WP 5 – BEST PRACTICE STARTING UP

Pilot areas of Regione Piemonte

*Two hamlets (Argiassera, Meitre) in Bussoleno (TO)*

**Main features**

Bussoleno lies in the Lower Susa Valley at 440 m a.s.l., 46 km W of Torino (Turin). The municipality counts 6455 inhabitants and an area of 37,38 sq.km. It includes a hamlet (Foresto) and many remarkable villages such as Tignai, Meitre, Argiassera, on both sides of the valley. Its historical centre is located in the valley floor on both sides of the Dora Riparia river, and features some medieval buildings.

The settlement stands along two important historical routes that connect France to the Po Valley through Moncenisio and Monginevro passes. The two roads and the bridge over the river Dora Riparia favoured in the past the development of trade.

Agriculture, practised as a means of subsistence, used to be the main activity of the inhabitants of the hamlets. Besides cereals, potatoes, dairy production there was also vine-growing (especially on the side facing South) and chestnut-growing (especially on the side facing North). Today agriculture survives just as a hobby, although vine-growing and breeding are being re-evaluated in Susa Valley in limited scale. There still exists a company specialised in the selling and working of chestnut in Bussoleno.

Moreover, until the early XX century, a lot of activities were carried out in the area of Bussoleno, often at high altitude: there were numerous quarries of granite, gneiss, green marble... Situated originally on both sides of the valley, today only three of them still exist on the side facing North, near Tignai and Meitre hamlets. The last stone-cutter of Susa Valley works in one of these.

Originally the population was mainly involved in agriculture and breeding, then in railway and factories. Today its activities are mainly in Turin. Nevertheless railway remains the main local employer.

Meitre and Argiassera, involved in the ongoing experimentation of CulturALP Project, are situated respectively on the side facing North and on the side facing South. On the latter, sunnier than the other, there are holm-oaks, almond and olive trees growing and viticulture is practised; whereas, on the opposite side, woods of larches, beeches and scotch pines are widespread and
there are some chestnut cultivations.

In origin both settlements were permanently inhabited. As did the other villages, they underwent a sound depopulation due to the massive employment in the valley floor. The desertion has been continuing up till now: Meitre counts only 20 residents, Argiassera 15. Few houses are used as country cottages.

Both villages are not far from Bussoleno centre and can be easily reached by car. The internal roads are not all paved and are only passable on foot or by simple means of transport. They are characterised by a traditional architecture built in stone and wood, that underwent reshaping in the Sixties and Seventies of the XX century. The original features, nevertheless, can still be seen. Stone slated roofs are among the most evident of these.

Today in either village there’s no business or facility, but once each had a school and a pub. Moreover, until some years ago, in Meitre there was a grocer’s shop and in Argiassera a nightclub.

**Local authorities involved**
Municipality of Bussoleno

**Starting from…**
Interreg IIIA – Alcotra Project financed by the Regional administration to maintain and improve school services in mountain areas.

**Operational tools to be applied**
Actions in the pilot area will include the application of the SWOT analysis methodology (WP3), by involving local communities, and the elaboration of a handbook focussed on public spaces of two ancient hamlets (Argiassera, Meitre).

Representatives of the communities will be interviewed. The talk will provide information on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks and will point out the elements that contribute to the definition of local identity, its potential and also the environmental limits, which will recall historical memory (traditions, culture, activities, daily life). Besides, it will enable to understand the attachment to the village by the locals and consequently their hopes, satisfaction and dissatisfaction and suggestions. The understanding of these needs, difficulties and expectations will enable to provide adapted solutions to improve and increase its value.

A landscape sequence databank will be created: pictures from the same viewpoint and of different period could provide evidence of landscape modification. The information drawn from photos will be integrated with other sources: analysis and comparison of historical maps, old and recent aerial pictures, land registers, etc. will permit to understand the development of the historical settlements and routes in the ages. Maps on geology, ground use, quarries, etc. will help the comprehension of settlement and living choices and present activities. The study of existing literature, together with direct confrontation with POs, local experts and inhabitants, will permit to acquire information and direct experience on the community’s condition.

The analysis of maps and aerial pictures will allow to study the ground use and the botanical environment (both agricultural and forestal) of Bussoleno’s territory, with particular reference to the areas around Meitre and Argiassera. The superimposition of maps will enable the comprehension of the usage of the territory in various periods.

Besides, the research will produce thematic maps which will point out and synthesise the settlements’ constructive and morphological features, the characteristics which build up the places’ identity, the buildings’ and plots’ functions, etc.