

Recovery of rural centres and “albergo diffuso”: A case study in Sardinia, Italy

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### **Abstract**

Abstract: The "albergo diffuso" (scattered hotel) is a typical Italian tourism system, introduced for the first time in the early 1980s by the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. It is a tourist accommodation management system that is able to deliver the services of a full hotel, by lodging clients in accommodation created in and around existing houses in mostly rural contexts. The accommodation is within walking distance of a centrally located main building. The albergo diffuso is organised horizontally, while traditional hotels are usually organised vertically, with a principal, and often single, building hosting common spaces and rooms. This new kind of hospitality offers visitors the opportunity of "living in the area", by taking part in the social life of the village, and may be seen as a tool for preventing the depopulation of small rural towns and for recovering abandoned villages. In this paper we discuss a proposal for an albergo diffuso in Osini, in Sardinia, Italy. Osini is an old rural village that was abandoned in 1951 because of a severe landslide. We verify the premises and viability of this intervention in terms of the opportunity it offers for launching rural tourist activities in the area, the European and national legal and institutional scenario, the regional landscape and hydro geological planning tools, and the recommendations for adopting coherent building types, techniques, and materials.

**Keywords:** Albergo diffuso, rural centres, traditional building types, recovery plan, tourism policies

## 1 Introduction

Rural tourism, i.e. the development of tourist activities in rural settings, has been acknowledged to be an important strategy for combating the depopulation of small rural undeveloped settlements. In Europe, tourism generates new job opportunities and is the third largest socio-economic activity (European Commission, 2010). Rural tourism is gaining in importance in Europe. According to the OECD (2009), the *Albergo Diffuso* (AD) is a remarkable example of such a kind of activity (Confalonieri, 2011; Paniccia, 2012; Quattrocioni and Montella, 2013).

The AD, literally “scattered hotel” (Droli, 2013), has been defined using a number of different names, such as “diffused hotel” (Russo et al., 2013), and “distributed hospitality” (Mandelli and La Rocca, 2006). In this paper we use the term “albergo diffuso”, which was proposed for the first time by Dall’Ara (2010). AD is a typical Italian phenomenon (Confalonieri, 2011). However in recent years similar cases have also been documented in Spain. The AD developed in the north-eastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in the early 1980s, when it was experimented with for the first time as a way of recovering and rehabilitating historic buildings which had been rendered uninhabitable by a severe earthquake. This kind of accommodation involves recovering formerly abandoned rural buildings, and so it does not require further land to be consumed for new residential buildings. This minimises the environmental impact on rural areas.

Many works (see, *inter alia*, Cano et al., 2013, and Cascone and Porto, 2008) expand on the concept that tourism is a major economic driving force for the recovery and reuse of rural buildings, and leads to important landscape changes. The design of tourist accommodation

should follow traditional building methods and use the original types of houses and materials. In this way, rural development is based on sustainable principles, as it uses existing housing, re-employs often abandoned techniques and materials, and creates new landscapes that are still meaningful in terms of the sense of local identity and attractive for potential tourists. In this respect, many successful recovery projects are based on careful designs, which start from historical analysis of the original shapes and production processes (see inter alia Torreggiani and Tassinari, 2012).

In this paper we aim to present a proposal for an AD to recover the historical centre of Osini in Sardinia, Italy. This rural town was damaged by a severe landslide in 1951 and completely abandoned. Recently, a reclassification of the hydro geological risk level has opened up the possibility of reoccupying Osini. AD may be a useful way of attracting tourists and potential residents. To be more precise, in our paper we address the following Research Questions (RQ<sub>s</sub>) (see Table 1). Research question one (RQ<sub>1</sub>) is on the general institutional context of tourism. RQ<sub>2</sub> concerns the development of rural forms of tourism, including the AD. RQ<sub>3</sub> and RQ<sub>4</sub> concern the legal framework which regulates AD projects and their management in Europe and Italy. And, finally, RQ<sub>5</sub> and RQ<sub>6</sub> concern the regional planning premises and the layout, housing types, and materials used in the AD proposal for Osini.

Please, place Table 1 about here

The argument develops as follows. In Section 2, we present an overview of tourism in Europe. In Section 3 we present a state of the art summary on recovery projects and the reuse of rural buildings for tourism and also comment on research works about AD. In section 4 we examine the European and Italian bodies and regulations which cover rural tourism. In Section 5

we present an AD proposal for Osini. In Section 6 we discuss the results of the research questions and in Section 7 we summarize the conclusions of the whole argument discussed in this paper.

## **2 Overview on tourism in Europe**

In this section, we elaborate on tourism development focusing on its European and Italian aspects and figures. We stress contextual elements that are relevant as they may act as pre-conditions of local tourism-based projects, including our AD proposal for the historical centre of Osini.

Tourism is a major sector of the European economy.

The Lisbon Treaty acknowledged the relevance of tourism and pointed out that the European Union has the responsibility to carry out actions which will support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States in the tourism sector, through “encouraging the creation of a favourable environment for the development of undertakings in this sector promoting cooperation between the Member States, particularly by the exchange of good practice” (European Union, 2012).

The European Union is one of the most important tourist destinations. In 2010 the European Commission stressed that tourism is relevant for a variety of reasons. It is an important economic activity and an instrument for reinforcing Europe’s image internationally. Thus the EC aims to “encourage a coordinated approach for initiatives linked to tourism and define a new framework for action to increase its competitiveness and its capacity for sustainable growth” (European Commission, 2010). With respect to sustainable growth, the EC strongly emphasises the

importance of offering high quality sustainable tourism at the international and European level (European Commission, 2010; Commission of the European Communities, 2006, 2007; WTO, 2007; UNEP and WTO, 2005).

Finally, according to the Eurostat yearbook issued in 2013, “tourism can play a significant role in the development of European regions given that infrastructure created for tourism purposes contributes to local development [...]” (European Union, 2013) and it can be an important activity with cultural, environmental and social implications, given that it involves both small and medium-sized enterprises. In Europe’s island states and regions tourism (accommodation, transport and recreational facilities) is “one of the main sources of income for the local population” (European Union, 2013).

According to the European Commission (2010), the European tourism industry i) generates over 5% of EU GDP , ii) is the third largest socio-economic activity, and iii) creates about 9.7 million jobs, with a significant proportion of young people among those employed. In addition recent statistics have highlighted that 2.3 million people in the EU are employed in the tourist accommodation sector (European Union, 2010). In 2011, there were more than 200,000 hotels and 25,000 campsites in the EU, for a total number of over 20 million beds (European Union, 2013). Figure 1 provides an overview of the density of accommodation in the EU (number of beds in hotels relative to the land area) in 2011.

Please place Figure 1 about here.

Italy is one of the top five international tourist destinations in the world (European Union, 2013) and recent studies have shown that the Italian tourist reception system is mainly used by foreign customers who, in 2012, generated 32 billion Euros of income, or, in other words, 2% of

Italy's GDP and 39.2% of exports of services (ONT, 2013). Moreover in Italy, despite the economic crisis of recent years, the number of companies operating in the tourism sector continues to grow.

The regions of southern Italy and the islands exert a certain attractiveness for long holidays, especially in summer: Apulia, Calabria, Campania, Sardinia, and Sicily are favorite destinations for this type of holidays (ISTAT, 2013). According to Smith (2003), "Sardinia has quite a rugged landscape; hence its tourism industry tends to be based on rural tourism as well as on the more established coastal tourism". Recent studies report for 2013 an increase in tourist arrivals in Sardinia mainly due to a higher number of international arrivals (CRENoS, 2014). In addition, the average daily expenditure is equal to 61 Euros for Italian and to 94 Euros for foreign tourists, while tourism has generated a total expenditure of about 2 billion Euros, corresponding to 8.2% of the regional added value (CRENoS, 2014).

### **3 Recovery of rural settlements and Albergo Diffuso: a state of the art summary**

In this section, we provide the reader with a panorama of studies concerning the tourism-led reuse and conversion of ancient rural buildings and settlements, local building types and materials, and the AD. A discussion of these issues is of paramount importance, as they inspire our proposal of AD-based recovery project in the rural centre of Osini showing the potential to become a tourist destination.

