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**LANDSCAPE AND TRANSLATABILITY**  
A STUDY FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

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## Introduzione

Questo elaborato, frutto del mio percorso di dottorato, muove da elementi della mia biografia che precedono la mia formazione. Sono una donna, nata e cresciuta in Sardegna ed ho trascorso, per la mia formazione universitaria, un terzo della mia vita tra il nord e il sud Italia, inframezzando gli studi con esperienze all'estero in Sud America e Nord Europa.

All'inizio del percorso di dottorato il mio interesse era rivolto verso le sperimentazioni urbane annoverabili all'interno del frame dell'*innovazione sociale* e della *rigenerazione urbana*: pratiche dal basso o *bottomlinked* che hanno visto il riuso di spazi pubblici e di gestione di questi da parte di gruppi più o meno strutturati di cittadini, nell'ottica di una trasformazione in termini di miglioramento della vivibilità e delle relazioni.

Le difficoltà di tradurre queste esperienze, spesso situabili in contesti metropolitani e lontani dalle periferie d'Europa, mi hanno spinto durante questi anni di ricerca, a ritornare nel mio territorio d'origine per indagare nuove metodologie di analisi e di pratiche di trasformazione spaziali collettive *in loco*.

La "scintilla" che ha innescato questa mia ricerca è sempre stata la ricerca di categorie che aiutino a leggere, comprendere per poi poter pianificare nel paesaggio rurale da cui provengo: un luogo mai troppo interrogato da un punto di vista spaziale. L'interesse verso una di queste categorie, quella dei *commons*, intesi come risorse localizzabili di un preciso territorio utilizzate da una comunità di riferimento per la sua stessa riproduzione - siano edifici pubblici, siano aree demaniali - e le sue diverse interpretazioni in contesti diversi è quella che ha sempre guidato il mio percorso di ricerca e che mi ha consentito, traslando spazialmente e temporalmente, di conoscere esperienze diverse creando un ponte tra luoghi.

Da un punto di vista metodologico, ho sperimentato nei primi anni un approccio più attento agli attori istituzionali che intervengono nelle trasformazioni urbane e i rapporti tra essi, alle politiche territoriali e lo studio di *best practices*, per orientarmi successivamente verso una metodologia di ricerca - azione, *placed based* e di micro azioni, che favorisca l'emersione di conoscenze locali e situate, al fine di analizzare quei fattori che generano negli abitanti un senso di appropriazione verso i luoghi, per poi trovare spunti per immaginare in modo collettivo le trasformazioni spaziali future.

Lo studio di campo, costituito da diversi casi studio è stato realizzato in tre luoghi e momenti differenti.

Il primo riguarda un villaggio in un'area interna della Sardegna, ad oggi completamente abbandonato che ho rilevato e di cui ho ricostruito la storia. Realizzato dalla Cassa del Mezzogiorno nel dopoguerra, in un'area che è diventata, da un punto di vista storico, il simbolo di una battaglia in difesa popolare delle *terre comuni*. È un luogo che ho individuato come carico di significati per la popolazione locale e come possibile sede di una progettualità futura.

Il secondo riguarda una sperimentazione di *bene comune urbano* nel centro storico della città di Napoli: un edificio destinato ad essere sede monolitica di un grande evento culturale, trasformato e gestito da attivisti e cittadini in centro culturale e artistico aperto verso la città ed all'uso della comunità degli artisti e dei lavoratori dello spettacolo. Uno spazio che ho studiato nella sua gestione partecipando alle attività e alle assemblee nel primo anno del dottorato.

Il terzo caso è un intervento di trasformazione di un *parco pubblico* attraverso la piantumazione collettiva di alberi che ha avuto luogo in un Comune sardo durante il febbraio 2020. Un' iniziativa in cui ho sperimentato la possibilità di vedere il cambiamento della percezione e dell'uso da parte degli abitanti nei mesi successivi e in particolar modo durante le restrizioni legate alla pandemia.

L'esito del mio progetto di ricerca risente inevitabilmente delle modifiche sostanziali causate dalle restrizioni legate all'emergenza pandemica che per più di quindici mesi hanno impedito qualsiasi possibilità di incontro di gruppo in presenza.

## Introduction

This manuscript, result of my PhD course, starts from elements of my biography that precede my training. I am a woman, born and raised in Sardinia and I spent, for my university education, a third of my life in northern and southern Italy, interspersing my studies with experiences abroad in South America and Northern Europe.

At the beginning of the PhD program, my interest was directed towards urban experiments that can be counted within the frame of social innovation and urban regeneration. In particular to bottom-up or bottom-linked practices that have seen the reuse of public spaces and their management from part of more or less structured groups of citizens, with a view to a transformation in terms of improving liveability and relationships.

The difficulties of translating these experiences, often located in metropolitan contexts and far from the peripheries of Europe, have pushed me during these years of research to return to my territory of origin to investigate new methods of analysis and collective spatial transformation practices *in loco*.

The *spark* triggered my research has always been the search for categories that help to read, understand and then plan in the rural landscape from which I come: a place that is never too questioned from a spatial point of view. The interest in one of these categories, the *commons*, intended as localizable resources of a specific territory used by a reference community for its own reproduction - whether public buildings or public buildings - and its different local interpretations is what it has always guided my research path. It has allowed me, by translating spatially and temporally, to know different experiences by creating a bridge between places.

From a methodological point of view, in the early years I experimented with a more attentive approach to the institutional actors involved in urban transformations and the relationships between them, to territorial policies and the study of best practices. Subsequently my work bents towards a research-action methodology placed based and micro actions, which favours the emergence of local and situated knowledge, in order to analyse those factors that generate in the inhabitants a sense of appropriation towards the places, to then find ideas for imagining future spatial transformations in a collective way.

The field study, consisting of several case studies, was carried out in three different places and times.

The first concerns a village in an internal area of Sardinia, completely abandoned today, which I have taken over and whose history I have reconstructed. Built by the *Cassa del Mezzogiorno* after the second world war, in an area that has become from a historical point of view, the symbol of a battle in the popular defence of the common lands. A space that I have identified as full of meanings for the local population and as a possible location for future planning.

The second concerns an experimentation of the urban common good in the historic center of the city of Naples. A building, destined to be the monolithic seat of a great cultural event, transformed and managed by activists and citizens in a cultural and artistic center open to the city and to the use of the community of artists and workers that I studied in its management by participating in activities and assemblies in the first year of the Ph.D.

The third case is a transformation intervention of a public park through the collective planting of trees that took place in a coastal town in Sardinia during February 2020. An initiative in which I experienced the possibility of seeing the change in perception and use by the inhabitants in the following months and especially during the restrictions linked to the pandemic.

The outcome of my research project is inevitably affected by the substantial changes caused by the restrictions related to the pandemic emergency, which for more than fifteen months have prevented any possibility of meeting in presence.

## Chapter 1

Commons and Landscape: theoretical references

## 1.1 An overview on contemporary debate of “commons”

An academic debate on common natural resources and their governance started with the Nobel prize in Economic Science on 2009 at work of Elinor Ostrom, one of the main exponent of the new-institutionalism, in particular with her work “Governing the commons” (1990) that sublates the thesis exposed in “The tragedy of commons” elaborated by the ecologist Garret Hardin (1968).

In parallel, another radical perspective emerged since the 1990’s after few events of international concern: the meeting of the World Social Forum (2001) with the encounter of Alter Globalization Movements and the rebellion indigenous in Mexico in response of the privatization of their common lands (Stravrides 2015). The main contributes related to this radical perspective comes from the theoretical geographical contributions of David Harvey and the marxist approach of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt.

The largest contribution of literature on commons ranges from economy to law studies<sup>1</sup>, from political ecology to philosophy<sup>2</sup> and recently, spatial and *urban studies*<sup>3</sup>.

Since that an enormous literature has been product around the concepts of “commons” and “commoning” and this wide interest from the academy opened, on one hand, new paths of research and, on the other side, the risk to transforms these concept in a *buzzword*.

From 2011, the academic debate on natural resources, as common lands and water, has been enriched with another line of studies that we can indicate under the key expression “urban commons”. The studies on Urban Commons introduced a deepening of spatial dynamics in urban contexts.

This research line start with the public protests in different capitals around the world: Syntagma Square in Athens (2010), Tahrir square in Cairo and Zuccotti Park in New York (2011) and Gezy Park Istanbul (2013). Exploring several examples of the use of the spaces in urban contexts and different manners of re-appropriation of the public

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<sup>1</sup> One of the main references on this topic is “P. Grossi, *Un altro modo di possedere*, Quaderni fiorentini, Firenze, 1977”; for the broad juridical debate see Archivio Scajola-Bolla, Centro studi e documentazione sui demani civici e le proprietà collettive – University of Trento.

<sup>2</sup> Not being able to go into detail here see for further information the works developed by the following network of researchers “Undisciplined Environments” (<https://undisciplinedenvironments.org/>) and “Ecologie Politiche del Presente” (<https://www.ecologiepolitiche.com/>).

<sup>3</sup> For a wide view see A.A.V.V., *Sharing cities, Activating the urban commons*, Shareable editions, London, 2018 and for a critic perspective S. Stavrides, *City as a common*, London. Zed books Ltd, 2016

space, carried on by the citizenship through bottom up or bottom linked processes, with temporary or sustained practices that have become widespread and still run today.<sup>4</sup>

One of the outcomes, perhaps the most structured, of these debates were the urban policies and practices relating to the concept of *commoning* as different ways of managing public space and heritage, with collective *bottom-up* or *bottom-linked* initiatives, most relevant cases among Europe are based in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Bologna, Ghent, Grenoble, Lille, Lisbon and Naples.<sup>5</sup>

Narrow it down into the Italian contest, during 2007 the foundation of the Commissione Rodotà set off spaces for new juridical debate around the necessity to find different and appropriate norms to defend and preserve natural resources, landscape and public heritage. Starting from the Italian Constitution, which regards at common resources as characterized by their intrinsic capacity to be functional to the exercise to the fundamental rights, required for the free personal development.

The outputs of these debates emerged in the public opinion in 2009, in occasion of the referendum related to the governance of the water, better known as “Acqua bene comune”.

Many activities of this public commission<sup>6</sup> included not only observations around natural resources, but also around the preservation of the social proper to the public heritage, in terms of real-estate national assets. Buildings that, during the austerity period, risked to be widely privatized.

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<sup>4</sup> S. Stavrides, *City as a common*, London. Zed books Ltd, 2016

<sup>5</sup> The references is to the following European networks: P2P Foundation, Culture Commons Quest Office and to European Programs as URBACT and Urban Innovative Actions.

<sup>6</sup>The outcome of these studies are collected in U. Mattei, E. Reviglio, S.Rodotà (a cura di), *Invertire la rotta. Idee per una riforma della proprietà pubblica* (Bologna 2007) and later publications as S. Settis *Il paesaggio come bene comune*, Collana Assise. Quaedam, La Scuola di Pitagora, 2013.

## 1.2 Landscape and Perception

In the common sense, the overcoming of the purely aesthetic dimension of the landscape - reinforced in Italy by a regulatory framework that often uniquely connected the concept of landscape to the idea of beauty - has not yet been achieved. However, the European Landscape Convention of 2000 it has certainly opened a passage - beyond the debate within geographers - towards a broader conception of the term. The fields of application of the Convention include and do not hierarchize natural, rural, urban and peri-urban spaces, as well as terrestrial landscapes, inland and marine waters and considers landscapes not only those places considered "exceptional" for particular aesthetic, historical or environmental merits but also landscapes of everyday life and degraded.

