



ISLANDS

INCLUSIVE SPORTS FOR LOCALS AND NATURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN REMOTE AND ISOLATED CONTEXTS, INCLUDING ISLANDS



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INTRODUCTION

Remote and isolated contexts, including islands, represent an important and far from marginal component of human geographies. Despite their often small size, these territories preserve unique natural and cultural heritages, developed over time thanks to specific geographic configurations, fragile ecosystems, and profound social dynamics. Their existence is a valuable indicator of the relationship between people, resources, and spaces, and allows us to more clearly observe the interdependencies between the environment, the economy, and communities.

Geographic isolation directly influences the social and economic organization of these territories. Physical distances from centers of power, production hubs, infrastructure networks, and large urban systems create specific conditions that impact the quality of life and opportunities available to local populations. In this sense, islands and remote territories become a lens

through which to observe the limits and potential of contemporary development models.

Environmentally, isolated territories are often characterized by highly valuable yet vulnerable ecosystems. Indeed, island biodiversity is among the richest in the world, but also among the most threatened: 75% of extinctions in the last 400 years have occurred on islands. Added to this are challenges such as water scarcity, rising energy costs, the impact of unregulated tourism, and the difficulties in transforming agricultural systems to a sustainable level. These challenges concern not only the "environment" in an abstract sense, but also issues that are deeply intertwined with the daily existence of communities.

Socially, the consequences of isolation are visible in educational pathways, professional opportunities, and the quality of civic participation. Unemployment, job instability, and dependence on seasonal economies constitute permanent factors of vulnerability. Educational opportunities are limited, and the limited availability of public infrastructure and services creates a marked territorial divide. Within this framework, the marginalization of minorities, the difficulty in integrating new residents, and poor democratic participation tend to become structural phenomena.

These territories, however, cannot be viewed merely as "fragile" places. They are also places of resilience, adaptability, living traditions, and great community intelligence. The solutions that emerge from remote contexts often foreshadow valuable and replicable perspectives in other areas: more efficient water management models, regenerative agricultural practices, innovative forms of community cooperation, strong social networks, and relational proximity that become social capital.

Analyzing environmental and social challenges in remote contexts therefore means questioning the very meaning of contemporary development: what makes a territory livable? What conditions are needed for a community to survive, grow, and plan for the future? What balances are needed to prevent geographic isolation from becoming social marginalization?

With the project "The Island" weThe book aims to address these questions through ten thematic chapters, each dedicated to a specific and concrete dimension of the environmental and social challenges present in remote and isolated contexts. It's not just a matter of listing critical issues, but of recognizing the connections between natural factors and human dynamics, to better understand the conditions that could make these

territories not just places that "survive," but places that manage to "live well," generate value, and build a future.

CHAPTER 1

Biodiversity conservation

Biodiversity conservation represents a key challenge in remote and isolated environments, including islands. In these places, geographic distance has often produced unique ecosystems, with plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world. While this isolation has allowed the development of extraordinary habitats, it also makes them extremely vulnerable to any external change. The loss of even a single species or the alteration of a single ecological balance can generate much more rapid and irreversible ripple effects than in large continental territories.

One of the main factors threatening island and remote biodiversity is the introduction of invasive species. Fish, mammals, insects, or plants introduced by humans, even unintentionally, can alter very delicate ecological environments, competing with local species for food, water, and space, eventually replacing them entirely. Islands have historically been among the environments most affected by this phenomenon.

Adding to this vulnerability are the effects of climate change. Extreme weather events, rising sea levels,

changes in water salinity, and shifts in currents alter the lives of marine and terrestrial species. In small, isolated places, every environmental transformation has immediate consequences: coastal erosion can lead to habitat loss, temperature fluctuations can disrupt reproductive cycles, and diminishing food resources can push animal species toward local extinction.

