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# Regenerating Former Military Sites in Italy. The Dichotomy between ‘Profit-Driven Spaces’ and ‘Urban Commons’

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**Abstract:** Within the last decades, the reorganisation of the Armed Force left many voids in the territories. Being located in highly lucrative and desirable locations, former military sites can be redeveloped into either profit-driven spaces or proper urban commons. This paper focuses the attention on the Italian case and scrutinises former military barracks in the dichotomies between the generation of profit-driven spaces and urban commons. Also, the analysis questions the actual role of these voids in guaranteeing the right to the city, especially in times of severe shortage of public resources to undertake urban regeneration processes.

**Keywords:** capitalist city, privatisation, urban regeneration

*«cities [...] those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it»<sup>1</sup>*

## 1 Introduction

The paper explores the reuse of the Ministry of Defence assets as ‘urban commons’ and ‘profit-driven spaces’ in Italy by comparing two case studies. The basic hypothesis of this work is that former military barracks – as well as other types of urban voids – offer the potential to become ‘social anchors’, turning what were once no-go zones into centres of their communities. Such vision may offer less in terms of immediate economic benefits for central government, but much more in terms of long-term local well-being and prosperity. However, the massive disposals of the Italian military assets aimed to reorganise the military apparatus and to wipe the public debt through privatisation in the logic of capital. As recently

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1 Calvino, I. 1974. *Invisible cities*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 35.

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claimed by Camerin,<sup>2</sup> current international and national academic works have analysed the regeneration processes of ancient military sites case by case and under different points of view (legal, urban planning, architecture, heritage, etc.), yet there is extremely little information about the role these assets may play as urban commons.

This paper aims to partially fill this research gap through a multidisciplinary approach that comprise three sections. First, the categorisation of the Italian legislation on the disposal of Defence assets from 1997 until today. Second, the exploration of the difficulties affecting the reuse of military assets (paragraph 3) and the recent approach of former military barracks as generators of urban commons (paragraph 4). Third, the case study analysis questions the dichotomies between two opposite approaches on the redevelopment of former military barracks, i.e. profit-driven and urban commons (paragraph 5). This analysis compares two former military barracks located in Rome that are experiencing their redevelopment in new profit-driven space (Guido Reni barracks) and urban commons (Porto Fluviale barracks).

I acknowledge that comparative research in one city is fraught with lacunae, such as the choice to analyse the Italian capital and two specific case studies that are not comprehensive of the Italian situation. It is also true that the qualitative interpretation of unfinished redevelopment of former military barracks reduces the relevance of summative evaluations. Nonetheless, this research may be a relevant step toward developing a comparative analytical framework for the evaluation of all kind of abandoned military sites in relation to barracks in relation to the features of urban commons and profit-driven spaces.

## 2 The Categorisation of the Italian Legislation on the Disposal of Military Barracks from the 1990s Onwards

### 2.1 Military Barracks: from Unavailable Domain to the Alienation

The Italian Civil Code divides military goods in two types. On the one hand, the article 822 “Public Property” classifies the military domain under the things ‘extra commercium’. Military domain is a *res in uso publico* or *res publicae* and comprises

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2 Camerin, F. 2021. *Asuntos y debates en torno a las instalaciones militares en abandono. Una reseña en perspectiva internacional*. Santarcangelo di Romagna, Italy: Maggioli. <https://doi.org/10.30448/UNI.916.46675>.

the works directly intended for national defence, i.e. airports, fortresses, installations, missile bases and military roads. These goods are affected to a public service – the so-called *domaine public* of the government – by decision of a public authority – the Ministry of Defence. This character implies that the goods belonging to the military domain are not governed by the normal rules on property transfer. These goods can be alienated and consequently privatised. On the other hand, the article 826 “State, provincial and municipal assets” includes several typologies of military sites – i.e. military barracks, hospitals, warehouses, workshops and the other territorial defence sites, all of them not belonging to the military domain – in the “unavailable domain”. The unavailable domain comprises assets aimed to achieve public goals or to carry out public services. In particular, the barracks are meant for the national defence purposes, – i.e. the troop accommodation – and the owner is the State, who gives the barracks for free to the Ministry of Defence. This means that military assets belonging to the unavailable domain are subjected to a relative inalienability and saleability. However, they can be entrusted into the “available domain” when the Ministry of Defence declare their usefulness.

## 2.2 The Categorisation of the Legislation

Four are the main phases of the alienation and redevelopment of military barracks according to the Italian legislation (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

A first phase, from 1972 to 1989, regards two alienation programmes launched with the draft Laws. First, the draft Law no. 148/1972 pursues the abandonment and auction of 351 properties classified as unnecessary for the Defence purposes – 221, 85 and 45 belonging respectively to the Army, Navy and Air Force.<sup>4</sup> Second, the draft Law no. 1740/1989<sup>5</sup> promotes a 10-year alienation programme for the selling of approximately 1000 military sites, totalling about 35,000 ha. Both programmes fails as none of the draft Laws are converted into Law.

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<sup>3</sup> Quarta (2016) has also analysed the legislation on the redevelopment of former military barracks (Quarta, A. 2016). “La riconversione delle caserme dismesse: nuovi paradigmi per la proprietà pubblica.” *Rivista critica del diritto privato*, 34(4): 609–24.

<sup>4</sup> Senato della Repubblica 1972. *Disegno di legge n. 148 del 6 luglio 1972: Dismissione di immobili militari ed assegnazione di fondi per il potenziamento delle Forze Armate*. Rome, Italy: Senato della Repubblica.

<sup>5</sup> Senato della Repubblica 1989. *Disegno di legge n. 1740 del 4 maggio 1989: Ammodernamento e redistribuzione territoriale delle caserme e delle infrastrutture militari mediante un finanziamento decennale straordinario e attraverso permuta ed alienazioni di immobili non più necessari alla Difesa*. Rome, Italy: Senato della Repubblica.

**Table 1:** Elaboration by F. Camerin (2021) starting from Commissione IV Difesa (1999) and Corte dei Conti (2003; 2017).

Phase	Contents	Public enquiry	Results
1972–1989	Draft Laws for alienation programme	None	/
1996–2003	First alienation programme	Commissione Difesa IV (1999); Corte dei Conti (2003 and 2017)	Alienation of 167 assets, totalling 205,473,524.23 euros
2003–2007	Introduction of State Property Agency in the management of alienation	Corte dei Conti (2017) for the period 2003–2016	191 alienation (172 and 19 exchanges)
2007–Ongoing	New programmes and overlay of Laws		

The second phase, from 1997 to 2003, comprises the first official alienation programme focused on the windfall economic gains that can ensue from military realignment and base closure and redevelopment. Introduced by the 1997 Financial Bill, it aims to collect around 1400 million euros for the rationalisation and modernisation of the Ministry of Defence. The Prime Minister Decree of 11/08/1997 releases a list of 302 military real estate assets fit to be potentially decommissioned. This task is consequently outsourced to the Consap spa, one of the largest government contractors. Over the years, the list is amended several times following the Armed Forces' latest assessments on structural and infrastructural needs, with insertions and deletions of assets. This phase results in the alienation of 167 assets, totalling 205,473,524.23 euros, less than 15% of the initial goal.<sup>6</sup>

The third phase, from 2003 to 2005, accelerates the redundancy process, with the State now more likely to retain a financial interest from the alienation to wipe the public debt. The Law no. 326/2003 establishes a collaboration between the State Property Agency – *Agenzia del Demanio*<sup>7</sup> – and the Ministry of Defence aimed to jointly elaborate alienation lists. However, the 2007 Financial

<sup>6</sup> Corte dei Conti 2017. *Relazione concernente “La dismissione e la permula di immobili in uso all’amministrazione della Difesa (2003–2016)”*. Rome, Italy: Corte dei Conti, 30.

<sup>7</sup> The State Property Agency is an economic entity launched in 1999 as one of the four Fiscal Agencies created by the Ministry of Economy and Finance that is transformed into a Public Economic Authority in 2003. This entity is entrusted with the tasks of management, rationalisation and development of the State-owned real estate assets in cooperation with the territorial authorities through the identification of ad hoc strategies and tools. See Morena, M. et al. 2021. “Exploring Tools for Public Real Estate Enhancement in Italy: From Criteria to Decisions.” *Sustainability*, 13(2): 622. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020622>.

Bill changes the terms midway and gives back to the military the authority to alienate.

