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The following paper sets out some of the dominant themes that have characterized a decades-long debate in Italy on inner areas. In fact, in the country there is an almost total coincidence between the two connotations, which somewhat complicates the picture of socio-economic and environmental problems that policy must address. Unfortunately, it must be noted that, albeit in different ways, various measures to support inner areas have not produced significant results because some social, economic and territorial pathologies have proven to be physiological and therefore unassailable by any kind of targeted measure. Currently, the issue is being taken up again with much energy, including through the formulation of intervention hypotheses involving recently intensified dynamics, such as immigration, and reviving concepts such as territorial cohesion, landscape restoration, and small municipality. The paper considers these various

points by exploring some of their characters and highlighting the many weaknesses that still risk thwarting initiatives underway today if simplistic equations are insisted upon and criteria of more pronounced complexity are not pursued.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is to set out a series of themes which, over time, have been developed and addressed in various ways on the subject of 'internal areas', meaning those areas which are the weakest in a national territory for reasons ascribable to morphological, infrastructural, social and economic aspects. The same themes have not always been included in a single organic and integrated framework that would connect the various pathologies detected, seeking a common thread of solution, but have often been considered and tackled separately without an overall and cause-effect vision.

The theme of inland areas re-emerges cyclically in the attention of Italian politics in ways that are not always analogous, but against the background of motivations which are in part logical and rational, but in another part largely emotional. It would be very difficult to systematically retrace and classify past legislative occasions oriented in this direction of a regulatory, programmatic and economic commitment nature; and even more complex, it would be to try to quantify the public resources that since the Second World War have been "invested" in the sector, and how they have influenced the current heavy public debt. According to the definition of the Agency for Territorial Cohesion (<http://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/arint/>), "The Inner Areas represent a large part of the country - about three-fifths of the territory and just under a quarter of the population - very diversified within itself, distant from large centers of agglomeration and services and with unstable development trajectories, but nevertheless endowed with resources that are lacking in the central areas, with demographic problems but also strongly polycentric and with strong potential for attraction". The definition also corresponds to a mapping (http://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/arint/Cosa_sono/index.html) centered on a methodology for classifying areas of gravitation with respect to poles, identified as such according to a criterion of capacity to offer certain essential services. Non "polar" municipalities are classified in 4 bands: peri-urban

areas, intermediate areas, peripheral areas and ultra-peripheral areas, based on distances from the poles measured in travel time.

These classifications are obviously aimed at channelling resources to "counteract the demographic fall and relaunch the development and services of these areas through ordinary funds of the Stability Law and EU funds", as Italy aims to do in the Strategy adopted in the National Reform Plan (PNR). The objectives are remarkably similar to those of the "historic" Law n. 1102 of December 3, 1971 (New norms for the development of the mountains) which, almost half a century ago (Bermond, 1977; Montani, 2004), proposed "the valorization of the mountain areas by encouraging the participation of the populations, through the mountain communities, in the predisposition and implementation of the development programs and territorial plans of the respective mountain districts for the purposes of a general policy of economic and social rebalancing...". Leaving aside some inconsistencies in the identification of the above-mentioned Mountain Communities (M.C.) (Rizzo and Stella, 2007), it cannot be denied that in some isolated cases, there may have been positive effects; but how the affair of law 1102/71 ended is well known: the mountains continued their depopulation and the "intermediate" bodies underwent a process and fed an administrative diatribe that is perhaps typically Italian. Established by national law, the M.C. were then downsized/depotiated/abolished through regional norms that generated an extremely tortuous situation as they were delegated to fragmented regional competencies (Romano and Fiorini, 2018). At present, it can be said that, in the collective conception, M.C. are essentially dissolved, or inessential, bodies everywhere. If the declared "rebalancing" has been lacking in the effects, the profuse funding have left the country a whole series of interventions with environmental impacts of varying severity: roadways that injure the slopes triggering erosion phenomena; artifacts now destroyed in remote areas to support unlikely economic activities; cableways with improbable purposes in the Apennines without significant snow, equipment and services in high-

ly marginal historical centers that have remained without users; up to anachronistic activities of "pasture clearing" and reforestation with conifers in central Italy, that have found ample space in the project cards attached to the planned "Plans for economic and social development". The important work of Gubert (2000) must essentially recognize that, even when it has taken place, the demographic recovery of the mountains "can hardly be ascribed to the merit of the mountain communities" and that, in determining the reversal of the migratory phenomenon "one should only take note of their marginality in this regard".

