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Maria Fierro, Mario Galterisi, Sara Riccardi, Giovanna Spinelli

RIVELAZIONI



Confinamenti →therightSpace← 05

**Research Tools and Methods
for Exploring the Denied and Invisible Spaces
of Contemporary Society**

Book of abstracts of Rivelazioni International Conference

CRATÈRA

Confinamenti →therightSpace← 05

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and Invisible Spaces of Contemporary Society

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Rivelazioni International Conference

-

University of Naples Federico II

Department of Architecture

October 9-10th 2025

CRATÈRA

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Rivelazioni. Abstracts from the International Conference

Francesco Casalbordino, Fabiola Cristalli, Elvira De Felice, Francesca Di Fusco, Maria Fierro, Mario Galterisi, Sara Riccardi, Giovanna Spinelli

In recent years, interest in invisible, denied, marginalized spaces, removed from representation and citizenship, has intensified in various fields. Architecture, urban planning, sociology, law, geography, art, postcolonial and environmental studies have progressively turned their attention to the material and symbolic devices that produce confinement, exclusion, and invisibility, questioning how such spaces can be recognized, understood, and transformed.

The RIVELAZIONI conference is part of the research project “RiSP – Right to Space, Space of Rights. Design Actions to Rethink Prisons,” funded by the University of Naples Federico II, between 2022 and 2025. The research explored the relationship between spatial justice and architectural design, with a particular focus on detention spaces. From this focused field of action, RIVELAZIONI opens new explorations and new research horizons to be unveiled, in the knowledge that prison represents both a significant reality and a broader reflection of the contradictions of contemporary society. The conference thus arises from this critical tension and the desire to initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue on methods, tools, and languages capable of restoring form and visibility to the denied and invisible places of contemporary life. This volume collects the abstracts presented at the conference, the result of an open call initially structured around three axes of reflection: Visions//Perspectives, Tools//Methods, Experiences//Narratives.

The Visions and Perspectives axis invited a rethinking of the role of design disciplines as critical and operational tools capable of impacting processes of exclusion, questioning the boundaries between theory and action, knowledge and practice, observation and participation. The collected researches move toward the construction of new theoretical and pedagogical perspectives, in which reflection on contemporaneity becomes an opportunity to imagine horizons of possibility and emancipation.

The Tools and Methods space explored the ways in which research has made visible realities excluded from dominant representations of the city and the territory. Maps, drawings, performative practices, visual narratives, and design devices were configured as tools capable of revealing the mechanisms of denial of bodies and spaces. The experiences presented propose a way of conducting research that intertwines analytical rigor and sensitive engagement,

transcending the rhetoric of neutrality and merging objectivity and subjectivity, science and activism.

The Experiences and Narrations constructed a situated atlas of denied places: confinement camps, post-industrial areas, geographies of hardship, invisible infrastructures, militarized or removed territories. Through stories, testimonies, memories, and practices of traversal, these experiences delineate a counter-geography of places of exclusion, capable of subverting established perspectives and reactivating relationships, imaginaries, and processes of resignification.

These axes delineated the field of research that transcended mere revelation to become a practice of resignification, spatial justice, and transformation. To clarify the diverse “revelations” brought to bear, the numerous contributions collected were then recomposed into a new mosaic, a collection of fragments that convey the complexity of contemporary life and the plurality of its geographies. The “revelations” are structured around six thematic clusters – confinements, ecologies, differences, post-metropolitan conditions, heritages, and devices – which, despite their heterogeneity, share a common striving to reconstruct a spatial knowledge capable of addressing questions of social, environmental, and ecological justice.

Each abstract represents a piece of this mosaic, a fragment of the world that, like Borges's *Aleph*, contains within itself the entire universe of possibilities for investigation and revelation. The contemporaneity of the themes is not understood as a simple adherence to the present, but as a horizon projected into the future: the research collected here does not simply describe, but opens avenues, produces perspectives, and generates processes.

This simultaneity of times and perspectives is the strength of the volume: its ability to convey the complexity of the present – largely Western, but not exclusively – and to offer it as a critical space for reflection and transformation. Revealing, in this sense, means acting, restoring to places, physical and immaterial, denied and invisible, the possibility of being seen, inhabited, thought about and shared again.

