



Reuse and spatial regeneration

Edition: 1

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Start date: February 18, 2027

End date: April 17, 2027

Number of hours: 45 hours

Delivery method: online (36 hours – 80%) and in-person (9 hours – 20%)

Language of instruction: ENGLISH

Edition: number 1

Location: POLI.design and online

Weekly commitment: the course format consists of online sessions lasting 2 or 3 hours and in-person sessions lasting 3 or 6 hours (on Friday and Saturday mornings)

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, cities have experienced an unprecedented expansion of their built environment, accompanied by a growing number of underutilized or abandoned buildings and spaces. In Italy alone, where the built environment has grown by over 400% in the last seventy years, there are now an estimated millions of unused or partially abandoned properties. Former industrial facilities, commercial buildings, obsolete infrastructure, public spaces without a function: these places represent one of the most urgent challenges of our time, but also an extraordinary opportunity for transformation.

In this context, the reuse of existing spaces emerges as one of the most effective strategies for simultaneously addressing environmental, economic, and social issues: reducing land consumption, enhancing the built environment, stimulating new local economies, and strengthening local communities.

In light of these urgent needs, the course proposes to explore reuse not only as an architectural intervention, but above all as a strategic and decision-making process, in which design plays a key role in shaping visions, supporting the integration of public policies and private initiatives, and facilitating citizen engagement. The approach adopted—strongly design-oriented and human-centered—therefore considers the interior dimension and the local scale as opportunities for broader territorial regeneration.



Through meta-design tools, analysis of territorial ecosystems, participatory processes, and hybrid governance models, the course provides participants with practices, tools, and operational methodologies to activate complex transformation processes. The focus is not so much on architectural design as on creating the conditions that make the transformation of spaces possible: defining usage scenarios, developing a program of activities that can be implemented in the medium and long term, engaging communities, building coalitions of stakeholders, and identifying sustainable management models.

The training program integrates contributions from the worlds of design, social-impact real estate development, cultural management, and the local economy, offering concrete tools for professionals working in complex and constantly evolving contexts who are capable of facing the challenge and responsibility of change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The educational objectives of the course are as follows:

- Recognize and interpret the value of abandoned spaces, identifying their social, cultural, and economic potential and developing the ability to critically analyze the local contexts in which they are situated.
- Design revitalization strategies and new usage scenarios capable of countering deterioration and preserving the spatial qualities and identity of places through progressive processes of transformation and care.
- Develop processes of social and territorial activation, fostering the involvement of local communities and transforming unused spaces into places of new social interaction, cultural production, and services for the local area.
- Build and manage relationships among public, private, and community actors, understanding the role of institutions in preventing abandonment and developing strategies to attract private resources and investments into regeneration processes.
- Assess the economic and development opportunities associated with the reuse of existing heritage, making the potential benefits of interventions explicit and promoting sustainable models of management and enhancement.
- Promote sustainable urban transformation approaches focused on the regeneration of existing structures and the reduction of land consumption, leveraging the built heritage as a strategic resource for territorial development.
- Promote and manage all technical aspects (techniques, practices, tools) related to virtuous processes of reusing existing structures as an opportunity for spatial redevelopment, social revitalization, and urban regeneration.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Develop alternative and sustainable use scenarios.
- Understand decision-making levels and dynamics.



- Map and activate stakeholder ecosystems.
- Initiate participatory processes and engage local communities.
- Structure governance and partnership models.
- Identify economic, financial, and intangible resources.
- Translate visions into concrete implementation processes.

BASIC SKILLS REQUIRED – SOFTWARE REQUIRED

No specific skills are required.

TARGET

The course is designed for professionals working both in the public and private sectors: architects, urban planners, engineers, project managers, government officials, developers, cultural practitioners, regional consultants, as well as cooperatives, foundations, and third-sector organizations interested in the adaptive reuse of disused assets as a driver of community engagement and local development.

COURSE SYLLABUS (45 hours)

THEORY MODULE

Hours: 36

Delivery method: online (includes lectures and guest speakers).

Description:

This executive program provides strategic and operational tools for designing or managing urban reuse and regeneration processes. From contextual analysis to vision-building, from community engagement to governance and sustainability models, the course integrates multidisciplinary approaches to transform underutilized spaces into opportunities of social and economic value.