Another factor is direct human pressure: coastal urbanization, infrastructure built without impact assessments, deforestation, and unsustainable agriculture. Remote areas do not always have the economic, legislative, and professional resources to effectively control land use. This increases the risk that private interests or emergency decisions could alter unique ecosystems without adequate protection.

Preserving biodiversity in these contexts requires integrated and forward-looking approaches. Tools such as sustainable territorial planning, the protection of sensitive natural areas, ongoing scientific monitoring, and the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes can make a difference. Citizens also play a key role: promoting responsible behavior, developing a culture of conservation, and recognizing the identity and cultural value of local

ecosystems can strengthen biodiversity protection in the long term.

Here are some data demonstrating the importance of biodiversity in these contexts:

- 75% of documented extinctions in the last 400 years have occurred on islands (UNEP).
- About 20% of the world's biodiversity is concentrated in island ecosystems (IPBES).
- 9 out of 10 species that became extinct in recent centuries were endemic island species (IUCN).

The conservation of biodiversity in remote and isolated contexts is therefore not only a strictly environmental issue, but also a social and value-based one. Protecting the life forms that inhabit these territories means safeguarding natural heritage, history, collective identity, and the future.

CHAPTER 2

Water resources management

Water resource management in remote and isolated contexts, including islands, is a complex challenge that directly impacts the quality of life of local communities. Freshwater is often scarce, difficult to access, and vulnerable to climate change, tourism pressures, and a lack of adequate technological infrastructure. Unlike continental areas, where water supplies can rely on large basins, rivers, or interconnected aqueducts, isolated territories rely largely on a few natural sources, such as small aquifers, local springs, or seasonal rainfall.

Climate change is further exacerbating this situation. Rising temperatures, increasingly irregular seasons, and reduced rainfall are compromising the natural recharge of groundwater reserves. In some areas, prolonged lack of rainfall leads to a lowering of the water table or its salinization, especially along the coasts. When saltwater infiltrates the aquifer, the result is a drastic reduction in its use for domestic, agricultural, or drinking purposes. Restoring a salt-contaminated aquifer is a very long, complex, and costly process, often beyond the technical and economic capabilities of smaller areas.

In many island contexts, a significant share of water consumption comes from technological solutions such as seawater desalination. However, these systems require energy, maintenance, and materials that are not always sustainable or readily available. When the only option is to import water via tankers or trucks, costs increase and further environmental impact is created, contributing to a vicious cycle of dependence and vulnerability.

Tourism, especially during peak seasons, increases water consumption exponentially. On some islands, the resident population doubles or triples during the summer months, placing pressure on an already fragile system. Without adequate planning, this dynamic leads to waste, rationing, and social tensions, as well as negatively impacting residents' perception of quality of life.

Investing in sustainable water management requires multidimensional interventions: technological innovation, environmental education, targeted public policies, and local governance. Rainwater harvesting systems, graywater reuse, reduction of leaks in the water network, and incentives for water efficiency in tourism facilities are examples of measures that can improve the situation. At the same time, it is essential to

engage the population and economic sectors (agriculture, tourism, and artisanship) in an awareness of the value of water as a limited and precious resource.

All this is demonstrated by some data:

- 40% of Europe's smaller islands currently suffer from medium-high water stress (JRC – European Commission).
- Desalination on European islands costs 2 to 4 times the average cost of continental water (EEA).
- 70% of the water consumed in the Mediterranean islands during the summer is used for tourism (UNWTO – Mediterranean Report).

Water resource management in remote and isolated contexts is therefore not just a technical issue: it is a strategic one, linked to food security, public health, urban planning, and economic stability. Preserving and using water responsibly means protecting the long-term sustainability of these territories and guaranteeing future generations the right to remain and live with dignity in their lands of origin.

CHAPTER 3

The impact of tourism

Tourism is often one of the main economic drivers of remote and isolated areas, particularly islands. It provides jobs, generates income, promotes cultural exchange, and can enhance the natural heritage and local identity. However, when not planned and managed with awareness, it can become a major threat to the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of these communities. Its influence is not neutral: it alters the spaces, relationships, consumption patterns, and political priorities of the territories that host it.

