LOST AND FOUND

Processes of abandonment of the architectural and urban heritage in inner areas. Causes, effects, and narratives (Italy, Albania, Romania)

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ArcHistoR EXTRA

Abbandono/riuso. Alcune riflessioni sul potenziale di riattivazione del patrimonio abbandonato nelle aree interne

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Il movimento e lo spostamento sono sempre stati una caratteristica della condizione umana. Quando gli eventi naturali costringono all'abbandono, oltre alla distruzione del patrimonio costruito le persone sperimentano lo sradicamento e la perdita di identità. In Calabria, questi fenomeni sono evidenti nella costellazione di "doppi" nati negli ultimi decenni. Una volta trasferiti gli abitanti, i vecchi centri sono lasciati al loro destino di oblio e condanna alla marginalità. Quale possibile futuro per questi luoghi? Il contributo vuole riflettere sul potenziale di riattivazione del patrimonio abbandonato nelle aree interne. Partendo dalla premessa che è impossibile ripopolare tutte le aree marginali, discutere intorno al riuso o abbandono di questi luoghi implica riflettere su diversi livelli. Molti fattori influenzano quello che Mioni ha definito "l'indice di vitalità dei luoghi", e la loro considerazione è essenziale per comprendere le reali possibilità di rigenerazione. La costruzione di un modello metodologico di valutazione di questa potenzialità, che considera l'apporto di risorse endogene ed esogene, potrebbe essere uno strumento efficace per aiutare i professionisti e le amministrazioni ad indirizzare gli interventi e a orientare correttamente i finanziamenti.

Abandonment/Reuse. Some Reflections on the Reactivation Potentiality of Abandoned Heritage in Inner Areas

Sonia Pistidda

Abandonment, movement, and displacement are not recent topics, but they have always been a feature of the human condition. Historically shared by scholars of many disciplines, the effects and consequences of these phenomena also reflect a cyclical and dynamic process. Although it is difficult to establish precise geographical and temporal boundaries of the phenomenon, we can observe, as Scamardì noted, that «in the history path no place ever completely disappears […] we can always feel a continuity, of use or even just of "memory"»[1].

Despite the social, geographical, and economic diversity, the stories of abandonment scattered in our country are somewhat similar[2]. A "hostile" environment due to the territory's specific orography and morphology, as well as connections and infrastructure, were among the reasons that contributed to decreeing the isolation of a place. However, the displacement can also be tied to the demographic decline, land abandonment, and obsolescence of the housing models. The destinies of these places tell that the system has weakened because of a traumatic event, triggering other consequent chain reactions. The lack of care and the abandonment of territorial protection make these contexts

1. SCAMARDÌ 2020, p. 23: «nel percorso della storia nessun luogo si annulla mai completamente […] è sempre percepibile una continuità, sia essa d'uso o soltanto "memoriale"» (translation by the author).

2. TARPINO 2016.

progressively more and more fragile. What is abandoned is not only a physical territory but a social and productive system that has stood on precise dynamics for centuries.

Sometimes, the movements are spontaneous; in other cases, the population, following the calamitous events, is "forced" to move with the promise of economic incentives, tax benefits, new lands to cultivate, more excellent stability, and better living conditions, often with social tensions and conflicts. In addition to the damage of destruction, there are those produced by eradication, by the loss of identity and the sense of belonging, with emotional consequences for the population, creating "double communities"[3], generations of walkers, and "lost"[4]. Along with the reconstruction projects, substantial funding has often been at the origin of the political decisions to build the villages elsewhere, triggering what Varagnoli has called "reconstruction damage"[5], generating a deep fracture in the narrative of these places.

Several factors affect where to build the new town, the "double". Sometimes, the proximity between the old, abandoned centers and the new ones is linked to the desire to guarantee the continuity of agricultural and breeding activities. Particular attention is paid to accessibility and the immediate proximity of services and infrastructure, but in most cases, there are no relationships between the old and the new centers. In Calabria, the "double" in the constellation of names followed by "marina" is a clear sign of the desire not to cut the link with the past. The places where the inhabitants are moved are quickly chosen to respond to the emergency, generating a double often of poor architectural and urban quality, and the most recent uncontrolled construction has certainly not improved the situation[6]. The "imposed" transfer triggers a definitive break in the system, underlining choices marked by an ideological approach where the only option seems to be "elsewhere". Once the inhabitants have moved, the old centers are left to their fate of inevitable oblivion and condemnation to marginality. The narrative on the abandonment of these places oscillates between nostalgic memory and indifference of those who want to keep alive rituals and traditions by using the protective shield of memory and those who want to forget a past of misery and poverty[7]. Are these inevitable and irreversible processes? Undoubtedly, the absence of protection policies for the old centers makes the degradation proceed inexorably, to reach, in many cases, a point of no return.

3. Teti 2008.

4. Jedlowski, Cerulo 2023.

5. Varagnoli 2020.

6. Mussari 2020.

7. Tarpino 2012; Teti 2004; Teti 2017.

The factors contributing to the debate between complete abandonment or re-use are varied and do not always follow understandable logic. The good or bad state of conservation of a place is not a sufficient indicator to determine its fate. These processes are often the result of an interaction of historical, cultural, social, political, and economic factors that can vary significantly from one center to another and play an equally important role. It is a paradox how some of the most suggestive Italian villages indicated by tourist guides are the so-called "Ghost towns": Poggioreale Antica in Sicilia, Pentedattilo in Calabria, Civita di Bagnoregio near Viterbo or Craco in Basilicata, to mention some of the best-known examples. These are centers in decline and abandonment, with ghostly and silent atmospheres where the eternal charm of ruin attracts tourists and film sets. These forgotten places are reborn; they know a second life through tourism, and above all, thanks to their "abandoned" condition. On the other hand, even better preserved but less known, many different centers remain in oblivion with the total disinterest of visitors, investors, and administrations. These reflections make us consider that even the concept of "point of no return" is relative and can vary depending on the context, processes, and actors involved[8].