The first article designates as landscape "a certain part of the territory, as perceived by the populations, whose character derives from the action of natural and / or human factors and their interrelations". The inclusion of the perception of the landscape by the populations refers to a relationship between subject and object. The impossibility of an objective representation of a portion of the territory and to the intrinsic ambivalence in the landscape, not as a merely aesthetic issue, but as the visualization, the concretization of historical processes, the materialization of economic and social processes.

Recently the anthropologist Vito Teti coined the expression the feeling of places, meaning not only a concept that refers to the emotional and affective sphere, but also to the social and cultural sphere.

*In un volume in cui esamina una successione di casi giudiziari relativi all'Italia Nord Occidentale dal XVI secolo ai nostri giorni Angelo Torre (Luoghi. La produzione di località in età moderna e contemporanea Donizelli, Roma 2011) ricostruisce il legame tra il sentimento di appartenenza ai luoghi e la possibilità di un loro godimento, quindi, come il sentimento dei luoghi fosse non tanto una costruzione mentale psicologica ma piuttosto sociale e culturale. Ritengo che il sentimento dei luoghi sia in effetti, nello stesso tempo, sociale e culturale, legata alla produzione e alla proprietà, tuttavia è innegabile che la percezione del paesaggio, l'affettività, i legami con i luoghi dipendano dai rapporti affettivi ed emotivi che con essi si stabiliscono fin dalla nascita. Il senso dei luoghi ha una sua storicità, ma anche una sua ineffabile magia, in cui ogni*

*individuo esprime sensibilità, sogni, immaginazioni propri, pure all'interno di culture, linguaggi rapporti condivisi.<sup>7</sup> Restano ancora da indagare il sentimento dei luoghi legato alle forme e ai modi della produzione (piccola proprietà fondiaria, latifondo, mezzadria ecc) e a dualismi territoriali che hanno segnato, fino ad anni recenti, la geo antropologia e il senso di appartenenza degli individui delle comunità tradizionali. Così pure, resta tutto da scrivere il tema del senso di appartenenza in rapporto al mito delle origini, a usi civici e beni comuni risalenti a tempi lontani, o ancora a quel "diritto folklorico" che stabiliva e regolava i limiti, confini uso dei frutti, delle olive, delle ghiande, delle acque."<sup>8</sup>*

Before him, many geographers considered the landscape under the lens of the perception and sense of belonging of a place. What interests us here is undoubtedly his final observation, which opens the field to a line of research on common goods, limits, borders, rules and uses, in force in most rural areas, not only in Italy, but also throughout Europe.

What to find in our days and what are today's interpretations of those uses that connected people to places is somehow the starting point of my research.

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<sup>8</sup> V. Teti. *Il sentimento dei luoghi, la nostalgia del futuro, nota numero 3*, in Riabitare l'Italia, Roma, Progetti Donzelli 2018

### 1.3 Main Research questions

My first research interest started from the idea to understand and study the contemporary management of civic lands in Sardinia. The reasons on this topic is based on both spatial and historical reasons summarized below:

- Remarkable extension of collective domains, estimated to be up to 306.685 hectares: almost 12,64 % of the island surface.<sup>9</sup>
- 347 municipalities in Sardinia are concerned by the presence of common lands in their area of relevance (92% of all municipalities)<sup>10</sup>
- Insularity status present the challenge of limitation of resources in terms of land due to geographical aspects.
- Location of these areas: most of these collective domains are placed in the inland in a wide correspondence with the areas more economically vulnerable, if compared with the coastal ones or the metropolitan areas.<sup>11</sup>
- Low-density population and a sudden growth of depopulation phenomena.<sup>12</sup>
- Inner territory of the region is studded by small and widespread settlements: a spatial asset with a centuries-old history, which have not undergone macro upheavals in the last two centuries in terms of sprawl.

Moving from an historical perspective, in Sardinia the existence of forms of common collective governance of the lands, better known as *adempriivi*, declined in several forms depending to local features, is documented since the 1392, the year of promulgation of the Carta de Logu, a law chart edited by the Giudicato di Arborea<sup>13</sup>. This document contains a guidance on the use of the land and access roles and rest in force until the 1827 when was substitute by the Codice Feliciano promulgated by the "Regno di Sardegna". The significant reduction of the historical common lands in Sardinia, was

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<sup>9</sup> Report "Sardegna, ecco il nuovo Inventario regionale delle terre civiche" Gruppo d'intervento Giuridico web. [gruppodinterventogiuridicoweb.com](http://gruppodinterventogiuridicoweb.com)

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> 26° Rapporto CREnoS sull'Economia della Sardegna, Cuec Editrice, Cagliari, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> The "Carta de logu" is a collection of laws intended for Sardinian Giudicati. The most notable was that of the Giudicato of Arborea which was promulgated, in its first version, by Mariano IV of Arborea, then updated and expanded by his sons Ugone III and Eleonora towards the end in the fourteenth century, and remained in force until when it was replaced by the Feliciano Code in 1827.

imposed during the 1823 with the "Editto delle chiudende" a new legal system that introduced and spread the private property creating popular uprising. This historical episode, commonly recognized as one of the greater fractures, in economic and social terms, caused some of the most incisive and widespread transformations of the rural landscape of the island. The change of the legal system of the common lands, not only does the property changes, which from collective becomes private, but also their intended use. The common lands, which for centuries had been used partly for agriculture and partly for breeding, through this transformation of the ownership structure change their intended use, starting that monocultural system of sheep farming that characterizes Sardinia up to to the present day.<sup>14</sup>

For what concern the present day, many of the civic areas are situated in protected zones (ZPS, SIC, or National Parks) while for the remaining ones there is an empty space of knowledge, from a planning point of view, as well as their management.

Most of these lands have been transmitted between generations in a fragmented way and being very small plots they are not sufficient to start agricultural production activities and today they are used for self-production for family use.

The lack of a database around the common lands in Sardinia<sup>15</sup>, as well as the lack of policies<sup>16</sup> aimed at planning these areas<sup>17</sup> or associations, informal groups working on these territories<sup>18</sup> led me to abandon the hypothesis of carrying out a study that could extend to the entire regional territory, analyze its plans, study its contemporary management.

For these reasons I had to resize and radically change the objectives of my research and, through a leap of scale, I wondered about:

What means nowadays manage a common?

How and from where to begin a collective reflection on commons in Sardinia?

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<sup>14</sup> For extensive information see G.G. Ortu, *Le campagne sarde tra XI e XX secolo*, Cagliari, Cuec 2017

<sup>15</sup> The construction of an inventory of common lands by the regional agency Argea has been underway for several years. This work involved a legal reorganization of what is civic use and what is private property. The result of this multi-year work is therefore a list of cadastral maps not geolocated.

<sup>16</sup> The Autonomous Region of Sardinia has recently pushed the technical offices of the Municipalities affected by the presence of Civic Uses to start drafting plans for the enhancement of civic lands. The planning process has not yet started, or is at embryonic stage.

<sup>17</sup> It is necessary to point out in this regard the precious attempt contained in the document "Civic lands: opportunities for growth for Ogliastra" drawn up, among the various authors, by experts of civic lands such as Giorgio Pizziolo and Rita Micarelli, which did not follow up on the internal of local administrations.

<sup>18</sup> With the exception of the Legal Intervention Group, an environmental association that deals with the defence of common goods and acts from a legal point of view.



#### 2.1 Introduction

##### Reasons for a methodological choice and references

The same material conditions that prompted me to change the objectives of the research are those that prompted us to change the research methodology in progress.

This chapter will bring some examples of contemporary strategies of community co-creation, collective analysis of places, emergence of local knowledge, collective and counter-mappings developed by interdisciplinary research groups and activists who have worked in the last fifteen years between Europe and South America.

The choice of these examples is due to several reasons. On the one hand, as a researcher in urban regeneration, there is a need for an in-depth knowledge of places that makes use of techniques and tools that go beyond the disciplinary boundaries of traditional planning and use strategies related to urban ethnography, archival research, critical geography, and participatory processes. On the other hand, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, there is the lack of databases and studies to refer to in order to work in territories that can be located in the peripheries of Europe. A lack that becomes even more limiting when it comes to studying contemporary phenomena and in territories that can be counted among the "internal areas".

The strategies, examples and tools that will be described below have been acquired during the research path and have been applied only partially to the case studies that I will discuss in the next chapter. The reason for this aspect, which inevitably makes this study incongruous at times, is to be found in the restrictions linked to the pandemic that characterized more than a third of the research period: limitations that effectively prevented any meeting in the presence and that forced me to modify, from time to time, the approaches towards the case studies.



## 2.1. COiNVITE

COiNVITE is an experimentation platform<sup>19</sup> - launched in 2019 - of transmedia storytelling, co-design and urban learning methodologies, who based her *action-research* area in the city of Medellin Colombia. The methodology outlined during the meeting "*Decolonizing Urban Studies Through Latin American thinkers?*" by Catalina Ortiz, is developed around a key concept of "*Sentipensar*". The practice has theoretical foundation on Southern theory, mostly elaborate by South American authors during the later XX century<sup>20</sup>.

The method of analysis and planning proposed embraces pedagogical tools and digital technologies, to collect stories and knowledge in multiple channels, in order to produce collective urban learning through plural and *non linear* narratives.

The idea of *Sentipensar*, used by the interdisciplinary collective of researchers, come from Afro-descendent community of fisherman settled around the San Jorge River in Colombia and has been expressed by the sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda as "*acting with hearth using the head*". The argument of their research is to use the idea of *sentipensar* "*to trace urban inscription of stories and the multiple ways of syncing territory, body, mind and hearth. This approach urges us to engage in critical urban pedagogies that leverage visual digital, performative storytelling to recentering the role of urban stories as bridges to epistemic justice*"<sup>21</sup>.

How to anchoring the idea of *sentipensar* with territorial and urban stories?

The Colnvite program has elaborated and imagined initiatives that dealt with four different lines: collective action, the visibility of the meeting of citizens through communication, awareness of urban dynamics in progress and the metaphor of collective *cooking* intended as an opportunity of exchange of one's memory of places and as a way to find urban *receipts* collectively.

The Colnvite laboratory provided a series of pedagogical tools that favour urban learning as the basis for the development of strategies to be pursued beyond the single initiative that could improve the quality of life of the neighbourhood in terms of safety and maintenance, quality

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<sup>19</sup> The reflections of this paragraph are outputs of the fifth conference of the cycle "Decolonial Urbanism. A Much Needed Research Agenda" organized by the Polytechnic of Turin by Antonio di Campli and Camillo Boano., November 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Arturo Escobar, Walter D. Mignolo, Anibal Quijano and Silvia Cusicanqui to name a few authors.

<sup>21</sup> Argument of Catalina Ortiz during the conference already mentioned "Decolonial Urbanism. A Much Needed Research Agenda"



## 2.2 Iconoclasistas

Iconoclasistas is a research group based in Argentina, which since 2006 has supported a research method linked to cartography and collaborative icons, as a structure for territorial analysis, emergence of local knowledge, invisible to official cartography, and as a design basis and spatial transformations future.<sup>22</sup>

The work tools developed are shared free of charge through the online platform and are shared through online and face-to-face laboratories, ranging from real maps to situational graphs, from pictograms to infographics, up to schemes able to re-establish the temporality of the transformations of a place. An individual aiming at the objectives, together with the reference community, which is a "toolbox", allows not only to elaborate a graphic representation of a certain space, but to begin, attracted and laboratory, a process of localized collective research, enabling and participants to use these tools and reuse it in different contests.

