

# **Rural landscape as heritage: a tool for building resilience in the context of disturbances affecting small towns**

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5th March, 2020 - Prague

# **REACH Culture**\_RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage for a wider participation in preservation, (re-)use and management of European culture



Cultural Heritage (CH) can be considered ephemeral, because it is based on a link between cultural features and the communities that produced them. Since communities change, their heritage changes as well. Europe is producing new communities who are looking for representation in European society, also in its CH. **REACH uses pilots to study more in depth some of these communities, to engage with them in participatory activities, to discover and promote best practices, and to create the conditions to encourage their commitment beyond the project's end.**

- **H2020 Small Town Pilot** - In Italian small towns, urban and rural heritage is strictly linked
- **How can local rural heritage enhance resilience to some disturbances?**



# THE MARCITA AND OUR CASE STUDIES

Ticino\_The Morimond Abbey



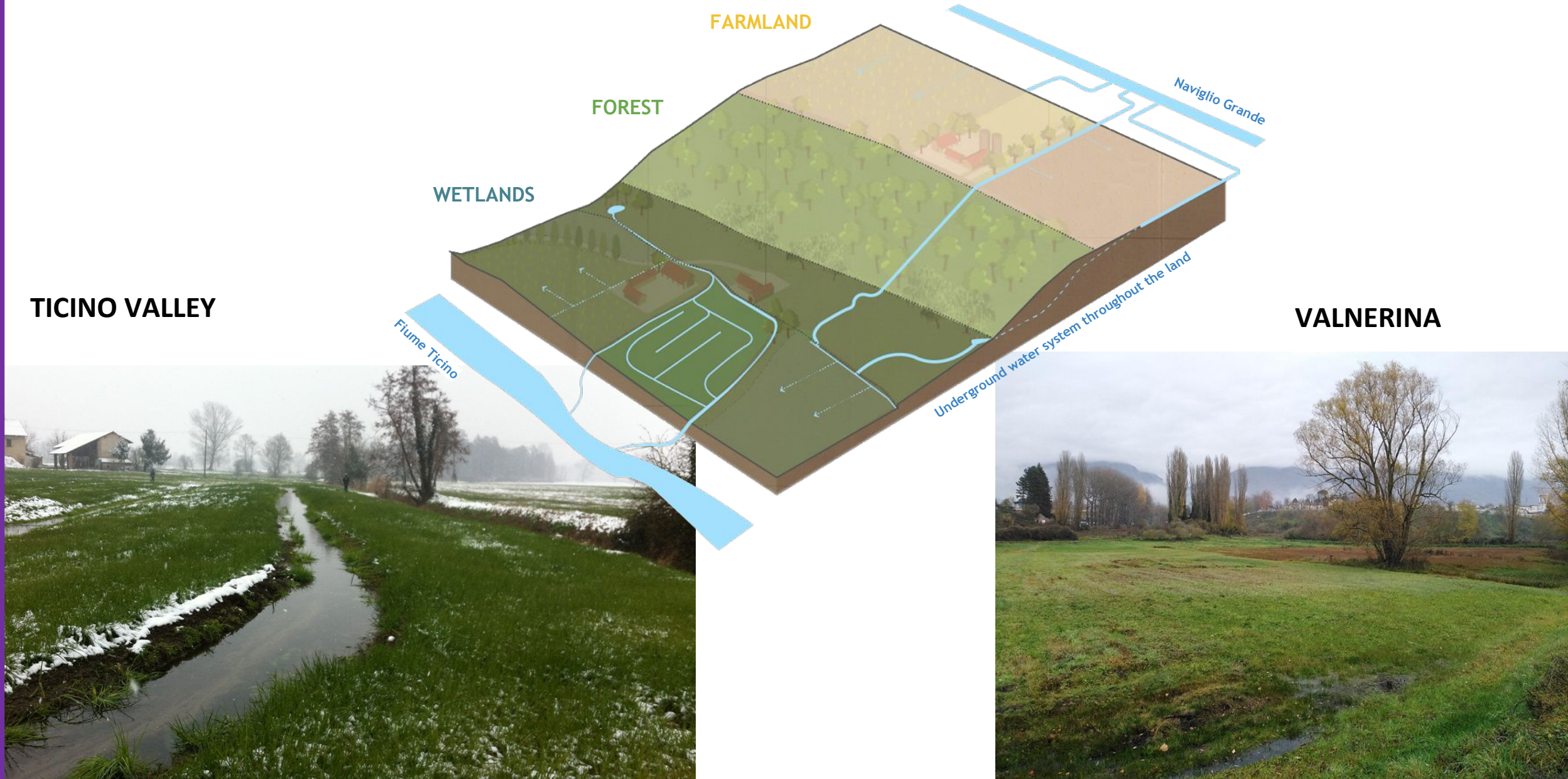
Norcia\_San Benedetto Monastery



RECOVERY AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE



# THE MARCITA WATER MEADOWS LANDSCAPE SYSTEM



# HERITAGE AND RESILIENCE: THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

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- ▶ Resilience as the capacity to deal with disturbances or changes without altering the “essential” characteristics of social-ecological systems - **“From a resilience perspective, landscape changes will be considered consequences of a complex interplay between nature and society, following patterns and processes of reciprocal effects, feedback loops, non-linearity, thresholds, surprises, legacy effects, time lags, different degrees of resilience”** (Plieninger & Bieling 2012: 16)
- ▶ **Rural landscape as heritage**: Refers to the **tangible and intangible heritage of rural areas**. Rural landscape as heritage encompasses physical attributes – the productive land itself, morphology, water, infrastructure, vegetation, settlements, rural buildings and centers, vernacular architecture, transport, and trade networks, etc. – as well as wider physical, cultural, and environmental linkages and settings. Rural landscape as heritage also includes associated cultural knowledge, traditions, practices, expressions of local human communities’ identity and belonging, and the cultural values and meanings attributed to those landscapes by past and contemporary people and communities. Rural landscapes as heritage encompass technical, scientific, and practical knowledge, related to human-nature relationships. (ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes As Heritage, adopted in New Delhi 15/12/2017)
- ▶ **Heritage can contribute to sustaining and increasing the adaptation and resilience of rural landscapes** by **supporting rural and urban inhabitants, local communities, governments**, industries, and corporations as integral aspect to managing the dynamic nature, threats, risks, strengths, and potentialities of such areas (ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes As Heritage, adopted in New Delhi 15/12/2017)

