

city as organism

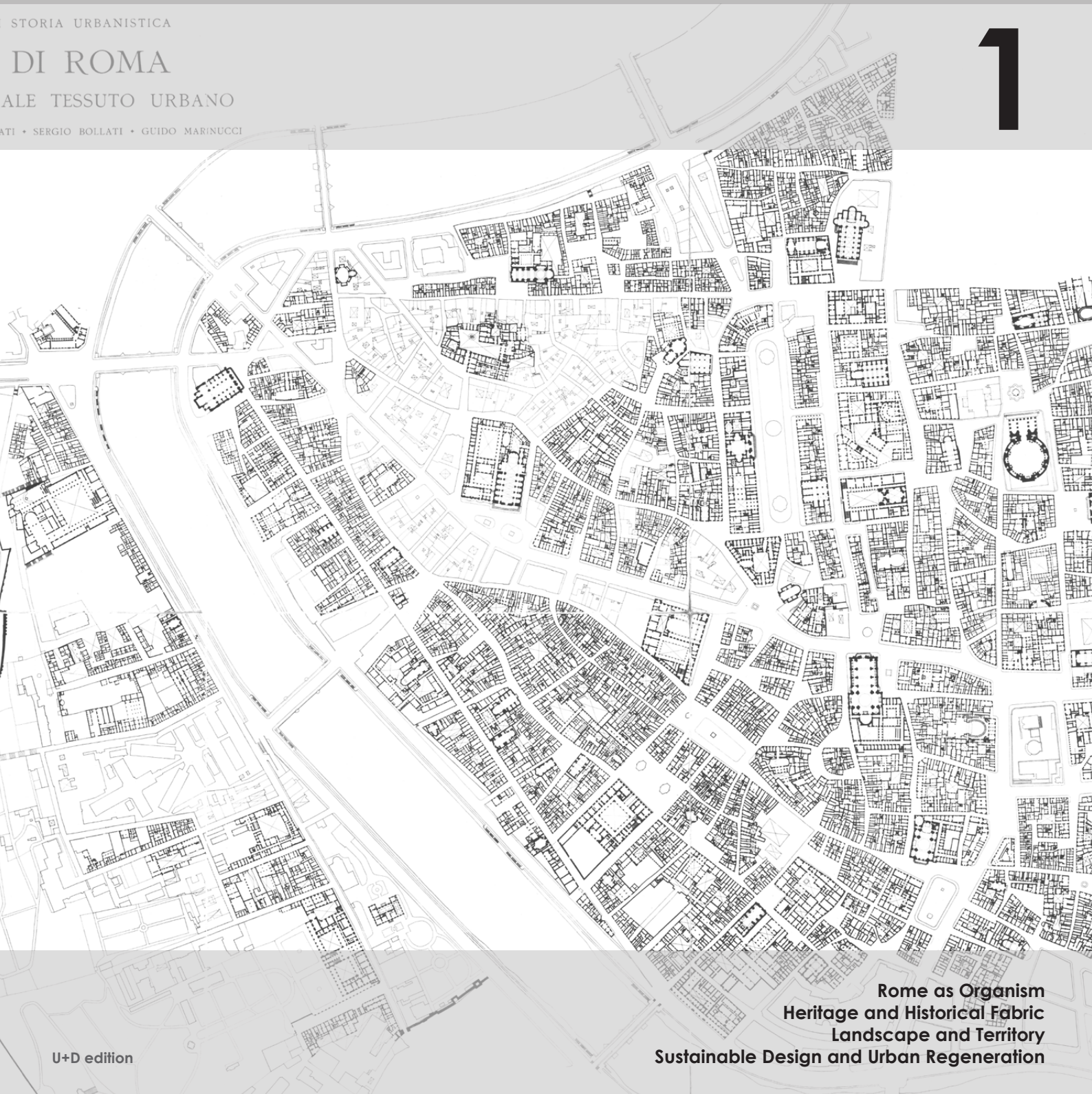
new visions for urban life

22nd ISUF International Conference | 22-26 september 2015 Rome Italy

edited by
Giuseppe Strappa
Anna Rita Donatella Amato
Antonio Camporeale

STORIA URBANISTICA
DI ROMA
ALE TESSUTO URBANO
ATI • SERGIO BOLLATI • GUIDO MARINUCCI

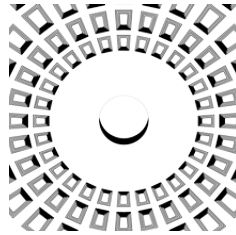
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Giuseppe Strappa
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**Rome as Organism
Heritage and Historical Fabric
Landscape and Territory
Sustainable Design and Urban Regeneration**

1

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Introduction

Giuseppe Strappa

"Sapienza" University of Rome

Conference Chair

First of all let me say how happy and glad I am to host an Isuf Conference in Rome, in our Faculty of Architecture of "Sapienza" University.

Since our early Isuf meetings in the Nineties, I always thought that, sooner or later, we had to organize a conference in Rome on Urban Morphology.

We were a few people at that time but since then many years have passed and the number of Isuf members is much increased.

Even the fields of interest and scientific methods have proliferated and the meaning of the term "urban morphology" now applies to many schools of thought, sometimes quite dissimilar from those of the founders, but certainly useful to the progress of "discipline."

To our field of interest it was actually recognized the status of discipline, whose roots do not belong only to the schools of cultural geography and building typology, but also acknowledged the different influences of scholars of the city form such as Christofer Alexander, Colin Rowe, Kevin Lynch.

For our conference we had about 700 submissions by Urban Morphology scholars belonging to different schools from all over the world. It is noteworthy that most of submissions came from countries rapidly changing, a sign that Isuf has become an association of actual reference in studies on urban transformation.

Each Isuf Conference had its peculiar character linked to the specificities of the place that hosts it.

I think that an Isuf Conference in Rome has two special reasons.

