



# LINKING TERRITORIES

RURALITY, LANDSCAPE AND URBAN BORDERS

Edited by Antonella Bruzzese and Annarita Lapenna



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**Linking Territories.**

**Rurality, landscape and urban borders**

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**POLITECNICO DI MILANO**  
**DIPARTIMENTO DI**  
**ARCHITETTURA E**  
**STUDI URBANI**



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# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT LINKING TERRITORIES

Antonella Bruzzese  
Annarita Lapenna

### RURAL AND URBAN

Rural areas close to the urban fabric no longer serve their adjacent towns as they once did when the link between town and the surrounding countryside was fully intertwined and they were economically interdependent and, in a sense, symbiotic. For decades, the relation between the production of food and energy and their consumption at the base of the economy has completely changed, alongside the balance between landscape and built environment.

The issues surrounding the so called 'endless city' and the pervading urban condition, which is mainly concerned with the ever increasing global population, is at the centre of the debate in the field of urban studies at a global scale<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, if we focus on the local scale, observing specific territories between the compact city (which is still present in the European context) and the countryside, we can easily remark how much these borders are blurred. Even if many scholars investigate this "in between condition"<sup>2</sup>, these territories are still out of focus. This means that the relationship between these two dimensions – rural and urban – must be, somehow, re-imagined in order to establish new and different balances (social, economic, and environmental), in particular in order to better share resources and to foster opportunities for sustainable development. Through this perspective, the relationship must be rediscovered as a strategic alliance to territorialise the urban actions in a local condition and to develop the rural milieus in accordance with the urban context.

### LINKS

Many contemporary projects are still the result of a traditional application of the principles of division and segmentation of the inhabited area, although a change in this attitude is in progress in many fields of our increasingly interconnected daily life. This change, therefore, is visible in the widespread effort of linking things and people, in the attempt of establishing stronger relationships between humans and societies and the natural background that surrounds them. In the same way, territories affected by the dynamics of regeneration, must go through the reactivation and the instauration of these links effectively. From territorial strategies to architectural projects and urban planning, these approaches aim to regenerate the environment at all scales. The challenge is to re-activate and invent other physical, symbolic and technical alliances between nature and culture.

We need to imagine new connections and links: temporal-space links, territorial and economic links. Temporal-space links are concerned with the creation of new links between urban and rural

milieus as a means to regenerate places in space and time, as effective sustainable urban projects do, whenever they are able to tackle critical situations and to reimagine territories to create new value. Furthermore, urban agriculture must be a way to rethink and recycle the potentials of urban transformation.

Economic links are reliant on the economic inter-dependence between urban-based enterprises and rural consumers and between rural producers and urban markets. The reliance of many households on both rural and urban-based resources, underlines the important potential role of agriculture in local economic development.

### **WHICH KIND OF LINK BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN?**

Many projects, initiatives and policies of different kinds have explored respectively the meaning and the feasibility of the intermediate condition of being between the urban and rural context, bringing together the characteristics of both of these traditionally very different dimensions. The zero kilometre production that is able to enhance a stronger link between territories, through the direct connection between producers and their consumers; the urban farming that improves the closeness between distant and only apparently different conditions; the reuse of abandoned farmhouses that can recover important pieces of material heritage; the creation of networks for the dissemination of agriculture related goods that allows the reconstruction of the lost memory of agricultural culture: these (and many other similar) practices can represent examples of links between the rural and the urban which are capable of reframing the meaning of these two dimensions. All of them, finally, highlight issues to the design of the territory and pose questions to both the urban and the landscape design and planning.

### **MILAN**

The city of Milan and the areas between the compact city and the surrounding countryside, in particular in the western part of its territory (stretching from the Expò area to the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano, passing through several parks like Parco di Trenno or Parco delle Cave), is an interesting case study to look at when investigating the relationship between the urban and the rural.