The fourth phase begins in 2007 and is currently ongoing. The 2007 Financial Bill marks the beginning of an impetuous law season and a series of programmes and actions aimed to create partnership between the Ministry of Defence, the State Property Agency and the public authorities (mostly Regions and City Councils). In chronological order of launching, the programmes and actions are the following: The 2007 Country Value Programme;<sup>8</sup> the 2010, 2013 and 2016 state property federalism;<sup>9</sup> the introduction of *ad hoc* real estate funds to entrust former military barracks between 2012 and 2014;<sup>10</sup> the article 24 of the so-called ‘Unlocking Italy’ of 2014;<sup>11</sup> the 2015–2018 public consultation<sup>12</sup> and the 2015 Federal Building. In this phase new Financial Bills, Legislative Decrees and Laws repetitively modify and integrate these measures, in particular the introduction of new actors to involve in the procedures (i.e. the 2009 Servizi Difesa spa, and the 2014 Task Force between the State Property Agency and the Ministry of Defence) is a destabiliser for the alienation and redevelopment frameworks.

The Corte dei Conti analysis on the results of these phases shows that between 2003 and 2016 the Ministry of Defence freehold and leasehold landholdings decrease by 1800 assets, 191 of which is successfully alienated thorough 172 selling and 19 exchanges.<sup>13</sup>

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**8** Ponzini, D. 2008. “La valorizzazione degli immobili statali come opportunità di sviluppo territoriale.” *Urbanistica*, 136: 87–94; Gastaldi, F., and Camerin, F. 2017. “La riconversione delle aree militari dismesse: questioni irrisolte, criticità e potenzialità/The reconversion of former military sites: unresolved issues, criticality and opportunities.” *Urbanistica*, 69(159): 144–52.

**9** It is a mechanism introduced by the article 5.5 of the Legislative Decree no. 85/2010 concerning the state-owned property transfer to local authorities for free, including Ministry of Defence real estate assets. See Gastaldi, F., and Camerin, F. 2019, cit, 144–68.

**10** Camera dei Deputati 2016. *Il sistema integrato di fondi immobiliari*. Rome: Camera dei Deputati; Senato della Repubblica 2019. *Relazione sullo stato della disciplina militare e sullo stato dell'organizzazione delle forze armate (anno 2016)*. Rome, Italy: Senato della Repubblica, 48–9.

**11** Gastaldi, F., and Camerin, F. 2019. *Aree militari dismesse e rigenerazione urbana. Innovazioni urbane, potenzialità di valorizzazione del territorio, inerzialità legislative e di processo*. Siracusa, Italy: LetteraVentidue, 133–143.

**12** Camerin, F. 2018. “La gestión de las instalaciones militares abandonadas. Dificultades y oportunidades en Italia.” *Bitácora Urbano Territorial*, 28(1), 159–69. <https://doi.org/10.15446/bitacora.v28n1.68386>.

**13** Corte dei Conti 2017, cit, 29; 31–32.

### 3 Difficulties for the Reuse of Military Barracks

Not only in Italy has the disposal of military sites attracted a growing interest by academics in the field of urban studies in the last two decades,<sup>14</sup> but also abroad.<sup>15</sup> The analyses have dealt with a wide range of features (architectural, environmental, heritage, legal, urban planning, etc.), yet there is extremely little information about the role military barracks may play as urban commons.

After an intense public debate during the 1980s,<sup>16</sup> Italy's Armed Forces begin to disentangle from several sites across the country based on geopolitical, military, public finance and urban development logics. Nevertheless, it is taking more than 30 years from the fall of the Berlin Wall to achieve the reuse.<sup>17</sup> Today many of the former military barracks are suffering the effects of the long-lasting abandonment, with consequent problems of degradation of their open and built spaces. As stressed by a number of public enquiries by the Ministry of Defence Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry – Commissione Difesa IV<sup>18</sup> – and the Italian Court of

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**14** The literature review on the studies performed on the redevelopment of former military sites is provided by Camerin, F., 2021, cit.

**15** See for instance Bagaen, S., and Clark, C., Eds. 2016. *Sustainable Regeneration of Former Military Sites*. London-New York, UK-USA: Routledge; Fiorino, D.R., ed. 2017. *Military Landscapes. A future for military heritage. Atti del convegno*. Milan, Italy: Skirà; Clark, C., Marks, M., and Bernard, D. 2020. *Barracks, Forts and Ramparts. Regeneration Challenges for Portsmouth Harbour's Defence Heritage*. Portsmouth, UK: Tricorn.

**16** Vv. Aa. 1979. *Servitù militari e riforma del demanio militare: atti del convegno Servitù militari e riforma del demanio militare promosso dalle Regioni Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia e Toscana: Bologna 17 novembre 1979*. Bologna, Italy: Regione Emilia-Romagna; Chiappetti, A. 1980. *Stato e regioni a confronto: servitù militari e pianificazione del territorio*. L'Aquila, Italy: Consiglio Regionale dell'Abruzzo; Vv. Aa. 1981. *Atti della conferenza nazionale sulle servitù militari promossa dal Ministero della Difesa d'intesa con le Regioni. Ministero della Difesa, Roma, 5–6 maggio 1981*. Rome, Italy: Stato maggiore della Difesa e del Servizio pubblica informazione; Vv. Aa. 1986. *Conferenza nazionale sulle infrastrutture militari. Atti, Ministero della Difesa, Roma, 10–11 novembre 1986*. Rome, Italy: Ministero della Difesa; Vv. Aa. 1989. *Esercito e città. Dall'Unità agli anni Trenta. Atti del Convegno di studi (Perugia, 11–14 maggio 1988). Tomo I, Tomo II*. Rome, Italy: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici; Crimi, L., ed. (1990). *Strutture militari e territorio. Atti del convegno di studio*. Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy: Regione del Veneto.

**17** For instance, at regional level, 285 and 109 military sites lies abandoned respectively in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto regions – see Santarossa, A., and Scirè Risichella, G., eds. 2016. *Un paese di Primule e caserme*. Pordenone, Italy: Cinemazero for the case of Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Gastaldi, F., and Camerin, F. 2018. “Verso un censimento delle aree militari in Veneto.” *Archivio di Studi Urbani e Regionali*, 48(123), 51–75. <https://doi.org/10.3280/ASUR2018-123003> for the case of Veneto.

**18** Commissione IV Difesa 1999. Le dismissioni dei beni immobili della Difesa nell'ambito della ristrutturazione delle Forze armate. Rome: XIII Legislatura; Commissione IV Difesa 2006. *Indagine conoscitiva Commissione IV Difesa. Seduta di mercoledì 25 ottobre 2006*. Rome: Camera dei Deputati.

Audit,<sup>19</sup> the alienation and redevelopment of military sites is filled with quite complex and multidimensional issues.

The drive to dispose of Ministry of Defence assets is not only the reconfiguration of the military apparatus. It is also part of a financial programme to balance the books and a political programme to reduce the role of the state in the public society following the capitalistic dynamics of market liberalisation and privatisation of many public services and public-owned assets.<sup>20</sup> The search for the extrapolation of the maximum cash receipts over time speeds up the sale of military assets, especially in the cases when rapid urbanisation has engulfed high-consuming military land such as the barracks, rendering them militarily useless. Moreover, when military sites are set for closure, the government takes interest in the sites. Not only is the Ministry of Defence likely to retain a financial interest in any subsequent redevelopment of a given site, but also the State to wipe the public debt. This approach is having, as a consequence, territorial repercussions in the reconfiguration of many parts of the cities where the military were located.

Both academics and public enquiries agree on the difficulties of the redevelopment and the insufficient results of the alienation processes.<sup>21</sup> The factors that negatively influence the reuse of military barracks are the following:

- The advantageous position of the owner – i.e. the Ministry of Defence – searching for generating much-needed income;
- The role and competence overlays between the different institutional actors both at state and local level, such as the contentiousness among the many administrative levels about the new use of the barracks;
- The mostly financial approach of the alienation to wipe the public debt and to help the rationalisation and modernisation of the Army Forces;

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**19** Corte dei Conti 2000. *Indagini territoriali sulla gestione dei beni demaniali e patrimoniali dello Stato nel 1997–98. Deliberazione n. 17/2000*. Rome, Italy: Corte dei Conti; Corte dei Conti 2003. *Alienazione di beni (art. 43 e 49 Legge Finanziaria n. 388/2000) – Delibera n. 29/2003/G*. Rome, Italy: Corte dei Conti; Corte dei Conti 2017, cit.

**20** Adisson, F. 2018. “From state restructuring to urban restructuring: the intermediation of public landownership in urban development projects in France.” *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 25(4): 373–380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776417717308>; Adisson, F., and Artioli, F. 2020. “Four types of urban austerity: Public land privatisations in French and Italian cities.” *Urban Studies*, 57(1): 75–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019827517>.