The first is that Rome is a true text of Urban Morphology, not only for its monumental and archaeological part, but mainly for its urban fabric that have been transformed over centuries. This also explains the presence here of numerous colleagues interested to heritage and interventions inside the historical fabrics.

Not by chance, is involved in this conference Daniela Esposito, the Director of the School of Restoration in Rome, one of the most prestigious institutions in the field in Europe. Moreover, as Jeremy Whithand has written in the last edition of our Journal, the matter merit high priority on the Isuf agenda, as the contribution of UM studies in the various Heritage Organizations has been meager in recent years.

The second reason is that this school of Valle Giulia hosted the birth of one of the schools of thought on which (along with the conzenian one) was founded Isuf. A school with a long tradition, born in the '30s with scholars such as Giovannoni and Milani, and continued by Calandra, Muratori, Caniggia and many others. A tradition which we try to continue with an open mind and by experimenting in new ways.

A last point. In organizing the structure of this conference we faced the problem of collecting many different contributions within, as far as possible, homogeneous sessions. As for any conference proposing an "oriented" theme, we had to deal with the answers of ap-

plicants and often with some very specific papers that it was not always possible to place in entirely consistent sessions. We preferred to anyway accept these contributions, giving up, in some cases, an ideal coherence of the sessions and preferring, instead, to include the most valuable materials proposed for the Urban Morphology disciplinary debate.

In opening this Conference I feel obliged to thank the Vicar Rector of Sapienza, Renato Masiani, The Dean of the Faculty Annamaria Giovenale, the Director of the Department of Architectural Design Piero Ostilio Rossi. All of them have strongly encouraged this project.

A special thanks is due to professors and students of our Draco PhD School.

They have actually coordinated, helped, and concretely supported the initiative.