What has happened in Calabria, particularly in the Locride area that the research has examined, reflects the general thoughts above, with a vast and complex spread of the phenomenon. Here, as in other realities, the intricate events that produced the transfers can never be attributed to a single reason and natural causes cannot be separated from urban and territorial policies.

Through a history-based lens that looks at the dynamics of the past to better read the present, the research has first tried to understand, from multidisciplinary perspectives, the natural and anthropic causes of these phenomena in a historical dimension. Secondly, it analyzed the effects of these processes on the physical territory and the landscape and, on a smaller scale, on the built heritage of these towns. Finally, the narratives have been reassembled, fundamental to understanding causes and effects on the social system and communities, to start some reflections about the "reactivation potentiality".

Abandonment or reuse? Some reflections on the "reactivation potentiality" of places

The construction of a solid wealth of knowledge leads to questioning the possible destiny of these places. Here, without claiming to define it, some initial reflections are presented, which could open other research paths.

8. Fiore, D'Andria 2019.

The dilemma moves in continuous oscillation between "the no longer places and the not yet places": «The "no longer places", which, however, regret, disturb, remember, send messages and life signals, and those we can call the "not yet places," always unfinished, always waiting for definition»[9].

A first reflection starts from the realistic admission that it is impossible to repopulate all the marginal areas. As Teti stated: «Places, however, are social and historical creations, born from an internal and external relationship, but places can also die, disappear, end»[10]. This also contemplates the honest acceptance that some places have reached the "point of no return" mentioned before, and the only possible scenario is the accompaniment to abandonment. Starting from the premise that every choice never has a neutral character, even the accompaniment to the abandonment presupposes a design: accepting that a place has now reached the end of life, a point of no return, and then consciously planning its end. But what about that place? An archaeological park for tourists? A ghost town that fascinates film sets? Also, these choices are not without consequences because the maintenance of all the abandoned sites in a state of ruin provides the local administration with significant investments in the long term. Questioning the reuse or abandonment of these places implies reflecting on different levels, considering the possible contribution of endogenous and exogenous resources, always with a look to the historical causes and effects produced on the territories and communities. This perspective represents the foundation of the history-based approach: try to understand the reasons for the abandonment and identify the tools able to rehabilitate not only the physical places but also their perception.

The reflection on the potentialities of places necessarily requires the satisfaction of some structural preconditions firstly, the evaluation of the territorial "milieu," including the natural and built heritage, and the identification of the social capital.

Among the open issues that need to be addressed at a political level to make possible an effective repopulation is overcoming the economic, infrastructural, and social reasons that led to the abandonment: adequate services (education, health, transport, welfare), infrastructures (water, gas, and electricity), job creation, investments to cross the digital divide (also for promoting smart

9. Teti 2020, p. 79. «I "non più luoghi", che tuttavia rimordono, perturbano, ricordano, mandano messaggi e segnali di vita, e quelli che possiamo chiamare i "non ancora luoghi", sempre incompiuti, sempre in attesa di definizione» (translation by the author).

10. *Ivi*, p. 84. «I luoghi però sono delle creazioni sociali e storiche, nascono da un rapporto interno ed esterno ma i luoghi possono anche morire, scomparire, finire» (translation by the author).

working, telemedicine, etc.), innovation, and expertise. Over the last decade, many strategies and tools have been implemented at different levels, including the legislative one, to try to provide alternative scenarios to abandonment[11]. In all these instruments, it's curious that insufficient attention is paid to the built heritage as if the theme of repopulation can be separated from the substance of the historic buildings.

Many factors influence the decision between abandonment and reuse, and there are several pros and cons in the regeneration process. The positive aspects of a possible repopulation include economic regeneration (increasing local economic activities and job opportunities), preservation of built heritage and local traditions, the strength of local communities (sense of belonging, social cohesion, and so better quality of life), and efficient use of local resources. On the other hand, repopulation may also stress the local public services (schools, transport, health services), it could lead to the dangerous use of resources (especially in the absence of adequate sustainable development policies), and it could have a negative impact on the environment. Moreover, the mixing of new inhabitants and existing communities could give rise to social conflicts, mainly if not managed in a correct and inclusive manner. As highlighted in a study through some interviews with fourteen Majors of the inner areas[12], one of the biggest problems at the policy level regards the fragile administrative structures, with little staff and no longer young who can hardly manage ordinary matters. Most of the "first citizens" place emphasis on the need to rebuild the communities starting from the local symbols and "cultural attractions", to create networks with other Municipalities (also putting services in common in an associated management perspective), guaranteeing minimum standards of services and focusing on shared development strategies.

Young people undoubtedly play a central role in these processes, as demonstrated by a survey published in 2023[13] which highlighted an incredible desire to "remain" actively in the territories, even in rather hostile ones such as the Calabria, to develop life projects in the inner areas.

11. To mention the most important ones: The National Strategy for Inner Areas (Strategia Nazionale per le aree interne, SNAI, 2014-2020 e 2021-2027), the FESR (Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale) program 2021-2027, the Law n. 145/2018 for the assignment of fundings to small villages, the Italian Law n.158/2017 (Legge Salva Borghi), the institution of the National Agricultural Lands Bank (law 154/2016), the urgent provisions for economic growth in South Italy (LD 91/2017), the "Decreto Sblocca Italia" until the more recent Recovery Plan, Next Generation EU and Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, PNRR. FORTE, MAFFEI, DE PAOLA 2020; DE ROSSI 2018; GIAMBRUNO *et al*. 2021.

