

Role of the Digital for the Third Sector in the Campania Region (Italy): From the Side of Research to the Side of the Objects in the Aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Gabriella Punziano^a, Mariavittoria Cicellin^a, Eugenio Zito^a, Suania Acampa^a, Rosa Sorrentino^a

Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the role of the digital in facing the social and practical impact of COVID-19 pandemic on particularly fragile and affected realities, Third Sector Organizations (TSO), in a context pervaded by structural and socio-economic weaknesses, the Campania Region in the South of Italy. It analyzes the digital object as: 1. a process - digitization/digitalization and digital transformation; 2. a scenario - in which identities, activities and alternative spaces of use or data collection transit and are constructed; 3. skills and capabilities - as social capital and value. This re-framing work is intended to be a useful tool for reflecting on the role of digital in research processes, while also offering a contribution in the debate on the Third Sector in contexts of crisis, such as the one generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, that impacts its existence, activity, shape, and perspectives.

Keywords: digitalization, Third Sector, Campania Region.

1. Introduction: a two-way transition and role of digital technology

* Gabriella Punziano, Mariavittoria Cicellin, and Eugenio Zito are responsible for the scientific NORISC-19 project; Suania Acampa and Rosa Sorrentino oversaw the data organization. For this article, Gabriella Punziano monitored the drafting and framing of the paper while the rest of the team took care of reworking, each according to their own disciplinary expertise and role in the project, the achieved results by reinterpreting them from the perspective of the role of digital technology.

^a Department of Social Sciences, University of Naples Federico II, Naples, Italy.

Corresponding author:
Gabriella Punziano
E-mail: gabriella.punziano@unina.it

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In recent years, the Italian non-profit sector underwent an evolution that transformed its historic voluntary nature. Starting from the Italian Law 106 of June 6, 2016, the sector underwent a transformation that completely revamped a fragmented sector characterized by much weakness (Lori & Zamaro, 2019). The complex legislative process was soon accompanied by the outbreak of the pandemic, which highlighted the essential role of the Third Sector (TS) in order to prevent social disruption (Ascoli & Campedelli, 2021). Moreover, during the pandemic, Third Sector Organizations (TSOs) reflected on two of the main cornerstones of their mission: precisely, the significant contribution of voluntary work during an acute health crisis and the challenge of social isolation, distancing, and remote work during the lockdown. This statement is justifiable, both in the first phase of the pandemic with repeated lockdowns, as well as in subsequent phases with measures such as social distancing and reorganization of spaces, which for many TSOs were already modest and difficult to readapt.

A solution to these containment measures was determined for many areas of the sector and for various everyday digital practices: the ability to transit to other, different, non-physical scenarios. This helped them pursue their aims and purposes similar to other systems, such as the educational and labour sectors, with practices like distance learning or smart working. How did the TSOs cope with these upcoming challenges?

Based on this presuppositions and open questions, the paper aims to investigate the role of digital technology, amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, in the TS, which has been witnessing a profound restructuring phase, with a focus on the Campania Region in the South of Italy. The paper defined stems from a research question developed within a larger academic-funded project of the University of Naples Federico II. The project, new organizational responses, innovations, and social impacts of COVID-19 (NORISC-19) on the TS in Campania, aimed to analyze the organizational and strategic responses of TSOs to the pandemic, using a mixed approach in terms of social sciences disciplines, methods, tools, and points of observation. This will help run broad reasoning on the impacts generated by the pandemic as well as better target sector policies and facilitate a prompt recovery of TSOs. Among the broader aims of the project, a specific part was devoted to understanding the role of digital technology in facing both cogent and unexpected challenges. Therefore, the project was developed along three lines of analysis:

- 1) digital mapping of TSOs in order to reconstruct consistency, dispersion, and concentration of organizations, activities, and typologies;
- 2) a comprehensive web survey of all organizations to investigate the impact of the pandemic on all possible changes in terms of economics, employees/volunteers, activities, spaces, targets, strategies

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implemented among whom was located the digital, highlighting the dimensions of failure, social innovation, and digitization;

- 3) in-depth web interviews and field observation to infer organizational-strategic elements functional to the pursued policy redirection.

However, this study reflects explicitly on an underlying component that becomes inescapable in a moment of disruption of normality, normativity, and physical co-presence. We will offer useful insights on the role of digital technology and the forms and impacts it makes on particular historical moments, both in terms of the research methods – in a scenario where a new access problem becomes increasingly incumbent – and in terms of solution established by the object of study, TSOs. Specifically, the proposed reflection dwells on the digital element from the research aspect to objects in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Social research, which will be discussed in the second paragraph, is called upon to reinvent itself, rethink its tools, and redefine its research objects in the wake of unexpected and unsettling changes in the social order that completely affect the methodological canon of conducting research (Punziano et al., 2022). In this scenario of digitalization of the TS amid the pandemic, new points of reflection emerge and involve at least three other crucial steps. Re-framing the digital element in this work constituted a specific methodological and substantive challenge for the realization of our project. The steps referred to, and which will be explored further in the third paragraph, are: 1. digital existence (Szakolczai, 2021) of TSOs in terms of self-presentation and recoverability of contact and mapping information; 2. digital skills or capital (Ragnedda, 2018) of TSOs in providing self-reflective responses regarding themselves when reached by questioning tools aimed at knowledge production, such as questionnaires and interviews on the Internet; 3. digital transition (Corvo et al., 2022) as the ability of TSOs to adapt, adopt, and construct strategic responses for their own survival by transiting to the digital as a new space of encounter and co-construction of their activities.

