The project of new social condensers for metropolitan areas: landscape strategies to contrast urban and social marginality

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Overall context and objectives

Main goal
To contribute to environmental and social reactivation of metropolitan areas, contrasting urban and social marginality by introducing **new social condensers**: public facilities to be placed in the most deprived urban areas, to foster social inclusion and employment of increasing fragile people

Background assumptions
interactions between innovative social services, open spaces and abandoned and disused buildings of the contemporary city, shows an extraordinary potential for the activation of new forms of sociality, inclusion and integration

relationship with agriculture, natural environment and landscape, play a significant role, both therapeutical and for the self-sustenance of communities and facilities, fostering social inclusion and employment
**Overall context and objectives**

Contemporary metropolitan areas are nowadays in a transition phase that **exacerbate social vulnerability**, that is to say a living situation in which metropolitan citizens’ autonomy and ability of self-determination is permanently threatened. More and more people are far from the circuits of opportunities and cultural exchange, living in poor, fragile and degraded environments (UN, 2015).

Although cities are motors for economic growth, they are also confronted by a wide range of problems, like crime, traffic congestion, pollution and various social inequalities. Furthermore, within many cities it is possible to find people who enjoy a comfortable lifestyle living in close proximity to others who may face considerable challenges, for example, in relation to affordable/adequate housing or poverty — herein lies the ‘**urban paradox**’. (Eurostat, Urban europe, 2016)
### Our specific objectives for more inclusive, livable metropolitan areas.... according to international goals and agreements

Today, welfare policies and actions are trying to define new and more effective social innovation routes, increasingly orienting towards the following targets:

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<td>a.</td>
<td><strong>New paths of training and job placement</strong> Formation, autonomy and work are indispensable to every path of support to discomfort and contrast to marginality. (The problem of employment does not only affect the so-called fragile people. NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) are increasing everywhere)</td>
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<td>a.</td>
<td><strong>Proximity networks</strong>. Active relationships and exchanges with the territorial and social context are the prerequisite of every possibility of real prevention and support to the discomfort.</td>
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### Our strategy

Landscape and architecture design can concretely contribute to environmental and social reactivation of metropolitan areas, contrasting urban and social marginality by reusing abandoned, underutilized buildings and open spaces (expecially public and rural)

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<td>- innovative care services (focusing on work and proximity networks) require a radical innovation in designing and organising dedicated open and built spaces.</td>
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<td>– certain structures adapted to assistance in a semi-spontaneous way (former religious buildings, factories, dismantled military structures and hospitals, abandoned farmhouse) were more efficient and loved than structures designed and realised with great waste of money.</td>
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<td>– the growing availability of open and built spaces and under-utilized and abandoned in metropolitan areas stimulates and nurtures creative forms of re-use, increasingly socially oriented.</td>
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Specific issues in Rome metropolitan area

1. Growing social marginality

In recent years, demand and offer of care services is changed, both in quantitative and qualitative terms especially in urban conglomerations. The request for assistance has grown with the increase and the growing complexity of needs, the economic crisis, changes in society and families. The economic crisis has contributed to economic hardships, social inequalities, exclusion and marginalization.

Europe: 10 countries out of 17 are above 20% Risk of Poverty Level

Europe Population over 65 years

+ 20000 Accomodations from 2007 to 2009
+ 12,5% 2007-2009

Increase in operators, social workers, care facilities, assisted people in Italy
The growth of metropolitan cities, in particular, is a high entropy process that obliterates and discards open and constructed spaces, unable to adapt to the speed and acceleration of the ongoing transformations.

In some cities, such as Rome, abandoned spaces are accompanied by large portions of "spared" territory thanks to the archaeological and landscape conservation regulations.
Specific issues in Rome metropolitan area

The total agricultural area within the municipality of Rome (the largest agricultural municipality of Europe) amounts to 52,000 hectares, representing 40% of its entire territory. The use of agricultural land for crops is by far the most popular land use with 30,000 hectares of arable land concerned. The use of pesticides and fertilizers has declined sharply in recent years as evidence of a growing attention to quality production. Agricultural farmers in Rome can count in general on good soil quality and widespread availability of water, even in a time when soil erosion and drought begin to emerge as a national problem. Rome Capital manages two farms directly: the farm in Castel di Guido and the Azienda Agricola Tenuta del Cavaliere, both dedicated to full organic biological management standards.