Contemporary landscapes are characterized by a system of scattered rural buildings and small or second level settlements. Recent developments introduced by the European Landscape Convention have re-awakened the interest of scholars and concerned parties in the recovery of and giving added value to those rural landscapes (De Montis, 2014). We live an historical period

where rural landscapes and activities are being abandoned and converted to other socio-economic activities, usually connected to the provision of services. In this respect, we believe that the recovery and reuse of rural buildings is a prominent research field, and has been so since the pioneering contributions of Ascárd (1996), Birckjær and Pedersen (1996), and De Montis (1996). We stress here the importance of many studies concerning the need to base the recovery and reuse of rural buildings and settlements on the coherence with historical layouts, local landscapes, and social identity. According to van der Vaart (2005), the reuse of redundant farm buildings as residential units should comply with reasonable and acceptable transformations of the landscape. Torreggiani and Tassinari (2012) also emphasised that the design of farm buildings of high landscape quality should be coherent with the historical cultural heritage. In addition, Ruda (1998) pointed out that if the recovery of rural houses is based on traditional models and architectural principles, then the development of rural areas is sustainable. McKenzie et al. (2011) assessed the ecological impact of rural buildings on agricultural landscapes. Verhoeve et al. (2012) constructed a survey method which was able to detect and quantify the hidden re-use of rural buildings for non-agricultural purposes, in order to ascertain what were the relevant issues to address when creating land and landscape plans. Dal Sasso and Caliandro (2010) evaluated the sustainability of the recovery of some agro-industrial buildings by considering a number of issues, including personal testimonies and landscape quality. Zavadskas and Antucheviciene (2007) constructed a multicriteria evaluation method for assessing feasible alternatives for regenerating derelict rural buildings.

We now report on many contributions, where authors clearly argue that conversion to tourism is a realistic prospective reuse of rural buildings and settlements. In a taxonomic perspective, Cano et al. (2013) proposed a GIS based archive and method that is useful to gather a panorama

of practices. The system was able to catalogue the reuse of rural buildings and to promote rural and cultural tourism. Cascone and Porto (2008) confirmed the interest in the role of contextual pre-conditions and constructed a set of indicators for assessing the potential reuse of traditional rural buildings for tourism. In the same vein, De Montis (2009) studied a multicriteria method for evaluating the possibility of reusing the system of traditional road-workers houses as tourist information points. Mollica et al. (2000) studied the recovery of ancient rural settlements for tourist purposes. Di Fazio et al. (2006) proposed converting an ancient rural village to tourism. Agostini et al. (2006) studied agritourism in the contemporary landscape. We believe these essays provide insightful inspiration for arguing that, in a very similar way, AD is a powerful instrument for developing rural tourism.

Our AD proposal in the marginal town of Osini is based on the adoption of traditional building types and settlement schemes. In this respect, we believe a reconstruction of the historical contributions on these themes allows the reader to realize the richness of the essays concerning rural housing in the Sardinian landscape. The pioneer geographer Le Lannou (1941) was one of the first to classify Sardinian buildings (i.e. settlements) into clusters or types: i) high buildings in mountainous areas; ii) courtyard houses in the plains; and iii) linear buildings in north-western Sardinia. This typological approach to the study of settlements was repeated and updated by Baldacci (1951), who extended the classification and divided the entire island into regions with homogeneous housing. Le Lannou (1941) and Baldacci (1951) stressed the relevance of the relations between buildings and contextual characters and cultures of the Island. After sixty years, other authors, inspired by the European Landscape Convention (ELC), focus on the interplay between buildings and landscapes. The ELC has paved the way to innovative landscape planning tools designed to appreciate the system of micro-episodes distributed in wide

land extensions. In this vein, the Sardinian Regional Department for cultural heritage and landscape has recently proposed that the atlas of rural architecture and housing types (see Appendix 1) should be used as a guideline document for the recovery of ancient rural buildings. Sanna, one of the creators of the Atlas, has been analysing rural housing types in Sardinia in recent decades (see, *inter alia*, Angioni and Sanna, 1988; Sanna and Cuboni, 2008; see also the final report “Guidelines for the sustainable design of regional rural landscapes” in Appendix 1). Caniggia and Maffei (1987) worked at national level on the relationship between housing types and the generation of the urban/rural settlement fabric (*i.e.* morphology). In addition, the work of Caniggia and Maffei (1987) is relevant for the comparative analysis of Sardinian buildings, as they contribute to a better definition of the high building type located especially in central Sardinia and in Ogliastra, where Osini is located.

In the remainder of this section, we report on useful works that explain the interest of many scholars providing definitions of AD under different perspectives and arguing on direct and indirect implications of policies and actions directed to its realization. Although AD is acknowledged as a typically Italian system for accommodating tourists, there are similar tourist management systems elsewhere, including the *gîtes ruraux* in France, the *pousadas* in Portugal, and the *paradores* in Spain. However, unlike the services usually offered by these systems, the AD provides standard full hotel services (Avram and Zarrilli, 2012). According to Dall’Ara (2010), who can be indicated as its inventor, AD is based on a network of houses built inside the historic centres of rural villages. The AD is characterized by an horizontal framework, while the main buildings of traditional hotels usually follow vertical scheme. The main building, including the reception and common spaces, is located in the centre of the AD. As with a typical hotel, the AD may offer a number of services, such as catering, customer assistance, access to Internet, and

so on. According to Confalonieri (2011), it is characterized by a series of basic conditions, such as: historic buildings of a certain value, uninhabited buildings, and the possibility of establishing a central reception area with respect to the rooms. The AD, if carefully managed, is also of some economic, social and cultural importance in the development of a given area, and although not all villages are suitable for such a system, in Italy there is a great potential for developing ADs (Paniccia, 2011).

Some other authors have discussed AD with a critical view to advantages and disadvantages and the possibility to exploit AD projects to enhance, directly, tourist activities and, indirectly, socio-economic conditions of local communities. Vallone and Veglio (2013) stressed that AD had some strengths, including: i) encouraging contacts between tourists and the resident community, and ii) elasticity, given that the AD offers a number of options from which tourist can choose (“from local products to cultural events”). Silvestrelli (2011) developed a study on AD which showed that the “enhancement of a historic village leads to tourism development, which, in turn, improves the competitiveness of its geographical area, thus generating value and sustainability for all stakeholders”. Finally, at the European level, Dropulić et al. (2008) argued that AD is a reasonable solution for the sustainable growth of tourism and Croatia can also develop this form of accommodation to improve its competitiveness in the tourist market.

According to Dall’Ara (2010), the strengths of AD are its ability to meet the needs of demanding and experts users, the respect for the cultural environment, and the authenticity of the accommodation offered, while its weaknesses are that the property is more difficult to manage than are traditional hotels.

#### **4 Rural tourism: an institutional research perspective**

In this section, we develop an institutional analysis of the bodies responsible for tourism, and the regulations and policies which govern them in the following western European countries: France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (Figure 2), the emergence of a variety of types of rural tourism, and the Italian regional laws and regulations for AD. The results are reported in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

The discussion of these materials is crucial, since it allows the reader to refer the AD to other rural tourism declinations and to consider the AD project proposed in this essay in the panorama of different AD layout solutions proposed by Italian regional laws and regulations.

Please place Figure 2 about here.

Please, place Table 2 about here

In Table 2 we focus on the bodies responsible for tourism policy and regulations in each European country. Tourism is often regulated by different ministerial departments. All the countries selected have at least a specific national law on tourism management, with the exception of Germany. We scrutinize various laws and policy documents (see Appendix 2 for details) to check their coverage of various forms of rural tourism including, not only albergo diffuso, but also agriturismo, equestrian tourism, and forestry tourism. Agriturismo is defined as a typical service, where tourists pay, in the form of money or help with agricultural work, to stay for a certain period of time on a farm, living as a guest with a peasant family (Enciclopedia Treccani, 2014). Italian regulation No. 96 of 2006 defines agriturismo as “those reception and hospitality activities exercised by agricultural entrepreneurs [...], also in the form of a limited

liability companies or partnerships [...] through their farm, related with cultivation of the land, forestation actions and livestock activities” (Italian regulation, 2006). Equestrian tourism “is a strong niche market in many rural areas, covering a range of activities from trekking to horseback safaris and working ranch holidays” (Lane, 2009). A bill proposed to the Italian Senate (Senato della Repubblica italiana, 2002) stated that equestrian tourism involves tourist, recreational and non-competitive sport, as well as the economic activities implied in horse racing, horse riding and use of carhorses. Forestry tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries worldwide and includes a number of leisure activities, such as walking, mountain biking, and wildlife watching (Martin, 2007).