12. LUCATELLI, MONACO 2018.

13. MEMBRETTI *et al.* 2023.

The definition of a "reactivation potentiality" or, as Mioni stated, "the vitality index"[14] of places is essential to understanding the real possibilities of regeneration. It could become an effective device to define criteria and action guidelines that can also be included in territorial governance.

The "reactivation potentiality" of a place can be defined as a kind of intrinsic ability of the system to self-regenerate through external triggers, a capability to promote repair processes starting from the cultural and human capital of the territory, taking new energies also from external resources. To identify this capability, a collection of representative indicators is necessary to set up a replicable method.

A first set of macro-indicators can be defined from thematic maps produced within the knowledge process, operating from general to particular. The elements to be "measured" concern accessibility and road infrastructure, the landscape, the average age of the inhabitants, the urban system and the quality of public spaces, the character of buildings, services of community interest, the presence of underground services (water, sewer, gas, electricity, fiber optics, etc.), the strategic territorial position in relation to the reference poles, but also the settlement pressure, the presence of established traditions, the ability of local actors to trigger processes. This first operation can provide a first screening of the intrinsic potentialities and criticalities of the site.

What is the contribution of built heritage in these transformations? In these processes, it must play an active role as an already available resource with great diversity and heterogeneity. The physical intervention on the buildings and places defines the basis for the new identity matrix. So, a second level of indicators, from a heritage-based perspective, concerns uses, availability of public areas and their conditions, open spaces, characters of the buildings (from material and structural point of view), and state of conservation. The construction of thematic readings oriented to the knowledge of the context, could support the local administration in elaborating Plans.

Indeed, the number of variables is enormous, and developing a device that can "measure" them is not easy, especially because some of those characteristics are latent and not recognized. Moreover, the construction and evaluation of these potentialities in different sectors (economic, social, environmental, etc.) require the contribution of other forms of knowledge and the deployment of multidisciplinary skills that must have a direction capable of synthesizing them.

The methodological construction of an assessment model of this potentiality could be an effective tool to help professionals and administrations target the interventions and correctly orient funding.

The knowledge process, as tested in the case study of Ferruzzano during the research, can represent a first step in constructing this heritage-based model. The uniqueness of the territories

14. Mioni, Pedrazzini 2005.

forces capillary site-specific work to implement an immersive activity in the places oriented to listen to them, to re-read this huge available capital in an innovative way, creating the proper interconnections.

From a methodological point of view, the construction of a solid baseline could orient the identification of "critical areas" and resources, promoting interventions in the areas with more potential, and it could effectively support future policies and target investments.

Some critical issues were highlighted during the work on the case study that can also be considered, more in general, as gradients of complexity. First, official censuses of uncultivated land and abandoned buildings are lacking, as is a mapping of socio-economic dynamics. However, the knowledge project is a dynamic process that continually requires insights and integrations, so implementable regional information systems are necessary to create a valid and constantly updated working tool.

The transfer determines an intense identity fracture, and whether the action goes in continuity or discontinuity with the past, one of the key points is to rekindle the interest in these places. These sites, which arose also morphologically to encourage community life and mutual help, still retain a character of solid uniqueness, strongly linked to the specificities of the territory, far from the homologous logics that today characterize the globalized contexts. However, the narrative of abandonment cannot be limited to the consideration that these settlements represent a heritage. Still, we must go further, overcoming the boundaries of the individual settlement and embracing broader contexts. As Loughlin Kealy observed:

«These reflections lead me to think that, when confronting the dominant narrative of abandonment, one needs to go beyond the boundaries of resistance, of protest, of the objectification of the surviving small-scale settlement as "heritage" to find a countervailing truth, one that is rooted in ecology, in the complex systems necessary for civilization to survive, and ultimately in the human spirit, in creativity, openness, and generosity. […] In my view, the issue of regenerating abandoned settlements needs to come to that level of thinking: it needs not to be understood as a problem of small settlements but as a problem of achieving a better quality of life throughout a region or even more extensive space»[15].

Even a possible repopulation must be framed in a broader sense, not only as a return to the places of origin by those who left but also as new arrivals, settlement of new communities, as a response to the latest contemporary concept of movement, also benefiting from the energies of the "remaining"

15. Kealy 2020, p. 206.

communities. We need to imagine new ways of living; as Teti stated, we need a "re-foundation of places"[16].

This requires a systemic and multidisciplinary vision but also, as Della Torre observed, an idea of conservation as "protection of the co-evolutionary potential"[17], aware that heritage and context are indissolubly linked and influence each other. Tourism certainly cannot be the only prevailing answer. The experiences conducted over the years have revealed an exploitation of these places without ultimately generating an effective rebirth. The tourism economy represents an essential resource with direct effects on the micro-economies, but it can be completely ineffective if not included in a systemic vision[18]. New "mixed" activities must be introduced, employment opportunities must be created, long-term, more pervasive, and constant interventions must be added to promote local identity by combining the permanent residence with other seasonal activities for an effective and lasting repopulation of these places.

A vital reflection concerns the use: the effects can be positive only if the uses prefigured effectively respond to the needs of the communities; if endogenous forces trigger them, and if they are the translation of the intrinsic potentialities of the places. The knowledge phase must, therefore, be enriched by the qualitative census of these potentialities. In fact, for the definition of any possible demand, it is necessary to cross-check non-traditional data, also from different sectors: for instance, families with situations of fragility reported to social services, elderly people alone, young farmers interested in new businesses, etc.

