

Venice, February 22-24, 2007 - International Conference
'Terraced landscapes: Comparison of cultures and experiences'

ALPTER project partner: Valle d'Aosta Region

Speaker: Michele Freppaz, University of Turin

Study area: Lower Aosta Valley

Context and analysis:

The test sites are located in four municipalities in Valle d'Aosta (Pont Saint Martin, Donnas, Arnad and Montjovet) and they have been selected depending on the age and management of vineyards, the state of the terrace walls and whether the terraces were abandoned or not. Here we will focus on the work carried out in the Arnad test site, giving an overview of the preliminary results.

The shape and conservative condition of terrace walls have been evaluated through on-the-spot investigations, metrical and photographic surveys. Three soil profiles were opened, each one characterised by different management (abandoned, two different management practices), and the soil was described (Schoeneberger, 1998) and classified according to the WRB (2006). The soil was sampled by horizon and analysed for the mineralogical, physical and chemical properties. In general, soils did not display significant differences comparing managed and unmanaged plots, probably because abandonment has lasted only few decades, maximum 30-40 years. However, the dry-stone walls and the slope drainage system often showed an almost immediate decay after being abandoned, indicating that their maintenance is a fundamental issue not only for landscape conservation, but also for slope stability and soil maintenance.

Strategies and developed project (foreseen interventions and expected results):

The recognizing of diverse typologies with similar characteristics of structural layout, materials and constructive techniques ought to aim at the definition of punctual recovery guidelines for each type. Furthermore, the comparison among various sources (bibliography, actual and historical cadastral maps dating back to the XVIIIth - XIXth centuries, iconography and documents), properly integrated by on-the-spot, topographic and photographic surveys, will allow interpreting the changes in land use, rural settlements morphology and infrastructural network, related to the evolutionary dynamics of the rural landscape.

Schoeneberger, P.J., Wysoki, D.A., Benham, E.C. and Broderson, W.D., 1998. Field book for describing and sampling soils. Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA, National Soil Survey Center, Lincoln, NE.

IUSS Working Group WRB, 2006. World Reference Base for Soil Resources 2006. World Soil Resources Reports No. 103. FAO, Rome.