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The Role of Architectural Heritage in the National Strategy for Inner Areas: Evidence from the Project Areas

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Abstract

In Italy, cultural heritage's importance for territorial development doesn't seem to find reflection in the public funding program with the consequent rise of several issues. These issues become even more relevant in marginal territorial contexts, where it is crucial to support public spending orientation appropriately. To this aim, a comprehensive knowl-

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edge frame of the public sphere's intervention approach to architectural heritage is a fundamental precondition. Based on these premises, the paper aims to define a geo-referenced database of architectural heritage interventions in the frame of the main national policy for marginal territories: the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). After introducing the "inner areas" issue, the paper preliminarily investigates the role assigned to architectural heritage in the SNAI's first cycle. This investigation highlights the emerging themes that guide the construction and interpretation of the geo-referred database, which provides a reference to identify specific criticalities or "virtuous" realities and can represent a knowledge basis to assess funded interventions' possible contribution to local development.

In Italia, il riconoscimento del ruolo del patrimonio culturale per lo sviluppo territoriale non sembra trovare riscontro nella struttura dei programmi di finanziamento pubblico con il conseguente emergere di una serie di problematiche. Tali problematiche risultano ancora più rilevanti nei contesti territoriali marginali, dove emerge con maggior forza la necessità di fornire un valido supporto all'orientamento della spesa pubblica. A tal fine, la costruzione di un quadro conoscitivo dell'approccio pubblico all'intervento sul patrimonio architettonico costituisce una pre-condizione fondamentale. Sulla scorta di tali premesse, il contributo propone un database geo-referenziato degli interventi sul patrimonio architettonico concepiti nel quadro della principale politica nazionale per i territori marginali: la Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne (SNAI). Dopo aver introdotto il tema "aree interne", il contributo indaga in via preliminare il ruolo assegnato al patrimonio architettonico nel primo ciclo della SNAI. Tale indagine, infatti, pone in evidenza i temi emergenti, da assumere quale guida per la costruzione e l'interpretazione del database geo-referenziato, che fornisce un riferimento per l'individuazione di criticità o di realtà territoriali "virtuose" e può rappresentare una base conoscitiva per la valutazione del contributo allo sviluppo territoriale degli interventi finanziati.

1. *Architectural heritage and public investments*

In recent decades, cultural heritage has been recognized as a key resource for European territorial development¹ and an essential feature of an innovative value system that considers new metrics to express local communities' well-being². However, in Italy, the country with the most UNESCO heritage properties in the world (59)³, the acknowledged importance of cultural heritage doesn't seem to find reflection in the public funding program. Indeed, in 2020-2021, the public spending for cultural services stands at about 5 billion

¹ CHCfE Consortium 2015. This document is the outcome of the two-year project *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe*, funded by the EU Culture Programme (2007-2013). It aims to raise awareness on the multiple benefits of cultural heritage, while providing policy recommendations for tapping into heritage's potentialities. More in detail, in *The 10 Key Findings* section it «provides a comprehensive overview of the evidence which clearly demonstrates the wide-ranging benefits of investing in Europe's cultural heritage».

² Cerquetti, Cutrini 2023, p. 18.

³ UNESCO 2023.

euros. This amount, representing 2,9 per thousand of the Italian GDP, is well below the EU's average (4.8 per thousand in 2020) and the public spending of other leading European states (i.e., in France, 16,6 billion euros in 2020)⁴.

Furthermore, by considering the primary expenditure for the *Protection and Enhancement of cultural assets and activities* in 2020-2021, it is possible to observe a decline of 4%, which can also be ascribable to the expenditure requirements related to the Covid-19 pandemic⁵.

The public spending's shrinking in the cultural sector raises relevant issues related to managing the huge stock of public heritage assets. Indeed, the willingness to preserve the technical and material features of built heritage assets requires designing accurate restoration and maintenance interventions, whose higher costs, compared to "ordinary" interventions, discourage orienting the limited financial resources toward this intervention line⁶. In this context, resorting to Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is becoming a common intervention practice to deal with the mentioned criticality and ensure a balance between heritage values' protection and financial sustainability needs⁷. However, this intervention practice finds little effect in marginal territorial contexts, where the lack of economic attractiveness discourages private intervention and calls for integrating architectural heritage in virtuous and innovative local development processes by reflecting on the relationship between historical assets and the present time, which represents the theoretical rooting of the conservation dimension⁸.

Thus, the appropriate orientation of public spending on architectural heritage becomes crucial in these territorial contexts and requires a clear understanding of the contribution of the planned interventions to triggering local development processes. To this aim, building a comprehensive knowledge frame, not yet existing, of how much and how the public sphere has intervened on architectural heritage in marginal territorial contexts stands as a fundamental precondition.

Based on these premises, the paper aims to partially bridge the outlined knowledge gap by defining a geo-referenced database of architectural heritage interventions in the frame of the main national policy devoted to Italian marginal territorial realities: the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). This national policy, launched in 2014 and representing one of the most interesting laboratories and examples of the European Union's territorial cohesion policies⁹, focuses on "inner areas", considered areas cut off from the lead-

⁴ ISTAT 2022, p. 210.

⁵ ISTAT 2022, p. 212.

⁶ Rossitti *et al.* 2021a, 13130.

⁷ Consiglio *et al.* 2020, pp. 359-363.

⁸ Oteri 2019, p. 176.

⁹ As a primary objective of European Union, territorial cohesion deals with «ensuring that people are able to make the most inherent features of the area in which they live».

ing urban-centered development models over recent decades, to mitigate their marginalization conditions¹⁰.

After describing SNAI's contents and objectives and contextualizing the "inner areas" issue from a historical perspective, the paper preliminarily investigates the role assigned to architectural heritage in the first cycle (2014-2020) of SNAI implementation. This preliminary investigation highlights the emerging themes that guide the construction and interpretation of the geo-referred database devoted to architectural heritage interventions in "inner areas". Such a database, including all the interventions funded within the 72 pilot areas' strategies, provides a reference to identify the existence of specific criticalities or "virtuous" realities and can be taken as a knowledge basis to assess funded interventions' possible contribution to local development processes.

2. The National Strategy for Inner Areas: contents and objectives

All citizens have equal social status and are equal before the law, without regard to their sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, and personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove all economic and social obstacles that, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent full individual development and the participation of all workers in the political, economic, and social organization of the country¹¹.

The need for all citizens to exercise their citizenship rights¹², well-expressed by art. 3 in the Italian Constitution, can be considered the ideological foundation for the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). The SNAI aims to tackle the negative demographic trends affecting some Italian marginal areas by strengthening their territorial systems' economic and demographic structure. The Strategy deploys two classes of actions to achieve its goals: welfare services quality/quantity adjustment and local development interventions in five key sectors. The first class of actions, related to welfare services, has been funded through national funds. At the same time, the funding for local devel-

¹⁰ Garofalo, Schilleci 2022, p. 6.

