

WASTELANDS.

Recycling urban spaces for the shrinking city

Edited by Francesco Gastaldi, Federico Camerin



Shrinkage processes are multidimensional phenomena affecting city sectors or regions that are experiencing a decline in their economic and social foundations and struggle in finding sound post-industrial revitalisation strategies. The symptoms of such structural crisis are population loss and ageing, economic recession, employment decline and social problems. The repeated international crises that followed the global economic, productive and cultural changes since the 1980s have resulted in the formation of neglected, underused and decay urban voids. Among these voids, a large quota of public assets, such as military and railway installations, have been slowly abandoned. This process has been strictly intertwined with public administration restructuring, austerity policies, spending reviews, geopolitical mutations, and unpredictable emergencies that have generated continuous shocks in public real estate assets management. These tendencies appear as local effects of global phenomena and actively participate in a re-scaling process by determining the re-articulation of urban and territorial hierarchy, networks and polarities, indeterminate physical forms,

and land-use lower quality. Not only are large-scale public assets being disposed of, but cities are scattered with other types of voids. Countless examples, such as private industrial areas; warehouses in small and medium-sized business districts; commercial facilities undergoing de-malling processes or indistinct closures of small businesses (in both old towns and suburbs); leisure and free-time zones (e.g. discos and summer camps); sports facilities; hotels in “mature” tourist places; colleges; religious centres; and schools. Urban regeneration and re-cycling are thus pivotal to overcome the phase of shrinking and demand for less land consumption. Revitalisation and re-cycling on the basis of various types of voids require multiple methodologies in which sensitive, social, economic, spatial, and environmental dimensions meet in the interaction between internal dynamics and external factors. Shrinking patterns place new responsibilities on public actors. Public bodies are expected to make complex choices by weighing a plurality of public and private interests bearing in mind the assets’ characteristics and their surroundings. This is a proper step to find feasible new uses for assets no longer useful for their original purposes. The New Leipzig Charter (2020) may support this step as it implements the pillars of the Urban Agenda for the EU. This Charter searches for activating the transformative power of European cities based on the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable urban development – i.e. social, environmental, and economic. Combined in a balanced way, these are key pillars to help build a “fair, green, and productive” city. This kind of approach requires financial resources, wide-ranging consensus, good leadership, and strong urban governance, including support from all administrative levels and actors involved in the planning of sustainable urban development processes.

The current abandonment scenario and related transformation opportunities are extremely complex and include a wide variety of typologically different wastelands. They comprise shrinking urban and peripheral fabrics, specific empty or obsolete infrastructure, derelict sites, and voids of historical-patrimonial relevance no longer animated by the socio-cultural “regime” that originated them. Wastelands are not unusual in Western society but their pervasiveness is certainly unprecedented given the general socioeconomic crises and dynamics. Abandonment is a challenging and constant process of space production to be filled with new functions by civil society. The re-cycle is even more challenging because the disposal of significant assets has occurred within a limited time frame compared to the post-industrial wastelands. Wastelands constitute a resource with relevant strategic opportunities for addressing a variety of issues – i.e., reducing land consumption, providing urban maintenance and rehabilitation, and increasing the supply of public open spaces, environmental quality characteristics, community standards and services. Last but not least, wastelands may provide new habitable and accessible spaces in contrast to various types of emergencies or polycrises the society is facing – i.e. climate, pandemics, territorial imbalances, ecological and energy resources impoverishment – thus addressing the transition scenario.

The call for papers aims at research and experiences conducted in Italy and Europe, also in a comparative form, concerning decommissioning and shrinkage processes. The call “Wastelands” helps to stimulate an international debate to achieve the following goals:

- Outlining similarities and differences in the management of public real estate assets in a specific case study, but also in comparison – and in relation – with other types of voids (e.g. private properties).
- Interpreting, in term of policy methodologies and tools, the effects of the decommissioning and redevelopment processes affecting abandoned assets and territories in terms of public-private relations, partnerships between public bodies at different administrative levels, institutional learning processes, and socio-economic repercussions at urban and territorial scales.

- Highlighting urban issues tied to wastelands in relation to processes, approaches, and models of urban planning, strategic planning, and urban design.
- Understanding the reasons and pivotal points underlying unsuccessful and successful re-cycling, as well as the opportunities and inertia of ongoing regeneration processes in connection with emerging issues and new experiments in territorial governance.

INFO

The call is open until **March 15th, 2023**.

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Registration and login as Author with the CONTESTI system is required to submit and follow the submission process online. Later, the account is necessary for following the status of your submission.

The proposals have to be unpublished and written in Italian, English, French or Spanish; the article length has to be **between 4000 and 7.000 words**, including spaces, title, authors, abstract, keywords, captions and references.

Please pay attention on how to ensure a **Double Blind Review** when submit your paper.

The proposals can include a maximum of 10 pictures with good definition (at least 300 dpi/inch and 25 cm the smallest side) free from publishing obligations or accompanied with the specific permission.

The selected papers will be published in the thematic section of the **1 | 2023** issue of CONTESTI.