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## **Conservation and restoration of the traditional architectural heritage of villages: monitoring some results of the PSR (Rural Development Programmes) 2007-13 of the Piedmont region, in view of new actions.**

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**Keywords:** Building refurbishment, Villages, Rural architecture, Landscape, Monitoring

**Abstract** The region Piedmont has financed, through the Rural Development Programme 2007-13 (PSR), the drafting of manuals and implementation of measures to recover traditional architecture. In particular, measure 322 supported 34 projects for the renovation of mountain villages, with a public contribution of more than 37 million euro.

Based on the results of the monitoring activity started by the Region around the outcomes of these actions, the article suggests a critical discussion about some outcomes of measure 322 to highlight strengths and weaknesses, in view of the next programming and of future actions. The discussion may be useful also in relation to the recent approval of the Law on small towns, mountain and recovery of historical centres, which has some common aspects with measure no. 322.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The Law on small towns, mountain and recovery of historical centres,<sup>1</sup> recently approved with a large majority by the Senate, promotes the valorisation of their natural rural, historical, architectural and cultural heritage, with a precise goal: the country demographic balance, by encouraging people to live in these towns. The measure tries to provide a response to problems of socio-economic marginality, which, after the end of the Second World War, have challenged the dense network of small rural and mountain centres of our country. They are now recognized as a possible territorial and cultural resource and matrix for the territorial development and presence, provided they start a revitalisation of economic activities and encourage the repopulation. The Law demands a synergic cooperation among public bodies (regions, metropolitan cities, provinces or large metropolitan areas, unions of municipalities, municipalities, park authorities) to restructure the system of services (civil protection, education, health, social welfare services, transport, road network), thus definitely considering **the fact of residing there** the key to recover small towns and to fight hydro-geological instability, through the continuous maintenance ensured by the use of the territory. With this Law, the Ministry of the Interior will invest 10 million euro for the year 2017 and 15 million euro for each year from 2018 to 2023. The investments will be managed through the adoption of a national plan for small towns,<sup>2</sup> where intervention strategies will be defined.

In this scenario, the experience of measure 322 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-13 of Piedmont, named “development and renovation of villages” and similar experiences within the PSR of other Italian regions, set an example of great relevance. Although measure 322 is exclusively focused on mountain villages of regional territories, it has undoubtedly anticipated many strategic issues of the new Law, by testing instruments and methods for the process management, its outcomes and concluded interventions shall be critically analysed to highlight the *lessons learned*, what worked and what may be improved, in view of the national plan. In addition, with reference to the PSR of Piedmont, non-repayable funding disbursed through measure no. 322 in the regional area is far over the amount of investments estimated by the Ministry. The object of the national law is much wider, not only under a territorial point of view (all municipalities under 5.000 inhabitants and throughout the entire national territory), but also for the variety of interventions established. However, many objectives in the law are the same as the ones pursued and tested in real interventions by measure 322, such as for example:

- the requalification of the public building heritage, with particular attention to energy efficiency;
- supporting business activities (existing and new ones), in particular linked to the valorisation and promotion of the territory and its products;
- the urban recovery and requalification of historical centres and the recovery of other buildings and artifacts of architectural and historical-artistic relevance.

While considering the different nature of the law and of the measure of the PSR, it is however assumed that the study of the real outcomes of the measure may contribute to structuring a strategy of intervention for implementing the law. Measure 322 is definitely a relevant experience in the management of strategic projects targeting villages: preliminary analyses, methods, processes and evaluation instruments adopted throughout the different implementation steps, represent a *background* of experiences to be analysed in a critical way for future actions with similar purposes, the aim is highlighting those which turned out to be more effective (Anderson, A. 2017; ENRID 2014).

<sup>1</sup> Law 6 October 2017, n. 158, “Measures for the support and valorisation of small towns, and provisions for the requalification and recovery of the historical centres of the same towns, in force as of 17 November 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The Plan will define the modalities for the submission of projects by municipal administrations, as a response to public invitations to tenders, for which specific selection criteria will be defined by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (art. 3 par. 4).

## 2 | THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2007-13 OF THE REGION PIEDMONT: MEASURES FOR THE REVITALISATION OF MOUNTAIN VILLAGES AND FOR THE RECOVERY OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

The rural development programme (PSR) is the main instrument, through which the EU implements its rural development policy, by addressing in an integrated way problems of economic, environmental and social nature. In the 28 member states, 118 PSR are currently in force for the period 2014-20, referred to specific territories. In Italy, each region has its own programme, with the exception of Trentino Alto Adige, where each of the two provinces has its own. In the previous programme 2007-13, where some action financed in 2015-16 were completed, the PSR of the region Piedmont had identified, among the different development strategies, the recovery of rural and mountain architecture as an opportunity for territorial development. That issue was mainly addressed in two measures of the PSR:

- measure 323, entitled “Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage”;<sup>3</sup>
- measure 322, entitled “Development and renewal of mountain villages”.

Measure 323 was implemented by 12 of the 13 G.A.L. (Local Action Group) of Piedmont, which decided to activate it within the PSL (Local Development Programme). The measure provided for the creation of manuals for the conservation and recovery of traditional architecture and of the landscape, with reference to the area of each G.A.L. - measure 323.3.a -, their adoption by the Municipalities and the co-funding of pilot building actions, demonstrating the implementation of manuals.