# METHODOLOGY

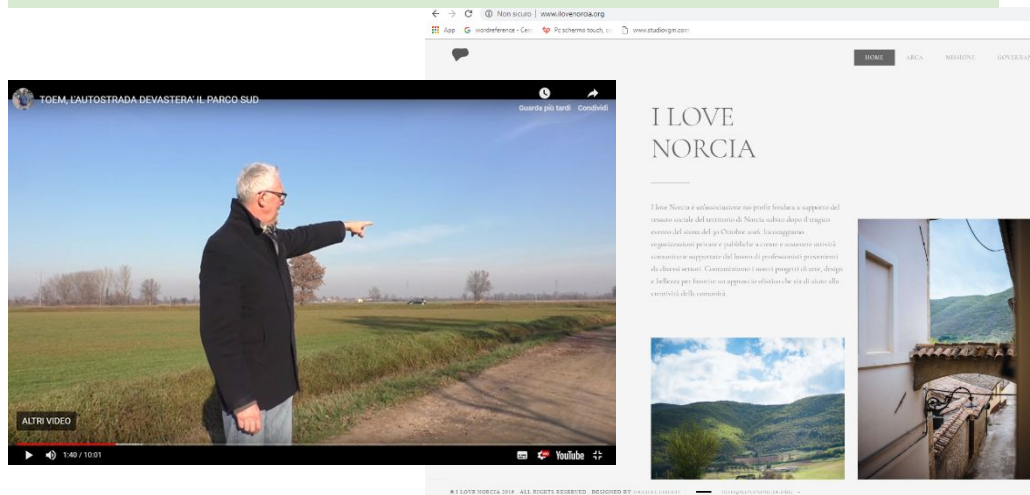
*Following research methodology of small town pilot action  
In order to compare results*

## DATA COLLECTION

- Collection of initiatives promoted by both institutions, stakeholders and the public
- Classic and walking interviews (14 INTERVIEWS PER CASE STUDY) and focused ethnography
- Documents and newspapers, online blogs and social media

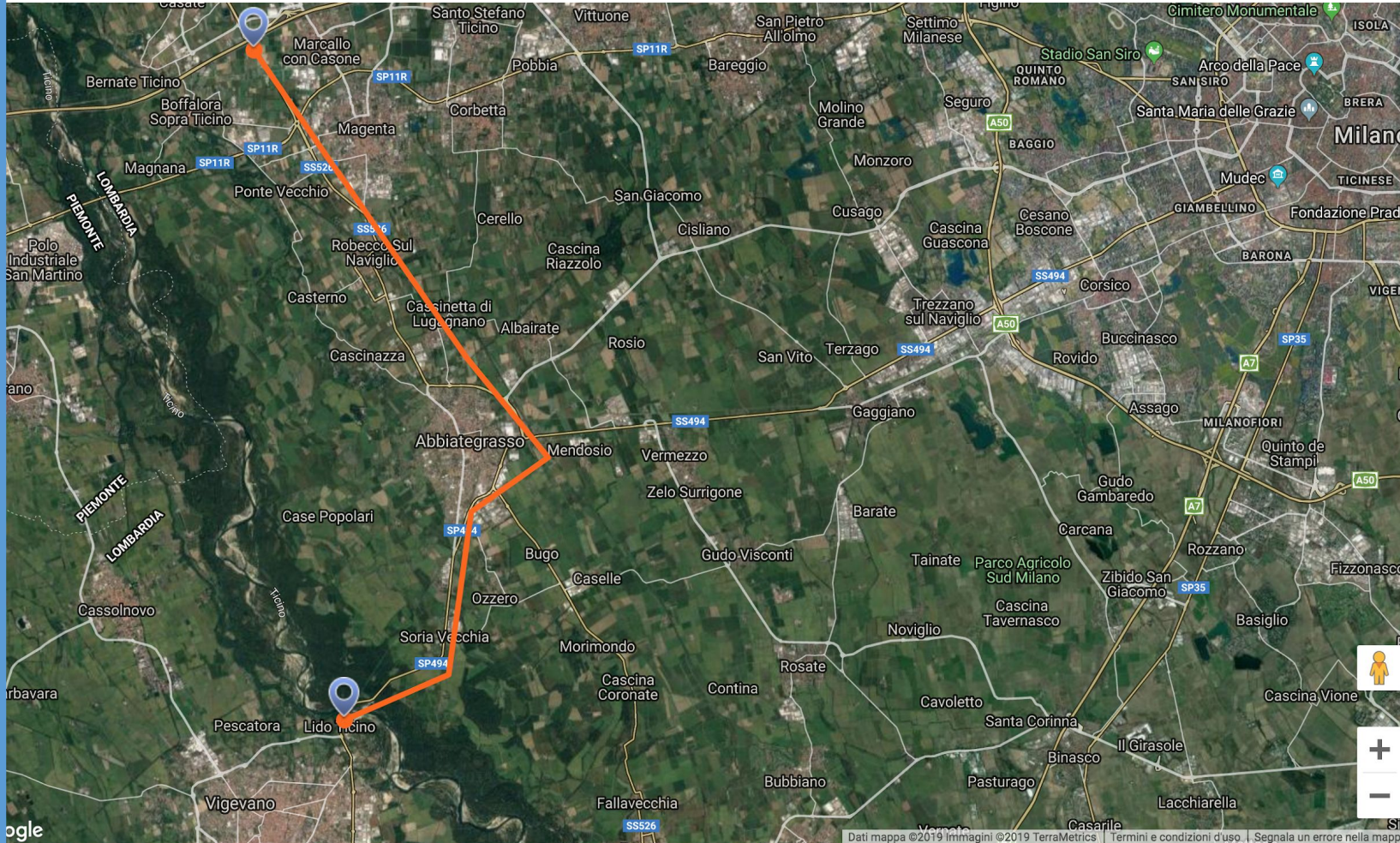
## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is heritage and what do you consider to be a protection worth heritage?
2. Which (and what kind of) initiatives are organized for heritage promotion/conservation?
3. How rural landscape and Marcite Water Meadows are considered in heritage-making processes? What kind of participation?
4. How the highway project/the earthquake is conceived and its impact on heritage and rural landscape (including marcite)? What kind of participation?
5. How heritage (and what kind of) and participation in heritage making are used to adapt/resist to the highway project/earthquake and its recovery?

