

sous la direction de
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Villages et quartiers à risque d'abandon

*Stratégies pour la connaissance,
la valorisation et la restauration*

TOME 1


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The inland areas of our region are often isolated or poorly linked to the main development poles, resulting in major problems of depopulation, an ageing of the residual population and a decline in economic activities. However, these "marginal" places have some potential for development. It then becomes necessary to provide a strategy of analysis and knowledge of these areas, to define guidelines and guidelines capable of guaranteeing conservation and enhancement solutions of these territories.

In recent years the Italian territory, and in particular the internal areas, whose economy was once based on the agro-forestry-pastoral system, has increasingly depopulated, in favor of urban areas. This trend is shared with many other European and Mediterranean countries and the European authorities, through the most careful control of regional organizations, tries to fight it, with funds aimed at the economic revival of these areas, in particular through tourism.

Tuscany, in accordance with national guidelines, has identified four areas to allocate 3.74 million euros to encourage their rebirth and avoid depopulation. Among these, there is Garfagnana, a territory endowed with great natural riches, such as the Apuan Alps, and the presence of waters and rivers, and anthropic-cultural assets, such as the numerous villages with a thousand-year history, marked by Lombard domination. However, Garfagnana is also among those areas most at risk of depopulation due to the progressive aging of the population and abandonment in favor of the valley. After the Second World War, in fact, with the radical change of the economic system, all those rural settlements, that previously survived self-sufficient on the slopes of the Apuan Alps, were gradually abandoned, both for the distance from the essential services and for the difficulty of moving. These characteristics meant that in the ranking of the 300 Tuscan municipalities with the greatest development difficulties, 21 Municipalities included in this area appear in the first 30 places. These abandonments led not only to the depopulation of an entire region and the consequent loss of services, but also to the impoverishment of the landscape heritage, due to the progressive invasion of the forest on agricultural areas, pastures and chestnut trees. How can we stop this decline? How can we avoid the loss of an immense territorial, landscape, cultural heritage?

The Architecture Department of the University of Florence, in collaboration with the Tuscan Regional Committee of the Federciclismo and the Union of Municipalities of the Garfagnana, have worked on a project for the tourist redevelopment of the municipalities of Careggine and Fabbriche di Vergemoli, on whose territories numerous attractive emergencies persist: the Vagli Lake, formed artificially with the construction of a hydroelectric dam by the Edron Stream by SELT Valdarno (today ENEL spa), which submerged some villages, today visible only during sporadic maintenance work (the last in 1994, the next in 2021). There is the Grotta del Vento, in the municipality of Fabbriche di Vergemoli, which today has three internal tourist routes, but not a collective accommodation and information structure. Also the forest paths between the municipalities of Careggine and Fabbriche di Vergemoli, would constitute, if enhanced, a magnificent opportunity for sports tourism in the Garfagnana. The University of Florence has the purpose with its CONOSCICINBICI. Disvelare e Mostrare, of enhancing these attractions, identifying definite itineraries and installing panels and structures that host dedicated exhibitions, thus expanding the knowledge and survey of such a rich area.

With these means the hope is to be able to reverse the trend, to revive the Garfagnana and to reinvent it, transporting it from its agricultural past to its future based on knowledge and respect for its millenary culture.

Keywords: Mountain areas, Territorial requalification, Landscape survey



The bike is a tool of discovery. It is the most suitable and versatile means to immerse yourself in the Wonders of Italy because it allows you to adapt each to your own rhythm, to stop and start again according to the emotion of the moment and, above all, always leaves the freedom to deviate from the predetermined way to go in search of a glimpse, a small church or a village whose existence was not even suspected until recently.



Introduction

Garfagnana, a land with a glorious past, rich in history and natural and architectural beauties, is today a place characterized by evident signs of structural weakness, caused by the distance from essential services, the depopulation and senilization of the population, the loss of functions and identity of the place. However, it has a landscape full of historical and cultural peculiarities able to guarantee the possibility of reconversion and revaluation. Garfagnana's renewal has to support itself with the great tourist potential of the area: since the Middle Ages the Garfagnana was crossed by important communication arteries. These paths have been almost completely abandoned, but they could give new life to sports tourism, in particular to cycle tourism and thus guarantee a structural rebirth. This is the goal that the University of Florence has set, with the research carried out so far and with the *Conoscinbici* project, which will be illustrated in the next paragraphs.