In island or peripheral destinations, the seasonality of tourism leads to very strong concentrations of flows in short periods of the year. During peak season, the resident population can double or even triple, resulting in increased water, energy, and land consumption. This temporary pressure can significantly alter local ecosystems, especially when infrastructure is insufficient to manage waste, sewage, or transportation. Roads, ports, and essential services risk overload, while pollution and the loss of natural habitats become tangible and difficult to reverse.

Tourism also impacts local living costs. On many islands, the arrival of large tourist flows leads to an increase in real estate prices and rentals, as accommodations are converted into accommodations or vacation homes. This phenomenon can contribute to the exclusion of the resident population, especially the younger and less well-off, who struggle to find sustainable housing solutions. The consequence is a progressive loss of social connection and a push for internal migration to large urban centers.

From a cultural perspective, the pressure of tourism can lead to a progressive erosion of local identity. Traditions, languages, social practices, and ways of life risk being transformed into spectacle or a product for sale, losing their authenticity. This process creates a rift between what the community truly is and what it must "display" to meet visitors' expectations. When culture becomes a commodity, the community loses control of its own narrative.

However, tourism can also be a powerful ally for positive change. Sustainable, responsible, and community-based tourism strategies can produce not only economic, but also environmental and cultural benefits. Promoting regulated nature trails, supporting small local businesses, promoting sustainable mobility, and actively

involving residents in decision-making processes can transform tourism into a tool for conservation, rather than consumption.

Below is some data on tourism in these contexts:

- In high season, on the Mediterranean islands, the number of visitors can exceed the resident population by up to +250% (UNWTO).
- Tourism accounts for up to 30% of the direct GDP of some EU islands (Eurostat / SEARICA).
- Tourism is responsible for 8% of global CO₂ emissions (Nature Climate Change, 2018).

The key lies in choices: defining limits, rules, standards, access criteria, and flow management plans. If tourism loses its respectful dimension, isolated territories become places to be exploited. If, however, tourism is managed with foresight, these same territories can become models of balance between development and conservation, protecting their nature and ensuring the lasting well-being of the communities who live there.

CHAPTER 4

Sustainable agricultural practices

Agriculture in remote and isolated contexts, including islands, takes on a meaning that goes beyond simple food production. It is an element of identity, a component of collective memory, an essential part of the local economy, and a territorial safeguard against abandonment and environmental degradation. However, producing food in these areas is often a complex, costly, and vulnerable process, confronted with geographical, climatic, and economic constraints.

Available agricultural land is limited, the soil is often difficult to cultivate, and the climate is not always favorable. Climate change exacerbates this fragility, increasing extreme weather events, droughts, and unpredictable seasonal variations. Furthermore, geographic isolation impacts transportation and supply costs: fertilizers, seeds, tools, and technologies can be more expensive or difficult to obtain, limiting the possibility of adopting modern and sustainable practices.

In many isolated contexts, agriculture has long been geared towards simple subsistence or small-scale

domestic markets. The risk today is that the agricultural sector will be completely abandoned or replaced by more immediate activities, such as tourism, which, however, do not guarantee long-term resilience. The abandonment of traditional agricultural activities often leads to the loss of agroecological biodiversity, the disappearance of local plant varieties, and the degradation of the rural landscape.

Sustainable agricultural practices represent a possible answer. Models such as regenerative agriculture, permaculture, agroecology, and short supply chains can foster an innovative return to the land. These practices aim to reduce the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, valorize water as a limited resource, restore the balance between crops and natural ecosystems, and strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems to external shocks. Local supply chains also reduce dependence on food imports and strengthen community food autonomy.

