

**DANIELA PITTALUGA**

**FABIO FRATINI**

(édité par/by)

**CONSERVATION ET MISE EN VALEUR  
DU PATRIMOINE ARCHITECTURAL ET PAYSAGÉ  
DES SITES CÔTIERS MÉDITERRANÉENS**

CONSERVATION AND PROMOTION OF ARCHITECTURAL AND  
LANDSCAPE HERITAGE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COASTAL SITES

ripam

7

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Ce livre est un ouvrage collectif, dont les contributions ont été élaborées à partir de la conférence RIPAM 7, organisée à Gênes du 20 au 22 septembre 2017 par le DAD - Département d'architecture et de design (Université de Gênes) en partenariat avec le CNR-ICVBC Institut national de recherche, Institut pour la conservation et la mise en valeur du patrimoine culturel de Florence).

This book is a collective work, with contributions developed starting from RIPAM 7 conference, organized in Genoa, 20 to 22 September 2017 by the DAD - Department of Architecture and Design (University of Genoa) in collaboration with the CNR-ICVBC (National Research Council, Institute for Cultural Heritage Conservation and Valorization, Florence).

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Daniela Pittaluga et Fabio Fratini ont travaillé ensemble sur les textes initiaux (comprenant les sections “Qu’est-ce que le RIPAM?” et “Conférence RIPAM 7”, les remerciements et les index) et sur les descriptions des thèmes et sous-thèmes (sections A et B et sous-parties). Cependant, Daniela Pittaluga a écrit les parties en français et Fabio Fratini a écrit les parties en anglais, ils sont auteurs de certains articles et les éditeurs de la partie restante.

Daniela Pittaluga and Fabio Fratini worked together on the initial texts (including sections “What is RIPAM?” and “RIPAM 7 Conference”, acknowledgements and indexes) and on the descriptions of the themes and subthemes (section A and B and subparties). However, Daniela Pittaluga wrote the parts in French, and Fabio Fratini wrote the parts in English. They are authors of some articles and editors of the remaining part.

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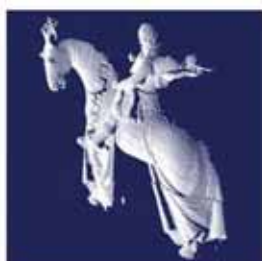
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a Anna Maria e a Luca

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## Reconversion du patrimoine architectural / Reconversion of architectural heritage

Cette session examine la reconversion du patrimoine architectural, avec la recherche de l'équilibre entre les exigences de préservation de l'existence historique et celles d'utilisation dans le contexte de la contemporanéité.

En abordant le thème de l'utilisation de ce patrimoine, on discute la nécessité d'avoir de nouvelles fonctions compatibles avec la structure ancienne et son histoire, par exemple en maintenant sa fonction originelle ou en maintenant la valeur historique du bâtiment dans sa reconstruction, comme mémoire indépendante de l'époque. De nouvelles relations sont étudiées entre le patrimoine architectural et l'identité locale, en tenant compte du nouveau contexte social résulte des problèmes émergents de la Méditerranée que l'accueil des réfugiés.

La possibilité d'une intégration avec les matériaux et les formes contemporains est également discutée, on se demande jusque à quel point de dégradation et d'altération on peut rétablir le patrimoine architectural. Des méthodes d'évaluation des interventions de réadaptation sont proposées, ces comparaisons et éléments seront utiles dans les reconversions futures. On discute également des spécificités et des lacunes dans le cadre réglementaire régissant la reconstruction des bâtiments historiques

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This session examines the reconversion of architectural heritage, with the search for a balance between the requirements of preservation of the historical remains and usage in a contemporary context.

By addressing the theme of the use of this heritage, the need to have new functions compatible with the ancient structure and its history is discussed, for example maintaining its original function, or maintaining the historic value of the building in its reconstruction as a memory independent from time. New relationships are being studied between architectural heritage and local identity, considering the new social context originated by emerging Mediterranean issues such as welcoming refugees.

