



4<sup>th</sup> ISUFitaly International Conference | Bari, 26-28 september 2018

# READING BUILT SPACES

Cities in the making and future urban form

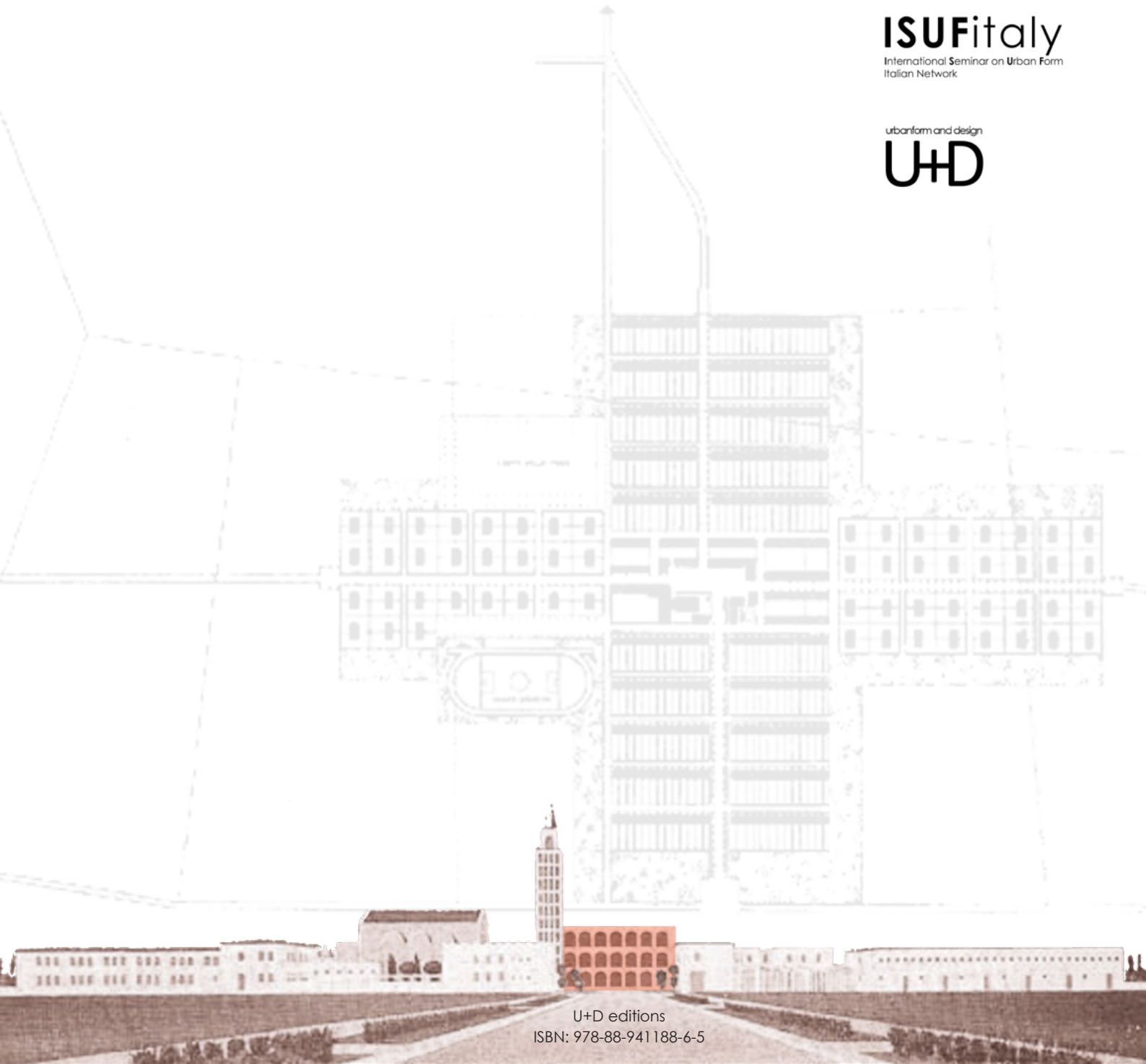
edited by  
Paolo Carlotti  
Loredana Ficarelli  
Matteo leva



Politecnico di Bari

**ISUFitaly**  
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## **READING BUILT SPACES**

Cities in the making and future urban form

READING BUILT SPACES | cities in the making and future urban form

# Presentation

The city is an “organism in the making”, an entity in constant transformation, not a complex of immutable elements. The city represents the entire human experiential field of the world, considered as expression of a “fundamental movement of existence” in its completeness and historicity, expressed by the formative structure of tissues and building types, by the urban hierarchies, by the relations with the territory, by the social relations, and by the values and criticalities.

