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Validation of the Interpretative Model of the READI® Matrix for Territorial Development

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Abstract

In the local development field, it is important to have tools and instruments—methodologies—that make it possible to determine and evaluate the potential of each territory in order to be able to face future socioeconomic development processes. In view of the lack of such specific methodologies based on evidence and scientific rigour, the aim of this article is to address this need from two perspectives: on the one hand, through its practical application by administering the READI® matrix and its computer application—@plicaREAD—in eight counties in Valencia province (Spain); on the other hand, after the fieldwork, the aim is to determine a proposal for interpretation of the scenarios resulting from this application—scores—obtained through a Group of Local Development Experts who have implemented this matrix in other Spanish territories (Alicante, Castellón, Murcia, Albacete, Cuenca and Teruel), with the intention of presenting it to the scientific community for discussion. As a conclusion of the results, the proposal presented investigates more deeply into the search for methodologies for territorial development planning, based on the progress of a tool available for this purpose, the READI® matrix, from an integral, integrated and integrating vision.

Keywords: READI® matrix; local development; territory; methodology

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1. Introduction

The Spanish and Valencian territory and the agents driving local development have been the subject of different studies and approaches from disciplines such as geography [1–4], applied economics and business management [5–9], town planning and regional planning [10,11], gender perspective [12] or from a multidisciplinary standpoint [13–15]. Likewise, it has been studied through social sciences by the Territorial Development Research Group of the University of Valencia (GRIDET), to which the authors belong [16–23].

According to this research, the local development model can be defined as the set of systemic elements that make it possible to understand the reality of a territory and its capacities to articulate a development process, based on the relationships, interactions and effects that are integrated between the resources available, the actors present and the dynamics implemented. In this way, the model incorporates the elements to understand why things happen as they do from a dynamic (as opposed to static) perspective, is proactive on the part of the actors (as opposed to deterministic) and functions with a practical sense of what can be accomplished from a given situation to implement comprehensive, integrative and integrated territorial development processes.

In line with this delimitation, it can be seen how each territory implements its resources differently, operates with its stakeholders and sets up dynamics between them, thus obtaining different results [18,19]. Consequently, two territories with similar resources, similar actors and similar dynamics will not obtain the same results. Nor does the same economic situation have the same effects on two territories with the same competencies—capacities.

The particular features of each territory are thus the differential element that generates potential for its socioeconomic development [16]. Specifically, these particularities are based on the presence, ownership, use and exploitation of the resources available in each territory, as well as the actors present, catalogued and activated and the dynamics articulated between them—from the basic existence of local meeting forums to the determination of a strategic planning to achieve a joint vision of development [24–26]. Therefore, the appropriate combination of these three elements, resources, actors and dynamics (understood in turn as sets—blocks—of elements), will allow a territory to have the capacities—competences—to undertake future local development processes, understanding them as potentialities that indicate the possibilities of success when facing future development processes. In other words, these singular features specialise the territory. Therefore, when sufficiently and well used, they become driving, characteristic and differentiating elements of the territory. But when unused or underused, they are idle elements present in the territory that do not provide added value or, if they do, they do so at a basic level.

This degree of territorial competence is the key element—strategic and decisive—for the future of the territory. It is therefore essential to understand it, analysing what has happened from the past to the present but with a view to the future it will face. In fact, in the current environment of uncertainty, it is a common tendency to highlight the fundamental importance of a prior diagnosis of the territory as a starting point for any development strategy [24,27], for policy evaluation and strategic planning, by means of contrasted, updated and precise information with the scientific method, rigour and objectivity. For decades, international organisations such as the OECD [28], the Leipzig Charter [29], the local dimension of the EU's European Employment Strategy [30], its Territorial Strategy [31] and its Territorial Agenda 2020 [32], as well as professional associations [33] and scholars in the field, have agreed with this statement [21,34–38]. For more than two decades, the theses on the programmes, services, characteristics and functions of the agencies and technical staff that implement socioeconomic development policies have also been pointing in this direction [2,34,39].

