



## **DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL ENGINEERING**

### ***Ph.D programme in Engineering of Structural, Building and Urban Restoration***

**XIII Cycle N.S. (2012-2014)**

## **HERITAGE AND MEMORY OF ABANDONED VILLAGES Documentation and analysis of disappeared towns**

***Giuseppe Damone***

The issue of abandoned villages and towns is nowadays an important issue around which are articulated complex search paths that cut across several disciplines: from history to the history of architecture and survey, from anthropology to archeology. Many are, in fact, the evidence of realities today uninhabited or abandoned that dot the Italian countryside, each with its own history and a precise architecture or layout. Small mountain realities or real countries that have 'ceased to exist' as a result of catastrophic events, represent a fundamental thing not only for understanding the complex dynamics of settlement of a territory, but also for the study of the landscape. That of the abandonment is a phenomenon that arises when the man starts to build to live, and has assumed different characters during the various eras. If in past centuries they left the small businesses in favor of fortified centers that offered greater guarantees of protection from the bandits and the power struggles, today, small mountain communities are depopulated for 'slow migration' to the city of middle and lower valley, where you can find places to live more comfortable. The change in the economic and productive situations, as well as a change in living conditions, have led in recent decades to the restructuring of large areas of land, of which these abandoned towns are testimony. The same are not rebuilt elsewhere, except for some cases, and the population tends to 'disperse' in existing and organized urban realities. And if in the examined cases the isolation is the main cause of depopulation in central and northern Italy, landslides and earthquakes are the reason for the transfer of villages in the south of the country, resulting in the birth of ghost town. Archival documents and literature of the field tell us of complex population movements within the same territory in the aftermath of emergencies. Arise so new urban settings that you can define 'foundation', and that from the past history they replace inherit, in almost all cases, only the name. New city systems almost always 'checkerboard', preferably located in lowland areas for their urban structure, take the place of the city born around generating elements - churches or castles - and imbued with what scholars call the genius loci. Is the eighteenth-century Calabria to lead the way to the big reconstructions relocated in the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake of 1783. A century before it was the turn of Sicily who first proposed schemes orthogonal city for the reconstruction, but more frequently opted for reconstruction of

destroyed towns on their rubble. For Calabria it will not be so, and of the thirty-three countries rebuilt, almost all is delocalized. A new cultural ferment interested intellectuals and technicians of the Neapolitan court of the eighteenth century, using reconstructions almost as a ruse to test urban designs from the European echo most easily accomplished in the middle and lower valley. Calabria Ultra is well characterized by the coexistence of these opposing realities: the historical city is left to slow decay, and the center of the new foundation is called to replace the first, becoming manifest of a new culture, the Enlightenment.

Analyzing these reconstructions means studying 'lights and shadows' of a problem always present, where to cases of relocation could oppose episodes whose result was not the one envisaged, or attempts to transfer never completed as in Saponara, today Grumento Nova, in Basilicata after the earthquake of 1857. It is here that, in the climate of fear and devastation, we assume the transfer of the town, almost completely razed to the ground, downstream, and in particular designing its reconstruction on the ruins of the ancient Roman city of Grumentum, abandoned as a result of the Saracen invasions. It will also be drawn up a plan for the reconstruction that has revived a checkerboard pattern, similar to the many designed for the eighteenth century Calabria.

But a lack of funds, and the swell of the timing of the project, will bring the citizens that in the meantime live in poor conditions in barracks, to rebuild their homes on the ruins. Always remaining in Basilicata, it is Campomaggiore that represents an important chapter in the delocalized reconstructions of the nineteenth century. The February 10, 1885 a landslide destroyed part of the eighteenth-century city of foundation, and a year later was drafted a plan for the reconstruction that will be four kilometers from the center involved in geological disaster. The project of the new country allows for orthogonal system of the leaving city center, even if adapting to the orography of the new site and detailing every single building type from having to accomplish. Landslides and earthquakes will repropone throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century the question of delocalized reconstruction, where the last chapter is represented by Irpinia in 1980 with the creation of new 'ghost towns'.