These three steps, together with the more general ponder on the practicability and changes in social research, open up a further reflection on digital research and challenges in uncertain times and on precarious subjects. This in the study aims to become a broader methodological and substantive reflection that can be extended to moments and subjects that – in part and whole – may possess overlapping characteristics. Digital skills play an essential role in implementing the presence, effectiveness, and planning ability of TSOs. The lack of digital skills and the imperceptibility of the web are real obstacles to the realization of the TS's mission, which for these reasons, deserve to be further investigated.

2. From the research aspect: Preliminary reflection on the role of digital technology on social research in uncertain times

Considering the now well-known and well-worn debate between virtualization of methods (Hine, 2005) and digital native methods (Rogers, 2013), focusing on the role of digital technology in conducting social research in times of crisis affecting social life, entrepreneurial activities, and processes means making room for a logic that focuses not only on the change of methods in their natural adaptation to the object of study but also on the innate adaptation capacity to a new scenario that brings to light novel and challenging prerogatives.

In particular, in the more general research project that gave rise to the reflections discussed in this article, the methods chosen to address the research were a web-based source mapping recalling digital methods of querying pre-existing sources and their new systematization and reuse for research purposes. We adopted a web-based questioning with survey and interviews, considered the precise historical moment of the survey's development (autumn-winter 2021–spring 2022) as the best solution to gather the opinions of a wide range of respondents during the pandemic, sudden closures and distancing measures and its protective devices, that certainly do not facilitate the building of that natural empathy that should be generated in vis-à-vis research.

While the search for information through a web-based quarrying process to map TSOs would seem to be a straightforward and smooth activity, this has not proven to be the case. However, what we obtained was a vacuum of information, which was outdated and inaccurate, suggesting the presumed inability of the respondents to think in terms of digitization as a showcase for staging their own identity and reach proved to be obstacles to the development of a tout court digital methods approach. Although we will dwell on this point in the following section as it is among the connotative peculiarities of the chosen object of study, in a more overall methodological reflection, here we can open the reasoning on the quality of digital data.

A possible definition of data quality under the ISO 8402 standard is the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied need, thus stating that the quality of the data does not only depend on the characteristics of the data itself, but also on the context in which it is used. Data quality is a critical component of social research, especially that which intends to make use of pre-existing data available online; therefore, failing to implement a strategy to evaluate and control data quality could have disastrous effects. Our data mainly come from official sources (sector, activity, or company registers) and less from non-official ones (such as those produced by other

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research organizations) or are directly self-produced (trivially also the information disseminated by the TSOs themselves on official websites or social pages). Considering classical data quality parameters, it can be said that, with respect to accessibility, comprehensibility, accuracy, reliability, completeness, consistency, correctness, interpretability, manipulability, objectivity, punctuality, quantity, relevance, and usefulness, these will be conditioned not only by the ownership or gratuitousness of the records, but also by their actual existence in digital form, their being up-to-date and ready for user interrogation, their ability to be promptly modified and intelligible, genuinely produced not only for administrative purposes, but also for knowledge producers, sector workers, and service users. These are the characteristics the study brought to light (Cai & Zhu, 2015).

On many occasions, the online sources consulted are neither complete nor superimposable. The information is neither up-to-date nor complete, almost as if the census process facilitates an invisibility also found on the other side, that is, the data self-produced by the TSOs, many times completely non-existent, when not up-to-date or factual, showing a sought-after invisibility on this side as well. Then, the registers produced by other actors or for other projects are often maintained in repositories that are difficult to use and query, making a wealth of knowledge that is increasingly needed to provide dimension and face to a sector that has been severely affected by the pandemic. This particular combination between the limits of official sources and self-produced and freely disseminated data by TSOs leads us to state that the only viable path to achieving the real possibility of progress in the mapping TSOs in the Campania Region seemed to be the implementation of scraping systems on conventional and unconventional sources, using computational procedures for the improvement of the overall quality of data traceable on the Internet and aimed at a better knowledge of the TS. With regard to the components just described, it is important to point out how the creation of the mapping of TSOs did not have the goal of collecting the entire population of actors present on the territory, but rather the more realistic goal of identifying as many realities as possible. This operation also had an ancillary purpose, namely to have a list of organizations whose contacts and location were truly accessible so as to serve as a basis for the construction of the accessible population from which to deduct the sample for the web survey, as will be seen below. The invisibility - sought or not - of actors has, in fact, been a major obstacle impossible to overcome in the current regulatory transition phase. The implementation of a tool with great potential such as the RUNTS (Unique National Register of the Third Sector) could, in the not-so-distant future, make it possible to overcome (at least in part) this problem, in order to obtain in an immediate way a general picture and the number of TSOs present on the national or regional level.

