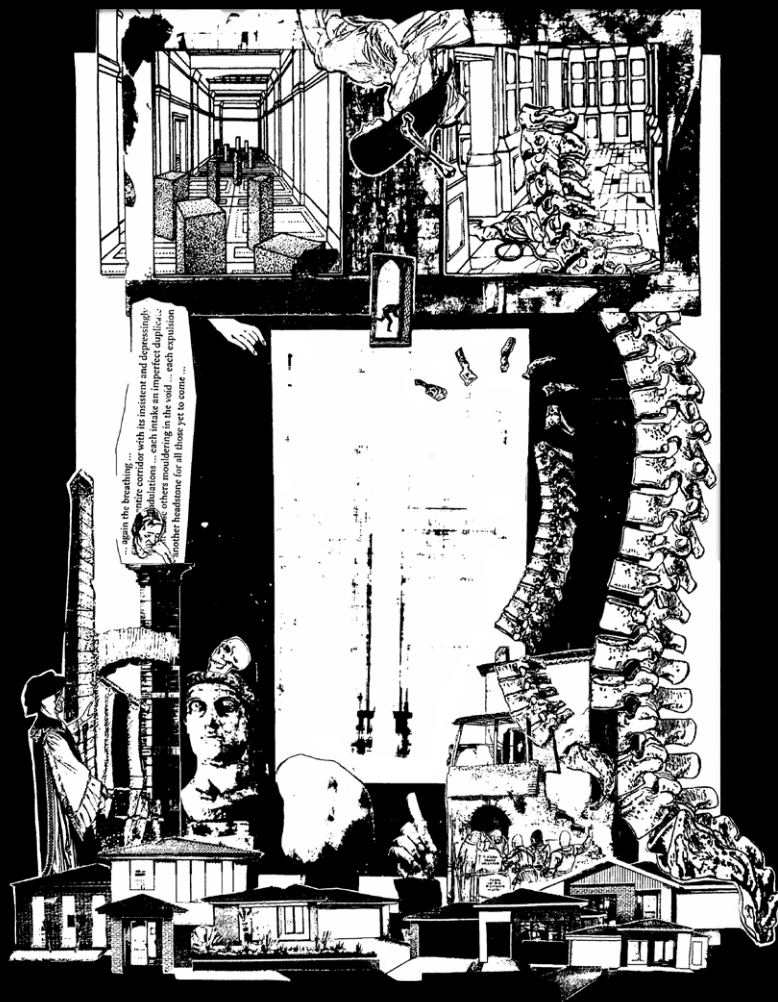


URBAN CORPORIS

TO THE BONES



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Edited by
MICKEAL MILOCCO BORLINI
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URBAN CORPORIS SERIES

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URBAN CORPORIS - TO THE BONES

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M. Milocco Borlini, A. Califano, A. Riciputo

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**A BOOK ON
ARCHITECTURE, ART,
PHILOSOPHY AND
URBAN STUDIES
TO NOURISH THE
URBAN BODY**

URBAN CORPORIS - TO THE BONES

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01. Territorial map of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region highlighting the production sites, the forest system and the main infrastructure networks identified (the cardo and decumanus). Elaboration: A. Pecile.

Anatomy of a Landscape

Processes, Approaches, and Methodologies for a Spatial Regeneration¹

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Keywords: Landscape, systemic approach, environmental regeneration, territorial breakdown

Abstract

The contribution analyses the methodological process of analysis, research, and experimentation that formed the basis for defining an experimental project for the reinterpretation and formal restructuring of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia territory, a region in north-eastern Italy.

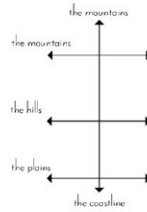
Working on a vast scale has required initial operations of decomposition and simplification of the territory, to identify punctual, linear, and areal elements that constitute its backbone, functional to the definition of intervention and regeneration methods that are punctual, but at the same time part of a broader territorial vision.

These considerations have led the experimentation to propose a second breakdown of these units, leading to the identification of the minimum element, the “pixel”, with which to compose the architectural project, i.e., the tree.

The two breakdowns implemented, on the vast scale on the one hand and on the “building” scale on the other, allowed the experimentation to integrate the regeneration practices within a holistic vision of the territory, to read the essential elements of a complex architectural and landscape system, yet defined in each of its parts, with a new look.

THE CARDO AND THE DECUMANUS

The main infrastructures



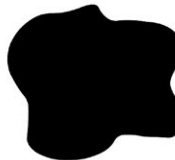
THE ARCHIPELAGO IN THE PLAINS

The industrial sites and the large impermeable platforms



THE MATRIX IN THE MOUNTAINS

The forestry resource



02. The environmental system, in which we recognize the linear elements that form the cardo and decumanus; the punctual elements that define the settlement archipelago of the plain; finally, the areal elements that make up the mountain forest matrix. Elaboration: A. Pecile.