The conference's aim is to propose a dialectical comparison between scholars of Architecture, Urban Planning, Urban History, Restoration, Geography, on the theme of urban morphology with an interpretative perspective based on the concept of “operating history”. Search for a multidisciplinary syncretism that eludes single analyzing techniques and aims to the complete reconstruction of the urban phenomenology in its totality and concrete essence, through the study of the changing and inflexible condition of ‘fluidity’ hinged on the world's events. An integrated thought based on the critical concept of ‘making’ that constitutes, phase by phase, the signifying element of each present, explained through the relationship between the before and the after: that is the research perspective of ‘being’ that announces the notion of transformational process.

Therefore, the projection in the future of the urban form is the central theme of the conference that proposes to stimulate the reflection on the issues as: recovery (not only of the historical city), re-use of existing urban spaces, regeneration, ex novo design in peripheral and peri-urban areas and natural spaces. All that, without neglecting the issue of sustainability, not considered with the strabismus of those who surrender to the “technique” pre-domain.



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- C.1 Urban form between identity and spatial semantics
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## Rural identity in the making. Architectural and urban design between city and nature

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**Keywords:** *Rural identity, urban morphology, urban fringe, agricultural park*

In his vision of the infinite city, Massimo Cacciari describes a process by which the city, in its metropolitan development, radiates from its center, overwhelming every ancient pre-existence and involving a sort of spatial crisis (Cacciari 2004). Within the expansion areas of the city, the urban project is called to shape this crisis, answering to contradictory questions (Cacciari 2009) posed by the relationship between city and nature. 1091

In this sense, the rural landscapes of urban fringe are places in the making, characterized by the constant, changing correlation between city and nature, between architectural construction and open spaces' use and design. The interpretation of this relationship makes it possible to think about the sense of rural identity in the contemporary city and to shape it through the tools of design's coherence as suggested by Luigi Cosenza in the 17 points on rural architecture. In this framework, an interesting case study is the hill area of San Rocco, north of Naples, a peri-urban agricultural fringe between a land incision and the dense fabric of the historical center. The area has preserved a predominantly agricultural identity with cultivated open spaces and farms. Current indications of transformation for this area suggest the re-interpretation of its rural identity through the design of an agricultural park and a small settlement of rural houses.

The purpose of this work is the interpretation of the morphology in the making of this area through its design, giving voice to different phases of the same process and working on the multifaceted possibilities of connection between permanence and change, in a compatible way with its rural identity (Ricoeur 1991).

## Introduction

Between city and nature there is an intermediate field, a fringe of rural territory where the horizontal dimension of the void prevails. But over time what defines the character of this emptiness changes. On the one hand, the presence of collective facilities and infrastructures grows; on the other, the rural character linked to a form of self-sustainable economy and to a way of building and inhabiting the landscape in relation to its use, goes dispersing.

Today these spaces are interposed between the peripheral areas, the territorial reference nodes and the dense historical fabric of the cities. Their form, once mainly built through the local dimension of man's work in the fields and its way of inhabiting the cultivated territory, is now designed and measured by the big dimension of territorial signs and architectures.

Therefore these rural fringes are areas of crisis on the edge and at the same time central areas of reconnection of the city in extension which suffer from a space crisis due to the modification of their original identity. They no longer have an identity that is clearly attributable to the traditional rural landscape, but an identity in the making, a multiple identity to be interpreted and shaped through the urban and architectural project.

By re-tracing the physical signs and recovering the deeper meaning of these cultivated spaces, but also intercepting the new functional and meaningful needs of the city in progress, the project relates a before and an after of the shape of the city by examining the case of area of the San Rocco valley in Naples. In particular, the rural peri-urban areas offers the opportunity to rethink the therapeutic role and care of agriculture, intended as an instrument for the recovery of physical, psychological, social and environmental health.

As a device for urban care, here agriculture is understood as the leading theme for the construction of large open spaces of territorial connection, not focusing instead on the most widespread and current trends in acupuncture actions and the in sprawl of urban gardens. Thus the rural space becomes the site of the design of areas, paths and architectures able to set up therapeutic sequences of care both for the recovery of the rural nature of urban fringe and for the improvement of community health.

## Rural identity in the extension city

Between city and nature there is a segment of territory characterized by the presence of heterogeneous physical traces, different urban times, divergent scales and conflicting uses. In this part of peri-urban space there are geo-morphological signs related to the agricultural uses, to the infrastructural nature of the water canals, to specific topographical features of the city.

