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## Urban rests and green-between

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Connection design strategies for stable scrap and health treatments for contemporary cities

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### Synopsis

This proposal aims to be a contribution to exploring the role of the architectural and urban project in encouraging actions to improve the health and well-being of the life of city dwellers and the wellness of the cities themselves. Through experimental project on a fragment of city, some principles and criteria of reference are in order to direct urban transformations towards more health-friendly models. Within contemporary cities the linking of residual green spaces represents an opportunity to take care of the city and then a way to be cured by the city, in a development truly sustainable.

**Key words:** Drosscapes, Green, Health, Infrastructure, Re-Cycle.

## **1. Sustainable behaviour and new perspective of re-cycle in contemporary cities**

In the time of the global crisis, "Society, Environment and Landscape" are the most important issues at the center of ethical, economic and political thoughts that have progressively involved the world of urbanism and architecture, changing objectives and value systems at the base of planning actions and urban transformations.

Over the past decades, a part of the culture of the project - now rightly obsessed with the themes of ecology, sustainability, waste disposal and the urgent need to adopt recyclable materials and resources - has metabolized the aims to define a new intervention paradigm capable of determining a radical transformation of architectural thought. The transformation of the existing has been the center of the reformulation of a different way of working.

Architectural artifacts, pieces of cities, fragments of territories are re-activated through new life cycles, responding to logics inspired by the eco-efficient recycling of 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) - the key-concept of the green economy - and the 3E (Economy, Equity, Environment) - the ground of ethical-political positions oriented towards economic growth combined with social equity and respect for and protection of the environment. The practice of Re-Cycle, insisting on the re-use of rejected or abandoned architectural materials and also on the activation of a whole life cycles for the city system or the territorial system, allows to work on the existing, considering it changeable, mutable, foldable to other and new meanings. Recycle the existing by changing its sense is a global necessity and at the same time it is a local opportunity for re-signification that can affect individual objects as well as entire parts of the city, triggering highly interrelated multiscale processes. The field for the application of this type of intervention is represented by the so-called "waste" places, liminal spaces, in the margin, waiting for a propulsive transformation that reinsert them in the urban practices. The waste is what is not useful and has no value: in the city are the residues of urbanization, the landfills, the neglected infrastructure and the fallen into disuse architectures, the abandoned buildings, the materials and outcast people. Looking at the city from its waste, from the fragments of reality that represent its marginal aspects, is a way of being inside the contemporary world, in the current condition of environmental pollution, consumption of resources and soils, economic crisis and social exclusion, replying to a global call to Recycle.

## **2. Naples' fragments as a case study**

In this new perspective, the "waste" commutes its value, it renovates its meaning and transforms itself into an essential material, an overriding aspect of the project. The city of Naples can be considered as a case of exceptional interest under this aspect, where the dross' nature takes a strong interscale dimension, due to its peculiar orographic configuration, as well as to its secular historical stratification. The structure of the city is founded on a delicate balance of "juxtaposed and not composed" fragments that build its heterogeneous architectural palimpsest and design its articulate urban tissue. In this complex assembly process, the fragments of the historic city, over time and in their



“remaining pathologically linked” to the city’s life cycle, have progressively take on a role of “waste”, changing into “dross of more recent construction urban metabolism”, in a paradoxical reversal of roles. The temporal difference that affects the constitutive parts of the city, through the continuous renewal of the most recent fragments, opposed to the fixity affecting the metabolism of the ancient urban tissue, makes it, in its lack of homogeneity, a real sequence of “waiting spaces”, a weft of waste areas, real urban rests, which can be considered as strategic occasions to trigger virtuous aspects for the reactivation of the city.



Figure 1.

In the dispersion and fragmentation of the space of contemporaneity, which results from actions that did not always take into account the physical and human relationships founding the city, it is necessary to consider the possible interactions that connect different fragments. Working on a network of public spaces, with the aim to improve existing structures through a transformation process capable of responding to human needs, means building urban and social interactions as well as relationships between architectures/parts of cities and individuals. Those interactions have a different and multi-scale nature: between pieces and parts of the city, between enclosed spaces and open spaces, between pre-existing and new, between interior and exterior, between subjects and different disciplines. Through projects with multiple relational skills, urban pieces can be "re-circulated" in connection either with their nearest surroundings or with other complex parts of the city, producing a territorial scale of a new vital urban landscape in which the utmost attention is paid to environmental, economic and cultural quality and sustainability.