Please, place Table 3 about here

In Table 3 we summarize the results of our analysis of legal and policy documents. AD has developed only in Italy and Spain. The remaining countries have not adopted AD or similar types of accommodation with a horizontal framework. Agritourism is regulated in all countries considered in this paper. All the countries except France and Germany regulate equestrian tourism. Forest tourism is explicitly mentioned in all the countries, except for Germany and Italy. Finally, all the countries examined develop other forms of rural tourism including, inter alia, rural cycling and ecotourism.

The Italian Government issued Legislative Decree No. 79 of 2011, namely the Code of tourism (Italian Regulation, 2011), which acknowledges AD inside the grouping of hotels and other forms of accommodation (see Table 2). It defines the AD as characterized “by accommodation in separate buildings, close together, mainly located in historic centres, and situated only a short distance from a central building in which reception, concierge and other

related services are offered” (Italian Regulation, 2011).

All the Italian regions have approved laws on the AD (see Table 4). Sardinia was the earliest Italian region to issue a specific law on AD in 1998 (Sardinia, 1998), while Molise was the last to do so in 2014. Some regions have also adopted a lower level legal document on AD: an operative regulation concerning the implementation of the principles conveyed in the law. Sardinia does not have an operative regulation: this hinders the development of an AD providing full hotel services (AD, 2014).

Please, place Table 4 about here

We have compared the Italian regional legal documents included in Appendix 2, in order to outline some basic features of the AD. Italian regional administrations have established a varied set of criteria for the minimum accommodation capacity: eight bedrooms in Basilicata, two independent buildings in Calabria and Campania, thirty bedrooms in Liguria, Apulia and Tuscany, and so on. They also establish quite different maximum distances from the central building to the rooms, ranging from 200 m (in Sardinia and Trentino-Alto Adige) to 1000 m (in Piedmont). ADs can only be planned in particular contexts. An AD can be established under certain circumstances, since eligible locations are limited to the municipalities with a maximum of 5000 inhabitants in Emilia-Romagna and in historic centres with a maximum of 3000 inhabitants in Lazio. In Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Piedmont, AD can extend to inter-municipal areas. Molise is the first Italian region to establish an AD in rural zones. In the province of Trento, AD is included in the other forms of tourist accommodation.

In Sardinia we found that some ADs have been developed in the municipalities of Bosa (Confalonieri, 2011), Orosei, and Santu Lussurgiu. Dall’Ara ed Esposto (2005) analyzed the

creation and management of some ADs, with particular reference to the contribution that AD can make to the social and economic development of the territory. They describe the experiences of some ADs in Sardinia: ‘Sas Benas’ and ‘Antica dimora del Gruccione’ (municipality of Santu Lussurgiu), and ‘Corte Fiorita’ (municipality of Bosa). The authors compare them with some Italian ADs and show that: i) a mainspring for the development of AD was often the provision of restoration plans and the enhancement of the natural resources and cultural heritage of the area (see also the case of Marghine-Planargia, in Sardinia); ii) in many cases environmental conditions were similar and characterized by remoteness (see the cases of Sardinia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Apulia, and Abruzzo). Such experiences provide useful case studies which can help when developing a proposal for an AD in Osini.

## **5 The rural centre of Osini: a proposal for an AD**

In this section, we present a proposal for an AD in the centre of Osini, Italy, dividing the argument into five subsections. In the first, we demonstrate that Osini has a system of cultural heritage sites and may become an attraction for tourists. In the second, we analyse regional plans for the centre of Osini. In the third section, we discuss land use and recovery planning tools that set favourable conditions for the development of our AD proposal, we present in the fourth section, developing on layout and building selection, housing types, and materials. In the fifth section, we clarify which are the strengths and weaknesses of our AD proposal.

### *5.1 Osini as a tourist attraction*

Osini is a rural centre located in the historical region of Ogliastra in eastern Sardinia, a few kilometres from the sea (see Figure 3).

Please place Figure 3 about here.

Ogliastra is connected to the main metropolitan area of Cagliari in the South through the State Road No 125, which is currently being renovated as a major and speedy-flow transport infrastructure. The nearest port in the area is located in Arbatax, the marine neighbour of Tortolì, while the main airports can be reached in roughly two hours.

The landscape in Ogliastra is partly mountainous –it includes Gennargentu, the highest mountain on the island- and partly coastal with well-known beaches, such as ‘Cala Luna’ and ‘Cala Goloritzé’. In Ogliastra agricultural activities such as farming, viticulture and handicrafts are still practiced (Ente Foreste della Sardegna, 2008). The area is rich in tourist attractions, such as archaeological sites and natural landmarks. To be more precise, the neighbourhood of Osini hosts, among others i) three Nuraghes, typical Sardinian prehistoric buildings, called ‘Serbissi’, ‘Sanu’, and ‘Orruttu’, ii) two ‘Tombe di giganti’ (in English, Giants’ Tombs), a Sardinian megalithic grave built by the Nuragic civilization, and iii) a number of caves and particular outcrops of rock, typically made up of limestone and dolomite and known as ‘Tacchi’ (in English, heels), “whose name derives from the fact that they resemble the heel of a shoe” (Ente Foreste della Sardegna, 2009). In Ogliastra the ‘Tacchi’ are prominent landforms (Ente Foreste della Sardegna, 2009; Cannas, 1987, p. 8). A typical natural monument is the ‘Tacco di Perda ‘e Liana’ (heel of ‘Perda ‘e Liana’) in Gairo, another village which was abandoned after the flood in 1951. There are about three hundred caves in the ‘Tacchi’ region (Federazione Speleologica Sarda, 2012), including the caves of i) ‘Marmuri’, which is rich in small subterranean lakes, stalactites and stalagmites (Colombo, 1991) and is a refuge for about 27000 bats in their hibernation period, the largest colony in Italy (Federazione Speleologica Sarda, 2012), and ii) ‘Taqisara’, which is accessible to the public for about 700 metres. Near Osini there is the ‘Scala

di San Giorgio' ('Scala' derives from 'skàla' and means steep mountain road), a limestone geological formation where the ancient habitants of the village made a passageway to reach the other side of the mountain (Barroccu and Gentileschi, 1996, p. 160). The name was chosen in honour of Bishop San Giorgio who, according to legend, divided the mountain to cross it (Barroccu and Gentileschi, 1996, p. 160). The trekking path of 'Sentiero dei Nuraghi' is in the territory of Osini, and was established by the Sardinian Forestry Agency (Ente Foreste della Sardegna, 2009), as part of the Regional Operational Programme 2000-2006 for structural actions for tourism and rural development. Other trekking paths which also attract foreign tourists are 'Selvaggio Blu' and 'Trekking delle Cale', both in the gulf of Orosei, and 'Sentiero Sa Tappara' in the municipality of Ulassai. Finally, a typical tourist excursion is to Gairo-Taquisara, a few kilometres from Osini, where there is a train station of the Green Little Train line, a typical tourist service provided by the regional railway network (ARST, Italian acronym) which takes tourists on a panoramic journey through the area. This is also the longest tourist railway line in Italy and one of the most used (ARST, 2014).

## *5.2 Osini and regional planning*

Osini has about 800 inhabitants (ISTAT, 2013) and is located about 650 metres above sea level, on a ridge with steep slope. Its historic centre is an old village abandoned after a flood, which in October 1951 caused such serious damage (see Figure 4) that it was decided to build a new urban centre a few kilometres away. The decision was taken at national level, with law No. 9 of 1952 (Italian Regulation, 1952), which laid down detailed rules for the transfer of all the Italian municipalities affected by a flood, including Osini.

The area where Osini is located has been reclassified by the 'Piano stralcio per l'assetto

idrogeologico' (in English, regional hydro-geological plan, hereafter PAI), which provides guidelines, actions, technical standards and general requirements for prevention of hazards and risks within the regional hydrological catchment and hydrological hazard areas (PAI, 2008). PAI covers areas with very high (Hg4), high (Hg3), medium (Hg2) and moderate (Hg1) landslide risk. According to PAI, the territory of Osini is largely classified as Hg2, and thus the following actions are allowed: building renovation; extension of buildings to be used as hotels or for giving food and drink; extensions and new construction of manufacturing facilities, sales and services (PAI, 2008).