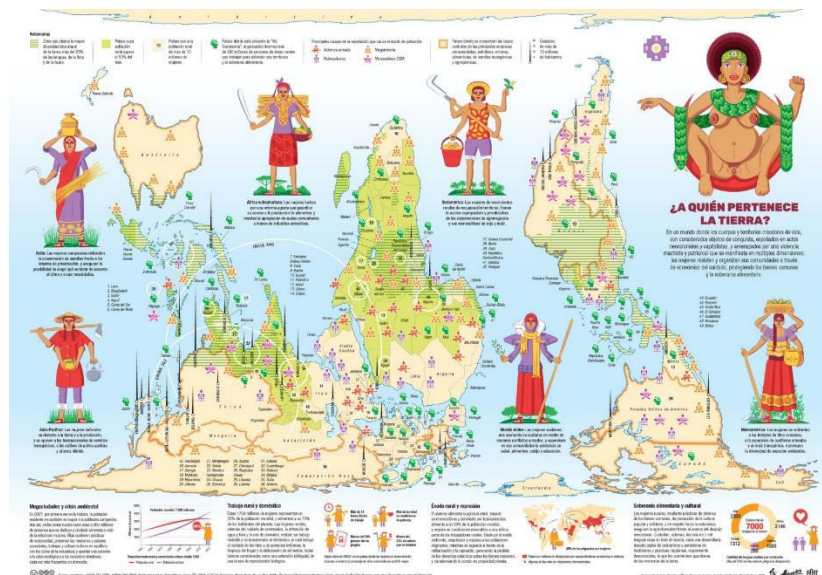


Image from [iconoclasistas.net](http://iconoclasistas.net)

<sup>22</sup> Notes of conferences "El mapeo Colectivo como metodologia de intervencion sociocomunitaria" Julia Risler, on line conference May 2020.

These resources make it possible to work at different scales: from those, applicability to small villages or neighbourhoods of metropolitan areas, to the regional and national scale, overcoming the dichotomy between urban and rural spaces.

The ones started in the laboratory over the last ten years have not ranged between different themes: the question of generating there a connection with the territory, the construction of a social and environmental movement retreat, the dialogue between art and territory. The actors coexist were only simple residents, institutions and universities or education centres, professional groups and teachers specialized in disabilities.

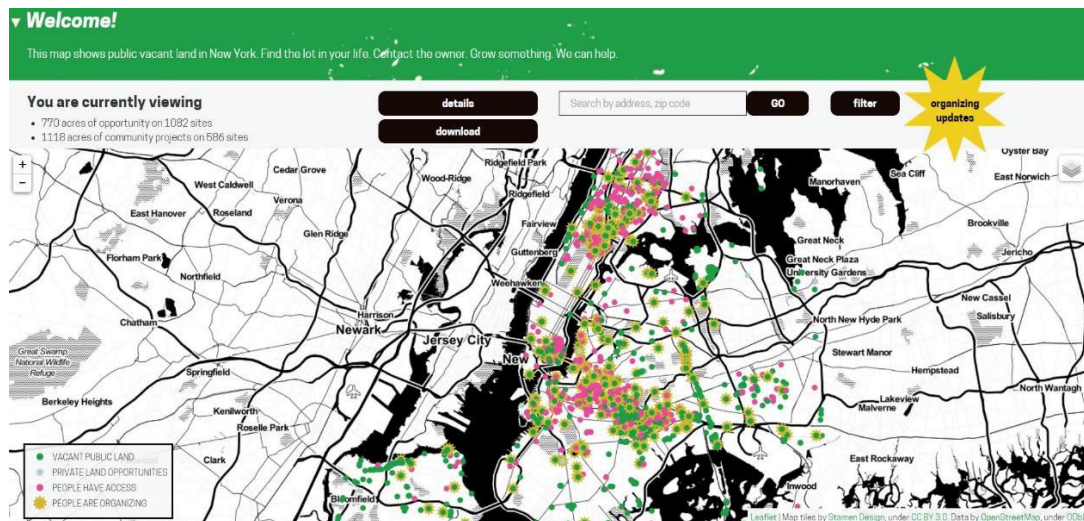
The theoretical genealogy of this co-creation methodology seems to be rooted among the authors of decolonial literature born and developed in the sixties in South America and in particular in the pedagogical models developed by Paul Freire, from which these experiments towards *conscientization* of places arose.

## 2.4 Orangotango Collective

The Orangotango Collective, based in Berlin, is made up by researchers, critical geographers and activists that since 2008 has been dealing with issues concerning urban space.<sup>23</sup> Through educational, emancipatory activities, artistic installations and at the same time policies and workshops they modify the urban space with the aim of creating social and economic changes in the reference areas.

The tools used collected in their book "This is not an Atlas" are mostly collaborative, educational or counter-mapping mappings, which has the aim to re-signify cartography as a tool of criticism. Their method overturn the idea of cartography as a tool for both a reductive spatial representation, which tends to make many of those "informal" aspects that create urban space invisible, and as a tool for top-down planning.

It is important to underline that the production of these maps is not the real outcome of their practices, but the process of collective construction itself is the founding core of their work. Their fields of action and their tools are not limited to critical cartography but also use art in the public space, not as decoration but as a point of reflection on urban ecology, the organization of debates or musical initiatives: moments that catalyse reflection and discussion from inhabitants.



*Maps of accessible agricultural areas in New York City, from This is not an Atlas*

<sup>23</sup> Notes of the online conferences: Decolonizzando linguaggi cartografici. Per una cartografia impegnata, Paul Schweizer apr 2020



### 3.1 Case 1. Urban Commons. The experience of L'Asilo Filangeri in Naples.

The Asilo urban experiment is strictly connected to the legal instrument of civic uses and represents the first case of civic and collective use in the metropolitan area. Civic uses are a form of management that regulates the collective use of goods useful to a community and in history, starting from feudalism, this form has been used to manage resources located mainly in agricultural areas, such as pastures, mills, woods or fishing areas. Together with public law, the right of civic use relates public goods to community needs.

The innovation that characterizes this experience consists precisely in bringing this legal institution into the urban environment and reusing it for the use of spaces and means for the production of art and culture.

In particular, the experimentation of the Asilo can be considered an effect of the Rodotà Commission about the common goods which, starting from the water issue, was able to start numerous studies on the concept of the common good by questioning other types of assets and possible perimeters.

Since the referendum of 2011, the movement of workers in the arts, entertainment and of culture, hooking itself to the lexicon of common goods, began to give life to forms of direct re-appropriation of abandoned theaters and cultural spaces (for example the Teatro Valle in Rome)<sup>24</sup>. When so many public assets were privatized the Asilo starts a symbolic practice, capable of returning a good of all to the community, making it functional to the satisfaction of citizenship rights and by sharing spaces, means of production and skills.

The declaration of civic use and the recognition by the administration differs from the traditional assignment to a private subject or an association configurable in a legal personality, because it recognizes a plural subjectivity: the community of workers in the sphere art of entertainment and culture.

*The Spark*

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<sup>24</sup> A.A.V.V. *Teatro Valle Occupato. La rivolta culturale dei beni comuni*, Fuorifuoco, Roma , 2012.

The experimentation known today as "L'Asilo" starts in 2012 with the occupation of the building, an initiative that in those days was imagined as temporary and which took the name of "Time Out-Contagion Down!"

On 2th March 2012 La Balena collective made up of a group of artist and workers, organizing concerts, conferences, shows and press reviews for a week, occupying the building even during the night. The promoters of the initiative intended to lead a protest not only against the *Forum of cultures*, criticized for the huge public expenditure and few results in terms of cultural production.

Considered as one of the symbols of the contradictions open in the city, they were intended to broaden the protest towards the progressive downgrading of policies cultural, start a process of rethinking them with a view to openness and participation, and the creation of a space for reflection on the theme of common goods.

The collective "La Balena" made up of middle and long-term activists, managed to connect through the occupation with the different movements of the city and declared the assembly of three days as part of the activities of a national network. During the same years was conducting actions on the same issues and experimented with new models of use of places destined for culture: the Ex Cinema Palazzo di Roma, collectives of the art workers of Milan, the S.a.l.e. Docks of Venice, the Arsenale of Palermo and the Coppola Theater of Catania<sup>25</sup>.

Above all was the experience of the Teatro Valle occupied in Rome, which prompted the beginning of the cycle of mobilizations linked to the occupations of the spaces destined for culture, acting as the first piece of a domino, which still continues in Italy and which inspired the actions of activists in attempt to create a New Institution. The activists of the Teatro Valle participated and supported the collective's activities from the very beginning, following the first steps of what it would become, following their example, the constituent process of Asylum. During those days the seventy people who occupied the building managed not only to attract the attention of the local press but to attract activists, temporary workers, exponents of the academic world from all over the country and to initiate a process of experimental research, developed through assemblies, linked to three macro themes:

- The rethinking of cultural policies and responses to art and show business workers
- Common goods and non-appropriative use of space
- The constant tension towards total horizontality decisions and openness to the outside.

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<sup>25</sup> Una Balena al Forum delle culture, Napoli Monitor, 2 marzo 2012

From these questions, which still form the basis of Asilo research today.

Further arguments developed regarding:

- Attention to the quality of relationships
- The emergence of everyone's desires and their fulfilment.

The most immediate result of the reflections that emerged on the theme of non-appropriative use was the dissolution of the collective La Balena, which as a closed and determined group, acted appropriating space as an occupying subject, deciding to open instead the use and management of spaces to anyone, dissolving any possible hierarchy.

The three-day "Time Out-Contagion upside down!" was organized with great care both from the point of view of communication, both as regards the planned interventions and they tried to bring together very different positions and views on politics cultural and common goods.

In the following months, a process full of contradictions began which saw the Forum of cultures as opposed to activities, but at the same time, some workers coexisted with the new tenants talking about the experience during lunch breaks. The initial attitude of the municipal administration was not accommodating and although no personal confrontation took place, they proceeded to close the building with a new lock: an episode that did not interrupt the activities thanks to the mobilization of citizens and intellectuals. The garrison of the activists in fact continued, making the Ex Asilo a crossing point for artists and cultural workers and in which the self-construction of the theatre began through the self-production work and thanks to subscriptions.

A few months later the promoters of the occupation felt an opening by some members of the municipal administration towards their experiments and their proposals. In May they obtained a resolution in which the building of the Ex Asilo Filangieri was destined "to a complex place in the cultural field which, through a shared and participated specification, guarantees the use of associations, groups and foundations in the field of culture understood as a common good and a fundamental right"<sup>26</sup>. In this way, the administration allowed that the use of the building was not exclusive of the Forum Foundation and facilitated the experimentation in progress, proposing to draw up a regulation agreed with those who used the space. Few months later, in August, the City council proposed a regulation with a specification to jointly define the calendar of the activities, the identification of people and the closure space at certain times: a

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<sup>26</sup> Resolution n°400 del 25/5/2012 Municipality of Naples

document that activists rejected<sup>27</sup> starting the process of writing collective self-regulation which will last two years.

### *The physical transformations of the building*

At the time of occupation, the building was in good condition: the recent restoration of 2005 and underuse by previous tenants made this place perfect for the start of experiments. It allows activists to pay off immediately practicable the entire building and to focus on their purpose: to start a research space for understand how to create an open, shared, participatory management of spaces and means of production, strengthening and expanding internal relationships and external recognition. The physical transformations made after 2012 mostly concern the interior spaces, in particular the acquisition and self-construction of semi-permanent or temporary furnishings, which allowed characterizing, rather than functionalizing in the strict sense, some spaces that still today they are used in a flexible way for different activities.