'It is the form that man, in the course and for the purposes of his agricultural productive activities, consciously and systematically imprints on the natural landscape' (Sereni, 1961), a 'huge sediment of efforts' (Cattaneo, 1875) composed of the fields and channels footprints which tell, as in a great book, the history of the generations that have succeeded over time (Reho 1997). Then this palimpsest underwent the impact of the construction of all those elements linked to urban expansion contributing to undermine the shape of the city that 'seems definitively unable to identify appropriate narrations and design interpretations in compliance with the nature of the problems to be solved' (Purini, 2000).

Massimo Cacciari states that 'The modern city, in its metropolitan evolution, radiates from its center, overwhelming every ancient persistence. [...] this expansion becomes more and more occasional, less and less planned and governable. And more the metropolitan nervous network expands, more it devours the surrounding territory, more its spirit seems to be lost' (Cacciari, 2004).

With the definition of 'city in extension', Giuseppe Samonà identifies a part of open territory in which the spaces' discipline was attributed to agricultural processes and human presence and in which there is no nature or countryside, but only a particular form of city, a city in extension. 'If nowadays, the rural-urban dichotomy is in a process of overcoming, it is not for a new territorial concept, but by the extension of the urban area to the whole of the territory' (Corboz, 1985).

Massimo Cacciari (2004) explains that if the city is everywhere, we no longer inhabit cities,

but territories, and he defines the post-metropolitan territory as a geography of events, a framework of connections, starting to identify a structuring potentiality of these spaces in relation to their surrounding context. The geography that designs these territories identifies the theme of its identity in the morphological specialization of the ground (Rispoli, 2013). But to the furrows of the fields, to the textures of the canals and to the topography of the ground, new residential settlement fabrics, large architectures, infrastructural bands have been joined, overlaid or mixed. The territory, as André Corboz recalls, 'is not a datum, but the result of different processes. On the one hand, it changes spontaneously [...], on the other hand, the territory undergoes human intervention' (Corboz, 1985).

The form of this extension city is therefore a form in the making and its identity is a processual identity with dynamic and in progress features, also fragile and permanently provisional (Bauman, 2003). The problem, Paul Ricoeur says (1991), consists in exploring the many-sided possibilities of connection between permanence and change that are compatible with identity. Therefore the city in extension poses questions of correct interpretation and compatible transformation, 'it is subjected to contradictory questions. Overcoming this contradiction is a bad utopia. It is necessary to give it a shape' (Cacciari, 2009).

In these large peri-urban open spaces interposed between the large metropolitan settlements and the smaller urban centers, the territorial rural fragments are a dynamic interface, an area of transition in which urban and rural features dialogue and confront each other. These are large rural open spaces oriented to transformation (Marson, 2008), a project theme among the most fruitful and among the most dense of meaning according to Bernardo Secchi (1989). But Bernardo Secchi himself, in the plans for La Spezia, Ascoli and Bergamo, recognizes as 'agricultural areas, the provisional margin of urban expansion, have never been interpreted by design, or as areas of breath, nor as a recognizable edge of the fabric, neither as an ideal site for equipped green areas, nor simply as free areas useful to reach other areas of the city' (Secchi, 1994). 1093

Yet these peri-urban rural areas have a strong transformative potential that is based on a long tradition of constructive experimentation based on the interweaving of the natural environment, the climatic conditions, the use of the land, the land ownership and the type of farm (Fondi, Franciosa, Pedreschi, Ruocco, 1964) with the aim of building a rural architecture, for residential and productive uses related to the cultivation of the fields. Preserving this type of relationship in the project of these areas is internationally recognized as a desirable transformative approach. In 1999, the city of Wellington, for instance, sets up guidelines for planning in rural areas, with the aim of providing sustainable development of rural life, preserving and enhancing the identity of the territory (Wellington City Council, 2009). In the Italian context, Giuseppe Pagano and Guarniero Daniel dealt with rural architecture with the aim of demonstrating the aesthetic value of its functionality and underlining how 'the relationship between utility, technique, form and aesthetics are not recent inventions, but only recent discoveries originated from an ethical need for clarity and honesty' (Pagano and Daniel, 1936).

This interest was taken up by Luigi Cosenza who formalized it writing the 17 points of rural architecture. 'It is especially in the rural environment that the effort to define the practical value of individual objects and to give them the form most suited to their function' is manifested. He works on the themes of coherence, homogeneity, design balance even within his projects, as in the case of the project for the villa in Positano (Salerno, 1937). But also other architects work in the furrow traced by Cosenza. Bernard Rudofsky realizes, both autonomously and with him, many villas using an archetypical and rural design syntax as can be seen in the project for a house in Procida (Naples, 1935) or in the villa in Frigiliana (Malaga, 1969-71), but also Valerio Olgiati will build the Villa Além in Alentejo (Portugal, 2014) where 'The rural landscape spills into the courtyard in the form of wind, dust, and then pigs and the animals boarding their ark' (Sealy, 2015).