Osini partially falls within the first homogeneous coastal buffer zone defined in the regional landscape plan (PPR, Piano Paesaggistico Regionale) approved in 2006 by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (see Figures 4 and 5).

Please place Figure 4 about here.

Please place Figure 5 about here.

The PPR is based on the principles of protecting and giving added value to the environment, and is designed for promoting sustainable transformations of the landscape (De Montis et al, 2014). The PPR encourages the connections between and synergy of the mountain villages, including Osini, through planning the provision of a network of services for hospitality and accommodation, with a view to recovering this historical urban space. The PPR also intends to recover the old and abandoned towns and use them for developing tourism and traditional local economic activities, such as the production of wine and olive oil (RAS, 2006).

### 5.3 *Land use and recovery planning tools for Osini*

In this section, we focus on Osini's planning tools operating at a lower level with respect to PPR and PAI: the Piano Urbanistico Comunale (Municipal Urban Plan, hereafter referred to with the Italian acronym PUC) and the Piano Particolareggiato del Centro Storico (Detailed Plan of the Historical Centre, hereafter referred to with the Italian acronym PP). These plans are relevant as they set the preconditions for the design of our AD proposal.

The PUC, approved in 1998, establishes the zoning, dividing the municipal area in homogeneous territorial zones, where similar destinations, i.e. land uses, are ruled. According to the PUC, the whole settlement nowadays known old Osini (see Figure 6A) falls in a unique homogeneous territorial zone coded with the letter "A" and concerning the recovery project of the historical centre, meant as a part of the town including urban morphologies and houses built before 1860. In this zone, the PUC addresses the material and functional conservation of traditional housing and building techniques.

Please place Figure 6 about here.

The general planning framework established in the PUC is further detailed by means of implementation plans consisting in lower level acts approved to design and manage operative territorial transformations. In this respect, for the A zone the PP of Osini aims at the conservative recovery of the historical centre and, in particular, at: i) valorising building with relevant historic and architectonic quality, and ii) identifying new land uses suitable for new, alternative and distributed tourist activities. The analysis and dispositions of the PP refer to construction sectors including intervention units that often correspond to a single building. In this framework, the PP clearly attributes to each building certain transformations, such as: restoration, conservative

renewal, and urban renewal. The analysis of the intervention units' status illustrated in Figure 6B shows the location of the building units included in the AD proposal. The buildings selected present a fair conservation status and are not contiguous to the areas characterized by collapsed buildings.

#### *5.4 An AD proposal*

In this section we present a prototype plan for recovering the old centre of Osini through creating an AD. We stress that this proposal is hypothetical and should be used to no more than the basis for discussion and to create consensus.

As we introduced in section 5.3, creation of an AD falls in one of a set of possible actions planned within the PP for Osini's historic centre. This proposal is based on the use of the traditional rural building types that were studied in the literature review reported in section 3 (see Sanna and Cuboni, 2008, in particular). This building type belongs to the mountainous cluster and consists of (often) mono- or bi-cellular housing units usually with two or three storeys. The buildings often have a transversally sloping orography, with doorways in opposite sides and at different levels. Sometimes a typical staircase leads to the unit and adds movement to the otherwise quite poor composition of the façade. Originally the ground floor hosted the entrance rooms and the upper floors the kitchen and dining room; a scheme that has been inverted in recent times. The most common building material used is irregular stones. The outer walls are made of them, and these support the intermediate floors and the roofs, which are made of wood, reeds, mortar, and tiles. We ascertained a number of details of the local building types in specific field surveys (see Figure 7).

Please place Figure 7 about here.

The structural walls were built by joining split limestone blocks with soil and lime mortar, and protected by a cover of shale and limestone slivers. The corners of the building consisted of squared blocks placed alternatively on top of one another, with respect to their longer side: this technique resulted in both good tying and sharp edges. The dividing walls were built on a wooden framework of pillars and rods, and plastered. The doors and windows were of simple design. Windows were topped by a juniper wood or stone architrave and often had two shutters. Doors were topped by a fanlight protected by a metal grating and had one or two shutters. The roofs were very simple: tiles were placed on a framework of rods anchored to large wooden beams. The railings of the balconies, in most cases, were made of wrought iron. Wooden stairs connected internal spaces, while sometimes external stone stairs provided access to the house from the street.

Designing an AD typically means identifying: a reception area, communal living spaces and dining areas, a number of rooms, and areas for services. A major issue is the location of common areas in a central site that is within walking distance of the accommodation (Dall'Ara, 2010).

In the case of Osini, we first identified the most suitable buildings for an AD, according to the regional regulations and Sardinian and national practice. In Figure 8, we identify: i) the lounge bar and reception (in red) in a central position with respect to the other buildings, ii) the restaurant (in sky blue) near the reception, and iii) accommodation (in blue) located within 200 metres from the main building.

Please place Figure 8 about here.

In Figure 9, we show an example of fact sheet of the current state and the recovery project proposal for a building. Each sheet includes: the location of the building in the centre of

Osini; photographic documentation useful for describing the external conditions; plans, elevations and sections of the current status, a written description of the materials, techniques and building types; plans, elevations and sections relating to the preliminary draft of building recovery, possibly complemented with a written description. The actions include: safety measures, if necessary, and reconstruction of the plants (boilers, interior air conditioning, plumbing, electrical wiring, and so on). There is no increase in building volume.

Please place Figure 9 about here.

At this stage of the preliminary design the draft aims to identify the possible accommodation and the location of the rooms (bedrooms, bathrooms, restaurant, common areas) for each building. As suggested in the literature (Dall'Ara, 2010), each room has a minimum gross floor area of 25 square metres, which is considered suitable for facilities with limited services. The reception and restaurant are at a maximum distance of 200 metres from the potential accommodation, as required by regional regulations.

### *5.5 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses*

In this section, we review our AD proposal and focus on its strong and weak aspects. The awareness of these conditions is crucial for addressing operative actions toward exploiting positive contextual situations and preventing risky disadvantages. In Table 5, we refer the strengths ( $S_x$ ) and weaknesses ( $W_x$ ) of our AD proposal to three cross cutting issues: i) location, ii) regional planning, and iii) building recovery and AD management.

Please, place Table 5 about here

With respect to the first issue, Osini has a very good potential as a possible destination

attracting tourists interested in alternative and innovative experiences (S<sub>1</sub>). Key factors are the relative closeness to the sea that ensures also a good accessibility to the major port of the area (S<sub>2</sub>) and a landscape shaped by typical Mediterranean matrices and including both mountainous and marine extensions (S<sub>3</sub>). On the other side, critical issues regard: i) a weak transport and mobility system almost entirely based on a road network that does not allow reasonable travel times without the use of private cars (W<sub>1</sub>); ii) a still incomplete main transport infrastructure (new SR No 125) that does not guarantee an acceptable accessibility level to major cities and airports (W<sub>2</sub>), and iii) the absence of a local living community after more than sixty years of complete abandonment (W<sub>3</sub>). This weakness is one of the most demanding, as a new population process should be accompanied by a complex set of public measures while being encouraged and explained through a correct communication strategy.

With reference to the second issue, a strong aspect is that the PPR contains dispositions that address correct processes of recovery of historical settlements and buildings (S<sub>4</sub>). On the other hand, the PAI still classifies Osini's area with an attribution of a medium level of hydrological hazard (W<sub>4</sub>). This implies the opportunity to refer always the design of new interventions, including our AD proposal, to cautiousness-driven measures to secure public safety.