Knowing the causes of the abandonment of cities and centers means to analyze the problem, and then eventually find solutions to combat the problem. Today that these have actually ceased to perform the function for which they were made, arises the question of what could be their future, and what are the measures to be implemented to ensure the memory and storage. Prerogative of this research is certainly the detection and analysis of abandoned realities in recent centuries (XVIII - XXI century), because are still preserved architectural traces of which giving relevant documentation and hypothesizing a compatible recovery, but also process a study methodology by which to restore memory to disappeared realities from the Middle Ages and whose traces can be found only in archive documents and historical iconography. The above allows, in fact, to be able to understand the structured knit settlement of a territory, as well as identify any existing tracks a few of these actually built, which now have become integral parts of nature that often has regained its spaces. The taxations - Angevin coupons and Aragon and viceregal hearths - allow to reconstruct a mosaic as the settlement geography of the ancient Kingdom of Naples, identifying all those organizations of which there are place names in maps, or of which you read the description of their ruins in the nineteenth-century literature. Villages, hamlets and towns turreted, with an urban morphology made with a few strokes of red ink, characterize Aragon fifteenth century cards, providing a concrete aspect of the settlements of the Kingdom and the area's image. The consultation applied to the Kingdom of Naples, and in particular to the Basilicata, provides a method that can be adopted in other contexts where the examination of archival material and literature

review are the cornerstone of the search for documentation. The choice of Basilicata as a case study is linked to the morphology of the region. It is, in fact, a heterogeneous territory which is characterized by settlement dynamics varied depending on whether you are inside, mostly mountainous, or on both coastlines. In addition, the region visited by thousands of years is often, over the centuries, in the center of important transformations of settlement related to historical relevant events.

Every man-made reality represent a concrete image of identity of the people who lives and transforms that place. That's how the built heritage is responsible for a series of invisible values , woven like a fabric texture, becoming an opportunity to search for an image of a recent past that can still have a future. Drawings of travelers and ancient cabrei become the source for reshaping - just an image - a matter that has changed some of its identity, becoming a ruin, a semblance mutilates to reconstruct and reinterpret. Knowing these abandoned or depopulated realities means being able to understand the importance and protect 'the image' like the great monuments that are more easily subject of study and investigation. Since these are actually man-made realities, and having been amended over the centuries in response to the changing needs of those who lived, these guard important information sedimented in built, linked to 'know-how' of the past, but also related to the cultural context. Being actually crystallized realities, locked in a given time, these ruins are offered to the study for the reading not only of the form, but also of the constructive lexicon, and of the system of relations that exist between both the individual parts that make up the artifacts, both among buildings and environment around them. Manufactures by recognizable architectural value, or even the whole building smaller, are broken down and studied in order to grasp its uniqueness in terms of architecture in the broadest sense of the term, ensuring proper documentation for future generations. The ruin by its nature suggests a form - that of the built - which tends downwards and not more upward. His image is lost in the vegetation that reconquers it, until becoming almost invisible, imperceptible within the landscape. It's for these reasons that the architectural forms of the disappeared centers are revealed only through a way of gradual approach and rediscovery. Therefore the approach of historical-critical study and analysis on the traditional field, must be accompanied by a journey of discovery and interpretation of data very close to that of the discipline of archeology, peculiarity leading to refine this search on abandoned realities as ' young archeology '. These urban areas, in fact, though comparable to the archaeological ruins have the same dating of many of the historical centers in which we live, but here an instantaneous event, or a particular social situation, caused an 'abandonment Ruskin' places. Several are now attempts to recover missing centers where the aim is to give back to the same form and function, and then return them to the collectivity. From cases of simple monumentalization in situ for a touristic use, we switch to examples of recoveries with transformation of the ruins in study centers and building hotels, in order to reach the seat of reality that become works of art with a strong emotional impact, as Gibellina with Cretto di Burri. The natural environment in which the abandoned centers are - in many cases these are places with a strong evocative power in terms of landscape and nature - as well as the system of relations with the neighboring towns, are among the reasons that affect the choices of recovery and reutilization.

A look at the depopulation in place in many small Italian towns allow an analogy with what has been perpetuated over the last decades in Spain where, with the industrialization of the sixties of the twentieth century, there was an exodus to the big cities leading to depopulation, and sometimes abandonment of small rural realities. The country ranks among those with the

highest number of depopulated centers and in recent years has highlighted the problem of their recovery, operating trials which could constitute guidelines for correct action also on the Italian centers. In addition, it has also accomplished a recognition of the value of natural, historical, cultural and ethnographic abandoned centers and their context, which are protected by the affixing of particular constraints. Defining guidelines for the recovery, documentation, and then cataloging of these realities is the first step for the memory of these nodal centers. The collected informations and the definition of a method are, in fact, support for future projects of recovery and use of this less heritage.