



University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria

PAU Department



# one needs a town

STUDIES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR ABANDONED OR DEPOPULATED SMALL TOWNS



ONE NEEDS A TOWN, IF ONLY FOR THE PLEASURE OF LEAVING IT.  
A TOWN MEANS NOT BEING ALONE, KNOWING THAT IN THE PEOPLE, THE  
TREES, THE SOIL THERE IS SOMETHING OF YOURSELF, THAT EVEN WHEN  
YOU'RE NOT THERE IT STAYS AND WAITS FOR YOU.

CESARE PAVESE, THE MOON AND THE BONFIRES (1950)

International Conference | Reggio Calabria 7-9 November 2018

[www.unpaesecivuoled.unirc.it](http://www.unpaesecivuoled.unirc.it)

info: [unpaesecivuoled@unirc.it](mailto:unpaesecivuoled@unirc.it)

# The conference

The conference aims at analysing the effects of processes of abandonment on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of European small towns and at identifying possible strategies for their social and economic re-launch. Today, in some countries, including Italy, the phenomenon of depopulation is dramatic: notwithstanding the recent increase of interest towards cultural heritage and attention to social and environmental problems related to big urban areas, in reality, many small towns and villages continue to lose inhabitants.

The history of European small towns, often located in peripheral, internal or mountain areas, almost always concerns people moving away, abandonments and, only rarely, people coming back. Migrations, falling birth rates, natural catastrophes, epidemics, wars, climate change, new road systems, cultural and social transformations: these are only a few of the numerous factors which, over the time - singularly or jointly, suddenly or gradually -, have led people to leave their places of origin.

In this perspective, the conference intends to be a moment of in-depth analysis on the reasons that caused, and continue to cause, the depopulation of villages and small towns.

The conference intends also to investigate the effects – permanent or reversible – which those processes have produced on the landscape and in the local communities. In losing inhabitants, in fact, local communities risk losing their cultural identity, architectural heritage deteriorates rapidly, working activities are abandoned and ancient traditions risk being forgotten. In addition, hydro geological instability often relevant increases due to the absence of land maintenance and, simultaneously, urban congestion grows unsustainably.

Moreover, the conference intends to launch a wide discussion on possible strategies aimed at contrasting depopulation phenomena and identifying solutions in order to valorise abandoned small towns.

The conference will have a transdisciplinary approach through which the disciplines that traditionally study the processes of transformation of architectural heritage and landscape – such as restoration, history of architecture, urban history – may productively work with the support of different fields, such as sociology, anthropology, history of economy, urban and territorial geography.



# Sessions

The proposals will be managed in two different main sessions, as follows:

## Session 1 – History of abandonment: reasons, consequences, and transformations

### 1a. The reasons of abandonment: historical, economic, natural, social and cultural issues

The sub-session collects studies aimed at investigating the reasons that, over the centuries, have led inhabitants to leave their places of origins. Although the conference privileges studies on processes of abandonment during the modern age, research concerning ancient and middle ages will be well accepted, seen as original roots of more recent phenomena.

Among the possible arguments:

- War and conflicts (political, religious and ethnic conflicts, etc.);
- Hydro geological instability (landslides, floods, erosion, coastal storms, etc.);
- Climate change and environmental alterations (desertification, environmental disasters, drought, pollutions, etc.);
- Earthquakes;
- New road systems and transport infrastructures (railways, motorways, etc.);
- Obsolescence of productive settlements (extractive operations, industrial zones, etc.);
- Social and economic changes (industrial revolutions, new economic models; new styles of life; new housing standards; real estate speculation; etc.);
- Changes in rural-based food production, or in agricultural practices and technologies.
- Demography (falling birth rates, migrations, internal mobility, etc.);
- Hygiene and public health (epidemics, insalubrious areas, conditions of life of inhabitants, etc.);
- Legislative and administrative issues (laws, orders, measures, economic provisions, etc.).

### 1b. The consequences of abandonment: transformations and permanence

This sub-session concerns the effects of abandonment and depopulation on the landscape, on urban and architectural heritage and on local communities.

Among the possible arguments:

- Transformations of urban and cultural heritage (small towns in ruins; issues related to the degradation of buildings, conservation, protection of heritage, etc renovations, restorations, functional updating, etc.);
- Effects on the landscape (new settlements, real estate speculations, illegal development, signs of natural catastrophes, etc.);
- Risks for intangible heritage (traditions, religious rituals, craftsmanship, etc.);
- Cultural identity and new conditions of life of local communities;
- Effects on the local economy, agriculture, public facilities, etc.;
- Indirect effects on other areas (urban congestion; coastal areas, etc.);
- Transfer of inhabitants (new towns, spontaneous settlements, emergency camps, etc.).