T2 – Ecologies

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We exist in an era where the forms of living, producing, and consuming intertwine in an unstable landscape. Industrial heritage is shadowed and blended with technological hyperconnectivity, while new material and digital ecosystems reshape the planet. How, then, can we reveal the contemporary reality of our “common home”? What remains of it after the passage of post-industrialization processes that, especially in the Western world, have transformed once-productive territories into worlds of consumption? What remains are contaminated spaces, geographies of extraction, disconnected and forgotten internal areas. These are some of the dimensions explored by the authors, who contribute to the construction of a constellation of revealed ecologies. But not only that. Aware that the post-industrial and technological reality continues to evolve, the authors question what new kinds of spaces and what novel architectural typologies are emerging, often hidden behind the need for technological innovation. Non-human zones such as data centers, intensive agricultural facilities, or automated production hubs – spaces where human presence is marginal or absent – occupy ever-larger portions of territories, consuming land and resources. And it is precisely how and what think about resources that seems to be at stake in imagining new different ways of being for such complex contemporary ecologies. What model of living should we conceive today? What practices, projects, and strategies can we implement to transform a way of living that is now unsustainable, based on domination, violence, and exploitation, fueling conflict and social, spatial, and environmental injustice? Possible responses revealed by authors include processes of naturalization and local ecologies, along with a redefinition of the agents that actually operate on the planet, in a perspective that transcends the anthropocentric vision to recognize more-than-human forms of agency. New ways of living are thus emerging, based on care – not only from humans, but from the Earth, and from the diverse species and ecosystems that inhabit it. These are the questions and revelations that run through this section: ecologies as places, spaces, and habitats, but also as relationships, practices, and networks of agents, inviting us to rethink the relationship between humanity, the environment, and technology in the construction of our common home. In this interweaving of spaces, relationships, and agents, the studies presented reveals the forms of the visible and the invisible, the more and more blurred distinction between what is natural and what artificial, inviting us to rethink our presence on Earth not as domination, but as an act of coexistence and care.

Ma l'anima rimane intatta

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keywords: *mutations, testimonies, tales*

"The landscape allows itself to be lived in," declared Eugenio Turri, "welcoming everything," even if this involves irreversible transformations capable of altering already established balances. Carlo Levi stated that "there is no landscape without people," describing them as capable of "conquering" the territory to their advantage. Contemporary progress, which is advancing at an ever-increasing pace, means that nothing is stable and that what is innovative today will be obsolete tomorrow. In this scenario, it seems inevitable to surrender to the idea that all the places we love will one day change or cease to have the value we attribute to them. While for our ancestors the process was more linear, for us today it is different. Luigi Ghirri's photos reveal this scenario and tell us about the poetics of places condemned to the immobility of a present that is already too past to be able to look to the future. Questioning which conditions are most easily "hidden" by contemporary life allows us to reflect not only on their forced preservation, but also to analyze the phenomena at work without excluding the possibility that the persistence of a phenomenon or practice is not necessarily indicative of a correct correspondence to the structure and balance of the place. It must be understood that anthropogenic 'care' is not the only perspective. In addition to study practices, memory is the fundamental tool for preserving the intangible sensations generated by places, without which we would lose essential clues. However, capturing images is always different: "to live is to interpret reality." Just think of abandoned railway stations, once symbols of progress, or agricultural fields that were once the resource of a territory and are now uncultivated. How do these places live on in collective and individual memory? They once promised a fertile future and now they are the barren past of something that cannot find balance and resist.

Living on the Floodline: revealing the invisible narratives of a suburban district under demolition

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keywords: *flood risk, housing precarity, everyday resistance*

This proposal explores the invisible forms of inhabiting a neighborhood in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges (Parisian suburbs), currently undergoing evacuation due to flood risks and targeted for an "ecological renaturation" project. Located along the Yerres river, the area combines degraded suburban housing, informal constructions, and houses gradually being sealed off by authorities. Beyond the media portrayal of a "high-risk zone", on-the-ground observations reveal the persistence of uses, resident resistance, and makeshift spatial appropriations despite forced evictions and demolitions.