Measure 322 was instead directly implemented by the Municipalities, in reply to a call for applications of programmes for the development and renewal of mountain villages. Despite the differences in the subject, territorial scale and implementing bodies, measure 322 mainly resulted in actions of recovery of public and private buildings, which, in many cases, can be compared with the interventions implemented with measure 323. The implementation of measure 322 included:

- the drafting of a study aimed at upgrading and characterizing Piedmont mountain villages (IRES Piedmont 2009). The study identifies and defines the target of the measure through its most important cultural, social and architectural factors and suggests, at the same time, a series of evaluation and eligibility criteria which were actually used to select the financed programmes.
- the creation, for each municipality of the beneficiary villages, of a manual with all the directions for the architectural recovery and the new realisations, by keeping in mind the typical and landscape features of the territory, to be integrated with the Municipal Building Regulation.
- An integrated programme of actions, consisting of a series of “elementary projects”, which is able to implement a local development strategy and to reach the specific goal of encouraging the stay of the population and the settlement of new businesses and families, by pursuing operative goals such as supporting activities (productive, cultural, environmental, service-related) and the architectural and functional recovery of single and collective infrastructures.
- The implementation of elementary actions established in the programme, belonging to different categories: adjustment/realisation of primary urbanization works, adjustment of open spaces for public use, recovery of monuments of great architectural relevance, recovery of public and private buildings.

<sup>3</sup> Measure 323 is articulated in 3 actions: 323.1 Actions of environmental protection and awareness-raising 323.2 Valorisation of the natural heritage, 323.3 Valorisation of the cultural heritage. Action 323.3 The valorisation of the cultural heritage is composed of 3 sub-actions, of which action no. 323.3.b provides for the creation of a programme of public-private actions.

The measure, in its logical structure, was highly centred on local stakeholders' ability to design and complete a programme of actions triggering local development. This programme shall not be conceived as the sum of elementary interventions, it is rather the implementation of a real strategy of change, where actions and resources mainly target the key elements to free that area from its condition of social and economic marginality (IRES Piemonte Aimone, S. 2009). The specific goals declared in the measure text are basically the same of the law for small towns: encouraging the stay of population or the demographic growth through the settlement of new businesses, the improvement of services and recovery. Under "operative objective" the following is meant: the support to economic and service activities and the architectural and functional recovery of structures and infrastructures. Despite of their specific features, their different direction and articulation, measures 322 and 323 have produced results in the same logical sectors: manuals for the preservation and recovery of traditional architectural heritage and actions incorporated in an "organic" and "integrated" programme (for the village or the whole G.A.L. area) which benefited from a considerable public funding and which were asked to be consistent with the directions expressly established in the manuals.

The research group of the Department of Architecture and Design of the Polytechnic of Turin has supported the region Piedmont in monitoring the PSR interventions aimed at preserving and recovering traditional architectural heritage (among these measure 322), (Bosia, D. 2015). In the activity carried out both measures were taken into consideration, despite the differences, they share the same logical structure based on the manual, the programme and interventions. The following discussion is mainly referred to measure 322, as it is more in line with the objectives of the new law on small towns. However, the considerations expressed are the result of a joint analysis on both measures.

### 3 | THE MANUALS

All the 34 towns which, thanks to measure 322, obtained the funding of one or more (that's the case of the town of Bellino CN) action programmes for the revitalisation of mountain villages, have produced a manual, for which they were asked to produce a fact-finding survey on the architectural and landscape heritage of the reference village and to define the directions for *ex novo* recovery interventions. The aims are partly the same as the ones in the manuals produced by the G.A.L. for the programming 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 (Measure 323.3a), although with some differences:

- The geographical area of the G.A.L. is much larger, it includes several towns, even more than 30, in different fields and Units of Landscape, defined by the Regional Landscape Plan, and so also quite different, even in the features of the traditional architectural heritage. As they shall be applied in the entire reference area, the directions contained in the G.A.L. manuals are less detailed than ones in the manuals specifically made for towns and are based on sample surveys on the built heritage.
- For the G.A.L. manuals, the introduction of intervention criteria for *ex-novo* actions was not required, as they are linked to a measure which is exclusively dedicated to the recovery and valorisation of existing buildings. Many manuals contain however also some directions referred to the enlargement of existing buildings.

Both manuals have in common the connection with the following action programme, the need to comply with the directions to benefit from the funding and to adopt the manuals as annex to the municipal building regulation. The municipalities with the more specific manual drafted for measure 322 were exempted from the obligation to transpose the G.A.L. manual produced with measure 323.

The 34 manuals, for whose realisation municipalities were given a contribution ranging from 5,000.00 and 10,000.00 euro, haven't got the same structure and contents, with the exception for those drafted by the same professionals for several villages of the same territorial sectors. That's the case, for example, of the 17 villages of the province of Cuneo, where only 4 stakeholders did work. All the manuals generally have a municipal territorial analysis, a summary of the historical phases of settlement development and a profiling of the main building typologies (not always analysed) and of the building element classes (walls, roofs, connection systems...). Besides the study and description of the traditional architectural heritage, directions for recovery and *ex-novo* interventions were required. Such directions were generally provided in data sheets, with charts showing eligible and non-eligible interventions, such as for example in the manual of the city of Ostana.

It must be pointed out that the term and concept of manual (used in the PSR) should be overcome and replaced by "guidebook" or guidelines and directions, as the vast majority of documents produced actually are. The preservation and recovery of traditional architectural heritage can indeed hardly be regulated by fixed regulations, such that optimal results can always be ensured. The aim of the guidebooks is rather that of describing some principles of action, which, if correctly applied, ensure the preservation and recovery of the assets and values of their local material culture (Region Piedmont, 2000).