On this basis, it can be stated that, in the field of socioeconomic development, there is a need for facilitating methodologies and devices that are integrated by close and practical indicators, as tools that assess and analyse local and stakeholder knowledge in a rigorous and objective manner [40–42]. Only by identifying innovative tools for the public management of local development [43] can existing trends be apprehended and opportunities for government and private intervention be identified in order to feed them back into the decision-making process and the drafting of development policies [44]. Consequently, it is necessary to adequately resource the most efficient lines of action [42,45–47]. Moreover, in line with our previous thesis, if each territory is different and has a different evolution, the need to have tools and instruments—methodologies—that make it possible to determine—and evaluate, if necessary—the competences of each territory, understood as potentialities that indicate the possibilities of success when tackling future local development processes, becomes even more important.

It should be noted that the academic literature contains several attempts to homogenise indicators in order to diagnose, supervise and compare development in the different territorial scales, with different approaches, depending on the disciplines used. In a brief review of scientific output, models can currently be found that base their analyses on the devel-

opment of matrices focused on the attractiveness of a region and its competitiveness [35], models based on the sustainable development of socioeconomic systems and the identification of management tools and indicators at regional level [36,48–51] proposals for methods that generate synthetic indicators to classify various territories, including European ones, in order to understand the multidimensional complexities of the process and the factors related to innovation and digitalisation [6,52]. Moreover, there are others based on regional competitiveness through the grouping of indicators by multi-criteria comparisons [53], partial and comprehensive indices of socio-ecological-economic development [54,55], or models focused on case studies [39,56]. Some proposals focus on measuring the role of geographic location in economic inequality [1], as well as in the measuring of resilience indices (economic, demographic, social, etc.) and the analysis of determinants in Spain and Europe [57,58]. There are also integrated multi-criteria strategic planning approaches which, through rural studies, green economy and sustainable development, are based on different assessment tools to support decision-making processes that lead authorities to opt for environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development [59–61].

There are also different methodologies that attempt to address the lack of tools and guidelines for participatory territorial governance strategic planning, through the application of problem structuring (PSM) and multi-criteria decision support/multi-criteria decision-making (MCDA) methods [44,62], integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives [40,63] with participatory management approaches and active citizen participation [27]. However, these overlook many areas for the management of local development, such as the use of specific and potential resources of the territory [47,64], the consideration of the development of institutional capacities [46], the presence of social networks of various kinds that strengthen social capital [65,66] and their possible implications and interdependencies as essential factors for territorial development [24,65].

In Spain there are also initiatives, such as the Action Plan for the evaluation of active employment policies, both state and regional, of the Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility [67] or the Avalem Territori diagnosis [14], prepared at the regional level by three Valencian universities on the current scenario of territorial development in relation to the labour market, with the idea of implementing a new management model that adapts the rollout of policies to the territory.

Despite these contributions, it should be noted that the Spanish local development model is generally characterised by a short-term, results-based vision rather than long-term planning and foresight. Thus, beyond the attempt of some scientific works to measure some territorial issues with methodological approaches for the development and implementation of strategies focused on case studies [27,35,37,40,42,54,60,68,69], the reality of development is often based on mere conjecture, “common sense”, with “good intentions”, based on the creation of models to fill information gaps.

This lack of specific, updated and continuous technical and scientific information-generating instruments for decision-making and the use of the knowledge generated in their actions means that the technicians in charge of the development model from the local level largely lack specific methodologies of their own that would allow them to confront development processes in their territory based on evidence and not only on informal and accumulative knowledge of the territory. This leads to major difficulties in establishing adequate strategic planning, which in turn hinders the application of an integral vision that is adjusted to the priorities or basic needs of society and inexorably takes into account the particularities of the territory.

Despite this, the margin of freedom and manoeuvre of each territory derived from the different territorial particularities has, in many cases, generated specialisation processes, presuming—in the absence of official data on their achievements—that development pro-

cesses of interest to society have been articulated, but these widen the existing gaps between territories [17].

Faced with this lack of methodologies, the authors' proposal (GRIDET) was to design a matrix that allows the evaluation of the potential of each territory, called READI® (Resources + Actors + Dynamics) (Table 1) [24,25]. Its reliability would then be contrasted methodologically [70] and applied in different territories for testing purposes [26] by means of a computer application, @plicaREADI. This led to a process of validation—both internal and externa—of the matrix. The matrix is based on the importance of three main elements (resources, actors and dynamics), which in turn encompass 165 key indicators that allow its evaluation. This matrix allows a representative score to be obtained for the situation of a given territory in order to detect under-utilised potential or elements that allow room for improvement.