### **New compatible identities for the rural peri-urban fringe**

In his essay *Designing, building, taking care*, Nicola Emery, recalling the Platonic analogy between city and pasture, the city as a place which leads the growth and nourishes its

inhabitants, highlights the therapeutic horizon belonging to project for the city. 'The project, in other words' - says Emery - 'must be conceived with a therapeutic aspect, it should imply a sort of preventive therapy, something analogous to the right cultivation and proper care of the pasture, whose good condition will affect not a little citizens' health' (Emery, 2010).

Already the German term *akerbau* combines the act of building and that one of cultivating. These two activities can be associated with another one, that of taking care, as the result of the first two on an open space that can offer itself as a reserve, a refuge, a nourishing pasture which contribute in promoting the health of society.

Indeed the quality of the rural area has a significant impact on the well-being of the population. In the Italian context, the National Institute of Statistics has developed an assessment of the welfare conditions of the population by including rural territories' conditions as indicators for the section Landscape and cultural heritage, and precisely considering the erosion of the rural space from urban dispersion, the erosion of rural space from abandonment and the evaluation of regional rural development programs in relation to landscape protection (National Statistical Institute, 2016).

1094 The concept of health promotion (the process by which people improve control and the direct management of their well-being conditions) can therefore be strongly implemented by preserving a high quality of rural areas. This theme is the basis of the salutogenesis theory (Antonovsky, 1979) which underlines the passage from a vision in which etiology was attributed to hereditary traits, relational problems during the evolutionary phase, microbes and other pathogenic organisms to a perspective in which the behavior and lifestyle of the individual are crucial: the relationship between personal habits, psychological attitude and health clearly emerges. These factors find evident stimuli in the quality, in the form and in the organization of the life spaces and environment which are the active background of the daily activities of the people. Health promotion, a strategy whose importance was underlined starting from the Zagabria Declaration for the Health Cities of 2008 and up to the Shanghai and then to the Pécs Declaration of 2017, (within the Healthy Cities strategic program of World Health Organization), finds its specific field of experimentation within the rural context of the extension city. The project for the recovery of the peri-urban agricultural territory can therefore develop the themes of prevention, promotion and improvement of the quality of life through the setting up of spaces for the green care including social and therapeutic horticulture, animal assisted interventions, care farming, facilitation green exercise as treatment, wilderness therapy, nature therapy, eco-therapy (Sempik, Hine and Wilcox 2010).

### **The case of the San Rocco valley in Naples**

The Neapolitan historical fabric is defined to the north by a hills' crown partly included within the Hills' Metropolitan Park, bordered to the east by the Capodimonte Park and to the west by the Camaldoli upland. This area is interposed between the historic center of Naples and the informal growth of the hilly hamlets, which today correspond with the neighborhoods of Chiaiano, Piscinola, Miano, Scampia and Secondigliano, 'a crown of thorns' (Nitti, 1902) that surrounds the city to north.

Before the unlimited expansion of urban centers occurred in the twentieth century, north of Naples there was the so-called 'Piano Campano: a landscape consisting of a vast agricultural flat land and a group of farms that constitute the last southern extension of the Campania Felix where cereals and vegetables were cultivated, flax and hemp, fruit, vineyards and numerous buffalo breeding farms were found' (Visone, 2009).

This landscape reached up to the hilly area of the city preserving a rural character and a widespread presence of farms. Inside the hilly arch, the area of the San Rocco valley still preserves a presence of cultivated fields and rural architecture, all compressed within a city in extension that has strongly modified its structure.

The valley belongs to the volcanic caldera of the Phlegraean Fields and is characterized by the presence of a deep hydrographic incision that extends in an east-west direction for about six kilometers. Once this engraving was used to drain the waters coming from the Camaldoli upland, to lead them towards the basin of Arenaccia and then towards the sea.



Today, due to the construction of the embankment on which the large hospital structure of the New Policlinico rests (completed in 1975 on a project drawn up by a group of architects coordinated by Carlo Cocchia), the west connection with the Camaldoli is definitively denied.

The shape of the valley itself has also changed: 'its original riverbed has been widened because of the excavations which have retreat the fronts of the valley' (Recchia, 2010). On the edge of the valley and up to the Colli Aminei residential settlement, built in the sixties, there is a rural area that still preserves its original features (Figure 1).

