

## FROM ABANDONED VILLAGE TO ECOVILLAGE: A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE BY THE COMMUNITY OF TORRI SUPERIORE

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### Abstract

The multi-faceted phenomenon of contemporary tourism reflects multiple and sometimes incompatible features, which lead, for instance, to the traveler's diversified expectations about the vacation destination, tourism infrastructure, tourism experience, etc. These perspectives – that sometimes happen to be contradictory, while at other times co-exist peacefully – draw ever-changing geographies along cultural itineraries. Why does a small community decide to repopulate an abandoned village located in the heart of the Ligurian Alps? Which is the leading cultural project that guided this community? In which innovative ways could the reinhabitation of an abandoned village be implemented by practices of sustainable tourism, capable of involving the community in local sustainable development processes? To find answers to these research questions, we will consider, in particular, the case of “Torri Superiore Ecovillage”, a village which is involved in the GEN (Global Ecovillage Network), in the RIVE (Italian Ecovillage Network), and in the permaculture movement.

### Keywords

territorial abandonment, recovery, valorization, sustainable tourism, sense of place, community, consensus, permaculture

### Résumé

*Le phénomène multi-facettes du tourisme contemporain incarne plusieurs caractéristiques, parfois inconciliables. Ces caractéristiques se traduisent, par exemple, dans les attentes diversifiées des touristes par rapport aux destinations, aux infrastructures, aux expériences, etc. Il s'agit de perspectives, capables parfois d'être contradictoires ou bien de cohabiter en paix et de tracer des géographies changeantes et ouvertes aux itinéraires culturels divers. Pourquoi donc une petite communauté décide-t-elle de repeupler un village abandonné au cœur des Alpes Ligures ? Quel est le projet culturel poursuivi par la communauté ? A travers quelles voies et innovations le repeuplement d'un village abandonné peut-il supporter des processus de développement et tourisme durable ? Pour répondre à ces questions, nous considérerons en particulier le cas de l'éco-village Torri Superiore, qui adhère aux réseaux du Global Ecovillage et de l'Italian Ecovillage et respecte aussi les principes liés au mouvement de la permaculture.*

### Mots-clés

*abandon de territoire, rétablissement, valorisation, tourisme durable, sens du lieu, communauté, consensus, permaculture*

### I. ON THE ABANDONMENT OF PLACES: SOME INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS, THREE RESEARCH GOALS

*“The village even forgot the old mills and the Wind that made them turn. So, one fine morning the Wind no longer blew. The inhabitants of the Valley did not even notice its absence: they did not have eyes*

*for anything but their Perfect Machines. The mills, whose arms are now motionless, have been asleep ever since.”*  
(Blanco N.; Docampo V., 2013, p. 4)

In recent years, the topic of the abandonment of places has triggered growing interest. The decadent charm emanating from historic villages, villas, abandoned industrial areas, no longer productive

agricultural settlements and structures, hospitals, individual buildings, and even no longer inhabited landscapes attract many admirers who, for various reasons and following exploratory paths whose type and level of depth vary, discover, visit, survey, map, analyze, purchase, photograph, depict, narrate, and listen to the places that, for different reasons and at different times, have been abandoned<sup>2</sup>.

According to the latest estimates<sup>3</sup>, there are in Italy around 6,000 villages, among which the towns, pastures, and farmsteads with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants (70% of the Italian municipalities, where only 17.2% of the population lives<sup>4</sup>) are included. Out of these 6,000 villages, nearly half are in danger of extinction because some are completely, and others almost completely, uninhabited. Such situation spreads all over the country, from North to South and from East to West, but becomes particularly rampant in some central and southern regions: the inner areas of Tuscany and Marche, Basilicata, the entire Southern Apennines arc, from Abruzzo to Calabria and through Molise.

Throughout this paper, we will attempt to provide an overview of the abandonment of places, with the aim of clarifying the phenomenon's territorial contexts, motivations, and types. Nevertheless, it must be at once clarified that the abandonment of places, wherever it is present, is not only closely connected to the historical and socio-economic dynamics that made headway with the first industrialization and tertiarization processes in the early twentieth century and intensified after World War II, strongly coupling with migratory movements, both internal and international, but also, in post-modern times, to the disbanding of industrial and agricultural facilities and production areas as well as urbanization and land use. Indeed, the transformation of physical space has been deeply affected by the economy of industrialization and consumption, leading to degradation of territory and landscape, over-dimensioning, under-utilization and abandonment of artifacts (Paolella, 2013).

We will also try to understand whether or not, and to what extent, there exist alternative options to abandonment, depending on the context in which it appears, because we firmly believe that the "sense of place"<sup>5</sup>, as opposed to "non-place", is a value that should be protected, notwithstanding the awareness that, when *surrendering* to the abandonment seems

to be the only option, one must resign to "laying down their arms". At times, caught in the effort of recovering, valuing, preserving, reviving a place, one indeed forgets, more or less consciously, to ask themselves one question, perhaps *the* question, which is the most fundamental: *why* was that place abandoned by its inhabitants? In other words, why has it ceased to have *meaning* for them? And again, what *reasons* would cause somebody to return there to live? Therefore, would it perhaps not be better, in some cases, to let that place simply *return* to nature, just making a mere effort to secure those elements that may eventually constitute risk factors and thus avoiding unnecessarily expensive interventions whose outcomes are not always positive? And, finally, is it possible that a place continues producing sense (Teti, 2004, 2014) even when it has been abandoned? As stated by Relph (1976), the relationship between community and place is indeed very deep, according to a mutual *identity* strengthening process, in which the landscape is the expression of collective values as well as relations among people. In the experience of places, both in reference to personal experience and that of the community, deep attachment, a familiarity, is often manifested, being part of knowing and being known *here*, in this particular place<sup>6</sup>. It is an attachment that found our *roots in a place*, and the familiarity that comes out of it is not something to be ascribed only to thorough knowledge, but to something more: that intimate sense of concern and care for a place, *that* place. And being tied to a place, maintaining a close relationship with it, is a human need, a need of the soul. Something that generates a *sense of belonging*, a *sense of place*, making it recognizable as mine, as yours, as ours (Coles, 1970). Identity (which has the dual purpose of outlining the subject in its uniqueness as well as in its similarities with others), and again a sense of belonging, a sense of place: these are all terms that lead us to another important concept, which welcomes all of them in itself: that of *home*. "*Home* is the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community, the dwelling-place of being. Home is not just the house you happen to live in, it is not something that can be anywhere, that can be exchanged, but an irreplaceable centre of significance" (Relph, 1976), whether it consists of walls, a clearing in a forest, or a city street. All these reasons lead us to understand which are the ways that allow abandoned places to be recognized as *home* again.