The fluidity of the spaces is an aspect that the organization of the Ex Asilo cannot bring together given the variety of activities that take place there. The larger spaces inherited from the Ex Asilo like the refectory or the room on the top level intended for the theatre, they are able to accommodate up to four hundred people, and are occasionally used for shows, concerts, workshops of dance and conferences. The room of intermediate size located on the ground floor, intended formerly the chapel, retains the fixed furnishings such as the altar and the wooden mouldings of the walls and can accommodate up to ninety seated people: this is where both film screenings and assemblies take place. The smaller rooms of the *armeria* are intended for manual activities and various workshops type: a scenography and tailoring workshop started in 2013, an urban garden active since 2014 and then the carpentry, the ceramic laboratory, the digital laboratory in construction phase, the darkroom for photography and the library. These latter workshops overlook large corridors that occasionally smaller events are used and that provide for the presence of a maximum of twenty people. The first two levels are connected by a large monumental staircase which, in addition to being a meeting place, exhibits dozens of installations resulting from artistic residences and workshops made in recent years. Finally, a guesthouse was built which includes two rooms used for the guests of the artistic residences.

The changes concerning the theatre in the first year of activity and the workshops in the following ones were made entirely by voluntary self-construction work, or through donations

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<sup>27</sup> Activists Interview 2/9/ 2012 <https://youmedia.fanpage.it/video/UEMwpOSwsB1IVx8f>

and small subscriptions. As for the re-functionalization of the Chapel, today the Cinema hall, in 2016 it is a crowdfunding campaign called "Fatti un Cinema"<sup>28</sup> was launched through the platform Productions from the bottom that has allowed, with a budget of a few thousand euros, to buy the audio system, the projector and the screen, while the sessions were spontaneously donate to space. For the improvement of the refectory room, today used mainly for laboratories of dance, the project "Mezzi senza fine" was written, winner of the fourth edition of the call Culturability promoted by Unipolis<sup>29</sup>. In this way, the *Asilo* was financed to purchase new furniture and means of production capable of transforming the refectory, a space of three hundred square meters, in the hall for dance and performing arts larger than Naples. The entrance into the *Asilo* space appears externally as a closed place: access is mediated during the day by the supervision provided for by the agreements with the administration municipal. This dynamic, which guarantees a certain level of safety regarding the means of production, however, can create perceptions of closure, an immaterial threshold in those who cross spaces for the first time. The entrance on the ground floor and the monumental stairs leading to the second level return, through the present installations, the result of hundreds of workshops and residences realized in recent years, the image of a place in continuous dynamics and research, where not it is possible to find a spatial layout design by a single artistic direction.

#### *Transformations on an urban scale and the scale of influence*

In dealing with the Asilo case one of the most crucial questions was to understand if from the beginning of the experimentation, there had been repercussions in terms of urban transformations that were in some way related to it: both at the scale of neighbourhood than on that town. Defining the scale of influence of an experience like this is difficult because it moves mainly from the needs of the workers of art, entertainment and the immaterial and continually questions issues that are not reducible to the mere local scale. However I have tried to deepen these issues as I find them crucial in this experience and they are necessary a bring out the strengths and criticalities of the experimentation.

#### *The relations with the neighbourhood.*

The building is located in the heart of the ancient centre of Naples, between the lower *decumanus* and the one superior, a stone's throw from the so-called Via dei presepi (Via San Gregorio Armeno) daily by thousands of tourists attracted by the traditional crib art. It is surrounded on the south and west side by the convent of San Gregorio Armeno. On east by

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.produzionidalbasso.com/project/fatti-un-cinema-la-sala-cinema-sempre-aperta-nel-cuore-di-napoli-1/>

<sup>29</sup> F. Mannino, *Culturability, vince la rigenerazione culturale*, il Giornale delle Fondazioni, 15/09/2017

Vico San Nicola al Nilo in which there are exclusively residential buildings and to the north, where there is access, on Via Enrico Maffei, also characterized by a prevalent residential animates for a few meters during the Christmas period, as an extension of the exhibition crib in Via San Gregorio with some temporary stands. The district, in addition to containing a large number of monuments and the visible stratifications historical is characterized by a very high population density that exceeds ten thousand inhabitants per square kilometer. In recent years, the citizen debate has been questioning for a long time about changes in this area, which saw sudden changes in the intended use of the activities commercial and an initial phase of population replacement, according to the increase of tourist flows<sup>30</sup>. *What influence on the urban scale?* If the reflections of the practice in terms of urban transformations do not insist on the small scale, it can be said differently by analysing a broader cross-section, with a glance over the entire metropolitan city. It is important to clarify that with regard to development of the urban policies initiated by the Municipality of Naples, it is preferable to postpone the observations on any overall design and its coherence with the debate and interventions drawn up by academics and researchers in recent years<sup>31</sup>. This work is not intended to study policies starting from the institutions, preferring a point of view oriented to an analysis of practices urban areas, also favouring the emergence of their political value (Crosta 2010). We therefore intend to start from what happens in the city, and in particular, to analyse some practices in the self-governance mechanism and management activities, limiting the description of the relationship between public institutions and practices to the reconstruction of the events addressed in this paragraph and summarized by fundamental stages in the following graphic scheme.



After the first recognition of the value of the activities carried out at the Asilo by the municipal administration in 2012, the same Municipality of Naples, start a process of transfer of property and real estate, then under the management of the State, towards the Municipality itself. This operation will last two years and will end in November of 2015. The assets transferred free of

<sup>30</sup> Lo stato della città. Napoli e la sua area metropolitana" Monitor edizioni, 2016

<sup>31</sup> Secondo Rapporto sulle città, Urban. "Le agende urbane delle città italiane", Contributi di D.Lepore e G.Laino

charge by the State in favor of the local authority consist about three hundred units, most of which consist of underground cavities used in past as anti-aircraft shelters and currently as depots or parking lots. But among these, there are also several buildings such as schools, prisons, beaches, convents, all in a complete state abandoned for several years<sup>32</sup>. If the state sees this heritage as a loss or as properties that are difficult to manage from a distance, they become an opportunity for the local authority to be grasped. Underlining this passage is important, as it will predetermine some subsequent experiences born from temporary reuse of some buildings by spontaneous groups and activists, who in 2016 will obtain recognition from the municipal administration for the activities carried out and for the ability to return this heritage to citizenship.

Starting from 2011 different groups of activists, spontaneous committees of citizens and collectives pushed for the recognition of the practice of the Asilo. They begin to reuse some of these assets by starting "regeneration paths, they carry out care and maintenance activities, structuring a self-regulating access system, a programming of activities and functioning of civic communities according to their inspiring principles"<sup>33</sup>. The administration, following an investigation aimed at identifying and managing assets municipal unused or partially used, perceived by the community as "common goods" and susceptible to collective use, recognizes the cultural and social value through a resolution of 2016, giving rise to urban experiments now known as *spaces get rid of Naples*. This initiative by the Municipality is inserted in a broader context of political campaigns related to the theme of common goods for which the city of Naples has set up a special department called "Department of the right to the city, urban policies, al landscape and common goods". The recognition initiative therefore starts from an administrative will and still clashes today with harsh criticisms substantially linked to two fundamental points. The first is related to tools and stresses the inability to create more complex urban policies and systemic with respect to the use of municipal assets, as acting through simple deliberation is considered a rather weak and contingent instrument that can be cancelled very easily with the change of the mayor and the relative majority. There the second criticism is that of assuming with respect to the complex dynamics of the city, a laissez-fair attitude in full coherence with economic liberalism, while on the other hand, the administration is accused of favoring groups of people close to the majority from an ideological point of view. Much has been written about the administration's political decisions and numerous contradictions are still open<sup>34</sup>. However this work intends to observe these urban practices starting "from the bottom" or trying to understand what happens every day in these spaces and

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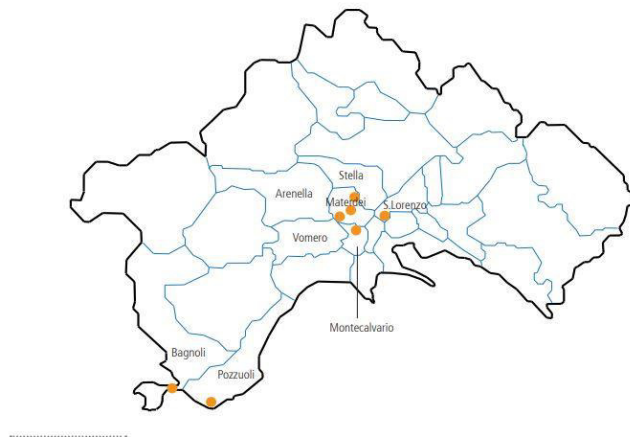
<sup>32</sup> Municipality of Naples , Comunicato Stampa del Consiglio del 19/11/2015

<sup>33</sup> Resolution of the Municipality of Naples n. 446/2016

<sup>34</sup> A.L. De Rosa , Ex asilo filangieri: è polemica tra artigiani e occupanti, La Repubblica 11/1/2016

because they are able to convey and attract tens of thousands of people who pass through these places more or less continuously. It is therefore important to underline the heterogeneity of all these experiences that obtain the recognition by the administration based on the previous resolution of 2012, but that do not act following the practice of the Asilo, which in fact is difficult to scale either replicable. Not all these realities, after obtaining the deliberative act, have started to question a possible path of self-government and the underlying motivations action and research of each bring with them very different areas. In the same city of Naples is possible to find a proximity to the Asilo, in spaces known as Scugnizzo liberato, Santa Fede and Giardino Liberato.

1. Asilo Filangieri; 2. Giardino Liberato; 3. Ex Opg Je So Pazzo; 4. Ex Schipa; 5. Santa Fede Liberata; 6. Villa Medusa; 7. Lido Pola.



Maps of "Spazi Liberati"

### *How a Urban common runs and is managed collectively?*

As anticipated in the previous paragraph, following the first municipal resolution of 2012, the Municipality of Naples issued a proposal for regulation and timetables for the management of the space. An amendment that the Asilo community rejected and started writing those that they will become shared principles and the *declaration of civic uses*. This document, which contains the principles to which the Asilo adheres and which regulates its organs interiors was collectively discussed and written over a two-year period.

The ideas in which the community of art and immaterial workers recognizes itself are

*"the repudiation of all forms of fascism, racism, homophobia and sexism through active policies of inclusion and affirmation of singularities. The liberation of artistic expression and culture from the logic of profit and the market, as manifestations of creativity, freedom and human personality, as well as a fundamental contribution to the qualitative growth of society. The interdisciplinary and sharing of the arts, knowledge and knowledge, with a view to freeing*

*up work by enhancing a cooperative vision of human relations and not competitive. The independence of the cultural and artistic organization from interference external to the practice of self-government; in interdependence, understood as the community's dependence on the collaborative capacity of the individuals who identify with it; in the search for consensus in the context of the decision, in order to build a shared decision-making process*<sup>35</sup>

The declaration of self-government is not intended in a peremptory and absolute way, but constitutes a track, a convention, a constantly evolving elastic mesh that aims to set points to ensure the management and transparency of what happens in the space. The process of political, artistic and cultural experimentation taking place at the Asilo is based furthermore on three guidelines, not explicit in the regulation<sup>36</sup> according to which:

- process is more important than success
- non-determination of permanent roles
- tension towards a sense of responsibility without the imposition of obligations on the individual

The functioning of the Asilo ecosystem or body is based on the centrality of the assemblies, which have decision-making power and thematic Planning Tables which constitute thematic work circles, in which the most practical and organization. As far as decision-making processes are concerned, assemblies can be describes as moments of experimentation with the consent method. It is important to clarify that the concept of consensus is not intended as a final vote unanimously, but is conceived as a tension towards which to strive, in the full awareness that not all participants they can never fully agree on all the proposals. The moments of discussion at the shareholders' meeting are open to anyone. According to the declaration it is possible to recognize, among the participants, a distinction between those who are "inhabitants" that is, those who have participated in a certain number of assemblies and who apply for this status. The "guests" those who intervene in the discussion to bring proposals and do not continuously frequent the space and the "users" of the Asilo, who pass by occasionally enjoying the activities.