In addition to the tools for recovering the built heritage, socio-economic triggers are needed to repopulate an abandoned center. So, parallel to the capillary work on the built heritage, a valid help in identifying some "indicators of vitality" can come from the sharing of good practices of resistance, evaluating their success or failure, even with comparative approaches, and multidisciplinary discussion. The construction of a repository of good practices could represent a valuable tool from which Mayors and different stakeholders can draw inspiration. In fact, from north to south of the country, there are many experiences of reactivation, often developed with a bottom-up approach: Smart villages, Cooperative Communities, Eco-villages, art-based reactivations, inclusion of migrants, etc[19].

16. Teti 2022.
17. Della Torre 2020, p. 115.
18. Meini 2018.
19. Cacciari 2016; Consiglio, Riitano 2014; De Blasio, Giorgione, Moretti 2018; Minervini 2016; Martinelli 2020.

The discussion with the resident population and local administrations can offer a significative framework about resources and criticalities of places. To collect these data, interviews, checklists, roundtables, focus groups or workshops with different stakeholders can be used. People and places are, in fact, closely intertwined: the recovery of the built heritage alone is not able to trigger reactivation, as well as social practices not context-based can take root. So, immersive work in the territories is necessary to understand criticalities and extract potentialities. But, at the same time, it is essential to accompany the processes to establish a practical mediation work[20].

The approach can only be interdisciplinary and oriented to understanding effects and processes to imagine sustainable scenarios of abandonment accompanied, revitalization, or other. But to make operations sustainable, we also need to braid both "upstream" and "downstream" modes of intervention.

Research and academia can play an essential role in these dynamics, building knowledge, facilitating processes, and promoting dialogue at scientific, political, and social levels.

As Della Torre stated, the view to image a future for these degraded and obsolete places is to accept a "break" and work on it, designing new paths of co-evolution and not adaptation[21].

Ferruzzano, a town. A case study

The case of Ferruzzano and its "double," which is presented in this contribution, was chosen as a "pilot" project to assess more closely and on the urban scale, the effects of these processes on the built heritage and to try to draw some reflections on the possible reactivation potentiality.

The starting assumption, as Oteri has observed well, is that a different perspective is necessary, that tracing a history of abandonment looking at not only movements but also causes, processes, effects, and narratives, including the economic, productive, and social scenario:

> «a significant paradigm shift in the usual way of looking at the territory: no longer as a frame within which things happen, much less as "production and aesthetic image" to crystallize and exhibit as a work of art in a museum, but as a product of a sedimentation of historical-economic and historical-cultural processes and also as a ground for social practices»[22].

20. Monaco, Tortorella 2022.

21. Della Torre 2020, p. 119. «La via per ipotizzare un futuro per i borghi obsoleti, disconosciuti e degradati sia quella di accettare una cesura e lavorare su di essa, pensando a percorsi nuovi di coevoluzione (non di adattamento!)».

22. Bortolotti 2009; Oteri 2019, p. 175. «Ciò richiede un significativo cambio di paradigma nel modo consueto di guardare al territorio: non più come una cornice entro cui succedono delle cose, tantomeno come "produzione e immagine

Ferruzzano is one of the small villages in the province of Reggio Calabria and the Locride area that has suffered this destiny of abandonment and population transfer in its "double". A constellation of dramatic events, repeated over time, marked its history, contributing to its decline in a general scenario of «long-lasting abandonment»[23].

Some historians[24] date the first settlement to 925, following the first Saracen invasion that had destroyed the nearby village of Bruzzano; others attributed the foundation to 1475[25]. Originally built as a "*casale*", a medieval term to indicate small groups of scattered houses, its history always remains closely linked to Bruzzano. Ferruzzano reached the status of an autonomous municipality ("University", as they were called at that time) only in 1807. The proximity to the port of Capo Zefirio has made the area always vulnerable to continuous enemy attacks, alternating periods of prosperity to more difficult times of famine, frequent floods, and disease (especially in 1700), which led to a substantial decrease in population. The history of Ferruzzano was marked by numerous sequences of earthquakes in different times that helped to build the imagination of events not exceptional but inevitable: 1181, 1456, 1510, 1602, 1616, 1620, 1621, 1627, 1638, 1640, 1644, 1646 and 1659. However, the earthquake of 1783 was one of the most violent[26]. Earthquakes have, therefore, played a significant role in the history of these places, influencing, also in an anthropological key, the relationship with the sites, indelibly marking the landscape and the memory of people[27]. Its history, marked by recurrent dramatic natural events, tells us that every regeneration process needs, at first, a rehabilitation of its imaginary as a safe place.

In the following years, many attempts were made to revive the economy, but living and sanitary conditions remained precarious, even with the lack of essential services such as water. Only around the middle of 1900, the aqueduct, a connecting road, a school, a pharmacy, the Carabinieri barracks, and the first mill were built[28].

The natural disasters that will mark the twentieth century will not help the country to recover;

estetica" da cristallizzare ed esibire come un'opera d'arte in un museo, ma come prodotto di una sedimentazione di processi storico-economici e storico-culturali e anche come terreno di pratiche sociali» (translation by the author).

23. TETI 2008, p. 405.

24. For a reconstruction of historical events, see: PERRONE 2007; LAGANÀ 2015; SPINELLA 1996.

25. GULLACE 1990.

26. SPINELLA 1996, p. 74.

27. TETI 2008. See the interesting anthropological reading of the phenomenon.

28. *Ivi*, p. 58.

indeed, they will inevitably lead it to decline. On October 23, 1907, Ferruzzano was at the epicenter of a new earthquake that caused disastrous effects on the town. A report by geologist Giuseppe Mercalli[29] states that the earthquake of 23 October 1907 devastated Ferruzzano, causing 158 deaths and bringing many houses to collapse. Indeed, the orographic and geological nature of the site contributed only to aggravate the consequences. Rodella Lucchini[30] noted the extent of the damage: «The destroyed village had 534 families, with more than 600 houses [...]: now from the list of the Genio there are 200 homes completely destroyed; 205 uninhabitable, the remaining to demolish immediately».