In the following parts of the work, various indicators linked gradually to the topics covered are exposed, such as the relationship between morphology and local economy, size of municipalities and urban growth, demographic structure and immigration load, whose integrated reading provides a rather effective indication of the complexities and contradictions present in the Italian interior areas.

TERRITORIAL COHESION

With very similar aims, the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) was activated in 2013 by the Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale, which aims to achieve development and territorial cohesion to counter the marginalisation and demographic decline phenomena typical of the internal areas of the country (<https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/strategia-nazionale-aree-interne/>). This origin of the strategy rather clearly marks its direct link with territorial cohesion, considering that the main actor was precisely the Minister for Territorial Cohesion in office in 2013.

An ambitious project of place-based policy, which has developed new ways of multi-level local governance aimed at addressing, through the adoption of an integrated approach oriented to the promotion and local development, the demographic challenges and respond to the needs of territories characterized by significant disadvantages of geographical or demographic nature. Fragile territories, far from the main centers of supply of essential services and too often abandoned to themselves, which however cover 60% of the entire surface of the national territory, 52% of the municipalities and 22% of the population. The “truest” and most authentic Italy, whose primary need is to still be able to live there, or to return. The areas selected by SNAI are seventy-two; they include a total of 1077 municipalities with over two million inhabitants. The National Strategy aims to intervene in these places, investing in the promotion and protection of the wealth of the territory and local communities; enhancing their natural and cultural resources; creating new employment circuits and new opportunities; ultimately counteracting the “demographic haemorrhage”.

Today’s approach to inland areas actually has many similarities with the aforementioned and previous policies, but differs in that it has an important EU contribution that expands the issue to the European dimension (ESPON, 2020).

In 2020 alone, the total value of the approved strategies on the areas amounted to 1.142 billion Euro divided into 261 million from state resources,

693 million from programs financed by European funds (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, EMFF), and 189 million from other public and private resources.

The territorial and geographical characteristics, that cause more or less marked effects on the urban and building evolution of inland areas, are strictly correlated to the distance and efficiency of access to the major urban, productive and service polarizers. The more these accessibilities are unfavorable, the more conditions of neglect and qualitative decay of the building prevail; however, opportunities for space and facility improvements remain, allowing high qualitative margins for regeneration. On the contrary, the more the centers and nuclei are close and easily connected with the said polarizers, the more they are subject to transformations to accentuate the residential and satellite functions: in the absence of rational and designed urban planning and construction rules, this quickly leads to a profound loss of value and physiognomy then difficult to restore, if not at the cost of enormous technological and economic commitments. The fact that the internal areas constitute a territorial vulnus in a country with an oblong shape and a “Gaussian” morphological section is a fact that has determined over the decades the decay of the economic strength of all those areas that cannot avail themselves of fast communications with the plains and that are not

very powerful polarizers of interests such as to attract dedicated flows of visitors. The economic differences are very substantial: as Figure 1 prepared on a peninsular cross-section of central Italy shows, the variability in per capita incomes between coastal and inland areas is between €5,000 and €10,000. It is not the case to go back over the innumerable number of hypotheses presented on how to restore housing and economic motivations to marginal areas: from the blanket endowment of broadband, to the concession of free housing for immigrants; to the generalization of temporary employment and telework; to the provision of a motivational income for young families who choose residential isolation to ensure the “garrison” of the areas in abandonment; everything has been said and repeated. Therefore, we must expect that the instance of artificial support to such “weak” realities resurfaces periodically even if with variable strength and political conviction.