Promoting traditional products and local varieties is another key element. Island settings often preserve ancient knowledge, native seeds, and production practices passed down over time. Incorporating these elements into a quality, certification, and marketing strategy can be a valuable resource for creating jobs

related to sustainable agriculture, diversifying the local economy, and reducing the monocultural effect of tourism.

Here is some useful data to understand the phenomenon of agriculture in these contexts:

- Only 2% of Europe's smaller islands have full local food self-sufficiency (DG AGRI).
- Agricultural areas on EU islands and remote territories have shrunk by 17% over the last 20 years (Eurostat, 2000–2020).
- Native island crops have an average commercial value 15-25% higher than standard crops (FAO).

Investing in sustainable agriculture therefore means investing in the future of these territories. It means creating economic opportunities, reducing environmental impact, keeping local farming culture alive, and building a more balanced relationship with nature. In an era where food security and sustainability are global issues, islands and remote territories can become living laboratories of agricultural innovation, capable of combining tradition and the future.

CHAPTER 5

Unemployment and job insecurity

Unemployment and job insecurity are among the most evident social challenges in remote and isolated contexts, particularly on islands. The limited size of the labor market, dependence on a few economic sectors, and the lack of solid professional alternatives make these territories fragile and unstable from an employment perspective. The result is a situation where many people, especially young people, cannot find opportunities suited to their skills and aspirations, and are forced to migrate to larger urban areas.

Dependence on tourism and agriculture is a critical factor. Tourism is almost always seasonal: it generates income and jobs for only a few months of the year, leaving long periods of inactivity or low-paid work. Agriculture, on the other hand, is exposed to climate change, water scarcity, and uncompetitive markets. The combination of these factors means that isolated territories have a fragile economy, with few certainties and a very high level of vulnerability.

Another consequence is the spread of informal and unregulated work. In the absence of a strong economic

base, many people find occasional, discontinuous, and often unprotected employment. This phenomenon has a direct impact on social security, contributing to the lack of social security contributions, reducing prospects for long-term stability, and increasing dependence on external support.

Job insecurity particularly affects young people and women. Young people, once they complete their studies, often fail to find professional opportunities that match their potential, while women face additional obstacles related to caregiving roles, the lack of services, and cultural resistance still present in some isolated areas. This fuels exclusion and inequality within communities.

Migration to cities is a logical consequence of this scenario. Many young people leave islands and remote areas because they see no prospects for the future. This phenomenon produces two simultaneous effects: it depletes local human capital and fuels a vicious cycle of depopulation and a progressive reduction in services. The more people leave, the less investment comes; the fewer services are available, the more people will leave.

Addressing this challenge means working on multiple levels: strengthening the local economy, diversifying

production sectors, supporting entrepreneurship, investing in vocational training, and promoting development models that are not dependent on a single source of income. In this sense, forms of social innovation, new green economies, digitalization, and the valorization of local resources can become real tools for creating new professional opportunities for those living in these areas.

Below is some data relating to work in these contexts:

- Youth unemployment in the smaller EU islands is on average +9 percentage points higher than in the urban areas of the respective country (Eurostat Youth Labour Market, 2023).
- In some southern European islands, more than 60% of employment is seasonal (DG REGIO).
- 36% of young people in remote European territories declare “emigrating for work” as their first intention (European Youth Survey, 2022).

Unemployment in isolated contexts is therefore not just an economic statistic: it is a factor that affects demographics, social cohesion, confidence in the future,

and the ability of local communities to continue to exist and thrive in their places of origin.

CHAPTER 6

Isolation and lack of infrastructure

Geographic isolation is the primary identifying feature of remote areas and islands. This condition is not only related to physical distance from major urban centers, but also translates into infrastructural, digital, healthcare, and social distance. Access to transportation, essential services, medical care, basic goods, and employment opportunities is more complex, costly, and uneven than in mainland areas. Territorial marginalization thus becomes marginalization in everyday life.