From nature to the city and back: the case of Piazzale Clodio, Rome

Rosalba Belibani, Deborah Chiara Lefosse, Eride Caramia

DiAP Department of Architecture and design, "Sapienza" University of Rome, 53 A, via Gramsci, 00197, Rome, Italy

Draco PhD School, "Sapienza" University of Rome, via A. Gramsci, 53, 00197, Rome, Italy

Keywords: urban regeneration, organism, landscape

Abstract

On the basis of complex urban realities that time dissolves into fragments, now punctual into the consolidated fabrics, now confined to the broken margins without coherence or dialectic with the surroundings, it is difficult to image the city as an unified organism, alive, able to adapt to changing needs of society as nature. The task becomes more difficult in the analysis of development of a city like Rome and in specific reading of the area named Quartiere delle Vittorie, so much rooted in the collective imagination cause its history and unique morphology, recognizable due to the typical starry path signed by a controversial planning and to its relations with Quartiere Prati and Trionfale. A part of modern city, still incomplete. The urban fabric is adapting to a geometric matrix of linear paths, no orthogonal, converging towards the highest hill of the city: Monte Mario. They stop in front of orography, not comparing with the territory. There is not a pole to mark a fitting end to a design planned, but only an undefined area, degraded in the use and in the physical state, as the landscape around Piazzale Clodio.

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In a more general urban regeneration project it appears not only to architecture as a social art, able to reconnect communities, places and nature, but also as a process, in the reverse direction, which completes the anthropical reality from natural context, defining a unique landscape, that like every other living organism challenges its own limits, becoming into a continuous evolution.

Introduction. The topic

Piazzale Clodio is one of the unfinished edges of the city: on one side, it physically touches but does not integrate with the slopes of Monte Mario, whilst on the other side lies the built and consolidated city.

The city as planned in 1909 stops at the edge of Circonvallazione Clodia, which it draws as its border; failing to advance due to the interruption from the chaotic front of Monte Mario.

Today it looks like a slot of asphalt (an asphalt buttonhole) welcoming a confused flow of buses and cars: judges, lawyers and defendants cross it daily.

It is a rather undefined space, a sliver of land that glides downstream to meet up along the asphalt of Circonvallazione Clodia. Only several planted trees and huge advertising billboards conceal the unfinished nature of an empty square, which over time became a bus terminal, parking, junction and roundabout.

The Panoramic road, known as Via Falcone e Borsellino, continues in the direction of Viale Mazzini, climbing into the Park of Monte Mario.

On the right side the square extends in an uncertain fashion along Via Teulada, marked only by the R.A.I. building (Italian Radio and Television) whose antenna symbolizes the sixties. On the left side the city continues to Piazzale degli Eroi, before settling on the Court.

In this special context a part of the urban fabric, confined between the Panoramic road, Via Teulada and Monte Mario, shows itself as ground parking and circus events, an undefined place full of potential where the city can reconnect to the landscape.

Historical analysis. Piazzale Clodio: formation and evolution

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To understand the transforming mechanisms of the city of Rome, from the historical capital of Italy to the modern European metropolis, it is useful to study the evolution of a specific part of the city, in this case Piazzale Clodio. Whether such a particular area evolved similarly to other parts of the city, or went against the grain, such study aids in understanding the complex image of the urban organism which hosts it, namely the city of Rome.

During the last 150 years Rome has undergone profound morphological changes: from a relatively compact city to an urban sprawl in the roman countryside, without adequate governance or planning, and from a concentrated focus on its historical center to a polycentric urban model. Historical analysis of the urban district, the main theme of these few pages, is very useful when comparing with the first stages of the Roman capital city as a whole: the foundation of Piazzale Clodio and of neighborhood Delle Vittorie coincides with the initial expansion of the city, outside the Aurelian Walls beginning from the northeastern quadrant.

In 1871, when Rome was proclaimed capital and symbol of the Italian unification, it still reflected dated standards both in economy and urban planning, where it consisted mostly of fields, villas and monasteries. To transform Rome into a modern European capital, its landscape becomes quickly a large outdoor yard, where more residential-intensive planning would be introduced amongst the old monuments.