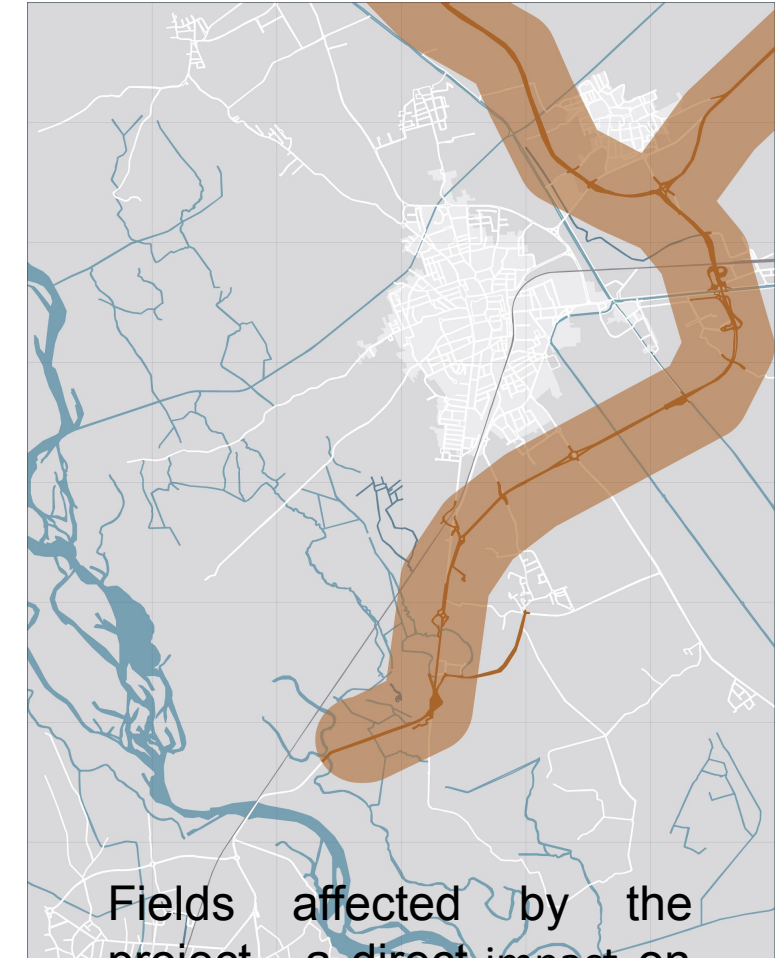




# THE HIGHWAY PROJECT



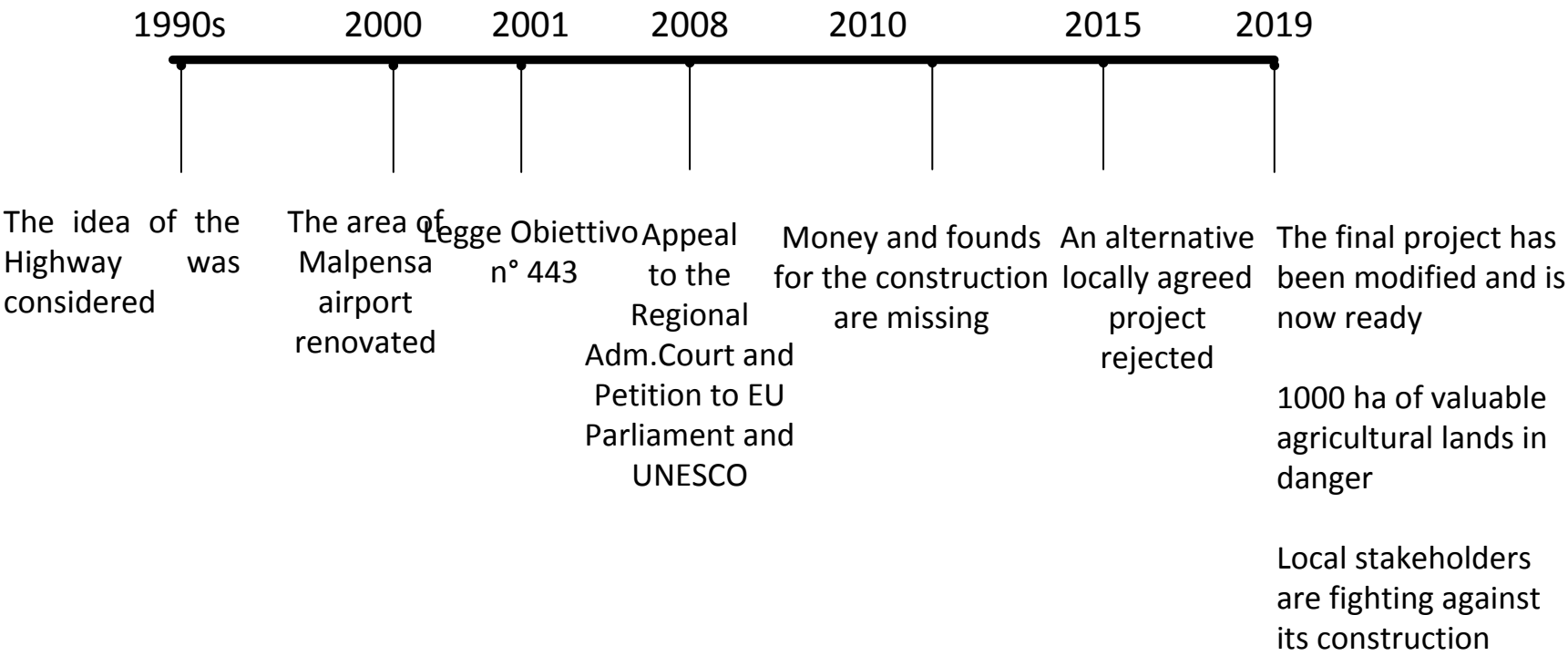
The project of the highway starts from the city of Vigevano and goes on the west side of Milan to connect Malpensa Airport