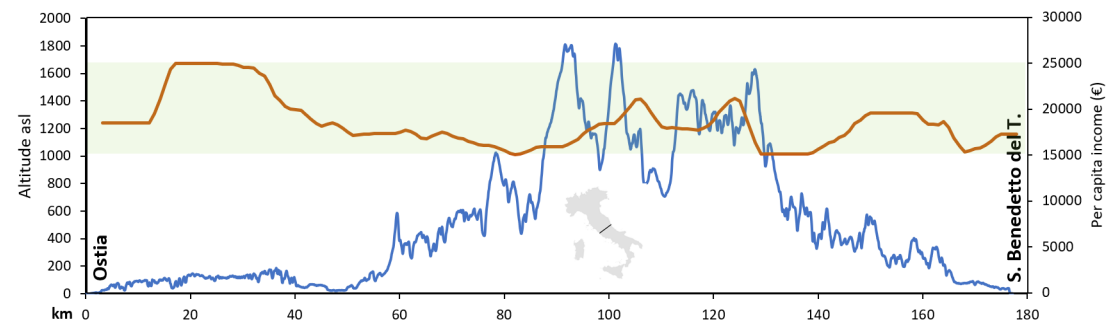


Figure 1 - Influence of morphology and altitude on per capita income in a geographical section of central Italy

SMALL MUNICIPALITIES

The latest case of targeted action is represented by the issue of small municipalities (i.e. those of small demographic size) is structurally linked to the weakness of inland areas, since the socio-economic difficulties they suffer lead to a systematic depopulation of villages. Moreover, the PNRR also provides funds (line B of the national boroughs plan) for the revival of the role of small municipalities, which in 2022 saw 289 entities financed throughout Italy.

The latest case of targeted action is represented by the so-called boroughs saving law (no. 158 of 6 October 2017) with which the government has allocated funds until 2023, as well as various measures for the recovery of abandoned historic centers. Interventions of maintenance of the territory, safety of roads and schools and other types of intervention that affect the "small" Italian municipalities (those with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants) in which more than 10 million citizens live, for "the structural, economic and social development of small municipalities for the financing of investments in the environment and cultural heritage, the protection and redevelopment of historic centers, the safety of road infrastructures and schools and the establishment of new productive activities".

It should be noted that, although they tend to be considered "abandoned", these municipalities have nevertheless undergone phenomena of expansion of peri-urban fabric and rural urbanization, as demonstrated by a conspicuous scientific literature (Micelli and Pellegrini, 2017; Zullo et al., 2018; Fiorini et al., 2018; De Rossi, 2019).

This selective criterion lends itself to some critical reflections: for a municipality to have "only" 5,000 inhabitants does not necessarily denote a condition of suffering. There are Italian regions of the Apennines in which the average population of municipalities is below 5,000 inhabitants (Abruzzo - 4,200, Molise - 2,306, Basilicata - 4,412, Calabria - 4,789) and municipalities with this demographic size are local territorial polarizers. On the contrary, in hilly and flat regions (such as

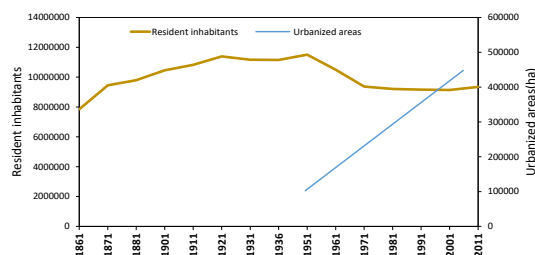
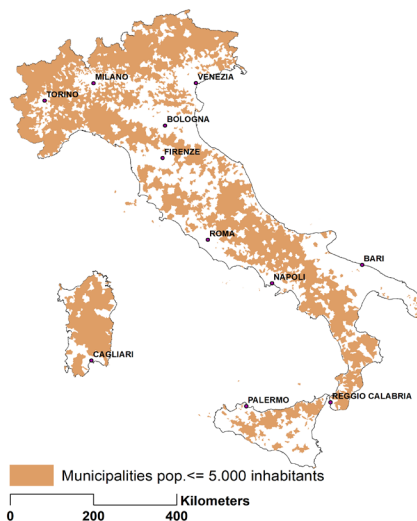


Figure 2 – The municipals I.158/17

Figure 3– 150 years of population trends in municipalities 158/17 and the increase in urbanization since World War II

Tuscany - 13,162 inhab., Emilia Romagna - 13,000 inhab. on average), evidently the situation is different, so perhaps it would have been appropriate to differentiate the demographic size according to geographical areas.

