



LUISA PEDRAZZINI (coord.)

Ámbitos periurbanos. Líneas guía paisajísticas para la gobernanza del territorio

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ORSINA SIMONA PIERINI

Politecnico di Milano (DASTU)
orsina.pierini@polimi.it

Around the urban

Peri-urban, literally around the urban. If the word *urbs* contains in its etymology both the root URV- the act of tracing the track, in the special sense of marking the delimitation, the circuit, the boundary of a new city, and the root VARDH- to elevate, to make grow, it is evident that what has to do with the urban, with its density and compactness, is opposed to the more distended agri-culture.

If the concept of urbanity insists on the importance of social and architectural relations, striving for harmony of parts, the design of the land is regulated by the timing of the seasons and crops.

Giancarlo Consonni, in his beautiful book *Non si salva il pianeta se non si salvano le città*, enlightens us in weaving together 'constraint (*vincolo*)' and inhabitant 'A locution in which the preposition in (which emphasises anchorage to a context) is joined by a theme derived from the verb *colère*, which has a wide range of meanings: to cultivate, to care for, to dwell, to maintain, to beautify...'

Through bonding, cultivating, the inhabitants become a collective. The better we clarify

the meaning of the different places, town and country, the more we sense the complementary bond they have forged through history.

Dealing with the ways in which this 'furrow', this border, Richard Sennet would call it, so fertile with relations, has disappeared from our territories is an urgent issue for the entire European community.

In its place are the different measures and depths of the peri-urban landscape, in its fragmentation, its mixture of ancient relics, agricultural bubbles, proto-industrial memories, patches of uncultivated greenery, infrastructures, commercial signs and the selfishness of single-family housing.

What is most evident is the lack of a unitary project in which the inhabitant can recognise himself in living together and in the collective care of the territory. But perhaps we are clinging to planning tools of the past, at a time when, on the other hand, the new economy is pressing in and the scales of intervention are different.

The international research group PAYS MED URBAN, including Italy and Spain as project partners, has structured itself in declining the analysis of the peri-urban territory in different ways in the specifics of some contexts, such as Andalusia, Murcia, Catalonia, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna and Umbria.

In particular, the volume of the Lombardy Region's guidelines, whose scientific head of the project is Luisa Pedrazzini, availed itself of the scientific collaboration of the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of the Politecnico di Milano, in the persons of Alberta Cazzani, Antonella Breda and Stefano Coloru.

They are professors who represent a line of thought, even more than research, that has been working for years on the conservation of the landscape, in its most natural and agricultural sense, which in Lombardy finds completeness in a man-made landscape that has become naturally industrial from its crops.

Assuming the important European regulatory gesture, the European Landscape Convention, which considers and brings back to the forefront the 'quality' of the landscape, and 'emphasises that the landscape performs an important function of general interest in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social spheres and constitutes, in turn, an important factor in the quality of life and individual and collective wellbeing', the research is part of the documents of the Territorial Government Plan, a new urban planning tool that in fact becomes a mosaic of different cultural approaches, and draws on the comparison of European case studies. The title, Guidelines, already emphasises the normative and analytical character of the text, which first of all deals with a description aimed at recognising the different features of a territory that is not yet so univocally characterised, in its values, critical aspects and potential.

Are we talking about peri-urban agriculture, urban fringes or urban entrances? These

three different places in the peri-urban landscape, which find their morphology and roots in history, precisely in the two opposing terms described above, city and field, are trying to resist the large scale of new economy settlements, which are leading to urban residential and industrial expansion without any kind of landscape integration, as the photos of UFOs accompanying the text make clear.

If in front of these 'out-of-scale' guidelines seem to be almost defenceless, it is instead in the culture of the landscape, of its recognition and restoration that the authors manage to identify those critical and low quality areas, where to operate in the valorisation and propose, in the wide selection of experiences of the international research group, good practices and concrete examples.

Historical culture, which allows for a profound knowledge of places, is wisely intertwined with the design hand in recognising visual aesthetic measure and quality as tools to improve, for example, the quality of urban fringes, perhaps the most widespread territories in the peri-urban.

It is rightly emphasised that the character of the many types of urban fringes is closely linked to the city they surround: the various peri-urban landscapes are in fact differentiated between metropolises, large cities and smaller towns, which are also divided between well-preserved or invaded by urbanisation.

Agriculture tries to resist invasions, the incursions of consumption that often disregard millennia of wisdom and stratify unsuitable and intrusive crops.

In the struggle to recognise, or hypothesise, a concrete image of the peri-urban, the theme of urban entrances is probably the most useful, since it plays on differentiation rather than homologation.

If there is something elusive, especially in the infinite landscapes that make up the Italian territory, it is the definition of a single character that can restore its sense; and so the differentiation between ordinary landscape, where it is more necessary to intervene with the pencil to give recognisable signs, and extraordinary landscape, simply to be protected, becomes useful.

Ever since Antonio Cederna, from his column in the pages of *Abitare* back in the late 1960s, had voiced concern over the devastation of our territory, much research, and consequently many regulations, have tried to move between protection, constraints and planning.

The guidelines that the Lombardy Region drew up in 2016 are part of this line of research and prove to be useful and analytical, deep in local knowledge and open to comparison with other European experiences, in the urgency of a problem that is still extremely topical.

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