¹¹ Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana (Gazzetta Ufficiale 27 dicembre 1947, n. 298). The article 3 states that: «Tutti i cittadini hanno pari dignità e sono eguali davanti alla legge, senza distinzione di sesso, di razza, di lingua, di religione, di opinioni politiche, di condizioni personali e sociali. È compito della Repubblica rimuovere gli ostacoli di ordine economico e sociale, che, limitando di fatto la libertà e l'eguaglianza dei cittadini, impediscono il pieno sviluppo della persona umana e l'effettiva partecipazione di tutti i lavoratori all'organizzazione politica, economica e sociale del Paese».

¹² Carrosio, Faccini 2018, pp. 51-77. The authors interpret the citizenship right as the right for all citizens to join the economic and civil development of a country equally, substantially and regardless of their place of birth and their social status.

opment interventions burdens regional financial resources related to European Structural Funding programs (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD)¹³.

The SNAI focuses on the territorial dimension of Italian “inner areas”, which are defined and identified as¹⁴:

- Significantly distant from the main centers offering essential welfare services (education, healthcare, and mobility);
- Endowed with significant environmental resources (water resources, agricultural systems, natural and human-made environment) and cultural resources (historical villages, craft centers);
- A diversified territory resulting from the different natural systems’ dynamics and human activity.

In operational terms, “inner areas” are identified by dividing the national territory into five zones (“centers”, “peri-urban areas”, “intermediate areas”, “peripheral areas”, and “ultra-peripheral areas”) according to an “accessibility indicator”¹⁵.

According to this classification, “inner areas” include all the municipalities resulting in “intermediate” (20-40 minutes needed to reach the closest “center”), “peripheral” (40-75 minutes required), and “ultraperipheral” (more than 75 minutes required). Thus, “inner areas” account for around 60% of the national territory, more than 4000 municipalities, and more than 20% of Italian residents¹⁶. Among them, starting from 2014, seventy-two project areas, grouping several municipalities classified as “inner areas”, have been selected for SNAI’s implementation (fig. 1).

This selection results from a public investigation process based on multi-level cooperation among the national Technical Committee, responsible for SNAI’s governance, Region, and local administrations¹⁷. This investigation process rests on a former “desk phase” for the area diagnosis, involving the Technical Committee in assessing the proposals for “inner areas” projects through the support of an “Indicator Grid” as an evaluation tool and an “on-field phase”, oriented to deepening the key elements that emerged from the area diagnosis by directly interacting with territories and communities.

Following such a process, the National Technical Committee issues an *Investigation Document* for each area, representing the functional and administrative fulfillment for starting the Area Strategy design process, based on

¹³ Carrosio, Faccini 2018, p. 5.

¹⁴ Carrosio, Faccini 2018, p. 8.

¹⁵ Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica (DPS) 2014. This “accessibility indicator” is measured in minutes needed to reach the closest *center*, defined as a municipality or a cluster of neighboring municipalities, offering simultaneously: all the secondary education provision, hospitals with I level DEA, and at least a Silver railway station, according to RFI classification.

¹⁶ De Matteis 2013, pp. 7-15.

¹⁷ Lucatelli 2015a, pp. 80-86.

producing three different documents with a growing level of detail (*Strategy Draft*, *Preliminary Strategy*, *Area Strategy*). Then, the process ends with the signing of a *Framework Program Agreement*. It stands as the implementation tool to set a binding commitment of interinstitutional cooperation among Regions, Local Entities, and the Central Administration (Italian Ministries) for achieving SNAI's objectives¹⁸.

3. *The inner areas issue: tie to the past and future perspective*

The “inner area” issue cannot be fully understood without flanking its contents and objectives description with the investigation of its ties to the past, its current role in the political and academic debate, and its future perspectives.

Indeed, the mainstream technical-political reading of the “inner area” locution, grounded on an “accessibility indicator” measured in minutes needed to reach the closest “center” offering essential services, threatens to cut off this territorial issue's historical significance and complexity.

Instead, by adopting a historical perspective to reading the “inner area” concept, the association between “inner” and “marginalized”, which still stands as the conceptual framework behind the SNAI, has emerged as central in steering the economic and territorial development trajectories of these places and, thus, in determining their current conditions¹⁹.

More in detail, a dichotomous reading of the national territory, divided into what is “rural” and what is “urban”, what is *polpa* (flesh) and what is *osso* (bone)²⁰, has resulted in markedly sectoral policies, whose consequences nowadays are more than evident²¹.

Starting from the '60s, the policies for Italian “inner areas” have swung between two lines of action²²:

¹⁸ The role of this legal tool for implementing SNAI's interventions is established by the art. 1, comma 15 of the L. 27 dicembre 2013, n. 147, “Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato (Legge di stabilita' 2014)”. Cfr. Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale 2022a. The “Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale” was abolished by the PNRR Ter decree, which transferred its functions to the “Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione”, later renamed “Dipartimento per le politiche di Coesione e per il Sud”.

¹⁹ Parisi 2020, p. 438.

²⁰ Rossi Doria 1958. In this volume the author first proposes the metaphor of the *polpa* (flesh) and the *osso* (bones) to highlight the territorial disparities between mountains and internal areas (the *osso*) and agricultural areas (the *polpa*) in the South of Italy.

²¹ In the nineteenth century's second half, policies have been grounded on a sharp division among economic sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary) and on a direct opposition between central and peripheral territories. Cfr. Parisi 2020, p. 439.

²² *Ibidem*.

- A former action line, supported by left-wing parties and trade unions, promoting a relaunch of Italian “inner areas” through a broad agrarian reform or a decisive intervention of the state industry;
- A latter action line, which argued in favor of the need and opportunity of a depopulation process in “inner areas”, thus pulling towards a minimum intervention from the State in these places to ensure local communities access to essential basic services.

Then, these two lines of thought are flanked by a third one, proposed by Manlio Rossi Doria, the author of the inflated metaphor of the *polpa* and the *osso*, within the *Progetto Speciale n.33 sulle aree interne del Mezzogiorno* belonging to the third *Programma Quinquennale per il Mezzogiorno*²³. The Italian politician and scholar rejects a one-for-all intervention approach for relaunching Italian “inner areas” and states the necessity of diversifying productive activities according to local economies’ specificities while promoting integration between agricultural activities with industrial and extra-agricultural ones²⁴.

His *Progetto Speciale per il Mezzogiorno* rests on the idea that: «a balanced economic development is only possible by recognizing the communities’ right to self-organization and to develop in their place of origin and their cultural values and identity»²⁵.