The assemblies differ in approach and scope of decision and meet every week:

- The management meeting (first Monday) takes care of the reception and discussion of the new proposals that are not attributable, by complexity or by topic, to a table specific.

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<sup>35</sup> Declaration of civic and collective uses. <http://www.exasilofilangieri.it/regolamento-duso-civico/>

<sup>36</sup> From interviews during the field study

- The meeting (second and third Monday) of address constitutes the space for political discussion general.

- The scheduling assembly (fourth Monday) takes care of the practical organization e logistics (therefore also in terms of scheduling) of the activities of the following month.

The latter type of assembly was recently established following a strong push from autonomy on the part of the worktables with the desire to recreate a collective moment of sharing of activities. The genesis of the tables is instead linked to the congestion of assemblies caused by the countless proposals that arrive daily in space, whose organizational and logistical needs stifled the time set aside for the reflections of political address. Over time, even the tables themselves have developed an organization more complex internal and some of them have an internal division.

In some cases it is created a departure from the meeting spaces, creating some problems of clarity and distancing from the general sense of experimentation. For this reason, the *Intertavolo* was established: a space of interdependent proposals between the tables capable of reporting activities in general assemblies.

- *Arti della Scena*: meeting space for workers in the theatre and dance sectors and of the performing arts in general. It creates workshops and artistic residences that make up most of the events scheduled at the nursery school. It has linked moments within it address and others related to management.

- *Armeria*: it is the meeting place for those involved in illustration, graphics, carpentry, ceramics and manual work. It deals with self-production, of the scenography, of the fittings and of the care of the spaces.

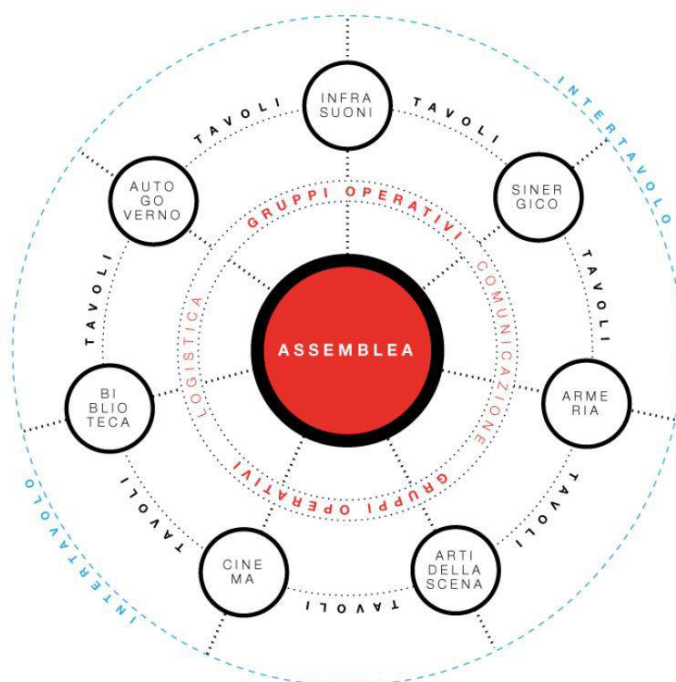
- *Infrasuoni*: intended for musicians, singers and sound engineers. He carries on the *Geografie del Suono* review where the musicians who usually attend the Kindergarten experiment on stage with artists from all over the world

- *Library*: deals with the management of the small library.

- *Cinema*: it has been active for a year and offers film reviews and has recently set up a cinematographic laboratory

- *Self-government*: technical work space for drafting regulations and reflection overall on the Asylum ecosystem and other urban realities.

## AUTOGOVERNO DELL'ASILO



*Scheme made by the author and the activists*

The strengths of this management model are certainly the extraordinary ability of attention to the quality of relationships, the continuous change of roles, freedom in participation and although it is impossible to create a space where there are no hierarchies, yes it always emphasizes the tension towards horizontality. The formation of possible hierarchies is constantly monitored, discussed again, and at the very moment in which they are formed they are accepted as temporary and dynamic. Criticalities of this scheme concern the amount of time to be allocated to the experimentation, the difficulty in managing internal communication, especially at the moment in which the individual tables have developed their own autonomy.

The exchange of inhabitants and energies, which has happened constantly during these years, is considered an important value for the natural evolution of experimentation in act, as well as the discontinuous presence of activists, who in this way are able to provide new stimulus and discussion.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The drafting of the paragraph is the result of the integration of interviews with the inhabitants integrated with information contained in the declaration of use.

This research work was a freer and more autonomous path that led me to a path of reflection towards the role of the urban regenerator coming to develop some considerations:

- the job of the "regenerator" cannot be separated from a long path of coaching to understand the community in which one operates, practicing listening and continuous dialogue, act to develop a trust-building process.
- a more multidisciplinary look is essential to understand the meaning and to know a path of urban regeneration that starts from the base of the citizens.
- suggesting ideas and emphasizing aspects that have not been analysed, highlighting any contradictions within the process is more inspiring to suggest good practices, than to against, they could induce unreal needs or suggest easy but inappropriate solutions.
- supporting urban regeneration processes on a continuous basis can create a "Fall in love towards practice", for which it is necessary to calibrate one's presence, but over the long period.

### 3.2 Case 2. Pratobello, an abandoned village symbol of *commons defece*.

#### *Why is a symbol*

The village of Pratobello is located in the territory of the municipality of Fonni. In front of the buildings runs a small provincial road that marks the border with Orgosolo, the adjacent municipality. Going north along this road, just ten minutes away is the border with another municipality, that of Mamoiada. Its border position on the one hand and isolation on the other has been repeatedly considered strategic, from different points of view. The events of this village will in fact intersect with the will of the state one more time about ten years after its construction.

The 1969 was an important year for the village of Orgosolo. During the month of May, lots of posters countersigned by the Trieste Brigade were posted on the walls and in the bars of the town. In this announcement was intimate to the shepherds to abandon the municipal grazing areas in the Pratobello area, with the evacuation of about forty thousand head of cattle, to due to the installation of a military polygon of the Italian Army.

Faced with the announcement, the shepherds wondered how to act in defence of the pastures and from the first days of June onwards numerous meetings followed one another that will involve the entire population of the country. On 7 June, a first popular assembly called a first demonstration in the places where the exercises were scheduled.

The assembly's communication reads *"This demonstration was decided to give a first warning to the military and political authorities who have arbitrarily decided to invade our territories with serious damage to all workers"*.

From then until June 19, the first of the "six days of Pratobello", the Prefectural Commissioner of Orgosolo, the Police Headquarters of Nuoro, the soldiers themselves and the organizations of the Alleanza Contadini, Coldiretti and CGIL among the unions tried to reach an agreement but no mediation was reached.

A popular demonstration was therefore organized which is still remembered today because almost all of the population of Orgosolo, about three thousand five hundred people, occupied the land where the exercises were planned for a whole week, managing to avoid the installation of the polygon. The reasons that led to the event were different and shared in

various ways by the population<sup>38</sup>. The first reason was that the state wanted to take the territory by force with the consequent loss by the shepherds of their properties, who could not have found other pastures either locally or elsewhere. Furthermore, part of the exercises should have been carried out in state-owned territory, which in those years employed dozens of people. The second reason, the one brought forward by the demonstrators adhering to a Youth Club born a few years earlier, was of a political nature: the goal was to start a constative action to be extended to all of Sardinia with the aim of closing all NATO military bases located on the island.



*Image from barbaricina.it*

The demonstration involved in addition to the students, who took care to inform the population and organize the protest women, children and farmers, civil and religious authorities and finally the parties and trade unions. The involvement of the entire community was favored by the concern for the possible installation of a permanent and non-temporary polygon as had been officially announced. In the initial phase, the protest did not see the participation of local administrators, who saw an economic opportunity in the installation of the polygon and also, the neighbouring villages of Fonni and Mamoiada distanced themselves from the event, as the areas intended for exercises were included in the perimeter of the municipal lands of Orgosolo. The events of the event, sometimes told partially, are described in various texts and there is a photographic reportage that illustrates the events.

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<sup>38</sup> F. Menneas *Sa lotta 'e Pratobello. La lotta di un popolo in difesa del proprio territorio*, Domus de Janas, Sestu, 2019 and G.Satta *Turisti a Orgosolo. La Sardegna pastorale come attrazione turistica*, Liguori editore, Napoli, 2001

Although the testimonies are sometimes conflicting, in the collective imagination the "Pratobello revolt" is an event that marks the history of these areas, becoming a symbol of a peaceful and collective defense of the territory.



*Image from barbaricina.it*

In 1969 the first mural also appeared in Orgosolo, a municipality today characterized by more than two hundred wall paintings that tell historical events, daily life but above all social issues, paintings that are now an integral part of the image of the country. The murals play today an important attractive role from the tourist point of view as they constitute a cultural event on a perennial exhibition, and even today new drawings are born that tell the complaints and the great achievements of a small community that are harmoniously intertwined with the representation of events of world-wide breadth. For a large part of the local population, the village of Pratobello is closely linked to the events of the military polygon as the army should have inhabited those spaces. Only the elderly remember that the original project was that of a service village wanted by the Cassa del Mezzogiorno. The renovation project of the hamlet, carried out a few months before the events of the event was functional to the shooting range as the large dormitories created could have housed the military. However, in the technical report of the Project for the restoration and adaptation works of the Borgata di Pratobello, the new destination of the village appears to be that of a "summer camp".

The document of February 1969 reads: "The construction took place, with financing from the Cassa del Mezzogiorno, in the years 1958-1961 (P.A.C. n T 23 / 4A and 23 / 4B). In the following years, the desired settlements were lacking due to the depopulation of the countryside, the Borgata, for several years without custody and maintenance, remained

exposed to the damage of the weather and the devastation of unknown vandals. [...] With this project, following agreements made with the Provincial Administration of Nuoro, we intend to adopt the Borgata as a summer camp, modifying, as far as possible, the original internal distribution of the premises and carrying out the necessary restoration and adaptation works . [...] " According to the report, the restoration works concern the reconstruction of the external plaster, the arrangement of eaves and downspouts, the fixtures, the water and electrical systems, the demolition of partitions to obtain larger rooms to be used as dormitories. In addition, for the building already intended as a dairy, it is foreseen that the roadmen who would be in charge of the custody of the entire village will be adapted to house. Finally, works were planned for the reconstruction of the fence and the external flooring. There is no doubt that the spaces defined by the restoration project, the dormitories and collective spaces, allowed both possible destinations of use, summer camp or residence for the military command, especially if of a temporary nature.

The subsequent history will be marked by the definitive abandonment of the structures, interspersed with recovery proposals from various public bodies, which have never been followed up in reality.

#### *The Construction of the village and the post-war rural colonization policies*

Following the signing, in April 1948, of the American aid plan for Europe (European Recovery Program), better known as the "Marshall Plan", the sum of 1,578 million dollars was allocated for Italy, equal to about a thousand billion lire at the time. A vast program of public works was launched in the South, especially in the agricultural sector. In 1950, the concentration of redevelopment programs in the south and the islands were also supported by economic policy measures of the Italian state, which were of great importance for the "environmental and productive transformation of vast areas of the national territory". Cassa del Mezzogiorno was

##### **Ongoing list of the rural villages built by *Cassa del Mezzogiorno* during the 50's.**

Sardegna: *Tottubella, Guardia Grande, Sos Alinos, Pratobello, Sant'Anna*

Sicilia: *Villaggi Schisina, Borgo San Giovanni, Bucceri-Monastero, Pietra Pizzuta, Malfitana, Piano Torre, Morfia*

Abruzzo: *Borghi Fucino*

Basilicata: *San Cataldo, Calle, Boreano, Monteserico, Caprarico, Taccone, Venusio, Policoro e Scanzano Jonico*

born as a public body created by the government of Alcide De Gasperi to finance industrial initiatives aimed at economic development in the south, with the aim of bridging the gap with the northern regions.