The key to understand the Neapolitan case study is to work on a network of connections made by pedestrian paths and public spaces, looking at the mean time to the historical center and the farthest suburbs, including marginal areas, discarded or abandoned, waiting for transformation. The case interprets the waste theme using several levels of reading: the decommissioning, abandonment and destruction are not the only generators of wasteland; there

are uses not well accepted in every settled community, but essential for larger territory. These ones imply the accommodation of people living on the edge of society, treated as waste. The "modern-shaped" mental hospitals, then psychiatric hospitals, represented the materialization of Foucaultian heterotopia: other spaces, rigidly separated from external reality, "containers" of a social dysfunction built for clear mechanisms of exclusion, decommissioned for several decades, they often lie in a state of ruin and abandonment. Reading the contemporary city by layers, new superimposed and subordinated layers profoundly modify the traditional urban dynamics, exponentially increasing the variables to be taken into account. The infrastructural networks constitute a new level that expands the territorial dimension of reference: what was previously considered a resource for the district or the city becomes a potential resource for an infinitely more extensive geography. The "big containers" like the former asylum complexes are established starting from the infrastructures, intertwining, in the complex territory in which we operate today, compact cores and widespread settlements: spaces that are, at the main time, interlinked to the city but part of it, seeking a dimension of relationship with a potentially interscalar context. The system of green areas is also interpreted as an infrastructure, able to hold together the different spatial and temporal scales - from the regional one to the single lot and from the short to the long term.



Figure 2.

### 3. Re-linking the Provincial Asylum “Leonardo Bianchi” through healthy green infrastructures



Figure 3.

The experimental project on the former Provincial Asylum of Naples “Leonardo Bianchi”<sup>1</sup>, today a shut and introverted fragment of the city, unable to establish, due to its nature, relations with a context so deeply changed over time, has been an opportunity to verify “*in vitro*” the urban possible interactions.

The former Psychiatric Hospital, that was built in a still virgin suburbs, has been joined by urban growth, absorbed by building wefts of twentieth-century expansion with variable density, indifferent to its huge presence, reinforcing its dimension of enclave and fragment. The Bianchi recycling project, structured for different periods and phases, has been a new opportunity to integrate in a single action territory and community, architecture and city, in a vision of a metabolic architecture capable of absorbing more and more resources to make it grow others.

The project has not only been tackled on the physical layer - compared to a necessary idea of preserving the identity of the fragment and the goal of reaching a new dimension of wide usability - but also in relation to the social and cultural fabric that could guarantee the transition from the past to the future.

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<sup>1</sup> The colossal Neapolitan complex, about 150 thousand square meters, almost completely fallen into disuse, rises up on a tableland North-West from the ancient city centre in its nearest suburbs, an area delimited by Albergo dei Poveri, the slope of Capodimonte Park and the international airport of Naples





Figure 4.

A green, wide and plural reconnection, linked to the network of non-built residual open spaces and small and large parks, based on continuity, porosity, permeability and functional integration, represents the instrument through which the potential of the fragment-scrap can be expressed and can be connected not only with the other drosscapes of the city but even with its most consolidated green areas and public spaces. This process may transform the separates, individual elements into a new whole green system.

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## Biography

**Maria Pia Amore.** Architect, graduated summa cum laude in 2014, she is a PhD candidate in Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture of University of Naples "Federico II". Her PhD research focuses on the relations between former psychiatric hospital and the contemporary city. Her wider research interests focuses on the design strategies of intervention, both at architectural and urban scale, on existing building and areas, considering the underused or abandoned built up spaces as a resource, and facing the modification/mutation as an instrument for reaching duration in a perspective of sustainable development. She is also interested on the communication of the architectural project. She joined at several academic researches, national and international design workshops and conferences. She is currently teaching assistant at Laboratory of Architectural and Urban design. As designer, she also takes part to public competitions on both small and large-scale.

**Francesca Talevi.** Architect, graduated summa cum laude in Architectural and Urban Design in 2015 at the Department of Architecture (DiARC) of the University of Naples Federico II. In 2016, she achieved a 2nd Level Master in Excellent Design of the Historic City. Since 2017 she is PhD student in Architectural and Urban Design. Her PhD thesis investigates the relationships between the fragments of the historic city and urban tissue of contemporaneity, reinterpreting the former in terms of waste spaces. She is presently working as teaching assistant for the Architectural and Urban design Laboratory at the aforementioned University and at the bachelor course of Construction Engineering Architecture of the Department of Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering (DiCEA) of the University of Naples Federico II. Her wider work see also her participation in various design competitions, research projects, national and international workshops.