State of the art

As mentioned before, the Garfagnana is a territory rich in history: the area, which for many centuries was a borderland between the republic of Lucca, the Duchy and the Estensi state, is characterized by important historical pre-existences and road traces that connected Lucca with northern Italy and Europe. In medieval times, the Garfagnana, in fact, represented almost an obligatory passage, for those from Northern Europe, especially from Great Britain and France, who went on pilgrimage to Rome and vice versa. The pilgrims,

in fact, after crossing the Apennines, had two alternatives to reach Lucca and then Rome: either, having reached Luni, travel the coast, or go up the Lunigiana and the Garfagnana. The first solution could be dangerous for malaria, pirate raids and the presence of the Byzantines. Here, then, is the origin of the Garfagnana road system and the birth along it of numerous 'hospitales' to welcome travelers. The most important itineraries that pass through the Garfagnana are the Chemin d'Assise, the Via del Volto Santo and obviously the Francigena.

While the Francigena avoids the areas of Garfagnana and Lunigiana located higher up, only crossing some towns in the Lucchesia (such as Altopascio), the Via del Volto Santo goes much further into the mountain area. This route was initially born as a simple deviation of the Francigena itself (Verrini, 2017), as an alternative route that allowed to reach an important pilgrimage destination, the Holy Face. This is a wooden statue collocated in the cathedral of San Martino in Lucca, built, according to the legend, from Nicodemus helped by some angels, in memory of the moment in which he laid Christ in the tomb (Romano, 2003). The first pilgrims arrived around the eighth century, but it was then in the twelfth century that the tradition spread massively. Although the route has been used for centuries, it was only in 2008 that it was decided to strengthen it, systematizing the information, providing it with new signs and indications and a site that would help the curious to find their way around. From this moment on, the path was increasingly publicized, increasing the number of interested parties more and more.

The Chemin d'Assise, although it is a "younger" path, has been rediscovered earlier than the Via del Volto Santo. Born to retrace the places that characterized the life of St. Francis, it provides the possibility to choose between a fairly long pilgrimage (if you decide to start from Vezelay) or to limit yourself to central Italy, where the 300 km of the journey are divided into 13 stages. Thanks also to the twinning with the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, the Chemin d'Assise is already very popular and has been equipped, like the Francigena, with specific signs and symbols: the Tau (typical of Franciscan friars) accompanied by a dove indicating the way to go. Where it is impossible to put up a sign, the direction of the path is indicated with colors, black and orange.

In conclusion, these routes have evolved into a form of slow tourism along the main communication arteries of the Middle Ages and of the early stages of the modern age, helping to create the landscape and cultural features of the area.

The Garfagnana, despite these important paths, is now in a state of profound crisis. In fact, after the Second World War, a radical change in the economic system has occurred. All those rural settlements that had survived almost self-sufficiently on the slopes of the Apuan Alps, were gradually abandoned, both for the distance from the essential services and for the



The via del Volto Santo or Francigena di montagna was the mountain route that joined the Lunigiana to the Garfagnana and that led to Lucca, a very important destination of the medieval pilgrimage for devotion to the Holy Face, the wooden crucifix displayed in the Cathedral of Lucca and depicting the true face of Jesus. It was an alternative route to the Sigeric route (12th century), the Via Francigena, the road that allowed the "Romei" to reach Rome, passing through Lucca and the crucifix of the Holy Face. This alternative route skipped the coast and the dangers of malar disease and pirate attacks. It descended from the Lunigiana through the Tea Pass.



difficulty of the movements, given by the progressive congestion of the only two fundamental arteries that follow the path of the Serchio. These characteristics have meant that in the ranking of the 300 Tuscan municipalities with the greatest development difficulties, 21 Municipalities included in this area appear in the first 30 places (Regione Toscana, 2018). These abandonments have led not only to the depopulation of an entire region and the consequent loss of services, but also to the impoverishment of the landscape heritage, due to the progressive invasion of the forest damaging agricultural areas, pastures and fruit chestnut groves.

