
The Suburb of Rome: the designed Landscape

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ABSTRACT. Most of the territory of the Suburb of Rome is characterized by neighborhoods without adequate public spaces and particularly rich in interstitial and marginal areas, degraded or abandoned. The project of the landscape redevelopment is therefore about the reconnection of the urban aggregate, through the creation of cultural-historical routes which cross the territory by reconnecting the historical traces, the urban strongholds, both modern and ancient, despite the passage of time and transformations. A project that leads to the transformation of the city towards a new direction, a new way of "creating" the city, a new "designed landscape". The aim is to focus on what already exists and let open spaces be the joining tissue between historic and contemporary city.

KEYWORDS. landscape redevelopment - cultural-historical routes - reconnecting the historical traces - new "making city" - new "designed landscape"

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The study of the landscape, continuously changing according to the process of modification of the territory, could not be tackled without analyzing the area of competence.

Considered as a product of the interrelationship between man and environment, the 'designed landscape', modified by history and time, becomes of particular interest rather for the individual perception than for the interpretation of the society which inhabits it. The landscape is so at the same time reality and image. The European Convention¹ also bounds the landscape to local communities and their historical characteristics, retracing the issue of the attribution of value to a choral type process. It is necessary to inquire and recognize the occurred transformations within that 'signs' characterizing a territory and its history. The landscape, in so doing, is intended as the 'theatre' for these transformations. Finding 'traces', 'signs' or 'plans', can be the base for reading the 'historic models of the territory' method, which takes into account both the primitive landscape and the different transformations occurred.

The historic and morphologic analysis of the territory and its legacy, both diachronic and synchronic, through the ancient, modern and contemporary cartography could represent an important method for the valorization of the landscape. The aim of the cartographic study is to comprehend the mechanics of the formation and transformation of the territory structure and their morphologic characteristics, by 'reading' the different pre-existences and persistences, and to reconstruct the process of anthropic structuring of the territory by phases. Each transformation phase is to be identified as a synthesis of the historic and cultural vocation's system; their definition is made by highlighting the most important characteristics which contributed to the transformation's process.

Diachronically analyzing the history of a region through the sequence of its 'models of configuration' allows also to identify the 'forms' or 'influence areas' of the landscapes, which can be defined as 'parts' of the territorial system. Through the historic reading of the 'tracking system', the 'permanences organization' (remains and traces) and the 'settlement system', each 'model of configuration' emerges as a product of the precedent structure and as a matrix for the following ones. Those models represent the historic reinterpretation, made both through reuse or abandon operation, partial or total, of the territorial system and through 'increments' and 'subtractions' of the elements that give the area its 'shape'. This is practically individuated, within every single historic phase, from the analysis of the natural and anthropic characteristics which defines the region itself. So it should be useful to consider: the orographic and hydrographic set, the primary and secondary road systems (ridge, counter-ridge, hillside and valley bottom tracks; climbing or counter-ridge routes, urban influence territorial roads and vice versa, territorial influence urban roads) the agrarian tissue, the settlements role and the historic building discontinuity.

In order to perform this kind of territorial 'phase analysis', it is extremely important to use all the informations trackable both through the bibliographic documentation (travel books, historic and archaeologic guides, historic atlas, etc.) and, most of all, through the historic (cadaster, corographic and topographic maps, views) and contemporary cartographic documentation (aerophotographic maps, satellite and thematic maps, such as the environmental ones: oro-hydrographic, forestal, geological, soil usage, natural parks, landscape planning, etc). Through the data taken from the cartographic sources it is possible to survey the natural 'shape' of the analyzed territory – supporting the various models of configuration – and the toponomastic informations concerning those places, settlements and tracings, which characterized the territory through the ages.

The further synchronic analysis sums up the previous 'phase analysis' and diachronic² one, with which the territorial systems and subsystems (historic models) and the 'parts' or tracking influence areas defined by the reinforced historic models of the settlement) are identified. It also tends to individuate the current and tendential 'shape' of the reuse of the territory through the superposition of the historic models, linked to its organization within the ages.