Finally, we will attempt to show, through fieldwork related to the case study of Torri Superiore (Ventimiglia, Italy), along which paths an almost completely abandoned place can return to life and start making sense again for the new *community* that settles there and its visitors. These are our three main research goals, which we want to pursue keeping our attitude open and free from prejudice, following Fulco Pratesi's words when he writes that a new cultural, social and economic season is needed and that starting from limiting new land use, requalifying cities and emptying spaces left abandoned and degraded are strategic to foster it (Pratesi, 2013).

Our "toolbox" will be filled with various types of bibliographical documents, it will contain normative sources, virtual and real sources, an analytical table, an online questionnaire, and an in-depth interview, and it will be frequently brought along our journey.

## II. THE ABANDONMENT OF PLACES: CAUSES, TYPOLOGIES, AND CONTEXTS

*"In the middle of the street of the old town  
there are no people:  
the heart of the town is now a closed door."*  
(Arminio F., 2013, p. 22)

The abandonment of places is a *composite*, *complicated*, and *complex* phenomenon that is found, in its various forms, throughout the entire Italian territory. Abandonment is *composite* because it affects certain parts of urban settlements, historic centers in the mountains that have depopulated due to emigration or catastrophic natural events (such as earthquakes, floods, landslides...), the peripheral areas of big cities as well as abandoned buildings in central urban areas, historical and architectural heritage located in areas of high landscape value, buildings which were meant to house offices, infrastructure interrupted in the course of their construction or never used, excavation areas and aggregate mines, vacant lots, dismantled areas, and former construction sites. Abandonment is a *complicated* phenomenon because it generates consequences in the areas where it occurs that are not only linked to the risks that the collapsing structures manifest, but also related to soil pollution,

often due to the presence of illegal dumps, or collapses and landslides that are evident where mountain slopes are no longer cultivated (it is the case of terraces, left uncultivated, supported by dry-stone walls), landscape degradation (for instance, eco-monsters built on the coast or in areas of natural, historical, and scenic beauty), producing and a sense of disorientation. Abandonment is thus a *complex* phenomenon that is difficult to classify and frame into rigid categories: it affects, almost equally, public goods and private goods<sup>7</sup>, and, where it occurs, it can manifest in mild, intermediate, or complete forms, sometimes even simultaneously<sup>8</sup>.

Garda, in his *Biografie dell'Abbandono*<sup>9</sup>, besides underlining how abandonment manifests unstable geographies, since new cases are added or subtracted due to recovery and reuse interventions, "defining in this way an extended archipelago with uncertain boundaries, in which dense and sparse (in terms of use) places alternate and mingle", puts forward an interesting taxonomy of abandoned places that we believe is worth summarizing here. According to the author, abandoned places can be articulated into five categories:

1. *discarded places*, the "subproducts" of urban transformation processes, such as appurtenant architectures or open spaces (such as buffer zones of major infrastructures), which for various reasons have not been able to intercept a real and long-lasting use;
2. *dismantled places*, where the loss of the role and the conditions that led to their birth causes an irreversible crisis and a loss of functionality (large industrial areas, farms, and areas for agricultural production);
3. *consumed places*, places devoid of energy and resources, abandoned as a result of continuous and prolonged human action (quarries, mines);
4. *worn-out places*, characterized by the rapid decomposition of architectural structures and materials that constitute them, often accompanied by failure to comply with regulations and building codes, which generates degradation and thus underutilization and abandonment (we consider, as an example, public residential buildings, built with low-cost materials);
5. *interrupted places*, abandoned even before being completed. An instant abandonment, generated by the economic crisis, trends in the housing market, and lack of public or private

funds, which, anticipating the completion of the work, left construction sites indefinitely open.

In all of these places, the landscape becomes *third*, its “indecisive character corresponds to an evolution left to all the organic beings that make up the territory, in the absence of any human decision. [...] This totality belongs to neither the shadow nor the light. It is located on the edge. Where the woods fray, along roads and rivers, in the cavities forgotten by crops, where cars do not pass.” (Clément, 2004).

### III. ABANDONMENTS AND RETURNS: A NEW SENSE FOR PLACES

*“The places reveal themselves to us,  
they choose us.  
They respond with generosity to the link  
that we decide to entertain with them.”*  
(Teti V., 2014, p. 3)

If the forms, times, and modes characterizing the abandonment of places are varied, the ways by which to return to places are just as many. When returning to places makes sense for the place itself and the people who go back there (old or new residents), the bond that tied people to a house, a mountain, a field, a tree, the bond that was weakened by migration, shattered by catastrophic events, forgotten in some corner of the city, starts being reconstructed, regaining strength and new meanings. It is then possible to “find the seeds of life again, right there, where the man has risked and still risks getting lost, losing his places and the relationship with them.” (Teti, 2014).

In an attempt to provide a brief overview of the ways of returning to places, well aware of operating a simplification that, however, seems necessary due both to methodological issues (when the matter is complicated, simplifying helps to sort out ideas) and space limits, we begin by saying that, in general, the possibilities to give new life back to abandoned places vary according to the geographical-territorial context, that is, depending on whether one is in a historic village, in a urban/metropolitan or rural environment, and according to the available resources. Outreach activities, scientific research projects, recovery and renovation projects, various programs, citizens’ movements, and associations:

the initiatives that since the 90s, first in a pioneering way and then increasingly frequently, have been dedicated to requalifying, recovering, and reusing abandoned places cannot be counted. Therefore, it is impossible, here, to mention them all, even though carrying out a census would now be very opportune, and not only at the Italian level. Thus, the brief introduction below is limited to the most common ones, postponing to a successive text further and more detailed insights.