Fields affected by the project - a direct impact on 128 ha, a broad impact on 1000 ha of valuable rural lands

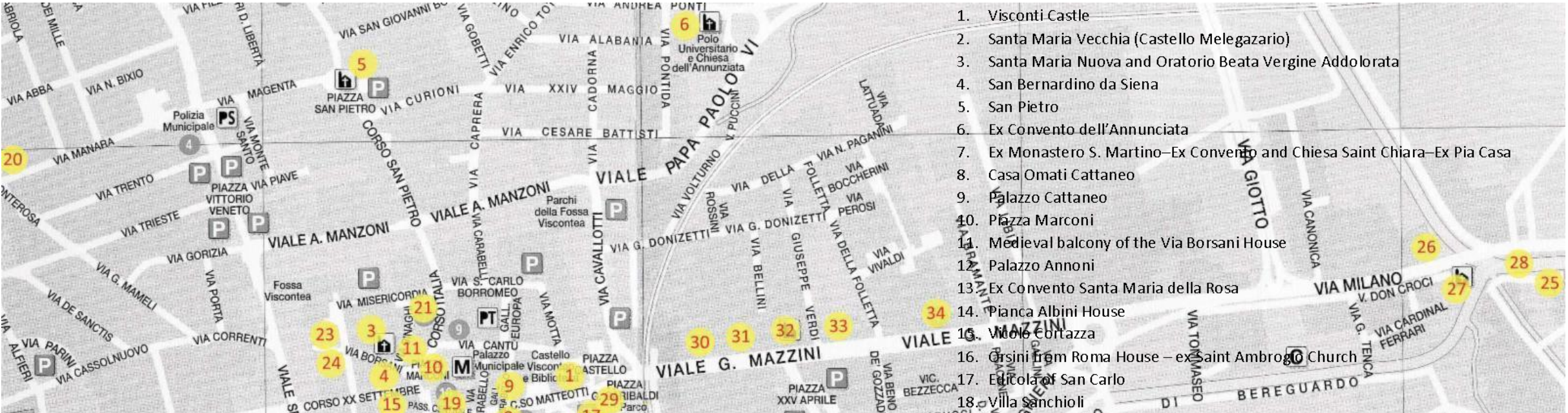
# HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

In the 90s with the great expansion of the airport of Malpensa there was the willing to connect better the city of Milan and its surroundings





# URBAN TANGIBLE HERITAGE\_data collection



1. Visconti Castle
2. Santa Maria Vecchia (Castello Melegazario)
3. Santa Maria Nuova and Oratorio Beata Vergine Addolorata
4. San Bernardino da Siena
5. San Pietro
6. Ex Convento dell'Annunciata
7. Ex Monastero S. Martino—Ex Convento and Chiesa Saint Chiara—Ex Pia Casa
8. Casa Omati Cattaneo
9. Palazzo Cattaneo
10. Piazza Marconi
11. Medieval balcony of the Via Borsani House
12. Palazzo Annoni
13. Ex Convento Santa Maria della Rosa
14. Pianca Albini House
15. Villa Cortazza
16. Orsini from Roma House – ex saint Ambrogio Church
17. Ercola of San Carlo
18. Villa Sanchioli
19. Central Pathway
20. Palazzo Arconati (Palasi)
21. Palazzo Castoldi
22. Palazzo Pionnio (Palasiet - Palazzo della Principessa)
23. Palazzo Taccani
24. Palazzo Confalonieri
25. Palazzo Stampa
26. Casa del guardiano delle acque
27. S. Antonio Abate
28. Naviglio
29. Garibaldi Monument
30. Palazzo Sacchei
31. Saint Rocchino
32. Saint Rocco
33. Palazzo Citterio Sala Cocini
34. Palazzo Corio Litta Visconti