With respect to the last cross-cutting issue, we stress four strong aspects. The PP of the historical centre of Osini explicitly mentions the eventuality to develop an AD project (S<sub>5</sub>) as a strategy able to catalyse the interest of a new target of users. In the last decades, we report on an increased interest for the adoption of traditional building types and materials characterizing our AD proposal (S<sub>6</sub>). The layout of our AD proposal meets local legislative requirements and allows potential clients to reach easily the main building located always in a walking distance from accommodations (S<sub>7</sub>). The independence of the accommodation and the opportunity to walk and

live constantly local cultures and environments make our AD proposal attractive for contemporary tourists interested to experience directly local contexts (S<sub>8</sub>). On the other side, we point out three weak elements. Many times, the buildings' conservation quality is reported poor (W<sub>5</sub>). In addition, multi-decade abandonment conditions have led to a poor status or, many times, absence of urban infrastructures, such as streets, sidewalks, lighting, sewage, telephone, gas networks (W<sub>6</sub>). This clearly implies important recovery actions and a relevant increase of costs (W<sub>7</sub>) that could hardly be sustained by purely private initiatives. A final weak aspect is that AD buildings spatial distribution leads to higher management cost with respect to the regular hotel compact layout (W<sub>8</sub>). In this respect, AD is a business model invoking expert and skilled entrepreneurship.

## **6 Discussion**

In this section, we discuss the results obtained so far for the research questions delineated in section 1.

With respect to RQ<sub>1</sub>, the AD proposed in this paper has been drafted following the suggestions of the international literature on the tourist development of rural areas. If adequately supported by institutions and citizens, the scattered hospitality provided by the AD will be able to contribute to the redevelopment of the ancient centre of Osini. It is clear that the socio-economic recovery of an abandoned town, such as Osini, is a challenge that should not be based exclusively on individual measures. However we believe our proposal has strategic value, as it may trigger off other measures which are able to encourage a stable re-population of the area. RQ<sub>2</sub> attains the main forms of rural tourism: we demonstrate that rural tourism is widespread throughout western Europe in a variety of forms. Agritourism, equestrian tourism, and forest tourism are

important specialised areas of this. In this context, the AD is a promising phenomenon for many small towns or rural areas. ADs are mainly found in Italy, where they originated, although there are also some in Spain. RQ<sub>3</sub> refers to an institutional analysis of AD: many European countries have published laws that regulate tourism activities in various ways. National regulation is crucial, since it provides regions with a legislative framework able to create feasible policies at the local level. As far as Italy is concerned, each region has approved specific laws on AD, but only in half of the cases have specific implementation tools (regional, provincial or municipal regulations) been adopted. Even though the Autonomous Region of Sardinia has not adopted a specific implementation regulation yet, in the island some cases are recognized by the Associazione Nazionale Alberghi Diffusi (National Association of Alberghi Diffusi), a body founded to promote and support the development of AD in Italy. These successful experiences are important, as they provide us with useful suggestions for developing our AD proposal for Osini. Following RQ<sub>4</sub> about the contents of regional regulations, we scrutinized the acts approved by the regions and established important guidelines for, mainly, the minimum accommodation capacity and the maximum distance of the rooms from the reception. These variables are expressed in different terms and are different in value. We designed our AD according to the values approved by the region of Sardinia. The last two RQ<sub>s</sub> refer to the AD proposal. The rural centre of Osini is suitable for an AD, as it meets the following conditions: i) recovery actions comply with regional landscape and hydro geologic and municipal land use and recovery planning tools; ii) the area is rich in attractions for rural tourists: nuraghes, caves, climbing walls, churches, etc.; iii) the area is depopulated and needs strategies for attracting residents and providing new jobs. Finally, we characterized our AD proposal as a recovery project directed to result in the reuse of the ancient buildings in the small rural village of Osini.

Hence we selected a traditional housing type, i.e. the mountainous mono- or bi-cellular multi storey unit, as the main reference framework for the proposal. Reception and rooms have been located according to a horizontal centre-satellites scheme, with each accommodation unit within 200 m of the principal reception building. This means that everywhere in the AD is within walking distance. The design of the buildings complies with traditional techniques, mainly based on the use of structural walls, and materials including irregular stones and wooden elements.

## **7 Conclusions**

In this section we summarize the argument and rationale developed in this paper, discuss the exportability of the Osini's case study, and identify some weak areas that deserve to be discussed and open the way to further research work.

In this paper, we discuss a proposed AD in Osini, in Sardinia, Italy, a small rural settlement which is slowly but persistently depopulating. We focus on the historic centre, which is nowadays an old village, abandoned in 1951 after a severe flood and landslide. We approach the issue from different points of view, including rural tourism as a strategy for economic recovery, the institutional capacity of local bodies and actors, the availability of landscape and hydro geologic planning tools, and criteria for the selection of general layout, building types, and materials. We address six specific Research Questions (RQ<sub>s</sub>) to these issues, and these constitute the rationale and structure of this paper.

We demonstrate that an AD in Osini may be successful and catalyse economic redevelopment, provided that some conditions are met. First and uppermost, the intervention should comply with the regulations of the hydro geologic regional planning tool (PAI), which opened the way to a hypothetical reuse of the old village. Secondly, this particular initiative

should be linked with other similar measures which are able to attract international and national tourists who are interested on rural activities. Thirdly, the AD proposal should use the institutions and comply with the laws currently in force in Sardinia. Fourthly, it should comply with landscape, land use and implementation planning tools on the approach to be taken for the recovering suitable old building units, in order to avoid any extra land consumption and the choice of morphologically coherent building types, techniques, and materials.

The Osini's case study offers some policy definition issues that can be applied to similar contexts. In Table 6, we argue on general ( $G_x$ ) and local ( $L_x$ ) declinations of exportable good lessons inspired to three concepts: tourist attractiveness, coherence in planning and building, and cautious budgeting and programming.

Please, place Table 6 about here

With respect to the first concept, a useful strategy consists in the analysis of the target ( $G_1$ ), i.e. the prospective clients of our AD in Osini. The municipality of this town and the whole historical region of Ogliastra show local landscapes, cultures and environmental resources that catalyse the interest of new contemporary rural tourists seeking not conventional forms of accommodation, such as the AD ( $L_1$ ). The issue is connected to relating the proposal to the system of material and immaterial resources of a given context ( $G_2$ ). In our approach, we stress the importance of the mosaic of local landscape goods ( $L_2$ ). This relational pool of elements contributes to the characterization of Osini as an attractive tourist destination. With reference to the second concept, an interesting aspect is the design of policies and actions according to the system of regional dispositions including planning tools and regulatory acts ( $G_3$ ). In our case, we base our policies on a strict coherence with PPR and PAI and a specific regional law (Sardinia,

1998) about the AD (L<sub>3</sub>). Ensuring the hierarchical coherence is key to obtaining higher chances to benefiting of further financing opportunities promoted in disadvantaged areas. Another general policy issue is the correct interpretation of urban planning dispositions (G<sub>4</sub>) that in the specific case leads mainly to conceiving the intervention according to the prescriptions of the PP of the historical centre (L<sub>4</sub>). In clear connection, a useful strategy has been the selection of building types and materials in coherence with traditional local culture and know how (G<sub>5</sub>). In our case, this implies the use of a reinterpretation of the historical vertical bi-cellular building type spanning two storeys and made with, inter alia, blocks of local stone (L<sub>5</sub>). According to the last concept, the process of repopulation in a town abandoned since a long time implies relevant preparative interventions with often high costs (G<sub>6</sub>). In our case, we just touched on required interventions on buildings and urban infrastructure (L<sub>6</sub>). When the financial commitment is important, the interest of a mixed pool of public bodies and private entrepreneurs is an ideal precondition (G<sub>7</sub>). In our case, world and local tourist operators, AD entrepreneurs, regional, provincial and municipal administrations should cooperate toward a successful implementation of the project (L<sub>7</sub>).

Finally the argument developed in this paper also raises other questions that are worth further investigation. The AD was introduced as a new tourist accommodation framework for settlements with a risk of economic stagnation and depopulation, but still extant. In our case, we propose AD as a way of reusing a group of buildings in a settlement that has been completely abandoned for more than sixty years. It is clear that in this situation any intervention has to be studied and verified in terms of the social-perceptive, institutional-political, and urban-technological issues involved. With respect to the first issue, future research should focus on the social feasibility and local willingness to repopulate former high risk areas. The clarification of

the level of social acceptance through analysing the expression of interest of local communities is of paramount importance for ascertaining the viability of the project. Thus, with respect to institutional-political capacity, future studies should clarify the level of commitment of local agencies, bodies, and interested parties. A well-developed governing system is relevant when planning, designing, and budgeting actions aimed at re-activating essential basic urban technological services, such as streets, electricity provision, municipal sewage, and supplies of drinking water.

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#### List of Tables

Table 1 Research questions investigated in this paper.