#### 4 | THE ACTION PLAN

Action B of measure 322 refers to the creation of "systematic integrated action plans aimed at recovering and developing a limited number of mountain villages". The plan is conceived as a group of elementary projects, chosen among the ones provided for by measure 322 or also by other measures of the PSR, with particular reference to those addressing the development of economic activities (for example the modernization of agricultural businesses, the improvement of the economic value of forests, the support to micro-businesses) and to services which are essential for the economy and for the mountain population. The connection with other measures highlights the plan synergist value and strategic nature. The decision to allocate the resources on few actions, with contributions exceeding one million euro, shows the willingness to obtain substantial transformations, by encouraging people to stay there and to settle new businesses. Maybe such a plan could have been better organized, if a transformation scenario had been defined (in the long and short run) and a strategy had been designed and implemented (action plan), for an estimated period going beyond the end of the PSR, by showing the successful use of contributions and the triggering of development phenomena which can grow or self-sustain. However, in the text of the measure no reference is made to economic-financial pre-feasibility studies or to the need to prefigure the expected results.

In 2009 the Region established the programme implementing rules (DGR 32-10795) and the related eligibility and evaluation criteria (DGR 35-10911, and DD 411). In a second phase, mountain communities were asked, within the context of a public invitation, to submit "generic programmes" which would be subjected to a first selection. The municipalities with generic programmes held eligible (in accordance with Resolution 353 of 03/02/2010) were later invited to submit "implementation programmes", composed of a list of elementary projects, belonging to different categories and submitted by public or private stakeholders. By means of D.D. dated 22/02/2012 the list of actions which are eligible and can be financed (elementary projects) was published, for each one the recipient's name, the typology and the eligible contribution were specified.

With the aim of improving future actions in the same field, the critical aspects of the selection procedure, as well as when planning the actions can be identified. When selecting the programmes for the renovation of mountain villages, compliance with the eligibility conditions both at a village

and action level, was firstly verified. The first condition concerns the correspondence to the definition of small village, in Italian “Borgata”, (Region Piedmont, Public Works Direction, Protection of land, mountain economy and forests, Resolution 411 of 05-03-2009): *“recognisable historical-anthropological unit... significant evidence witnessing history and local communities, traditional rural economies and the landscape evolution... meant as a thick concentration (although elementary) of buildings without the features of a single productive residential settlement”*. In this regard, the case of the town of Scagnello (CN) is to be noted, in this case the target of the financing plan seems to have more the features of a single residential productive settlement than of a (small) village or hamlet, as the toponym “C.na” (cascina/farmstead) in the town planning map also confirms. The manual itself, specifically produced for the town area, doesn’t include, among the several villages, the settlement for which the programme was submitted. Other eligibility criteria, with reference to the village features, are: minimum number of buildings (from 10 to 100), demography, number of businesses, absence of building works which are not in line with traditional architecture by size and building typology and the services available. For the eligibility criteria concerning the interventions, for example, the presence of a minimum number of elementary projects belonging to different classes was asked, so as to ensure balanced development strategies.

The programmes were later assessed by using a scoring system which considers both the village and action features (in the case of actions: the number, variety and scope).

With reference to the village features, 6 evaluation categories<sup>4</sup> were considered; these categories are divided, based on measurable threshold values (for example the number of inhabitants to assess demographic dynamism), in classes with different scores, up to a maximum of 60 points.

With reference to the evaluation criteria applied to the suggested revitalisation measures, the total sum of the scores assigned to each “elementary project” pertaining the different eligible typologies (Figure 3) was considered. In addition reward criteria were introduced, such criteria considered, for example, the participation of other co-funders, the presence of actions financed with other measures of the PSR or the use of eco-friendly technological solutions when working on buildings. Greater importance was rightly given to those actions concerning businesses and services than to building recovery actions; however, overall, a “summation” logic, rather than the evaluation of the programme quality, was preferred. In other words, although there are many positive examples of interventions where resources are integrated for both the development of micro-businesses and for the recovery of buildings, in other cases interventions of mere recovery of residential buildings by private stakeholders are simply added to the list, with no apparent role in the village strategy, but with a considerable impact on the overall budget of contributions granted.

Although in the text of the measure the adjectives *organic* and *integrated* are used in the definition, programmes have no “strategic” configuration nor do they look like “action plans”, as it would be for a revitalisation project aimed at, firstly, activating local economy and improving services, so as to trigger and encourage the settlement (residence) of the population. The lack of a synthetic evaluation of strategies for the revitalisation of villages is indeed recorded. The analytical evaluation of programmes through socio-economic indicators is fundamental, however it is maybe not sufficient, as it may be incomplete or inconsistent with the specific features of the different territories, which try to get out of the vortex of marginality, by investing right on their peculiarities.

<sup>4</sup> The 6 evaluation categories are: assessment of physical size, demography and demographic dynamism, of businesses and employment dynamism, of buildings, their level of conservation and of living quality, of the village architectural value and of the services here available.

## 5 | THE ACTIONS

Besides the manual and the programme, the third pillar of measure 322 consists of those financed actions which can produce change and a visible transformation. And so it was, although with some problems. As it was said, the "logical" structure of the measure included the study and the adoption of a manual, then the implementation of actions while complying with the guidelines and the project directions in the manual. All the interventions made with public contributions of the PSR should be considered demonstrative interventions, a kind of "best practice" in the application of the manual so as to practically demonstrate the possibility to intervene in the delicate context of mountain villages while respecting local traditional architecture, which the PSR considers as having a great cultural value and as a strong point for local development. The actions within measure 322 should move away from some common practices of demolition and reconstruction,<sup>5</sup> as they are linked to the precise willingness of the PSR and of measure 322 to preserve and recover traditional heritage. The requirement to adopt the manuals as annex to the building regulations pursues indeed a precise goal: safeguarding not so much the architectural emergencies (already subject to constraints), rather the buildings, even the less relevant ones, witnessing tradition and which in rural and mountain areas – and particularly in villages – strongly characterize the landscape. If the concept of protection and conservation is not extended to "minor" architectures and artifacts, the risk is that nothing is added to current intervention practices, which actually enable the demolition and reconstruction of a kind of heritage, which has instead a recognized cultural value.