This research questions the contradictions between ecological discourses promoting a return of nature and the silent social violence inflicted by these operations. Behind the promise to "give the river back its space" and "saving lives" unfolds a process of erasing ordinary memories and marginalizing vulnerable communities. Using the case of Villeneuve, the project aims to interrogate how environmental policies may function as a vector of urban "invisibilization".

The project focuses on what must be revealed: the traces of domestic life, micro-architectures of survival, paths of resistance, and residual sociability in a condemned space. We will ask: what clues allow us to perceive the underlying life in a disappearing neighborhood? These indices include leftover personal belongings, reappropriated public spaces, unmaintained but inhabited houses, and narratives of return after eviction.

Methodologically, the research will combine on-site observations, sensitive cartographic mapping, photographic documentation, and short interviews with remaining inhabitants. The goal is to produce a visual and spatial narrative, highlighting the paradox of a disappearing district coexisting with ongoing, albeit fragile, life forms.

The project contributes to a critical reading of fragile forms of inhabiting, reflecting on the tensions between ecological transitions, urban policies, and informal resident resilience.

Marginal Spaces as Infrastructures of Possibility. Urban ecologies for an active transition

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keywords: infrastructure of possibilities, eco-social hubs, sustainable production

Contemporary cities, which consume large amounts of energy and depend on long supply chains, are based on a consumption model that is disconnected from production sites, a structural imbalance that generates waste and pollution. Within this paradigm, there is a widespread geography of residual, interstitial, underground spaces that elude urban representation and governance. These are not simply urban voids, but denied places, removed from the active cycle of the city. However, it is precisely in these spaces that a latent potential for regeneration can be recognised: no longer passive territories or spaces to be filled, but infrastructures of possibility. This contribution offers a theoretical and operational reflection on the idea that such spaces can be transformed into active places of sustainable, cultural and social production, activating processes of eco-systemic transition. In particular, it explores the possibility of imagining these places as distributed nodes of a new urban ecology: micro-centres of food production, ecological education and community activation, capable of reducing the distance between consumption and production, between citizens and territory. The local project is built not on what is missing, but on what exists and can be regenerated as a collective use value (Magnaghi, 2010). The approach adopted moves between transdisciplinary design practices, territorial strategies and forms of research-action, which, through the use of visual tools, participatory maps and co-production devices, combine analytical rigour and sensitive involvement. The study therefore proposes a vision of the city as an archipelago of local ecologies, in which neglected places become drivers of systemic change. They take the form of eco-social hubs, where the dimension of doing is intertwined with that of knowing, generating new forms of active and conscious citizenship. In an era of systemic crisis, revealing means activating: giving shape to new relationships between body, space and environment, restoring to the city the possibility of producing, not just consuming, life.

Ecological Counter-Narratives: the landscapes of non-human zones

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keywords: non-human ecologies, rewilding, counter-narratives

During the course of history, areas that were off-limits due to wars, industrial disasters or geopolitical reasons – such as the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea, the Chernobyl exclusion zone or the ex European Iron Curtain – have unconsciously become places of extraordinary renaturalisation. The absence of humans has activated spontaneous ecological processes which, over time, have encouraged the restoration of habitats, increased biodiversity, and the formation of non-intentional landscapes, defined as “non-human zones” (Massenberg et al., 2023). These areas, often removed from the collective imagination or associated with memories of disaster, reveal a counter-narrative of the landscape: not places of anthropogenic construction, but of emerging ecology, where nature reveals itself in the absence of planning: fauna returns, vegetation expands, ecosystems self-regulate (Arias, 2024). In a context marked by climate and environmental crises, these spaces question the role of abandonment as a generative form, challenging the rhetoric of care and abandonment and raising tensions between protection and absence, control and autonomy. What does it mean to “design” in these places? Is it possible to conceive of forms of coexistence between human inactivity and ecological regeneration? Post-human renaturalisation forces us to question the established categories of design and representation. Through analysis and critical comparison with case studies, this contribution proposes a counter-narrative of the denied landscape, where absence becomes a revealing sign, offering a reflection on alternative forms of environmental projects that do not fall into the logic of domestication but recognise the generative value of non-intervention. Passive rewilding practices and post-abandonment transformations (Navarro & Pereira, 2012) show how, in the absence of human intervention, new forms of habitability emerge, suggesting management models based on inaction, indirect care and respect for ecological autonomy. In these geographies, the landscape ceases to be a representation and becomes living testimony to the broken, and perhaps to be repaired, relationship between human and non-human.