Introduction. Methodological considerations²

The territory is an adaptive system within a continuous process, consisting of a complex structuring of natural and anthropic elements that intertwine with each other with varying degrees of intensity.

Approaching the territory from a planning point of view, therefore, requires a phase of analysis and systemic reading of the structures that make it up to achieve full knowledge of the functioning of its parts and, consequently, of its totality. The anatomical study of the landscape is therefore intended to be a detailed reading of the landscape units present in the territorial fabric, which is thus reduced to its minimum.

The landscape is like a theatre³: a place where many recognizable signs are staged, isolated from each other but forming part of a context within which they take on specific meanings, roles, and functions. The operation of reading the landscape requires two parallel actions. The first one involves the recognition of its component elements and their distributive order. This step leads to the definition, therefore, of a sort of landscape syntax. The second one concerns the understanding of the specificity and territorial function of these elements.

It seems clear, therefore, that just as the meticulous organization of a human body allows for its functioning, care, and maintenance, in the same way, the reading and punctual inspection of the landscape's components makes it possible to understand it and, consequently, to define the best regeneration and design operations. The image of a given landscape if well understood, can intrinsically project specific design intentions, compatible with the resources and ecosystem balances of the places, as it contains within itself an architectural dimension closely linked to its formal aspect (Capitanio, 2002). The territory, as the result of different processes, has its own shape⁴, whose "construction" does not have dimensions, but rules and principles. In architectural design on a large scale, the term "construction" does not refer exclusively to building, but rather to a process of reinterpretation and formal restructuring of the existing (Margagliotta, 2022). Structuring the anthropogeographical landscape, therefore, requires an understanding of the relationships between natural and anthropic elements, and the "design" of the landscape becomes a critical operation that, starting from the analysis of the territory, aims at identifying possible areas of development (Capitanio, 2002): "a map is made first to know, then to act"⁵. The design action for the landscape, therefore, must be systematic, effectively structured, and aimed primarily at the valorization of those territorial elements that, constituting the backbone of the landscape system, project the image of the territorial area subject to intervention.

Based on these premises, the design methodology adopted in this experimentation, born from a cross-reading between the disciplinary paradigms of architectural and environmental technology with the macro-objective of qualifying the environmental regeneration processes, has assumed the landscape as a structured system of units. These have been defined in their specific performance, outlining an approach of analysis that is not quantitative, but qualitative-functional, which starts from the general study of the system and arrives at that of the individual parts. In the same way as a building organism, the landscape can also be read as a summation of elements that are not homogenous, but related and organically integrated. The resulting system is then subdivided into several subsets joined together and identified according to the role they play. These, in turn, are composed of elements that can be aggregated with each other, each with its performances⁶.

Based on these considerations, the methodology was applied, in the first phase, to the territorial scale, identifying the structuring elements, assumed as invariants (or permanences)

that contribute to the definition of the territory's framework (environmental system). Subsequently, a second fractioning was applied to the search of the "technical elements" (technological system) with which to initiate processes of regeneration, reinterpretation, and formal requalification of the existing, assuming as a basis the concept of sustainability of man's interventions concerning the environment. Just as in a production process the material used can rarely be employed in future economic activities, and the progressive use of land also results in the loss of fundamental functions and services for society (Conti *et al.*, 2020). This led the investigation to the identification of the minimum element, the "pixel", with which to compose the architectural design, i.e., the tree. If in the processes of the architectural redevelopment of an artifact, one intervenes with technological and building elements, in these processes of territorial regeneration the protagonist is the tree, assumed in its possible spatial configurations, and thus more generally the forest⁷. Everything that conditions the anthropic environment can be considered an architectural material (Gregotti, 1987); hence the experimentation choice to use green matter as a tool with which to compose the architectural project.