As already said, the programmes for the renovation of villages were designed as the sum of elementary projects, belonging to different categories, with public or private recipients. Table in fig. 1 briefly shows the distribution of fundings in the different intervention categories. Figure 2 represents the number of those benefiting from the interventions (elementary projects) consisting of private and public stakeholders grouped according to the ATECO classification of economic activities. Based on this classification, public and private stakeholders which benefited from a contribution non-related to a specific economic activity, fall under the class "undefined" (\_n.d.) and represent almost 80% of the total. Figure 3 shows the number of those benefiting from the interventions divided by legal form. Private individual stakeholders which benefited from the contribution represent 67.10% of the total. Interventions refer in this case, for these beneficiaries, to typologies 5 and 7 about the recovery of buildings and other artifacts, probably private buildings non-related to public activities or services.

<sup>5</sup> Interventions of typologies 5 and 7 expressly refer to the recovery of buildings, in case buildings cannot be used, as they are damaged or collapsed, they shall simply be secured (D.D. 411 05-03-2009). In this framework, reconstruction would not be possible, even if some parts collapse during the works. Using the PSR contributions, limited to works different from demolition and reconstruction, but in the presence of this kind of operations, leads to consider the whole intervention as incompatible with the recovery purposes.



	Contributions granted by intervention typology (euro)		Contributions granted by intervention groups (euro)	
Typology 1 - redaction of the manual containing the technical guidelines for refurbishment and new buildings	271.734	1	271.734	0,71%
Typology 4 - refurbishment of buildings and other artefacts of architectural, artistic, archaeological, historical-documentary and ethno-anthropological relevance: realized by municipalities or other public entities	1.306.362	4;6	7.614.577	20,20%
Typology 6 - refurbishment of buildings not having architectural, artistic, archaeological, historical-documentary and ethno-anthropological relevance: realized by municipalities or other public entities	6.308.215			
Typology 4 - refurbishment of buildings and other artefacts of architectural, artistic, archaeological, historical-documentary and ethno-anthropological relevance: realized by private subjects	642.999	5;7	8.272.654	21,95%
Typology 6 - refurbishment of buildings not having architectural, artistic, archaeological, historical-documentary and ethno-anthropological relevance: realized by private subjects	7.629.654			
Typology 8 - modernization of farms	311.364	8;9;11;12;13;14	2.797.315	7,42%
Typology 9 - increasing the added value of forest products	42.285			
Typology 11 - construction, improvement and strengthening of rural aqueducts serving several agricultural companies	120.000			
Type 12 - diversification of non-agricultural activities	206.455			
Typology 13 - development of micro-enterprises	930.302			
Typology 14 - new micro-enterprises	1.186.909			
Typology 15 - development of cultural and recreational activities	6.516.609	15;16,17;18;19	8.105.385	21,50%
Typology 16 - creation and enhancement of services for children: actions carried out by public bodies	145.746			
Typology 17 - creation and strengthening of services for children: interventions carried out by private bodies	90.900			
Typology 18 - creation of multi-functional centers: interventions carried out by the municipalities	1.276.129			
Typology 19 - creation of multi-functional centers: interventions created by micro-enterprises	76.000			
Type 2 & 3 - adaptation / renovation / construction of primary urbanization works and open spaces for public use in the township	10.629.623	2&3	10.629.623	28,20%
			37.691.286	

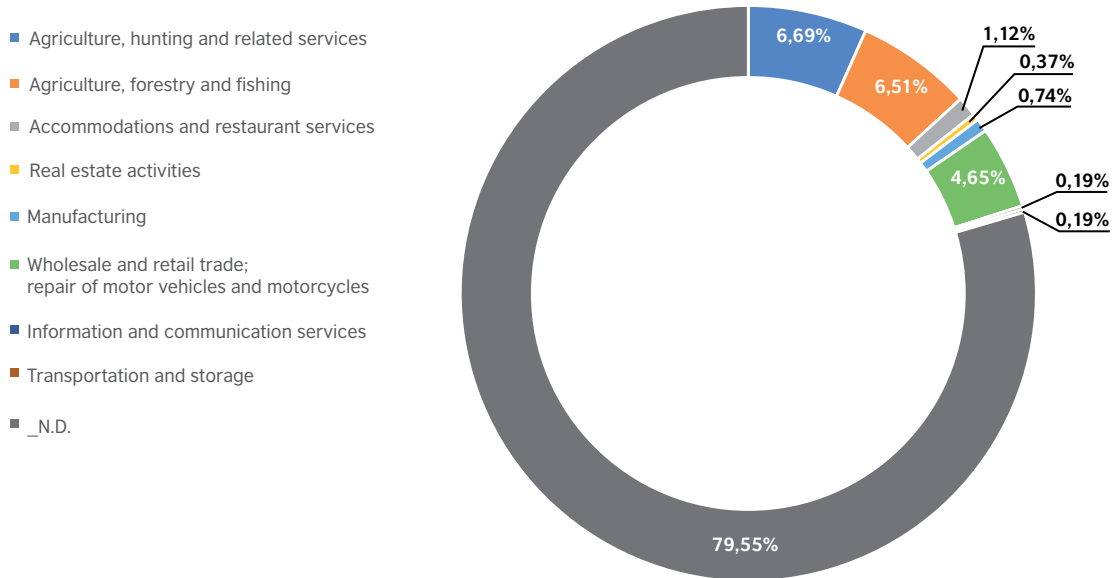
**Figure 1** Typologies of interventions for which “elementary projects” could be submitted by public and private stakeholders and for which the contributions made available by measure 322 can be obtained. The intervention categories were divided into 6 groups. The first one (white) concerns the production of the manual, which is compulsory for all the applying villages. The second group (sky blue) includes the interventions for the recovery of buildings or of other public artifacts (with and without historical-documentary relevance); the third group (red) includes the same kind of interventions, but submitted by private stakeholders). Then there are: interventions for the development of economic activities (green); interventions for the provision of services (blue); interventions of urbanization and for open spaces for public use (compulsory, exactly as it is for manuals, to access the programme)