Table 1. READI matrix final proposal.

MATRIX Summary—Resources, Actors and Dynamics	Scores
RESOURCES	
ECONOMIC	
Own funding sources	15
External funding sources (public)	10
External funding sources (public-private))	10
External funding sources (private))	10
Interest in and seeking participation in European projects	5
PRODUCTIVE	
Quantity of employment generated	15
Quality of employment generated	20
Productive fabric	10
Productive sectors (quantity)	5
Size of companies	5
HUMAN	
Average education level of the population	10
Labour migration balance (local employment system)	10
SPATIAL	
Natural resources	10
Tourism resources	10
Cultural resources	10
Production resources	15
Geographical location	10
Infrastructures	10
	200
ACTORS	
Specific resources for development	25
Presence of socioeconomic actors	25
Presence of variety of socioeconomic actors	25
Detection, study and analysis process	20
Contact process and collaboration proposals	30
Results obtained	25
	150
DYNAMICS	
Forums and meeting points	30
Types of forum and meeting points	20
Territorial leadership	25
Socio-institutional networks at local level	25
Methodologies and strategic plans	25
Joint vision of territorial development	25
	150
TOTAL MAXIMUM SCORE	**500**

Source: Own creation.

On the basis of the above, the aim of this text is not to present the contents of the matrix, which have already been exhaustively presented in previous publications, together with an analysis of its reliability and its initial outcomes for the territory. In view of the importance of the need for tools and instruments—methodologies—that make it possible to know and evaluate the potential of each territory in order to face future processes of socioeconomic development and the lack of such specific—own—methodologies based on evidence and scientific rigour, the aim of the article is to address this need from a twofold perspective.

On the one hand, after the first tests of the matrix, which proved to be a tool of high interest for local development, the objective of the research consists of the practical application of the methodology cited through the administration of the READI® matrix and its computer application—@plicaREADI—in eight counties in the province of Valencia (Spain).

On the other hand, after the fieldwork, the aim is to determine a proposal for the interpretation of the scenarios resulting from its application—scores—obtained by the different territories. This interpretation responds to questions such as the following: What do the scores obtained mean? How many points would be sufficient to be considered in an optimal situation for future local development processes? This is the ultimate aim of the READI proposal as an element that makes intervention on the territory possible.

The proposal for interpreting the results arising from this application process is validated through a Group of Local Development Experts who have applied this matrix to other Spanish territories (Alicante, Castellón, Murcia, Albacete, Cuenca and Teruel), with the intention of presenting it to the scientific community for debate. On this basis, the aim is to generate a creative process of reflection and analysis with the idea of returning to reality with new ways of acting on it [71], overcoming the immediate individual expert knowledge, constituted by the technical, professional experience of the factual events, to reach the most profound scientific knowledge of the reality of the analysed territories, achieving the aggregation of the scientific evidence generated in an intersubjective way and the "normalised" synthesis or shared framework of this specialised thought on the macro-situation of reference, for construction of the collective discourse.

This facilitates its implementation in the territory, with the aim of it becoming a structural tool in the planning of socioeconomic development. At the same time, this makes it possible to highlight the importance of having resources, actors and dynamics for development of the territory and, above all, to have them evaluated as a starting point for the implementation of actions of interest for its development.

2. Material and Method

To address the complexity of the research, at the methodological level, the strategy of a mixed or multi-method design was considered interesting, combining different methods as cross-validation for the same reality, with the articulation of a plurality of methodological, procedural and instrumental—technical, quantitative, distributive and qualitative, structural/dialectical—perspectives integrated in the same research process, combining conversational and direct participation devices. This strategy was considered useful and adds efficiency to the research. In other words, it brings benefits and methodological and theoretical rigour by providing coherence with the analysis model and a complex final objective with a multi-strategic logic, such as gauging the competence level of territories for local development by means of a composite index for determination of the resulting scenarios.