3. wide availability of rural areas

- **1900 PRODUCTIVE FARMS**
- **410 LIVESTOCK FARMS**,
- **17,000 HEAD OF CATTLE**
- **48,000 HEAD OF SHEEP AND GOATS**
- **2,500 HEADS OF PIGS**
- **200 FARMS LARGER THAN 50 HECTARES (HIGHER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE)**
- **1,100 COMPANIES, OVER 9,000 EMPLOYEES**
Our proposals for Rome: socially useful landscapes

Our project, developed through the dialogue with stakeholders (regional public authority and administrations, social workers, care givers and fragile people), meets the growing demand for assistance by focusing on local resources and implementing urban regeneration strategies:

- recover abandoned spaces as social capacitors in the fringe and in the weakest, neglected neighbourhoods
- reactivate the agricultural and natural areas focusing on their therapeutic value and the opportunities for social inclusion and job placement
- revitalize historic centers in depopulation through new residential policies (for senior, immigrants, fragile people) increasing safeguard and resilience of the territory

REGIONAL STRATEGY: new social condenser in Lazio region

The research project: REGIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES: INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION IN THE LAZIO REGION aims to renew urban areas through fostering “smart” localizations of care services in terms of: accessibility, reuse of existing abandoned or misused structures and natural spaces, self-sustenance opportunities (agricultural, craftsmanship and accommodation facilities).
Our proposals for Rome: socially useful landscapes

to foster significant relationships with neighborhoods, centers, agricultural territories, open spaces and to identify new possible interactions to improve, starting from social care services, even the contexts which host them.

REGIONAL GUIDELINES: new metropolitan localization policies and new design criteria

ACCESSIBILITY
Relations with the city and the territory
Encourage locations that allow a high level of services accessibility through local and regional public transport and pedestrian networks, fostering a large number of "sustainable exchanges". Strengthen the capillary connection within the context through protected and well marked systems of paths, parks and essential services.

INTERACTION
Relations exchange with the context
Foster social interactions through the design of spaces for activities that involve both "internal" and "external" subjects: cultural initiatives, craftmanship activities, agricultural local sale, catering, etc.

PERMEABILITY
Relations with the landscape, especially with the natural components.
Encourage the permeability through architectural devices capable of establishing relations between "inside and outside". Carefully planning the spaces of "transition" and looking for a meaningful dialogue with the landscape. Enhance the environmental comfort, the therapeutic value of green spaces (especially if cultivable). The positive effects of proper exposure, with particular attention to the beneficial effects of sunlight and the perception of seasonal trends (resulting in energy optimization).
Our proposals for Rome: socially useful landscapes

Our project, developed through the dialogue with stakeholders (Municipal authorities and administrators, social enterprises and social workers, care givers and citizens), aims to integrate new active welfare policies with housing and employment policies and urban regeneration policies:

a. experimentation of innovative services feeds innovation in design and arrangement of spaces dedicated to them.

The main themes of innovation concern the integration with housing and job policies, the efficiency of the expenditure, the exploitation of land resources.

b. the growing availability of under-used and discarded spaces in metropolitan areas stimulates and nourishes forms of creative reuse, more and more social-oriented.

There are many initiatives that indicate how innovation sometimes starts by spaces, i.e. the availability of spaces that can be customized, even temporarily, to the new needs of care and protection.

URBAN STRATEGY: the europe project INSPiRE

The goal of the european project Inspire (EASi Progress axis) is to experience "innovative" services to support social fragility within the municipality of Rome.