# INTANGIBLE HERITAGE\_data collection

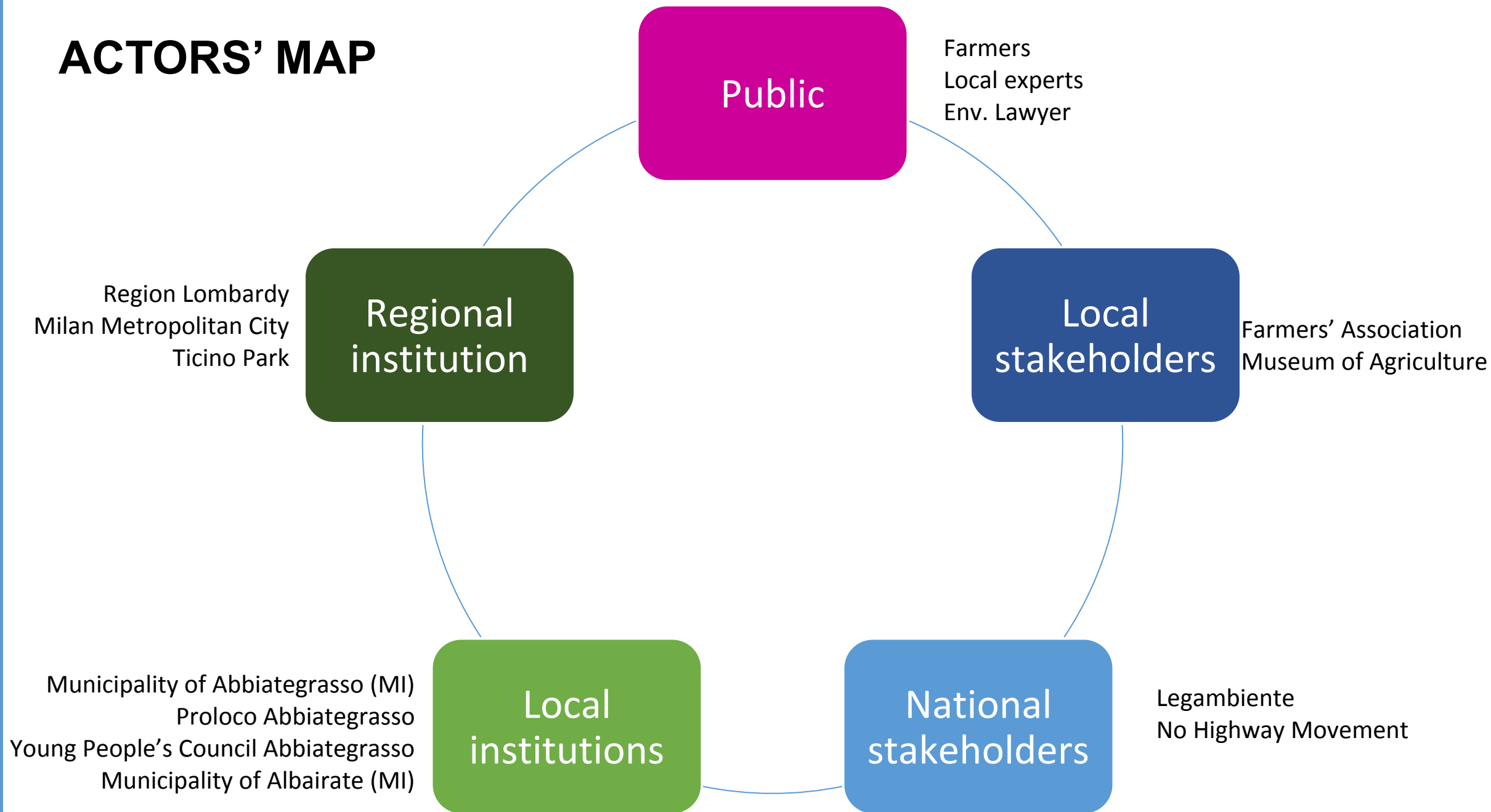
## Main initiatives

- The *San Pietro Palio*: a horse race among the six neighborhoods of Abbiategrosso. It was born in 1980 on the wave of the folk festival revival of the 80s.
- The *Notturmo*: an historical performance located in historic buildings – now ended.
- Every third Sunday, the monthly market of modernism, hobbies, handicrafts/creations and typical products
- *Abbiategusto*, a promotion of local products through local restaurants
- The NO Tangenziale Festival, a gathering of the No Tangenziale Movement, for the protection of the rural areas
- The Saint Patron's day of Albairate, with different religious and traditional events the first week of October
- *Corteggiando*, a night of performances and music in the traditional yards of the town





# ACTORS' MAP



# HERITAGE COSTRUCTION

Public

*heritage is water* (Abbiategrosso farmer)  
*Landscape is an ecosystem* (agronomist)

Local  
stakeholders

*heritage is everything  
connected to the rural  
landscape, mainly derived  
from a direct (local)  
knowledge of it*

National  
stakeholders

Local  
institutions

*heritage is something linked to  
the town, mainly referring to  
the historical built environment  
of a supposed Medieval origin  
soil and water to be the heritage  
of an area historically based on  
agriculture(Albairate Mayor)*

Regional  
institution

*almost everything  
connected to the  
landscape is heritage  
(Ticino Park)*



# THE MARCITA MEADOW AND THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

*unique internationally acknowledged value to be preserved ...and a potential future model for sustainable circular economy (Ticino Park)*

*a relics of the past (Pro loco)  
old tradition, with an historical and cultural value...part of a collective history it hasn't got an active role in the present (Metropolitan city)*

Regional institution

Local institutions

Public

National stakeholders

Local stakeholders

*Traditional agricultural technique transmitting values (Abbiategrosso farmer)  
Landscape is an ecosystem (agronomist)*

*a symbol of past relationships with a rural past evoking also shame (Legambiente)*

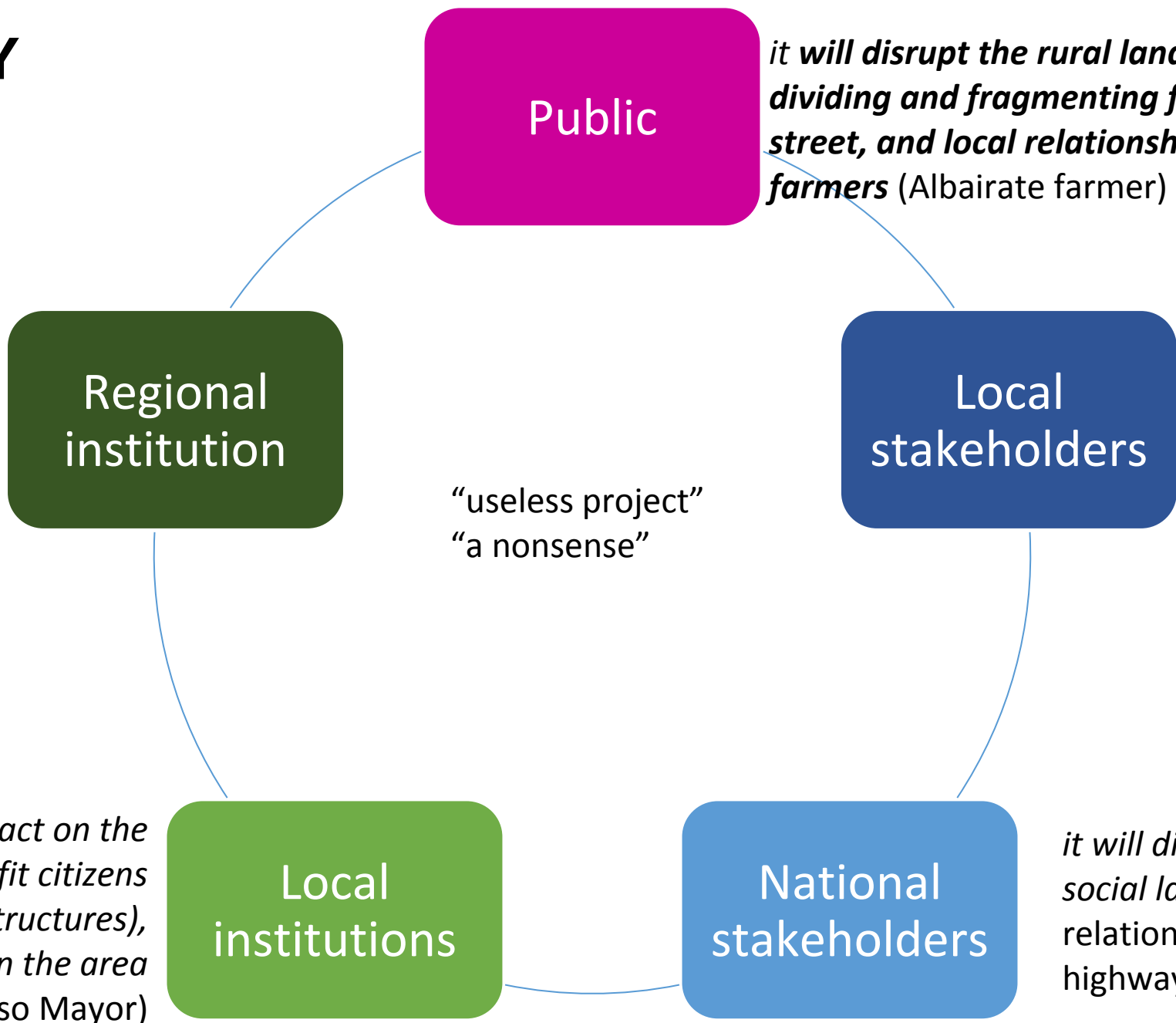
*like heritage of the town to raise awareness on local key characteristics (No-Highway Movement)*