The conceptual and methodological framework of Rossi Doria’s *Progetto Speciale per il Mezzogiorno*, whose limits depend on its being a product of a time in which industry was seen as the engine of economic development, thus clearly shows the connection between its contents and the SNAI’s ones. In this sense, it becomes necessary to analyze SNAI’s contents, objectives, and potentialities without dismissing a historical perspective on the “inner areas” issue.

Indeed, the synthetic reading of the most relevant SNAI’s prodromes returns that this public policy doesn’t provide a novel approach to the “inner area” definition or a new conceptual framework to address the development issue. Instead, its innovation breadth must be sought in a change of paradigm

²³ L. 2 maggio 1976, n. 183 “Disciplina dell’intervento straordinario nel Mezzogiorno per il quinquennio 1976-80”.

²⁴ Manlio Rossi Doria in the *Preface* of the *Progetto Speciale per il Mezzogiorno* states that the relaunch of Italian *inner areas* will be possible only if it is based on «un diverso assetto delle attività produttive, a condizione che queste non [fossero] più esclusivamente agricole, come nel passato, ma insieme agricole e industriali» Furthermore, he claims the need to set «vere e proprie moderne industrie e di altre adatte attività extra-agricole, non potendo qui reggere in avvenire una economia esclusivamente basata sull’agricoltura». Cfr. Rossi Doria 1981, p. 9.

²⁵ Giuliano Cesarini, in clarifying the objectives of the *Progetto Speciale per il Mezzogiorno*, states that this project is based on the idea that «uno sviluppo economico equilibrato è possibile solo riconoscendo alle comunità il diritto di organizzarsi e di svilupparsi nel proprio ambiente di origine, nei propri valori ed identità culturali». Cfr. Cesarini 1981, pp. 15-18.

and perspective in planning through alternative and place-based approaches to local development²⁶.

In this respect and in light of the new seasons of funding for “inner areas”²⁷, it is necessary to avoid repeating past errors by eschewing mono-sectoral development policies and simplistic views for these areas’ future, as the ones emerged within the media and academic debate about “inner areas” and Covid-19²⁸.

Three years after its outbreak, it is clear that the pandemic has not been and cannot be the ‘redemption occasion’ for “inner areas”. Surely, it has been a fruitful occasion for a necessary reflection on all the current settlement modalities and, among them, the “inner areas”²⁹. The most interesting outcomes of this reflection can be identified in prioritizing the spatial and territorial dimension of policies³⁰ and, with specific reference to “inner areas”, re-thinking policies through a shift from a tourism enhancement orientation to conscious reuse of the existing local territorial capital³¹.

Thinking about the “inner areas” future, thus, the big ongoing socio-economic changes must be read as a space of possibilities rather than a redemption occasion³²: it is necessary to understand if these possibilities exist and if it is worth intercepting them. In light of the previously outlined reflections, architectural heritage, in numbers, can be a real possibility for *inner areas*’ future, but in practice? What has architectural heritage’s role been in the first cycle of SNAI implementation?

²⁶ Marchetti *et al.* 2017, pp. 11-14.

²⁷ The national funding devoted to SNAI strengthening and widening amount to 310 million euros, divided as: € 300.000 for each area already included in the previous planning, for a total of 21,6 million euros; 4 million euros for the new selected areas for a maximum of 172 million euros; 11,4 millions devoted to the project *Minor Islands*; 100 million euros for fire events prevention and contrast. This amount of funding is further enriched by 3 million euros, allocated for the *Municipal PhD* and by 950 million euros from the PNRR for the extraordinary maintenance of road infrastructures, the enhancement of essential services and the rural pharmacies implementation. As in the previous funding cycle (2014-2020), also in this new cycle (2021-2027) national funding are integrated with financial resources related to European Structural Funding programs for local development interventions. Cfr. Ministero per il Sud e la Coesione territoriale 2022.

²⁸ Chiodelli 2020, pp. 44-47. The scholar criticizes the positions of some famous Italian architects who, within the early post-pandemic debate, propose the “escape from the cities” and the “return to inner area” as the key for tackling the pandemic consequences and rescuing *inner areas* from depopulation.

²⁹ Cecchini, Sanna 2020, pp. 7-9.

³⁰ Curci, Pasqui 2021, pp. 9-10.

³¹ De Rossi, Mascino 2020, pp. 48-55.

³² Carrosio *et al.* 2020, pp. 26-34.

4. *The National Strategy for Inner Areas and architectural heritage: emerging themes*

Coherently with the wide acknowledgment of cultural heritage as a key resource for sustainable development, the SNAI recognizes “natural and cultural heritage enhancement and sustainable tourism” as one of the five key sectors for local development³³.

Including cultural heritage enhancement and sustainable tourism within the same local development sector reveals the leading tourism-centered approach to public policy implementation in the cultural field and, within it, to the architectural heritage theme. Furthermore, this tendency also seems to strongly emerge in the SNAI implementation concerning the national strategic and design frame’s transposition to the local territorial dimension.

Architectural heritage, indeed, seems to be mainly conceived as a tourism attraction, and heritage-based strategies are often related to tourism proposed as a cure-all solution. This criticality often comes to light when analyzing SNAI documents and the related scientific and official debate. More in detail:

- When analyzing the “Indicator Grid”, used by the Technical Committee in the “desk phase” as an objective tool to assess the proposals of inner area projects, the partial and limited vision of architectural heritage as tourism attraction emerges. Indeed, all the indicators belonging to the specific grid’s section, named *Cultural Heritage and Tourism*, are only measures of tourist flows. On the contrary, there is no indicator considering built heritage use and conservation state or capturing the ongoing enhancement initiatives in “inner areas”³⁴;
- While reading through the interviews with different mayors of “inner areas” municipalities collected in the volume *La Voce dei Sindaci delle aree interne*, architectural heritage and landscape are almost always mentioned concerning tourism development³⁵. Indeed, the interview reading clearly reflects the vision of architectural heritage and landscape as mere tourist attractions. For instance, the mayor of a municipality in the *Reventino-Savuto* “inner area” in the Calabria Region explicitly speaks about the abbey as an attractor to enhance from a tourism perspective. Again, the mayor of a municipality from the *Alta Carnia* “inner area” in Friuli Venezia Giulia Region speaks about the landscape as something to show and promote rather than something to live.

³³ Barca *et al.* 2014, p. 10.

³⁴ Rossitti *et al.* 2021b, 6927. The indicators belonging to the *Cultural Heritage and Tourism* section in the grid are related to: the number of state and non-state cultural sites; the number of visitors and the percentage of paying visitors; the accommodation and the tourism rate; the number and variation of arrivals and presences.

³⁵ Lucatelli 2018, pp. 19-82.