It is well known that the transformations of a territory are a form of adaptation to the present time, a form of reuse; so, through the synchronic analysis, it is possible to elaborate both a verification of the usages and morphologies not coherent with the formal qualities strengthened by the historic process, and a confront between the present roles and the historic invariants of the territory (consolidated systems). Moreover, it is possible to try to define the 'tendency' of reuse, often characterized by features which are strongly estranged from the natural environment and the history of the places and configured as an adaptation to the existing through further physical transformations and the use/reuse of the territory. And also to plan (through the willing highlightment of all the surviving 'models') the recovery, the redevelopment, the valorization and the historic, cultural and touristic reuse of the territory by landscape influence areas (spotted through the recognizance of the historic and environmental emergencies). All through a 'pattern' which is characterized by the organicity, compatibility with the natural environment and continuity within its transformation with the historic models of territory conformation.

The project here presented is the new usage of the ancient radial and counter-radial tracings for a new fruition of the territory and of the remains through the valorization of the landscapes. It is the project of renovation and transformation of suburban territory between the historical radial connection, and it is concentrated in the area of the Suburb of Rome where ancient urban strongholds built around the late 19th century as a defensive structure and control of the city of Rome.

The territorial analysis is strictly bounded to the analysis of the historical routes, which lead off the gates of the Urbe, as the presence, along these, of the historic urban tissue of the *Suburbium* of Rome connects the dimension of the city with the surroundings towns and villages, interposing a patching architecture, not so evident nowadays, to the great space between the city and the villages.

The ancient consular roads originally functioned as long distance connection routes, they didn't pass through the towns and cities which weren't directly on their tracings, while in the first part of the Middle age "la strada perde di vista la meta lontana, si dirige verso mete vicine, si orienta in compartimenti più limitati"³ (the road does not seek for the far away destination, since it leads to closer places, it is oriented to more limited spaces); and as A. Esch writes, roman roads "laddove è possibile, procedono in linea retta non curandosi di nulla: come una basis villae muta con forza il rilievo del paesaggio, lo domina" (wherever it's possible proceed straight without caring of anything: like a basis villa they change heavily the surrounding environment, they dominate it), so the long transport routes didn't conform to whatever surrounded them, at that time, and "nel loro tracciato rettilineo, preoccupandosi poco della morfologia del terreno, richiedono proprio per questo molte costruzioni: scarpate, ponti, fossati, argini, tagli, sostruzioni" (within their straight tracing, not caring at all about the morphology of the region, they need many construction: escarpments, bridges, ditches, banks, substructures). Connection routes (counter-radial) with the main roads (radial) and secondary routes, used by villas and rural estates, characterized the minor route system right outside Rome; even the service road system near the aqueducts (sometimes even paved with flagstones), created for the maintenance of those aqueducts, were used for a secondary road viability in the *Suburbium*⁴. It is also to be remembered that

these consular roads⁵, beside structuring the areas right outside the Urbe, connected the city to the necropolis, placed all along these roads and outside the walls. The ancient roads kept their importance also because they gave access to the proprieties of the Church placed in the *Suburbium*; it has to be considered, as A. Esch wrote, that: "già tra il 314 e il 440 dei 43 toponimi noti di proprietà della Chiesa nei dintorni di Roma 12 ricadevano nel quadrante del suburbio attraversato dalla via Appia" (between 314 and 440 AD, of the 43 known toponyms of Church's proprieties around Rome, 12 were placed in the area of the *suburbium* crossed by the Via Appia) – *Patrimonium Appiae* – ; the *patrimonia* were therefore located according to via and miliarum⁶.

Proprieties and sites within the roman countryside were grouped together and localized according to the consular roads since roman ages, then in the Middle age and finally in modern age. In consideration of the above, it has been extremely useful trying to 'map' the remains and the 'traces' of the *Suburbio* starting from the single consular roads, also to reshape the suburban landscape. The Historic and morphological analysis⁷ and evaluations, showed how this context is rich of archeological and historical ruins, featuring the historical memory of the place; they also showed how this contest has a high potential for transformation and redevelopment. Most of the territory of the suburb of Rome is characterized by neighborhoods without adequate public spaces and particularly rich in interstitial and marginal areas, degraded or abandoned. The project of the landscape redevelopment is therefore on the reconnection of the urban aggregate, through the creation of cultural-historical courses which crosses the territory by reconnecting the historical traces (Fig. 1), the urban strongholds, both modern and ancient, despite the passage of time and transformations.



Fig. 1, The Suburb of Rome in 19th century

The territory as palimpsest then becomes an opportunity to design an interconnected system of public open spaces, which is a green wedge that crosses the suburb of the city, acting as a joining element between the various sector of the suburb (Fig. 2), placed behind the historical radial connection, the roman *Vie consolari*.

