Abstract

Community and production buildings of Elva in Alta Valle Maira. Cataloging and ecomuseum project for the valorisation of the territory.

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The thesis focuses on the Municipality of Elva, in the Upper Valle Maira in the Province of Cuneo in Piedmont, Italy.

The choice fell on this reality, as it was the Piedmont’s Valley most affected by the depopulation of the nineteenth and twentieth century and today preserves an intact and not very urbanized environment. These aspects now represent new development opportunities for the entire Maira Valley, especially in the field of slow tourism.

Elva is still known only for certain characters, such as the Museo of Cavié (High Valley Maira Ecomuseum), the Vallone’s Street, the frescoes by Hans Clemer in the Parish Church of S. Maria Assunta, the Great Alpine Crossing (GTA)'s Posto Tappa and its gastronomic products. But Elva is much more, in fact preserves on the territory many examples of alpine rural architecture. For this reason the objectives of the thesis are to create a catalog of productive and community products in the area and to draw up a planning hypothesis of recovery and territorial valorization.

The cataloging is intended to make known part of the local heritage (votive piers, wood-fired bread ovens and lime kilns, mills, hemp beaters, apiaries, fountains, forges, schools) to date not valued and destined to get lost over time.

This work was carried out through a documentary research, which involved several provincial and municipal historical archives (such as the State Archives of Cuneo, the State Archives of Turin, the Chamber of Commerce of Agriculture Industry of Cuneo, Municipal Archive of Elva), and a field research, with interviews and inspections (sixteen in Elva, seven in Valle Maira and three in Valle d'Aosta).

Among the numerous written sources, the Municipal Archive of Elva was the only one to provide specific information. Since there was no type of internal organization, it was necessary to create an inventory for the viewing of useful volumes. This organization has provided for the identification of folders by renaming each room, wall and shelf.

Among the documents selected and used are different types, such as those of the census (related to professions or properties) and descriptive (laws, posters and work licenses). Both categories have allowed to find different information, which comparison has led to unexpected results.

Field research was carried out with various surveys, all conducted and supported by written sources and local figures, which gave fundamental information for the discovery of many artifacts.
The final result of cataloging consists of three types of cards: the first presents the village (twenty-nine), the second shows the plan of village (twenty-nine), the third presents every single artefact cataloged (one hundred and twenty-eight). The reading of the entire elaborate has been set up for village in alphabetical order, with each one of its artefacts numbered in progression.

The visits to Valle Maira and Valle d'Aosta were aimed at studying some cases of good practice in view of the project for the recovery of the thesis. The examples analyzed concern both cases of recovery of artefacts, such as ovens and mills, and tourist routes. These cases helped to outline the objectives of the project: to enhance the local productive heritage, to enhance Elva's tourist offer in the Alta Valle Maira Ecomuseum, to encourage the recovery of abandoned artefacts.

The project proposal is based on the knowledge of the territory and its history, acquired with the work of cataloging, and on the study of examples of good practices to understand the methodology of intervention.

The project consists in the enhancement of an existing walk and the recovery of some artifacts, a mill, an oven and an old guesthouse. All the proposed interventions are characterized by a minimal, reversible and recognizable approach, to keep the local and environmental identity.
Picture 1. Example of the three types of cards present in the catalog.
Picture 2. Tract of the walk to be enhanced, with the planned works indicated.

Picture 3. Project table of the three buildings to be recovered in the village of Molini Allioni.

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