**21** No enquiry defines the exact number of reuses carried out since the late 1990s. Turri, F., Cappelletti, V., Kakolyris, E. 2014. “Le caserme dismesse. Il riuso possibile. Il riuso compiuto.” In *Le Caserme e la Città. I Beni Immobili della Difesa tra Abbandoni, Dimissioni e Riusi*, edited by Storelli, F., and Turri, F., 407–22 (Rome, Italy: Palombi) claim that City Councils across the country modified the Urban General Plans to redevelop 230 Army barracks. Nevertheless, the inventory of barracks is not provided.

- The continuous adoption of new regulations and the consequent introduction and modification of procedures that are not always well-defined and often in contradiction with each other, yet the undefined timing of bureaucratic procedures;
- The lack of knowledge about the current state of the military barracks, i.e. in use, underused, abandoned or to be included in the lists of the alienation programmes;
- The high cost for both removing pollutants and contaminants and the conservative reuse, along with the decay pollutants and contaminants conservative reuse of listed buildings, and decay of open and built spaces;
- The crisis of both the building industry and the real estate market, especially since the 2007–2008, the persistent lack of State public resources, and the constraints imposed to local authorities by the Stability Pact.

## 4 Can Former Military Barracks Generate Urban Commons?

In terms of the academic literature on former military barracks, very little is about their meaning as urban commons, while the studies conducted on the concept of urban commons is flourishing.

The definition of ‘urban commons’ is clearly tied to the urban space. While Hardin (1968)<sup>22</sup> and Ostrom (1990)<sup>23</sup> define the commons<sup>24</sup> as a common-pool resource (CPR), how to transpose this concept to the urban level<sup>25</sup>? According to

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<sup>22</sup> Hardin, G. (1968) ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’, *Science* 162(3859): 1243–1248.

<sup>23</sup> Ostrom, E. (1990) *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>24</sup> The ‘commons’ are those goods belonging to the community due to cultural identity, feeling of belonging, memory and expression of the territory. The concept of commons includes air, water and soil; the global and transnational common goods; non-traditional common goods such as knowledge, intangible heritage, material and symbolic processes of ‘commoning’. According to Kammerer P. (2006. “Il contributo dell’individuo alla costruzione del bene comune.” In *La casa dei beni comuni* edited by Biggeri, U., 18–27. Bologna, Italy: EMI), the latter concept refers to social practises used by commoners to managed shared resources and recovering common goods. In particular, commons are assets that a certain community considers indispensable for its own reproduction (and happiness) which, therefore, should be reproduced, cared and used in a “common” logic.

<sup>25</sup> See the debate set up by Foster, S. R., and Iaione, C. 2019. “Ostrom in the City: Design Principles for the Urban Commons.” In *Routledge Handbook of The Study Of The Commons*. Edited by Blake Hudson, Jonathan Rosenbloom, and Dan Cole, 237–39. London, UK: Routledge.



Kip et al.<sup>26</sup> “the urban” is the spatial organisation of society, so any commoning effort is subjected to the urban condition, albeit in different ways and to different degrees. Urban commons cannot be intended as mere extension of the natural resource perspective as urban space is a rare resource and is therefore likely to become the object of conflicting interests. On the basis of the Howard’s theory of urban value,<sup>27</sup> density and relationality are key factors in what constitutes urban commons.<sup>28</sup> More specifically, Foster and Iaione<sup>29</sup> widen the concept of urban commons by claiming that the city is itself an urban commons, «*a shared resource that belongs to all of its inhabitants, and to the public more generally*». According to this claim, military barracks can be easily ascribed to urban commons when the military leave.

The abandonment of these sites constitutes an opportunity to deal with existing environmental and socio-economic challenges of our society, such as increasing inequalities between people and places, as well as unsustainable developments that will be challenged further by climate change impacts.<sup>30</sup> Capitalist-led urbanisation and land speculation conducted to the saturation of urban space from the post-WWII period in the Italian cities,<sup>31</sup> so the redevelopment of barracks – being usually high-consuming piece of land – in urban commons may potentially provide new socio-economic benefits for everyone.<sup>32</sup> For instance, the

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**26** Kip, M., et al. 2015. “Seizing the (Every)Day: Welcome to the Urban Commons!” In *Urban Commons. Moving Beyond State and Market*, edited by Dellenbaugh, M. et al., 17–8. Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser Verlag.

**27** In *Cities of To-morrow’s Chapter II “The revenue of Garden City, and how it is obtained—the agricultural estate”, Howard, E. (1898. *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*. London, UK: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 28–29)* explains that the value of the land and buildings is a function of the activity of people and that landowner profits from people’s activities around his/her property. Howard argues that in the city the surplus is created by people’s activity but it is given to the property and its owner, who enjoy from an ‘unearned increment’. In the city the landowner is able to capture the ‘unearned increment’ through the separation of his/her building from its surroundings and turning it into an isolated and tradable object. This can be interpreted as the opposite of urban commons. According to this vision, the city becomes a city only through the people interaction, so usage and consumption practises are a constitutive part of the production of the urban commons.

**28** Kornberger, M., and Borch, C. 2015. “Introduction: Urban commons.” In *Urban commons. Rethinking the City*, edited by C. Borch, and M. Kornberger, 6–8. Oxon-New York, UK-USA: Routledge.

**29** Foster, S. R., and Iaione, C. 2019, cit, 235.

**30** Carta, M. 2019. *Futuro. Politiche per un diverso presente*. Soveria Mannelli, Italy: Rubettino.

**31** Campos Venuti, G. 2010. *Città senza cultura. Intervista sull’urbanistica*. Roma-Bari: Laterza; Benevolo, L. 2012. *Il tracollo dell’urbanistica italiana*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

**32** For a state-of-the-art review of the diversity of the urban commons see Feinberg, A., Ghorbani, A., & Herder, P. (2021). “Diversity and Challenges of the Urban Commons: A Comprehensive Review.” *International Journal of the Commons*, 15(1): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.1033>.

replace of military voids with new spaces for social integration and green public spaces can lead to positive effects of recreation in urban spaces and consequently improve physical and mental health, as well as act as ecosystem services such as greenery-driven climate regulation.<sup>33</sup>

For some time now, the expression ‘commons’ has entered in the Italian politic language and is becoming commonplace among citizens.<sup>34</sup> The recognition of the urgency of urban commons results in the enactment of the so-called “Regulations on the shared care of urban commons” by a growing number of Italian municipalities.<sup>35</sup> According to the definition of urban commons provided by this tool,<sup>36</sup> former military barracks can generate urban commons due to the goals and interests their redevelopment must/can fulfil as they are public properties. In this context, the Italian public bodies and citizens are aware of both the poor results of the alienation policies and issues concerning the abandoned military barracks. The possibility to convert them into urban commons is recently triggering a growing scientific and cultural debate,<sup>37</sup> and has also inspired social movements,

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33 Barchetta, L. 2021. *La rivolta del verde. Nature e rovine a Torino*. Milan, Italy: Agenzia X.

34 Mattei, U. 2011. *Beni comuni. Un manifesto*. Rome-Bari, Italy: Laterza; Arena, G., and Iaione, C., eds. (2012). *L'Italia dei beni comuni*. Rome, Italy: Carocci; Rodotà, S. 2013. *Il terribile diritto. Studi sulla proprietà privata e i beni comuni*. Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino; Settis, S. 2014. *Azione popolare. Cittadini per il bene comune*. Turin, Italy: Einaudi; Mattei, U., and Quarta, A., 2015. “Right to the City or Urban Commoning? Thoughts on the Generative Transformation of Property Law.” *The Italian Law Journal*, 1(2): 303–25; IUC Research Commons 2–15, International University College of Turin, available at <https://ideas.repec.org/p/iuc/rpaper/2-15.html>; Montanari, T. 2015. *Privati del Patrimonio*. Turin, Italy: Einaudi; Moroni, S. 2015. “Beni di nessuno, beni di alcuni, beni di tutti: note critiche sull’incerto paradigma dei beni comuni.” *Scienze Regionali*, 14(3): 137–144; Somaini, E. eds. (2015). *I beni comuni oltre i luoghi comuni*. Turin, Italy: IBL; Dotti, J., and Rapaccini, A. 2019. *L'Italia di tutti. Per una nuova politica dei beni comuni*. Milan, Italy: Vita e Pensiero; Albanese, R. A., and Michelazzo, E. 2020. *Manuale di diritto dei beni comuni urbani*. Turin, Italy: LEXIS; Labsus (2020). *Rapporto 2019 sull’amministrazione condivisa dei beni comuni*. Rome, Italy: Ora Comunica.