Anatomy of a Landscape, Act I. The skeleton

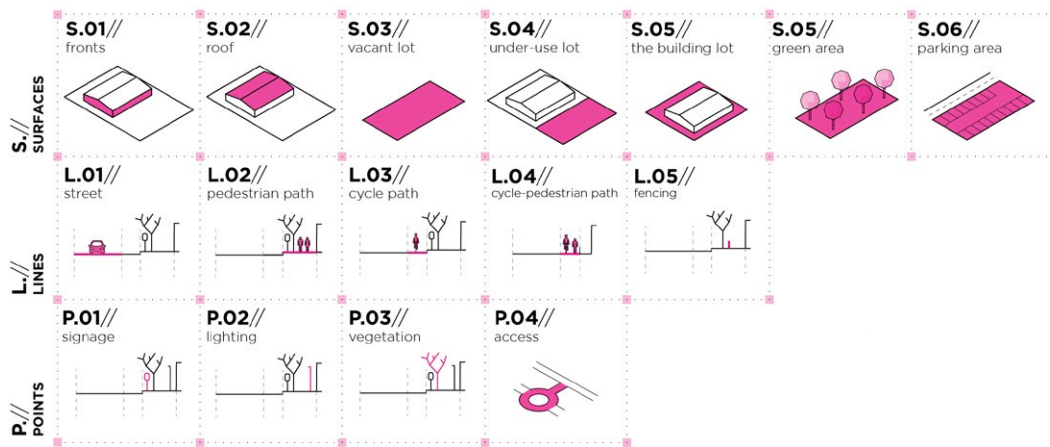
The nature of the images used today to communicate territorial knowledge is very broad and varies according to the type of information to be conveyed and the type of medium adopted. Representing the identity of the territory is, therefore, a very complex phenomenon that has necessarily required a methodological process of reading the available cartographic bases for elements of complexity and simplification. The experimentation, therefore, implemented an initial phase of reading and analyzing the main regional plans and thematic maps available⁸, identifying the nature of the information and data they contain. These devices, which aim to restore a territorial imagery of Friuli Venezia Giulia, in fact, deal with specific themes (environmental, urban planning, commercial, forestry, archaeological, etc.) by superimposing the subject investigated on topographical/cartographic support.

The originality of the experimentation lies in having implemented, by adopting a synthetic logic, a process of simplification of this thematic complexity, sifting through all the mapped data to highlight the punctual, linear, and areal landscape-territorial structures that contribute to the definition of the environmental structural system. In carrying out this operation, careful attention has been paid to giving each element reported (be it an infrastructure, a built fabric, or a natural component) the same importance and, therefore, to achieving a "structural" rather than thematic mapping.

The spatial elements identified concerned the water and infrastructure system (linear elements); the forest system (areal elements); and finally, the settlement system (punctual elements). The recognition of the latter has made it possible to highlight rules and principles of structuring and signification processes of the area's transformative dynamics, recognizing three different "environmental units"⁹, namely: a *cardo* and a *decumanus*, made up of the main infrastructures that cross the regional territorial surface from north to south¹⁰ and transversally from east to west in the three geomorphological belts (mountains; hills and plains); an archipelago of settlements in the plains, with particular attention to industrial ones; finally, a wooded matrix in the mountains that tends to rarefy towards the hills and, therefore, the plains (fig. 02).

The resulting image is the bearer of a specific design intentionality, which in the experimentation has seen the intensification of green infrastructures along the main roadways; the cre-

SYNTAX MATRIX OF INDUSTRIAL SPACES



03. The syntax matrix of industrial spaces. The methodology of the de-composition by points, lines, and surfaces applied to the territorial scale was also implemented in the analysis of the species of spaces of the industrial agglomeration. Elaboration: A. Pecile.

ation of a constellation of green islands in the plains identifiable with the main industrial and production areas; finally, the strengthening of the ecological network in the plains as an element of continuity and rebalancing of the wooded mass in the mountains.

Anatomy of a Landscape, Act II. The tree

Following the applied methodology, the investigation then questioned the technical element with which to construct the territory project, i.e., the tree, exploring it in its spatial configurations: the forest. The latter, like a building system, composes spatial and environmental units (environmental system / the skeleton) and is in turn formed by technological units (technological subsystem / the tree) (Conti *et al.*, 2019).

Within the requirement-performance view, the tree was decomposed into its component elements (the roots, the trunk, the crown, the branches) by defining classes of requirements and performance aimed at satisfying the greatest amount of ecosystem services. To achieve this result, the methodology has adopted the UNI 8289 standard¹¹, revisiting it from an environmental viewpoint and defining six requirement classes for the forest technological system: safety, wellbeing, usability, appearance, management, and environmental protection. Each of these was then made to correspond to a specific class of characteristics (requirements) that the “minimum technical element” (the tree) must possess to be able to perform specific services aimed at achieving the required ecosystem services¹².

The forest becomes, therefore, a system designed following the principles of landscape ecology¹³ that can improve microclimatic conditions and air quality; screen noise caused by traffic and/or acoustically polluting elements through reflection and diversion of sound energy; control luminosity and glare phenomena; control soil erosion caused by runoff; protect soil stability; create and/or restore natural habitats; give identity to places.

Conclusion

Within the macro-objective of restructuring and formal re-interpretation of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia territorial area, the application of the systemic reading in a requirement-performance key allowed the experimentation to initiate in-depth studies aimed at qualifying the processes triggered off.