## Session 2 - A possible return: strategies, proposals and perspectives for the re-launch of abandoned small towns

### 2a. Strategies for regeneration and valorisation: a look back to the recent past

Since the 1960s – in practice, since the phenomenon has become prominent – several solutions and strategies have been proposed to contrast depopulation and to try to valorise some abandoned villages. This session will welcome studies aimed at analysing the strategies adopted in the recent past, through some specific cases studies, outlining both positive and negative results.

Among the possible arguments:

- Gentrification;
- Tourism;
- Musealization and memorialization;
- Cultural events;
- “Neo-rural” movements settlements;
- Law and administrative aspects (funds, aid, policies, etc.).

### 2b. Imagining a different future: innovative proposals, experiments and new trends

In the light of an increasingly globalized world, strategies adopted in the past seem to be often ineffective or outdated. This sub-session will welcome studies on strategies adopting innovative approaches to the issue of depopulation and, more in general, regarding the related social, cultural and economic aspects.

Among the possible arguments:

- New legislative proposals;
- Urban policies for innovative accessibility and mobility system;
- Alternative notions of cultural identity, heritage and local community;
- New interpretations of landscape and architectural heritage;
- Globalization, glocalization, unhappy growth and happy degrowth;
- Ecovillages;
- Refugee welcome policies as repopulation process;
- Re-launching rural and traditional activities;
- New economies.

## GUIDE FOR THE AUTHORS

The proposals will be submitted by the authors exclusively **on-line**, by creating an account and starting a submission, following the instructions at [Author Guidelines](#). (Don't forget to switch the language!)

The authors will upload:

- Two abstracts (3000 characters, spaces included, each), one in Italian and one in English, outlining objectives, methodology and results of the research and a short bibliography;
- Up to a maximum of 3 images (or table, or graph), jpeg or tiff format (300 dpi each, max 2 Mb each); text file with captions;
- Personal details (affiliations; qualifications) and indication of the session and sub-session to which the author intends to participate.

Official languages of the conference are Italian and English.

The submitted proposals will be selected through a double-blind peer review procedure. Results of the selection will be communicated to the authors by 28 May 2018; authors will also be informed if their accepted proposal will be included as an oral presentation or a poster.

After acceptance, authors will be asked to register through the OCS platform.

The accepted abstracts and the additional materials will be included in a volume, with ISBN, published before the conference.

Following the conference, authors will be invited to submit the full paper, both oral presentations and posters, within December 2018, which will be published in an open access volume, with double blind peer review, ISBN (*ArcHsitoR Extra* series), in 2019. Guidelines regarding presentation and submission of full papers will be communicated soon.

Learn more visiting [www.unpaesecivuoie.unirc.it](http://www.unpaesecivuoie.unirc.it)

## DEADLINES

Call for papers: 31 January 2018

**Deadline for proposal submission: 26 March 2018**

Abstract acceptance: 28 May 2018

Registration – ordinary and reduced – fee: from notification of acceptance to 15 June 2018

Late registration fee: from 15 June 2018 to 15 September 2018

Presentation of final programme: 19 September 2018

Conference: 7-8-9 November 2018

Full paper submission: December 2018

Publication e-book double blind peer reviewed with ISBN : Spring 2019

## REGISTRATION FEES

N.B. Registration procedure will be activated by 28 May 2018.

Early registration (from notification of acceptance to 15 June 2018)

- €120: Full-time professors, lectures, researchers, non-university civil servants (e.g. Department of Culture & Heritage personnel);
- €80: students, non-affiliated and free-lance researchers.

Late registration

- €180: Full-time professors, lectures, researchers, non-university civil servants (e.g. Department of Culture & Heritage personnel);
- €110: students, non-affiliated and free-lance researchers.

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## STUDIES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR ABANDONED OR DEPOPULATED SMALL TOWNS

### SCIENTIFIC CO-ORDINATORS

Annunziata Maria Oteri (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Giuseppina Scamardi (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria)

### INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Philip Brown (University of Salford), Carlo Carozzi (Director of "Storia urbana"), Xavier Casanovas (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya), Lucia Della Spina (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Stefano Della Torre (Polytechnic University of Milan), Concetta Fallanca (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Donatella Fiorani (University of Rome La Sapienza), Loughlin Kealy (University College of Dublin), Francesca Martorano (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Stefano Musso (University of Genoa), Tonino Perna (University of Messina), Valentina Russo (University of Naples Federico II), Renato Sansa (University of Calabria), Ruxandra-Lulia Stoica (University of Edinburgh), Rosa Tamborrino (Polytechnic University of Turin), Vito Teti (University of Calabria), Pietro Tino (Roma Tre University)

### SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Roberta Filocamo (Mibact), Monica Musolino (University of Messina), Bruno Mussari (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Renata Prescia (University of Palermo), Nino Sulfaro (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria)

### CONFERENCE ADMINISTRATION

Michele Ambrogio (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Rossana Caniglia (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Elena Trunfio (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria)

Design: Nino Sulfaro (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria)

Web management: Melchiorre Monaca (SIAT - University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria), Giuseppina Scamardi (University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria)

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