35 Mattei, U., and Quarta, A., cit., 320–24.

36 The article 2 of the 2014 Bologna’s regulation defines the urban commons as «*tangible, intangible, and digital goods crucial aimed at individual and collective welfare. Both citizens and City Council are able to recognise them through participatory and deliberative processes according to the article 118 of the Italian, and share the responsibility for their care or regeneration to improve their collective use*» (Comune di Bologna 2014. *Regolamento sulla collaborazione tra cittadini e amministrazione per la cura e la rigenerazione dei beni comuni urbani*. Bologna, Italy: Comune di Bologna, 2. <https://www.fondazioneinnovazioneurbana.it/images/benicomuni/REGOLAMENTOENICOMUNI.pdf>).

37 Discussed within the framework of the international conference “*Commons/Comune. Geografie, luoghi, spazi, città*” held in Rome in December 2015 – Commons. Geographies, places, spaces, cities –, see Marin, A. and Leoni, V., Eds. (2016). Sezione 16 – Territori e immobili demaniali dismessi come beni comuni. In *Commons/Comune, Società di studi geografici. Memorie geografiche NS 14* curated by Vv. Aa., 597–672. Florence: Società di Studi Geografici.

practical experiments (i.e. tactical urbanism<sup>38</sup>) and theoretical proposals which have influenced the legal framework.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the 2019 alienation programme,<sup>40</sup> the Italian public policies are still supporting real estate market forces to maximise profits by seeking high-density development of urban land in place of the former military barracks. In addition, after the military declare the redundancy of the barracks, these sites fall into a state of total abandonment<sup>41</sup> while waiting for the reuse. The uncertainty on their future makes them proper ‘urban voids’.<sup>42</sup> This condition may be subject to practises of informal appropriation and manifestation by citizenship reclaiming new uses for their social reproduction.

## 5 Case Study Analysis

The case study analysis attempt is to clarify the dichotomy between the generation of profit-driven spaces and urban commons to redevelop former military sites. In particular, the case study section compares the dichotomous redevelopment of two former barracks located in Italy’s Rome in profit-driven spaces and urban commons.

### 5.1 Case Study Selection

The choice of the city and two specific former military barracks (Rome’s Guido Reni<sup>43</sup> and Porto Fluviale barracks,<sup>44</sup> see Figures 1 and 2) relies on both similar

**38** Bazzu, P., and Talu, V., 2021. Casi studio. Cavallerizza Reale. In *Tactical Urbanism 5 Italy*, edited by Bazzu, P., and Talu, V., 50–51. Sassari, Italy: TaMaLaCà.

**39** See Signorile, N. 2014. *Diario Rossani. La difesa dello spazio pubblico e la privatizzazione della città*. Bari, Italy: Caratteri Mobili and Comitato per una Nuova Caserma Mazzoni, ed. (2020). *Chiesa Nuova. Storia di un Borgo Bolognese*. Bologna, Italy: Comitato per una Nuova Caserma Mazzoni.

**40** Ministero dell’Economia e delle Finanze 2019. *Dismissioni immobiliari, al via il piano da 1,2 miliardi di euro*. <https://www.mef.gov.it/focus/Dismissioni-immobiliari-al-via-il-piano-da-1.2-miliardi-di-euro/>.

**41** While abandoned, former military barracks have been subjected to sporadically illegal occupations by anarchists and squatters that definitely vandalized the area, such as in the case of the Milan’s Mameli barracks occupied by the “Pirati di Rho” squatters in 2015 (Bravi, M. 2015. “Caserma Mameli, sgomberato il fortino dei Pirati,” *Il Giornale*, March 30, <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/milano/caserma-mameli-sgomberato-fortino-dei-pirati-1111477.html> – accessed July 24, 2021).

**42** Lopez-Pineiro, S., 2020. *A Glossary of Urban Voids*. Berlin, Germany: Jovis.

**43** Also named “Precision Electrical Components Factory” – Stabilimento Militare Materiali Elettrici di Precisione in Italian.

**44** The official name of this barracks is “Military Commissariat Warehouse Management”, *Dirazione Magazzini Commissariato* in Italian.

characters and dichotomies that help a comparative analysis based on four main assumptions. The analysis comprises the morphological analysis of the site (with a 100 m-scaled localisation map) and the context through a barrack-centred walkable catchment (400 m-scaled map).

First, Rome is a capital city with a huge presence of abandoned military sites since the late 1990s.<sup>45</sup> Guido Reni barracks and Porto Fluviale barracks are entangled in state-local collaboration since the 2001. Rome's City Council signed two draft agreements with the Ministry of Defence in 2001 and 2010 to redevelop 15 military sites, totalling 800,000 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>46</sup> The sign of a third draft agreement between City Council, Ministry of Defence and State Property Agency in 2014 occurred due to the alienation regulations changes, the inclusion of the State Property Agency in the procedure, and the possibility of selling former barracks to real investment funds.<sup>47</sup>

Second, the dichotomous new functions and the owner. The Guido Reni barracks was sold to the F.I.V. real investment fund belonging to CDP Cassa Depositi e Prestiti sgr,<sup>48</sup> which aim is to provide new profit-driven spaces. Porto Fluviale barracks, instead, is currently owned by the Ministry of Defence and since 2003 self-organised occupations and collective actions are claiming the site as proper urban commons.

Third, the barracks localisation in neighbourhoods that underwent urban regeneration processes. The Guido Reni barracks is located in Rome's Flaminio mid-class neighbourhood, at the northern edge of the historic centre. The Porto Fluviale barracks lies in the former working-class Ostiense neighbourhood, at the southern border of the historic centre. Over the last three decades these areas have underwent to large urban renewals through specific flagship projects<sup>49</sup> entrusted to star architects that attract media attention that become identity regenerating agents reorienting the neighbourhoods image.<sup>50</sup> As a result, these neighbourhoods

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**45** Storelli, F. 2014. "Gli immobili della Difesa a Roma". In *Le Caserme e la Città. I Beni Immobili della Difesa tra Abbandoni, Dimissioni e Riusi*, edited by Storelli, F., and Turri, F., 19–86. Rome, Italy: Palombi.

**46** Geusa, M. 2012. "Aree militari dismesse e trasformazioni urbane: l'esperienza di Roma." *Territorio*, 62, 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.3280/TR2012-062005>.

**47** Gastaldi, F., and Camerin, F., 2017. "Verso una nuova fase del processo di valorizzazione del patrimonio militare italiano?." *Territorio*, 80: 151–56. <https://doi.org/10.3280/TR2017-080020>.

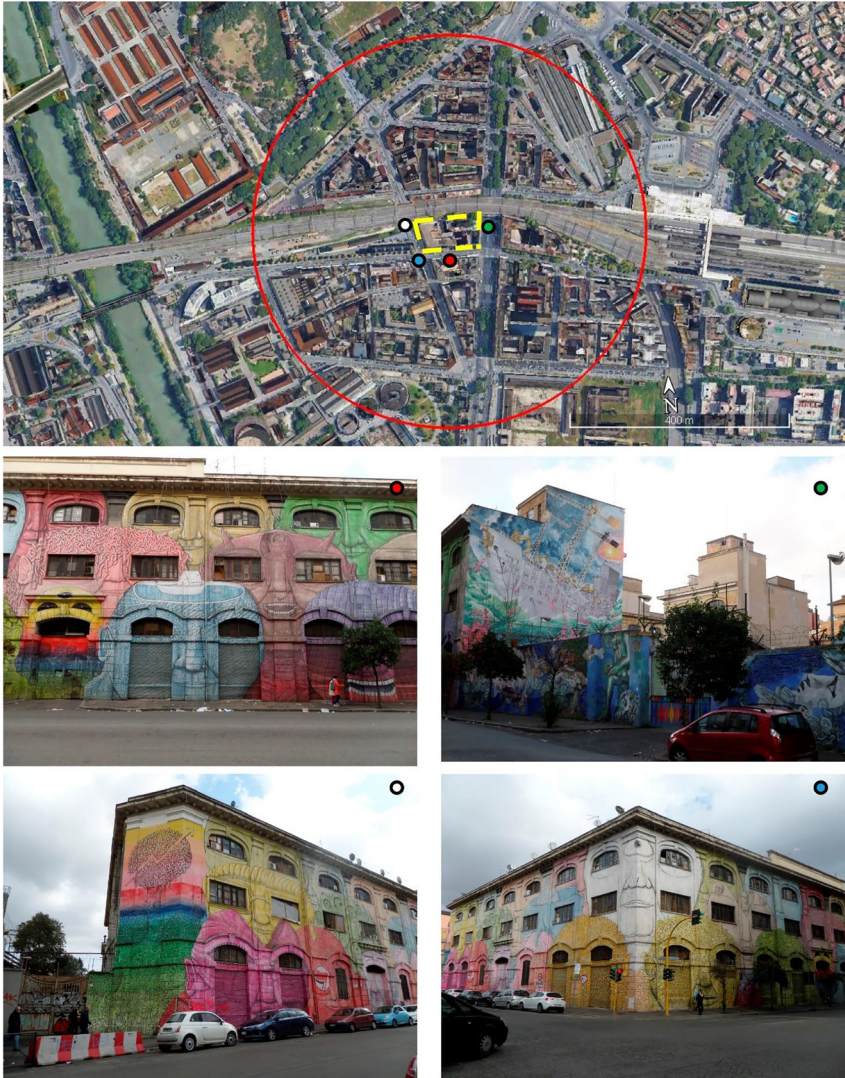
**48** Fondo Investimenti per la Valorizzazione, see <https://www.cdpsgr.it/valorizzazione-immobili-pubblici/immobili-in-portafoglio/lazio.html>.