Of course, reading these interviews also returns more sensitive and aware positions toward architectural heritage and landscape. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the thoughts proposed by the mayor of Fontanigarda municipality from the *Antola Tigullio* “inner area” in the Liguria Region and the mayor of Canosio municipality from the *Valle Maira e Grana* “inner area” in the Piemonte Region. Indeed, while recognizing the strategic role of the cultural landscape for tourism-driven local development, the former mayor states the necessity that local inhabitants take care of and use that landscape as an essential precondition for development³⁶. Instead, the latter mayor adds another crucial perspective when dealing with cultural heritage issues in “inner areas”. While discussing the landscape theme in connection with the territory’s tourism enhancement, he reports the absence of social sustainability and the need to rebuild local communities³⁷.

The same contrast between more and less sensitive positions toward architectural heritage and landscape’s role in the sustainable development of Italian inner areas emerges from the scientific literature on tourism. Indeed, based on the awareness of tourism’s importance as a tool for creating development opportunities³⁸, different scholars have dealt with the relationship between inner areas’ territorial capital and tourism development strategies.

These scholars propose interesting scientific reflections, ranging from the need to conceive planning practices oriented to tourism attractiveness in light of their coherence with territorial capital³⁹ to the opportunity of promoting a multi-level governance approach integrating residents, stakeholders, and decision-makers⁴⁰. Furthermore, they recognize the importance of the local cultural heritage in triggering a *place-based* tourism enhancement process⁴¹.

However, this centrality of tourism attractiveness in the discourse about inner areas’ development brings along the risk, within a broader process that Sabatini defines as “touristification of the margin”⁴², that architectural heritage is deprived of its deeper meaning and role for the reference territorial context and community and is reduced to one of the products of a broader offer structuring an “inner area” brand⁴³.

³⁶ Zingarapoli, Martinelli 2018, p. 38.

³⁷ Zingarapoli, Martinelli 2018, p. 68.

³⁸ Brown, Hall 2020; Andreoli *et al.* 2018.

³⁹ Mantegazzi *et al.* 2021, pp. 142-144.

⁴⁰ Di Matteo, Cavuta 2019, pp. 88-93.

⁴¹ Salvatore *et al.* 2018, pp. 41-51.

⁴² Sabatini 2023, pp. 10-19. While discussing the on-going resignification processes of Italian inner areas triggered by the SNAI, the author reflects on the risks related to the “touristification of the margin” and its consequences for peripheral areas’ future.

⁴³ Giambruno *et al.* 2021, pp. 53-54.

5. Investigating the role of architectural heritage National Strategy for Inner Areas: toward a geo-referenced database

In this context of ambiguous and different interpretations of the architectural heritage's meaning and role, it can be appropriate to build up a geo-referenced database (fig. 2) as a comprehensive and objective picture of the interventions on architectural heritage funded in the first cycle of SNAI implementation (2014-2020). Such a knowledge frame can provide a valuable reference in understanding architectural heritage's role in SNAI implementation and its contribution to local development processes.

The implemented process moves from analyzing the *Framework Program Agreements* produced for the seventy-two project "inner areas" as the normative tool for the Strategy implementation. Indeed, the *Framework Program Agreement*, drawn up for each project area admitted to SNAI funding, includes detailed information about all the defined interventions, such as their description, expected timing, and financial coverage.

This preliminary investigation, indeed, allows identifying, for each project area, all the funded interventions related to architectural heritage, that are analyzed and categorized according to four dimensions: financial coverage, implementation status, interventions' scale, and purpose.

More in detail, selected interventions are first described in terms of financial coverage, representing the cost admitted to funding. Concerning the implementation status, interventions are distinguished into: "in progress" (about 49%), "not started yet" (about 41%), and "completed" (10%)⁴⁴.

According to the scale, four categories have been identified: the architectural scale; the urban scale, intended as the built environment stemming from the interaction of architectural assets and open spaces based on an organized spatial layout; the landscape scale; and the archeological scale (fig. 3).

Finally, in terms of purpose, the tourism-centered approach to architectural heritage, apparently emerging from reading SNAI's documents, hints at deepening this phenomenon's extent by distinguishing the identified interventions into two categories:

- "tourism-related interventions", absorbing all the interventions conceiving restoration works within renovation or enhancement programs limited to tourism purposes. They deal with the tourism furnishing of historical routes, historical centers, or heritage assets (i.e., installation of signage, information totems, tourist info points) or the reuse of heritage properties for accommodation purposes (i.e., widespread hotel);
- "other interventions", including all the other planned interventions on ar-

⁴⁴ Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione 2023. Available data about funded operations in the portal are updated to 28 February 2023.

chitectural heritage, planning restoration works within broader conservation and enhancement programs not limited to tourism purposes: reuse of abandoned heritage properties for social, cultural, or commercial purposes (i.e., museums, cultural centers, shops, social hubs); productive agricultural landscape enhancement; improvement of architectural heritage fruition conditions addressing, even if partially, local communities' needs.

The analysis and categorization phase allows for the construction of the database of SNAI architectural heritage interventions that, thanks to data return, elaboration, and visualization in a GIS environment using the software *QGIS*, provides a geo-referenced database. This geo-referenced database can be queried according to the analysis dimensions and provides different thematic maps about architectural heritage interventions in “inner areas”.

6. The geo-referenced database consultation: evidence from the project areas' strategies

The so-defined geo-referenced database, intended as a cognitive tool for understanding architectural heritage's role in SNAI implementation, provides preliminary answers to two relevant tasks:

- Understanding the spatial distribution of interventions on architectural heritage and their funding by also considering the incidence on the area's total funding and local development funding;
- Delving into the architectural heritage-tourism relationship by measuring the incidence of tourism-related funding on the total of architectural heritage funding.

Starting from the former, the observation of the number of interventions on architectural heritage (fig. 4) conveys that “inner areas” in the Center-South of Italy show a higher inclination toward interventions on architectural heritage. Such a piece of evidence can be preliminarily read according to two opposite interpretation keys, which can find feedback only by addressing a specific territorial context and its cultural approach's history. On the one hand, it can be seen as a signal of a higher awareness of architectural heritage's potential as territorial capital. On the other hand, it can be ascribable to the tendency for retracing consolidated planning paths and, thus, resorting to restoration interventions not included in any specific local development strategy.

More in detail, the positively emerging “inner areas” concerning the number of designed interventions are: the *Monti Simbruini* area in the Lazio Region with thirteen interventions; the *Alto Medio Sannio* area in the Molise Region with twelve interventions; the *Monti Dauni* area in the Puglia Region with eleven interventions; the *Mercure-Alto Sinni-Val Sarmiento* in the Basilicata Region area with twelve interventions. On the contrary, eleven strate-

gies have no specific intervention on architectural heritage (*Valfno Vestina, Subequana, Alto Aterno-Gran Sasso-Laga* in Abruzzo; *Alta Carnia* and *Val Canale – Canal del Ferro* in Friuli Venezia Giulia; *Valli Maira e Grana* in Piemonte; *Sud Salento* in Puglia; *Madonie* in Sicilia; *Contratto di Foce Delta del Po* and *Comelico* in Veneto; *Val di Sole* in Trentino).