# THE HIGHWAY PROJECT

*It will have a disruptive impact on the water grid draining all the resurgences and springs (Ticino Park)*

*It'll be an environmental and naturalistic damage, and for farmers very substantial, needlessly... harmful - **This is really stupid** (Metropolitan City of Milan)*

*it will have a bad impact on the environment, but it will benefit citizens (due to a growing lack of infrastructures), local industries and traffic in the area (Abbiategrosso Mayor)*



*it will disrupt the rural landscape by literally dividing and fragmenting farms, fields, local street, and local relationships between local farmers (Albairate farmer)*

*it will disrupt rural and social landscape (social relationships) (no highway movement)*



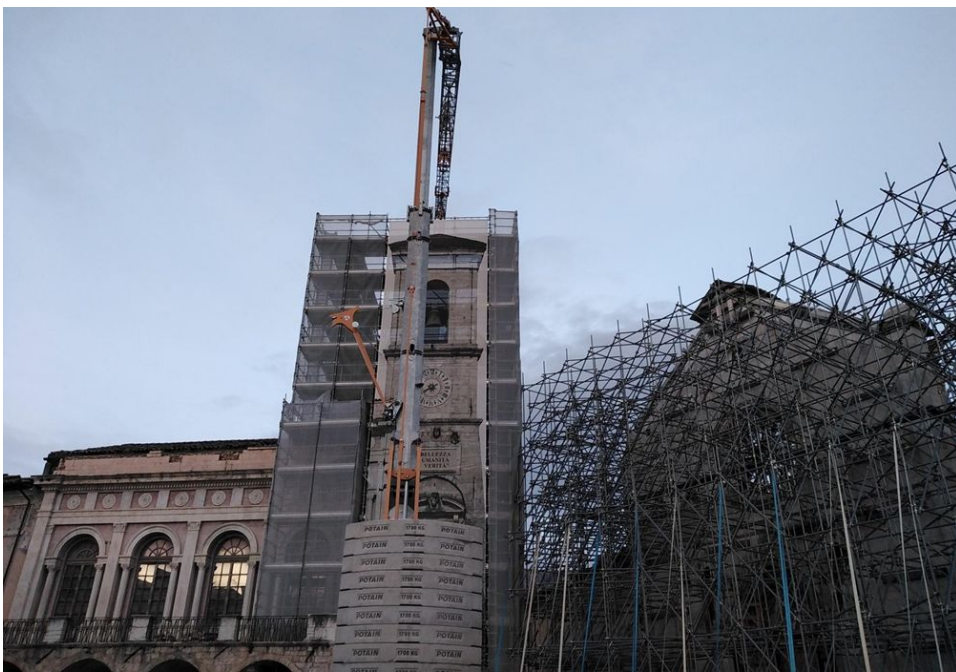
# CRITICAL ANALYSIS Rural landscape enhancing resilience

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- the highway turns into a potential disaster, as it configures itself as the threat of losing something at this intersection between human practices and the environment: local networks linked to a (conflictual) relationship with rural landscape
- The point is the acknowledgement of what is locally incorporated in rural landscape as heritage while this is under attack
- Rural landscape enhancing resilience by:
  - transmitting shared values and local knowledges
  - promoting sustainability and raising awareness
  - promoting urban regeneration and stronger local networks for an alternative economic and social system

# URBAN TANGIBLE HERITAGE

Piazza San Benedetto - Norcia



1. The Basilica of Saint Benedict
2. Palazzo Comunale
3. The Castellina (Civic and Church Local Museum)
4. St. Maria Argentea Co-cathedral
5. Il Complesso Monumentale San Francesco
6. St. Agostino Church
7. St. Giovanni Church
8. The tempietto (1354 d.C.)
9. Madonna Addolorata Church
10. Oratorio of Saint Agostinuuccio
11. Massenzi Art Collection
12. The permanent exhibition "Partire per l'aldilà"
13. Cryptoportico of Porta Ascolana
14. The exhibition of the rural culture
15. Civic Theatre

Queste immagini  
rappresentano  
il nostro passato e...  
il nostro futuro.  
Torneremo come prima.



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# RURAL INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

## *Main initiatives*

- *Nero Norcia*, the festival of black truffle
- Benedictine religious celebrations, linked to the Patron of Europe
- *The faoni* of St. Antonio in Castelluccio and in Norcia, bonfires made of broom branches, stacked around a pole, and arranged in the squares of Norcia, while in houses are prepared the songs, music and delicious local buns.
- The Epifania in Castelluccio, a rural questua.
- August feasts in Castelluccio
- The flowering of legumes and lentils in Castelluccio plan