Source: data processing D.D. 22 February 2012, n. 397



**Conservation and restoration of the traditional architectural heritage of villages:**  
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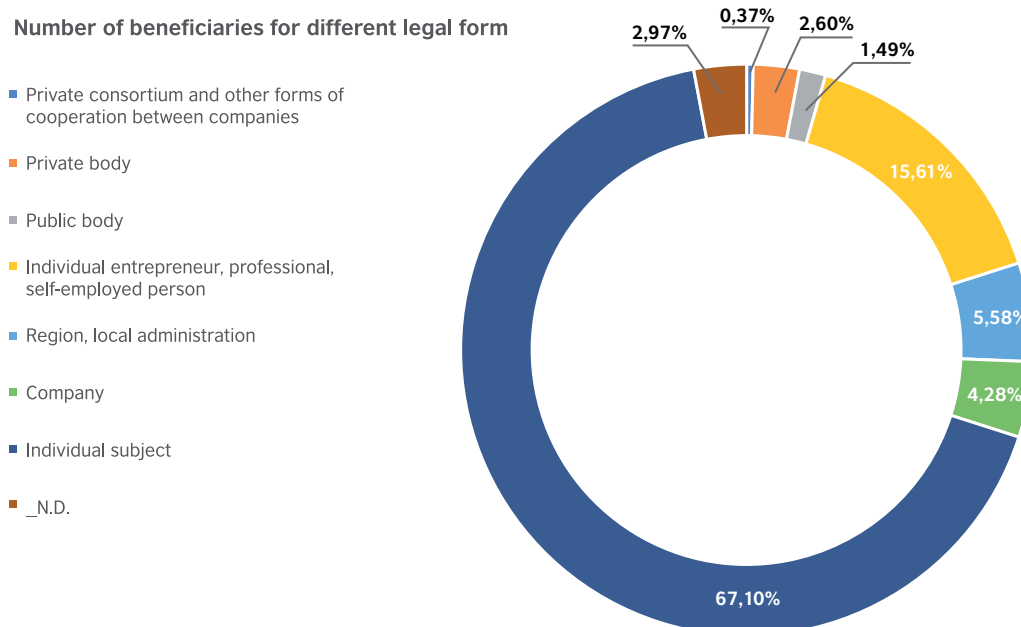
**Number of beneficiaries by ATECO classification (level 1)**



**Figure 2** Number of subjects benefiting from interventions (elementary projects) submitted by private and public stakeholders grouped according to the ATECO classification of their related economic activities.

Source: Processing made by the author based on original data of the web service  
 Data Warehouse Monitoring PSR 2007-2013 of the Piedmont Region

**Number of beneficiaries for different legal form**



**Figure 3** Number of subjects benefiting from interventions divided by legal form

Source: Processing made by the author based on original data of the web service  
 Data Warehouse Monitoring PSR 2007-2013 of the Piedmont Region

## 6 | THE MONITORING ACTIVITY

To complete the monitoring activity on the PSR measures, which was mainly carried out to assess the implementation of the different operations both as time and the economic resources used are concerned, the monitoring activity carried out by the DAD and by the Region Piedmont concerned both the manuals and the guidelines adopted by the municipalities and by the GAL already with the PSR 200-2006, as well as the programmes and the interventions made with measures 323 and 322 of the PSR 2007-13, with the aim of suggesting a critical evaluation of the results and some improvements for the programming (Sumiraschi, C. 2010). The activity ended up with the production of a scientific report, which the Region suggested as a support instrument for the G.A.L. while updating the manuals as under measure 7 of the new PSR 2014-20.

The measures 322 and 323 - which are designed, respectively, to revive mountain villages and enhance the diffused rural and mountain heritage - were implemented, as already said, by different subjects, however they were analysed in parallel, as they concern the same issue and have a very similar logical structure, based on:

- The production of a manual analysing the subject (the town village or the traditional architectural heritage of the G.A.L. area) and the definition of intervention criteria;
- The definition of an integrated and organic programme of intervention;
- The implementation of the actions with the financial contribution of the PSR or G.A.L.

During the monitoring, all the manuals produced were analysed, the main results in the recovery of traditional architectural heritage within the framework and with the support of Measures 322 and 323 were examined, the regional databases and those (people in charge and experts) in the Region which managed them were consulted; much of the technical project documentation was also examined and, lastly, sample audits of the interventions made were organized with the PSR contributions.

The monitoring activity was structured on two levels:

- process level, where the overall consistency among the manuals, programmes and interventions and the instruments used to make the measures working (invitations to tender, evaluation systems and eligibility requirements for the selection of interventions) were analysed;
- planning activity level, where the following elements were checked for a relevant sample of interventions funded: the effectiveness of manuals and of the guidelines for interventions, the recognisability of the typical features of rural architecture, the project quality, the completeness of the documentation and of the information material and any inconsistency or lack of information/material.