Considering the backwardness of the south, the result of the Cassa del Mezzogiorno aims mainly at creation of new infrastructure and water networks, as well as construction, reclamation and industrial development works. These interventions were the subject of an interesting public debate by architects, urban planners and enlightened industrialists and the community movement was born which began to express its dissatisfaction with this institution, especially in the face of the forms of intervention practiced in the south.

What the community intellectuals condemned the Cassa was the lack of a central structure that united the territorial interventions to the real needs of the inhabitants. These interventions had to be integrated into a coherent and completely different economic policy from the one followed up to now. The absence of local initiatives that controlled the planned social investments, gave an appearance of total irrationality to public spending, which was paid "sprinkling" beyond any optimization criteria.

The initial benevolence shown towards the extraordinary intervention soon turned into total disillusionment. The types of construction interventions (excluding civil works such as dams, roads and infrastructures of various kinds, which we will not deal with here) can be summarized in residential villages, service villages and newly founded villages including residences and services.

The hundreds of projects carried out with these funds, in Abruzzo, Molise, Lazio, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Sardinia and Sicily have profoundly transformed the surrounding territories and the results of the projects, which are widely variable, are linked both to the design, whose quality was strictly dependent on the individual designers, both on the characteristics of each place. It therefore happens that some villages have expanded, becoming real hamlets, others are still used today thanks to refurbishment interventions and still others have been abandoned. As part of the intentions of the Cassa del Mezzogiorno, ETFAS (Ente per la trasformazione fondiaria e agraria in Sardegna) was born in May 1951, the body for land and agricultural transformation in Sardinia.

The project took shape, first of all, with the expropriation of uncultivated lands, the implementation of vast colonization and transformation plans, together with the creation of important infrastructures. The marshy areas were reclaimed and dams, canals, aqueducts and roads were built. The peasants were assigned the farms deriving from the previous expropriations. Each assignee had the obligation to cultivate their own fund, producing

quantities of crops that would guarantee at least the sustenance of the relative family. The ETFAS represented the structure to which all the tasks of expropriation, reclamation, transformation and assignment of land to farmers were assigned, in order to awaken and revitalize Sardinian agriculture marked by decades of neglect.

The hamlets were built mainly approximately medium or large urban centers, such as Sassari, Nuoro, Alghero and Oristano and in addition to buildings for housing, they also contained service buildings (church and rectory, schools, pharmacy, barracks).

Today the hamlets are the result of a transformation process that lasted about fifty years, which made them industrial areas as happened for the hamlet of Santa Maria la Palma (Ss), or residential as it happened for the hamlet Sant 'Anna (Or), for the hamlet of Maristella (Ss). The Colonization Center of Porto Torres, which involved the construction of residences, has become a municipality. Others are still inhabited today but intended to be service areas for the surrounding areas such as the villages of Guardia Grande and Tottubella located near Alghero.



*Image from Sardinian digital library*

Focusing on the area of central Sardinia, the service villages built through the Cassa del Mezzogiorno are only two. The design was commissioned directly to the Marreri-Isalle Reclamation Consortium, today a Reclamation Consortium of Central Sardinia. One is the village of Pratobello in the internal area and the other is the village of Sos Alinos, a few kilometers from the Gulf of Orosei. Both were made between the years 1958 and 1961. If the two projects are completely similar in size, functions and general objective, that is to encourage

the development of existing rural realities, the two projects will have very different developments closely related to the territory and the historical events that have overwhelmed them in fifty years. The first economic initiatives related to tourism began to develop in Sos Alinos and the outcome of this project will be influenced by the exponential development of this sector. The take-off of the tourism industry in this region began with the foundation of the Costa Smeralda Consortium in the northern area of Gallura. While the Costa Smeralda was increasingly establishing itself as a luxury tourist destination, the rush to build tourist settlements began in many coastal towns on the island. In fact, a large number of other settlements followed this initiative and also in the rest of Sardinia the sector developed to become one of the main sectors of the island's economic activities. Today the village of Sos Alinos, which is a total of 10 km from the Municipality of Orosei, represents the center of the surrounding seaside resorts - Cala Liberotto and Sas Linnas Siccas - and includes all the main services of the area. In the original village of Sos Alinos there are today a pharmacy, tourist medical guard, church surrounded by various accommodation facilities and tourist services, for catering and purchases and if the number of inhabitants is extremely reduced for most of the year - there are 186 residents - in the bathing season the hamlet hosts several tens of thousands of tourists.

### *Spatial Description*

The village of Pratobello located in the municipality of Fonni, on the border with the municipality of Orgosolo, is made up, according to the original project, of six buildings in which the following functions were provided. The church with the attached rectory, a rural school, a medical office, a post office, two shops, some houses and a dairy, all set within a well-defined restricted area. Shortly after its construction, it was abandoned for several reasons, which we will describe in the next paragraph.



Images from Comunal Library – Orgosolo; 1958

The most important were essentially two. The climate, as the pastures of the surrounding areas were used only in the summer season and the change in housing styles in rural areas. If previously the shepherds lived in the countryside for long periods, often with their families, in the in the 50s and 60s with the improvement of infrastructures and the spread of cars, living in the country and moving daily for work became easier. The use of the buildings was therefore temporary and sporadic: according to oral testimonies between 1962 and 1969 it was used for a few months a year as a place for the summer camps of children from the surrounding countries, organized mainly by groups linked to the parishes locals. A use relating to an interval of two months a year that took place until the theft of fixtures, bathroom fixtures and furnishings made it permanently unusable.

The project begun in 1958 was entirely financed by the Cassa del Mezzogiorno, which entrusted the design to a local authority: the Mareri Isalle Reclamation Consortium. The documents of the original project and of the restoration that took place in 1969 are still partly preserved in this consortium, now named the Consortium of Reclamation of Central Sardinia. The lack of knowledge of the history of this hamlet has led us to search for official documents that have in part been lost. The various information collected in various public offices have composed the final image of a puzzle that unites this village with similar situations of abandonment present in southern Italy.

Despite this, the partiality of the data and information contained within the documents led to a survey on site, in order to obtain precise measurements. The survey, subsequently digitized, can be integrated with existing paper documents.

### *Future perspectives*

The study of the history and the territory in which these artefacts are inserted allowed me to foresee a process of regeneration in the rural area that could become a “spark” for a broader reflection on the surrounding common lands that still exist.

Thinking today of renovating these buildings, considering the decay linked to decennial abandonment, with a “complete” physical redevelopment may be a somewhat unsustainable choice.

However, this does not prevent the possibility to weave a network between research groups, environmentalist and anti-militarist movements that still understand this space as a place of collective recognition for local communities, of interventions in open spaces, be they micro artistic installations or ephemeral architectures. Transformations that could change not only the perception of the village and the territory but the uses of those spaces themselves.



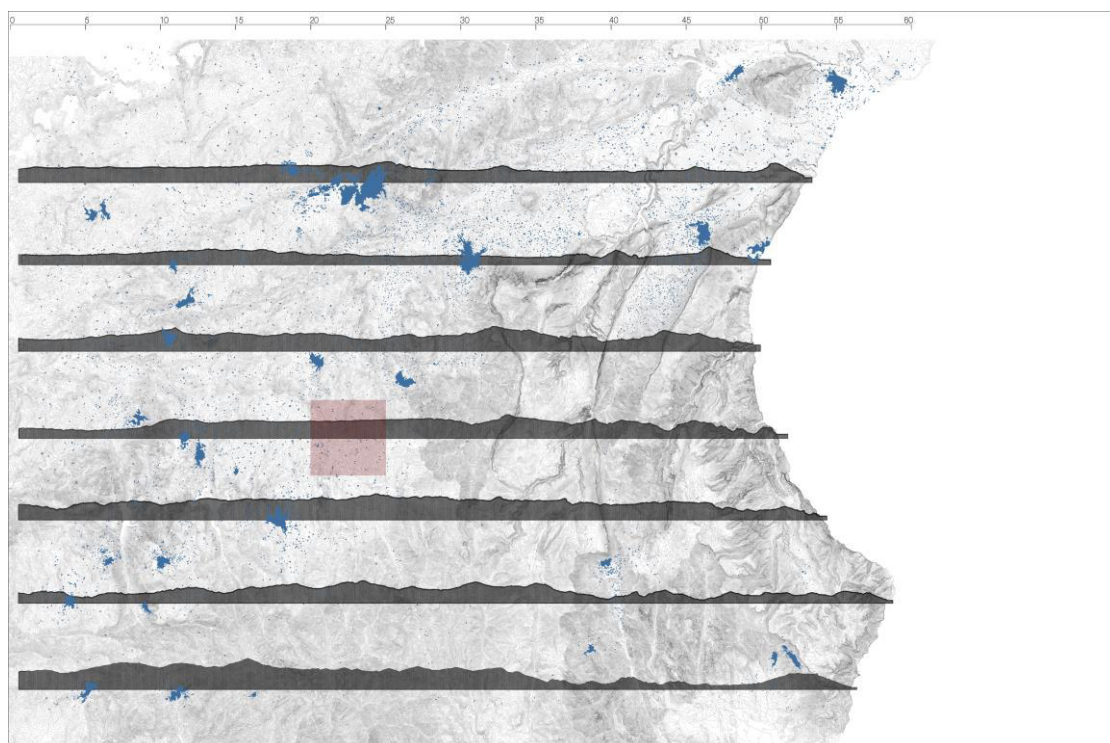
*Picture of the anniversary celebration in 2019 – unknown author*