Considering the web-mediated questioning procedure, this project used web surveys on Survey Monkey and in-depth web interviews on the Zoom platform. The research team employed tools that are becoming increasingly familiar to researchers nowadays, not only as transposed and virtualized tools of traditional methods but as real connotative elements of the methodological toolbox. Moreover, during restrictions on mobility imposed by lockdown measures, these methods showed themselves to be almost the only viable options for conducting social research, especially considering the unit of analysis of the research, which involved contacting those for the TSOs who had to answer the questionnaire or interviews, in order to provide the necessary data for the study.

In the web survey, the respondents were enrolled through email. As will be seen below, numerically speaking, this procedure resulted in a low response rate. The reasons for this can be found in the endemic mode of postal (also web) administration without return constraints, which does not favor a full response. The particularly low rates also showed a substantial lack of interest in participating in a study aimed at gathering information on the state of health of TS in the aftermath of the pandemic, together with an inability to respond to questionnaires in this format - affecting the representation of the TSOs' poor digital capital (Ragnedda, 2018) as will be enunciated later - and, in general, a distrust of research.

In the web interviews, the respondents were contacted through an initial telephone call before preparing for the interview, briefing them about the protocol and interview to prevent distrust and provide TSOs an opportunity to feel more involved in the research project, also if the medium used might not make them perceive this level of mingling. In this case, the reticence and lack of digital familiarity detected in response to the web survey instrument were countered by a willingness to participate, express oneself, and narrate their stories, which in the other instrument had been obscured by what appears to be a reluctance to accept digital modes and not research instruments or practices tout court. It can therefore be said that, beyond the many studies (Lombardo & Mauceri, 2020) that have shown how the pandemic had become an element in bringing individuals, also understood as research subjects, closer to the digital world, getting them accustomed to online questioning tools and given the numerous surveys that have been disseminated through the period from the outbreak of the pandemic to the present day.

The willingness to provide information in a structured and standardized form on the dynamics of the experience of individuals and organizations in particularly difficult moments of change and requiring sudden responses to unexpected events is becoming increasingly scarce. Meanwhile, the involvement, also in a web-mediated form, of the subjects in a discursive

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elaboration of the same events facilitates not only their expression but also their self-reflection and ability not to feel isolated in a general experience of isolation such as the pandemic. The willingness to respond in a very detailed and extensive manner to the interviewers has, in fact, led to the evidence that participation is not only a function of the greater availability of time and online presence in a period of forced isolation and restricted mobility. Essentially, it has emerged that the respondents, that is, the citizens and people affected by a destabilizing event, needed to express themselves, do their part for society and the TSOs to which they belong, and believe that they were useful in society in a crucial situation.

3. From the side of the research object: Transition, existence, and skills of TSOs in light of pandemic impacts

To provide for a numerical and figurative dimension of the issue, the theoretical population of TSOs in the Campania Region, cross-referenced in the registers and online sources consulted, is equivalent to 3,601 organizations. They are territorially distributed as follows: Naples 1,276, Salerno 873, Caserta 726, Avellino 373, and Benevento 353. Of these, approximately 82.25% (i.e., 2,962 organizations) were traceable; that is, they have counters that were found to be effective and correct, constituting the accessible population of this study. Of the accessible population (2,962 TSOs), only 6.24% (i.e., 185 TSOs, about 5.13% of the theoretical population) responded to the web survey.

Regarding the intervention area, the TSOs operate mainly at the local level, in particular at the municipal (25%) and provincial (19%) level. 13% of TSOs operate beyond regional borders, while the remaining 10% operate internationally. Among the entities responding to the web survey, the most widespread activity is training and education (74%), which promotes access to educational opportunities for those who otherwise would not be able to access them; following are the TSOs that offer various kinds assistance (53%) – from accompaniment to the disabled and sick, to support for their families – while in third place are the TSOs that play a significant role in the conservation and in the promotion of the cultural heritage of the territory, including art, architecture, history and traditions (48%), followed by the TSOs dedicated to awareness campaigns (45%). The scarce participation of sports bodies in the fact-finding survey leads us to reflect on the reasons, presumably of an economic and tax-facilitative nature, linked to the desire not to provide information regarding their state of health in the aftermath of a pandemic. The recipients to whom the investigated TSOs are mainly addressed are young people (53%), children (48%) and families (44%). The activities of the entities

are supported by volunteers: 44% have up to 10 volunteers and 8% up to 40 volunteers. The TSOs that has up to ten permanent employees are 25%, while 11% declare that they have between 11 and 40 employees.