The engineer Vincenzo Sabatini of the Genio Civile in Reggio Calabria, following a visit to the places at that time, reported that one of the causes of the destruction was the precarious structural conditions of the buildings, often already damaged by the previous earthquakes and never restored. The houses were one or two floors (fig. 1), usually without foundations but resting directly on the sandstone. The mortar, composed of crumbled sandstone, was of poor quality, as well as the masonry. The only exception was represented by the wealthy houses, with sandstone blocks arranged in parallel faces[31] (fig. 2).

The first measures began to arrive, and in Law n. 445 of 9 July 1908[32], Ferruzzano was inserted in the list of the settlements to transfer. However, since the decree of transfer, many decades passed before this materialized, and the population continued to live in unsafe and precarious homes.

The floods of 1951, 1953, and 1954 gave a new blow to the town. «L'Unità» of 18 February 1954[33] reported that numerous houses had fallen and even the electrical cabin, leaving the village without light.

The earthquake of 1978 gave the final killing blow to a dramatically marked territory. Ferruzzano is the most affected town. Collapses are widespread everywhere, and the quake caused deep cracks in the ground. The inhabitants were moved to some school buildings of the Riviera Ionica.

Numerous newspapers of the time recorded the damage suffered, also stressing the lack of prompt interventions for the transfer since 1908 and political responsibilities:

29. Mercalli 1908.

30. Rodella Lucchini 1910. «Il paese distrutto contava 534 famiglie, con più di 600 abitazioni [...]: ora dall'elenco del Genio sono 200 le abitazioni distrutte completamente; 205 le inabitabili, le rimanenti da atterrare immediatamente» (translation by the author).

31. Spinella 1996, p. 74.

32. L. 445/1908 – Legge 9 Luglio 1908, N. 445, *Sui provvedimenti per la basilicata e la calabria*, URL https://www.normattiva.it/eli/id/1908/07/30/008U0445/ORIGINAL, accessed 20 September 2023.

33. Sa 1954.

Figure 1. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. One-storey building (unit 137) (photo S. Pistidda, 2023).

Figure 2. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Morphological and material characteristics and state of conservation. A building made in mixed masonry with spread decay phenomena (unit 346) (photo by the research group, 2023).

«In Ferruzzano [...], the earthquake would have caused some houses to collapse. Seventy percent of the houses were damaged. Seventy people were homeless and placed in a hotel in the area. The quake also caused large cracks in the streets, especially on the provincial road that connects the municipality with the state road. The Municipality, of 920 inhabitants, at the foot of the eastern Aspromonte, was almost razed to the ground by the earthquake that in 1907 hit Calabria»[34].

«The most significant damages are recorded in Ferruzzano [...] placed on decaying sandstone rocks: in old houses that have withstood the terrible earthquakes of 1908 (175 dead and about a hundred injured), 700-800 inhabitants live. [...] In the ancient center, the damage was significant: over 70 percent of the old houses, damaged by the floods of '51, '53, and '73, did not resist the violent earthquake; some of them collapsed, and the majority of them became uninhabitable as a result of the deep cracks suffered in the load-bearing structures and in the floors. [...]. The inhabitants of the collapsed or unsafe houses (about fifty) were housed in a hotel in the nearby town of Brancaleone. The story of this small town, broken up and cut by emigration, with a rural economy not even self-sufficient, is emblematic. Since 1908, a commission had decided the total relocation of the town because of the overall insecurity of the area; after the terrible floods of '51, '53, the danger of the area was confirmed and set, and subsequently realized, a first plot for the transfer of the flooded houses. For over ten years has been realized - albeit with old and outdated schemes - the master plan in the coastal area: in an area capable of housing a hundred has been paved with narrow streets and curves, today invaded by weeds: it has been arranged the creek, built a bridge to allow the transit to the station of Ferruzzano, were built sewage and water. The houses, however, have never been built, while the danger in Ferruzzano is always constant and serious; there are responsibilities that involve not only the offices of the Civil Engineers and the Region, but the same regional juntas so far succeeded»[35].

34. Laganà 1978. «A Ferruzzano [...] il sisma avrebbe causato il crollo di qualche abitazione. Il settanta per cento però delle case sono rimaste lesionate. Settanta persone sono rimaste senza tetto e sono state sistemate in un albergo della zona. La scossa ha provocato larghe crepe anche nelle strade, particolarmente sulla provinciale che collega il comune con la statale. Il Comune, di 920 abitanti, alle falde dell'Aspromonte orientale, fu quasi raso al suolo dal terremoto che nel 1907 colpì la Calabria» (translation by the author).