Along the left bank of the Tevere, between Monte Mario and Castel Sant'Angelo, there was a vast agricultural area, also used for a long time as a training area for the military. Two new developments arose in this picturesque and bucolic area: first the neighborhood Prati, followed by the neighborhood Delle Vittorie, and hence the city began to move toward the North. The first city plannings were not complex models like the contemporary proposals by Haussmann, Cerdà and Wagner, since they considered only works of expansion and rehabilitation in the historic center based on a growing population. The early stages of urban development affecting the neighborhoods of Flaminio and Prati di Castello, were both planned on an orthogonal pattern, where the road layout would prevail over the building typology. Thus the closed block was born; as a negative of a thick and regular mesh that is repeated from Via Flaminia to Via Porta di Castello, still ending today on the axis of the Military Barracks. At this point however, the blocks become larger and modulate the surrounding geometry with a slower pulse.

The neoclassical Rome conforms itself to the umbertino model, which imports compact fabrics as blocks that constitute it. The image of a compact city, made of chessboards, fixed paths and continuous facades, would be re-proposed later and for more than fifty years in different areas of the city: we can find the same urban composition again in several district like Viminale, Testaccio, Porta Pia, San Lorenzo, Esquilino and Gianicolo. The classic typology for this urban model is the 'house for rent' as defined by Insolera, rented buildings of 4-5 floors, later replaced with the roman Palazzina (Insolera 1985).

The real authors of the Quartiere delle Vittorie and its structure, as it appears today, are the mayor Nathan and Sanjust di Teulada, designer of the new plan (1909) and expert engineer, an outsider to the building speculations that threatened urban growth in those last years. Their plan involves expanding on several fronts of the city with distinct characteristics and layouts, large green areas, urban equipment and infrastructure networks, and well defined building types. The plan shows the new neighborhood Milvio, renamed Delle Vittorie to celebrate the Great War. As the clear cut of the Military Barracks confirms, the new fabric is morphologically contrasted to the matrix of Prati because of stellar and diagonal geometries. Confined between Via Carso and Viale Angelico, the fabric radiates in concentric shape from Piazza Mazzini, with the tree-lined boulevard of Viale Mazzini interrupting the orthogonal matrix. The squares are obtained by the intersection of the main paths, but because of the interplay between built areas and surrounding voids, they lose their typical identity of public places, instead being realised as the courtyards of building blocks. The stellar shape, as found in the Appio-Tuscolano district, reflects urban planning of the past, such as those commissioned by Pope Sixtus V and spread around Rome. The outward features of the blocks are derived from the three residential types planned by Sanjust: high-density buildings (24 meter- high blocks with an open courtyard, marked in the façade by a stone base and neoclassical decorations); smaller buildings with 3 floors and surrounding garden, and villas within public parks. However, the plan did not consider the Universal Exhibition held in 1911, which changed the urban face of Rome in just two years as it became the city celebrating Italy's 50th Anniversary. The Exhibition was split into two sections on either side of the Tevere: the then unrealized Quartiere delle Vittorie was dedicated to Ethnographic and Regional Exhibition, whilst Valle Giulia focused on Art. From this extraordinary event the district inherited the primary urbanization networks; the fundamental axes which went on to mark the future design (the main axis of the Exhibition corresponds to the current Viale Mazzini) and a series of small villas, reinterpreted in Renaissance and Baroque style, is still visible on the riverside (Lucchini 1988).

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In subsequent years, the debate on the final structure of the Quartiere delle Vittorie became long and controversial, with many proposed variants (fig.1). The joint proposal by Piacentini and Giovannoni, which prevailed over the others, proposed curving Viale Mazzini up towards Piazzale Clodio, connecting it to the new urban expansion. Their plan also introduced the palazzina as a new building type (with a commercial ground floor and 4 upper levels) which together with the intensive buildings went on to become one of the most common building forms in the city.