Table 2 Institutional analysis of rural tourism in some European countries: responsible bodies and laws.

Table 3 Institutional analysis of rural tourism in some European countries: coverage of various forms of tourism.

Table 4 Overview of the Italian regional laws and regulations on AD.

Table 5 Strengths and weaknesses of the AD proposal.

Table 6 Exportability of good practices: concept, and general and local declinations.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
RQ <sub>1</sub>	Can tourism be a catalyst of economic development and recovery?
RQ <sub>2</sub>	What are the main forms of rural tourism?
RQ <sub>3</sub>	Which are the bodies and laws regulating AD in Europe?
RQ <sub>4</sub>	Which prescriptions are contained in the laws regulating AD and Italy at the regional level?
RQ <sub>5</sub>	Which are the regional planning premises of the Osini AD proposal?
RQ <sub>6</sub>	How is the Osini AD proposal characterized?

Table 1

<b>Country</b>	<b>Entity in charge o tourism policy</b>	<b>Main tourism regulations/policy documents</b>
France	Ministre du Redressement productif/ Ministre déléguée à l'Artisanat, au Commerce et au Tourisme	Code du tourisme
Germany	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie	Federal Government Report on Tourism Policy Tourismusperspektiven in ländlichen Räumen
Italy	Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo	Codice del turismo (2011)
Portugal	Ministro de economia e inovação	Decreto-Lei 141/2007
Spain	Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Turismo, Instituto de Turismo de España (TURESPAÑA)	Real Decreto 425/2013 and regional laws
Switzerland	Swiss tourist federation, Scisse Tourism	Federal Law 935.21/1955
The UK	Minister for Sport & Equalities	Development of Tourism Act 1969 Rural tourism action plan

Table 2

Country	Different forms of rural tourism				
	Albergo Diffuso	Agriturismo	Equestrian tourism	Forest tourism	Other
France		√		√	√
Germany		√			√
Italy	√	√	√		√
Portugal		√	√	√	√
Spain	√	√	√	√	√
Switzerland		√	√	√	√
The UK		√	√	√	√

Table 3

Region	Law	Regulations	Minimum accommodation capacity	Maximum distance from central building to accommodation (metres)	Notes
Abruzzo	22/2013	-			
Apulia	17/2011	Regulation 6/2012	30 bedrooms	300 (Euclidean distance) 400 (road distance)	
Basilicata	6/2008	Regional Committee Resolution (RCR) 1274/2010	8 bedrooms	300	
Calabria	8/2008	Regulation 4/2008	2 autonomous building	300 (Euclidean distance) 400 (road distance)	
Campania	17/2001	Regulation 4/2013	2 independent buildings	300 (Euclidean distance) 400 (road distance)	
Emilia-Romagna	16/2004	RCR 916/2007	7 residential units	300 (average)	Eligible locations only in municipalities with maximum 5000 inhabitants
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	2/2002	Municipal regulations	80 bedrooms	Indicated by each municipality	AD can be an inter-municipal system
Lazio	13/2007	Regulation 16/2008	7 residential units	Not specified	Eligible locations only in historic centres with maximum 3000 inhabitants
Liguria	13/2007	Regulation 5/2007	30 bedrooms	250	
Lombardy	8/2010	-	7 rooms or apartments	400	
Marche	9/2006	RCR 479/2007	7 residential units	500	
Molise	7/2014				The first Italian region to set up an AD in rural zones
Piedmont	17/2013	-	15 bedrooms	1000	AD can be an inter-municipal system
Sardinia	27/1998	-	Not specified	200	
Sicily	11/2013	Scheme of RCR , 2015	7 residential units	300	
Trentino-Alto Adige (Autonomous Province of Trento)	7/2002 and 20/2007	Provincial President Resolution 28-149/Leg./2003	4 residential units	200	AD is included in the other form of accommodation
Tuscany	71/2013	-	30 bedrooms		
Umbria	18/2006 and 13/2013	-		Not specified	
Valle d'Aosta	1/2011	-			
Veneto	11/2013	-	2 residential units	400	

Table 4

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Location	S <sub>1</sub> . Location with a good potential for cultural and rural tourism	W <sub>1</sub> . Weak transport and mobility network
	S <sub>2</sub> . Relative closeness to the sea and a major port	W <sub>2</sub> . Low accessibility to major cities and airports
	S <sub>3</sub> . Typical landscapes	W <sub>3</sub> . Absence of a local community after a very long period of abandonment
Regional planning	S <sub>4</sub> . Favorable regional planning dispositions for the recovery of historical settlements	W <sub>4</sub> . Presence of medium hydrological hazard
Building recovery planning and AD management	S <sub>5</sub> . Favorable dispositions for AD construction in the PP of the historical centre of Osini	W <sub>5</sub> . Poor conservation of the buildings selected
	S <sub>6</sub> . Current interest for the use of traditional building types and local materials	W <sub>6</sub> . Absence or poor status of urban infrastructures
	S <sub>7</sub> . Ideal layout: rooms' closeness to the main building	W <sub>7</sub> . High costs of recovery actions
	S <sub>8</sub> . Tourists' appreciation of the AD's layout	W <sub>8</sub> . Higher costs of AD management

Table 5

Concept	Declinations	
	General	Local
Tourist attractiveness	G <sub>1</sub> . Definition of the target	L <sub>1</sub> . New forms of clients: rural tourists
	G <sub>2</sub> . Enhancement of exiting relational systems	L <sub>2</sub> . Link with the network of local landscape goods
Coherence in planning and building	G <sub>3</sub> . Address of the coherence with regional dispositions	L <sub>3</sub> . Coherence with PPR, PAI, and AD regional law
	G <sub>4</sub> . Exploit the application of detailed urban planning	L <sub>4</sub> . Basing interventions on the PP of the historical centre
	G <sub>5</sub> . Adopting traditional building types and materials	L <sub>5</sub> . Using two storey and stone based building types
Cautious budgeting and programming	G <sub>6</sub> . Budgeting all costs of re-population	L <sub>6</sub> . Evaluation of building and urban infrastructure costs
	G <sub>7</sub> . Seeking mixed policy making	L <sub>7</sub> . Coordinating private-public actions

Table 6

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Websites

Appendix 2 Regulations

## Appendix 1 Websites

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## Appendix 2 Regulations, policy and planning documents

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## List of Figures

Figure 1: Density of bed places in hotel relative to land area in 2011 (source: Eurostat).

Figure 2: Institutional analysis of rural tourism: the countries included in the study in grey.

Figure 3: Ogliastra: infrastructure and natural resources. A: the relation with main regional ports and airports; B: the group of three municipalities; C: state and local road network; D: the heel of 'Perda 'e Liana', Gairo; E: 'Scala di San Giorgio', Osini; F: the cave of 'Taqisara', Gairo.

Pictures taken by Vittorio Serra.

Figure 4: Osini. A: location of the municipality in Sardinia; B and C: images of the abandoned and ruined rural landscape and housing. Pictures taken by Vittorio Serra.

Figure 5: Location of Osini with respect to the first homogeneous coastal buffer zone defined in the regional landscape plan (PPR).