*Territorial Placement*

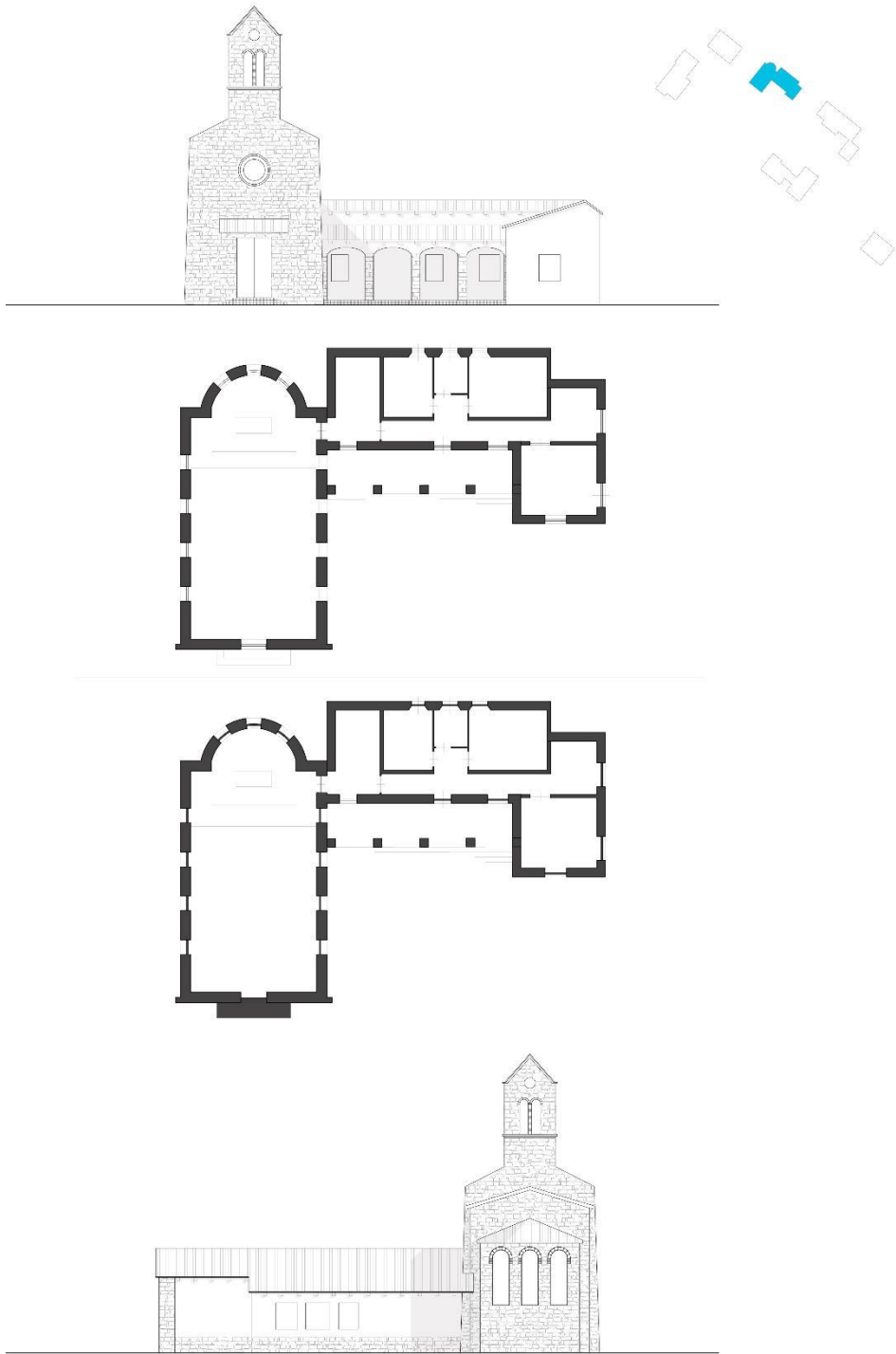
The village of Pratobello and the nearest municipalities of Orgosolo, Fonni and Mamoiada



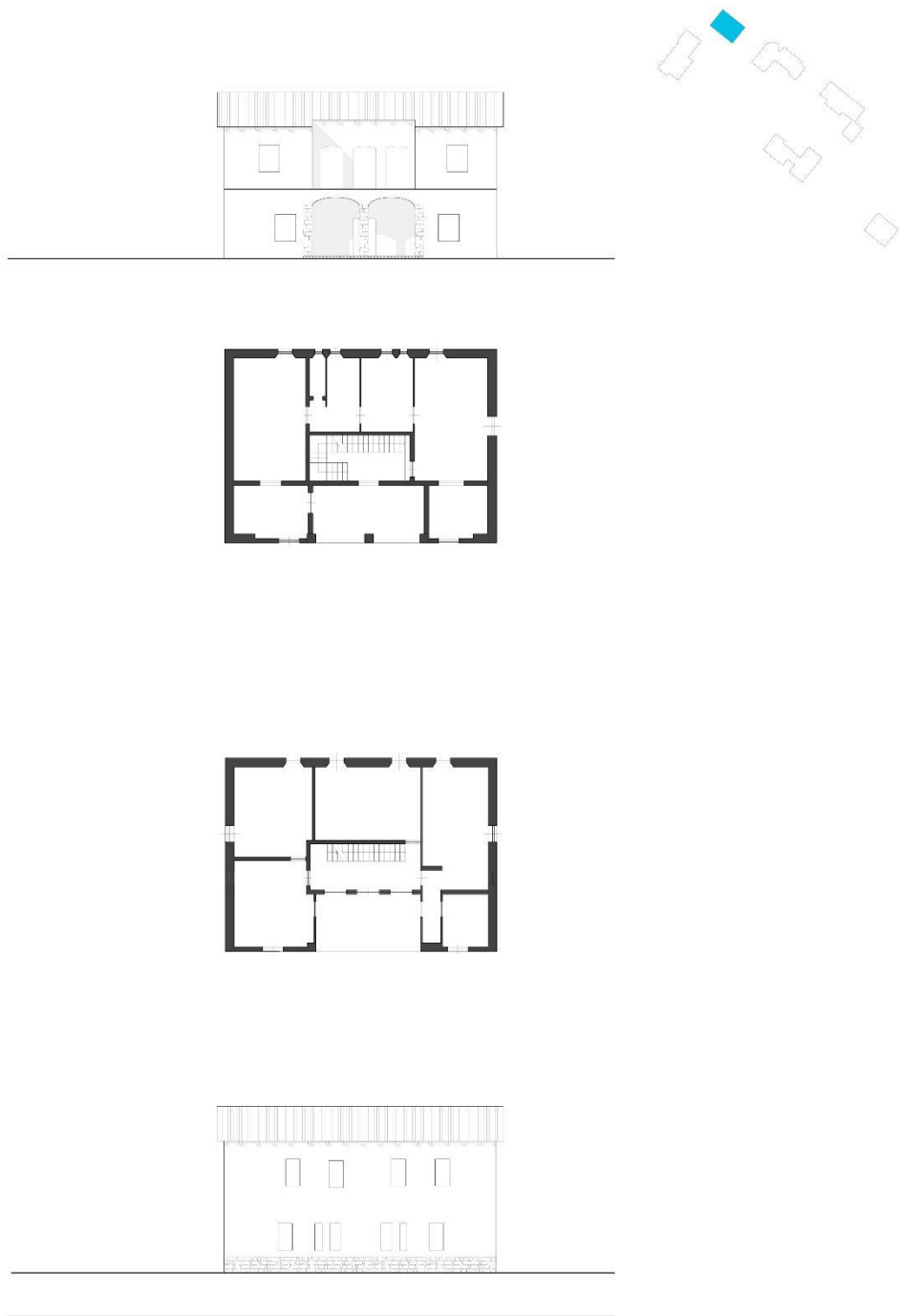
*The location of Pratobello , with territorial sections and the major villages.*



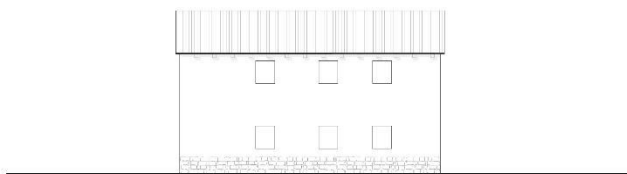
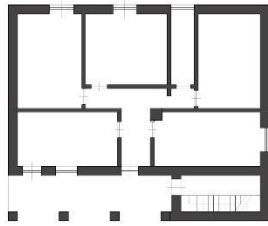
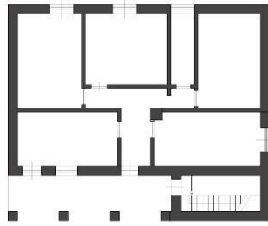
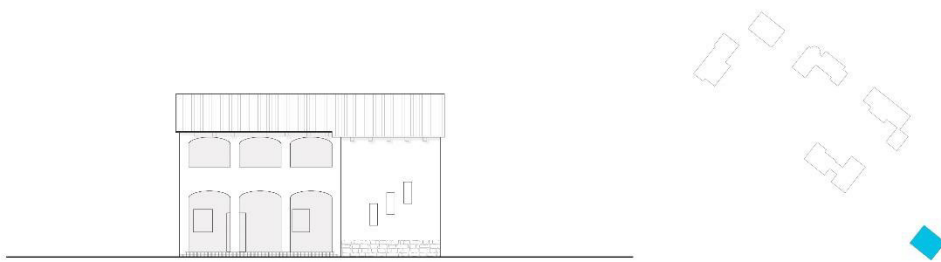
*Architectural survey*