Figure 1. Main activity and main activities and recipients (% di n=183, multiple choice questions).



Essentially, the first result that emerged from the web-survey analysis is this profiling obtained analyzing the data through cluster analysis techniques. Clustering is a set of multivariate data analysis techniques that has the task of grouping a set of objects in such a way that the objects in the same group (called a cluster) are more similar to each other than those in other groups (clusters)

The cluster analysis results can be briefly described as follows.

The “overwhelmed” (18,2%): TSOs characterized by a surrendering and immobile attitude toward the dimensions of COVID-19 impact that does not allow them to implement any kind of action aimed at relaunching the activities offered, mainly related to the cultural and sports sector. These TSOs have not yet been registered in the RUNTS and probably have yet to start the regulatory

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transaction, which allows them to take advantage of a favorable tax regime and continue to act in the underground by riding on the absence or lack of digital updates to better cover this regulatory impasse. This immobility is countered by the higher turnover of entities based on sports, cultural, and recreational activities and their increased organizational mortality (Lori & Pavolini, 2016). At least 43.1% of the TSOs that would have ceased their activities at the turn of the first and second decades of the 2000s belong precisely to the sectors of sports, culture, and recreation. This factor could be linked both to the sustained attitude with respect to endogenous and exogenous elements and to economic and utilitarian factors, which could feed the instability and reluctance to comply with the fiscal dictates of the research.

The “persistent” (33,3%): TSOs on which the pandemic seems to have had a weak and, in some cases, meliorative impact linked to social assistance and economic sources deriving from stable contracts with the Public Administration and extraordinary subsidies. These TSOs have a stable digital presence on official and social channels, taking care of marketing and communication activities considered central to their work.

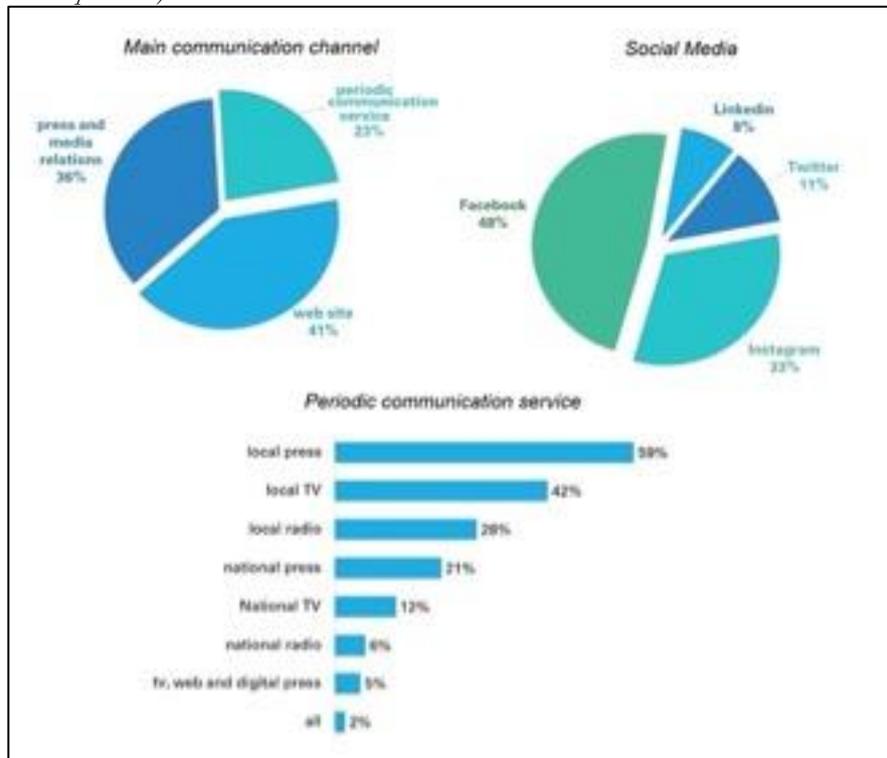
The “fragile” (18.5%): TSOs that have been severely impacted by the pandemic but show particular resistance. These TSOs are related to the artistic-cultural and educational field, where forced closures have revealed obvious criticalities and weaknesses and have led to evident losses not always adequately supported by extraordinary interventions other than those envisaged for the upcoming activities of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR).

The “resilient” (30.0%): TSOs that suffered weak impacts, mainly economic, during the acute phase of the pandemic. Subsequently, these organizations have been able to resume their activities by re-organizing their production model and re-programming their activities, especially by digitalizing them, emphasizing the importance of their online presence and the advantage of having transited to RUNTS, by aligning themselves to the dictates of the regulatory reform underway.