The neighborhood was completed in the next two decades, but being a publicly owned area it was never subjected to uncontrolled speculations and anisotropic expansions, even if subsequent plans proposed to shift the focus from the center to the suburbs. The necessary urban growth started with the official and spontaneous districts and with the new neighborhoods built for special occasions (such as E42); Rome transformed itself from a compact city to a Metropolitan Area. In the same years (1942) Giacomo Balla from the window of his study painted 'the beautiful district' (fig.2), as it has always been known to all those who have inhabited it since the '30s: now it is the image of a complete city, beyond some houses demolished later. Today the district still boasts the same architectural and urban quality in its morphology such as in the compact blocks merging into the intimate spaces of the courtyards.

While the district is included in the consolidated city, extending slightly toward the natural landscape and beyond the limits of the main paths, the historical events affecting Rome since the postwar period until today.

Figure 1. Planning variants (1909 Sanjust; 1911 Stubben; 1911 Sanjust; 1913 Giovannoni; 1914 Piacentini; 1915 Piacentini-Giovannoni, final design).



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greatly influenced the evolution of the city. Territorial expansion is designed to ensure the home as a primary asset to the constantly increasing lower middle class. According to I.N.A. CASA and P.E.E.P works, the capital city grows and renews itself with landmarks at large scale, neither with an orthogonal fabric as in Prati, nor a stellar configuration as in the district Delle Vittorie. They instead conform to abstract geometries composed of broken lines and circular arcs, merging together as isolated galaxies of linear buildings and high density towers, but they are mostly so-called 'dormitory neighborhoods' according to the zoning of the latest planning. The aim is to renew the face of the city with new forms in the new modern style. However, what we see today is an image of degraded suburbs, general lack of services, with low architectural and urban quality.

In the last decades the urban planning of Rome has changed, both to overcome the planning crisis, and to ensure a higher quality of life. This represents a shift from urban sprawl to rehabilitation of the city itself. The goal is to recover the existing city: with its history and nature, consolidated fabrics and decaying suburbs, villas, parks, illegally exploited and unused areas. Metropolitan size is configured as a network of multifunctional centralities linked together, radiating from the center. Multiple points lie along the main axes or in privileged positions, small cities within the city, similar in their morphological features and functions but not in their order.

Whether real or as depicted by artists, the district remains unchanged today. It is part of the consolidated city to be rehabilitated due to the presence of unfinished areas such as the examined one: a strategic limbo between natural and urban landscape, which need a strong regenerative action to rebuild its identity as a physical and public space, included with uniform and harmonious growth of Rome.

Forming process. The role of the Park of Monte Mario.

Established as a Park in 1989, the Reserve of Monte Mario represents to the city of Rome a rich heritage of biodiversity, spanning an area of 150 hectares. It was a place of study and a "Grand Tour" destination for poets, artists, and writers, whose descriptions and portrayals of the area are now important sources for historical reconstructions of the site.

The Reserve's natural features and strategic location make it one of the most un-

Figure 2. Balla, G. (1942). "La fila per l'agnello". Balla paints the Quartiere delle Vittorie, from the window of his studio in Via Oslavia 39/b.



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spoiled areas within the Roman territory. In fact, it accommodates the area of the "Zodiaco" astronomical observatory, whose enviable location keeps it away from the bright lights of the metropolis below.

It is precisely in this confrontation between nature and city; the two great realities inhabited by man, where a curious third landscape of urban culture along the periphery hides.

Historic late-fifteenth century houses owned by the Strozzi family, a late-nineteenth century fort and old brick factories exist together with the R.A.I. headquarters, along with large parking facilities and an area originally meant to accommodate travelling circuses. Today some of these places, such as the circus area, have lost their primary functions, leaving a physical and functional void, thus creating a new border without any connection to the surrounding territory.