A further observation leads to the assertion that, the aforementioned municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, represent rather challenging realities for the public treasury: in half a century they have lost 1,200,000 inhabitants (10%), but

after World War II within them there were about 170,000 ha of urbanized land (1%), which then became 572,000 after 2000, i.e. 3.32 times more (Fig. 3) with an estimated speed of 22 ha/day. This is the contribution of more than a quarter to the similar velocity calculated for the whole country (Romano et alii, 2017a). Approximately 3800 municipalities, i.e. 66% in number but 77% in surface area, are distributed between mountains and inland hills, and 2000 of these (46% in territory) are precisely mountainous so, beyond the number of inhabitants that might also be insignificant, most suffer from the condition of marginality determined by unfavourable morphology. It is no coincidence that the almost 2000 municipalities with a population of less than 1000 inhabitants, and about 800 of these do not even reach 500, are located almost entirely in the alpine and central Apennine areas (Fig. 4). Only a third of all of them are located in other Italian morphological units of coastal mountains, coastal hills and plains.

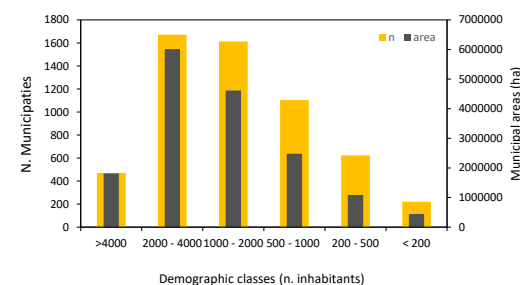


Figure 4 – Distribution of municipalities I.158/17 by demographic classes

The current urban density is less than half the national average, but the urbanized area per capita is over 550 m²/inhabitant as opposed to the national average of 370. Also in these municipalities the pattern of pulverized building growth, i.e., national sprinkling, has prevailed, as indeed throughout Italy, as shown in a model elaborated by Romano et alii (2017b) to which we refer for methodology, and it is an extremely energy-intensive configuration in every sense.

Some of these spatial operating costs are essentially indifferent to actual urban and population density, so their incidence (energy footprint) increases enormously in dispersed, low population load situations [Brownstone and Golob, 2009; Gu et alii, 2013]. The assessment covers all urban network wiring and services on a daily basis. In the face of these considerations, it seems entirely reasonable to conclude that Italian settlement, even when small, presents exorbitant costs for the provision of public services; and in addition, the permanent financial crisis in which, more or less, many municipalities find themselves is evidently also the result of this unergonomic development. Actually, what the above mentioned regulations almost never consider, is that the contradictory building/urban development that the above data certify for the centers in demographic abandonment, has generated over time conditions of high de-qualification of their own. Conditions that translate in many cases into dysfunctional urban fabric and neglected and approximate building landscapes, far from that level of attractiveness that could be attractive to activate permanent residential interests on the part of a market that would consist largely of citizens of good cultural and economic level (although some lines of thought question this latter position). In fact, the idea that abandoned villages can become places of interest and concentration of immigrant flows has been emerging with increasing strength for some time. This is a topic of some relevance on which the next point will dwell providing some food for thought. It is also quite evident how, after the reasoning related to territorial cohesion, to small municipalities and, to follow, to the migratory "repopulation" of abandoned territories, we cannot avoid introducing another aspect intimately connected to the previous ones, that of the quality of the landscape and of the built environment, which in fact constitutes the last sector of this work.