Beyond the geographical-territorial context, recovery initiatives for abandoned places can be divided into two main categories: direct or site-specific actions, which focus on the specificity of places, on local products and activities, and the concept of adaptive reuse<sup>10</sup>; and indirect actions, which focus on the creation of local, national, and international nets, promoted by various organizations and associations. In both cases, from the point of view of the scale, the actions and projects can be *punctual*, that is, relating to a single element of the place in question (a building, a field); *diffuse* over several elements of the site (various buildings, lands, road networks); *linear*, when they are implemented on structures that cross several areas (disused railways, paths, tracks, etc.); and *areal*, if dedicated to vast territories and landscapes.

With regard to historic villages, among the direct rehabilitation, valorization, and reuse actions, we can cite the *Albergo diffuso* or *Paese albergo* projects (among the best known, Sextantio in Santo Stefano di Sessanio, in the Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga National Park in Abruzzo), the villages of artists (such as Bussana Vecchia, in the hinterland of Sanremo, Liguria), landscape eco-museums (spread over the entire Italian territory), and the eco-villages<sup>11</sup> (such as that of Torri Superiore, analyzed in the following paragraphs). Indirect actions, as stated, have as their objective the creation of networks, which are also considered “quality labels”: becoming part of the network, as a matter of fact, means having met the requirements set by the network and having passed a series of tests and site checks. Among the most famous, the “Bandiera Arancione”, an environmental quality label promoted by the Touring Club of Italy and awarded to small towns in the hinterland, and the “Borghi più belli d’Italia”, an association that promotes little towns that, despite being characterized by strong historical-artistic interest, are located outside the main tourist circuits.

Within the urban/metropolitan context, the forms of recovery and reuse of abandoned or unused places are many and range from temporary reuse (for example, temporary shops are becoming increasingly common) to co-housing, which is often accompanied by co-working, and also from the restitution of various spaces to collective use for the creation of urban gardens, public green spaces, community centers, museums, libraries, schools, etc., to the reclamation of dismantled industrial sites and former construction sites for residential purposes and/or social use.

Finally, in the rural and extra-urban context, the possibilities to requalify and enhance abandoned places range from educational farms to holiday farms, from agricultural activities (often organic and to which quality brands, such as the Slow Food presidia, are associated) to the simple environmental restoration (usually concerning former quarries and mining areas), which may favor the repopulation of local species of flora and fauna.

As previously stated, this differentiation serves the purpose of organizing ideas. Nevertheless, it must be said that we often face mixed forms of recovery and valorization, taking into account local peculiarities and resources: an eco-village can, for example, rise in a historic village, but also in a rural context such as that of farms, and present at the same time forms of co-housing and co-working, have lands dedicated to organic crops, host art workshops, even temporarily, or be the site of courses related to the people's psychological and physical well-being. What unites all these forms of recovery, requalification, and valorization is perhaps the will to meet that need that has accompanied humanity since its appearance on Earth: find a home, a shelter, a haven, a place to feel good, a place to belong. There is no ideal recipe, no magic formula that will ensure the success of an intervention of recovery, reclamation, or reuse: every place has its soul and it is the new community that wants to occupy that place that needs to find the right way in order to build a lasting and durable relationship with it. It is the communities, ancient or recent, that, through individual behaviors and shared decisions, guide the evolution of places, for better or for worse. And, therefore, it is the community that must "acquire the awareness of being the main subject for widespread requalification, measuring the possibility of recovery, also through common

work, of what can be reused or naturalistically restored." (Paoletta, 2013). This awareness is a good guarantee of success. The community, however, cannot be left alone: the representatives of the political and institutional world have their share of responsibility in providing innovative regulatory, urbanistic, and financial tools, in order to promote cooperation between public and private also through incentivizing and rewarding mechanisms, as well as the necessary financial support for the implementation of the places' restoration projects<sup>12</sup>.

### **A. Three tools for field research: a methodological proposal**

A significant part of the research presented here was prepared through fieldwork carried out with the aid of three different, yet complementary, analysis tools, which allowed us to approach the case study according to a multiscale and multiperspectival approach, with the aim of providing various interpretation keys useful to a better understanding of the reality which is being investigated. Here, we propose a method of study and research which is employable also for other geographical-territorial contexts, with the appropriate and necessary changes eventually suggested by the case considered.

#### ***1. The analytical table***

The analytical table of the territory and landscape<sup>13</sup> aims to provide a brief and ready-to-read overview of the context analyzed. Special attention is paid to elements of landscape degradation and abandonment, as well as recovery, valorization, reclamation, and reuse projects. Where deemed necessary, the summary sheet may be accompanied by a more extensive report, designed to offer a greater level of depth and detail. Parts 1-5 of the summary sheet for the analysis of the territory and landscape (see Tab.1 in encart) are dedicated to the identification and location of the area, to its dimensional characteristics, to the geomorphological aspects, to its climate conditions and to the accessibility. Parts 6 and 7 outline the main scientific, cultural and productive interests of the sample area and the settlement system, its evolution and typology, while parts 8 to 10 detect major degradation and abandonment process, particularly referring to the main causes and grade of alteration and to the types of abandoned

### The analysis of the territorial context

The table below aims to give a concise and comprehensive picture of the territorial context in which Torri Superiore is located, a village nestled in the bottom of the Val Bevera, between two mountain chains that thin out directly into the sea. Located in the Ligurian hinterland, a few kilometers from the border with France, it is part of a territory marked by a picturesque mix of characteristic landscape elements. The terraces surrounding the village, often abandoned, provide the most obvious and spectacular scenic trait, even though the structure of the village itself constitutes a typical element of an area, which is dotted with various residential settlements: the slope houses, the terrace houses, and, precisely, the “compact centers”.