The possibility of integration with contemporary materials and forms is also discussed, examining at which point of degradation and tampering it is still possible to reconvert the architectural heritage. Methods of evaluating rehabilitation interventions are proposed, to draw from these comparisons and useful elements in future reconversions. A discussion is also on the specificities and gaps in the regulatory framework governing the reconstruction of historic buildings.

## New strategies for Mediterranean architectural heritage. The case of Calabria's historical centres repopulated by refugees

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**Résumé.** Ce travail présente des observations sur le thème des centres historiques abandonnés dans la région méditerranéenne et sur les stratégies possibles pour leur réemploi et leur conservation. Dans le détail, les auteurs analyseront le cas de la côte de la mer ionienne de la Calabrie où, au fil des siècles, les Phéniciens, les Grecs, les Arméniens et les Albanais ont laissé une trace de leur culture sur les communautés locales, à partir de la langue pour arriver jusqu'à l'architecture. Plus récemment, ces lieux sont devenus le port d'arrivée pour des milliers de personnes en fuite de leur pays d'origine et, dans les années 90 du XX siècle, des expériences concernant les politiques d'immigration ont été entreprises non seulement dans le but d'aider les réfugiés, mais aussi pour favoriser un développement local durable. En utilisant d'abord des ressources locales et ensuite des fonds publics, certaines administrations municipales comme celles de Badolato et Riace ont entrepris des politiques de récupération du patrimoine architectural des centres historiques, en partie dépeuplés au cours du XX siècle. Grâce au capital social, des magasins et de petites entreprises basées sur la récupération de l'artisanat local ont remis en marche l'économie locale et permis un réseau lié au tourisme responsable.

**Mots-clés:** architectural heritage, immigration policies, Calabria, depopulated centres, valorisation.

### Introduction

In September 2017, the Mayor of Ventotene, an Italian island famous for being the cradle of Europeanism with the Manifesto of Ventotene, 1941, appealed to the authorities to send immigrant families to repopulate the area and thus, avoid closing the school due to too few pupils<sup>1</sup>.

The case of Ventotene is not isolated and highlights two relevant issues: the depopulation of European marginal or internal areas and the policy of welcoming refugees.

In recent times, the issue of abandoned historical centres, and, more in general, the depopulation of small towns, which involves Europe and not

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<sup>1</sup>See:[http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/17\\_settembre\\_05/ventotene-mandate-qui-migranti-appello-sindaco-santomauro-479f0e46-921c-11e7-a584-742676259d49.shtml](http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/17_settembre_05/ventotene-mandate-qui-migranti-appello-sindaco-santomauro-479f0e46-921c-11e7-a584-742676259d49.shtml) (online December 2017).

only Italy, is constantly in the media spotlight, especially for the notion that these places can live again with the help of proper policies for welcoming refugees.

The idea of looking at immigrants as a resource for re-populating small towns in Italy is not recent: since the 1990s, Calabria has been making efforts in this direction, with significant, even if sporadic, experiences.

Starting from the main reasons which, in the contemporary age, caused the abandonment or depopulation of Calabrian historic town centres, with particular reference to those of the southern Ionic coast, the essay proposes some reflections on possible strategies for repopulation and enhancement, and on the role of architectural conservation within these processes.

### **Processes of the depopulation in Southern Calabria**

Recently, in Italy, the phenomenon of depopulation is truly impressive: a recent study highlights that in Italy, 43.2% of towns with a population less than 5000 are suffering from an economic and demographic crisis capacity [POLCI, GAMBASSI 2016]. In most cases, these small towns and villages can no longer guarantee public services (healthcare, education, etc.), so the process of depopulation increases more and more every day.

The effects of depopulation on the territories are not obviously only a problem of numbers. In losing inhabitants, in fact, small towns lose attractiveness, economic activities are discontinued, while, at the same time, congestion and environmental pressure in the larger urban areas increase, due to population displacement. From a cultural point of view, as a consequence of depopulation, we can observe how urban and architectural heritage decays more rapidly, local communities lose their identities and ancient traditions disappear.