The typing reported here serves as a link to take up the three crucial steps recalled in the second paragraph used for re-framing the element of digital. In particular, the first step defines the object of the research by reconstructing the size, characteristics, and territorial distribution of the TSOs in the Campania Region in order to create a digital mapping. From here arises the first challenge that can be declined in terms of digital existence. The problem lies in the ability of these organizations to provide a self-presentation on their digital skills by translating their identity and disseminating their information to third parties (thus providing a clear framework in terms of the type of organization or type of activity they provide or even defining their mission and structure, or simply providing their contact details correctly so that they can be found through the

Internet and digital tools). This issue immediately relates to digital communication skills and conceals a double pitfall. From a methodological point of view, it slows down and makes the process of finding, organizing, and optimizing data for mapping very difficult. From a substantive perspective, it becomes an alert with respect to the willingness of these entities to be truly visible and to exist concretely, even on the digital platform. To provide an overview of the digital existence scenario (fig. 2), it can be said that around 41% of TSOs have a website but maintain much less press and media relations or provide periodic communication and updates (press includes: local press 59% + national press 21%; media includes: local TV, 42%, local radio 28%, national TV 12%, national radio 6%; digital and media press 5%).

Figure 2. Main indicators of digital existence (% n=183 - *periodic communication service is a question in multiple choice).



In any case, they favor mainstream communication channels, with the majority of TSOs on Facebook (48%) and Instagram (33%), thus targeting a

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general audience, and a limited presence on LinkedIn (8%) or Twitter (11%), where they can reach targeted, professionalized, and media-oriented audiences.

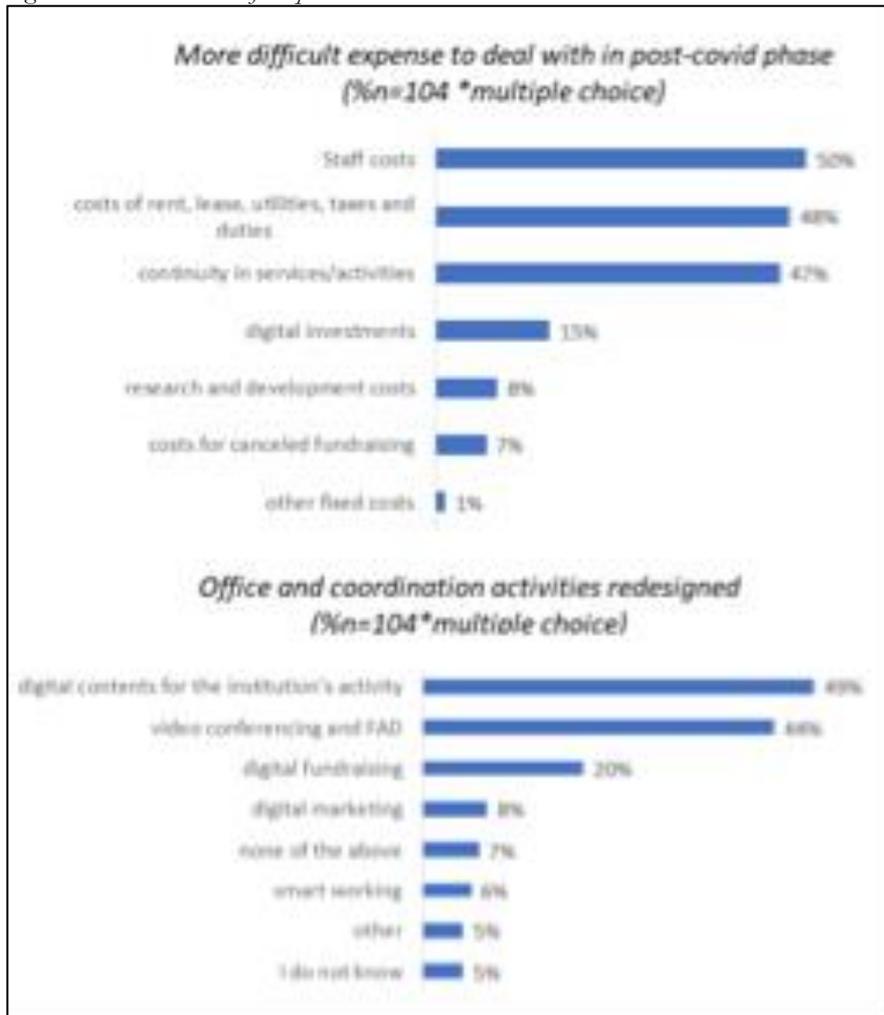
Voluntary organizations, social promotion associations, and no-profit organizations are also positioned as being more attentive to social presence, especially in the fields of culture, sport, recreation, social assistance and civil protection, and health.