**49** Alaily-Mattar, N. et al., 2017 Public real estate development projects and urban transformation. The case of flagship projects. In *Routledge Companion to Real Estate Development*, edited by Squires, G., Heurkens, E., and Peiser, R., 43–55. London, UK: Routledge.

**50** For the case of Flaminio see the 2002–2005 "The Neighbourhood of the City of Science-the Urban Project Flaminio" (<http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/partec-quart-scienza/puf.html>). For the case of Ostiense see the 1995–2005 "Urban Project Ostiense-Marconi" (<http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/progetti-urbani/citta-storica-pu-ostiensemarconi.html>).



**Figure 1:** Guido Reni barracks interior spaces in the frame of the Guido Reni District activities. Source: elaboration by F. Camerin (2021).



**Figure 2:** The Porto Fluviale barracks façade.  
Source: elaboration by F. Camerin (2021).

are changing from being spaces for the mid-low classes to new tertiary uses – cultural, leisure and sports – and luxury housing.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> For the case of Flaminio, see Rossi P. O., Ed. 2020. *Flaminio Distretto Culturale di Roma. Analisi e strategie di progetto*. Macerata: Quodlibet. For the case of Ostiense see Marroni, U. 2018. *Roma. La rigenerazione dei quartieri industriali. Il progetto urbano Ostiense-Marconi*. Rome, Italy: Ponte Sisto.

Four, the barracks primordial uses. Both sites were initially built as industrial factories in the same period. The Guido Reni barracks was a car factory converted for military uses into the “Royal Arms Factory” – *Regia Fabbrica d’Armi* in 1916.<sup>52</sup> The Porto Fluviale barracks dated back to the early 1920s, being dedicated to industrial warehouses<sup>53</sup> but successively converted into weapons and ammunition stores and Air Force Commissariat offices.<sup>54</sup>

## 5.2 Methodology

The methodology relies on the intention to build on the categorisation, even roughly, of the drivers that determines the redevelopment of former military barracks in profit-driven spaces and urban commons. To overcome the substantial lack of scientific research on this theme, the work comprises three ways to obtain the data. First, archival research, i.e. Rome’s archive *Archivio Storico Capitolino* and Italian Universities libraries carried out mostly at Università Iuav di Venezia (Venice), Sapienza Università di Roma and Università degli Studi RomaTre (Rome). Second, the search for scientific literature using the bibliographic databases Scopus and JSTOR along with the grey literature (i.e. government’s legislative documents, local administrations’ urban and territorial planning sources and press articles). Third, on-site visits and interviews with residents, actors and stakeholders involved in the reuse of former military barracks conducted in Rome (February 2017 and October 2018).

The data collection includes a review of the existing literature on the case studies and the interpretation of official documents released by the actors involved in the management of former military barracks (mostly Ministry of Defence, State Property Agency and City Council). The study identifies two kinds of data. On the one hand, the main features of the former military barracks<sup>55</sup> and, on the other hand, 11 dualistic characteristics of the redevelopment process. They are the following:

1. High-consuming land (a) versus small plot size (b) of the barracks;
2. Location in wealthy (c) versus working-class (d) neighbourhoods;

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52 The Rome Car Company, *Società Automobili Roma* in Italian, established its factories for cars production and storage between 1905 and 1907.

53 Named Vincenzo Taburet Tax Warehouses, *Magazzini Tributari Vincenzo Taburet* in Italian.

54 The property was definitely handed over to the Italian Air Force on November 1966.

55 Plot size and gross floor area (m<sup>2</sup>); number of buildings within the enclosure, and their volume (m<sup>3</sup>) when possible. In some cases, gross floor area and volume are not publicly available; Year, or époque, of both construction and military abandonment; Presence of building classified as “cultural heritage”; Ownership, i.e. City Councils and real estate investment funds; Current state of the former military barracks, i.e. abandoned, reused, partially reused and temporary reused and new future uses (i.e. commercial, housing, tertiary and mix of uses).

3. The long-lasting abandonment (e) versus immediate reuse (f) of the barracks;
4. Top-down (g) versus bottom-up (h) approach in the decision-making process. It regards the degree of involvement of local citizens in the decision-making process through community-based management and planning;
5. New functions of the barracks elaborated according to the comprehensive vision of the Urban General Plan (i) versus single urban projects based on a masterplan that modify/integrate the land-use planning tool (j);
6. Use values (k) versus exchange values (l). Use value refers to the satisfaction of social needs and wants so it would mean the redevelopment of barracks into social anchors by the provision of space for social reproduction (such as gardens, parks and public equipment). The exchange value is, conversely, the real estate market value acquired by former barracks over time, which make them interchangeable commodities for the owner in search for profit;
7. Type of reuse and the management of the existing morphology. It regards the dichotomy between the conservative reuse of listed buildings (m) and demolition/reconstruction of ordinary buildings (n);
8. Enhancement and preservation (o) or delete (p) of tangible and intangible values. The existing buildings within the military enclosure constitute the tangible values. Intangible values are mostly geared towards the socio-spatial context of the site and are strictly linked to what degree the reuse is tied to local characters, culture and history (i.e. to the oral traditions and expressions, performing arts and social practises, rituals and festive events) and consequently enhanced through tourism;
9. The valorisation of nature and biodiversity (q) versus the provision of anthropic functions (r);
10. Protests and occupations against the redevelopment projects (s) versus harmony between public bodies, real estate agents and citizens involved in the redevelopment (t) and
11. Use of visual culture (u) – or no (v) – in the form of street art, graffiti on derelict buildings, the provision of spaces for film, performance, photography and mixed media to strategically create temporary public spaces.

### **5.3 Profit-Driven Spaces versus Urban Commons. Differences and Commonalities through the Analysis of 11 Dichotomies**

This section describes point by point the case studies, illustrating them in relation to the morphology of the site and its surroundings and the data collected for the measurement of the analysis criteria (Table 2).



**Table 2:** Guido Reni and Porto Fluviale barracks characteristics and dichotomies.

Assets	Plot size and gross floor area (m <sup>2</sup> )/volume (m <sup>3</sup> )/buildings	Year of construction/underuse-abandonment/disposal/redevelopment works	Owner	Cultural heritage	Current use	Dichotomies										
						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Guido Reni barracks	55,480 (72,000)/223,827/28	1916/late 1980s/2013/2016	CDP fund	No	Temporary reuse and vacant	a	c	e	g	j	l	n	p	r	s	u
Porto Fluviale barracks	5,100 ( )/46,786/2	1919–1926/early 1990s/–/2003 occupation	Ministry of Defence	All area	Occupied by families and social activities	b	d	e	h	j	k	m	o	r	s	u

Source: elaboration by F. Camerin (2021).

1. The 55,480 m<sup>2</sup>-size Guido Reni barracks comprises 28 1–4-storey buildings, supposing a total volume of 223,827 m<sup>3</sup>. Over time this barracks underwent significant transformations within the enclosure due to military requirements. The Porto Fluviale barracks covers a small-size block of 5100 m<sup>2</sup> and is made up by two buildings with a volume of 46,786 m<sup>2</sup>.
2. According to Celata and Lucciarini (2016),<sup>56</sup> the per capita income in Flaminio and Ostiense fluctuates respectively between 25,000 and 30,000 euros and 15,000 and 20,000 euros. While Flaminio will reinforce its status of mid-class neighbourhood, Ostiense is still a working-class sector of the city suffering a relevant phenomenon of gentrification.<sup>57</sup>
3. The underuse and abandonment is lasting for more than 10 years in both cases so the long-standing abandonment has resulted in a very precarious state of conservation of both barracks. The underuse of the Guido Reni barracks started in the late 1980s. At that time, a debate took place to reconvert the barracks in new profit-driven functions around an Auditorium,<sup>58</sup> but this structure was built in another vacant area of Flaminio in the late 1990s.<sup>59</sup> The official abandonment took place only in the late 1990s, being confirmed by the 2001 draft agreement between the City Council and the Ministry of Defence.<sup>60</sup> The temporary reuse of the area occurred between 2016 and 2018 and nowadays is empty. The Air Force left Porto Fluviale barracks in the early 1990s, keeping it abandoned for 10 years. A total of 160 families occupied the

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**56** Celata, F., and Lucciarini, S., Eds., 2016. *Atlante delle disuguaglianza a Roma*. Rome, Italy: Camera di Commercio Roma, p. 10.