Innovative services interpret the welfare actively, proposing new training and job placement* and proximity networks**

*training and work related to urban agriculture and environmental education are fundamental for acquiring autonomy and skills enhancing the extraordinary green asset of metropolitan cities (large natural areas, rural landscapes, abandoned open spaces, etc)

**Active relationships and exchanges with the territorial and social context are a prerequisite of any possibility of prevention and support fragile people
Minimun Resilience Structures:
Large care and healthcare containers, built in the early 900's or in the modern age, specialized and generally well-distinguished from the urban context. These complexes are difficult to modify with low intensity interventions (therefore low costs), for their peculiar traits, volumes, and internal organization. This buildings are surrounded by large green spaces (at least originally), giving a high positional and environmental value at the whole complex.

Medium Resilience Structures:
Convents, pre-unitary hospitals, stratified structures showing parts with high historical and architectural value, but also additions, internal modifications and open spaces where contemporary uses and reuses occur, perhaps through processes of Compatible adaptation and sustainable costs. These complexes, both for their position and for their historical interest, activate a large amount of exchanges with the surrounding city and with wider contexts;

High Resilience Structures:
High Resilience Structures: buildings and open space dedicated to uses and activities that are no longer present in the urban areas (industrial, retail, military, agricultural), with less constraints than the other categories mentioned above. They have been realized in the last two centuries and have often been upgraded or restructured with new functions. They have a fair dialogue with the context even if abandoned for decades, although "marginal" uses often reduce the vitality of their urban relationships.
Our proposals for Rome: socially useful landscapes

Dialogue with stakeholders and open data source as new modality of working and designing

Recognition of abandoned or underutilized facilities in the involved municipalities through direct surveys; available documentation (databases); crowd mapping platforms (e.g. “romabbandonata”; “(im)possible living”, etc.)

Pre-assessment of the general conditions of use (ownership, conservation, authorization process) and critical evaluation of re-use possibilities for the realization of innovative social services

Identification of new opportunities related to new collective activities: boot devices (design and regulatory) for temporary use and self-recovery

Pre-assessment of the general conditions of use (ownership, conservation, authorization process) and critical evaluation of re-use possibilities for the realization of innovative social services

Large public underused and abandoned estates

historic and archaeological territories disjointed from the contemporary city

Tenuta della Mistica. socio-occupational workshops of agricultural production

Parco degli acquedotti-Fermentum: socio-occupational workshops for catering excellence in excellent open spaces

Abandoned parks at risk of improper use

former psychiatric hospital of Santa Maria della Pietà: socio-occupational workshops in crafts and recycling in the new urban social condensers
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Mistica agricultural estate

Design experimentation defines:

a. **safety conditions**: minimum levels of intervention required to remove abandoned sites from risk, degradation and improper or illegal use

b. **Terms of use**: identification of experimental activities and innovative forms of direct involvement (temporary use, self-recovery, etc.)

c. **Devices to facilitate the re-use process**
Mistica is a large public underused estate in the east suburbs of Rome, that hosts socio-occupational workshops of agricultural production, aimed to stand as a new hub for urban–rural connections, supporting employment paths but also training, food, agricultural and environmental education.
Our proposals for Rome: socially useful landscapes

Mistica agricultural estate
Our proposals for Rome: socially useful landscapes

Innovations for liveable cities

a. Innovations of survey modes: from discrete and analytic mapping to multidimensional mappings capable of integrating data from different and heterogeneous sources organizing them for concrete and specific purposes of reuse and social re-activation of urban landscapes,

b. Innovation of design modalities: from definite proposals to possible open and dialogic solutions. Design simulations are not intended as predefined definitions of what needs to be done in spaces but as an exploration of possibilities, with wide flexibility

c. Innovation of policies and recovery strategies: from the recovery of buildings to the reactivation of abandoned landscapes
urban landscape is not the background but the starting point of recovery and re-activation: a privileged place for training and job placement that is increasingly feed by the relationship with nature (environmental education, health, sports practice and movement) and urban agriculture (organic cultivation, social and multifunctional agriculture, etc).