**Table 1.** The analytical table

SUMMARY SHEET FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE TERRITORY AND LANDSCAPE								
<b>1 – Identification and location (scale 1:6,000)</b>								
<b>Country:</b>	<b>Region:</b>			<b>Municipality:</b>				
Italy	Liguria			Ventimiglia				
<b>Sample area:</b>	Torri Superiore’s residential area and its surroundings (see picture)							
<b>2 – General dimensional characteristics</b>								
<b>Size (Km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	Approx. 530,000 m <sup>2</sup> (0.53 Km <sup>2</sup> ).							
<b>3 – Geomorphological characteristics</b>								
<b>Alpine landscape</b>	X (Maritime Alps)							
<b>Prealpine landscape</b>								
<b>Appenninic/hilly landscape</b>								
<b>Plain landscape</b>								
<b>Maritime costal/fluvial/lacustrine landscape</b>								
<b>Hydrographical network</b>	Bevera Torrent							
<b>4 – Climate</b>								
<b>Solar exposition</b> (more than one possible choice)	N	NE	E X	SE X	S X	SW	W	NW
<b>Average annual precipitation</b>	896.3 (avg. 1981-2010): Airole observation station							
<b>Climatic classification</b>	The climate belongs to the Mediterranean belt and sub-humid subtype.							
<b>5 – Accessibility</b>								
<b>Grade of accessibility:</b>	LOW X (from local/municipal road)		MEDIUM (from provincial/regional road)			HIGH (from high density road)		
<b>Types of public/private transportation infrastructures:</b>	Torri is connected to the coast by a single route, consisting of a highway stretch and a municipal road.							
<b>6 – Interest factors in the area</b>								
<b>Scientific/cultural interest</b>								
<b>Geological:</b>	<b>Elements:</b>							
<b>Naturalistic:</b>	<b>Elements:</b> peculiar naturalistic values in high altitude areas and along the coast of the Bevera river (fluvial island).							
<b>Scenic:</b>	<b>Elements:</b> vestiges or small wrecks of ancient or very ancient terrace. Medieval village situated along the side of the mountain.							
<b>Historical/anthropological:</b>	<b>Elements:</b> trail network, dismantled agricultural structures.							
<b>Economic/productive interest</b>								
<b>Agricultural:</b>	<b>Elements:</b> small agricultural enterprises (olive, vines, fruit trees, vegetables), beekeeping, farm animals.							
<b>Industrial:</b>	<b>Elements:</b> oil mill.							
<b>Tertiary:</b>	<b>Elements:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle of education, courier service.							
<b>Touristic:</b>	<b>Elements:</b> holiday home.							

7 – Settlement system

<b>Evolution of settlements:</b>	Degradation and reclamation of the village, construction of new housing.
<b>Residential settlement pattern</b>	Compact village, scattered houses.
<b>Types of production:</b>	Oil mill, crafts, cosmetics, and pottery.
<b>Abandoned settlements/buildings</b>	Houses, agricultural structures.

8 – Environmental/scenic alteration status

<b>Grade of alteration:</b>	<b>none/low X</b>	low/medium	high
<b>Degradation:</b>	none	<b>Partial X</b>	none
<b>Impairment:</b>	none	<b>Partial X</b>	none

9 – Causes of degradation

Natural	<b>Anthropic</b>	Mixed
	<b>X</b>	

10 – Types of abandoned places

<b>Territorial context: (specify whether in a mainly urbanized or rural environment)</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>Residential</b>	
	Agricultural	<b>Mixed X</b>	
<b>Abandoned element:</b>	Single building (residential/agricultural/industrial)	<b>Historic village X</b>	
	Industrial production complex (farms, buildings, adjacent lots)	<b>Agricultural production complex (farms, buildings, adjacent lots) X</b>	
<b>Grade of abandonment:</b>	Low	Medium	<b>High X</b>
<b>Period of abandonment (alleged or proved):</b>	Mid-seventies/Eighties		
<b>Causes of abandonment:</b>	<b>natural</b>	<b>Anthropic X</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
		Migrations	
<b>Notes:</b>			

11 – Territorial and scenic restrictions persisting on the area

<b>Area restrictions: (Park, Reserve, SPA, ...)</b>	<b>"Grammondo-Bevera" Site of Community Importance.</b>
<b>Indirizzi pianificatori (General Regulatory Plan, Territorial Coordination Plan, Regional Landscape Plan, etc.)</b>	<b>Urban Regional Plan, Territorial Landscape Coordination Plan, Territorial context n.2 Bevera</b>

12. – Historical data

<b>Sources:</b>	<b>Historical registry</b>
<b>Year:</b>	
<b>Evolutionary dynamic of the agricultural destinations:</b>	
<b>Historical notes: (period of foundation of the inhabited center and its evolution)</b>	

13 – Available iconographic/cartographic documentation

<b>Typology</b>		<b>Typology</b>	
<b>Digital orthophoto</b>	X	<b>Digital geographic bases (specify)</b>	
<b>Rectified aerial photograph</b>	X	<b>Paper geographic bases (specify)</b>	X
<b>Aerial images</b>	X	<b>Photographs</b>	X
<b>Satellite images</b>	X	<b>Digital photographs</b>	X

14 – Reclamation/valorization/protection projects

<b>Project</b>	<b>Typology</b>
Recomposition of the structural fragmentation of the hamlet, repopulating, and economic and social revitalization.	Land regeneration project

14 – Bibliography and documental material sources

1) Agrillo G., Bonati V., <i>Atlante climatico della Liguria</i> , Graca KC, Genova, 2013.
2) European Commission, <i>Rural Development Programme (Regional) - Liguria</i> , 2015.
3) Comune di Ventimiglia, <i>Sistema di gestione Ambientale. Relazione sull'analisi ambientale iniziale</i> , 2007.
4) Comune di Ventimiglia, <i>Piano Urbanistico Comunale</i> , 2008.
5) Regione Liguria, <i>Piano territoriale di coordinamento paesistico, Ambito territoriale n.2 Bevera (d.c.r. n°6 del 26 febbraio 1990)</i>

places. Other information, regarding the presence of protected areas and the territorial and scenic restrictions, together with historical data and notes and the iconographic documentation are collected in parts 11 to 15.