The proposal for the interpretation of the scenarios resulting from application of the matrix presented for discussion in this text is as follows:

First, the diagnostic phase is carried out by means of a quantitative methodology, similar to the questionnaire survey or pre-coded index of indicators; the READI® matrix,

using the computer application of the matrix; @plicaREADI and the analysis of the results obtained from its application to the territory in eight territories (counties) in the Valencia province (see map).

Second, validation of the scenario proposal is carried out by means of a qualitative methodology; the focus group technique is applied to the working groups that brings together a set of assigned or self-assigned people, according to specific skills, knowledge and competences—professionals or experts—to accomplish a certain goal under the guidance of a coordinator [25,72]. Through these techniques, the joint process of co-reflection takes place through a Group of Local Development Experts who have applied this matrix in other Spanish territories (Alicante, Castellón, Murcia, Albacete, Cuenca and Teruel).

Territorial Sample

The sample to which the READI® matrix was applied through its computer application—@plicaREADI—consisted of 64 technicians from eight territories, 50% of the counties in the province of Valencia, covering 170 municipalities (63.91% of the total), a population of 1,129,805 (41.70% of the total in 2024) and a surface area of 5187.13 km^2 (48%). It is then broken down, presenting an initial a priori classification based on population density (Inhabitant/km^2) and average income per consumption unit (€) (Table 2):

Table 2. READI® matrix application sample.

County	Municipalities	Surface Area (Km^2)	Population (2024)	Population Density (Res/km^2)	Average Income per Unit of Consumption (€)	AEDL Sample	Semaphore
El Rincón de Ademuz	7	370.22	2170	5.86	18,574	6	
La Serranía	19	1405.28	17,453	12.42	19,382	10	
La Canal de Navarrés	8	709.29	15,755	22.21	19,207	6	
La Vall d'Albaida	34	722.22	88,848	123.02	19,531	13	
La Ribera Alta	35	970.04	232,520	239.70	19,746	7	
El Camp de Morvedre	16	271.20	99,848	368.17	20,041	9	
La Safor	31	429.80	181,068	425.94	17,471	6	
L'Horta Sud	20	309.08	492,143	1592.28	19,000	7	
Province of Valencia (Spain)	266	10,806.09	2,709,433	250.73	19,772		
Total representation (%)	**63.91**	**48.00**	**41.70**				

Source: Own creation.

3. Results of the Methodological Discussion: The Proposed Interpretation of the Scenarios

Based on the outcomes of the expert working group, an interpretation of the scores obtained in these eight territories is proposed in order to infer a model for interpretation of the matrix, the results of which are applicable to any territory, and, thereby, to validate the proposed interpretation of the READI® matrix.

This proposed interpretation model of the READI® matrix (Resources + Actors + Dynamics) takes into account, on the one hand, the quantity or the resultant of the total of the elements available on the territory linked to resources, actors and dynamics over a maximum of 500 points (resources = 200, actors = 150, dynamics = 150) on the basis of the previous validation of the matrix [70]. On the other hand, the balance between these three

blocks of elements was considered according to the following scale of the percentage weight of their average: Low < 30, Medium-low = 30–40, Medium = 40–50, Medium-high =50–60, High > 60.

For this purpose, a scaling of these two main dimensions is proposed around five categories (levels) for each of the dimensions, as shown in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3. Dimensions 1 and 2 of the proposed interpretation of competence utilisation and factor balance.

Dimension 1. Total Points Obtained	Dimension 2. Balance Between the 3 Elements/Blocks
Low (<150 points)	Low balance
Medium-low (151 to 200 points)	Medium-low balance
Medium (201 to 250 points)	Medium balance
Medium-high (251 to 300 points)	Medium-high balance
High (>301 points)	High balance

Source: Own creation.

This is a reasoned choice of categories based on the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained so far in the territories in which it has been applied in Valencia province (a total of 8 counties and 64 municipalities). Thus, although the criterion scores are not the same for all of the sections determined by the categories, they do allow the results obtained to be interpreted in a logical manner.

This makes it possible to determine the existence of six major groups of scenarios resulting from such a combination. These scenarios are shown in the following table (Table 4). In this table we also present the scenarios grouped by blocks. Specifically, there are six blocks of scenarios that we propose as a result of these scenarios.