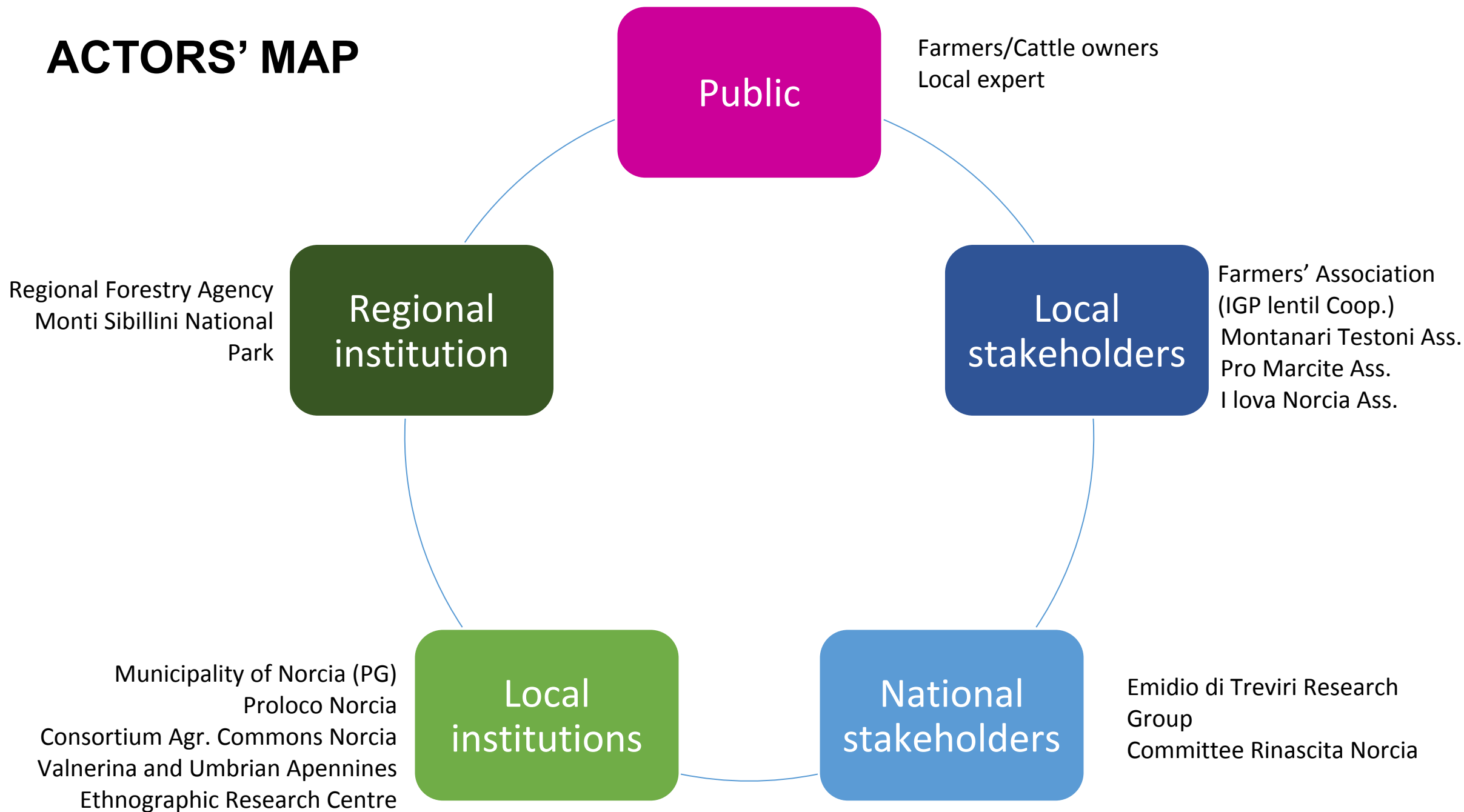


# HISTORY OF THE EARTHQUAKE

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- High seismic risk: 1979 and 1997 earthquakes
- In 2016-2017 four strong earthquakes struck the central Apennine area and involved four regions: Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo.
- the 30th October 2016, a magnitude 6.5 struck again the Valnerina: the city of Norcia suffered great damage, with all its churches collapsed and Castelluccio di Norcia was almost entirely destroyed. 40000 people were left displaced.
- With almost 50,000 displaced persons, the Dept. of Civil Protection proposed four solutions to help the affected population in response to the housing emergency: 38,184 in Autonomous Housing Contribution (CAS), 7.782 in emergency housing units (SAE); 1,943 were in accommodation facilities, 807 in prefabricated rural emergency housing modules for livestock farmers, 642 in container modules and 486 in municipal facilities (DPC 2018; Pitzalis 2019).
- After 3 years the accepted applications for the reconstruction of private homes is the 3.5% among the 79,454 expected

# ACTORS' MAP



# HERITAGE COSTRUCTION

*the landscape with  
the surrounding  
mountains and the  
historical buildings of  
the city centre*

Public

*huge intangible  
heritage repertoire  
made of local food  
production  
practices, local  
knowledges and  
traditions, religious  
practices and a  
lifestyle (I love  
Norcia Ass.)*

*(at Faoni fest) we “make  
the community”  
(Regional Forest Agency)*

Regional  
institution

Local  
stakeholders

*cultural heritage is  
everything that concerns  
the [collapsed] village  
(IGP Lentil association)*

*Exactly what has been hit by the  
earthquake (Norcia Mun.);  
the productive landscape,  
(Consortium Agricultural Commons  
Norcia and Castelluccio)*

Local  
institutions

National  
stakeholders

*You used to take  
everything for granted!  
(comitato Rinascita)*



# THE RURAL LANDSCAPE and MARCITA MEADOW

*the landscape is very dynamic, evolves in function of the of man and agricultural activities*

*...Rural landscape can be a vehicle for promoting the territory, as long as it is usable by the people who actually live in it» (Forestry Reg. Dept.)*

*(Concerning marcitas) We work with project fundraising (Regional Forest Agency)*

*The landscape is the cake and Norcia is its icing (Norcia municipality)*

Regional institution

Local institutions

Public

lentil,  
the black truffle  
and pork processing

*There is no generational change, the technique disappears, so young people don't know it, they should have learnt it from the elderly (Farmer)*  
**the productive landscape** (IGP Lentil consortium)

