

Rethinking sacred heritage: from abandonment to landscape reactivation

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The growing disuse of religious heritage, linked to the progressive loss of its liturgical function, is leading to a widespread process of abandonment of ecclesiastical buildings. This phenomenon affects both urban centers and peripheral areas, emerging as a pervasive and transversal condition of the contemporary territory. In this context, Sardinia, with its vast open spaces and low settlement density, represents a privileged field of analysis for understanding the phenomenon at a territorial scale, highlighting the relationships between abandonment, permanence, and landscape stratification.

The agrarian landscape reveals itself through layers of territorial and architectural stratification that define specific spatial conditions and both past and present patterns of use. Alongside the persistence of some original functions, there is a widespread presence of recognizable yet inactive structures, often taking the form of ruins of abandoned churches, endowed with significant testimonial value despite lacking a contemporary role. The potential reactivation of these structures emerges as a strategy for regenerating portions of landscape that have gradually lost their centrality and collective recognition, as evidenced by the remains of ancient religious architectures. Their distribution and mutual relationships suggest the need to move beyond a site-specific reading of individual buildings, in favor of a broader perspective that considers specific landscape portions where similar structures coexist and describe historical forms of land use. Within this framework, the notion of the path assumes a central role as both an interpretative and operational device for studying these areas, forming the knowledge base upon which the architectural project is developed.

The project thus becomes a tool for critically interpreting the landscape, capable of reactivating spatial relationships and latent meanings through new configurations of use. From this perspective, territorial design becomes an act of recomposition that restores continuity to fragmented systems, transforming abandonment into an opportunity for renewed legibility and design.