These effects are evident not only in national internal and mountain areas, but also in Calabria, where in some small towns along the southern Ionic coast, the negative consequences of depopulation processes are dramatic.

In the past, people coming from foreign countries, such as the Phoenicians, Greeks, Albanians and Waldesians, arrived on the coasts of Calabria, leaving substantial traces of their background over the centuries on the local culture, from language to architecture. In more recent centuries, the fluxes went in the opposite direction, making the phenomenon of depopulation a constant feature of this territory.

Focusing only on the 20<sup>th</sup> century and on more recent processes, Calabria is, in fact, one of the Italian regions which has been most affected by depopulation processes: there were many totally abandoned small towns in the past, others partially depopulated, and centres that are currently being depopulated.

In particular, the recent history of most of the small towns along the Ionic coast of Calabria, between Locride and the so-called Greek-Bovesian area – characterized by the influence of the ancient presence of Greeks, Byzantines and Armenians – well describes the range of issues related to the processes of abandonment and depopulation from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to today. Here, economic emigration, as in the rest of the region, is still one of the most relevant incentives in driving people to leave: between 1876 and 1976 about two million people moved from Calabria to foreign countries – a similar number to the current population in the region – and the trend is still noteworthy today capacity [CARCHEDI, VITIELLO 2014]. Apart from searching for a job and better economic conditions, people were also attracted by new models of life, represented by modern, comfortable urban lifestyles as opposed to the poor, heavy rural life, moving thus from small towns to the main towns in Calabria or in northern Italy.

However, in Calabria, the various natural disasters which occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, probably played the main role in the depopulation processes. The complexity of the orographic and hydrogeological structure has always been decisive for Calabria: floods and earthquakes, frequent and often catastrophic, have been constant features in the history of this territory [GAMBI 1960].

Earthquakes in 1894, 1905, 1907 and 1908 caused significant mobility along the Ionic coasts, both abroad and within the region [TETI 2008; ROMEO 2014]. The events in the small town of Ferruzzano well describe correlations between the several earthquakes which occurred in this area and depopulation processes over the years. In particular, on October 23<sup>th</sup> 1907 a catastrophic earthquake, 9° of the Mercalli scale, effected most of the towns and villages along the Ionic coast. In Ferruzzano, the effects were particularly devastating, causing 158 victims, obliging the inhabitants to move to other villages and some emergency camps. Already damaged by previous earthquakes, most of the buildings of Ferruzzano did not resist this event. After only one year, in 1908, when nothing had yet been repaired or reconstructed, another devastating earthquake occurred in the area, overlapping the effects and damage

of the previous one. After this event, some studies estimated that 87% of the building collapsed or were seriously damaged [TETI 2008]. The government, in successive years, proposed to move the inhabitants in another location, but, for 60 years nothing was reconstructed and people continued to live in the old town and in the emergency camps, which then slowly transformed into new villages. Many of the inhabitants, in the meanwhile, moved to other Calabrian towns, or emigrated. In 1978, when another earthquake caused further damage and the town was declared unliveable by the authorities, Ferruzzano was, in practice, already depopulated. The few remaining inhabitants continued to live there till the 1990s, when funds from the Regional government were destined to build a new settlement near the sea, rendering the old town definitively deserted<sup>2</sup> (figg.01-02).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, frequent earthquakes were accompanied also by other natural disasters, related to hydrogeological instability. In the 1950s, the instability of the entire Ionic area was dramatic, to the extent that some experts sent by the government suggested evacuating all the towns and villages of the area and transferring all the inhabitants to safer places [ZEMA 2004]. According to the experts, due to the instability of that territory, guaranteeing any effective intervention to make the towns and the villages safe again was impossible. In 1951 and 1953, floods damaged some small towns and destroyed others, obliging inhabitants to look for alternative refuge. In particular, those events devastated the towns of Africo and Casalnuovo, obliging the inhabitants to look for a location to settle the new town. After several difficult years, a new town was built very far from the old town, within an environmental context which is totally different from the original one [STAJANO 1979].