The Latin name of Milan – Mediolanum – means 'city in between'. It suggests a peculiar geographical position: between the Ticino, Seveso and Olona river basins in the western part and the Lambro and Adda in the eastern part, and finally between the Po valley and the Alps. These conditions helped the development of agriculture in and around the city. From the precious efforts of monks during medieval times, until modern interventions, man's work has changed this territory, transforming it into a "huge deposit of labor"<sup>3</sup>. Milan has always had a deep relationship with its countryside. The central city could economically benefit from the rural activities of the suburbis, and in turn, the countryside could take advantages from the close proximity of the emancipated Urbis<sup>4</sup>.

The morphological relationship between urbis and suburbis, between the city and the countryside, had been the same up until the nineteenth century, when, the city started to evolve in a different way, relying on a fragmented logic with the occupation of empty or agricultural areas. This process modified not only the urban figure but also gradually tipped the balance between urban and rural culture.

Rediscovering Milan as an 'Agricultural Metropolis' brings forward the need to rebuild economic, social, and spatial links between the urban and the rural, considering that the limits of these two worlds are not as clear as they were in the past.

From this perspective, the 'Linking territories' workshop set out to investigate specifically the area of Milan, through the proposition of some questions with the intention of creating some general strategies for the western region of Milan.

### **THE WORKSHOP AND THE MILAN AREA INVESTIGATED**

This book collects the outcomes of the workshop 'Linking territories. Rurality, landscape and urban borders' conjointly organised by the PhD course in Urban Planning, Design and Policy (UPDP) at the Politecnico di Milano and the Post-Master "Architecture des Milieux" at the Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture de Paris. The workshop has had a double aim; to widen the view of the relationship

between urban and rural areas by involving different groups of research and practice, and to define experimental proposals able to imagine new spaces for the co-habitation of urban and rural ways of life, in the end redefining the concept of rurality and its relation with the urban condition.

Carried out from May until September 2015, the workshop focused on the western part of the city of Milan, where the relationship between the compact city and the countryside offers an interesting field of research. Three areas in particular have been explored:

*Muggiano, area of rural enterprises and urban borders*: in Muggiano, there are a large number of rural enterprises practicing intensive agriculture. The proximity between industrial/agriculture production and residential areas often results a "difficult cohabitation". The historical link between urban living and rural activities disintegrated a long time ago and in these areas such loss is particularly visible. Residential and rural worlds turn their back on each other and do not show any kind of relationship. How can we approach this relationship between intensive agriculture and urban living?

*Boscoincittà / Parco delle Cave / Parco di Trenno and in-between spaces*: Boscoincittà, Parco delle Cave, and Parco di Trenno are three parks which are the results of processes carried out by different associations both to design and to manage that territory. These processes involve several different groups: farmers, various associations (fishers, archers, ItaliaNostra), local governments (the Municipalities) and the users. Through various processes, these groups manage and take care of precise areas. Even though they involve public spaces, such care necessarily builds some kinds of borders that can produce spatial exclusions and selective use. Moreover the borders often create residual and marginal spaces. So between the 'clearly-designed' areas managed by these groups, the combination of the leftover spaces creates a potential connective system constituted by infrastructures and 'inter-places'. How can we manage and take care of these leftover spaces?

*Piazza d'Armi / Parco Parri / Calchi Taeggi*: in Milan's northwest urban pattern, we can recognise several empty urban spaces that characterise the urban morphology of the area, this is the result of urban growth which has been developed without a general plan or an overall vision. These empty spaces are mainly unfinished or abandoned urban sectors and parks which are underused. In this urban sector, open spaces are needed, but they do not have to necessarily be 'parks'. Such spaces, on the contrary, could become laboratories to experiment hybridisation processes of different environments: rural, urban and various different typologies of parks. Such 'unsolved' areas allow an opportunity to reconsider the nature of the open space. Moreover, we can reflect on the meaning of the possible role that productive agricultural activities could have to promote the territory's specific qualities. How can an empty urban space be a different model for urban-rural parks?