According to the European Commission (DG REGIO), the average cost of freight transport to European islands is 20-45% higher than the continental average. This means that every product—from raw materials to food, to construction materials—is already more expensive. The same logic applies to people: traveling to and from islands is difficult and involves greater time and costs. Insularity impairs access to mobility and affects the ability to fully participate in national social and economic life.

Another key factor is the difficulty in accessing healthcare services. The European Health Agency (ECDC) notes that islands and remote areas have an average of 30% fewer specialized facilities than metropolitan areas. Even in primary healthcare, staff shortages are persistent: doctors and nurses are not easily attracted to areas with few career opportunities and complicated logistical conditions. This creates a structural health risk that is exacerbated during peak seasons, when the temporary population suddenly increases.

The lack of adequate infrastructure also affects the digital dimension. European islands have an average 15 percentage points lower high-speed broadband coverage than urban areas (Eurostat, 2023). This "digital weakness" is not just a technological problem: it affects the ability to work remotely, to launch innovative businesses, to access online training, and to access digital public services. In an increasingly connected world, the lack of robust digital infrastructure further accentuates the territorial divide.

Isolation also has psychological and identity-related consequences. In small, closed, and poorly connected areas, people perceive a symbolic boundary between "us" and the "rest of the world." When everything is

further away, opportunities also seem distant. This condition exacerbates the risk of youth drain: if there is no access to infrastructure, services, and prospects, young people leave. And when young people leave, the area empties, ages, and becomes further weakened, generating a vicious cycle.

Investing in infrastructure isn't just about building roads, hospitals, or digital networks: it's about investing in dignity and the right to remain. It means creating the conditions where living on an island or in a remote setting isn't a penalty, but a sustainable choice. It means ensuring that geographical distance no longer becomes a barrier to life opportunities.

CHAPTER 7

Training opportunities

Access to education is a key strategic factor for the human and economic development of any community. However, in remote and isolated contexts, and on islands in particular, educational opportunities are limited in both quantity and quality. Distance from academic centers, the lack of vocational training institutions, the shortage of specialized teachers, and the weakness of digital infrastructure create a profound educational gap that affects the future of younger generations.

According to Eurostat (2023), young people living in remote European regions have up to 40% less direct access to advanced vocational training than their peers living in metropolitan areas. This means that the skills required by the contemporary labor market—digital, technological, linguistic, entrepreneurial—are more difficult to acquire for those who remain in isolated communities.

Schools are often insufficient to bridge this gap. Local schools operate with limited resources, a limited curriculum, and a limited availability of specialized

teachers. Extracurricular training (courses, workshops, technical-professional programs) is almost always lacking or too expensive to access. This creates a structural condition: where one is born determines the level of educational opportunities one can realistically have.

The educational deficit directly fuels the dynamics of youth migration. The data is clear: 57% of young people living on islands and remote European areas consider it "necessary" to move to a large city to adequately complete their education (European Youth Survey, 2022). Leaving an island or remote area thus becomes a mandatory step in the growth process. But often this departure is not followed by a return. The flight of the most educated young people leads to a cultural and cognitive impoverishment of the region and reduces the collective capacity for innovation.

At the same time, the limited training offering also penalizes adults. Lifelong learning, which is essential in contemporary society for updating skills and remaining competitive in the labor market, is much more difficult to ensure in isolated areas. The European Commission certifies that access to adult learning in these areas is approximately 30 percentage points lower than the EU

average (DG EMPL, 2023). The result is a less prepared and less dynamic workforce.

Investing in educational opportunities means investing in future independence. It means reducing dependence on a seasonal economy and building new skills rooted in the local area. Digitalization, if well supported, could be a crucial tool for bridging the educational gap: online training, platforms, digital labs, and transnational cultural exchange networks can allow residents of isolated areas to access advanced training programs without necessarily having to migrate.