However, the data about the number of interventions provides only a partial vision of the importance and role of architectural heritage within the different *inner areas' Strategies*. Thus, it can be worth considering the incidence of the funding devoted to architectural heritage interventions on the total and local development funding for each area's strategy.

Indeed, these information layers add further interest points to reflecting on the different areas' awareness of architectural heritage potential in tackling shrinking dynamics and triggering local development.

First, by reasoning about the incidence of architectural heritage funding on total funding (fig. 5), the previous reading about the relationship between architectural heritage and the different project "inner areas" slightly changes. On the one hand, the higher inclination of Center-Southern "inner areas" toward intervening in architectural heritage seems to be confirmed. On the other hand, adopting a different observation perspective changes the geography of "virtuous" realities from a data-based vision, which reads "virtuosity" regarding funding devoted to architectural heritage.

Indeed, the higher incidence of architectural heritage funding on the total funding is observed in: the *Alta Tuscia* and *Monti Simbruini* areas in the Lazio Region, with a percentage incidence respectively of about 49% and about 32%; in the *Sud-Ovest Orvietano* and *Nord-Est Umbria* "inner areas" in the Umbria Region with an incidence respectively of 35% and 39%; and in the *Gargano* area in the Puglia Region with a value of about 33%.

These results are almost confirmed by querying the geo-referenced database according to the incidence of architectural heritage funding on the funding allocated to local development within each area's strategies (fig. 6).

However, besides some preliminary hints on possible "virtuous" realities, based on their inclination toward heritage investments, the most evident result lies in the marginal role of architectural heritage in many strategies. Indeed, in addition to the eleven "inner areas" with no planned intervention for architectural heritage, there are nineteen other strategies where the incidence of allocated funding for architectural heritage is lower than 6% of the total (fig. 5)⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ The inner areas with an incidence of allocated funding for architectural heritage lower than 6% are: *Valle Roveto* in Abruzzo; *Mercure-Alto Sinni-Val Sarmento* in Basilicata; *Greca-nica* and *Reventino Savuto* in Calabria; Cilento Interno, *Tammaro-Titerno* and *Vallo di Diano* in Campania; Basso Ferrarese in Emilia Romagna; *Monti Reatini* and *Valle di Comino* in Lazio; *Valle Arroscia, Beigua e Unione Sol, Val di Vara* and *Antola-Tigullio* in Liguria; *Ascoli Piceno* in Marche; *Valnerina* in Umbria; *Bassa Valle* in Valle d'Aosta; *Tesino* in Trentino.

Concerning the incidence of heritage funding on local development funding, 60% of the analyzed strategies provide funding for architectural heritage, with an incidence lower than 20% of the total financing devoted to local development initiatives (fig. 6)⁴⁶.

However, more comprehensive remarks on the criticalities of the SNAI approach towards architectural heritage and the existence of possible virtuous realities can be drawn out only by going into the details of the planned interventions on architectural heritage. With this aim, the geo-referenced database is approached by considering the previously described interventions' distinction between "tourism-related interventions" and "other interventions" and observing the incidence of tourism-related funding on the total of architectural heritage funding.

More in detail, by considering the incidence of "tourism-related interventions" funding on the total allocated funding for architectural heritage within each *Area Strategy* (fig. 7), almost 80% of the considered strategy (forty-four of the fifty-five "inner areas") include "tourism-related interventions" for architectural heritage. Among them, fifteen "inner areas" adopt a mere touristic planning approach towards heritage conservation by devoting all the related funding to "tourism-related interventions". Furthermore, in twelve "inner areas", funding for tourism-related interventions exceeds 50% of the total for architectural heritage. This result, thus, seems to show the existence and relevance of the highlighted criticality in SNAI implementation: architectural heritage is recognized as a territorial capital to be enhanced in tourism terms.

Instead, the complementary reading of the investigated heritage-tourism relationship, based on the incidence of "other interventions" funding on the total for architectural heritage, provides further helpful information to address the possible "virtuous realities" theme (fig. 8). In this regard, there are eleven "inner areas" whose strategies seem to conceive architectural heritage interventions in light of a broader and more sensitive perspective toward conservation and enhancement by allocating all the architectural heritage funding to interventions categorized as "other interventions"⁴⁷. In addition, there are further ten strategies where the incidence of the financing on "other interventions" exceeds 70% of total funding for architectural heritage.

⁴⁶ The threshold of 20% is defined by considering that the SNAI identifies five key sectors for local development. Thus, by considering an equal distribution among the five local development sectors, the percentage of funding devoted to recognizes "natural and cultural heritage enhancement and sustainable tourism" should be at least 20%.

⁴⁷ The *inner areas*, whose strategy devotes 100% of architectural heritage funding to other interventions are: *Marmo Platano* "inner area" in the Basilicata Region; *Basso Ferrarese* "inner area" in the Liguria Region; *Antola-Tigullio* "inner area" in the Liguria Region; *Alta Valtellina* "inner area" in the Lombardia Region; *Ascoli Piceno* "inner area" in the Marche Region; *Fortore inner area* in the Molise Region; *Val Bormida* "inner area" in the Piemonte Region; *Monti Dauni* "inner area" in the Puglia Region; *Alta Marmilla* in the Sardegna Region; *Garfagnana* "inner area" in the Toscana Region; *Valnerina* "inner area" in the Umbria Region.

7. Discussion and future perspectives

The research provides a geo-referenced database of architectural heritage interventions funded by the SNAI, which can be considered a knowledge contribution toward understanding the role of architectural heritage in this public policy and a reference frame for monitoring and assessing funded interventions' impacts on territorial development processes.

Crossing the different layers of information provided in the database about architectural heritage's role in SNAI implementation opens valuable considerations about the heritage-tourism relationship and the possible identification of virtuous processes in SNAI implementation.

Considering the heritage-tourism relationship, indeed, this preliminary investigation strongly and unequivocally highlights the marginal role of architectural heritage in most "inner area" strategies. Furthermore, when architectural heritage is present, it is often considered a resource to be enhanced in tourism terms. Thus, in light of SNAI strengthening and widening for the next years, it becomes essential to address this criticality by conceiving architectural heritage conservation interventions within a strategic design stemming from robust and well-structured decision processes.