35. E.I. 1978. «I danni maggiori si registrano a Ferruzzano [...] appollaiato su rocce arenarie in disfacimento: in vecchie casupole che hanno resistito alle terribili scosse telluriche del terremoto del 1908 (175 morti ed un centinaio di feriti) vivono 700-800 abitanti. [...] Nell'antico centro, i danni sono stati rilevanti: oltre il 70 per cento delle vecchie case, danneggiate dalle alluvioni del '51, '53, '73, non ha resistito alla violenta scossa tellurica; qualcuna è crollata, la maggioranza di esse è divenuta inabitabile a seguito delle profonde lesioni riportate nelle strutture portanti e nei solai. [...] Gli abitanti delle case crollate o pericolanti (una cinquantina) sono stati alloggiati in un albergo del vicino comune di Brancaleone. La vicenda di questo piccolo comune, disgregato e falcidiato dalla emigrazione, con una economia rurale neppure autosufficiente, è emblematica. Fin dal 1908, una commissione di indagine aveva deciso il totale trasferimento dell'abitato per l'insicurezza complessiva della zona; dopo le tremende alluvioni del '51, '53 fu confermata la pericolosità della zona ed impostato, e successivamente realizzato, un primo lotto per il trasferimento delle case alluvionate. Da oltre dieci anni è stato realizzato – sia pure con schemi vecchi e superati – il piano regolatore nella zona costiera: in un'area capace di ospitare un centinaio di alloggi sono state pavimentate stradine strette e curve, oggi invase dalle erbacce: è stato sistemato il torrente, costruito un ponte per consentire il transito verso la stazione di Ferruzzano, sono state realizzate le reti fognanti e idriche. Le case, però, non sono mai state costruite, mentre il pericolo a Ferruzzano è sempre costante e grave; ci sono responsabilità

The news of April 1978 reported that the state of public calamity had been requested and that Ferruzzano was almost entirely evacuated. From this moment, the center started to become a ghost town, and, almost paradoxically, the abandonment has preserved these places from destruction.

The historical reconstruction of the main events of Ferruzzano helped a lot to complete the knowledge work developed on-site, allowing us to understand the effects of these moments on the substance of places.

Heritage-based perspective for the relaunch of historic centers. A methodology

«There are places in Calabria that continue to live despite their abandonment. For this to happen, someone must remember them, know how to re-look them, giving them a new sense»[36].

The research methodology was implemented into two different levels. The first included an initial *history-based approach* aimed at reconstructing the events that have affected the transfers to understand better the causes, dynamics, and effects of these processes[37]. This part has also linked some determining parameters, such as the character of settlements or cyclical phenomena of abandonment and repopulation. The material collected in the various archives, explained in detail in the documentary appendix[38], has also allowed the comparison of different narratives concerning abandonment. The stories handed down from the population's direct experiences, the state institutions' perspective, and the press highlight how these events were perceived from different points of view.

The interweaving of the various narratives allowed us to read the phenomena from a multiple perspective. The deliberately multidisciplinary composition of the working group and the comparison with the international panorama provided an additional interpretative key, enriching the readings with multiple looks[39].

The second level of investigation wanted to bring the built heritage back to the center, according

che coinvolgono non soltanto gli uffici del Genio Civile e della Regione, ma le stesse giunte regionali fin qui succedutesi» (translation by the author).

36. Teti 2008, p. 413. «Esistono luoghi della Calabria che continuano a vivere anche a dispetto del loro abbandono. Perché ciò avvenga occorre che qualcuno li ricordi, li sappia ri-guardare, conferendo loro un nuovo senso» (translation by the author).

37. See Sulfaro, pp. 44-89, and Mareggi, Rombolà, pp. 126-149, in this volume.

38. See Scaglia, Valiante in this volume, pp. 280-323.

39. See Sansa, pp. 90-105, and Petrillo, pp. 354-373, in this volume.

to a *heritage-based approach*, through a cognitive deepening on the pilot case of Ferruzzano. The goal is to read the effects of such processes directly on the "substance", the built heritage. The ruins of abandoned houses, what remains of past lives and stories, have been investigated, looking for the links between events, causes that have produced them, and tangible effects that still resist today.

Ferruzzano has been "re-watched", with a look to the past and a projection to the future, to understand if this stratified palimpsest can still represent an available resource (fig. 3).

Referring to the sequence of historical events outlined above, the architectural layout belongs to the reconstruction following the 1908 earthquake that destroyed the village. Placed on a hill from which it enjoys a privileged panorama between the Aspromonte mountains and the sea, surrounded by the countryside, its urban layout follows the irregular terrain morphology and the differences in altitude, using the rock as a support (fig. 4).

The Via Regina Margherita and two smaller parallel streets represent the axes around which the village is built, intersecting perpendicularly with other smaller streets to connect all parts of the town. In front of the church stands the unique square. The local historians, also referring to oral traditions, describe a city with single-family buildings juxtaposed with each other, mainly with a ground floor and a basement used as a warehouse, woodshed, or stable. The basement, often carved into the rock, was called "*catoju*" and used to store food[40].

The buildings are in stone and lime mortar; the roof was made with clay tiles called "*ciaramidi*" from the local furnaces. «In the roof of the kitchen room, on the perpendicular of the hearth, a special sliding tile was installed, with a small central hole, to allow handling from the ground by a stick, called "furcuni". This system was called "fundicu". By sliding the tile upwards [...], a window of about 30x20 cm was created that allowed the smoke to escape»[41].

The interiors were simple: one room for the poorest houses and two or three rooms for the wealthiest families. The most prominent houses had a wood oven for bread to serve more families. Some buildings had cisterns for collecting rainwater. Running water arrived only in the forties but bringing it to all homes would have required much work, so many continued to remain without.

Several buildings played collective roles: a kindergarten, founded by Zanotti Bianco in 1925 and

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40. Perrone 2017, p. 11.

41. *Ivi*, p. 11-16. «Nel tetto del locale destinato a cucina, sulla perpendicolare del focolare, veniva installata una speciale tegola scorrevole, con un piccolo foro centrale, per consentire la manovra da terra mediante un paletto, chiamato "furcuni". Questo apparato si chiamava "fundicu". Facendo scorrere la tegola verso l'alto [...], si creava una finestra di circa 30x20 cm che permetteva la fuoriuscita del fumo» (translation by the author).