Training is therefore a challenge for development and territorial justice. Where there is no training, there is no future: there is only distance. Where training exists, however, concrete opportunities for social, professional, and community transformation open up.

CHAPTER 8

Cultural and linguistic integration

Remote and isolated contexts, particularly islands, are often spaces with a strong cultural identity. Local languages, dialects, traditions, rituals, and customs have developed over time precisely because of geographic isolation. This richness, however, now coexists with a growing influx of people: seasonal workers, tourists, new residents, migrants, and people returning after experiences elsewhere. This transformation necessitates a reflection on cultural and linguistic integration as a fundamental element of social cohesion.

Contemporary migration flows don't just affect large cities. In 2023, 28% of new residents on small European islands came from other EU or non-EU countries (Eurostat – Regional Migration Index). This data indicates that even small and peripheral communities are becoming intercultural meeting places. However, integration doesn't happen spontaneously: it requires skills, tools, relationships, and mediation spaces.

The lack of dedicated language inclusion services is one of the main obstacles. The European Union Agency for Education, Culture and Sport (EACEA) reports that in

remote areas, the availability of language courses for newcomers is 50% lower than in urban areas. The consequence is immediate: those who do not master the local language (be it the national language or the island idiom) struggle to find employment, form stable relationships, participate in community life, and understand implicit social rules.

Local cultural identity itself is being challenged. When the arrival of new people isn't accompanied by processes of cultural mediation, polarization arises: on the one hand, the historic community fears losing its authenticity, on the other, newcomers remain perceived as outsiders. In small areas, where "everyone knows each other," cultural conflicts can be more immediate and profound.

Integration, on the other hand, is a process that requires care, presence, and intentionality. It's not just learning a language, but understanding the codes, values, and rhythms of a community's life. And at the same time, it requires the community's willingness to open up and learn from new arrivals. Where this happens, islands and remote territories become valuable social laboratories: when relationships are built, cultural innovation is produced.

The European Commission (DG HOME) emphasizes that areas with a strong local identity and structured investments in intercultural policies demonstrate more stable social cohesion and greater economic resilience. This confirms that integration is not a "marginalization issue": it is a strategic element.

Investing in linguistic and cultural integration in isolated territories means:

- prevent social conflicts
- strengthen the community as a whole
- transform diversity into a resource
- make coexistence between long-standing residents and new arrivals sustainable

In island contexts, isolation can be a barrier or an opportunity. If communities choose to recognize diversity as part of their future, then integration becomes not only possible, but even generative.

CHAPTER 9

Social inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups

In remote and isolated contexts, social inclusion is never guaranteed. Small areas, with limited resources and a strong internal community identity, generate very specific dynamics of belonging and exclusion. In these places, differences emerge more clearly because the social space is smaller, relationships are more direct, and roles are more visible. Those who do not fit the community's perceived "norm" risk rapidly becoming marginalized.

Minorities can be many: cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, elderly people living alone, single-parent families, and people with recent migration backgrounds. All these groups face a dual challenge: not only the structural vulnerability of their own condition, but also the vulnerability resulting from the geographical isolation of the area in which they live.

European data highlight this risk: according to Eurostat (2024), people with disabilities living in remote areas have 35% lower access to social services than the continental average. For new residents with a migrant

background, the likelihood of social isolation in islands and peripheral areas is 18% higher than in urban contexts (DG HOME, 2023). Psychosocial support is also much weaker: the ECDC highlights that in isolated areas the number of active mental health services is 50% lower than in urban centers.

This condition has concrete effects: less access to rights, less access to opportunities, less access to community participation. In very small settings, where "everyone knows everyone," stigmatization can be more immediate and more painful. The lack of anonymity can lead some vulnerable people to limit their behavior or hide parts of their identity for fear of social judgment.

On the other hand, small communities have great potential if they implement inclusion programs: when the community chooses to "take charge" of social care, the support can be more direct, human, and personalized than in large urban systems. Unwieldy bureaucracy isn't necessary; human networks are needed. When relationships are close, change can happen rapidly.