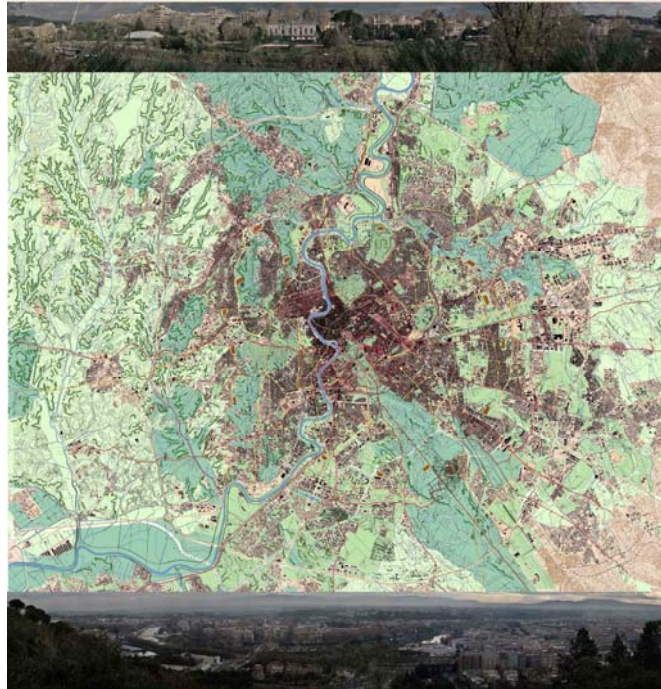


Fig. 2, The Suburb of Rome in 21th century

The aim of the project is therefore to revive the traces of history in the present, connecting one another through the articulation of a system of open spaces, that makes up a plot of reconnection based on relation between nodal points, which perform the function of real urban strongholds, references easily perceptible and therefore favourable to an immediate understanding of the landscape.

A project that leads to the transformation of the city towards a new direction, a new way of "creating" the city, a new "designed landscape". It is a "new drawing", created to "maintain and requalificate" the abandoned, decayed and leftover parts of the city, bringing them out according to the uses and necessities of the modern city. The aim is so to focus on what already exists and let open spaces be the joining tissue between historic and contemporary city. This would create the right conditions for these spaces to be re designed, in order to make the "new" and the "old" co-exist together, in harmony with their history and preserving their historical memory.

Notes

¹ *Convenzione europea del paesaggio*, 19 Luglio 2000, Articolo 1. Definizioni (European Landscape Convention, July 19, 2000, Article 1. Definitions).

² Generally, for the studies concerning the Italian regions it is preferable to find - on small scale - and diachronically analyze the "historic models" from the pre-roman and archaic roman periods (IV-VI centuries BC), roman (IV century BC-VI century AC), medieval (VI-XIV cent.), renaissance (XIV-XVII cent.), modern (XVIII-XIX cent.) and contemporary (XX-XXI century) as they represent completely different territorial systems and so they characterize the historic transformation ages. For further more specific studies, as in the case of *Suburbio* of Rome, in between the territorial analysis and the urban one, it should be absolutely considered, on a bigger scale and in detail, the historic periods between the 16th and 19th century from the historic cartography.

³ Esch, 2003, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 9-10.

⁷ The purpose of analysis is to provide a scientific and cartographic base and an informative contribution to the historical search that has, as an objective, the understanding and the definition of the organization of the territory and landscape of the suburb of Rome in the subsequent historical periods spanning from the 16th century until the present days. Within the aforesaid time and space limits, it has been possible to compile a repertoire of toponymic recognition and the diachronic and synchronic cartographic representations, through the analysis of the evolution of the suburban landscape in relation to placenames. The analysis was developed after careful sifting and comparison of the information derived from the relevant literary and cartographic sources, covering selected periods. The findings were reported on to the modern cartography. The methodology adopted for the localisation, the analysis of locations, and the connection of the toponyms, considered criteria of persistence of the denominations of the most meaningful remains and the morphological references and landmarks. The study provides, through a synthetic but nevertheless, rigorous representation, a tool of base documentation for possible detailed studies having as an objective the comprehension of territorial structures and landscape (e.g. road networks and other territorial structures) relevant to that part of Rome for particular periods or successions of historical periods.

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Biography

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