To understand the meaning of this place, one must consider its genesis and transformations. One quickly realizes how Piazzale Clodio remains a drawing left at the margins:

the modern system of the early-nineteenth century did not provide for collective-use spaces, except for imposing squares placed between the crossroads of various roads. The Piazzale, which stops at the foot of the mountain, remains the last ever completed work of the urban plans which helped shape the city.

What remains missing is a relationship with the environment, since what follows is simply a clear separation deprived of any dialogue between architecture and landscape. On one hand is the city, with its speed, while on the other lies nature with its imposing elegance. Both are isolated in their generative mechanisms, which recede as they approach the marginal area of Piazzale Clodio.

The lack of identity of this place makes it even more of a front line, an “in-between” demarcating the boundaries of the Monte Mario Reserve, which lie higher than the city of Rome, and the fabric of the Quartiere delle Vittorie, the relegating the square to a solely connective function, serving its particular area of the city.

The importance of involving the theme of architecture with that of landscape appears crucial, and an essential generative process, since it is the interaction between these two elements which constitutes one of the possibilities of transforming the area.

As one knows, architecture can never be isolated from its context. One element interacts with the other, integrating and influencing modifications in a reciprocal manner, in a continuous evolution that enables endless opportunities in configuring a new space.

The term “new”, however, should not distract from the process that lurks beneath the reconfiguration and the continuous transformation of a space composed of layers linked to the passage of time. Thus, one does not imply a completely new space, but rather an open system allowing change and transformation (Gattinara 2005).

Every time a new temporal layer is introduced into the life of the place, a modification which remains unchanged in time brings about sedimentation of a particular form, thus defining a temporary plan. These actions, when repeated and accumulated over the years leading to the current configuration of the place, may be retraced, revealing thought and identifying the different layers.

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Therefore, the possibilities of a new space can be infinite and never devoid of objective data, since they arise from relationships with the surrounding environment, whether built or natural (De Carlo 2013).

And it is indeed the strong presence of nature in Piazzale Clodio that can generate the difference, by proposing a new design direction composed of relationships and experiential spaces rather than pure forms and geometry, as happened in the latter part of the last century.

Here, it is the nature of the place to plead for a space in relation to the surrounding environment; no longer a boundary between architecture and landscape, but a strategy able to incorporate the different ways of transforming places (fig. 3), recovering areas, and situations capable of fulfilling one of mankind's fundamental needs: inhabiting and living within a space.

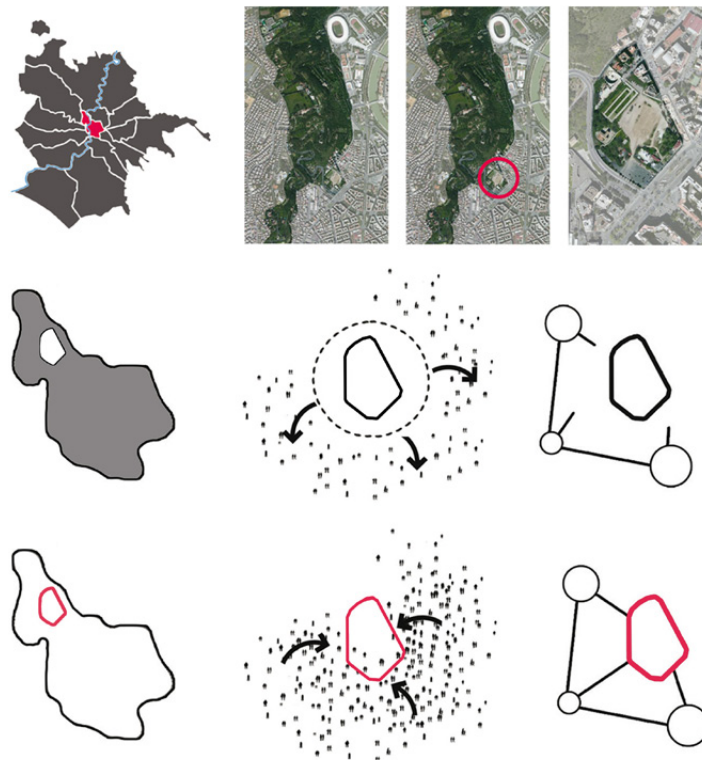
Perhaps the open system of the morphological approach, refusing static conformity whilst preferring dynamic relationships to definite formalizations, could be the answer to the crisis of the great systems and the very idea of progress.