Starting with the sample checks of the manual technical material, the programmes and interventions collected at the G.A.L. (for measure 323) and in the Region (for measure 322), all the manuals produced were collected and analysed and sample inspections were made throughout the regional area, together with officers of the Government Environment Sector and of the Department for Heritage Protection of the Region Piedmont. Although the monitoring activity and the inspections mainly focused on the results of measure 323 (considered the continuity of contents and objectives with measure 7 of the new PSR 2014-20, which was then in the process of drafting), the sample analysis of the technical documentation produced and the project drawings of the interventions funded, the consultation with the regional experts who followed the activities established by the measure by means of several inspections in all the 34 villages, specific inspections in the villages Baracco, Baltigati, Ferriere, Sant'Antonio Miribrart, Varinella and Rassa and the many data collected in the regional *datawarehouse* of PSR 2007-13 enabled to define a general framework of the results

of measure 322, thus highlighting the possibility to develop further monitoring activities for more punctual checks (Gudda, P. 2001).

Although many positive results were achieved, as the recovery and conservation of traditional architectural heritage are concerned, critical points were reported in many cases and were mainly attributable to the poor strategic vision of the programmes implemented.

## 7 | THE RESULTS OF THE MONITORING ACTIVITY

With reference to measure 323, many of the weak points identified concern the consistency among manuals, programme and actions (Bosia 2015). During the monitoring, there have been some cases, where contributions were granted for interventions on assets which were completely stranger to the issues in the manuals – specifically produced – or which were not of public use, while it is an indispensable requirement set by the measure.<sup>6</sup> In addition, just one of the 13 G.A.L. adopted a programme of interventions, by trying to organically structure the measure. In the other cases the “wishes” of the municipalities belonging to the G.A.L. were simply collected, also due to the difficulty of finding projects which could be “ready”, eligible to be financed and whose normal authorization procedure could be in line with the timing set by the tender notice. Just think, for example, of the time needed to get the authorisations from the relevant authorities. This problem in consistency may be influenced by the area which measure 323 refers to (the entire G.A.L.) and by the stakeholders’ difficulty in finding an agreement when defining the programmes. So, such criticality should not be found in measure 322: focused on well-defined units - mountain villages - for which a specific programme is developed. The logical consistency among manual-programme-interventions, which is formally irreproachable, was indeed respected, although the results were not always in line with the aim of revitalising villages and had no ex-post evaluation on the impact of intervention programmes, of the investments and of the contributions granted in terms of reduction of socio-economic marginality, which is qualitatively and quantitatively measurable through static indicators.<sup>7</sup> While analysing the manuals produced, within the framework of measure 322, some problems have come up with regard to the effectiveness of the manuals as an instrument for conservation and recovery, to be integrated with municipal urban instruments. The Region asked the municipalities benefiting from the contributions for mountain villages to include the manuals in the Building Regulation, thus basically making the directions therein contained valid for the interventions on the whole town area. The biggest problem – of general nature – is the real possibility to define intervention criteria for the recovery of traditional architecture so that they can be applied unambiguously, without being eluded, misinterpreted or twisted in interventions which basically do not ensure the preservation of traditional building heritage. While the verification of compliance with the building requirements established by building regulations is possible by measuring clearly identified parameters (for example: distance of building, percentage of open surfaces, heights and dimensions of habitable spaces), the issue of conservation cannot be easily measured by completely objective criteria and implies, first of all, a cultural orientation and a certain sensitivity among the professionals and specialists who, in different ways, intervene in the building process. The possible

<sup>6</sup> Think for example of contributions for private assets, with no public use, or for urbanization works, they are useful although outside the measure scope.

<sup>7</sup> Compare for example the study IRES Piedmont IRES Piedmont (2009), “Classification of marginality of small towns of Piedmont 2009”, available at: [http://www.irespiemonte.it/irta/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11%3Aires-piemonte&catid=13&Itemid=21](http://www.irespiemonte.it/irta/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11%3Aires-piemonte&catid=13&Itemid=21), (consultation 11 February 2014).

reintroduction of the manual as an instrument for recovery should maybe be preceded by a verification of its effectiveness and real application, for example, the building procedures in those towns which adopted it shall be examined, by considering its use among professionals while drafting the projects, among specialists when setting up procedures, and building and landscape commissions as a reference when expressing opinions. While the contents of the manuals cannot often be translated into measurable parameters, their use may be particularly recommended to support the opinions of local commissions for the landscape, which are asked to express a qualitative opinion on the project overall compatibility. The manual may be useful to support the opinions of commissions which do not include experts on architectural recovery and conservation, or – as annex to the building regulation - to avoid critical situations caused by the recent DPR 13 February 2017, n. 31,<sup>8</sup> which may jeopardize the recently approved Regional Landscape Plan.

Another critical aspect is the structure and the contents of manuals which should, generally, facilitate a project structured as follows:

- when setting up a building procedure for habitable purposes, the designer shall be able to understand whether the architectural asset or artifact at stake has the peculiar features of the traditional buildings as described in the reference manual, by also comparing it with the rich photographic and descriptive material generally completing the guidelines.
- After having recognized the presence of “local typical features” (which may concern the building typology or one or more systems of building elements, materials, or traditional technologies), the designer should clearly identify in the manual the intervention criteria for conservation and recovery, the possible authorized and non-authorized operations, or those which are subject to a scientific assessment, and transpose them in the project intervention, exactly as it is for the other requirements established by the building regulation.
- The specialist in charge of setting up the procedure shall have an exhaustive illustration of the object and of the planned interventions and shall check their compliance with the manual indications.

The actual application of the manual requires a certain accuracy in structuring and expressing the contents. In this regard, results are very much heterogeneous: in some manuals, intervention criteria are not evident or well expressed, in other manuals the *ex-novo* planning issue is not even mentioned. As the 34 manuals shared all the same purpose for different areas, but focus all – theoretically - on mountain areas,<sup>9</sup> providing a structure of the minimum contents and a draft for explaining the intervention criteria with a suitable technical language would have been maybe useful.