Natural Regenerate. New post-industrial landscapes for Naples

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keywords: design, landscape, post-industrial

Natural Regenerate is a scientific, theoretical, and design-oriented project focused on the specificity of landscape design in addressing the issue of regenerating contemporary territories that have been left undetermined, abandoned, and undefined due to the cessation of productive activities.

Starting from a critical reading of a selection of books by international authors and concrete recent experiences carried out, through design and educational experiments, exhibitions and conferences, and shared urban walks, an interpretative and design approach is proposed for this wide range of contemporary landscapes.

In the proposed approach, the recent past is compared with the present and the near future to create a happy and fruitful tension and friction between memory and innovation, including through a new elaboration that overwrites, surpasses, or even eclipses previous configurations to give meaning to the present.

The project does not completely erase existing anthropic traces but rather ennobles them by elevating them to the rank of true “ruins” of a bygone modernity. Thus, natural processes, whether spontaneous or induced, interpreted according to principles of coexistence and coevolution among living beings, are also considered the driving force behind the natural regeneration of contaminated territories.

Warehouses, chimneys, pylons, cisterns, metal platforms, reinforced concrete columns and beams, brick walls blend in with the natural and newly planted vegetation, interacting with perceptive architectural devices and slow mobility systems introduced to enable their use.

The results are New Landscapes, unprecedented expressions of aesthetic, ecological and social qualities that interpret the post-industrial condition of contemporaneity.

Living Opacity: towards a subtle semantics of the post-industrial city

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keywords: fabric, subtlety, opacity

The contemporary city and its surrounding territory are today punctuated by opaque and inert bodies. Large-scale architectures, outcomes of a past urban phase devoted to Expansion in all its forms, now persist as rigid signs, underutilised or entirely abandoned. Yet, what would occur if these spaces were reconsidered as malleable project material? Which new urban meanings could emerge from signifiers now obsolete? A renewed semantics – understood as the identification and differentiation of relations through implicit conventions – becomes possible, leading to an architectural and urban design process no longer vertical – from context to site – but circular. In fact, through a multi-scalar approach it is possible to deconstruct the technical networks of the city, exposing their latent vitality. Grey residual spaces, decommissioned industrial areas, cisterns, and mobility infrastructures all bear their own imprint within the urban fabric, now legible as a submerged framework from which new centralities may arise. In the transition from an urbanism of Expansion to one of Intensity, coinciding with the shifting of political and economic centralities, built artifacts may cease to be read as relics and instead operate as transformative nodes: flexible containers for collective dwelling, public spaces where relational dimensions are reactivated, new sites in which design loses its dominant character, giving way to a weaker, imperceptible one – sometimes reducible to a simple seat in a concrete void. In this sense, these obsolete signifiers can recover implicit relations that reassign a meaning, reinstating that linguistic relativism whereby the weak project can reshape our perception of reality and our mode of conceiving the city, no longer as a unitary entity but as a multiplicity of interconnected forms.

Beyond the decorated Shed

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keywords: gasoline stations, photography, abandonment

Once a symbol of an increasingly fast-paced world, gasoline stations are gradually turning into urban relics – remnants of a vision of progress that has long become outdated. While their abandonment is not a new phenomenon, it has become increasingly visible today. Whether situated on the urban periphery or within the city fabric, once they lose their function, gasoline stations bring a host of challenges: the creation of urban voids, potential environmental problems, regulatory issues related to land use, and the low economic appeal of both the site and its surroundings. Even though the removal of these structures is problematic, their absence does not necessarily restore continuity to the urban landscape, but rather leaves behind undefined areas, awaiting new narratives.