Specifically, in many cases, these are organizations that have experienced or are experiencing a difficult regulatory transition to the RUNTS, which not only encompasses them in a searchable list but also forces them to comply with accounting procedures, reporting obligations, and activity limitations depending on the type they fall into. Sometimes, organizations voluntarily choose not to undertake the transition to the register or not to define themselves clearly in order to leave open spaces for further activities and procedures that could be interesting and/or profitable for them, thus not limiting the range of opportunities to be accessed. The need to overcome a moment of crisis also passes through the completion of the regulatory transition and the possibility, therefore, of being able to make themselves visible, take advantage of all the facilities provided for registered TSOs, and thus be able to enter into contracts and agreements with the Public Administration to perform activities or services of interest.

The second step involved the transition from the retrieval of data indirectly from the Internet to a direct but virtualized data retrieval tool. A web survey was constructed to directly investigate the characteristics, composition, activities, and pre- and post-Covid experiences of TSOs of the Campania Region surveyed through the mapping operation. This leads to the second challenge, which concerns the digital skills of these organizations. A 6% response rate and a careless, often fallacious compilation brought to light the lack of ability to cope with digital tools to talk about themselves. Furthermore, at a time such as the pandemic, when the only way to find data has made the digital transposition of research activities urgent, the consequences of the results of a survey with this response make any cognitive effort that passes over the digital sector useless if – on the other side – the respondents are those who, with profound disinterest or incapacity, do not let external cognitive processes enter their space. The need for skill enhancement, as well as awareness of how research can bring reflective elements to complicated and poised situations, are two other unexpected elements that the conducted project process brought to the fore by linking field experience to the increasingly central digital element. However, digital skills were also identified through several direct indicators that brought to light a poor adaptive-resilient attitude. Among the most difficult expenses for our TSOs are those related to digital investments tout court, as well as those associated with the management of spaces (potentially empty

during lockdowns) and the continuity of services to be offered precisely because of the inability to make them use different scenarios of which digital becomes the undisputed pivot (fig. 3).

Figure 3. Main indicators of adaptive-resilient attitude.

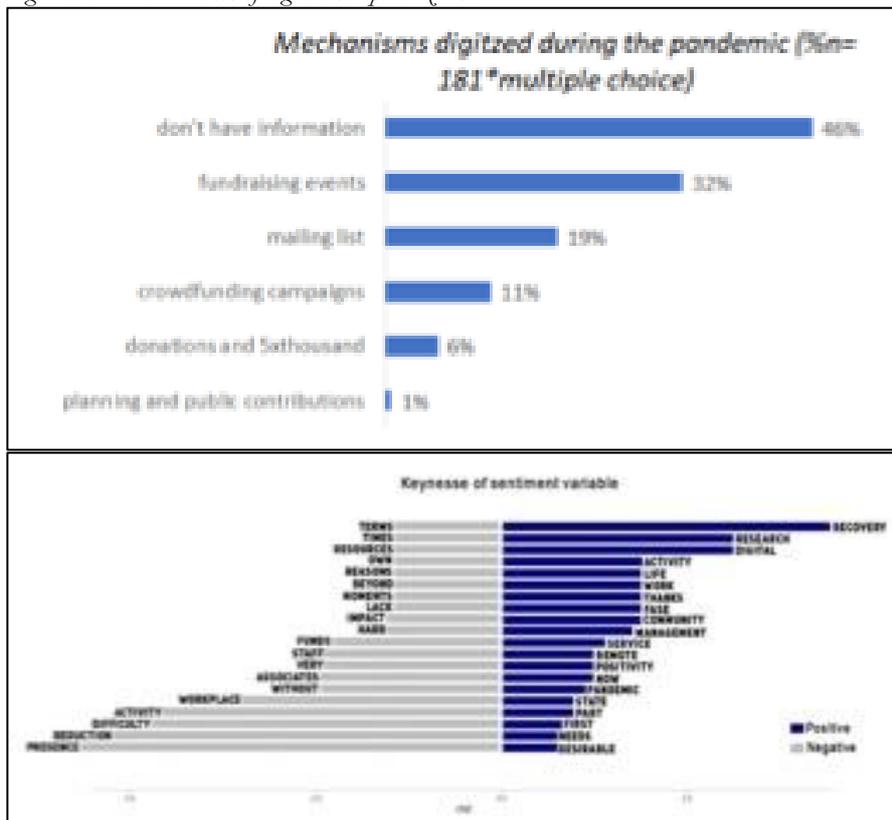


A point of interest touched upon in the survey concerns the transience of digital solutions adopted to cope with the pandemic (fig.4), and the fact that 68% of TSOs responded positively to this component denotes the extent to which digitization has not fully become part of an organizational mindset

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capable of learning from the responses implemented. However, interviewees also see digital as the third priority component for a relaunch of the TS, pointing out the possibility of remotely managing activities and services in a more competent and composed manner.