THE THEORY OF "IMMIGRANT REPOPULATION"

As has been introduced earlier, the channelling of immigrant flows to abandoned centers and villages is a theory with many supporters and one that fuels a dense disciplinary literature in the fields of sociology, economics, and spatial planning [Di Figlia, 2012; Bertini, 2015; Antonucci and Marel-la, 2017; De Rossi, 2019; Scala, 2020]. This is evidently the application of a simplistic equation that sees on the one hand the seemingly large availability of unused housing in mountain settlements; on the other hand an estimated demand for work and residency of acceptable quality reduced and, therefore, channelled to places that national history has objectively expelled from the ordinary sphere of viable economies. Such reflection makes it possible to focus on several critical issues inherent in the theory, that will probably not allow programs set according to the said equation to be implemented systematically, but only in a few limited sample cases, as is already happening [Cannizzaro and Corinto, 2012; Perfetti and Ronconi, 2021]. First, it is appropriate to dwell on the concept of residential "abandonment" of mountain hamlets, as this is a phenomenon that takes on many physiognomies and thus would make the use of the plural (abandonments) more correct. Without resorting to the use of very circumstantial data, which are moreover partly available in ISTAT databases, it should be pointed out that a huge amount of buildings/accommodations are undoubtedly unused as permanent dwellings, but are seasonally occupied by owners or tenants for periods of between a week and a month per year. This fuels an important phenomenon of Italian tourism known as "return tourism," i.e., formed largely by former residents or descendants of these who have nevertheless retained an interest in the family's properties, albeit limiting activities and expenses in management/maintenance to the minimum level of housing quality. All this housing stock should therefore be substantially excluded from full availability for use by new residents. Another fraction consists of buildings that are

dilapidated or, at any rate, lacking the minimum levels of housing performance (efficient fixtures, running water, gas). Clearly, on this building stock, or at least part of it, more substantial hypotheses for transformation into residences for immigrants could be done, but massive public investments would be required to make it suitable to support basic housing functions. Considering the enormous difficulties that the country has been manifesting for years toward social housing initiatives (that is the construction of houses for the less affluent classes), it seems quite unlikely that resources, necessarily large ones, could be allocated for urban regeneration and the rehabilitation of dilapidated housing complexes in mountain villages. It should also be added that the usability of these properties will have to reckon with the holders of the property: there may be some with a willingness to transfer them free of charge, also for tax convenience; but in other cases this may not be the case or, and these are very frequent situations, the property itself may be fractioned among a myriad of subjects due to the stratification of successions that has taken place over the decades and has never been updated in the land registers. In the presence of this ownership pulverization, the only tools available to the public would be that of the acquisition by authority of all the properties thus characterized, by means of generalized expropriation practices; but even on this point one must refer back to the current weak action of the state toward forced property acquisition actions, which have long since been replaced by devices such as land equalization. In other words, the weld path between the conspicuous presence of immigrants to be accommodated and a large amount of abandoned housing in the highlands, often posed in a popularized and elementary form, needs to be reconsidered in a realistic and much less trivial light [Sokoll, 2018]. Not to mention that, while resolving the issues posed by housing, other kinds of obstacles may also arise: indeed, it should be considered that places in the mountains have been precisely "abandoned" as no longer capable of offering satisfactory conditions in services, economic production, standards

of social relations, access to infrastructure, and employment opportunities. Therefore, allocating these places to a certain target of potential new residents presupposes the certainty that the vulnerabilities that caused the abandonments are not such for immigrants and that they, effectively fleeing wars and extractive economies, are willing to inhabit places that are highly marginalized in the territory. Places that moreover, would require the use of certainly expensive means of private mobility to seek employment opportunities given the well-known, and inevitable, lack of infrastructural functionality and public transportation. In fact, it is no coincidence that the greatest concentration of immigrants occurs near metropolitan areas, areas where there are abundant regurgitations of wealth from which to draw, as well as employment opportunities of all kinds with good levels of accessibility to services (Cristaldi, 2012). This statement is, moreover, confirmed by the data (Tab. 1): immigrants are heavily concentrated in northern Italy and in the country's main metropolitan and manufacturing areas. The geography of distribution (<https://www.truenumbers.it/immigrati-per-provincia/>) as the districts of intensive and specialized agriculture, manufacturing and personal services, create strong polarizations; this distribution also traces that of per capita income, showing that the lands from which even Italians emigrate are not attractive to anyone.

