



Towards an integrated analysis of rural systems: the case study of the Alento basin

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The role and the functions of rural areas are undergoing considerable change due to economic, social and environmental drivers. The outcome of the transformation is the production of highly heterogeneous landscapes, rural mosaics, which are home to varying degrees of intensity of land-use and processes of deactivation, abandonment and land degradation. The identification of rural mosaics has implications both for determining the impacts on the stock of connected natural resources and for defining measures and policies able to support the resilience of rural territories and the identification of sustainable strategies for development. The study proposes a methodology for the integrated analysis of the rural territory which combines the analysis of land cover dynamics, using GIS, with an assessment of socio-economic dynamics, reconstructed through the combined use of indicators and local history, and which is aware that the differences and peculiarities within rural territories are the result of actions taken over time and of the different adaptive strategies undertaken by communities operating in different fields, under the influence of specific ecologic and environmental conditions. The methodology, applied to a socio-ecological system which is representative of the Mediterranean basin, is proposed as a tool to support the territorialisation of policies, opening the process up to perspectives able to better comprehend the dynamic evolution of rural territories, internalising that evolution in the definition of the instruments and measures to adopt.