**57** Lelo, K., Monni, S., and Tomassi, F. 2021. *Le sette Rome. La capitale delle disuguaglianze raccontata in 29 mappe*. Rome, Italy: Donzelli.

**58** Cederna (1991. “E fermate l’ingordigia dei privati su via Reni.” *La Repubblica*, [http://media.regesta.com/dm\\_0/IBC/IBCAS00132/pdf/articoli/1188/001188\\_02\\_001.pdf](http://media.regesta.com/dm_0/IBC/IBCAS00132/pdf/articoli/1188/001188_02_001.pdf)) reported that at that time a consortium of banks and companies presented a project for the realisation of a mix of functions to redevelop the barracks located on both sides of Guido Reni street. The whole regeneration project involved more than 10 ha, 2.5 of which to transform in the auditorium and 9 ha devoted to a functional mix made up by a directional centre, accommodation, shops, and offices for a total of 190,000 m<sup>3</sup>. As Cederna (1992. *Il caso Auditorium. Roma Ieri Oggi Domani*, 5(46): 10. [http://media.regesta.com/dm\\_0/IBC/IBCAS00132/pdf/articoli/1992/001992\\_07\\_001.pdf](http://media.regesta.com/dm_0/IBC/IBCAS00132/pdf/articoli/1992/001992_07_001.pdf)) explained, the implementation of this urban project would lead to several risks: an enormous investment by the Italian State for the displacement of the military; a huge urban development of the barracks surroundings may have led to an irreversible deterioration of Flaminio’s urban quality; a surplus of tertiary functions in the neighbourhood; and a severe increase of traffic congestion and pollution.

**59** Insolera, I., and Sette, A.M., 2003. *Dall’Augusteo all’Auditorium*. Rome, Italy: Fondazione Musica per Roma.

**60** See <http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/aree-militari/prot-intesa-2001.html>.

barracks in 2003 and established the local committee *Coordinamento Cittadino Lotta per la Casa*.<sup>61</sup> The occupation was made official in 2007 and consequently the occupants obtained residence and a recognition of “emergency housing status”.<sup>62</sup>

4. Top-down (c) versus bottom-up (d) approach. The Guido Reni barracks redevelopment has been tied to a top-down approach since the failed proposal to replace it with the Auditorium in the early 1990s. The 2001, 2010 and 2014 draft agreements confirmed the top-down approach. The City Council supported a participation process previous to the 2014–15 International Design Competition in the early 2014, but the participation took place only after the General Urban Plan Modification of December 2013. The participation gathered stakeholders and citizenship to just inform them about the strategy for public equipment in Guido Reni barracks and, in general, in Flaminio neighbourhood.<sup>63</sup> Instead, a bottom-up approach – i.e. an occupation – boosted the Porto Fluviale barracks reuse.<sup>64</sup> After the recognition of the emergency housing status in 2007, the 2010 draft agreement foresaw the property transfer to the local administration with the aim to sell it in the real estate market. This option failed as well as the approval of a feasibility plan for the reuse according to the 2014 draft agreement. The turning point may be the project “Porto Fluviale RecHouse”<sup>65</sup> for receiving funding from the “2021 National innovation programme for the quality of living”<sup>66</sup>. This project was coordinated from April 2020 by the City Council in collaboration with three Universities (Università Roma Tre, La Sapienza and LUISS Guido Carli) and 16 actors (cultural associations, stakeholders and citizens), being approved in mid-July 2021.<sup>67</sup>

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**61** D’Amico, T., 2019. *Guerra ai poveri. La resistenza del Movimento per il Diritto all’Abitare* (Roma, 2009–2019). Rome, Italy: Red Star Press.

**62** The barracks is currently home of 55 families for a total of 150 people of 13 different nationalities with a large majority of children born and raised in the building.

**63** See <http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/partec-quart-scienza.html> (accessed June 5, 2021).

**64** Grazioli, M., and Caciagli, C. 2017. The right to (stay put in): Il caso di Porto Fluviale a Roma. *U3 I Quaderni*, 13(5): 79–85.

**65** The project is well described in <http://articiviche.blogspot.com/2021/03/porto-fluviale-rechouse.html>.

**66** Promoted by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility (*Programma innovativo nazionale per la qualità dell’Abitare*), see <https://qualitabitare.mit.gov.it/login>.

**67** Ministero delle Infrastrutture e della mobilità sostenibile 2021. *Programma innovativo nazionale per la qualità dell’Abitare – Selezione di progetti meritevoli*, p. 9, <https://www.mit.gov.it/sites/default/files/media/notizia/2021-07/Selezione%20Progetti%20PINQuA.pdf>.

5. Both redevelopments are meant to modify the General Urban Plan: The Guido Reni barracks is mostly regarded as a large urban project while the Porto Fluviale barracks is supposed to strengthen the social reproduction of low-income classes. The definition of the new uses of the Guido Reni barracks has been strongly influenced by the 2005 strategic plan “The Neighbourhood of the City of Science-the Urban Project Flaminio”<sup>68</sup> and the creation of new arts and culture spaces over the past two decades in the barracks surroundings.<sup>69</sup> The new items were the 1998–2010 Zaha-Hadid-designed MAXII museum,<sup>70</sup> the 1994–2002 Renzo-Piano-designed Auditorium,<sup>71</sup> and the 2008–2011 Music Bridge.<sup>72</sup> The strategic plan for a new cultural district and these new urban pieces boosted definitely Flaminio’s accessibility and resulted in the General Urban Plan Modification in December 2013.<sup>73</sup> The implementation of Porto Fluviale RecHouse is envisaged with the 2021 national financing. In the event of funding, the Ministry of Defence agreed to the property transfer for free to the City Council by means of the so-called Cultural State Property Federalism.<sup>74</sup> The following step will be the General Urban Plan Modification on the ground of the Porto Fluviale RecHouse project.
6. The Guido Reni barracks redevelopment is tied to exchange values: this is a flagship project based on a large real estate development. The new gross floor area will be articulated in the following functions: 27,000 m<sup>2</sup> for the City of Science; 29,000 m<sup>2</sup> for private housing; 6000 m<sup>2</sup> for social housing; and 5000 m<sup>2</sup> for commercial and tourism functions each, all of which will be connected by a new system of public spaces. According to the international real estate portal “InvestinItaly”,<sup>75</sup> the risk profile affecting this projects is

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**68** <http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/partec-quart-scienza/puf.html> (accessed June 5, 2021).

**69** Rossi P. O., cit.

**70** Vittorini, A. 2004. *Dalle Armi alle Arti. Trasformazione e Nuove Funzioni Urbane nel Quartiere Flaminio*. Rome, Italy: Gangemi.

**71** Alvisi, M. 2019. “La Vicenda dell’ Auditorium Di Roma Le Fasi Principali Della Realizzazione Ed Il Futuro Nel Quartiere Flaminio”. *L’architettura Delle città – The Journal of the Scientific Society Ludovico Quaroni*, 11(15), 201–206.

**72** <http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/citta-storica-pontemusica.html> (accessed June 5, 2021).

**73** <http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/images/partecipazione/guido-reni/guidoreni-relazione.pdf> (accessed June 5, 2021).

**74** It is a branch of the state property federalism dealing with listed buildings. The Ministry of Defence is willing to transfer for free the property only in case of funding as it has just happened in the case of the Port Fluviale barracks.

**75** See <https://www.investinitalyrealstate.com/en/property/rome-former-guido-reni-barracks/> (accessed June 5, 2021) and <https://www.investinitalyrealstate.com/en/property/turin-former-la-marmora-barracks/> (accessed June 5, 2021).