Geographical areas	N. Resident immigrants 2022	National rate
North	3065411	0,590
Center	1286571	0,248
South	602747	0,116
Island	238940	0,046
Italy	5193669	

Table 1 – Distribution of immigrants in the main geographical areas of the Country
(Source: http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRRES1)

LANDSCAPE RESTORATION: THE THEME OF QUALITY

Building quality

The concept of architectural quality has always been the subject of discussion in (Zevi, 1948; Arnheim, 1991; Prestinzenza Puglisi, 2004; Marini, 2008); it is a concept that contains within it a multiplicity of dimensions and qualities, both those that belong to the emerging architectural characteristics in their own properties, and those that belong to the object in its more immaterial and perceptive characteristics. The interest in improving architectural quality has already been present for some time in the European regulatory landscape and also in the Italian one (see Directive 85/384 / EEC, 2008 / C319 / 05 and Davos 2018). These regulations are aimed at promoting a quality architecture that correlates with the quality of the contextual environment and creates a harmonious complex with it. It is however daring to correctly accept the difficult, as it does not depend only on objective, but also on subjective aspects,



elements that are not so tangible and are not easily identifiable: this places the individual as the fulcrum of the definition (Bentivegna, 2019).

The perception of architecture is fundamental to understand the architectural object we have in front of us, we cannot ignore the subjective characteristics to judge the architectural quality: it is a difficult task to make an objective judgment on architectural quality, as finding criteria that are universally recognized, logical and shared is very difficult. The essential characteristics of quality are sanctioned by the Innsbruck Declaration in 2019. These characteristics are: aesthetics, habitability, respect for the environment, accessibility and mobility, inclusiveness, identity character, economic accessibility and integration into the environment (Forte, 2019). We can well see how the evaluation is determined by a large number of more or less fixed elements over time.

To be more explanatory, it is now appropriate to identify two cases, respectively of best practice and worst practice (in this case in the Abruzzo region, but the same also applies to the Italian territory) and recognize common characteristics.



Figure 5, 6 – Best and worst practice: Santo Stefano di Sessanio and Collebrincioni

We see in fig. 5 how the historical-architectural value of the village of Santo Stefano di Sessano resides more in the whole than in the single building, and how the degree of general quality is high, given by the attention to landscape peculiarities and to the historical urban matrix: the relationship between the village and the surrounding landscape has been preserved here, in many other cases denied by the uncontrolled urban expansion. In contrast to this, in fig. 6 we find the village of Collebrincioni, in which the separation between architectural / urban quality and the landscape matrix is evident, two systems historically related to each other: the signs of the twentieth century, such as the construction of new buildings over the years 60/70, caused a notable loss of identity, as well as the loss of the link with that characteristic and specific "genius loci" for each place and for the site-specific architectural heritage. This situation is a consequence of the lack of regulations and direct intervention, which took place following the very few parameters present in the master plan (Romano et al., 2017a).

Merely economic incentives, such as: five thousand euros with a grant for those who decide to go and live in the village as such, incentives for smart working, tenders for the sale of houses for one euro ... if detached from architectural and urban quality, will not have the desired effects, as the lack of this component will not give rise to the urban regeneration necessary to bring the population back into the villages (De Rossi, 2020).

On closer inspection, therefore, the currently dominant political line is aimed at the "repopulation" of the villages. The Covid-19 pandemic then gave a strong boost to the leitmotif of returning to small villages and inland areas: it is clear how vast the offer is, compared to a potential demand that is in any case limited. This situation generates a form of "competition" between the various municipalities, which as such will lead to an incentive to improve more and more and to take a cue and emulate municipalities that are more successful. The quality component is therefore envisaged as one of the decisive discriminating elements for the choice of the village (De Rossi, 2020).