Figure 4. Main indicators of digital conceptualization



The third step, presented here as the last moment of reflection on the digital component, is a qualitative insight into the experience of TSOs in carrying out their activities at the time of the pandemic outbreak and the breakdown of physical presence in the activities characterizing this sector. It can be declined as another issue of reflection that can be renamed digital transition. This time, the object referred to are the activities and their possible continuation within a different container and scenario. Potentially, this component no longer concerns only organizational skills because it also sets in motion the skills of the recipients of the activities and services offered by TSOs

and their digital skills, their detainment of means, and access to the Internet. This kind of reflection implies the need to identify the area's most at risk of the digital divide, which highlight social, economic, educational and multi-combined inequalities. Reflecting on these areas makes it possible to think about developing ad hoc strategies to intervene and reduce the digital divide and all other types of inequalities resulting from it, charting a new course even for organizations that are highly prone to fragility, such as TSOs.

Interesting data emerged from in-depth web interviews more than from the web survey. In fact, when the digital component is mentioned, words such as “know how to use” are recalled in the discourse, declined in the double direction of training for those who have to offer on the digital scenario activities using it as a different and yet accessible environment during the pandemic, and of education on the instrument for those who have to use activities, services, and contacts with TSOs. All these aspects recall the economic dimension, which on the one hand, insists on government funding and support to guarantee TSOs the possibility of equipping themselves with the infrastructure, means, and instruments appropriate to the shift in supply. On the other hand, they recall the ability to mobilize resources for access and availability of the means for individuals to take advantage of the transition asset so that they do not remain excluded from the new emerging experiential dimension. Therefore, there is a great interest in this sphere, to the possibilities it offers, for example, of translating courses, workshops, places of contact, and encounters online, but also of making it an innovative process, with respect to the classic modes of fruition and experience by riding the asset of transition (Punziano et al., 2023). What remains, in fact, for some insignificant and circumscribed realities linked perhaps to activities where physical presence is inalienable, is the impossibility of seeing themselves transposed into such a scenario, leading to increased fear and reticence. Pitfalls are not secondary in this process. Conceiving, for example, cultural activity completely detached from physical contexts and personal contacts for many TSO workers cannot become a replacement tout court. It can certainly give rise to parallel dimensions, but the problem for all persists and continues as to what will remain in the future after the pandemic.

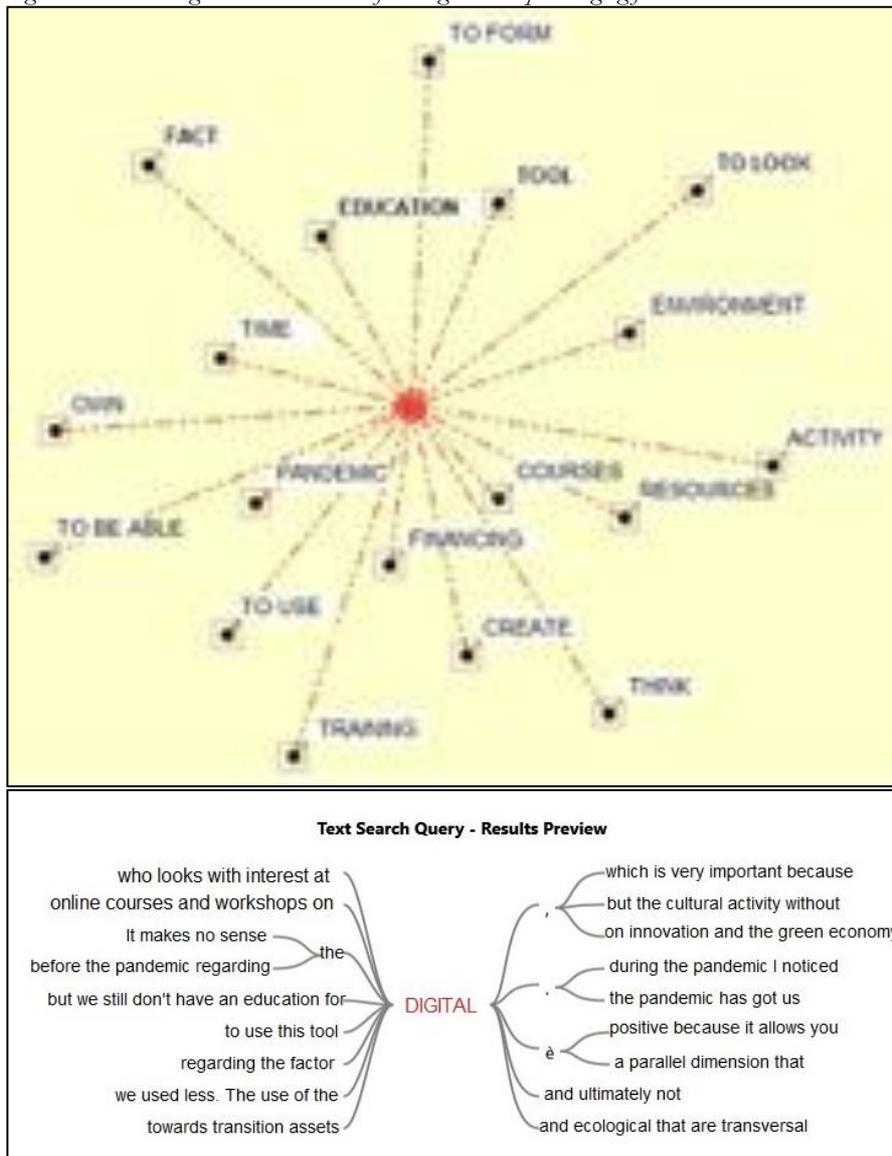
In light of these insights, several research questions arise, such as, “will there be a long-lasting educational effect integrating old and new processes, or will the digital transition replace old practices and ways?”. The enthusiasm of some finds reticence in many others and leads us to think that digital education and training cannot be conceived as different procedures for different audiences. Awareness of present and future digital scenarios should become a domain of knowledge accessible to all. If mobilization of conscience and fearless openness is what is needed at a time of great upheaval, what the policies supporting digital transition should aim at should be linked to actions aimed at