Instead, addressing the virtuous "inner areas" realities theme, based on the number of architectural heritage interventions, their typology, and funding incidence, it is possible to identify six "inner areas", which seem to emerge as more sensitive and conscious towards architectural heritage potentials for local development: *Appennino Piacentino-Parmense* in the Emilia Romagna Region; *Alta Tuscia* and *Monti Simbruini* in the Lazio Region; *Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano* in the Marche Region; *Alto Medio Sannio* in the Molise Region; *Terre Sicane* in the Sicilia Region. These results deserve further deepening by investigating:

- The existence or lack of a systemic and sustainable approach to architectural heritage intervention planning within each *Area Strategy*: do these interventions answer specific territorial needs or leverage real and local potentialities? Are they sustainable from a long-term perspective?
- The reasons for this stronger sensitivity and awareness towards architectural heritage's role in sustainable local development. Is it ascribable to the engagement of specific subjects or entities in the strategy-building process, such as academic or research institutions? Is it justifiable in light of a well-rooted tradition toward architectural heritage conservation? Or is it 'only' the product of a decision-making process led by forward-looking public administrators?

These are all complex questions whose answers require a deep and complex study of these "inner areas" realities that can be seen as a natural and challenging future research perspective for this work. Together with it, further research efforts can be devoted to relating funding for architectural heritage

interventions with their impacts, thus understanding if this approach deserves stronger financial support or if it cannot trigger positive effects in local development terms. At this stage, since most interventions (90%) are “not started yet” or “in progress” and territorial effects observation requires some years distance from the interventions’ implementation, it is still not possible to reflect on this aspect. In this sense, the work can be considered a reference and necessary knowledge basis for such a reflection in the future.

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Appendix

Fig. 1. Seventy-two Italian project areas selected within the National Strategy for Inner Areas (Author's elaboration on ISTAT administrative boundaries data)

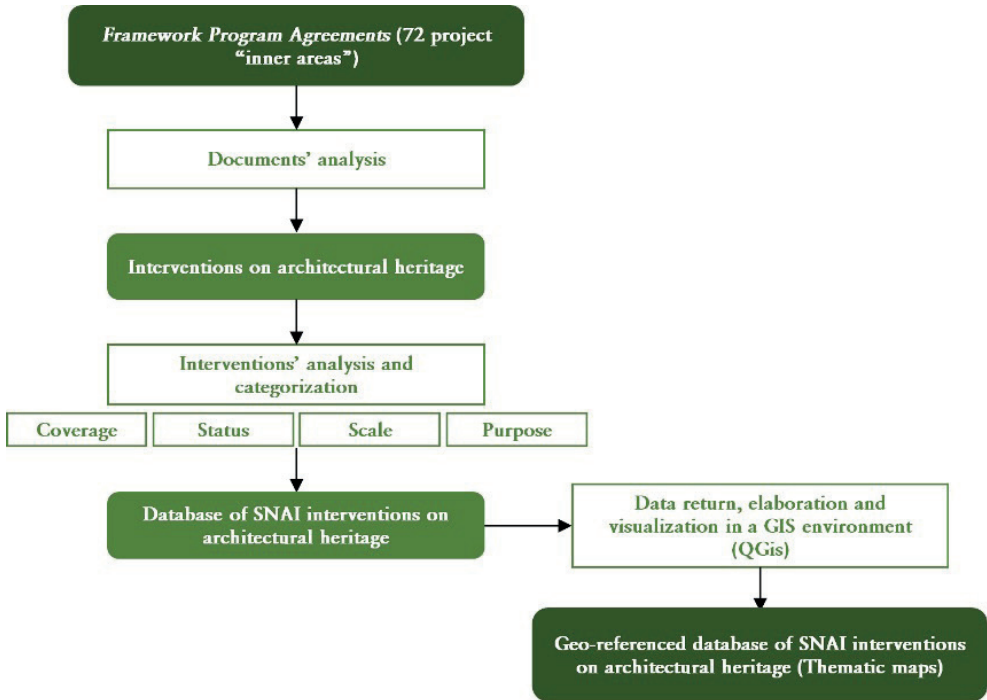


Fig. 2. Methodological approach for the geo-referenced database construction (Authors' elaboration)

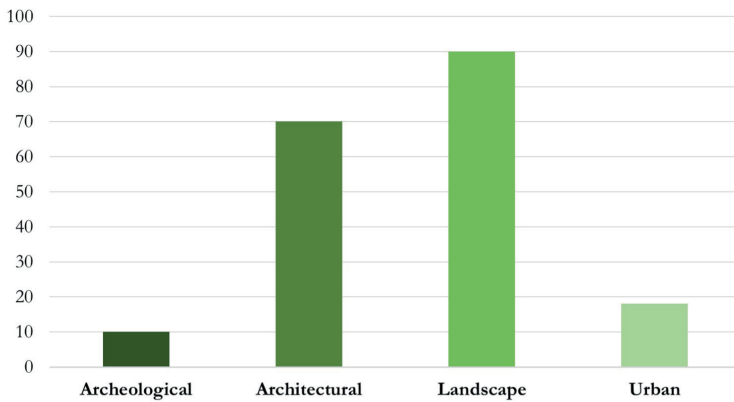


Fig. 3. Number of interventions on architectural heritage for intervention scale (Authors' elaboration on data included in the *Framework Program Agreements* of the SNAI project areas)