“opportunistic” as the Guido Reni barracks investments involve high-risk/return strategies that need a high degree of capital expenditure with just capital growth returns. As a matter of fact, the estimated investments is 350 million euros.<sup>76</sup> Instead, the state funding of 11 million euros to redevelop the Porto Fluviale barracks will extrapolate the use values by the conservation and enhancement of the existing community and activities. The first and second floor of the main building will house the current families living in the barracks. The ground floor and courtyard will accommodate the existing local associations<sup>77</sup> and provide functions that are currently lacking in the neighbourhood.<sup>78</sup>

7. Although being built in the same époque, the values assigned to the existing buildings of Guido Reni and Porto Fluviale barracks buildings are opposite. No buildings were deemed worth preserving in the case of the Guido Reni barracks and the International Competition established the demolition and the construction reconstruction of new architectural items. The decay, nevertheless, seems to be an excuse to provide a new urban morphology, more densified with respect to the current state of the barracks. The main buildings of the barracks were actually renewed for the 2016–2018 temporary activities. On the contrary, in 2012 the Regional Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Landscape of Lazio recognised the Porto Fluviale barracks as historic industrial building. The redevelopment seeks the preservation of the whole area and the Regional Directorate approved the feasibility study of the Porto Fluviale RecHouse in March 2021.
8. The reuse of Guido Reni barracks is meant to erase the tangible and intangible values of the military remain site, having a strong repercussion in Flaminio. The new functions are strictly related to the strategy of consolidation the arts and cultural district, with the risk of gentrification. In fact, the cost of selling the private areas – residential, commercial, offices, and touristic facilities – in

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**76** Nartello, F. 2015. “Roma, 270 Milioni di Investimento per Realizzare la Città della Scienza di Fronte al Maxxi.” *Edilizia e Territorio. Quotidiano del Sole 24 Ore*, January 14.

**77** The local associations have organised over time goldsmithing, tailoring and leatherwork workshops, a circus and dance training workshop and a tea room with recreational and cultural activities. The current bicycle workshop will be transformed into a sustainable mobility centre linked to the new cycle path connecting the neighbourhood to the near Piramide metro station.

**78** Such as a weekly market of Km 0 products; a help desk for female victims of violence; an intergenerational community building comprising a toy library and old people’s centre; spaces for distance learning; reskilling; coding and digital transfer (a space for civic technological-digital use); and a classroom-study in collaboration with Università Roma Tre opened 24 h a day.

the real estate market are estimated to fluctuate around 4800–5000 €/m<sup>2</sup>,<sup>79</sup> more than the Flaminio's average property prices (4750 €/m<sup>2</sup>).<sup>80</sup> On the contrary, the Porto Fluviale RecHouse project seeks to enhance the existing urban morphology and consolidate the socio-economic features without displacement of any families living in the area.

9. The two redevelopment projects apparently leave behind the issues of nature and biodiversity as they aim to provide anthropic functions. Nevertheless, both reuses will provide solutions in accordance to the Zero Energy Building standards, such as the installation of photovoltaic systems and roof gardens.
10. The participation of local associations and stakeholders before the Guido Reni barracks' International Urban Design Competition was not satisfactory and the diverse local associations have kept asking transparency and democracy in the decision-making process.<sup>81</sup> The Porto Fluviale barracks has been place of conflicts between occupants and public bodies, mostly the owner, the Ministry of Defence, and the City Council, but the Porto Fluviale RecHouse project seeks harmony between public bodies, real estate agents and citizens.
11. Both redevelopments have included the use of visual culture, but with different scope. While waiting for the City Council's final approval of the "City of Science" urban project,<sup>82</sup> CDP fund sought to make profits from the so-called "Guido Reni District"<sup>83</sup> urban marketing strategy. The activities referred to the action marketing, events, and advertising society "Ninety-nine"<sup>84</sup> from

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**79** Nartello, F. 2015, cit.

**80** Data retrieved from the Italian real estate portal <https://www.mercato-immobiliare.info/> updated to July 2021.

**81** For instance, in January 2017, nine associations formally solicited for the involvement of citizens in the City of Science Neighbourhood decision-making process, <https://www.cartainregola.it/index.php/progetto-flaminio-non-doveva-essere-un-processo-trasparente-e-partecipato/> (accessed June 5, 2021). The scarce citizenship involvement is well described in <https://www.cartainregola.it/index.php/ex-stabilimenti-militari-via-guido-reni-ii-municipio/> (accessed June 5, 2021). The Guido Reni barracks redevelopment was also contested by the group Metropolitan Precarious Blocks – *Blocchi Precari Metropolitani* in Italian – in February 2014 see [https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/02/07/news/roma\\_non\\_si\\_vende\\_giornata\\_di\\_proteste\\_occupata\\_la\\_caserma\\_guido\\_reni-77927152/](https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/02/07/news/roma_non_si_vende_giornata_di_proteste_occupata_la_caserma_guido_reni-77927152/) (accessed June 5, 2021).

**82** The project is currently waiting for the approval of the Lazio Region decisional process, *conferenza dei servizi* in Italian, <https://www.comune.roma.it/web/it/notizia.page?contentId=NWS696746> (accessed June 5, 2021).

**83** See <https://guidorenidistrict.com/> and Fiorentino, F. 2018. "«Guido Reni District», via i locali e le strutture dell'area riqualificata," *Corriere della Sera-Roma*, April 23, [https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18\\_aprile\\_23/guido-reni-district-chiudeora-lavori-futuro-incerto-1cb5abfa-4657-11e8-9661-d18d4bfcdaf.shtml](https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_aprile_23/guido-reni-district-chiudeora-lavori-futuro-incerto-1cb5abfa-4657-11e8-9661-d18d4bfcdaf.shtml) (accessed June 5, 2021).

**84** <https://www.ninety-nine.biz/it/portfolio/guido-reni-district/> (accessed June 5, 2021).

December 2016 to May 2018, also related to the MAXXI museum ones.<sup>85</sup> As a result, more than a million people visited several kinds of exhibitions, conferences, festivals, presentations, parades, performances, and shows over a year and a half. The use visual culture was quite different in the case of the Porto Fluviale barracks. On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the occupation (2003–2013), the international street artist “Blu” painted its exterior façade, turning the barracks into a symbol of the right to city.<sup>86</sup> The murals depicts a multitude of colourful faces to represent the social and political context of the barracks, being a work of art available to the Ostiense inhabitants.

## 6 Discussion

The case study analysis opens to a discussion based on the following points.

First, this enquiry shows that the management of former military barracks deals with the balance of a dualist vision.<sup>87</sup> On the one hand, barracks meant to generate urban commons for the creation of value for the community. This approach usually results in disputes about the right to access, use or share barracks as urban resource to provide goods necessary for human flourishing, such as in the case of the Porto Fluviale barracks. In a short, this case study is about the process of creating urban commons, i.e. the urban commoning. On the other hand, barracks intended as financial assets for generating revenue for both the State and Ministry of Defence.<sup>88</sup> This is the most prominent approach on former barracks as it is promoted by the existing regulations. In particular, a speculative approach on the redevelopment may take place in the cases of highly lucrative and desirable locations as demonstrated in the case of the Guido Reni barracks. The uplift in land value follows the mechanisms of appropriation of public land in neoliberal countries<sup>89</sup> to generate much-needed

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**85** Delgado-Jiménez, A. 2018. La transformación urbana del área de Progetto Flaminio en Roma: del abandono del establecimiento militar y el concurso para la Ciudad de la Ciencia al actual Distrito Guido Reni. In *Ciudad y formas urbanas. Vol. 5. Formas urbanas, planeamiento, proyecto urbano*, edited by Monclús, J., and Diez, C., 121–32. Zaragoza, Spain: Universidad de Zaragoza.

**86** Piccinini, A. 2013. Un tuffo nel Blu. *Il Manifesto*, <https://ilmanifesto.it/un-tuffo-nel-blu/>.

**87** Dobson, J. (2010). *In the public interest? Community benefits from Ministry of Defence land disposals*. Portsmouth: Bill Sargent Trust; Dobson, J. (2012). *Forces for good: local benefits from surplus military land*. Portsmouth: Bill Sargent Trust.

**88** The redevelopment of the Guido Reni barracks is meant to generate at least 43 million euros for the municipality, in addition to the planning fees. See <https://www.romatoday.it/politica/ex-caserma-guido-reni-citta-scienza-approvazione-delibera.html>.

**89** Christophers, B. 2018. *The New Enclosure. The appropriation of public land in neoliberal Britain*. London, UK: Verso, 286.

income for the owner. Nevertheless, the long-term community benefits tend not to correlate with short-term budgetary exigencies of the public entities selling land.