A redevelopment is therefore necessary, which can be based on a project that is able to enhance the historical-architectural emergencies and the naturalistic beauties of the territory of Garfagnana, Lunigiana and Mediavalle del Serchio. This is the purpose of the research project promoted, starting from 2018, by the Survey Laboratory of the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence in synergy with the Union of Municipalities of Garfagnana and the Tuscan Regional Committee of the Italian Cycling Federation. The project was in line with the provisions of the National Strategy for the internal areas of the country, implemented by the Italian Government, which represents a direct action to support sustainable territorial competitiveness, in order to counter, in the mid-term, the demographic decline that characterizes some areas of the country. These areas are those ones furthest from the primary and advanced essential service

poles, which correspond to 60% of the territorial surface, 52% of the municipalities and 22% of the Italian population, including the Garfagnana.

The project is based on the belief that it is possible to exploit the important pre-existing road axes to favor a form of tourism, now encouraged by national and local government policies: cycle tourism. The relationship between sport and culture is evident through this practice since the possibilities opened up by the emotional involvement dictated by sporting practice are evident. Playing sports in quality contexts stimulates an ever-greater interest in historical and architectural factors and therefore encourages an ever-greater involvement in paths otherwise rarely traveled.

However, although this is a common practice abroad, it is not as practiced in Italy, where an adequate national support structure is still lacking, especially for foreign tourists. Those who decide to discover our territory through the use of bicycles, in fact, come across the lack of adequate services, the scarcity of signs and safe sections reserved only for cyclists; there are too many roads with mixed circulation and therefore dangerous, too many accommodation facilities not equipped to accommodate tourists with their bicycle. The project promoted in Garfagnana could therefore be part of a broader plan of incentives for this positive phenomenon. First of all, to define an effective program to create a cycle tourism system that has the ability to improve the cognitive, cultural and economic processes of a territory, it is necessary to have a careful knowledge of the places and their emerging properties on which to set up an enhancement path. This first phase, of knowledge, study and surveys, took place in 2018 and involved the aforementioned entities. This operation made it possible to collect a lot of data, which later proved useful for the preparation of the CONOSCINBICI project.

Knowledge, ways and methods

The research was initially based on an analysis of the territorial system and then went into detail through the survey of a system of ancient medieval infrastructures, characteristic elements, which have become fundamental emergencies in the Garfagnana landscape. The research carried out by the Survey Department culminated in the publication of a Book, in which all the results of the surveys carried out are reported; alongside a brief overview of the historical and archival information that can be found on the various fortresses and bridges of Garfagnana, there are photographs and the location of the study area. Then, they made reliefs with the aid of a laser scanner, reconstructions, by photogrammetry, of three-dimensional models and consequent digitization point cloud. Thus, the legibility of architecture that was once an integral part of the local road system was ensured, with a view to bringing them back to their ancient splendor. In particular, the reliefs of the medieval bridges, built between



⬆
Some of the bridges analyzed and documented during the important campaign of the research project conducted for the Union of Municipalities of Garfagnana.

➔
Assonometric view.

1300 and 1600, which can thus be included in the paths marked out for tourists, were fundamental in the perspective of the cycle tourism project.

Once it had a detailed knowledge of the territory, the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence, in collaboration with the Tuscan Regional Committee of the Federciclismo and the Union of Municipalities of Garfagnana, developed the project, focusing in particular on the municipalities of Careggine and Fabbriche di Vergemoli, on whose territories there are numerous attractive emergencies: Lake Vagli, artificially formed following the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Edron stream by SELT Valdarno (today ENEL spa), which submerged some villages, today visible only during sporadic maintenance interventions (the last in 1994, the next in 2021); the Grotta del Vento, in the municipality of Fabbriche di Vergemoli, currently equipped with three internal tourist routes, but not with an accommodation and collective information structure; the wooded paths between the towns of Careggine and Fabbriche di Vergemoli, which, if exploited, would constitute a magnificent opportunity for sports tourism in the Garfagnana.