The applied methodology, which can be reiterated in similar contexts, places the territory and its systemic reading at the center of the experimentation, with attention focused on the elements, phenomena, systems, and processes identifiable at the various scales, qualifying all the formal characteristics and thus highlighting the semiological value of the landscape. By adapting the language and disciplinary paradigms of the technology of architecture to the dynamics of the territory, the investigation recognizes a formal autonomy to the architectural project at a large scale that stems from morphological attention to the territory. Thanks to the study of the formal structures that compose it (i.e., an observation based on the composition of its spatial elements and environmental units), in fact, research has favored an understanding of territorial phenomena with a continuous cross-reference between the macro and micro-scale. Reading the landscape in the light of its component materials, therefore, makes it possible to study its functioning and assess the performance of each element at the same time.

Notes

- 1 The contribution can be equally attributed to the authors. The discussion is based on the results of the Boscoregione research (*Cantiere Friuli*, University of Udine, 2018-2020, scientific coordinators prof. Giovanni La Varra and prof. Christina Conti), then developed into the PhD investigation of the author Ambra Pecile (PhD thesis: *The shape of the territory. Environmental networks and industrial nodes*, supervisor prof. Giovanni La Varra, co-tutor prof. Christina Conti, research grant funded by the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia). It proposes the application of a possible methodology for the analysis of the territory in relation to its regeneration potential. The research was funded by the University of Udine as part of the initiatives supporting the University Strategic Plan 2022-25 - Interdepartmental Project ESPeRT.
- 2 The definitions adopted in this discussion are given below:
Landscape: component with aesthetic value, linked to the quality of space “part of the territory as perceived by populations, whose character results from the action of natural and/or human factors and their interrelationships” (European Landscape Convention, 2000).
Environment: component with ecological value “the context in which an organisation operates, including air, water, soil, natural resources, flora, fauna, human beings and their interrelationships” (UNI ISO 14004, 1997).
Territory: component with administrative-jurisdictional and productive value “Region or geographical area, portion of land or terrain of a certain size” (Treccani vocabulary, 2023).
- 3 Turri, E. (2001). *Il paesaggio come teatro. Dal territorio vissuto al territorio rappresentato*. Venezia: Marsilio Editori.
- 4 Corboz, A. (1985). *Il territorio come palinsesto*. Casabella, 516 (settembre), pp. 22-27.
- 5 Corboz, A. (1985). *Ibid*, p. 25.
- 6 The approach to the macro territorial theme is an integral part of the technological research conducted by the authors with the interdisciplinary contribution of Giovanni La Varra in the field of architectural and urban composition (BoscoRegione 2018-2020 and Ph.D. thesis research “The shape of the territory. Environmental networks and industrial landscapes” by Ambra Pecile, PhD student at the University of Trieste, XXXVI cycle)
- 7 In this experimentation, the term “forest” has been used to refer to any plant association consisting of trees, shrubs, and/or bushes. Possible spatial configurations of the forest are, therefore, riparian buffer strips, inter-grassland rows, tree-lined avenues, industrial green parks, etc.
- 8 These include, by way of example but not limited to, the Regional Forest Plan; the Regional Landscape Plan [P.P.R.]; the Territorial Government Plan [P.G.T.]; MOLAND-FVG Map (Friuli-Venezia Giulia Land Use and Consumption); Corine-Land Cover Map.
- 9 The methodology adopted, following the disciplinary paradigms of architectural technology, assumed the environmental system as a structured system of environmental units identified by spatially and temporally defined elements.
- 10 The towns of Amaro (north) and Grado (south) were taken as fixed points.
- 11 The UNI 8289 standard defines the technological system by breaking it down into needs-requirements-performance classes.
- 12 For more details see Conti, C., La Varra, G., Pecile, A. (2019). *The forest as a tool to regenerate urban and suburban environments*. SMC Sustainable Mediterranean Construction, n. 9. Online edition. ISSN: 2420-8213.
- 13 The experimentation was supported by a multidisciplinary working group and by a research team with agrarian-environmental expertise.

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A BOOK ON ARCHITECTURE, ART, PHILOSOPHY AND URBAN
STUDIES TO NOURISH THE URBAN BODY.

The second volume of Urban Corporis, titled "To the Bones", compiles reflections from architects, artists, and scholars who have extensively delved into the fundamental themes of contemporary architecture. By navigating a constant interplay between past and future, memory and innovation, and the realms of the natural, artificial, and virtual, these contributions put forth strategies for architectural, artistic, urban, and landscape projects that resonate with the fundamental principles shaping our built and perceived environment. They advocate for design approaches that synchronise with the foundational elements, referred to as "the bones", that structure the landscape while promoting forward-thinking considerations.