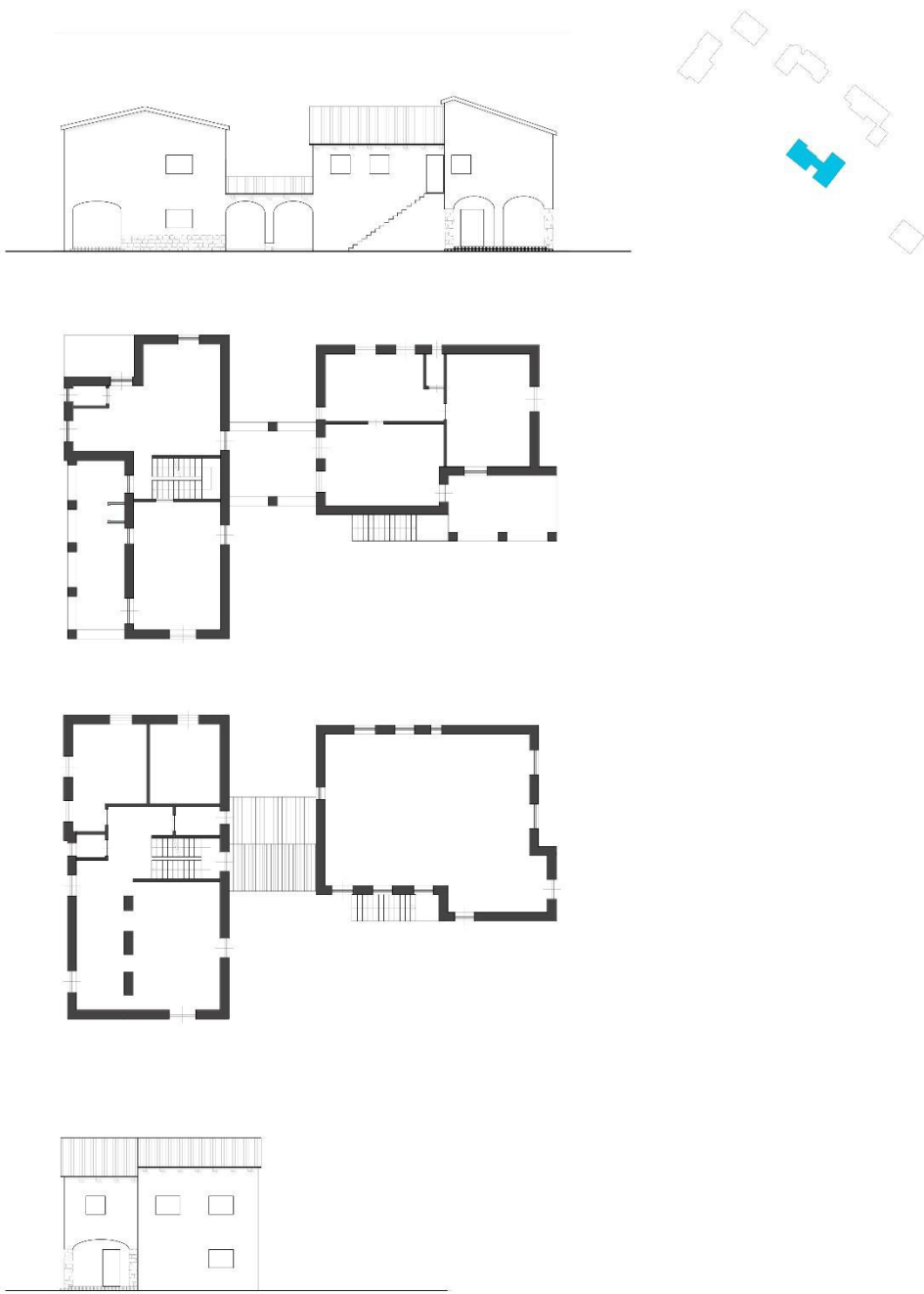
*Church, plan and elevations*



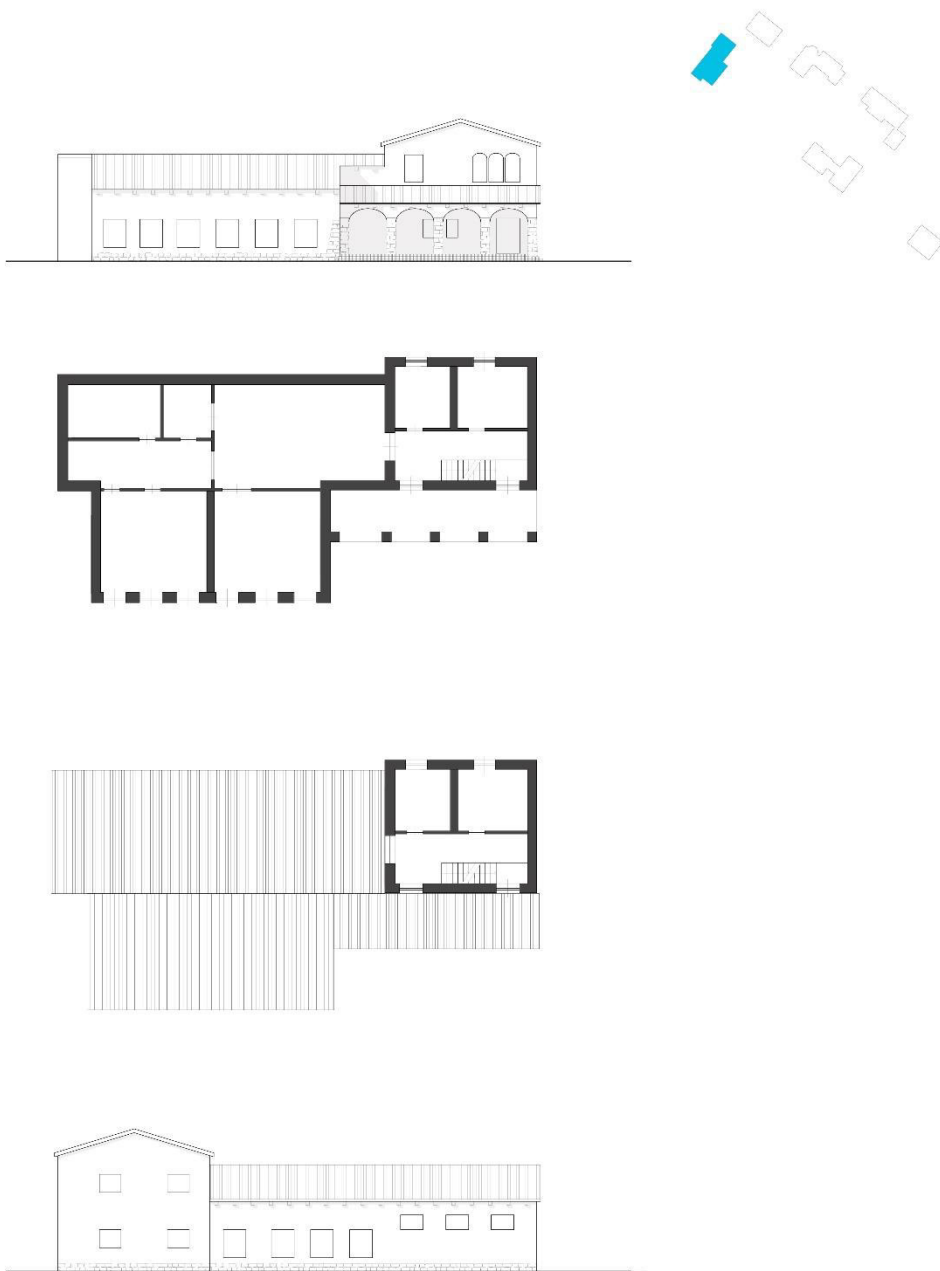
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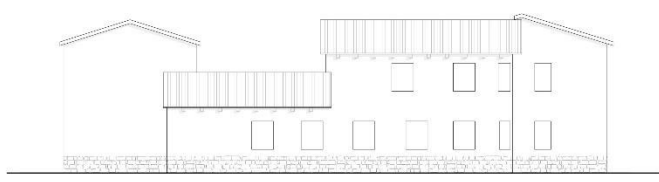
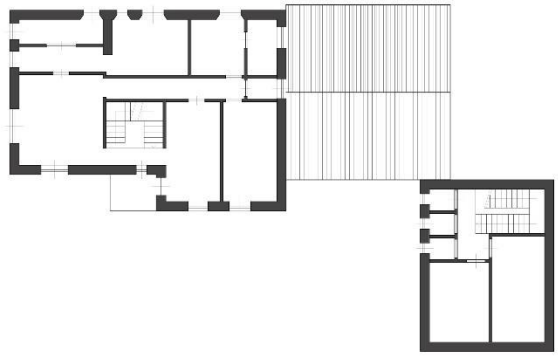
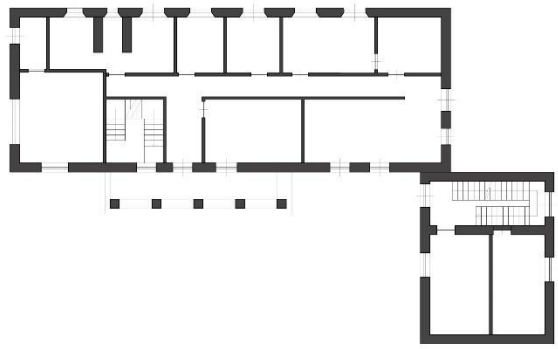
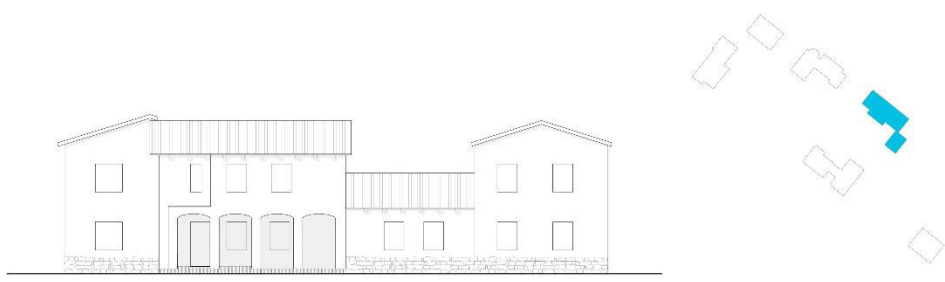
*Cheese factory, plan and elevations*



*Post  
and medical offices, plan and elevations*



*The  
rural school, plan and elevations*



*Headquarter forest service, plan and elevations*



### 3.3 Case 3. Collective Planting Laboratory in a Public Park

The initiative "89 Alberi" took place on 9 February 2020, on the hill around which the urban center of the Municipality of Dorgali. A Sardinian municipality of about 8600 inhabitants, located in the east-coast of the island and in the subregion of Barbagia.

The workshop was the first collective planting event not only aimed at schools, as had already happened in the past, but open to all citizenship and it took place in the largest urban park in the village, on a hill around which the inhabited center develops.

The urban park, despite the project for the arrangement of terraces and pedestrian paths carried out in 2006, was used intermittently by the local population, with a slight increase in flows in the summer season, due to the favorable ventilation of the area. The collective perception that I was able to register after several informal chats and in-person observations was that of a public place that the inhabitants were reluctant to use.

The origins of this "distance" from the public space can probably be traced back to the structure of the inhabited center. Surrounded by particularly extensive protected natural areas, his urban layout is devoid of a large gathering space: with the exception of the small churchyards, there is no space that has the dimensional and architectural characteristics of a square. An aspect that certainly affects both the use and the perception of public space.

The aims of the event followed several trajectories:

- Re-appropriation of a rarely used urban park through a collective spatial transformation action, place-based and in an informal context
- Stimulate reflections, through knowledge of local biodiverse species, on an ecological perspective that looks at green areas as ecosystems on which we interdepend and not as mere ornamental gardens
- Emergence of the need to care for a common space, to be faced both: in an institutional form and in a self-organized form among citizens, with a long-term perspective beyond the event.

*For whom?* The laboratory of collective planting of local biodiverse species was free and aimed at all citizens, of all ages, in single or associated form.

*By whom?* In its organization the involvement of several local associations and institutions. The actors involved in organization of the initiative were:

- Local Biodiversity Committee
- Sardinia Forests regional body
- Municipality of Dorgali
- The association promoting the event "San Giuseppe Committee"

The characteristics of the initiative, conceived and built together with the citizens themselves, have been outlined, to ensure the widest possible participation, along these lines:

- avoid any a didactic or formal approach
- Institutions and associations were present and participated together with citizens without being "guides" of the initiative
- The initiative involved a large number of people, heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, level of education, political orientation and professions.

As planner and action- researcher, in order to analyse the observations of citizens on the transformation taking place, during the co-creation process of this day I experienced the possibility of acting deliberately not only in terms of my background, but to play a chameleon-like role. On the one hand as an urban regenerator, on the other as an active citizen. This deliberate choice was made to encourage one point: all citizens have the opportunity to improve and take care of the public space and benefit from it, either individually or in associated form.

In addition to the planting, the workshop included a previous collective selection of native species, from the local biodiversity and the construction of a simple irrigation system to allow the sustenance of the plants during the first years. Although there is no structural management of public green maintenance, individual volunteers and associations, spontaneously and without any regulation or shifts, have taken care of these plants during these months, that have begun to bear fruit.

*Observations after thirteen months.* Establishing how much the *collective planting day* has actually contributed to a different use of the park is a difficult challenge and it is even more, when we think about how the restrictions linked to the pandemic have changed our relationship with the outdoors. According to the observations, at different times of the day, the flow of people using these spaces on weekdays and in the afternoon has increased. During the period

of lockdown, it was a point of "escape" for several citizens, mostly adult and elderly women, without a private open space adjacent to their home.

Photo Gallery

# 89 ALBERI

La leva '89  
Comitato San Giuseppe 2019

invita

singoli cittadini  
e associazioni

alla

**PIANTUMAZIONE  
COLLETTIVA  
DI ALBERI**

**Dorgali  
Parco Su Craminu  
Domenica 9 Febbraio  
Ore 10.30**



SardegnaForeste



*Flyer designed by the author*



*Pictures by E. Scapicchio*

## Conclusion

This research work has allowed me to take different positions with respect to the three field experiences. The first one, as a researcher-activist who observes and contributes to the accompaniment of an urban regeneration process in the field. The second as a preliminary study for the weaving of a network, that can trigger a long-term regeneration process. The last one, as a citizen and observer of the dynamics of transformation of public space, in action through spatial transformation interventions that require shorter times in the realization and sporadic forays to observe the results.

The conclusion of this research path leads me to observe that first they concern the role of the urban regenerator. A hybrid figure, still not recognizable, who struggles to find a space for action, out of projects linked to institutional actors. A difficulty that increases when one finds himself operating in contexts far from metropolitan areas.

The need to build interdisciplinary teams in order to study and accompany the complexity of contemporary urban transformations, where the necessary skills range from architecture to geography, from planning to anthropology, from jurisprudence to the ability to identify sources of funding.

Urban regeneration involves the interaction between actors, arguments that lead to very different spatial scales and the analysis of institutional dynamics on multiple levels.

The long times of these processes require a renewed attention to the places. A *stasis* that allows to elaborate observations on the changes taking place, which cannot be reduced to a few weeks or last minute inspections, a *stasis* that allows first of all active listening, the basis for ongoing relationship with those who live in the spaces and try or would like to transform them.

At the same time, it is important to have the ability to observe moments of relaxation with respect to research-action experiences in order to be able to analyse with greater clarity both the development of the path through distance, and the change in one's position *in itinere*.

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