The project includes a further cognitive study, with the archaeological excavation of the medieval fortress in Castellaccio in the municipality of Fabbriche and the metric survey of the submerged village by Lake Vagli; it has to be carried out after the opening of the dam, through aerial photogrammetric and aerial surveys and three-dimensional survey with Laser Scanner instrumentation. Once this information has been obtained, they will



be made readable through the creation of two-dimensional and three-dimensional graphics. These materials will be necessary to create explanatory panels of the most important architectures in the area and will be available in a continuously updated digital database. (Pancani, 2017). Three different cycling itineraries were then thought of, diversified in terms of time and difficulty according to the categories of users: the first itinerary (max 60 min) in the municipality of Careggine, from the town to lake, is designed for families and occasional cyclists; the second itinerary (max 150 min) from the town of Fabbriche di Vallico passing through Campolemisi, San Pellegrinetto to the wind cave, designed for cyclists and two-wheel enthusiasts; the third itinerary (over 240 min) of communication between the wind cave and the Vagli lake, passing through the factories of Vergemoli, designed for bicycle and nature lovers and for those who train.

The project then provides for the installation of a permanent exhibition spread throughout the territory: in particular the exhibition will have its pivotal locations in Careggine, at the municipal structure, in Fabbriche di Vergemoli in the open space in front of the Wind Cave (in a special mobile structure) and along the three cycle routes mentioned above. For these, explanatory panels and structures, possibly mobile, will be provided to be distributed along the prevailing paths. Furthermore, a three-dimensional reproduction of the village submerged by Lake Vagli will be designed.

All these interventions will then be promoted in the municipalities, schools, commercial activities in the sports and tourism sector, with the creation of flyers / brochures and advertising



**Medieval bridge
in San Michele.
Province of
Lucca.**

A qualitative survey carried out with traditional relevant techniques and the introduction of technologies such as laser scanning and photogrammetry for the creation of point clouds to create three-dimensional models.



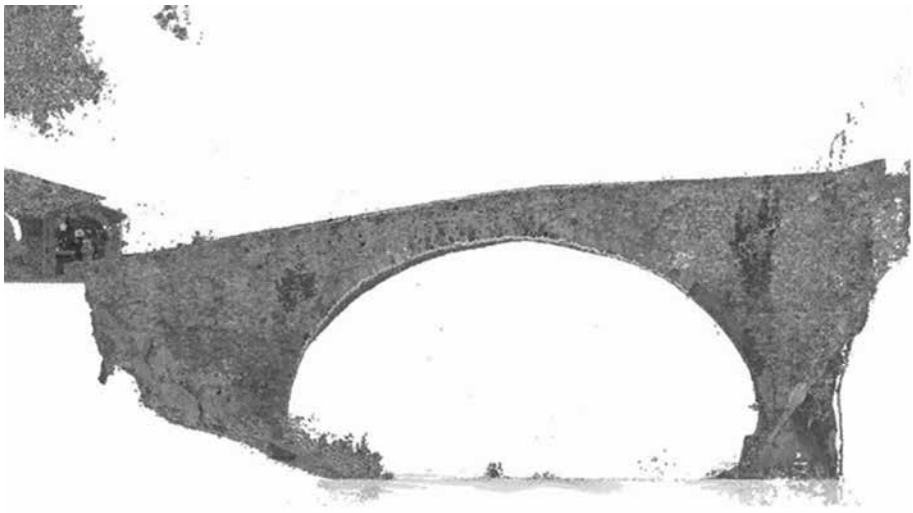
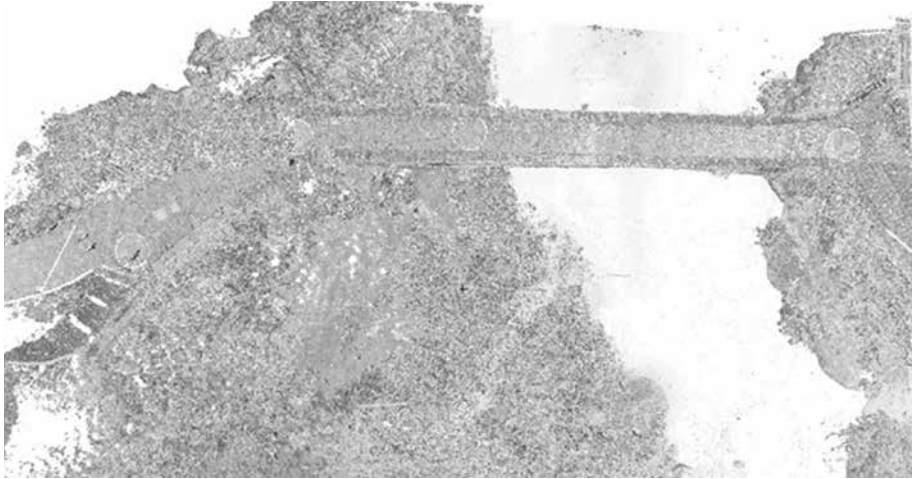
**Planimetric view
of the bridge
Perspective view
of the Bridge of
St. Michael.**