These transformations have been explored through photography, which since the 1960s has documented the presence of gasoline stations in the urban environment. Edward Ruscha's *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (1963) inaugurated a documentary approach to these structures, followed by the works of Jeff Brouws, Xavier Aragonès, and Éric Tabuchi, who have reinterpreted the format to emphasize themes of abandonment and change within the built environment. Photography thus becomes a critical tool for revealing the ambivalence of these places: spaces that are neglected yet remain active in the collective landscape, capable of sparking new interpretations and design possibilities.

The postcard presented aligns with the perspective of more recent photographers. The shed endures, stripped of its decoration and reduced to its most essential form. Even its potential demolition would not constitute a conclusive act but rather represent yet another form of erasure. In this ambiguous state – between trace, intention, and disappearance – a critical space emerges, one that interrogates the possibilities and limitations of its own transformation.

Against Amnesia: Taranto in the mirror

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keywords: Taranto, hyperobjects, geography

Covering an area of approximately 15 km², the Italsider plant in Taranto – now Acciaierie d'Italia – is the largest steelworks in Europe. Since 1965, and until the 1990s, the factory embodied the ambition to replace the desolation of a horizontal landscape with the vertical hope of its chimneys. The artificial clouds rising into the sky sketched the figures of a mirage that time has turned into deprivation – the same deprivation that has condemned the city's historic island to be called “old” rather than “ancient.” These are the materials of an artificial geography that encodes not only a sequence of images, but also the awareness of an exhausted system that has overshadowed reality by replacing monuments and social ties. The design project thus becomes a tool to once again traverse forgotten geographies – spaces not always recoverable, yet still rewritable through instruments able to define interpretive theories as well as operational strategies. Words and materials therefore shape not only a framework of thought, but also an action that continuously redraws the threads and boundaries of a territory that “instead lays the groundwork for another vision, and urges us to bring it into the public arena, overcoming our self-censorship as designers” (Garofalo 2012, p. 7). This contribution offers a critical reading of the space of Taranto understood as a hyperobject, in the sense proposed by Timothy Morton: an entity so vast and complex that it resists any totalizing vision. In this context, the only possible stance is to inhabit the “inside” – to interrogate what resists, what transforms, what acts. Objects, atmospheres, traces, actions: these are the clues of a possible counter-geography, one that does not merely describe where things are, but what they represent (Farinelli 2003). The starting point is Gian Maria Tosatti's work *Storia della notte e destino delle comete*, presented at the 2022 Venice Art Biennale: a pavilion devoid of human bodies, traversable, where the collapse of industrial civilization becomes both matter and narrative. Building on this installation, the contribution proposes a reading capable of revealing the latent forms of the Taranto landscape, activating new paradigms for design practice. Beyond the dreamlike suspension into which parts of Southern Italy have fallen, it becomes necessary to detect an apparatus of “historyless” architectures – figures capable of outlining a counter-geography of the city, overturning the notion of amnesia. Social, political, and spatial change, and by the broader idea of sustainability in inhabiting the Planet, this contribution explores visions and projects of the night as a means to uncover hidden, inhabited, and inhabitable parts of the city.

Going Dark, on the Invisibility of inner Villages and Territories

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keywords: inner areas, contextualism, mapping

“Going Dark” is the title of a contemporary art exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York (October 2023 – April 2024), addressing the theme of real and metaphorical invisibility that defines our present age in an increasingly unequal society. It could be an apt expression for describing the path toward invisibility of many villages and territories in inner areas – already depopulated and marginalized – that are sinking into oblivion as a result of political choices and of degradation, primarily cultural, stemming from the complete absence of governance over local processes. This decline profoundly affects social conditions, patterns of habitation, and the physical environment itself. The act of unveiling – of deeply knowing these contexts, understood as unities of places and people, to be studied and interpreted by uncovering their settlement histories, vocations, resources, geographies, and the living conditions of all species inhabiting them – through documenting, recording, interpreting, and connecting, while engaging with multiple forms of knowledge, represents first and foremost a means of mapping situations of decay and abandonment. In doing so, it brings them out of darkness, while simultaneously constructing a framework of opportunities for regeneration, enhancement, reuse, and the building of a future for those mortified and forgotten places and landscapes. This process outlines a form of new contextualism, one that demands in-depth knowledge pursued with full awareness of disciplinary expertise, yet constantly intersecting with other perspectives born of diverse experiences and disciplinary approaches, without neglecting the insights of those who live or have lived in these places – knowledge that is, precisely, “contextual.” Juxtaposing maps of abandonment with those of notable virtuous experiences (best practices) – which are emerging in ever greater number as sparks of regeneration within the study of inland villages and territories – offers an immediate perception of the transformative potential of converting the geographies of abandonment into conditions of opportunity, capable of triggering regenerative processes made possible only through a deep cognitive effort. In this direction, the paper proposes – drawing transversally on several ongoing research initiatives (PNRR Borghi projects currently under implementation, research agreements with local authorities: municipalities, unions of municipalities, regional administrations) – a methodological reflection on the relationship between unveiling and the activation of regenerative processes, and on the role that urban, architectural, and landscape design may assume within these processes.