Figure 3. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. The complex palimpsest of the buildings (photo by the research group, 2023).

Figure 4. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Three floors building resting on a rocky wall (unit 193) (photo S. Pistidda, 2023).

located in the center of the village, with large classrooms and a garden, elementary schools spread throughout the town, a post office, the Church, entirely destroyed by the earthquake of 1783, then by that of 1908, and then replaced with a temporary wooden structure, and the *Casa della Madonna* that was used for theatre performances.

Ferruzzano, which has undergone organic development over time to delineate an evident urban morphology, is almost totally abandoned today (figs. 5-8). Only a few families continue to live there, but the "spirit of the place" permeates the houses and streets. The abandonment of agricultural activities has triggered a rapid degradation of the natural landscape, and the end of care has produced the inevitable decay of the buildings. The town today has many buildings reduced to the state of ruins, deprived of roofs, clear evidence of a nature that takes back possession of architecture. The degradation of the built heritage is in continuous evolution: the loss of the roof favors infiltration phenomena, putting in crisis the supporting structures and generating structural collapses, sometimes irreversible. However, the resistance of the built heritage highlights the places' adaptive ability (figs. 9-11).

The working methodology[42] has focused on the deep knowledge of the historical settlement as a complex system because of the multiple physical and use transformations that occurred over time. The historical information collected in the first phase has been intertwined with the reading of the current state, providing valid support to some questions that emerged from visual observation. The perimeter of the investigation considered factors such as accessibility, conservation status, and representativeness of the sample examined. A quick census sheet has been specially developed for the data collection, considering the results from the first surveys and historical information collected. The sheet is divided into several levels, proceeding from the general to the particular, exploring the fabric in all its components: fronts, horizontal and internal structures, interior spaces, and open spaces. For each of these components, the materials, the construction techniques, the level of preservation, and the degree of transformation suffered over time are recorded. The collected data were transferred to a georeferenced database for the reasoned elaboration of specific thematic maps. The GIS platform (Geographic Information System) allows the development of different themes depending on particular needs and purposes. For example, by cross-referencing the information collected, some topics have been identified that could have an even more generalized knowledge value. Topics such as accessibility, use (both current and historical), morphology of the building and

42. For a complete analysis of the methodological structure of the research, see SCAGLIA, VALIANTE in this volume, pp. 280-323.

Figure 5. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Addition of external bathroom (unit 324) (photo S. Pistidda, 2023).

Figure 6. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Elevations and additions (unit 305) (photo by the research group, 2023).

Figure 7. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Morphological and material characteristics, decorative elements of the fronts (unit 147) (photo by the research group, 2023).

On the next page, figure 8. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Characteristics elements, a votive shrine (unit 310) (photo by the research group, 2023).

level of transformation suffered, general state of conservation, safety measures, and characteristics and potential of open spaces already allow some synthesis reflections (figs. 12-14). For example, it is possible to identify the areas with a priority of intervention, those best preserved and thus more easily recoverable, and those less transformed and therefore more responsive to the ancient urban structure. These analyses could also identify the areas appropriate to host pilot interventions and even those that could be re-naturalized because they have reached a point of no return.

The study's goal was to test, through the pilot case of Ferruzzano, the replicability of a method of investigation and its adaptability to other contexts with similar characteristics. Extending this type of investigation to other realities could create a valid database to support preliminary studies and design reflections on the possible future of these places (not necessarily of revitalization) but also a reasonable basis for the risk assessment of some territories from a mitigation perspective.

The municipal authorities, the provinces, and the region could benefit from these starting data within decision-making processes and, above all, to decide where to effectively target new funding, as happened recently with the PNRR, National Recovery and Resilience Plan. These kinds of analyses are undoubtedly necessary to build the starting point of the reflections, but they are not surely enough. Good policies, dialogue and network between the administrators, involvement of the communities, a careful listening of the territory to map associations, good practices, and new energies such as the young generation are fundamental to creating new narratives and effectively supporting the "capability to stay"[43].

43. MEMBRETTI *et al.* 2023, p. 83.

Figure 9. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Building in ruins without a roof (unit 310) (photo S. Pistidda, 2023).

Figure 10. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Provisional works after the earthquake (unit 175) (photo S. Pistidda, 2023).