To increase the attractiveness of the villages it will therefore be necessary to carry out maintenance and recovery actions, to be guided with essential rules and regulations. These standards are strictly necessary, as currently the majority condition of the building is of low quality, except in rare exceptions, which gives knowledge of the damage that some technicians and clients are capable of doing if not guided in the design and construction choices. "Aesthetic decay goes hand in hand with civil and social decadence" to quote Pasolini in his documentary "Pasolini and the shape of the city" (1974). Correct regeneration of the heritage is therefore essential for the repopulation of the villages.

But how to intervene? What are the founding elements for the development of guidelines? The issue is very complex and even controversial, animated over the decades by an intense specialist debate on methods, criteria and opportunities to intervene in the refunctionalisation of historical buildings (Ferretti et al., 2014; Malighetti, 2016; Bartolomucci, 2021). In the case of abandoned villages, in which very often the only element still legible in the settlement evolution is the urban layout, in the face of a high qualitative degradation of the building bodies devoid of intrinsic value (also due to repeated seismic events), the intervention assumes an enormous level of difficulty.

In some cases, radical reinterpretation solutions of local stylistic features have been proposed, based on a few residual references, in order to achieve a spendable result in terms of attractiveness (Huber, 2014; Loi, 2016; Abbate, 2021). In others, for the majority in central and southern Italy, space has been left for private initiatives, limiting the degrees of regulation in order to incentivize private individuals to invest resources on building renovation. Settled that permanent or tourist housing attractiveness cannot disregard at least a minimum level of architectural quality, in the current state of affairs, the first of the action strategies described appears more effective than the second in terms of results, although certainly debatable on a subjective level.

The quality of the landscape hinterland

It is well known how the territories of the Italian mountains have been used/exploited for centuries according to their capacity to provide different ecosystem services, which has resulted in very profound and irreversible effects on the landscape matrices of settlements (Harker, 1999; Holl et al., 2003). Such effects have also produced in many cases visual results that have been, and still are, highly appreciated by national and international observers, connoting morphological and vegetational features considered to be of other value and appeal, and which have justified the awarding of high quality certifications, such as UNESCO World Heritage Site bonds. In reality, such achievements have been concentrated in those areas that, for pedological and climatic reasons, have allowed for specialized forms of primary production (horticulture, fruit and vegetable and vine and olive crops, fodder production, forestry cultivation); while other more disadvantaged areas destined for less noble agrarian uses (industrial agriculture, sheep grazing, subsistence forms of agriculture, inadequate reforestation) have suffered very substantial effects of environmental and landscape de-qualification, especially in the drier sections of the country with poorly productive soils, conditions aggravated by the phenomena of demographic abandonment (Derhé et al., 2016).

It is clear from this brief overview that working on the quality, including the visual quality of built cores, cannot be separated from a parallel focus on their hinterlands, which greatly influence the overall attractiveness of the environmental scenarios constituted by the land borough systems. Such an objective greatly amplifies the difficulties inherent in the action of landscape recovery, since one would have to intervene on parts of the territory that have in any case lost economic roles and have no possibility of recovering them, thus failing to compensate even in part for any public investments destined for their improvement, thus transforming them into "non-returnable" interventions. While this is true directly, in that a reaffirmation of agricultural productive activities in the moun-



tains is basically impossible, at least in a systematic and extensive form, it is not true indirectly in that the high value of the natural/environmental frameworks is a very attractive factor for tourist and visiting interests and thus for the induced sectors related to these activities.

