CASE STUDY 3:  
**History and turning points of the ceramic cluster of Sassuolo, Italy**

80% of Italy’s ceramic tile production capacity (and 18% of world production) is located in the Emilia-Romagna region, mainly in the town of Sassuolo.

Tile production in Sassuolo grew out of a century-long tradition in craft-based ceramics manufacture. Firms were mostly created in the post-war period when the reconstruction of Italy created a strong demand for construction material. The availability of clay in the rural areas of the region was an important element in inspiring the idea to start tile production.

The evolution of the industry owes much to the interaction between tile producers and metal engineering workshops based in the region and accounted for the availability of a pool of mechanically trained workers. The relationship between the two industries was mutually supportive and local tile producers were used to pilot new technology that allowed them to gain an edge over other industries. Finally, the concentration of tile producers and equipment manufacturers encouraged the formation of suppliers and consulting firms around Sassuolo, adding to its specialization.

**Explanatory notes on the link between this case and the UNIDO Cluster Development Methodology:**

A diagnostic study also aims to understand what factors have driven the concentration of a critical mass of enterprises in the same locality and given rise to a cluster. Proximity to primary resources and the local availability of raw material or the presence of industry specific skills can be springboards for the emergence of a cluster. This case study provides an example of how cluster history and origins can be described in a diagnostic study.