Unveiling the Invisible: sustainable strategies for the revitalization of contaminated lands

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keywords: remediation, environmental restoration, orphan site

The contemporary city is traversed by a network of invisible and neglected places: areas which, although integral to the urban and territorial fabric, remain inaccessible, degraded, and marginalized. From coastlines interdicted due to contamination, to abandoned industrial sites, and contexts of widespread decay, these spaces constitute genuine open wounds in the territory. Delays in remediation interventions – prolonged, complex, and above all costly – hinder their reactivation and restitution to the community.

The urgency of the issue is underscored by the attention devoted by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) to the so-called “orphan sites,” namely contaminated areas lacking an identifiable or accountable responsible party. Further confirmation can be found in the Sites of National Interest (SIN), for which the State provides special legislation and accelerated procedures. The allocation of European funds also to non-remediated private lands highlights both the scale of the phenomenon and the need for an approach that transcends proprietary logics. An ethical and programmatic principle is thus affirmed: environmental remediation, as the protection of a common good, must prevail over all other considerations and requires a collective, cross-sectoral effort.

This contribution proposes to explore innovative modalities for reactivating such areas, positioning natural remediation as the methodological and design fulcrum. The underlying hypothesis is that architectural and urban design can integrate low-impact remediation systems – such as phytoremediation, the use of selected plant species, and agricultural practices – while simultaneously generating new landscapes and territorial identities. Through case studies and emerging research, strategies will be analyzed that render remediation processes both sustainable and regenerative, thereby transforming marginalized and often invisible spaces into ecological, productive, and socially inclusive places.

Making Citizenship: gestures, places, and relationships for living with abandonment

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keywords: inner areas, active citizenship, temporality

The abandonment of the so-called “Inner Areas” is often narrated through the rhetoric of loss and decline, where resignation to depopulation risks turning into a silent surrender that paralyzes any possibility of imagining alternatives. The dominant narrative denies design – both architectural and strategic – the chance to intervene in a critical, creative, and context-sensitive way.

This contribution proposes to overturn that perspective: what if abandonment, instead of marking an ending, were the beginning of a transformation? What if marginality itself could become a generative threshold, capable of activating new ways of inhabiting and of being citizens?

In this vision, abandonment is not a void to be filled according to restorative logics, but rather an open field for civic invention, where unprecedented forms of belonging can be experimented with. It is in these fragile spaces – apparently at the margins – that the possibility emerges to design a new form of citizenship: not imposed from above, but built from below through the direct investment of one's own body and labor.

Taking possession of a neglected space often means physically fixing it with one's own hands: building temporary structures for a festival, reopening an abandoned house, or carrying out small-scale collective restoration projects. In such cases, design is never neutral or abstract but becomes time freely given and effort collectively shared.

Different experiences – from solidarity-based cohabitation that brings abandoned housing back into use, as in Riace, to ephemeral festivals that reignite presence in depopulated villages, like Sponz Fest in Irpinia or Borgofuturo in the Marche – show how inhabiting can become both a political and poetic act, intertwining care with disobedience.

In these contexts, design acknowledges and supports diverse forms of active citizenship, revealing possibilities invisible to institutional radars. The aim is not to offer ready-made solutions, but to create connections between those who stay, those who return, and those who arrive.