through the sites of the departments and municipalities involved and their official pages on the various social networks.

The project is in line with the Rural Development Program (RDP) of the Tuscany Region and the Integrated Local Development Strategy and aims to be included in the Call for implementation of operation 7.6.2 “Redevelopment and enhancement of cultural heritage”. In this way, it hope to find funding, although necessary for the surveys and the graphic rendering are made available by the departments of the universities of Florence and Pavia. The involvement of such important institutions and possibly even private individuals could make the project even more participatory and involve the population in a profound way, ensuring that the benefits are not only for tourists, but also for the citizens themselves.

Expected results and conclusions

The main purpose of the project, as mentioned, is to facilitate the process of tourist attraction in the area for the enhancement of natural, cultural and sustainable tourism resources. The idea is to recover an original dimension of the “sporting” experience, that is a total and almost primitive immersion in naturalistic itineraries and to facilitate, through the perceptive immediacy of physical activity, the construction of new bonds with the



territory. Since Conoscinbici also provides for the active participation, through internships and collaborations, of the new generations, we hope for a strengthening of the sense of identity of the place and of belonging.

In conclusion, the hope is to give new attractive possibilities to Garfagnana so as to be able to transport it from its agricultural past to its future based on knowledge and respect for its millenary culture.



Vagli: the lake and the submerged village. In this area between the Apuan Alps and the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, in 1946/47 Enel built an artificial reservoir with the intention of bringing water to the Castelnuovo di Garfagnana power plant and becoming a water reserve for the whole area. In the valley destined to house the basin was the village of Fabbri di Careggine, a village of blacksmiths built in the thirteenth century that was evacuated and completely submerged by water.

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Villages et quartiers à risque d'abandon sont aujourd'hui une problématique commune à des nombreuses régions de la Méditerranée, considérée comme un point stratégique dans les nouvelles politiques européennes. L'abandon progressif des zones internes est une constante dans les pays caractérisés par le sous-développement économique, avec les phénomènes d'émigration et de fragmentation du patrimoine culturel. Cela entraîne des problèmes d'architecture et de gestion du territoire. L'objectif principal de ce travail de recherche est de créer un espace de discussion qui comprend l'étude du patrimoine architectural et du paysage ainsi que les témoignages démo-ethno-anthropologiques.



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DICHIARANO CHE IN MERITO AL CONTRIBUTO DAL TITOLO

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- *1. Introduction;*
- *3. Knowledge, ways and methods;*
- *4. Expected results and conclusions.*

ADELAIDE TREMORI è l'autrice dei paragrafi:

- *2 State of the art*

I sottoscritti dichiarano inoltre di essere informati, ai sensi del D.Lgs. n. 196/2003 (codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali) che i dati personali raccolti saranno trattati, anche con strumenti informatici, esclusivamente nell'ambito del procedimento per il quale la presente dichiarazione viene resa.

Firenze, 28 marzo 2022

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