For Africo, as for other evacuated towns, the transfer meant not only losing a home, but above all their economic activities, based essentially on agriculture and farming. The location for the settlement of the new Africo town, just to mention one of several cases, was on land near the sea, where neither of these two activities was possible, and thus, the population had no choice but to emigrate (figg.03-04).

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<sup>2</sup> See: *Legge regionale 24 gennaio 1997, n.3 - Integrazione a modifiche alla legge regionale del 24/2/1979, n. 2, Disciplina degli interventi nelle zone della provincia di Reggio Calabria.*





*Fig. 01,02 : On the left, Ferruzzano (Reggio Calabria) destroyed by the earthquake in October 1907 (from "La Tribuna illustrata", n.45, November 1907 - private collection); on the right, the old small town of Ferruzzano today (photo by N. Sulfaro)*



*Fig. 03,04 : On the left, the abandoned old town of Africo (Reggio Calabria); on the right, Africo Nuovo, near the sea, far about thirty kilometres from the old abandoned town (photo by N. Sulfaro)*

In the light of these few cases, we can outline how depopulation represents a significant risk for territories, from several perspectives. First of all, depopulation prevents carrying on traditional agricultural and craftsmanship activities – often passed on from generation to generation and nearly always based on empirical knowledge – which were the bases of the economy in most of the marginal areas. The obvious loss of interest in the correct maintenance of the land, both by inhabitants and public institutions, increases the risks of hydrogeological instability. At the same time, depopulation produces a growth of population in the main urban centres, with a consequential increase of anthropic and environmental pressure on areas which are often already congested.

In addition, we can underline other social and cultural issues: depopulation in contexts nearly always characterized by deep historical

and cultural features causes loss of identity, the disappearance of stable cultural values, the breakdown of communities and a general sense of bewilderment in people that remain.

Inevitably, this process also has relevant effects on the local architectural heritage which deteriorates rapidly, as a consequence of the lack of maintenance. But, more in general, it has a relevant effect also on the landscape: small towns slowly go to ruin and nature takes possession again of the structures. This is the case of some small abandoned towns, such as the case of Africo, which today are totally abandoned and have become something more similar to an archaeological site than to an urban, dwelt-in settlement, and the idea of repopulating is now impossible.

In other cases, such as Ferruzzano, despite the several natural disasters, the depopulation process has been slower, so the towns have been maintained over the years and now are better conserved. However, due above all to the absence of policies for economic, cultural, social and touristic development, these territories cannot overcome the minimum standard required for ensuring the inhabitants good living standards. These standards can be considered non-return thresholds; meaning that once those particular conditions have been breached it is impossible to revitalize those territories without a strategy involving external factors. Without external help, in terms of funds, projects and people that physically repopulate the places, these small towns – nearly always bearers of a relevant Mediterranean cultural legacy – are destined to lose their tangible and intangible heritage. N.S.

### **Strategies for repopulation of historical centres: welcoming refugees in Southern Calabria**

The issue of repopulation of small abandoned town is highly topical in Europe and involves many scientific and cultural fields, such as sociology, economics, geography, urban planning and architectural restoration. Until up now, this heritage, mostly characterized by small rural and inner historical centres in which landscape and architecture are fuse together in very suggestive contexts, in economic analyses contributes to local economies mostly for its value of use in relation to its touristic accommodation capacity [DELLA TORRE 2010].

In recent times, also thanks to the new tendencies of cultural economics, different strategies for repopulation of historical centres are going to be studied. These experiences, commonly related to touristic offer (scattered

hotels, cultural attractions and, recently, supporting tourism), lately look at new forms of development with the idea to promote activities that can support and improve the local economy with new sustainable strategies [KNOX, MAYER, 2013; DI FIGLIA 2016]<sup>3</sup>. Among these, recent experiences in Calabria, a Region of Southern Italy, look at immigrants as a resource for the repopulation of small historical centres<sup>4</sup>.