## 2. The in-depth interview

The semi-structured interview is given to two of the founders of the cultural association and is organized into four sections (see Tab. 2 in encart): the first aims to investigate the phases of conception of the cultural project that led to the birth of the ecovillage (values, foundation, development and economic

sources); the second aims to understand the original structural conditions of the village and the methods and tools of its regeneration; the third focuses on the resident community, especially those aspects related to its composition and relationships with the outside world – in particular, with the neighboring village, Torri Inferiore, – and the features of the distinctive participatory method with which it manages the ecovillage (consensus method with its strengths and weaknesses); the fourth part, finally, explores the territorial and social development activities implemented by the residents, with particular attention to the forms of sustainable agriculture and ecotourism.

**Table 2.** The structure of the semi-structured interview

Interview structure
<b>SECTION 1</b>
<b>The “Torri Superiore” project</b>
–How was the Association born? –Who founded it? Which are the elements that constitute it? –How is the idea of founding an ecovillage developed? –Why Torri Superiore? –What are the ideas and concepts that are behind the birth of the project; and which are the ones that have accompanied its development? What are the strengths? And weaknesses? – What are your economic sources, besides the ones generated by touristic activities?
<b>SECTION 2</b>
<b>The renovation of the village</b>
– How was Torri Superiore before your intervention? – What were the conditions of the historic buildings? – Whose were they? – How did you manage to own them? – What are the main actions implemented in regard to securing and renovating the buildings?
<b>SECTION 3</b>
<b>The resident community</b>
– Who are Torri Superiore’s residents? – How have the relationships with the residents of Torri Inferiore developed? – Could you describe the general directions of the ecovillage’s participatory management (consensus method)? – What are the strengths of this system? And weaknesses?
<b>SECTION 4</b>
<b>Activities (territory maintenance, agriculture, tourism, training...)</b>
– Which maintenance activities of the territory do you carry out? – Can you talk about the agricultural techniques and production implemented in Torri Superiore? – How do you assess the agricultural activities carried out in your territory? – What are the main points of strength and weakness? – According to which methods and strategies has tourist receptiveness in Torri Superiore developed? – What type of tourist do you mainly receive? – What are the strengths of your tourist offer? What are the critical issues? – What other activities are carried out? – Are there any ideas or future projects that you would like to carry out?

## 3. The online questionnaire

The questionnaire is submitted to a non-representative sample of the village’s “external” users, 40 tourists<sup>14</sup>. It has been translated into three languages and distributed electronically via email

and social media in order to reach the largest possible number of contacts. Each of the four sections that constitute it addresses a specific theme (the journey, the tourist experience, the tourist offer, the guiding principles of the host community), highlighting how the diversified hospitality practices are perceived by

the guests of the structures (see Tab. 3 in encart). The questionnaire is structured in four sections. The first section aims to investigate how tourists plan their travel (reasons, means of transport, accommodation), taking into account if they have stayed at the ecovillage before and how they have known about it. The second shows how the Torri Superiore Ecovillage blend into the surrounding area from the perspective of the sustainability.

The third section evaluates the visitors' level of satisfaction about touristic and cultural offers (facilities, services, workshop, events). The last section explores to which extent tourists agree with the values shared by residents, especially in relation to their decision-making policy based on the consensus method and the traditional farming. Furthermore, it examines whether these practices can be repeated in their own life or in other contexts.

**Table. 3.** The structure of the questionnaire

<b>SECTION 1: YOUR TRAVEL</b>
How did you reach this location? (More than one answer is allowed)
<input type="checkbox"/> By car <input type="checkbox"/> By bus <input type="checkbox"/> By regular airline <input type="checkbox"/> By low-cost airline <input type="checkbox"/> By train <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
How did you find out about the ecovillage?
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Through friends or acquaintances <input type="checkbox"/> Through books or guide books <input type="checkbox"/> Through a tourist agency <input type="checkbox"/> At a fair or an exhibition <input type="checkbox"/> I can't remember
Have you ever been to Torri Superiore ecovillage before?
<input type="checkbox"/> No, never (go to question n. 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I've already been there in the past
How many times have you stayed at the ecovillage before?
<input type="checkbox"/> Once <input type="checkbox"/> Twice <input type="checkbox"/> Three times or more
What were your main reasons for going to Torri Superiore? (More than one answer is allowed)
<input type="checkbox"/> Rest, relaxation in a particular context <input type="checkbox"/> Visit to relatives and friends <input type="checkbox"/> Business trip <input type="checkbox"/> Conference, congress etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Sport and trekking <input type="checkbox"/> Health and well-being <input type="checkbox"/> Learning experience / Cultural exchange <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
How did you plan your journey and accommodation?
<input type="checkbox"/> Independently <input type="checkbox"/> With a tourist agency <input type="checkbox"/> Through networks or associations
How long have you been in Torri Superiore for?
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than a week <input type="checkbox"/> Between a week and 15 days <input type="checkbox"/> Between 16 days and a month <input type="checkbox"/> More than a month
<b>SECTION 2. THE EXPERIENCE: PLACE AND COMMUNITY</b>
Please find below some sentences about the location. Rank each statement on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Totally disagree; 5 = Totally agree).
1. In this location the visitors may have an authentic experience with the local communities. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2. The structures of the Ecovillage blend into the surrounding area. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3. In this location the environment is respected. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4. In this location the abandoned buildings have been effectively restored. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

