, provided a representation of the five main areas of action at national level, namely the campaigns on the topics (e.g., Let’s Clean Up The World), environmental education, training, relations of scientific study and projects. At the national level, in view of the implementation of the NRRP, Legambiente has identified 23 priorities relating to the circular economy, the fight against climate change, renewable energy, and risk mitigation, in particular, the hydrogeological one.

The importance of creating a system, of communication and environmental information was emphasized also to increase the social acceptability of the plants.

Initiatives were hoped for that aimed at creating energy communities for democratic energy as well as the possibility of taking advantage of adequate energy–environmental planning tools and digitization, all of which could take place in an area that has already been largely secured. The main strategies for the environment are reported in the section Priority 6 of Figure 10.
Priority 7: Industrial Policies and Environmental Sustainability

The Lucanian economy is characterized by overall levels of outsourcing in line with national average values [28]. The share of contribution to the total added value constituted by the agricultural sector is clearly the highest in Italy (well over 5% against about 2% at the national level), while that of the industrial sector is more contained (with a differential of 4–5 percentage points compared to the national average) [30].

The business system is mainly characterized by family-run and undercapitalized micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Production specializations are mainly based on traditional sectors and are therefore more exposed to competition with emerging markets.

They have a very low propensity for internationalization and, also due to their size, often have limited access to credit.

The economic fabric of Basilicata appears fragile and very tried by the pandemic. Despite this, the credit system still holds up, debt is still low, and the agricultural and industrial sectors seem to have withstood the shock.

To date, the region does not have a real industrial development plan, even though it hosts important international industries, including the automotive pole of Melfi, with the Stellantis plant and its related annex, and the mining and pre-treatment industry of hydrocarbons with the presence of Eni and Total.

There are nine industrial areas that have so far been managed by the industrial consortia of the two provinces, of which that of Potenza has been subject to reconversion through the establishment of new company API-Bas S.p.A. In this framework, industrial policies can play a pivotal role to correctly direct the future development of the sector in Basilicata towards sustainability.

The need for tangible and intangible infrastructural investments has emerged by the strategic diagnosis as well as for the implementation of industrial and labor market policies, on strategies and perspectives for the enhancement of skills, for the circular activation of schools, universities, and the world of research.

The manufacturing industry (automotive, agri-food, wood furniture, aerospace, energy, and construction), in fact, must be better supported by research, innovation and technology transfer activities. In general, the gap between public research and industrial production must be bridged and training aligned towards new green skills.

There is a need for a reorganization of the two industrial consortia with the creation of a single consortium and the various interviewed stakeholders called for the definition of a unified design of industrial policy at regional level. This should take note of the mistakes made in the past and in the light of the enormous economic flows arriving, promoting a self-propelling development capable of enhancing the green perspective and the Euro-Mediterranean strategy with the Mezzogiorno (South Italy) logistic and infrastructural center of this strategy.

Numerous sources and interviews referred to the opportunity represented by the Special Economic Zone—Ionian SEZ Puglia-Basilicata Legislative Decree no. 91/2017 [59].

Thanks to the participation of the Department of Training, Development Policies, Work, Training and Research, it was possible to emphasize how the problem of industrial policies in Basilicata suffers from a cultural, infrastructural, and social gap.

The implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda, the new programming cycle and the Recovery Fund aim to enhance the five priority “areas” of innovation in the Basilicata region: aerospace, automotive, bioeconomy, energy, cultural and creative industry.

To innovate the extremely fragmented Lucanian entrepreneurial system, clusters created with the grouping of local excellences and development contracts were implemented to attract investments in all industrial areas (bonuses were awarded for the recovery of disused production facilities).

Among these, noteworthy is that of the automotive one with Stellantis on the electric, while Basilicata is putting itself forward as a candidate to become the Italian hub of hydrogen for both production and storage (one of the seven experimental research centers).
Additionally, considering the provisions for the SEZs, for the implementation of which a simplification law (DL 77/2021) [60] was required in view of a more Consolidated Law, work is being carried out on the Industrial Development Plans (rewarding consumption of resources and waste reductions) and investment plans (self-production reward from RES).

Finally, through the establishment of the new company API-BAS S.p.A., the regional government laid the foundations for the implementation of governance models for the sustainable management of industrial areas, including the Ecologically Equipped Productive Areas (EEPAs).

Lastly, the agreements with ENI and Total for the new environmental compensations that envisage no investments in no oil are worthy of note, including, by way of example, the center of excellence for drones.

In support of what was planned by the regional government, as its in-house company, the Sviluppo Basilicata activity is set up, which proposes the technical tools necessary to implement regional strategic policies. Most of the measures envisaged are non-repayable or with a very low financing rate compared to the market. Innovative financial engineering tools are also envisaged for the contribution of part of the risk capital to finance the start-up or growth of a business.

Subsequently, the business will be abandoned, partially recovering the invested capital and offering the same loan to other companies.

It is about revolving loans which have the characteristic of using the initial capital several times on different activities, generating the leverage effect, or rather the benefit is transmitted to several companies.

Confindustria Basilicata reiterated the need for recognition of the centrality of the company and a greater business culture in solving the employment problem in Basilicata.

By giving voice to the requests of entrepreneurs and the difficulties encountered in finding suitable professional figures, the need for a co-projecting strategy between institutions and companies was emphasized, with the involvement of all stakeholders, as well as the recognition of the key role of training and of Superior Technical Institutes (STI) to minimize the mismatch between supply and demand. At the same time, the need to streamline the authorization procedures for greater competitiveness of businesses was advocated.

Finally, ARPAB, in underlining its institutional commitment to the control and inspection of activities, indicated the opportunity to create a dialogue profile between itself and companies and to strengthen the planning tools, specifically including the REEP and procedures for assessing the environmental impacts of renewable energy technologies. The strategies identified for industrial policies and environmental sustainability are reported in the section Priority 7 of Figure 10.

4. Conclusions

The present contribution represents an example of an interactive, replicable, and updatable model of participatory planning for a more sustainable and resilient community.

The trans-disciplinary and integral approach adopted in the construction of this participatory planning model has allowed us to examine the sustainability of the Basilicata system in all its dimensions. The active involvement of stakeholders and community partners was achieved in all phases of this research process, structured in three methodological steps.

Working with policy makers, academic experts, school networks, students, employers’ associations, trade unions, parishes and social partners, the participatory planning has provided a space in which stakeholders can analyze problems, identify local needs, exchange ideas, compare proven and promising practices, discover cutting-edge research, and contribute to increase the community resilience. This has led to the creation of stable and lasting partnerships and alliances between subjects not used to designing together. This also made it possible to pursue purposes of information, training, and awareness regarding the ecological transition of the region. Once the priority areas of action have been identified (infrastructures, education and training, agriculture, tourism, environment,
industrial policies, and environmental sustainability), the active involvement of community partners, stakeholders and political institutions led to the implementation of a position paper, a summary document of the participatory planning model framework, and an action plan with strategic actions per area. These two documents represent useful tools to guide decision making in this delicate phase of choices in the light of the possibilities offered by the PRRN. Both will also represent valid tools for monitoring the impacts of regional government policy choices in bringing about positive changes.

The present research activity has combined the style of participatory planning with the scientific approach of research, representing a very complex but extremely significant experience in supporting the integral ecological transition of a community towards a more resilient and sustainable world.

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