It remains to be discounted that there is a certain national backwardness towards the design of ecological and landscape restoration interventions, marked by a contemporary cultural and scientific vision, and taking into account both perception and ecological-functional outcomes attentive to biodiversity (Galatowitsch, 2012). Barring rather radiant qualified examples in general, the conception that led, from the 1930s to the threshold of the 1980s, to that vast series of reforestation

operations carried out largely with conifers has not yet been completely rejected. These operations, in order to protect soils from erosion and gravitative events, ended up characterizing the piedmont and mountain landscapes of many sections of the Apennines, with objectively negative perceptual and ecological outcomes, even if not grasped by the average national environmental culture, has not yet been completely rejected. At present, reforestation has all but ceased for many years, but its consequences remain, partly because the original plantings were not then followed by all the works of progressive replacement with native species, and have therefore gradually degraded with spontaneous trajectories and highly variable evolutionary arrangements (Navarro et al., 2005; Mercurio et al., 2010; D'Ippoli-



Figures 7, 8, 9, 10 - Different cases of landscape disturbance of mountain land matrices due to reforestation, infrastructure pervasiveness, illegal landfills, tourist expansions with "rampant" pattern.

to et al., 2013). For the rest, many contexts in the vicinity of the villages are marked by sectors with ruderal vegetation, uncultivated areas, excavation or accumulation sites of lithic materials, and deposits of various extractions, very often strewn with temporary artifacts made from waste materials that radically damage the perception of the relationship plants have with morphology and the historic built environment (Figg. 7,8,9,10). The characteristics listed denote edge landscapes that have generally undergone processes of over-exploitation of the resources they were historically able to provide. Their current condition therefore mirrors that of the built settlements to which they are functionally connected and, therefore, action strategies for recovery and redevelopment are conceptually not very different (O'Donnell, 2016; Della Spina, 2017; Garcia-Ruiz et al., 2020). It seems clear that recovered villages with high levels of quality, will have to be matched by a landscape hinterland of adequate quality; otherwise the project of new territorial attractiveness will fail, but this latter objective appears more difficult than the former. Indeed, private involvement, albeit incentivized, in landscape restoration is much more difficult, but so is public intervention on spaces that are almost always private property. The Italian legal system is very weak on this front and therefore there is a need to first set up the tools and then proceed with their application. The latter is a real challenge for jurisprudence and landscape planning, but it will have to be tackled if we want to reinsert into productive economic circuits (niche agriculture, ecosystem services, tourism) areas of space that have been worn down and eroded by years of neglected and careless transformation. It may be added that, in order to achieve truly satisfactory results, the current and even numerous forms of protection exercised through landscape planning under l. 431/85, d.l. 42/2004, UNESCO and so on may not be enough.

CONCLUSIONS

Italy's inner areas, after more than half a century of attempts to recover their conditions of demo-

graphic impoverishment, productive and settlement abandonment, with cases of landscape deterioration, still present themselves as problematic geographical areas for different reasons. It cannot be denied that the massive movement of populations to the coasts and plains has also led to an important revival of naturalness in these places: in fact, these are largely affected by environmental protection restrictions such as parks and reserves for the conservation of biodiversity of international stature. It is true, however, that recent research shows that this, while important and indispensable role, does not by itself allow for the nurturing of a stable economic circuit, underlying at least a partial recovery of territorial functions (Ferrari and Pratesi, 2012; Romano et al., 2020). The condition of inner areas needs, with little doubt in this regard, a vast action of restoration and redevelopment, which starting from the villages expands towards the semi-natural and ex-agricultural areas, attempting to regain a quality at least perceptive of a good level, which would be the driving force for a tourist industry of a consistency and level better than the current one. Then, one cannot fail to mention the function as providers of ecosystem services that these areas have always held: they are the reservoirs of the best quality drinking water, of pastures for livestock, of forests for CO2 absorption and timber supply, of some specialized and niche crops, that are indispensable for the national economy. Therefore, it can reasonably be said that the country cannot do without its inner areas by derubricating them to marginal spaces, periodically revived in political attention through simplistic equations for solving ultra-complex problems, as the article tries to explain. These areas need to be reconsidered in a permanent form and made the subject of ordinary policies, not episodic and discretized over the years. These policies must have the capacities to apply planning modes, even these complex ones, that do not neglect any of the multifaceted characteristics that have been, albeit briefly, listed.

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