It is a controversial topic, which involves some significant concepts such as territory and social identity, together with some conflicting aspects, such as the relationship between repopulation (people who come from other countries and cultures) and sense of belonging of exiting communities to their traditions and places.

In this sense Calabria, which is the result of hybridization of different cultures that left deep traces and great changes over the centuries, may represent a natural laboratory of welcoming and hybridization of cultures. The idea to repopulate small towns by welcoming refugees was born quite causally when, in 1997, a Kurdish refugee ship ran aground near Badolato, a small depopulated town on the Ionic coast of Calabria. The locals welcomed the almost one thousand refugees who were initially hosted in a school. Subsequently, the municipal administration offered them some abandoned or uninhabited houses in the historic centre, with the agreement of the owners. Albeit in the end most of them left for other destinations, the experience inspired other initiatives.

In the same period, a few kilometres from Badolato, in Riace, a program was started – on the personal initiative of the local mayor Domenico Lucano – aimed at managing refugees' needs and accommodation in the historical centre. Some associations and cooperatives have been created in order to rent empty houses to host refugees: families or small groups of friends, speaking the same language and professing the same religion. Thanks to these initiatives, Riace has become a model for refugee welcoming programs.

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<sup>3</sup> We can quote the eco-villages, for example, based on the idea of repopulating abandoned small towns thanks to new uses inspired by a return to agriculture or other traditional ways of life, or other experiences based on sustainable forms of supporting tourism that are favourable both for tourists and local communities.

<sup>4</sup> Other countries in Europe are going to experiment these processes for repopulation, such as Spain (Gonzales-Torres 2016); in some areas of the United States, Hispanics immigrants are considered a resource to revive America's Blighted neighbourhoods and, more in general, the idea to repopulate dying small towns by welcoming immigrants is studied in many fields.

In Riace, currently, refugees from all nationalities are welcomed and integrated into the urban and social fabric through social activities and the recovery of local or ethnic craftsmanship. And Riace itself has changed (figg.05-06).



*Figg. 05,06 : Riace (Reggio Calabria) - Some murals along the streets of Riace, a small-town that has become a model for refugees welcoming programs (photo by N. Sulfaro)*

The “Utopia of Normality” carried on by the mayor [RINALDIS 2016; BARILLÀ 2017], transformed a dying village in a lively and multi-ethnic small town. «The multiculturalism – said Lucano interviewed in September 2017 –, the variety of skills and personal stories which people have brought to Riace, have revolutionized what was becoming a ghost town» [NEEDLMAN 2017].

The elementary school did not close, as just a few years ago it seemed would happen; many local inhabitants, who had left Riace in the past for lack of work and moved to the coastal centres, have come back to open shops, thanks to the ‘tourists’ flows, mostly journalists, scholars and simply curious travellers, that this initiative has created<sup>5</sup>.

In addition, thanks to the work of immigrants and volunteers involved in the projects, part of the hill in front of the town has been reworked, terraced and made cultivable, allowing the cultivation of oranges. The

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<sup>5</sup> The experiences in Badolato and Riace are told in a fascinating short film, directed in 2010 by Win Wenders – *Il volo (the flight)* – a mix of fiction and documentary, also supported by UNHCR, which tells the story of the welcoming of refugees to Locride (South of Calabria) from the 1990’s.

small town is now full of murals made by artists from all over the world and every summer a cultural festival is organized.

The successful experiments in Riace, produced a public debate which led to the launch of the National program for refugees (PNA) in 2001 and the subsequent approval of Law n.189/2002 that created the current System for the Protection of Refugees (SPRAR) and the allocation of special public funds (Fondo nazionale per le politiche e i servizi dell'asilo - FNPSA)<sup>6</sup>. Now the question is the relationship between this kind of approach in terms of cultural heritage preservation, and also how architectural conservation can work for welcoming refugees and, more in general, for revitalising depopulated historic centres.