Sinking Grounds: mapping the voided landscape of Acque Albule

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keywords: extraction, labour cities, critical cartography

Roman Travertine is the stone of the empire, it has characterized the city of Rome, and unexpectedly conditioned the Acque Albule hinterlands. Its extraction is interlaced with invisibility, dictated the dominance of the industry and the collective coercion of human-actors (labor, their resulting living conditions), and non-human actors (soil, multiple water systems, and ecosystems). Through political ecology and interdisciplinary analysis, this research unearths the rich ecological, historical, and political narratives surrounding travertine, attempting to reveal its consequences through a mapping project. These critical maps intersect complicated dynamics of water, waste, and labor to bring the non-human forces resisting extraction into stark relief.

This proposal maps the visible and invisible transformations of the Acque Albule plain, a territory shaped by centuries of extractive activity and marked today by geological fragility. Natural subsidence and sinkholes, both hidden and exposed, are exacerbated by thermal water extraction and quarry dewatering, turning the land into a slow-moving hazard. At the core of this transformation are i fossanti, the travertine workers who carved the land, built homes, and sustained the area's stone economy. While others profited from the travertine boom, they now face the collapse of their own houses, built from the very ground that sinks beneath them. The maps of surface topography and subsurface depression reveal not just ground deformation, but the lived experience of precarity. Depression velocities, measured in imperceptible millimeters per year, conceal structural damage, minor quakes, and chronic unsuitability for habitation. These invisible voids are rendered visible only through cartographic and narrative tools that combine data, from geologists, hydrogeologists, and social scientists, placing the landscape discipline in the middle. Mapping here is not neutral: it is a critical method to uncover how denied places are produced, geologically, economically, and socially, and to question the imaginaries that continue to erase them.

Architecture's silent Complicity: granite, radon, and the geographies of mining

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keywords: vibrant materials, building health, radioactive contamination

This article investigates the overlooked intersections between architecture, geology, and public health in mining-affected communities, focusing on Urgeiriça, a Portuguese town where locally quarried granite – the very same granite that contains uranium and is mined for nuclear materials – forms the fabric of its buildings. While granite is traditionally celebrated for its durability and cultural significance, this study reveals its silent complicity in perpetuating environmental and health risks through radioactive contamination by radon gas, a byproduct of uranium deposits embedded in the region's geology. Through a spatial and material analysis, the article unpacks how architecture, as both a cultural and material practice, becomes entangled with the geographies of mining, exposing residents to invisible hazards. By revealing these hidden geographies, the study challenges conventional narratives of architectural heritage and calls for an urgent reconsideration of the responsibilities tied to building materials. Ultimately, it advocates for a critical rethinking of the relationships between architecture, environment, and health to promote safer, more just living environments in mining landscapes and elsewhere.

Data Center. Future trajectories of inaccessible spaces

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keywords: spaces without humans, data center, invisible landscapes

The progressive dematerialization of the physical realm into digital data, alongside the automation of both productive and creative processes, is radically transforming the spatial conditions of human habitation. Within this emerging paradigm, Data Centers, logistics hubs, and automated agricultural facilities delineate new technological landscapes – largely invisible yet operationally pervasive – in which human presence becomes functionally obsolete. These environments, which may be defined as “human-less spaces,” are characterized by the physical absence of individuals, who no longer occupy them directly but engage with them only as indirect users.

Among these, the Data Center assumes a paradigmatic architectural role: an opaque and inaccessible structure, it functions as a fortified archive of collective digital memory. Echoing Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia, these spaces may be compared to museums or libraries – places where “time never stops accumulating and gathering upon itself” – preserving material artifacts, but intangible information. The inherent inaccessibility of these infrastructures presents both a conceptual and design challenge, opening new trajectories for architectural experimentation. These explore potential interfaces between human presence and automated systems, questioning how such typologies might be spatially reimagined. One example is The Spark, a project developed by the architectural firm Snøhetta.

Approximately 200 server racks are housed within a mineral core, around which collective spaces are organized, all unified under a functional canopy. Piloted in the city of Lyseparken, Norway, the project aims to reduce energy consumption by up to 40%, transforming the Data Center into an active energy resource for the surrounding urban fabric.