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increasing awareness of the digital itself so that it does not appear as a vague spectre of threats but can be conceived as a place of possibilities and innovation.

Figure 5. Radial diagram and word tree of the digital concept emerging from the interviews.



As shown in figure 5, connected to the word “digital” we find, in fact, words such as education, training, enable, create, resources, courses, activities,

which refer to the digital endowment of skills, competences and tools of which the same TSOs feel the need. Specifically, these terms are included in phrases that refer to looking forward to a full digital transition. On the other hand, the digital environment and the unfamiliarity with it, the underutilisation before the Pandemic and the acceleration due to the emergency period that one was faced with without adequate preparation are also recalled. What emerges, therefore, is a dual perspective that is enthusiastic but at the same time aware of the starting situation of not a few of the realities that make up the Campania TS scenario. This brief lunge opens to an exquisitely qualitative cross-section showing the real state of mind that digital technology generates in the space of action, perception and identity of the TSOs in the aftermath of a general situation of uncertainties brought about by the particular pandemic conjuncture and by a difficult process of regulatory transition that has not yet reached a stabilised situation.

4. Discussion: Lesson learned on the role of the digital

From the preliminary results discussed in this short paper, the digital element emerges as an object, scenario, and process that is far from being without effects and consequences. Its connotations are multiple and multiform, so fluid that they do not allow for a static frame but lead us to adopt a processual and dynamic conception of the digital according to the different emerging declinations.

To summarize what has emerged from the discussion in this paper, there are two main lessons that this first results, in harmony with the more general research project within which they fit, has presented to us.

One takes shape in the methodological field by showing us the digital as a two-fold object. On the one hand, it represented the way to determine data on particular contexts when contacts are inhibited. On the other hand, it highlighted the extent to which the scanty updating and general quality of the data disseminated influenced the digitized data component exacerbated by the mistrust expressed by TSOs to digitized research tools and research. It aims to develop completely beyond the screen in realities in which it is neither customary nor habitual to relate to third parties by placing the mediation of the digital screen among the subjects of this relationship.

The second lesson takes shape on the substantive field and helps us recognize the triple role of the digital element in the field of the specific case analyzed. Digital existence becomes a form that can be equated with the physical one when it not only affects the quality, updating, and abundance of information disseminated about organizations but also becomes a mirror of the

Role of the Digital for the Third Sector in the Campania Region (Italy): From the Side of Research to the Side of the Objects in the Aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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regulatory transition that imposes a non-negligible aspect of this in legal terms as well. Digital skills become a proxy for the agency possibilities of TSOs as the scenario changes. It follows that working to improve, enrich, and develop these competencies should not remain an intervention isolated to the pandemic contingency but should become a systemic action adequately supported by national and supranational contextual actors. Digital transition, in the final instance, becomes that process to be sustained by employing appropriate education to awareness aimed at reducing inequalities and outlining possible futures far from the distrust, concern, and reticence generated by problems of universalized and generalized knowledge with respect to the role of the digital in the specific sector analyzed as well as in daily life in general. The hasty digitization linked to the contingency of Covid emergency most acute phase - driven by the resilience and reaction to the pandemic choc - is transformed in a concrete possibility given by the PNRR. The Plan responds to the digitization needs of the TS (not only) with a large intervention of around 48 billion euros to support the innovation and digitization process that can help the Sector streamline procedures, have a greater grip on the territory and provide new more efficient services, get to know the communities better needed, but also improve and make internal and external organizational processes more efficient. The preliminary reflections in this article are intended to serve as an opening to the emerging questions rather than to find solutions and answers precisely because the exogenous contingent event that generated the questions from which this study stems, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, is far from over. This in-progress reflection serves precisely to add one more stone to the wall of a debate that will continue to accompany us for a long time.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because restrictions apply to the original data under the GDPR regulation. The datasets will be made available on request.

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