New pattern for an urban design between nature and history

On the basis of previous considerations, resolving Piazzale Clodio is an important matter due to its urban, environmental, and landscape value, together with its unsettled relationship with the continually eroding slopes of the Park of Monte Mario.

The necessity of an intervention led to a planning study, which established the following pre-requisites: the introduction to the problems of the urban project, with definitions and meanings in literature and in practice; the acquisition of the necessary knowledge for carrying out the urban project with respect to the strategies, relationships of scale, representation; the completion of the preparation in the field of architectural design in its relationships with the urban design with particular attention to issues of environmental sustainability, complexity, interdisciplinary relations (Belibani, Bossalino, Gadola 2010).

Figure 3. The urban void on the slopes of Monte Mario is not connected with surrounding fabric. The new reversion/project deletes the boundaries to recover the urban networks.



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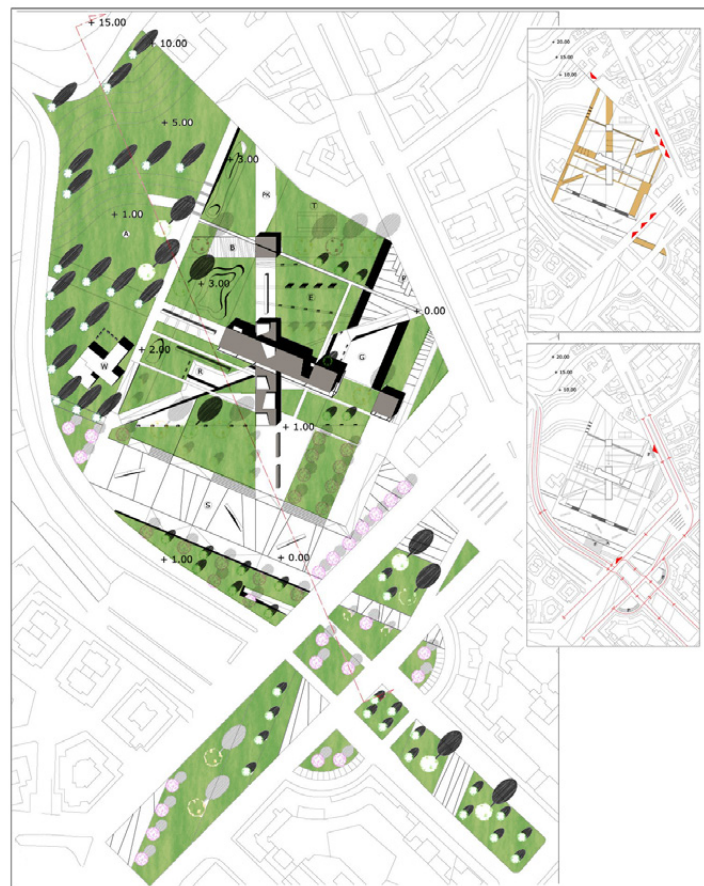
To this end, we have proposed as a theme within a Design Studio IV, the design of the square and its relationship with the park. The design research, experimented for two years, tried to remedy the permanent degradation of the square, reviewing the internal mobility roads, remodeling the free north boundaries with Monte Mario and locating services, lacking in the neighborhood.