This architectural inquiry into the Data Center raises pressing theoretical and practical questions: can a space conceived for human absence be meaningfully integrated into the contemporary urban landscape, whether consolidated or newly developed? And within these “human-less spaces,” is it possible to identify new spatial relationships between human presence and automation?

Fragile Topographies. A reading of the mining legacy of Monteponi

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keywords: fragile, mining ecology

The paper investigates the topic of fragility within the abandoned mining landscapes of south-western Sardinia. It explores potential critical directions for design capable of addressing contemporary emergencies and urgencies, grounded in a formal reading of these territories. During the second half of the twentieth century, the mining experience of the Sulcis-Iglesiente was particularly marked by the strategic exploitation of subsurface primary resources. Yet it progressively bequeathed transformed post-industrial archaeologies, vast territorial voids, extensive spoil heaps, and toxic traces. Today these places, marked by a desolate austerity, call for adequate responses. The latent, critical, and generative condition of fragility – intrinsically rooted in the delicate negotiation among different agencies – can open new possibilities for design hermeneutics. Starting from the elementary act of backfilling – a primary gestural operation that shaped many of these places through a processual exposure of matter from the subsoil to the surface – the reflection puts forward a controversial topographic case study: the experience of the “Fanghi Rossi” (Red Muds) of the Monteponi Mine. It stands as a paradigmatic example, given its dual contemporary condition as both protected monument and contaminated residue, a material memory of past metallurgical activities. In the raw exposure of intrusive matter – only apparently inert, static, and inactive – mining fragility has both repelled and, unpredictably, accommodated diverse agencies over a century-long time span. In this light, it configures itself as an open-air laboratory capable both of retaining certain risk conditions and of suggesting ecological forms of decommissioning, which from the outset preserve spontaneous clues for their “survival”.

Revealing marginal Italy: Hirpinia Station as a dispositive of unveiling

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keywords: high-speed rail stations, railway infrastructures, intermediate Italy

In the contemporary debate on denied places, the inner areas of Italy appear as marginalized geographies. This marginality does not stem from a lack of natural or cultural assets but from a set of structural factors – including political disinterest, economic decline, and demographic erosion – that have contributed to their invisibility within national planning and policy frameworks. Within this context lies Hirpinia Station on the Naples-Bari HS/HC line. It is an infrastructure designed to connect two metropolitan poles – Napoli and Bari –, yet it simultaneously produces new fractures in the marginal territories of Irpinia.

This contribution, developed as part of the research carried out under Spoke 7 PE9 GRINS (PNRR), considers Hirpinia Station as an emblematic case study, in which architectural design is understood as a tool of interpretation that can reframe the relationship between territory and infrastructure, and as a potential device for making visible marginalized geographies and denied inner territories. On this basis, the contribution reflects critically on the tensions between the space and the possibilities represented by the station and the lived space, composed of slow landscapes, stratified memories, agricultural communities. The aim is to outline perspectives for a design approach that does not merely insert itself into the territory but can subvert sedimented narratives by listening, revealing, and projecting new imaginaries for a counter-geography oriented towards the territorial sustainability of Italy's inner and denied marginal areas.



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This volume collects abstracts of contributions presented at the international conference “RIVELAZIONI. Research Tools and Methods for Exploring the Denied and Invisible Spaces of Contemporary Society”, organized in October 2025 by the RiSP (FRA 2022) research group of the Department of Architecture at the University of Naples Federico II. RIVELAZIONI brought together scholars from diverse fields – architecture, urban planning, sociology, geography, art, law, postcolonial and environmental studies – to reflect on the methods and tools capable of making these places visible, comprehensible, and transformable. Through theoretical contributions, design experiments, and research practices, the book composes a mosaic of perspectives on spatial justice and the relationships between space, power, and rights. Each abstract is a small revelation, a fragment of the world that unlocks new possibilities for knowledge and transformation.

RIVELAZIONI is both an investigation and a political gesture: an invitation to investigate the interstices of the visible, to reconsider the role of design as a critical tool, and to restore space, voice, and form to what contemporary reality tends to hide.