4. Most people have a positive opinion of this location. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SECTION 3. THE TOURIST OFFER</b>
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects related to the ecovillage tourist offer? Rank each statement on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Very dissatisfied; 5 = Very satisfied).
1. Accessibility. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2. The local transport system. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Type and quality of the accommodation. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Cleanliness and care. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Safety. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
6. The quality of the food. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
7. The hospitality of the inhabitants. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
8. The variety of cultural heritage (e.g. architecture, traditions and customs). 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
9. The quality of the landscape and environment. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
10. The possibility to attend or to take part in exhibitions or cultural events. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the whole ecovillage tourist offer? Rank each statement on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Very dissatisfied; 5 = Very satisfied).
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Did the ecovillage come up to your expectations? (1 = not at all, 5 = definitely yes).
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Did you attend any course organized by the ecovillage? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (state which _____) <input type="checkbox"/> No (go to question n. 12)
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the courses organized by the Ecovillage in which you took part? Rank each statement on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Very dissatisfied; 5 = Very satisfied).
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SECTION 4. THE VALUES: PLACE AND COMMUNITY BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION</b>
In what respect do you agree or disagree with the values shared by the resident community and its workers in the Torri Superiore ecovillage? Rank each statement on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Totally disagree; 5 = Totally agree)
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you think the activities of the ecovillage could bring about changes in society and/or in the surrounding territory? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (state which) <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know
Has your stay at the ecovillage had any effects on your habits or way of life? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (state which) <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know
Do you think the experience of an intentional community could be repeated in other contexts? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you know what Consensus decision making is? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (go to question n. 19) <input type="checkbox"/> No (go to question n. 20)
Have you ever used Consensus decision making at any other time? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (state where) <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you know what permaculture is? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (go to question n. 21) <input type="checkbox"/> No (go to question n. 22)
Is this type of farming more environmental friendly than traditional farming? (1 = not at all, 5 = definitely yes).
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you think you might choose this location as a holiday destination again in the future?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Do you think you might spend a holiday in another ecovillage in the future?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Would you recommend the ecovillage to others?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Have you any suggestions of how to improve the tourist experience at the Torri Superiore ecovillage?
Who did you come with? (More than one answer is allowed)
<input type="checkbox"/> Alone <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Children from 0-5 years of age <input type="checkbox"/> Children from 6-14 years of age <input type="checkbox"/> Children over the age of 14 <input type="checkbox"/> Relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Friends <input type="checkbox"/> Colleagues <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____
<b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>
Sex
<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age
<input type="checkbox"/> 15-24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25-35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36-45 <input type="checkbox"/> 46-64 <input type="checkbox"/> 65 or over
Country/Hometown: _____
Profession
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed <input type="checkbox"/> Office worker <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Education qualifications
Thank you for your time and cooperation!

**Figure 1.** Physical and Anthropic Context: the Municipality of Ventimiglia



Source: Google Earth, our elaboration.

#### IV. NEW PEOPLE IN TORRI: THE RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS WITH EYEWITNESSES

Torri Superiore is an ancient medieval village, situated on a terrace in the municipality of Ventimiglia (IM), a few kilometers away from the border with France. Embraced in a perimeter of 30x50 m., it includes 150 rooms, which are joined by a maze of ladders, passages, alleys, and terraces<sup>15</sup>. These spaces, once used as residences of farmers and ranchers and later dismantled and abandoned, were the subject of a recent renovation and are organized in areas of common use (property of the cultural association) and private spaces (property of resident members).

«As early as in the auroral phase of the project, the founders considered the destination of public or private spaces as a decisive issue. They had the awareness that a community could grow especially by sharing spaces that harbored rites, festivals, and public discussions. Striking the right balance between public and private spaces has come today to identifying a sort of equivalence between the two sides, with a slight predominance of the private component» (Int. 1).

In addition to the village, a few other buildings belong to the hamlet of Torri Superiore, such as old stone cabins and some scattered houses, often abandoned. Very similar is the fate of the agricultural space, as reflected in the words of the interviewee:

«In our settlement, the area was abandoned for the most part. I remember only two crops of olive and lemon trees and pockets of subsistence agriculture. In these years, we have cultivated 600 olive trees and we take care of the vegetable gardens, a small orchard, and a vineyard.» (Int. 2).

The life and activities in the ecovillage are ordered and regulated by three cooperating organizations: the Torri Superiore Cultural Association (ACTS), the resident community, and the Ture Nirvane Cooperative (SCTN) (d'Erm, 2009). ACTS was founded in 1989 from an idea of Gianna and Piero, a couple from Ventimiglia who aimed to reconstruct the fragmented nature of the hamlet and revive it through a *phalanstery* of sensitive affinities (Caffaratti, 1988), with the intent of carrying

out a social experiment of community life. The association has about 30 members and is the current owner of the village's common spaces.

The resident community is composed of 12 adults and 8 children, 4 of which are teenagers, and is diverse within itself in terms of age, nationality, educational level, and gender. It is a community open to new participants, who, after a trial period, can become permanent residents of Torri Superiore.

The SCTN<sup>16</sup>, founded in 1999, in order to manage the restoration of buildings and agricultural areas<sup>17</sup>, is responsible for the "holiday home", with 19 beds and 70 seats at the table. The members of the three entities have chosen to coordinate through the "consensus decision-making method"<sup>18</sup>, a participatory methodology, borrowed from some matriarchal cultures, which is based on the assumption that every proposal must be shared by all in order to be accepted<sup>19</sup>. Such governance has transformed the ecovillage into an economic and cultural center recognized by the national and international press<sup>20</sup>, frequented by tourists, and inhabited by a numerically stable "intentional community" that is well-rooted in the context where it is located. The latent conflicts, dating back to the 90s, with the neighboring village of Torri Inferiore, are, in fact, solved (Marzano, 2012):

«We slowly realized that the task of finding a common language would be up to us - as newcomers. We were brought close together during the (second) cleaning of the river organized by the community of Torri Inferiore, in which we participated. Later, the opportunities to share moments of work and free time have multiplied» (Int. 1).

However, some doubts about the future of TSEV transpire from the words of the respondents, especially in relation to the gap between the high number of young volunteers («about 100 per year») and the few requests of becoming resident. For the younger generations, the inspiring motto of the "founding fathers", «Torri Superiore: a proposal of life», appears to be anachronistic, as their existential trajectories are uncertain and unpredictable.

«Even the most prepared and interested young people appear to be incapable of long-term thinking. The "liquid" relations of this society have made them more "unrooted" than we were. The only item

to have preserved a value of rootedness in a place seems to be the birth of a child» (Int. 2).

Job insecurity and the difficult achievement of economic independence offer a frame of vagueness in which ACTS members are immersed. The community, nowadays unable to further atomize revenues among its components, is looking for new ways of development.

«Compared to the founding era, in which the sufficient condition for joining the association was sharing our project, those who join today must also bring sustainable economic ideas» (Int. 1).

With the exception of those employed full-time in the SCTN, all the member-residents are self-employed, although many of them are part of the cooperative, or cooperate with it.