The first crucial point is that a change in the theoretical-methodological approach to the question of cultural heritage needs to be carried out [LALANA SOTO, PÉREZ-EGUÍLUZ 2014].

In the last few decades, the "master narrative" on cultural heritage has mainly concerned the strong relationship between territory and local identity, in order to increase the sense of belonging of communities to their traditions and places. This approach has been carried on also to restrain globalization processes, considered correctly a risk for the uniqueness of territories and more in general, of local cultural heritage. Furthermore, the field of conservation and restoration has sometimes contributed to this misinterpretation.

The experiences of Badolato, Riace or Acquaformosa, only to quote some of the most successful cases in Calabria, show that while today's globalization processes in many cases they can be said to be complete, new processes of hybridization of cultures are moving forward.

The second aspect, strictly related to the previous, concerns the relationship between repopulation and economic development. As the experience of Riace showed, new life and new inhabitants could reappear in depopulated areas only if innovative strategies for the economic growth of these territories would be found.

New viewpoints, traced out by cultural economists, propose different and more rational uses of natural resources of territories by enhancing, for

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<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to underline that, at the moment, in Calabria 116 SPRAR projects are activated. The Region is at the third place, after Sicily and Lazio for welcoming refugees (9.8% at the national scale). These data, elaborated by Cittalia Fondazione Anci, are updated to June 2016. It is also important to underline that the most part of SPRAR projects in Calabria are carried out in small depopulated historical centres.

example, local agricultural products or by promoting a responsible cultural and naturalistic tourism. In this perspective territories should be considered not only as sites, but also as places where relationships among people, who in those territories live and work, occur due to economic, social, cultural and personal interactions [FRATESI, PELLEGRINI 2014].

In this new perspective, the role of conservation is not to determine these changes but, more properly, to manage them in relation to preservation of urban and architectural heritage. The topic is almost new, so at the moment there is not a methodology in the intervention of re-use of abandoned towns.

In general, it is clear that not all the historic centres which have been abandoned or depopulated may lend themselves to new functions (in the case of ruined town, for example, no kind of reuse is possible, and we can think only of interventions aimed at maintaining them and managing them as archaeological areas).

In the case of historical centres repopulated by immigrants – coming back to our topic – it is necessary to co-operate with the administrations that launch refugee welcoming projects with protocols aimed at evaluating the compatibility of urban heritage with preservation issues and aimed at managing the reuse processes. It is necessary, just to mention a few aspects, to count the available structures, to evaluate which kind of function should be inserted, to identify spaces for collective functions (healthcare, education, work, leisure, etc.).

It is also important to analyse the urban space, in relation to safety, practicability and spaces for encounters<sup>7</sup>.

In relation to the quoted experiences, it is significant that all the interventions for restoring or repairing the urban fabric are realized by the owners of the buildings or by volunteers or immigrants itself, without any reference to guidelines or protocols which could ensure the proper restoration of the buildings (renovation of plasters, roofs, slabs or other important elements or the buildings are often replaced with no attention to the specific characteristics of the place) (figg.07-08).

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<sup>7</sup> In this perspective, the Architectural restoration course of the University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria has been working on this theme for some years, having also started targeted educational paths, and students are now working on the theme of historical abandoned centres reused as refugees welcoming centres.



Figg. 07,08 : Camini (Reggio Calabria) – The depopulated small-town close to Riace accepted around 80 newcomers from Middle East and Africa. Although it is a successful example of welcoming, interventions on urban fabrics does not follow any guidelines or  
([http://www.nationalgeographic.it/multimedia/2016/10/07/video/camini\\_paesin\\_o\\_italia\\_immigrazione-3259973/1/](http://www.nationalgeographic.it/multimedia/2016/10/07/video/camini_paesin_o_italia_immigrazione-3259973/1/) : (online December 2018)

If conservation cannot influence these significant changes, it can help to manage them studying proper solutions in order to ensure that transformations – which are necessary for the relaunch of these territories – would not ignore the respect for urban and architectural values and for the related identities.

A.M.O.

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