Table 4. Proposed ranking based on total score and balance of elements.

		Balance Between the 3 Elements/Blocks (Resources, Actors and Dynamics)				
		Low	**Medium-Low**	**Medium**	**Medium-High**	**High**
Total points obtained (resource + actors + dynamics)	**Low (<150)**	1	1	2	3	5
	Medium-low (151 to 200 points)	1	2	3	5	5
	Medium (201 to 250)	2	3	3	5	5
	Medium-high (251 to 300 points)	3	4	4	6	6
	High (>301)	4	4	4	6	6

Source: Own creation.

Based on the proposed classification, the interpretation of the resulting scenarios and their level of competence to deal with local development processes would be as follows:

- Scenario 1. Territories with a serious lack of competences to tackle local development processes. They are characterised by very low scores (clearly insufficient) and are also unbalanced between the three blocks of elements, with little possibility of strengthening them, most probably because they have not even detected the resources that could be available to them.
- Scenario 2. Territories with certain difficulties in harnessing their development competences. Scenarios that respond to partial imbalances to be considered, as they can make the subsequent implementation of development processes very difficult.

- Scenario 3. Territories with average (basic) competences to face local development processes, and in whose scenarios, in addition to having a certain level of competences, there is a certain balance between the groups of elements, which facilitates the proposal of actions to improve the territory's reality. So, we would be talking about territories with a certain degree of stability in terms of competences, but which encounter difficulties at some point with the possession and use of resources for development or with the balance of these resources.
- Scenario 4. Territories with interesting competences (outstanding, existing in absolute terms) but in which the elements present a certain imbalance between them or between some of them, usually with a large number of resources, to the detriment of the rest of the elements (actors and dynamics), which tend to have lower scores.
- Scenario 5. Territories in which the competence-generating elements are not very abundant in absolute (total) terms, although they do provide a certain balance between them (coherence between resources, actors and dynamics), between the weight or presence that each of them has. This aspect greatly favours the implementation of development processes.
- Scenario 6. Balanced territories with high potential a priori to tackle local development processes, both in terms of the competences available to them in terms of available resources, actors present and dynamics implemented, as well as the balance between them, which are aspects that provide guarantees for the implementation of actions on the same.

To these two basic dimensions and in line with the interpretation of the results obtained so far, a new dimension of a complementary nature could be added, consisting of the disaggregation of the scores obtained separately for the three elements/blocks (Table 5), resources, actors and dynamics, which would allow us a more in-depth analysis of the territories to which the READI matrix is applied.

Table 5. Disaggregation of scores obtained per element.

Dimension 3. Disaggregated Level by Points of Each Element/Block (Resources, Actors and Dynamics)		
Values		**Competence Level**
>121 >91 >41 dynamics	resources actors	
>101–120 >71–90 >31–40 dynamics	resources actors	Territory with limited competences for development, with certain difficulties for development, Territory that does not make full use of its competences (either of its resources, actors or dynamics)
>91–100 >61–70 >21–30 dynamics	resources actors	Territory in partial imbalance (of resources, actors or dynamics)
<90 <60 <20 dynamics	resources actors	Territory with low levels of competence

Source: Own creation.

4. Results of Empirical Application of the Proposal to the Territories

The results presented here only validate (show) from an applied perspective the application of the interpretation proposal put forward. As can be seen in the following figure,

which shows the scores obtained in these eight Valencian counties (Figure 1), grouped according to the three blocks of elements: resources, actors and dynamics (Figure 2).