This publication is structured in five parts. The first part (Topics) reflects on the relationship between city and countryside and the need for new projects and different ways of inquiry within the territory. The second part (Places and policies) explores the territory of Milan with three articles and a photographic reportage. The third part (Proposals and insights) collects the projects developed during the workshop, creating a virtual dialogue with three contributions by scholars that we met with the aim of widening the horizons of each project. The fourth part (Good Practices) illustrates the Rungis project in France as a good example of a 'linking territories' approach. To conclude, the last part (Approach and working method) is a reflection about the 'research-by-design' approach and the *architecture des milieux* methodology. A final apparatus (diagrams and pictures) describes the different phases of our workshop, and provides a general account of the experience we had with the territories we have tried, somehow, to link.

## NOTES

- 1 See Brenner N. (ed., 2014), *Implosions/explosions: towards a study of planetary urbanization*, Jovis, Berlin.; Bonomi A., Abruzzese A. (eds., 2004) *La città infinita*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano.
- 2 Cfr Donadieu P. (1998), *Campagnes urbaines*, Actes Sud /ENSP, Arles.
- 3 Cattaneo C. (1925), *Notizie naturali e civili su la Lombardia con altri scritti su l'Agricoltura nell'alta Italia*, Edizioni Risorgimento, Milano, pag. 104.
- 4 De Finetti G. (2006), *Milano, costruzione di una città*, Hoepli, Milano.

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# CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The workshop has been realised within the activities of the Doctoral course in Urban Planning, Design and Policy (UPDP) at the Politecnico di Milano (30° Cycle) and of the Postmaster Course "Architecture des Milieux" (ADM)" at the Ecole Speciale d'Architecture of Paris.

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Research by design Workshop\_2015

# LINKING TERRITORIES

Rurality, landscape and urban borders  
Strategies for the western region of Milan

Rural areas close to the urban fabric no longer serve their adjacent towns: the relation between production of food and energy and their consumption at the base of the economy of the past has completely changed, likewise the balance between landscape and built environment. The relationship between urban and rural is at the centre of the debate which investigates how these two dimensions can be re-imagined in order to better share resources and to foster opportunities for sustainable development. Milanese territories are interesting cases to explore the implication of such a issue.

**LINKING TERRITORIES** is a joint workshop organized by the PhD in Urban Planning, Design and Policy (UPDP) of the Politecnico di Milano and the DES "Architecture des Milieux" of the Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture de Paris.

#### May 2015 | MILAN |

##### May 5th public conference

h. 10.30-13.00 :Workshop presentation + Lecture  
Aula Gamma, Politecnico di Milano

- A. Bruzzese - P. Pucci (UPDP) | A. Lapenna - C. Younes (ESA)
- P. Versteegh (Western Switzerland University, Fribourg)

h. 14.30-17.30: Focus on Milan + Round table  
Spazio Aperto Nave, Politecnico di Milano

- A. Longo (Polimi) - M. Prusicki (Polimi)
- P. Versteegh, G. Scudo (Polimi), A. Calori (Polimi), N. Reverdini (Az. Agricola La Forestina)

**May 6th workshop activities:** Expo visit

**May 7th workshop activities:** Site visit with S. Anderloni (Bosco in Città)

#### June/July 2015 | MILAN |

**June 29th - July 4th workshop activities:**  
work sessions with tutors and external guests

#### September 2015 | PARIS |

##### Sept 21st workshop activities

**Sept 22nd workshop activities**  
+ public conference

h. 13.15-19.00 presentation workshop proposals, final presentation and discussion with Claire Shorter, architecte and urbanist; Pierre Donadieu, professor at the ENSP de Versailles; Didier Rebios, general secretary EUROPEAN EUROPE

**Sept 23rd workshop activities:**  
Site visit of Montjean and Maiouines in Rungis and project presentation

Workshop curators and coordinators:  
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**This book collects the outcomes of the workshop “Linking territories. Rurality, landscape and urban borders” jointly organised by the PhD course in Urban Planning, Design and Policy (UPDP) at the Politecnico di Milano and the Post-Master “Architecture des Milieux” of the Ecole Spéciale d’Architecture de Paris. The workshop has had a double aim: to widen the view on the relationship between urban and rural areas, by involving different groups of research and practice, and to define experimental proposals able to imagine new spaces for the co-habitation of urban and rural ways of living, in the end redefining the concept of rurality and its relation with the urban condition.**



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