A third critical aspect is detailing the contents. Almost all the manuals of measure 322 were drafted together with the manuals for measure 323 for the G.A.L. areas, most of which already have manuals produced for the previous programming. Most manuals of measure 322 broadly recall contents and intervention criteria of the G.A.L. manuals, by directly including the set of sheets, which is considered – not mistakenly – clear, effective and exhaustive, also for the more limited area of the towns where villages are. Also for the realisation of *ex-novo* interventions, much reference is made to project directions and intervention guidelines from manuals which were already produced for the whole

<sup>8</sup> Decree of the President of the Republic 13 February 2017, n. 31, Regulation for the identification of the interventions excluded from the landscape authorization or subject to simplified authorization procedure.

<sup>9</sup> The case of village Varinella is to be noted, in the town Arquata Scrivia (AL). Although it is classified as a mountain area, its features are very different from the ones of other villages and it is situated at an altitude lower than 300 m above sea level.

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regional area (for example for the subtraction/addition/integration of new volumes or the improvement of energy performance). As most of the contents included originate from other manuals, the following question arises, namely if the manuals produced for the villages could pursue also other objectives, by developing original and more detailed contents, linked to the specific municipal area. An example is the profiling of representative buildings with specific directions for the intervention (for example the town of Rimella associates with the manual the cataloguing of the Guarini survey, as under law 35/95), or the connection with the integrated programme of interventions, with a detailed analysis of the issues connected to a specific strategy of village valorisation.

All the contents of general nature, thus valid for larger areas (Region, G.A.L.) could be used, provided greater attention was paid to original and specific contents, more tailored to local reality and with an adjustment of scale.

With regard to the programmes, the monitoring data for PSR 2007-13 available in the regional platform *on line* concerning measure 322 (Figures 1-2) show that the beneficiaries which are not classified in productive activities (agricultural, tourist, agro-sylvo-pastoral, and other) are a very small number, if compared to the non-classified beneficiaries, presumably private or public subjects who recovered buildings for different purposes. The picture is confirmed also by the subdivision of beneficiaries in categories by legal form. As already highlighted, private individual subjects represent 67% of the total and an overall unbalance arises, as there is a prevalence of interventions by private subjects not classified as productive economic activities, thus highlighting a greater support to interventions for residential purposes than for economic activities and services. Of course, the detailed study of each case would enable to better explain the data and to identify the synergies with other interventions in the area of villages, not linked to the PSR or financed with other measures, to provide a more complete picture of the programme or, better, of the overall development strategy (besides the PSR). Also the data on the amount of the contributions granted for each programme, divided by typology of interventions (Figures 3-4) highlight the predominant role of contributions granted to private subjects for the recovery of buildings or other artifacts with or without a recognized historical-documentary value (interventions 5-7, for which capital subsidies were granted for an amount equal to 60% of the eligible expenditure). The contributions granted for interventions connected to productive activities are just over 7%, while most contributions were granted for urbanisation works and for the adjustment of public spaces, equal to 28.20%. In addition, if the data on the towns of residence of many beneficiaries of the contributions are considered, it might be thought that some interventions regarded the houses of owners who do not reside there, so used during the holidays: it is definitely an important action for local tourism in these villages, but maybe it should not be funded with capital subsidies, even relevant subsidies, or at least it should not prevail over the support to local services and economic activities, which can instead produce permanent results and have a greater impact in the long term.

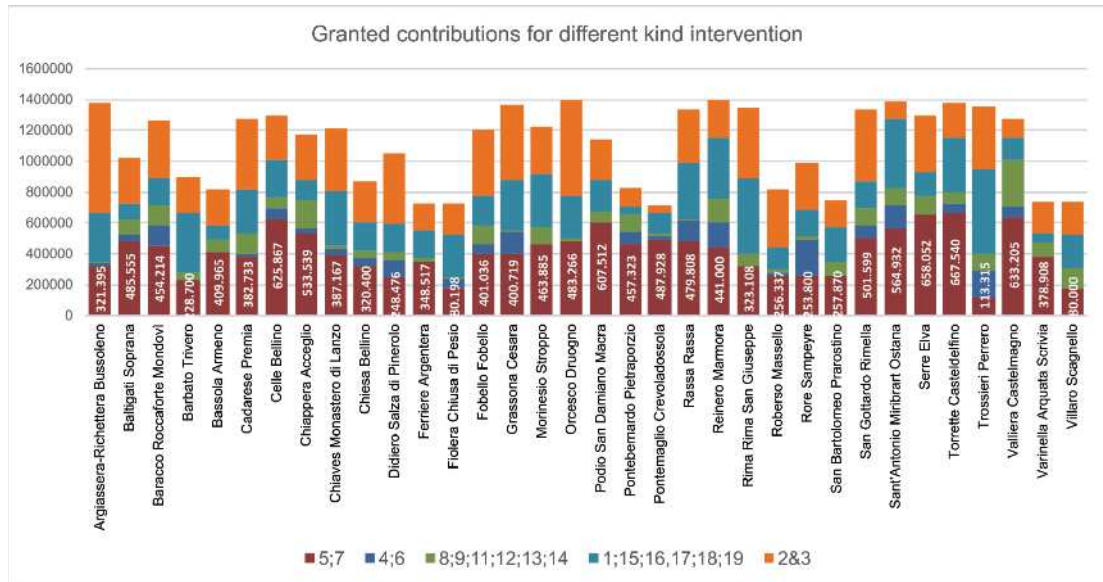


Figure 4 Contributions granted for each programme of village renovation, by intervention typology, based on the classification in Figure 4

Also while monitoring the interventions, it was found out that the results were not always in line with the principle inspiring measure 322:

- Some interventions regarded buildings with no traditional features (compatibly with the provisions for typology 7), applied the manual project directions and basically produced “hybrid” units, deprived of their original peculiarity (definitely not a traditional one) with new contaminations, inspired by local architecture (Figure 5);
- Many interventions were wrongly classified under Typology 7, so “with no architectural, artistic, archeological, historical-documentary and ethno-anthropological relevance” even though traditional architectural features, the same illustrated in the manuals, could be clearly identified and so had to be preserved. In contrast with the concept of “recovery” - which should also regard interventions for Typology 7 - and with the directions in the manuals, the following actions were often taken: demolitions and reconstruction of the total building or of relevant parts, evident modifications of openings, shapes and roof (Figures 6-7) even of entire buildings, witnessing the material culture which produced them. In many cases, having the manual as a cultural reference and operative instrument made no difference if compared to traditional intervention modalities, which pay little attention to the existing heritage.