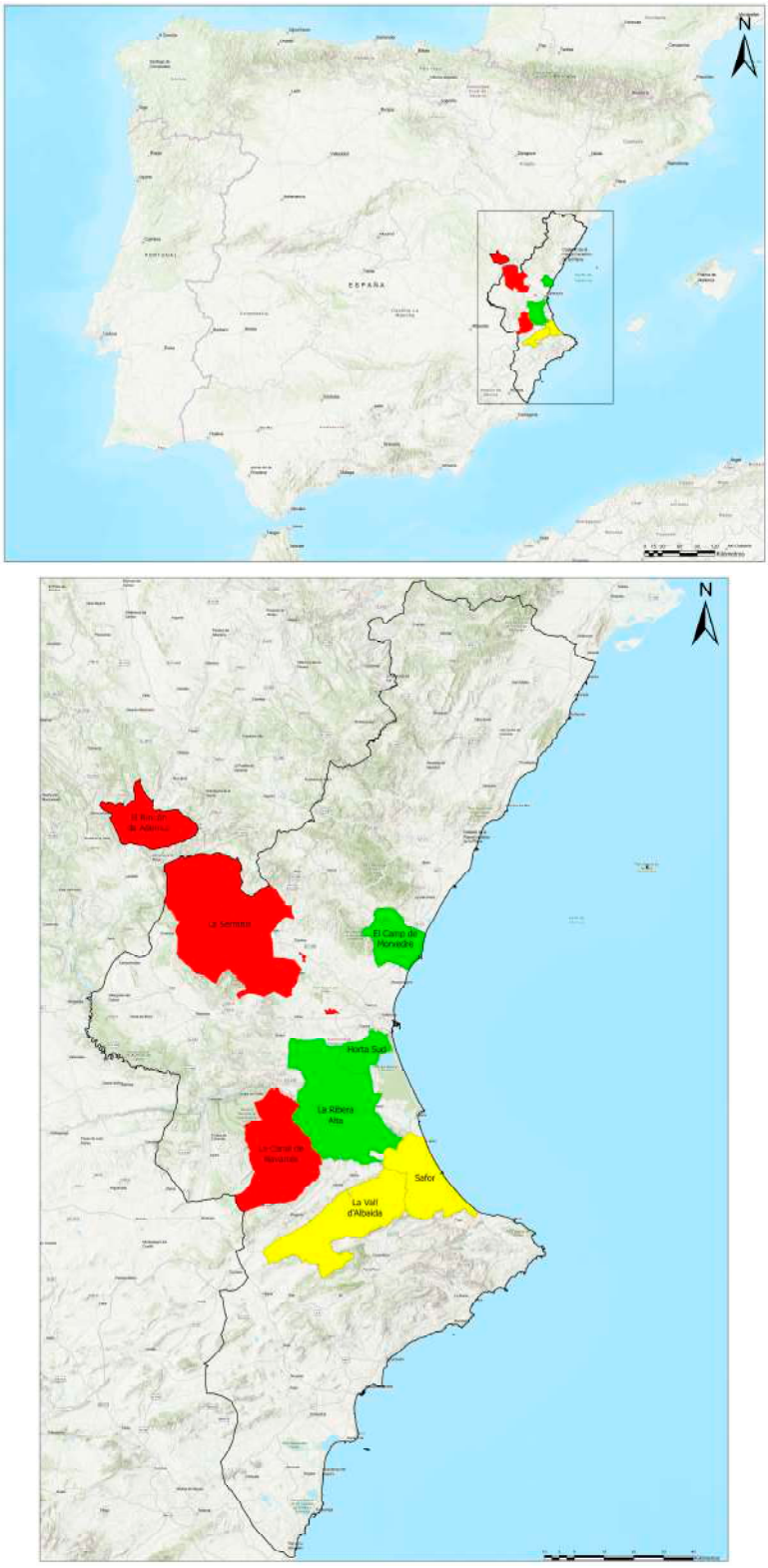

Figure 1. Map of the territories analysed. (The authors wish to express their gratitude to the following for their contribution to the preparation of the map: Javier Santamaría, Adrián Ferrandis and Carmen Zornoza).