To make inclusion a reality in remote territories, three conditions are needed:

1. accessible basic services (health, social, educational)
2. community meeting spaces (places where people can connect without predefined roles)
3. active local leadership (associations, administrations, sports coaches, teachers capable of recognizing diversity)

Inclusion isn't a statement; it's a daily practice. And in smaller contexts, it's even more evident that inclusion doesn't just happen "just because." It happens when someone takes concrete responsibility for making connection and proximity happen.

CHAPTER 10

Political participation and civic empowerment

In remote and isolated areas, geographic distance often coincides with distance from the places where decisions are made. The perception of having little influence, or of being marginalized with respect to national or regional political priorities, is widespread within island and peripheral communities. This creates a situation in which the sense of civic belonging can weaken and political participation can become marginal, sporadic, or even useless in the eyes of citizens.

In Europe, the data is clear: the rate of active political participation in remote areas is 12% lower than the national average (Eurobarometer – Civic Engagement, 2023). Distance from decision-making centers affects people's sense of political efficacy. If someone living on an island or in a peripheral area perceives that the decisions that matter are made elsewhere, they will tend to feel like spectators, not actors.

This has direct consequences for the quality of local democracy. Abstentionism can become a structural phenomenon, young people distance themselves from institutions, and public debate is limited to a few, often

already influential, stakeholders. Conversely, when remote areas are involved in decision-making—when they are listened to, consulted, recognized as policymakers—participation grows rapidly.

Civic empowerment means providing citizens with tools, languages, and concrete opportunities to exercise their right to influence public decisions. It's not an abstract concept: it means the ability to organize local initiatives, create associations, participate in consultations, propose alternatives, and monitor the work of institutions. In small areas, when active citizenship takes action, it can be extremely effective precisely because social networks are shorter and the impact of actions is more visible.

According to the European Commission (DG REGIO), remote areas that have established structured civic participation processes (community forums, thematic roundtables, digital consultations) show an average 22% increase in trust in local institutions. This data confirms that participation is more than just "symbolic democracy": it can strengthen cohesion, trust, and shared responsibility.

Finally, civic empowerment in isolated contexts is closely linked to the ability to build vision. If a region perceives

that it can contribute to defining shared solutions, then sustainable development strategies (environmental, economic, social) can become the heritage of all, not just of technical or political elites. Geographical distance does not have to mean distance from power. Building active citizenship is the foundation for transforming isolated places into resilient, self-determining communities.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the environmental and social challenges of remote and isolated contexts highlights how these territories are extremely complex, where natural factors and social dynamics are interdependent. Water scarcity cannot be addressed without considering the impact of tourism; agriculture cannot be supported without addressing education; economic development cannot be discussed without addressing civic participation or the inclusion of minorities. Everything is connected.

Islands and remote territories teach us that sustainability cannot be understood as a set of sectoral interventions. It must be an integrated approach. The environment influences economic opportunities, and the economy influences educational programs, social integration, and local democracy. The key is not "changing a piece," but connecting the pieces.

Second, this document shows how many of the problems of isolated territories stem not from "internal weaknesses," but from external imbalances: infrastructural asymmetries, power imbalances, development models designed for central areas and not adapted to the peripheries. These territories are not

fragile because they are small. They are fragile because they are marginalized.

Finally, reflection on challenges must lead to a reflection on possibilities. Remote contexts can be places of innovation, not of renunciation. They can become spaces for experimenting with forms of sustainable coexistence, resilient local economies, new models of governance, and widespread participation. To do so, we need to recognize their uniqueness, listen to the real needs of communities, and leverage existing human and cultural capital.

Understanding these territories also means looking to the future of global social models. If we can make life in remote contexts dignified, stable, and sustainable, we will have built a development model capable of working everywhere, and this is one of the goals of The Island project.

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