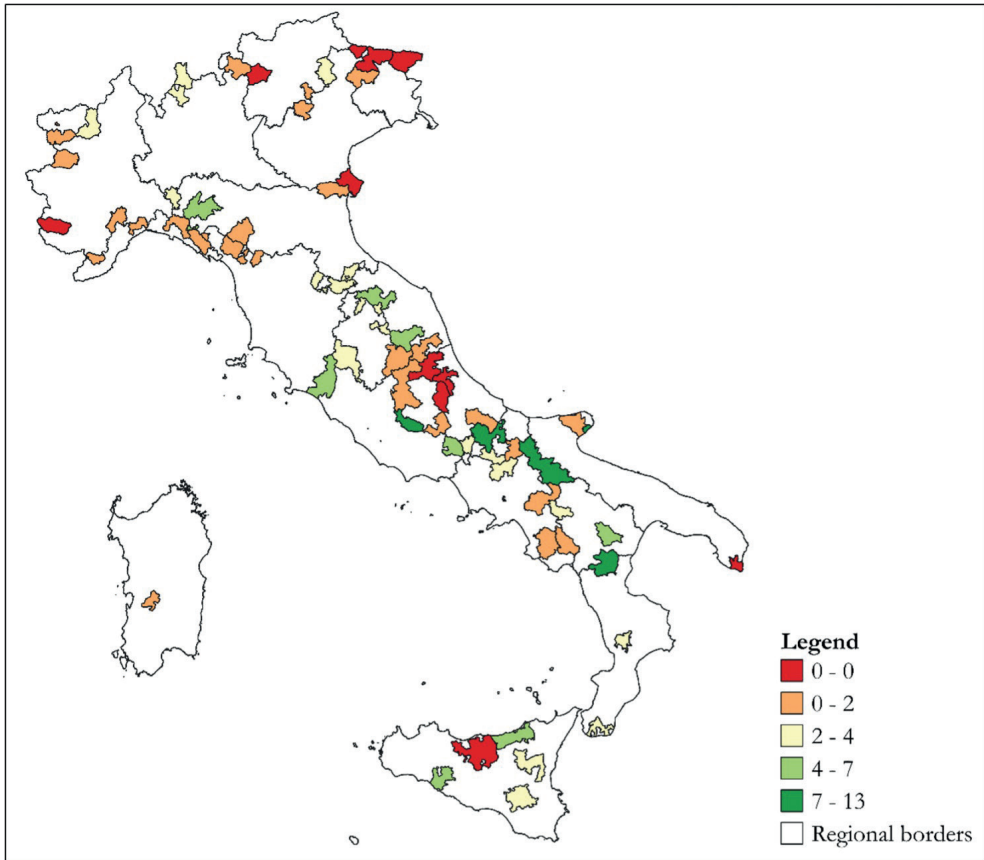


Fig. 4. Number of interventions on architectural heritage for each project's "inner area" (Authors' elaboration on data included in the *Framework Program Agreements* of the SNAI project areas)

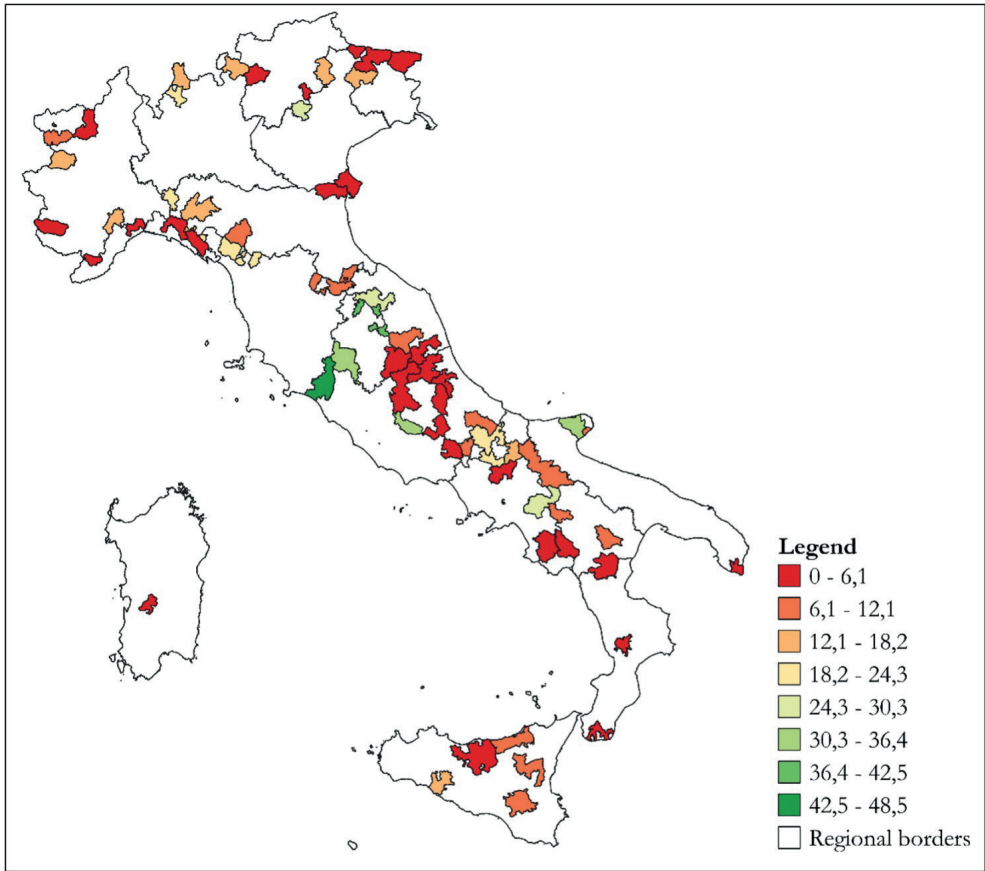


Fig. 5. Percentage incidence of architectural heritage funding on the total funding allocated for each project “inner area” (Authors’ elaboration on data included in the *Framework Program Agreements* of the SNAI project areas)

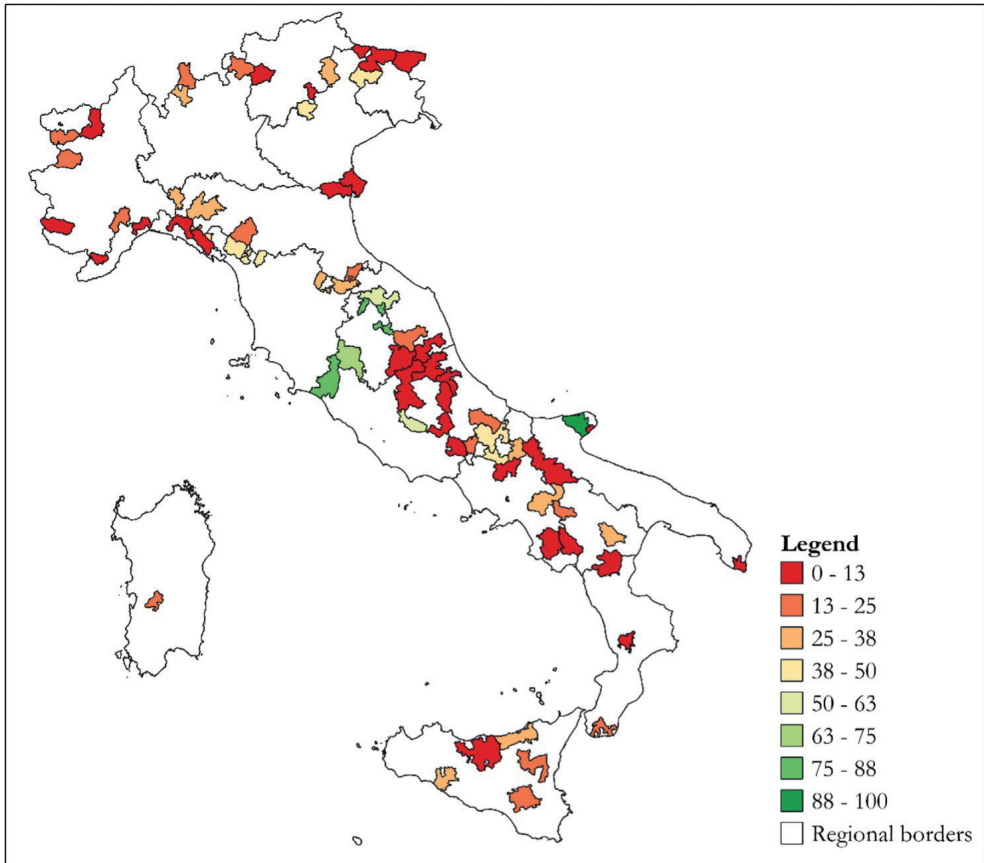


Fig. 6. Incidence of architectural heritage funding on local development funding allocated for each project “inner area” (Authors’ elaboration on data included in the *Framework Program Agreements* of the SNAI project areas)