Figure 6 shows an intervention of Typology 7, for private buildings with no historical-documentary value. The building has indeed features which are completely alien to the local building tradition illustrated in the manual produced with measures 322 and 323 of the PSR, and yet the intervention included the replacement of some architectural elements (balcony and roof) with others, whose materials and technology recall the traditional ones. It is interesting to compare the interventions illustrated in the photos 5-6: buildings with features fully in line with local tradition were completely replaced, while a non traditional building has acquired pseudo-traditional features and was turned into an “hybrid”.



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In the examples in Figures 6 and 7 there are many differences in the volume, roofing and position of the openings so that it looks more a demolition and reconstruction rather than a recovery of an existing building. Although these interventions fall under typology 7, so regard buildings with no recognized architectural relevance, they did have many of the typical features of traditional architecture highlighted in the manual adopted by the municipality as annex to the Building Regulation and in the G.A.L. manual for Mongioie (which the town belongs to).



**Figure 5** Comparison of the building aspect before and after the recovery intervention with the contributions of measure 322 in the village of Baracco - Roccaforte di Mondovì (CN)

([https://www.google.it/maps/@44.275428,7.7502694,3a,90y,340.93h,105.42t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sT4hynN1A\\_v1SAVD1jGNb6A!2e0!7i13312!8i6656](https://www.google.it/maps/@44.275428,7.7502694,3a,90y,340.93h,105.42t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sT4hynN1A_v1SAVD1jGNb6A!2e0!7i13312!8i6656))





**Figure 6** Comparison of the building aspect before and after the recovery intervention with the contributions of measure 322 in the village Baracco (Roccaforte di Mondovì), from two different points of view of the main village road.  
([https://www.google.it/maps/@44.2759125,7.7498298,3a,90y,311.47h,90.01t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1shW0VO6uyQ3zAZ\\_QVUYkKI2e0!7i13312!8i6656](https://www.google.it/maps/@44.2759125,7.7498298,3a,90y,311.47h,90.01t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1shW0VO6uyQ3zAZ_QVUYkKI2e0!7i13312!8i6656);  
<https://www.google.it/maps/@44.2760829,7.7498293,3a,75y,259.88h,98.58t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1slrPdYoZq5z4mJXXFsAxBCw!2e0!7i13312!8i6656>)



**Figure 7** Comparison of the building aspect before and after the recovery intervention with the contributions of measure 322 in the village Baracco (Roccaforte di Mondovì)  
(<https://www.google.it/maps/@44.2755529,7.749961,3a,90y,334.18h,94.37t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s5jChC4x2NLXgOYI-AxsvHQ!2e0!7i13312!8i6656>).

## 8 | CONCLUSIONS

The monitoring activity highlighted some criticalities encountered when implementing the programme of interventions, in particular of measure 322, which is quite complex, and somehow, “pioneering”. The analysis was surely partial, although stimulating and definitely interesting, if further implemented, particularly in view of new programmes with similar purposes, as the one established by the law on small towns. For each of the 34 villages benefiting from the measure, a further monitoring of the main socio-economic indicators (defining the condition of marginality of an area) should be carried out to check, after the intervention, the real positive impact of the actions taken.

In particular, it was found out that the logic based on the manual, programme, (organic, integrated, with a strategy behind and not aiming at just using the contributions available *one-off*) and on interventions, (pursuant to the programme and the manual directions), is in theory very convincing, but in practice quite unsuccessful, as results are not always ensured. In addition, it was noticed that the production and implementation of manuals for the recovery of traditional architecture required a relevant investment of human, economic and cultural resources, as well as the engagement of public administrations, however in many cases they were able to ensure a cultural progress in common conservation and recovery practices.

The 34 villages are a case study of excellence, where over 37 million euro were invested in contributions. An *ex-post* evaluation of the results achieved in terms of revitalisation of economic activities and increase in the number of people residing therein is necessary to prove the real effectiveness of overall strategies and single interventions. The systematic analysis of the variation of some of the socio-economic indicators used to assess the eligibility of programmes and the scores regarding the village features may help develop the strategy, which is still to be designed, concerning the law on small towns.

With specific reference to the conservation and recovery of the traditional architectural heritage, the great variety of content typologies and of the structure of manuals is not suitable for instruments which have the same purpose and use and which shall differentiate only in the subject of the investigation. With regard to the interventions funded, many turned out to be alien to the concept of architectural recovery, as they included the evident demolition and reconstruction (theoretically not allowed) or “hybrid” buildings, whose contemporary identity can be found in technological solutions, building techniques and materials which do not belong to the local tradition. For next programmes of interventions, it may be useful to define and level out the contents and the structure of manuals, to expressly state which recovery operations are eligible and which are not and to better control the interventions benefiting from public contributions, to ensure a high quality level, so that they can be considered inspirational *best practices* for all the other interventions on the existing heritage.

The experience of measure 322 shall not be forgotten, by starting from scratch again and making the same mistakes or ignoring the best practices and *lessons learned*.

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