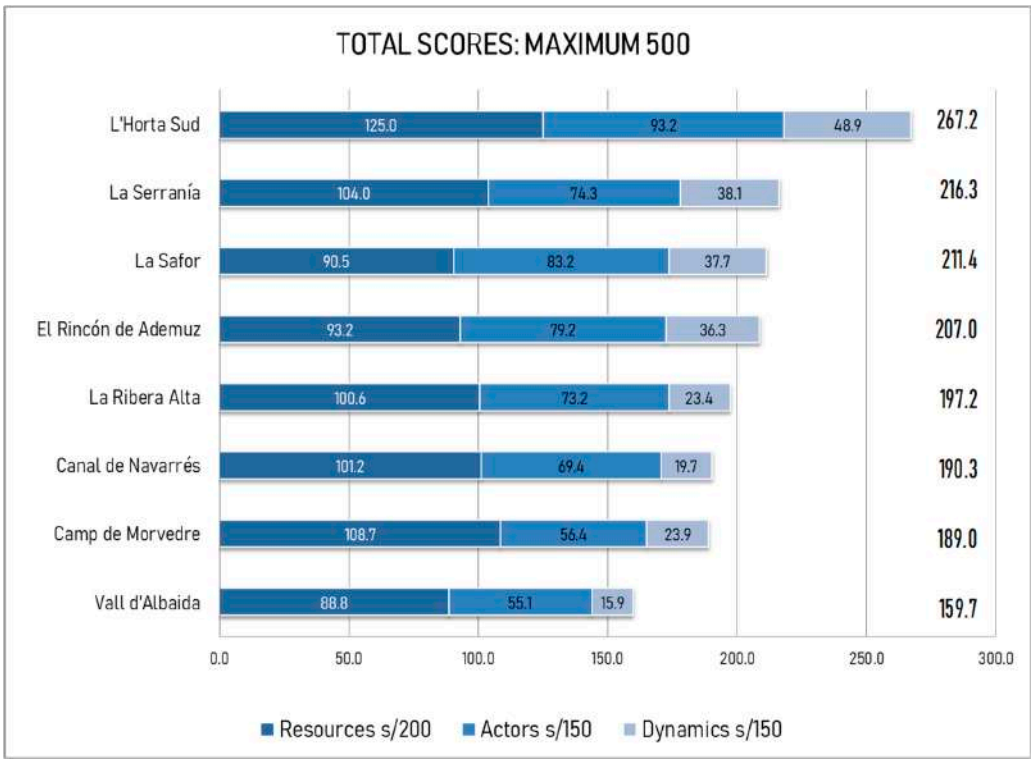

Figure 2. Results of application of the READI matrix (resources, actors, dynamics). Source: Own creation.

If the interpretation criteria presented above are applied to these outcomes, the reality they show us is that there are territories such as Vall d'Albaida, Camp de Morvedre, Canal de Navarrés and La Ribera Alta which would be in scenario 2, being territories with certain difficulties in making the most of their competences. There are scenarios that respond to partial imbalances, which should be taken into account because they may hinder the subsequent implementation of development processes.

In turn, El Rincón de Ademuz, La Safor and La Serranía are located in scenario 3. These are territories with medium (basic) competences to undertake local development processes, and in whose scenarios, in addition to having a certain level of competences, there is a certain balance between the groups of elements, which facilitates the reality of the territory. This would therefore mean they are territories with a certain stability but encounter difficulties at some point with the possession and use of resources for development or with the balance between them.

Finally, L'Horta Sud (scenario 6) is a balanced territory with a high potential for executring local development processes, both due to the competencies it has in terms of available resources, actors present and dynamics implemented and because of the balance between them. All of this is reflected graphically in the following table (Table 6) (taking into account that the data provided are prior to the irruption of the DANA storm in the regions of L'Horta Sud and La Ribera Alta in October 2024).

Table 6. Results: total score obtained and balance of elements according to territories.

		Balance Between the 3 Elements/Blocks				
		Low	**Medium-Low**	**Medium**	**Medium-High**	**High**
Total points obtained	**Low < 150**					
	Medium-low (151 to 200)		Vall d'Albaida Camp de Morvedre Canal de Navarrés La Ribera Alta			
	Medium (201 to 250)			El Rincón de Ademuz La Safor La Serranía		
	Medium-high (251 to 300)				L'Horta Sud	
	High > 301					

Source: Own creation.

In order to corroborate the previous results, a new dimension is analysed, consisting of the breakdown of the scores obtained separately for the three elements/blocks: resources, actors and dynamics. By carrying out an analysis of the different components of local development and not only from the total result, a deeper analysis of the territories is obtained to which the READI matrix has been applied (Table 7).

Table 7. Breakdown of scores obtained per element.