Second, the challenge to manage the land-use of former military sites deals with the hurly-burly of negotiations with developers, target-setting by central government and continuing cuts in public finances. Both academics and public enquiries criticised the Italian public sector both taking a short-term financial approach on former military assets and apparent inflexibility and unwillingness to listen to the views of local communities.<sup>90</sup> Most of the former barracks redevelopments show poor models of urban governance as they usually do not put the interest of local residents at the centre of the projects and increase resilience, with also poor coordination across levels of government to meet concomitantly place-specific needs and national objectives. This is the case of the Guido Reni barracks. Nevertheless, over time the reuse of Porto Fluviale barracks has adopted a functional approach at territorial level to policy action based on where people live and work to tailor strategies and public service delivery to the diversity of urban scales.

Third, the commoning of the Porto Fluviale barracks is clearly tied to the notion of ‘inclusive cities’.<sup>91</sup> In fact, the redevelopment is ensuring that lower classes – i.e. low-wage workers and migrants – are targeted with specific programmes. Porto Fluviale RecHouse seeks an adjustment of housing quantity, quality and affordability to the variety of housing needs, with a view to promote social cohesion and integration with improving accessibility to soft mobility – i.e. cycling and walkability. This type of reuse has been the result of the disputing over the question of how best to share the finite resources of the city among the variety of users and uses – such as the lack of social housing and functions for the social reproduction of low-income classes.<sup>92</sup> On the face of it, citizens’ claim to provide goods necessary for human flourishing have enabled creative partnerships between communities and public entities (City Councils, Ministry of Defence and State Property Agency) on the future of barracks, allowing a broad interpretation of the idea of public benefits.

Fourth, the case of the Porto Fluviale barracks is not unique in Italy. A number of former barracks have been occupied by self-managed social centres with the aim to underlying the state of degradation of the barracks and to attract the interest of Bologna’s citizenship on these assets. The group Ex Caserma Liberata occupied the

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**90** Commissione IV Difesa, 1999, cit, Corte dei Conti 2003 and 2017, cit; Camerin, F. 2018. “La gestión de las instalaciones militares abandonadas. Dificultades y oportunidades en Italia.” *Bitácora Urbano Territorial*, 28(1), 159–169. Doi: 10.15446/bitacora.v28n1.68386.

**91** OECD 2020. *Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19). Cities policy responses*, July, 23. <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/cities-policy-responses-fd1053ff/>, 38 (accessed July 24, 2021).

**92** Foster, S., and Iaione, C. 2016. “The City as a Commons.” *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 34(2): 281–349.



Rossani barracks in Bari in 2014; in Turin, the Cavallerizza Reale barracks was occupied in 2014 by the group “Assemblea Cavallerizza 14:45”,<sup>93</sup> and the local association “Free Via Asti” has occupied La Marmora barracks for seven months in 2015 to foster cultural and training activities. In Bologna, the local associations “Làbas” and “Xm24” occupied respectively the Masini barracks between 2012 and 2017<sup>94</sup> and the Sani barracks between November 2019 and January 2020.<sup>95</sup> These experiences refer to bottom-up approaches, such as protests of local associations against the profit-driven approach to the reuse, the decay of the military enclosure due to the long-lasting abandonment, the demands for the ‘right to the city’, and the occupation due to the need of finding a house to live in. The commoning of military barracks is, in most cases, an indirect process, but a direct process can be launched by the public, i.e. City Councils, through top-down solutions that propose more local-centred solutions. The redevelopment of the Piave barracks in Belluno in the Third Sector City – *Cittadella del terzo settore* – is an outstanding example of “innovative” alternative of urban regeneration not responding to the capitalist purposes in search for the highest yields. Since 2014 the City Council is effectively shaping a new urban space related to local culture in order to promote social aggregation, being a case of true application of the principles of solidarity, pluralism and subsidiarity.<sup>96</sup>

## 7 Conclusions

The poor outcomes of military assets decommissioning policies is a symptom of the weakness of the Italian state and the public sectors against the neoliberal approach that have affected urban governance since the late 20th century.

The dominant political-economic context oriented towards profit-maximisation of the urban and no-urban environment has indeed affected the redevelopment of former military barracks. Since the 1980s the negotiated procedures between state and territorial entities have favoured real estate developers

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<sup>93</sup> Brino, G., and Lupo, G., 2018. *La Cavallerizza: Stato di conservazione e proposta di manutenzione straordinaria*. Turin, Italy: Celid

<sup>94</sup> Cori, A. Capelli, E. and Venturi, I. 2017. “Bologna, sgombero del centro sociale Làbas: scontri con gli attivisti,” *La Repubblica*, August 8, [https://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/08/08/news/bologna\\_la\\_bas\\_lo\\_sgombero\\_della\\_polizia-172617595/](https://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/08/08/news/bologna_la_bas_lo_sgombero_della_polizia-172617595/) (accessed July 24, 2021).

<sup>95</sup> Stinco, G. 2020. “Xm24, lo sgombero pre-elettorale che imbarazza il Pd,” *Il Manifesto*, January 17, <https://ilmanifesto.it/xm24-lo-sgombero-pre-elettorale-che-imbarazza-il-pd/> (accessed July 24, 2021).

<sup>96</sup> Camerin, F. 2017. “La riconversione degli immobili militari in Italia: il caso dell’ex caserma Piave di Belluno trasformata in Cittadella del terzo settore,” *Working papers. Rivista online di Urban@it*, 2, 1–14.

in the modification of the General Master Plans, without guaranteeing a long-term vision of the territory.<sup>97</sup> In addition, the political decisions on alienation have resulted in multiple instruments for the reuse in favour to the market forces even though the articles 822 and 826 of the Italian Civil Code apparently aim to protect public property. This situation has been exacerbated by neoliberal-induced successive waves of economic and financial crisis accompanied by socially and ecologically disastrous consequences – such as urban austerity, cuts in the welfare system and privatisation of public assets and services.<sup>98</sup> As a result, filling the voids has become increasingly difficult. The Regulations on the shared care of urban commons may be the proper tool to offer innovative solutions and legalise commoning practises due to their immediate capacity of reusing empty spaces. Their appropriate application depends on the local administrations willpower to overcome a profit-driven approach as it is happening in the case of the Porto Fluviale barracks.

Eventually, the lessons learned from this paper can be the following.

First, this study provides a deeper understanding of the dualistic approaches applied to a specific kind of urban void, i.e. military barracks. On the one hand, the long-standing abandonment can be conceived as a failure of the capitalistic system continual and creative destruction of the so-called ‘operational landscapes’.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, the abandonment may not only means failure or the proper condition to support the capitalist mode of production. Military voids can be the fertile ground for the experimentation of new modes of urban governance speculation which could help the reproduction of the lower classes.

Second, the need to elaborate an open-access inventory of former military barracks showing the state of the art of their redevelopment process. Only an adequate knowledge of the current state of these assets can provide a solid foundation on the basis of which providing relevant public policies of preservation and enhancement. In this sense, the inventory may lead to formulate a series of solutions to speed up and streamline the public process which is taking from the moment the military barracks are defined useless to the moment where these goods are given for common purposes – public property lists are full of goods that

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<sup>97</sup> Oliva, F. (1984). *Il modello dell'urbanistica alternativa*. Milan, Italy: Franco Angeli; Della Seta, P., and Salzano, E. 1993. *L'Italia a sacco. Come negli incredibili anni '80 nacque e si diffuse Tangentopoli*. Rome, Italy: Editori Riuniti; Campos Venuti, G. 1991. *L'urbanistica riformista. Antologia di scritti, lezioni e piani*. Milan, Italy: Etaslibri Campos Venuti, G., and Oliva, F., eds. 1993. *Cinquant'anni di urbanistica in Italia 1942–1992*. Bari-Rome, Italy: Laterza.

<sup>98</sup> Schönig, B. and Schipper, S., eds. 2016. *Urban Austerity: Impacts of the Global Financial Crisis on Cities in Europe*. Berlin, Germany: Theater der Zeit.

<sup>99</sup> Ferretti, M. 2016. *Land stocks. New operational landscapes of city and territory*. Trento-Barcelona, Italy-Spain: ListLab.

are kept waiting abandoned for years without a decision. A number of questions arise: Which are the possible ways to avoid the speculative market pressure on the possible reuses? What about a common unique list or matrix of possible common cultural renovation projects open to everyone to pair with a list of available goods and a ranking system to apply? How to evaluate the redevelopment process in terms of local needs for a more equal and healthier urban environment? How to assess the perennial tension between short-term budgetary exigencies of the public bodies selling land and the long-term needs of the local community? The answers may come from the elaboration of a clear way to monitor and audit the impact of any of the redevelopment projects so as to endorse an evaluation process to entrust to the public. This evaluation may be particularly important to assess both the sustainable and social targets of the redevelopments and the cultural, economic, social and urban outputs of urban commons and profit-driven spaces.

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