Main Content:

MODULE 1 – Reuse and Regeneration as a Strategic Process (6 hours)

This module introduces urban regeneration and, in particular, the reuse of abandoned or underutilized spaces as strategic processes of social, economic, and territorial transformation capable of generating collective value. The module addresses multi-level analytical tools—from the local to the metropolitan and regional scales—and methods for interpreting social, economic, political, and regulatory contexts, leading to the construction and definition of the “public problem” as the basis for initiating transformation initiatives.

MODULE 2 – Development of Use Scenarios and Operational Visions (4 hours)

This module explores tools for developing use scenarios and strategic visions capable of guiding reuse and transformation processes. Through scenario-building techniques, the opportunities for developing visions, programs, and ultimately projects are analyzed. The module also explores



methods for identifying latent needs and emerging dynamics in local contexts, using data-informed approaches to interpret socio-economic priorities and to define indicators capable of measuring the impacts of the strategies adopted.

MODULE 3 – Participatory Design and Community Activation (6 hours)

This module addresses the role of communities in reuse and regeneration processes, focusing on the contribution of residents, local organizations, and territorial stakeholders in project development. It analyzes different levels of participation—from simple involvement to co-design—and the operational models that enable effective collaborative processes. Particular attention is given to illustrating social activation techniques and tools, which are useful for facilitating dialogue and building consensus around transformation processes, empowering stakeholders at the planning table to become co-protagonists, building local alliances, and fostering the generation of social capital, as well as facilitating conflict management and negotiation between divergent interests.

MODULE 4 - Temporary Reuse and the Role of Events (6 hours)

This module explores temporary reuse as a strategic tool for urban activation and for experimenting with new scenarios for the use of spaces. Various forms of activation—temporary use, meanwhile use, event-based activation, etc.—are analyzed, highlighting their role in the progressive transformation of places. The module also examines the contribution of cultural, social, or commercial events as tools capable of revealing new functions and new audiences for spaces undergoing transformation. Particular attention is given to activation strategies requiring low investment thresholds, such as spatial prototyping and testing of usage scenarios, as well as to the advantages of temporary reuse in terms of visibility, building local networks, and attracting investment.

MODULE 5 – Governance, Actors, and Decision-Making Processes (6 hours)

This module analyzes the governance dynamics that characterize reuse and regeneration processes, focusing on the relationships between public, private, and community actors. Through stakeholder mapping tools and analysis of power relations, it explores local ecosystems and potential coalitions of actors that can support transformation processes. The module also delves into the relationship between public administrations, policymakers, and operators, introducing negotiation and mediation tools useful for managing diverse interests. Finally, it analyzes the main decision-making and authorization hubs and collaborative models—including public-private partnerships—that can support project implementation.

MODULE 6 – Economic Models and Resource Identification (4 hours)

This module addresses the economic dimension of reuse processes, analyzing sustainability models and tools for developing appropriate economic strategies. It explores cost and revenue structures—with particular attention to the profitability of spaces and project financing mechanisms—as well as the main sources of funding available (public funds, European programs, impact finance instruments, and partnerships). The module also delves into the valuation of intangible resources such as networks, social capital, and reputation. The module also introduces



methods for developing an implementation roadmap through phases, milestones, and progress indicators, addressing issues related to risk management, process adaptability, and monitoring.

MODULE 7 – Communication and Dissemination (4 hours)

This module explores the role of communication as a structural component of place revitalization and regeneration processes. It presents communication tools and methods capable of supporting the various phases of the process, making visions and transformation strategies understandable and shareable. Particular attention is given to the development of the project's storytelling—understood as a narrative capable of mobilizing communities, institutions, and local stakeholders—and to the envisioning of future scenarios, which help make the potential for transforming spaces visible and tangible. The module also explores strategies for institutional and local outreach.

PROJECT MODULE / WORKSHOP (9 hours)

Delivery method: in-person (guided tours) or remote (alternative practical exercise).

Description:

The project module offers an opportunity to engage directly with the course topics.

This module includes guided tours of select Milanese sites considered best practices, as they exemplify sustainable reuse projects, showcase exemplary public-private partnerships, and serve as catalysts for broader urban regeneration processes.