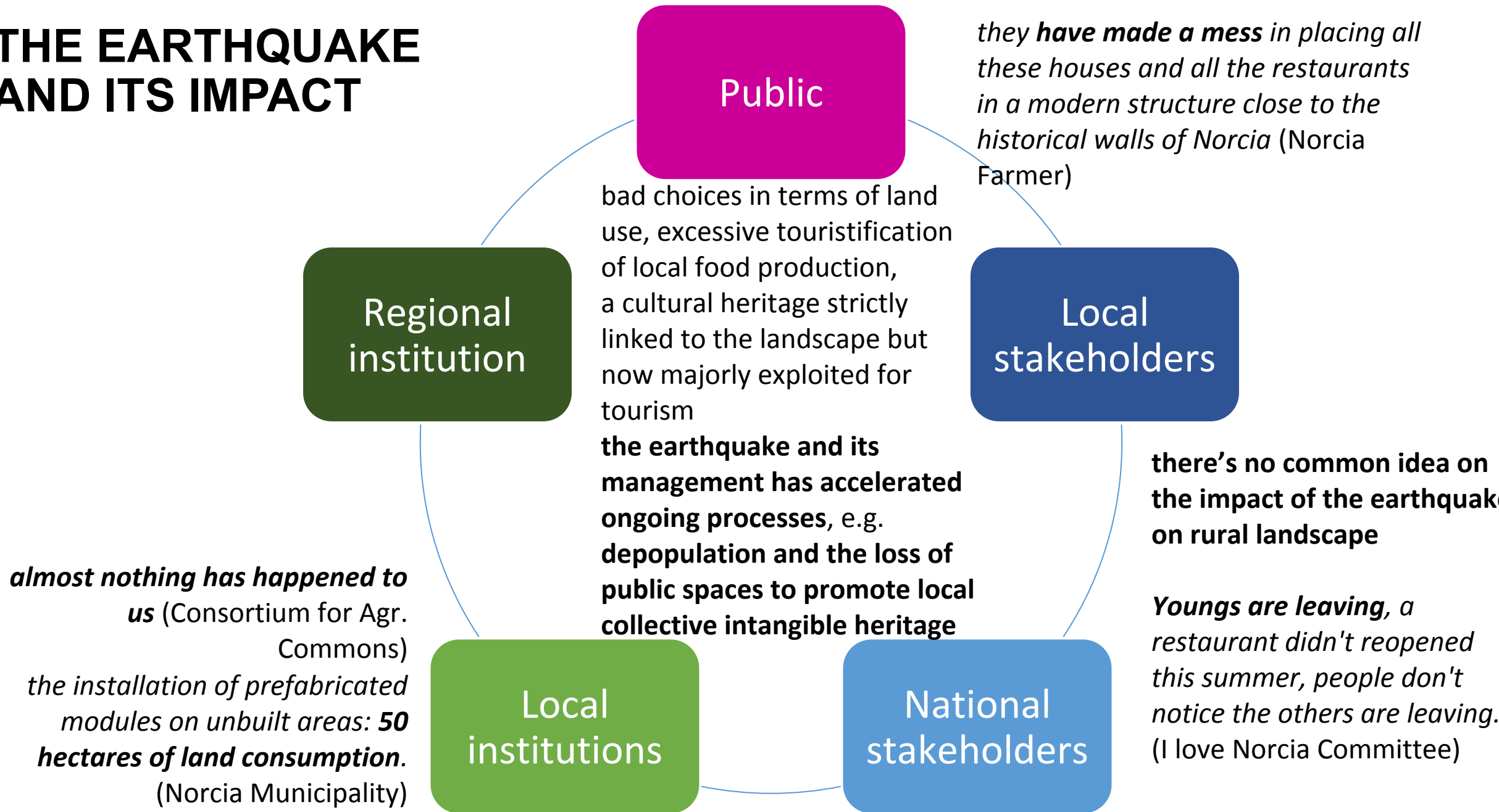
Local stakeholders

*(Marcitas) everyone in Norcia more or less knows what they are ... extraordinary place but left a bit apart (Montanari Testoni)*

National stakeholders

*Marcita are a link with what we had before ...before the disaster, the watermills were regularly visited (comitato rinascita)*

# THE EARTHQUAKE AND ITS IMPACT



# CRITICAL ANALYSIS Rural landscape enhancing resilience

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- There's a conflict between values, local economy and heritage: a touristification of rural landscape as heritage and local needs: acceleration of existing processes due to the earthquakes and its management
- The first and second year after the earthquake festivals and traditions that have been adapted to the status quo (they found new places but continued) became a sort of symbolic shelter
- Due to the lack of tangible elements with high symbolical values (churches and buildings) since they collapsed after the earthquake, the re-proposal of folklore practices/feasts can enhance the sense of belonging to places
- The landscape can therefore enhance resilience in case of an earthquake, especially in the emergency and recovery phases because it is less affected by the damage of the earthquake, so it can turn into a **factor of continuity, reassurance and a vector of intangible heritage to help recovering through past shared practices/values performed in places (within a collective common rural history)**



# COMPARATIVE RESULTS\_ rural landscape is considered as

TICINO VALLEY  
ABBIATEGRASSO

“supporting”  
urban built  
heritage

controversi  
al value of  
traditional  
techniques  
/relics

part of a  
conflictual  
historical  
identity

can  
promote  
circular  
economy

Feb. 2020

Highway Project  
stopped by the  
Regional Court

VALNERINA AND  
NORCIA

strictly  
integrate  
d to  
urban  
built  
heritage

conflictual  
source of  
production  
and life

intangible  
glue

resource  
for a  
sustainabl  
e future  
now  
touristifie  
d

# CONCLUSION

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- ✓ In terms of reacting to a disturbance, rural landscape resulted to be not just “the surroundings” of a “small town”, rather **a main component of the landscape system**
- ✓ The landscape system can be a resource of resilience for local people if it is understood and evaluated **in terms of local knowledge as a part of the historical and social system.**
- ✓ **It could embody and transmit tangible and intangible aspects which potentially encapsulates a sense of identity and place in small towns:** these feelings are essential to recover from disturbances, if acknowledged.
- ✓ It could connect people at local level - **it both shapes and is shaped by a social network (which is inherently embedded into socio-natural elements e.g. water or food) VS “Eviction” of locals/depopulation due to touristification?**
- ✓ It could connect (and visualize) social-ecological systems, so **promoting sustainable urban regeneration** and raising local knowledge and awareness
- ✓ **It could also work as source and place of alternative economic models, turning rural landscape as heritage into an active an element of continuity between past and future.**