«The owners of the “Due Asini” farm live in the village, as well as a chicken farmer and beekeeper, and they sell part of their products to the ecovillage. A second farmer supplements his salary by working occasionally on the construction site, while two people take care of the common vegetable gardens, in exchange for room and board. Some residents,

finally, work full-time outside: a teacher, a yoga instructor, and a barista» (Int. 2).

Tourist activity is now considered a vital resource for the ecovillage. Concerns expressed by some of the residents about the idea of establishing a “holiday home” have disappeared over time and tourism is today attributed a central role both in helping take up agricultural businesses and in recovering an abandoned village. However, the accommodation business must not harm the interests or compromise the needs of the community, in order to prevent the outbreak of discontent, tension, or conflict among residents.

«The resident community is our main stakeholder. Every decision taken must ensure its well-being. Increased flows of tourists would surely increase our earnings, but would risk damaging relations among us. It would mean raising the price of basic necessities, increased traffic, and increased chaos day and night» (Int. 1).

If, on the contrary, tourism brings wealth to the territory in full respect of the residents, a virtuous circle is established, also benefiting the visitors themselves: a cohesive and peaceful host community welcomes its guests with greater care, improving the quality of the stay.

**Figure 2.** Torri Superiore Ecovillage



*Source:* Photograph by the authors, 22/04/2016.

## V. WHAT TOURISTS THINK: THE RESULTS OF THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Along with agriculture, the tourism business has always been the core of TSEV and tourists are a key interlocutor for the resident community, for economic and cultural reasons. For this reason, they were asked to complete a questionnaire about their experience in Torri Superiore, of which the main results collected so far<sup>21</sup> are presented below.

The 40 respondents are almost equally divided between men (48%) and women (52%), and are, for the most part, of Italian nationality (75%). Among foreign respondents, Europeans predominate (70% of the total of foreigners), with Germans in particular (28.5% of the total of European tourists), though the significant American representation (7.5% of the total number of tourists) is worth signaling.

It is also possible to identify 4 different age groups in which respondents are divided: young people aged between 15 and 34 years (10%), the most interested in forms of part-time volunteering; the 30-40 year-olds, often accompanied by young children (55%); the 50-60 year-olds (30%); and pensioners (7.5%).

Significant differences between Italians and foreigners emerge in the choice of means of transport and duration of stay: it is evident, in fact, that international tourists are particularly fond of traveling by public transport (80%) compared to the Italians, who mainly travel by car (72.4 %).

Equally diverse are the interests that drive guests to reach the ecovillage. While the seaside towns and the presence of the bathing river are appreciated by those looking for a more relaxing stay (22.5%), a high percentage of visitors are attracted to forms of cultural tourism, both for the presence of Italian and French medieval villages, museums, and western Liguria folk festivals and, above all, for the opportunity to participate in the ecovillage's community-life activities (42.5%).

Such experience of sharing with the local community is, in fact, considered as authentic by 85% of respondents, also because it is inserted in an architectural structure harmonized to the surrounding context (95%). The high approval

rating is not affected by the recognized deficiencies of the tourist destination, such as the difficult access to the site and the level of efficiency of the local transport, which 65% of the respondents do not judge positively.

The last section of the questionnaire investigates the guests' degree of awareness of the values that characterize life in the ecovillage. The analysis shows that all the respondents believe that the experience of the intentional community is applicable in other contexts; 87.5% consider permaculture an effective and sustainable alternative to traditional agriculture; finally, 47.5% declare that in the past they took part in the participatory processes based on the consensus decision-making method. It is clear, moreover, that those staying in Torri Superiore aim to undertake (or continue, as in the case of volunteers belonging to the network of ecovillages) a journey of personal growth, modeled on the exchange with the residents and visitors of the village.

For these reasons, in the space of two decades, a tourist circuit has developed around the ecovillage, establishing with the host structure and its residents enduring relationships. For about half of the respondents (52.5%) the stay has prompted a change in the ideas and everyday practices with respect to production and consumption of food, social life, and environmental sustainability (Grizzuti, 2009).

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The recovery of the abandoned village and portions of the surrounding agricultural land are part of a cultural project undertaken in the 1980s and now shared by those who manage and/or live in the TSEV spaces, as well as by the majority of its visitors. The recognition of the evolutionary lines of this project has identified the tireless research by the cultural association members for a balance between the common and private spaces of the village which is functional to the community life, and that for a compromise between the utopian desire for self-sufficiency and adapting to market dynamics.

The resident community, self-regulated through the consensus decision-making process, has thus organized the community spaces, allotting "only" half to community use and the remaining part to

private use. At the same time, it has cultivated a relationship with the outside - from the “near” of Torri Inferiore to the “far” of national and international tourists - sometimes disregarding the programmatic rejection of certain liberal logic.

Tourism has been the subject of debate between two lines of thought within the resident group: the centrifugal one that values its beneficial activities for the development of “weak” economies (agriculture or subsistence animal farming) and the centripetal one which stresses the risk of increased dependence of the ecovillage on the external market, with increasing demand for food and services. Conscious of this potential result, the community welcomes tourists paying attention to the fact that the social and territorial diseconomies arising from their input do not overcome the real benefits brought to the community.

Tourists themselves claim to reach Torri Superiore with the intent of not subverting the dynamics of the community, but achieving an authentic sharing experience with it. In some cases, the benefits of the stay exceed the space-time contingency and result, after the holiday, in a renewed civic and ethical awareness, which can subvert the routine and build the first element of the transformation of one’s life context.

The TSEV is today a magnet of attraction for a form of responsible, slow, low environmental impact tourism: an innovative center, in which the initial hypothesis, according to which ecotourism practices could be an asset in the regeneration processes of abandonment places, is confirmed. Looking to the future, however, some gray areas are highlighted. One of these is the difficulty with which many young people (tourists or volunteers) rarely show interest in becoming residents, revealing a trend that, if repeated, could undermine the current model. In spite of the recent implementation of policies promoting the revival of these places, young entrepreneurs do not seem sufficiently motivated to invest in marginal areas yet. If this trend is confirmed in the coming years, attempts such as the one in Torri Superiore, able to provide renewed impetus to depopulated areas, risk remaining isolated cases.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Although the result of joint discussions, the present work, in terms of individual contributions, can be divided as

follows: Alice Giulia Dal Borgo is the author of the following paragraphs: *On the abandonment of places: some introductory reflections, three research goals; The abandonment of places: causes, typologies, and contexts; Abandonments and returns: a new sense for places; Three tools for field research: a methodological proposal*. Giuseppe Gambazza is the author of paragraphs: *New people in Torri: the results of the interviews with eyewitnesses; What tourists think: the results of the online questionnaire; Conclusions and Encart*.