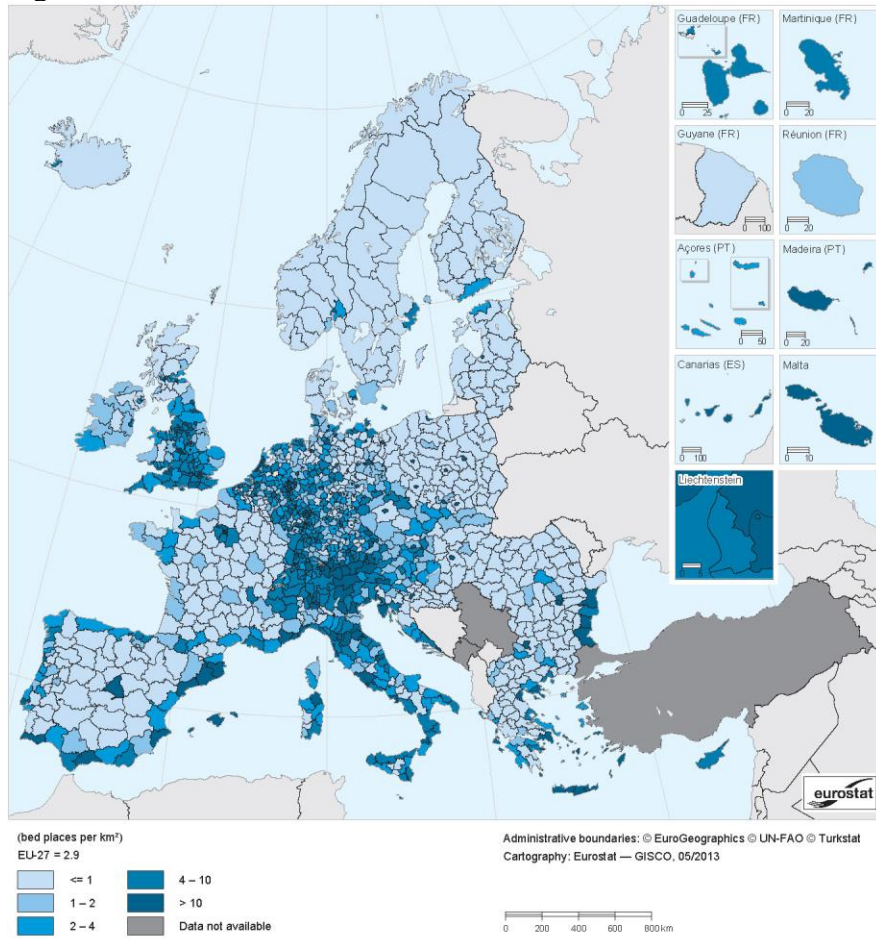
Figure 6: Land use and recovery planning tools of Osini (Municipality of Osini, 1998 and 2003). A: Overlay mapping of the PUC's zoning on a Google Earth Image of the town showing the A zone on the right; B: PP's analysis of conservation status and location of potential buildings for the AD proposal.

Figure 7: Building details. A: external staircase; B: rubble masonry clipping the joints; C: squared block disposition shaping a sharp wall corner; and D: two shatter door topped by a fanlight protected by a radial metal grating. Pictures taken by Vittorio Serra.

Figure 8: A hypothesis of AD for Osini and a draft of the recovery project: lounge bar and reception (in red), restaurant (sky blue), and accommodation (blue) within walking distance.

Figure 9: An example of sheets prepared for the recovery of the building. A-1: location of the building highlighted by a red circle; A-2: the building to be recovered; A-3: description and drawings relating to the current state of the building. B-1: preliminary project and rooms identification. Pictures taken by Vittorio Serra.

Figure 1



(\*) Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Scotland (UKM) and Montenegro, total area instead of land area; Städteregion Aachen (DEA2D), Bautzen (DED2C), Görlitz (DED2D), Meißen (DED2E), Sächsische Schweiz-Ostergebirge (DED2F), Erzgebirgskreis (DED42), Mittelsachsen (DED43), Vogtlandkreis (DED44), Zwickau (DED45), Leipzig (DED52), Niedersachsen (DED53), Milano (ITC4C), Monza e della Brianza (ITC4D), Foggia (ITF46), Bari (ITF47), Barietta-Andria-Trani (ITF48), Rimini (ITH59), Pesaro e Urbino (ITI31), Ascoli Piceno (ITI34), Fermo (ITI35), Agglomeratie Leiden en Bolleestreek (NL337), Oost-Zuid-Holland (NL338), Groot-Rijnmond (NL339) and Zuidoost-Zuid-Holland (NL33A), 2012 data for area; Biberach (DE146), 2005.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: tour\_cap\_nuts3 and demo\_r\_d3area)

Figure 2



Figure 3

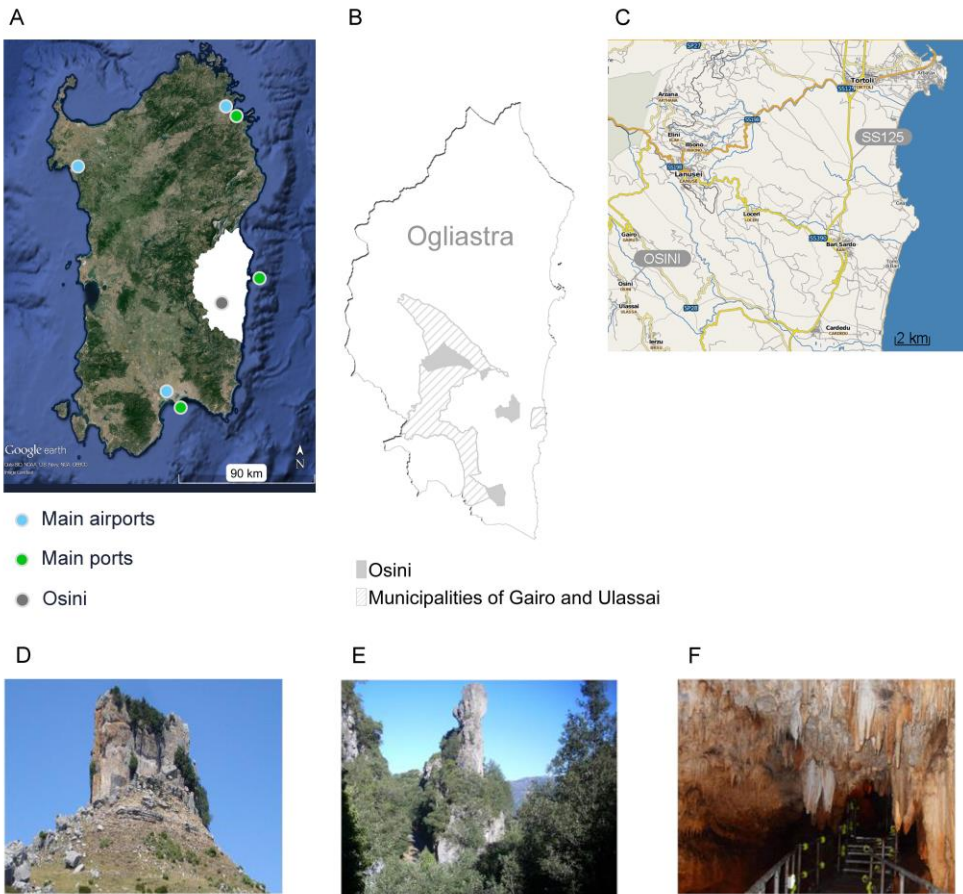
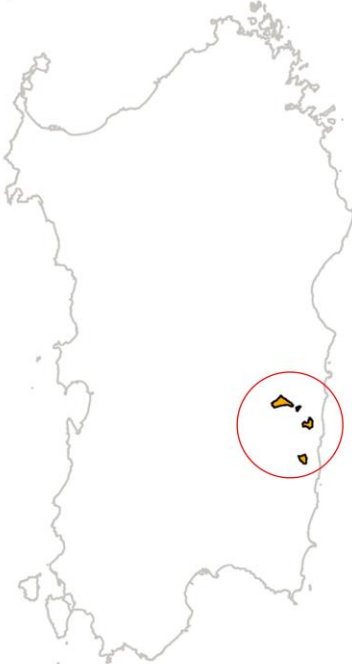