Figure 11. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. Provisional works after the earthquake (unit 175) (photo S. Pistidda, 2023).
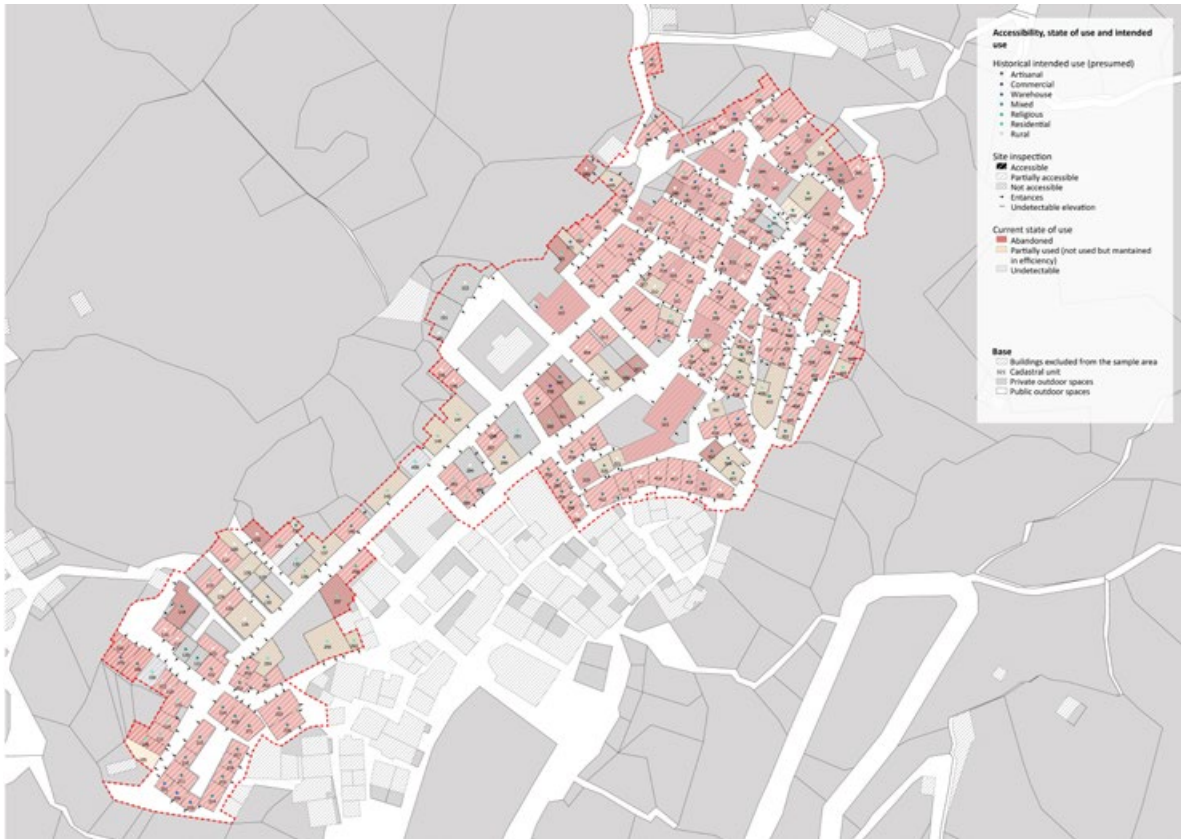
Figure 12. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. A thematic map of the accessibility and uses (actual and historical) (elaboration by M. Scaglia and C. Valiante).

Figure 13. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. A thematic reading of the building's morphology and level of transformation (additions and overlapping) (elaboration by M. Scaglia and C. Valiante).
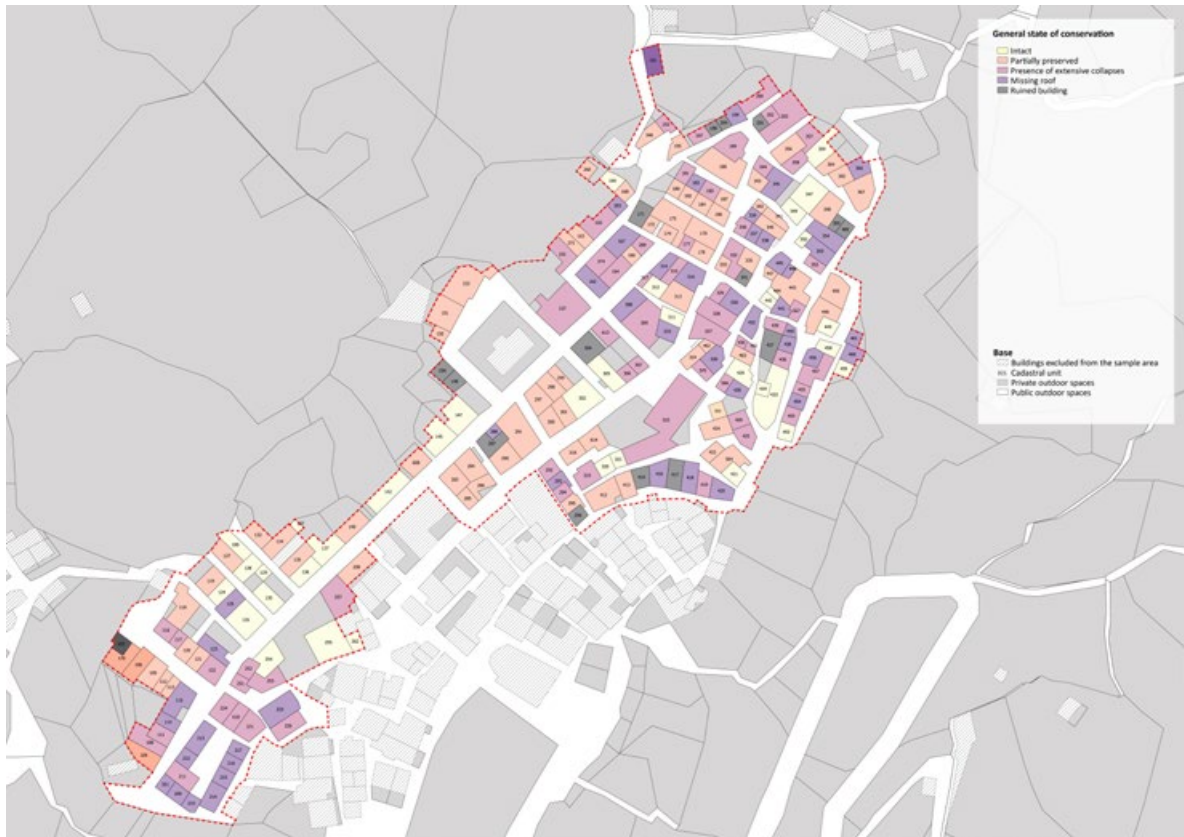
Figure 14. Ferruzzano, Reggio Calabria, pilot project. A thematic reading of the general state of conservation of the built heritage (elaboration by M. Scaglia and C. Valiante).

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