Vall d'Albaida	Territory with low levels of competence for development in all three factors
Camp de Morvedre	Territory with low levels of competence for development in terms of actors, with limited competencies and certain difficulties in terms of dynamics, and which does not make full use of its competencies in resources.
Canal de Navarrés	Territory with low levels of competence for development in terms of dynamics, with limited competencies and certain difficulties in terms of actors, and which does not make full use of its competencies in resources.
El Rincón de Ademuz	Territory with limited competencies and certain difficulties for development in terms of resources and which does not make full use of its competencies in terms of actors and dynamics.
La Safor	Territory with limited competencies and certain difficulties for development in terms of resources and which does not make full use of its competencies in terms of actors and dynamics.
La Ribera Alta	Territory with limited competencies and certain difficulties for development in terms of dynamics and which does not make full use of its competencies in terms of resources and actors.
La Serranía	Territory that does not make full use of its competences in terms of resources, actors and dynamics.
L'Horta Sud	Territories with high competences (potentials) for development.

Source: Own creation.

5. Final Conclusions

The information presented completes the READI® matrix (Resources + Actors + Dynamics) as a further methodology available to the territory stakeholders in their need for knowledge of the reality of the territory and their will to articulate a policy for development.

The proposal arose following an expressed request from specialised actors, mainly Employment and Local Development Agents (AEDL), who repeatedly manifested their lack of resources. The READI® matrix is proposed as a strategic tool for reflection and for strengthening socioeconomic development processes; it is capable of serving as a basis for decision-making and management of the most appropriate strategies to address local development processes.

Specifically, the application of this matrix makes it possible to classify territories and compare them with objective uniformity criteria. Likewise, it makes it possible to detect areas for improvement, including proposals for intervention in the territory that enable its development. In this way, emphasis is placed on the micro vision or in the macro vision of the territory, as well as on an assessment of the degree of integration of the visions of the stakeholders present in the territory and their degree of coincidence in their perception of it. It is, therefore, in essence, an applied instrument, which is based on the territory-population binomial and which is aimed at it, generating direct transfer to it (exchange), as it allows its assessment (self-evaluation) through an integral vision (proposed for the whole territory—and for any territory—being able to establish comparisons), an integrated vision (understanding the territory as a whole on which to intervene) and an integrating vision (taking into account all the actors of the territory, as elements that dynamize the available resources).

The development of the matrix contents has made it possible to obtain both a micro vision of the key elements (resources, actors, dynamics) and even of their specific indicators, as well as an overall vision of them, facilitating the achievement of a final assessment based on the proposed weighting of these factors. With the application of the index of indicators, the territories have obtained a score that graphically visualises the reality in which they find themselves, determining their strengths and weaknesses in a simple way, with a clear purpose of articulating actions for future improvement, facilitating the design of policies adjusted to different levels.

The scenarios proposed in this text complete the interpretation of the READI® matrix, thereby facilitating its application by those territories wishing to use it as a strategic planning tool for their development. While the tool has been presented, its universality is not yet established and requires further in-depth analysis.

Finally, although the conclusions are grounded in the findings of the research project from which this study originates, broader interregional and international validation remains necessary. The territorial application of the matrix presents certain limitations arising from the lack of sincerity or commitment of some local actors, as well as from the limited participatory and planning culture found in certain territories. Its success largely depends on institutional leadership and the effective involvement of local stakeholders. Furthermore, the absence of comparative studies hinders the validation of the results obtained. Nevertheless, progress is being made towards the development of a broader interregional framework, with the aim of consolidating the conclusions and strengthening the validation of the interpretative model of the Matrix for Territorial Development.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study as it relies solely on fully anonymized, aggregated statistical datasets. No information capable of identifying individuals, directly or indirectly, is collected, stored or analysed. Moreover, data processing is performed using a strictly technical system, with no human subject interaction and no risk to privacy or well-being.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants. Verbal consent was chosen instead of written consent because participants interacted with a computer application that did not involve any personal data, and their responses were collected solely for aggregated statistical purposes. The authors affirm that all procedures were conducted in accordance with ethical standards and that the confidentiality of the information collected was fully ensured.

Data Availability Statement: The data employed in this study are owned by various public institutions and are subject to usage restrictions imposed by these entities. Consequently, the data cannot be made publicly available. Nonetheless, limited access may be considered upon explicit authorisation from the institutions that hold ownership of the data.

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