Figure 4

A



B



C

Figure 5

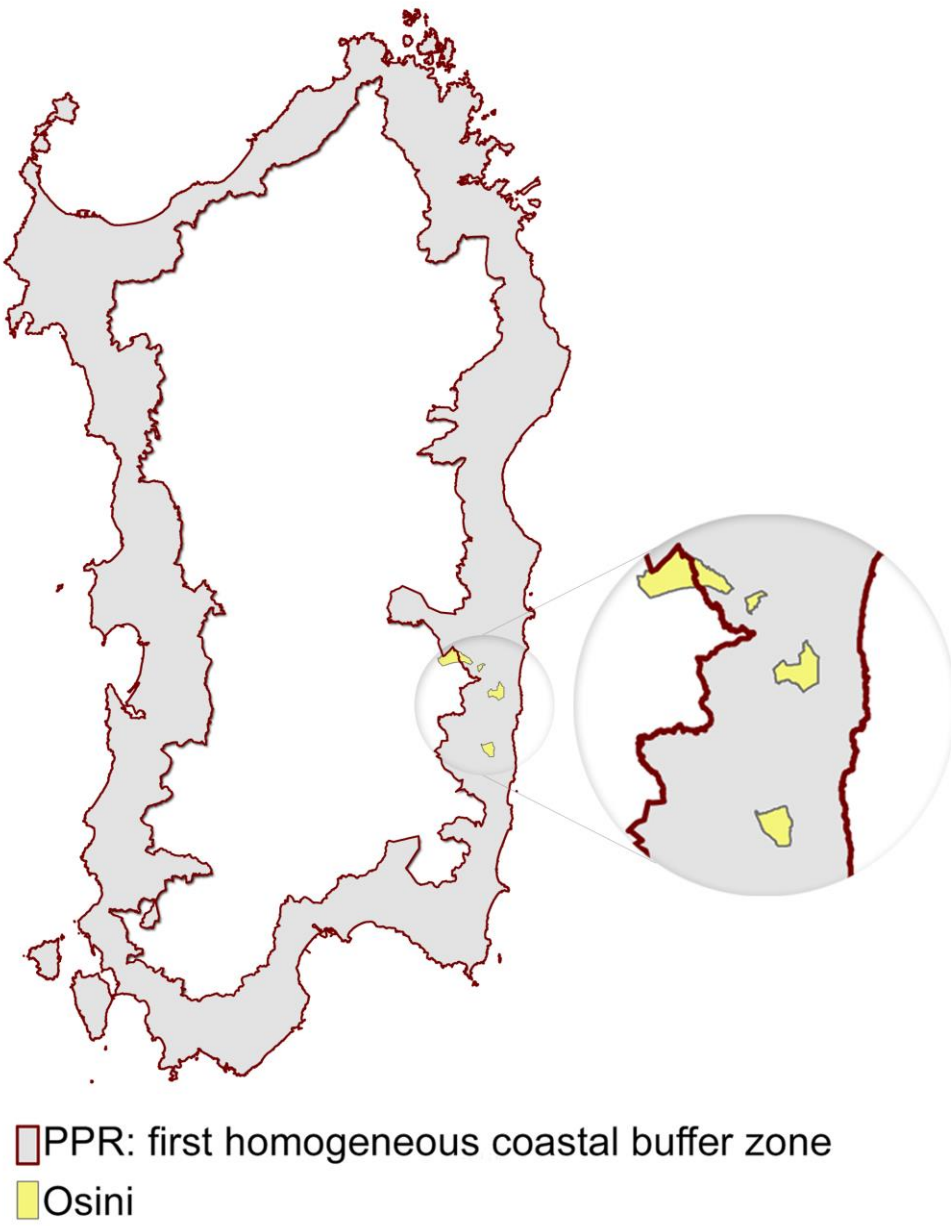
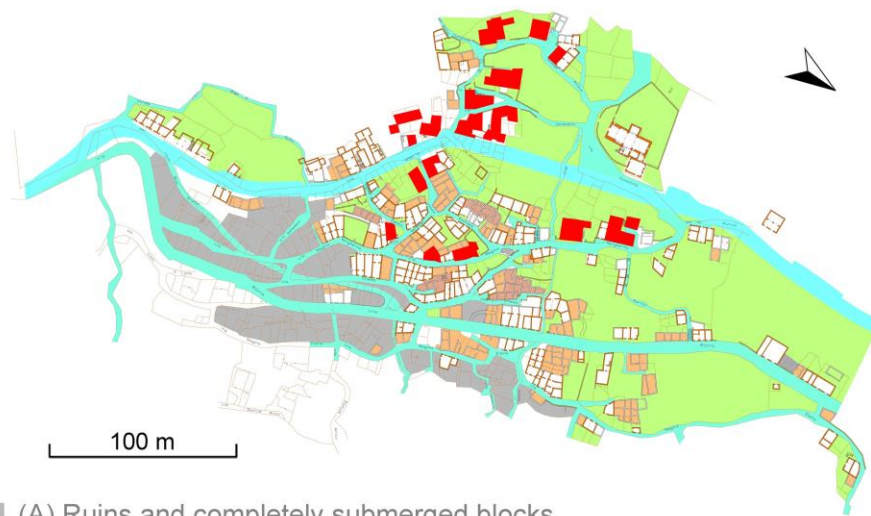


Figure 6



A

B



- (A) Ruins and completely submerged blocks
- (B) Partially collapsed still recognizable buildings
- (C) Streets
- (D) Green or open areas
- (E) Degraded areas with traditional building types
- (F) Buildings included in the AD proposal

Figure 7



A



C



B



D

Figure 8

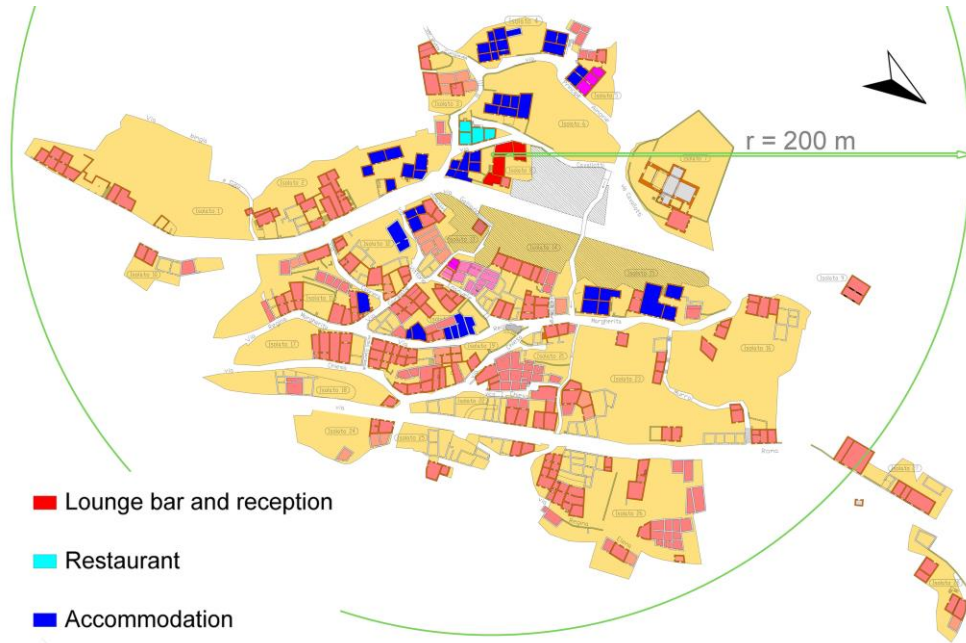
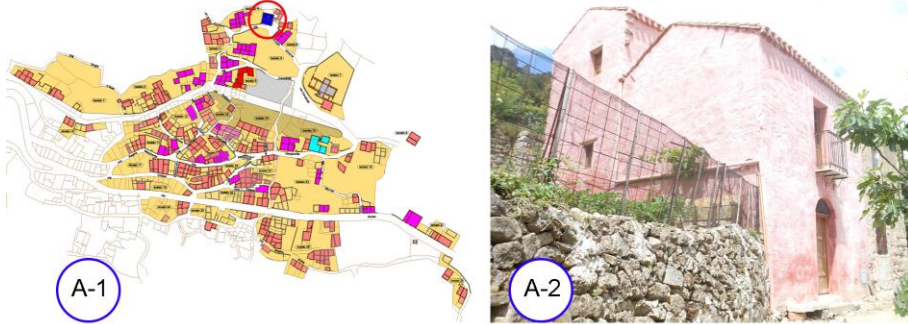


Figure 9

A - Sheet of current state

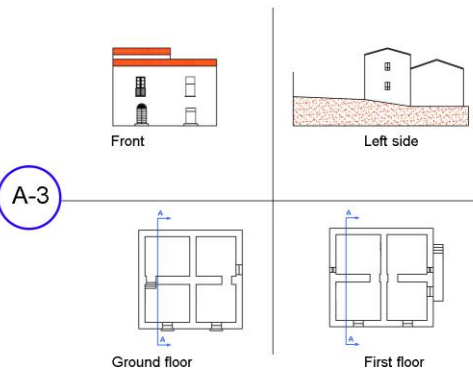


**Building description**

(Address: via Aimone 2)

Materials used: limestone blocks, lime plastering, wooden beam floors, wooden windows and doors, wrought-iron balconies.

Building stability conditions: it is almost fully recovered and in good condition.



B - Project sheet