<sup>2</sup>To confirm this, just think of how the phenomenon of the abandonment of places has now become a viral topic on major web channels, both traditional and social: the pages of the major search engines appear indeed to be thousands when entering keywords such as abandonment, abandoned villages/towns/places.

<sup>3</sup>Cfr. Bassanelli M., *Geografie dell’abbandono*, 2010; WWF, *Riutilizziamo l’Italia*, 2013.

<sup>4</sup>According to data on resident population to 31/12/2009 (Istat 2010). <http://www.comuniverso.it>

<sup>5</sup>On the concept of place and sense of place see Tuan Y.-F. (1974), *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall; Tuan Y.-F. (1977), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press; Relph E. (1976), *Place and Placelessness*, London, Pion.

<sup>6</sup>The idea of “being in the world” is attributable to Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1962).

<sup>7</sup>Cfr. WWF, 2013.

<sup>8</sup>If we consider, for example, the case of an agricultural farm, it is possible to find cases in which the farm and the adjoining land have been completely abandoned, or the case in which forms of partial abandonment of land and buildings exist, having taken place at different times and for different reasons (parts of housing because family members have decreased or less productive plots). The same applies to an abandoned village, which can be totally or partially abandoned, or that may have been left to be re-established elsewhere, usually further down in the valley where the morphology of the terrain is more favorable.

<sup>9</sup>Garda E. (2017), «Biografie dell’Abbandono», currently being printed for the journal *Planum*.

<sup>10</sup>This a concept that defines intervention practices aimed at reusing old structures for new activities, through ways that can establish a dialogue with the characteristics of the place where the intervention is carried out. Adaptive reuse considers not only the identity possessed by the artifacts, but also the cultural value that binds, or bound, them to the community as a determining factor in the planning of any renovation operation. According to this approach, the reuse projects have to start from recovery and valorization actions considered as active-actions, capable of reactivating the places and communities in which one intervenes in a sustainable way. For further discussions, see Bassanelli M.; Postiglione G. (2013).

<sup>11</sup>The ecovillage can be defined as a form of intentional community that bases its lifestyle on the principles of environmental sustainability, ecology, permaculture, and organic farming. The ecovillage is built according to the principles of reuse, limiting environmental impacts, and using renewable energy sources. A concrete utopia, *ecotopia* of the XXI century, the ecovillage is characterized by a strong tendency towards being self-sufficient, presenting itself as an alternative to the forms of living which are prevalent in post-modern society, with the aim of meeting the needs of people who live there, whether they are work-related, educational, or

emotional (Jackson H., Svensson K. (2002), *Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and Her People*, Green Books; Dawson J (2006), *Ecovillages. New frontiers for sustainability*, Foxhole, Green Books; d'Erm P. (2009), *Vivre ensemble autrement. Ecovillages, écoquartiers, habitat groupé*, Paris, Ulmer; Holmgren D. (2009), *Future scenarios. How communities can adapt to peak oil and climate change*, White River Junction, Chelsea Green Publishing).

<sup>12</sup>The Law no. 164, November 11, 2014 goes in this direction: first *Programma 6000 Campanili*. Among the topics touched by the program, various types of intervention align: from the qualification and maintenance of the territory to the requalification of existing buildings, through the reduction of hydro-geological risk. To date, 200 million euro have been allocated. Furthermore, the Commissions V (budget, treasury, and programming) and VIII (environment, territory, and public works) met on June 30th, 2015, in a selected committee in order to define the measures for the support and enhancement of the municipalities with populations of less than or equal to 5,000 inhabitants and the mountain and rural areas, as well as to establish powers to the government to reform the system of government of the same areas, to introduce remuneration schemes for environmental services, and to define measures for the requalification and recovery of historic centers, with special reference to abandoned places.

<sup>13</sup>The table presented here was drawn up on the basis of the chart for the analysis of the landscape used as part of the Interreg IIIB – Spazio Alpino - Alpter, 2005/2008, a project to which the co-author of this paper participated directly.

<sup>14</sup>The Authors are well aware that this number is too small to be representative and indeed their research interests are leading them to submit again the questionnaire in the next months, in order to reach a wider sample of tourist.

<sup>15</sup>For a structural and evolutionary reconstruction of the architectures of “Ponente ligure” (Liguria) see Scarin (1957) and Spalla (1984).

<sup>16</sup>Società Cooperativa Ture Nirvane s.r.l employs 4 residents for the management of the center.

<sup>17</sup>The renovation - completed in 2012 - resulted in the conservation and requalification of the medieval characters of the structure through the use of natural and eco-compatible materials, based on structural interventions in harmony with the surrounding environment. The cultivation of vegetable gardens and olive groves uses only organic fertilizers. For these reasons, ACTS and SCTN are members of RIVE (the Italian Ecovillage Network), GEN (the Global Ecovillage Network), and the Italian Association of Permaculture ([www.torri-superiore.org](http://www.torri-superiore.org)).

<sup>18</sup>The consensus decision-making method aims to avoid deep rifts among the debating parties, averting the risk of exit, obstruction or retaliation on the part of the minorities, as well as to minimize the risk of prolonging the decision-making process. It outlines a path structured along the dynamics of a specific group, engaging members in the final drafting of the project. In particularly delicate assemblies, the role of the facilitator (internal or external) can be central. For a discussion on the “consensus decision-making method” see, for example, Briggs (2014).

<sup>19</sup>The intentional community is a group of people who propose sharing space, time, and goods of various kinds.

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Calder (2006), Nielsen (2010), Leaf Christian (2007); Saint-Jours Y., Bierens de Haan (2007), Debenedetti (2008), Secolo XIX (2014).

<sup>21</sup>The questionnaire was published online on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016, and will remain available until October 31<sup>st</sup>.

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