For this reason, we wanted the project to value the presence of the Park and satisfy the following objectives:

- Reconnect the natural slope of the Park with Piazzale Clodio, restoring its natural appearance;
- Restore the park's interaction with the square, making it directly visible from the square and reconstructing its green slopes in a physical and visual continuity;
- Remodel the hanging landscape of the Park, composed of the visually suspended but inaccessible park;
- Maximize the value of the park's presence by placing on its slopes services which are lacking in the district;
- Rebuild an urban setting where the fabric stops through the 'door' of the Park and new services;
- Rationalize the mobility system and the exchange facilities between public and private transport;
- Convert the daily parking areas to regenerated urban spaces;
- Redefine the borders of piazza on the left side, from the parking area to the chaotic access at the Courts;
- Reconsider the presence of the pedestrian subway beneath the Panoramic road (known as Via Falcone e Borsellino).

We suggested a project strategy oriented to safeguard and value the residual open spaces, whilst reorganizing the boundaries of the piazza and providing new specialized services through the landscape design.

Figure 4. Some design solutions that show the reconnection of the park district, the ecobuildings and the new arrangement of the Piazzale Clodio.



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The ideal axis of Viale Mazzini takes you through the infrastructural system, which necessitates different strategies when planning any intervention, depending on whether it is within a residential fabric (as Quartiere delle Vittorie), in an infrastructural knot (as Piazzale Clodio) or in the open space of the Park (as a continuation of Via Falcone e Borsellino).

Taking this into consideration, we delineated several pertinent themes of architectural and urban planning, concerning:

- The landscape with its own natural and architectural features;
- The mobility system and infrastructure (driveways, cycling and pedestrian);
- New residential, tertiary and productive buildings.

These themes are intended to satisfy diverse general objectives:

- Extend and increase the value of the landscape, especially the area of the Park;
- Plan the intersections of local streets with regards to sustainability and environmental improvement;

- Increase the mobility network, favoring public transport;
- Solve the problem of parking areas;
- Complete the residential fabric with new local services and public spaces.

The main objective of the project is the arrangement of the piazza, with a new system of public and private mobility. An important issue is the location of the new buildings, which can be designed either to create a new independent fabric, or in accordance to the current ones: placing them in order to continue the existing orthogonal fabric or as an isolated landmark into the park (fig. 4). Another important matter concerns the new buildings, their position, typology and height, in comparison with the image of the consolidated city.

The project considers one or more buildings with a complex functional program; these would include a small library, a cafeteria or a restaurant, classrooms and workspaces, an exhibition space, administrative offices, temporary residences, a multi-purpose and conference room, a cinema or multimedia theater. In addition, the park would offer several different functions: theater, outdoor auditorium, sporting area, children's play area, wi-fi area. The project is also concerned with the integration of the existing trees with the planned new ones; it provides for the identification and planning of new green areas, possible breaking areas, parking levels, water ways, ways inside the park and paved areas.

The proposed projects offer appropriate solutions to the problems, solving every pertinent theme in a different way: the entrance of Viale Mazzini into the square and its continuation towards the hill, the internal mobility networks, the relocation of existing terminal and parking areas, the connection to the park, the choice and position of services. Among the possible proposals, the most interesting include: moving the bus terminal to the center of the piazza, in front of the Court; an underground parking, which would provide for a clear view towards the Park, allow access to Monte Mario, whilst being perfectly visible from Viale Mazzini.

The entrance to the Park introduces, from a morphological perspective, a remarkable difference in height, where the gap, providing for great visibility, is resolved with a stairway marking the access. The traffic circle would be located underground, with the lane in an east-west direction along the Park and the perpendicular crossing to Viale Mazzini on ground level, leaving a dedicated pedestrian and green space. This new urban scenario is designed in such a way that the piazza appears as an open space, with a more regular internal distribution.

All proposed solutions appear as the last stage of a transformation, the readable synthesis of interpretation of the actual fabric of the city. The outcomes of the entire process, representing the evolution and the vocation of the area, offer almost always the reconnection of parts of the city alienated from its milieu.

The synthesis, finally, are able to reconstruct a single organism, but always manifest in the intervention or in the reinterpretation of mending its temporal stratification, the intervention scar in the body overall.

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