For those unable to attend in person, a practical exercise based on a real-world case study will be conducted remotely.

Main content:

The design module is dedicated to understanding the tools and methods learned in the theoretical part through guided tours and firsthand accounts, which are useful for exploring operational models, governance structures, and replicable design solutions.

If feasible, this module will be delivered in person during the Milan Design Week, an event widely regarded as a strategic model of urban development. Through the temporary adaptive reuse of spaces, it contributes to the revitalization of the city as a whole by attracting substantial tourist flows, as well as significant cultural and economic value.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

The final assessment will be qualitative (e.g., achieved, partially achieved, not achieved) and will be based on attendance and proactive participation during the sessions.

OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOME PROFILE/SKILLS

Opportunities:

The course trains professionals capable of working in the processes of reuse and regeneration of the built environment, at the intersection of design, urban policy, and territorial management.



Participants will be able to work as consultants for public administrations, developers, foundations, cultural institutions, and third-sector organizations, or within design firms and strategic consulting firms. The skills acquired enable them to lead spatial transformation processes, build governance models, and implement temporary or permanent reuse programs in complex urban contexts.

Career Profile:

The program aims to train professionals capable of intervening in the processes of repurposing and revitalizing unused spaces, which are part of the vast stock of derelict and abandoned architecture found in various urban and territorial contexts.

These professionals develop skills to make such spaces available again through flexible and sustainable interventions, responding to new contemporary social, cultural, and environmental needs.

The professional profile developed by the course works in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders—including public administrations, developers, urban planners, sociologists, and cultural operators—helping to guide the transformation of environments through design tools, activation strategies, and innovative methods for engaging stakeholders, managers, and users.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course lasts 45 hours, comprising a total of 16 teaching sessions over 8 weeks.

The format includes:

- 2 online sessions per week (on Thursdays and Fridays, from 5:00 PM or from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM) for a total of 36 online hours over 7 weeks, covering the theoretical modules.
- 2 intensive in-person sessions over 2 consecutive days (Fridays from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM and from 2:30 PM to 5:30 PM, Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM) for a total of 9 in-person hours, covering the project module.

The course will take place on the following days:

Delivery method	Date	Teaching	Week's day	Time	Hours
online	18/02/2027	Module 1	Thursday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	19/02/2027	Module 1	Friday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	25/02/2027	Module 2	Thursday	6:00 PM–8:00 PM	2
online	26/02/2027	Module 2	Friday	6:00 PM–8:00 PM	2



online	04/03/2027	Module 3	Thursday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	05/03/2027	Module 3	Friday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	11/03/2027	Module 4	Thursday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	12/03/2027	Module 4	Friday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	18/03/2027	Module 5	Thursday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	19/03/2027	Module 5	Friday	5:00 PM–8:00 PM	3
online	01/04/2027	Module 6	Thursday	6:00 PM–8:00 PM	2
online	02/04/2027	Module 6	Friday	6:00 PM–8:00 PM	2
online	08/04/2027	Module 7	Thursday	6:00 PM–8:00 PM	2
online	09/04/2027	Module 7	Friday	6:00 PM–8:00 PM	2
In person	16/04/2027	Workshop – Day 1	Friday	10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. 2:30–5:30 p.m.	6
In person	17/04/2027	Workshop – Day 2	Saturday	10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	3

PAYMENT

You can make your payment using one of the following methods:

- Bank transfer

Please make your payment using the following bank details:

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BIC / SWIFT: BCITITMM

IBAN IT28M0306909606100000176368

Reference: course name and participant's first and last name

You must send a copy of the payment receipt to: iscrizioni@polidesign.net

- Online payment by credit card via the members-only area of the POLI.design website, by requesting access at iscrizioni@polidesign.net

COST

The total cost of the course is €2,400 per student.

CERTIFICATE ISSUED

Certification issued:

Upon completion of the course, an open badge for the Executive Course in “Reuse and Spatial Regeneration” will be issued by POLI.design.

MINIMUM ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT TO OBTAIN THE COURSE CERTIFICATE

Course attendance is mandatory for 80% of the sessions.

Information and Contacts

POLI.design Academic Office

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