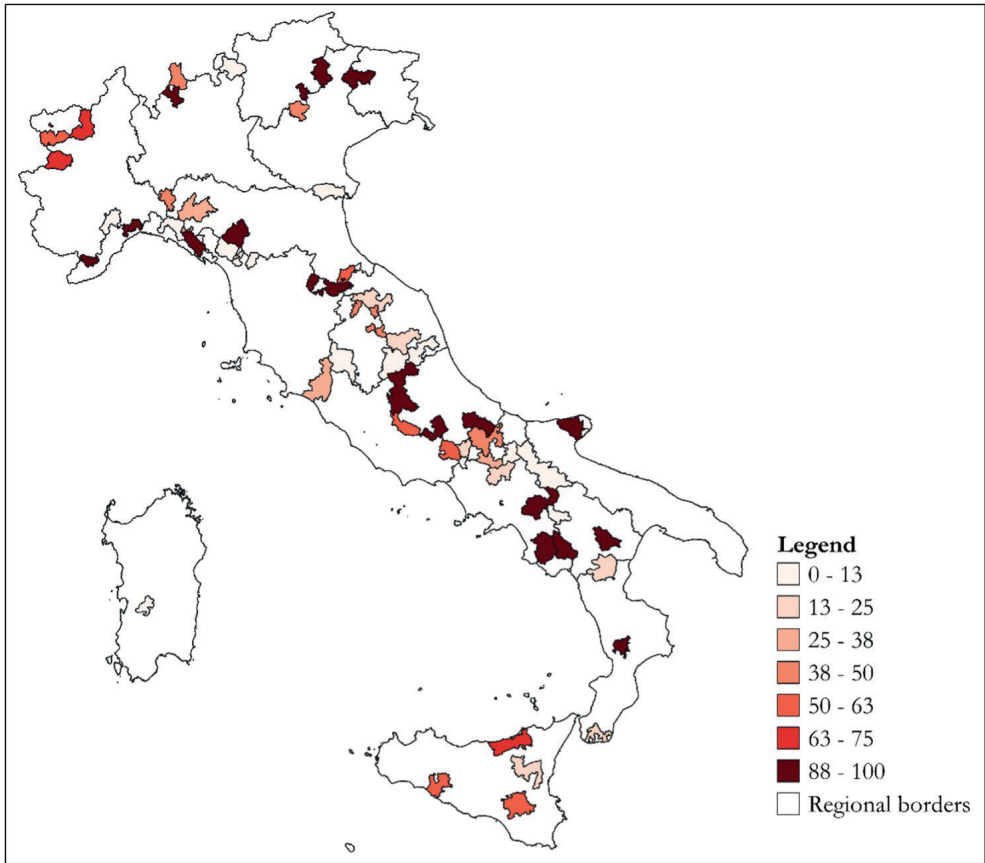


Fig. 7. Incidence of funding devoted to tourism-oriented interventions on architectural heritage on the total funding for architectural heritage in each strategy (Authors' elaboration on data included in the *Framework Program Agreements* of the SNAI project areas)

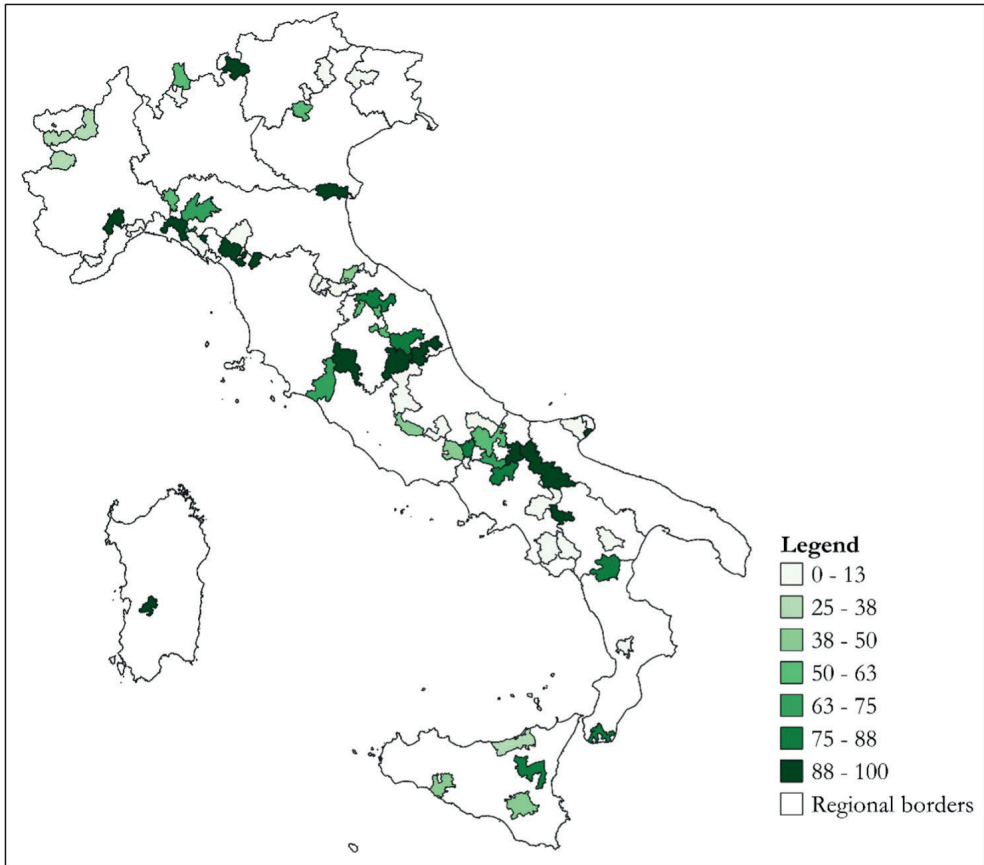


Fig. 8. Incidence of funding devoted to architectural heritage interventions in other sectors (different from the tourism sector) on the total of funding for architectural heritage in each strategy (Authors' elaboration on data included in the *Framework Program Agreements* of the SNAI project areas)

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