This segment of rural landscape is inserted into urban parts that have developed through functionalistic logics, creating enclaves of residences or different urban facilities, in particular hospitals and schools. Within the overall urban development, this particular process has conferred a largely secondary role to this area, which has become a semi-abandoned enclave of landscape itself.

The rural area is defined to the north by the valley, to the east by the metro viaduct and then to the south by the Colli Aminei residential settlement and a small group of schools and the Cardarelli hospital structure and to the west by the New Policlinico hospital facility. Inside the area there is an archipelago of farms, rural residential architectures in close relation with the agricultural areas, which, like islands in a sea crossed by vegetable gardens, vineyards and fruit trees, represent domestic references of a large open space. The area is a large open space on the edge of the city (Figure 2), with an extension of about 100 hectares, which preserves a rural identity and a human scale, but which is measured to the west by the great size of the tower of the Biological Institutes (twenty floors high and belonging to the New Policlinico hospital) and to the east by the metro viaduct (Figure 3) with the two big station buildings of Frullone and Colli Aminei (built between 1993 and 1995).

The events that have characterized this area make it clear how it is located in a strategic position, in a part of territory that is both a border area and a connection area and that was also the site of the passage of the last wall of Naples, the financier wall, designed by Stefano Gasse starting in 1827 and of which only a few segments remain. 1095

To protect this area and its context from further alterations, in 2004 the Campania Region established the Naples Hills' Metropolitan Park, safeguarding forever what remains of the agricultural landscape that surrounds the city and that still characterizes the territory where the farm are. This policy was implemented in parallel with the approval of the last regulatory plan that protected, like the historic center, also the old farmhouses and the still un-built and partly cultivated soils of the hills.

### **A proposal for rural form and identity in the making**

The San Rocco valley area is governed by an Implemented Urban Plan approved in 2012, but not yet realized, which provides for the construction of an agricultural park in this area. The proposal follows the prescriptions of the Plan, interpreting the general strategy and the specific aims, but developing the topic of the agricultural park with reference to the therapeutic need, in accordance with the research themes of the research project of national interest "The city of care, the care of the city" (PRIN 2015 - University of Rome, Naples and Venice).

The setting of the project for the new park starts from some morphological figures of the existing landscape that become leading concepts for the new design: the natural morphology of the valley, the artificial morphology of large hospitals' structure and the natural morphology of the wooded gardens describe an engraved landscape in a clear and flexible way, characterized on the edge by the rigid grids of the settled landscape and traced in its interior through the furrows of the cultivated landscape.

The large agricultural space (Figure 4) takes shape through the articulation of some internal areas clearly identified and developed in relation to a frame of paths. These paths delimit different areas and connects them with each other and with the external parts of the city through a system of widespread entrances, located along the perimeter.

The paths also design areas for the green care activities following the compositional - organizational healing gardens principles, an orientation perspective that give coherence to

the landscape forms as therapeutic space. The whole project works in terms of general clarity, with areas and paths that give a feeling of stable simplicity and control of the understanding of the park's articulation. This aspect is therapeutic for all those stress related pathologies and is balanced to a design of strong variety of spaces, routes and crop types also in relation to the seasons changes which instead provides for the activation and stimulation of senses.

These variable and heterogeneous spaces are organized through the articulation of sequences and gradual transition areas that fluidly accompany the specific and variable need for spaces of exchange and aggregation with respect to more intimate and reserved areas. These sequences are organized through the rhythmic alternation of focuses represented both by the presence of some equipment architectures and by the presence of specific thematic areas.

Then, the specific location of the agricultural park in this expanding area of the city, characterized by strongly impacting infrastructural bands and great architectures, makes it necessary to develop space on the human scale that can be pleasant, welcoming, measured and can become, in this specific sense, also a new urban attractor.

The north-west south-east route defines the eastern boundary of the park, crossing it at the point of greatest difference in height, characterized by the structured presence of already cultivated areas, and intercepting the area of the new rural residences. In fact, in the east side the park is characterized by the presence of a new residential settlement that develops the rural architecture principles, both with respect to the local features, and with respect to more current forms of living, hospitality and residential treatment assistance.

1096 The rural residential settlement extends into the agricultural landscape through rural paths and adjacent little architectures in this way designing the nearest open spaces. This also creates a new social dimension linked to the cultivation of the land and a renewed sense of belonging and identity, aspects that contribute to reinforce a dimension of collective, physical, psychological and social well-being. This area is also characterized by the presence of a space linked to the exchange intended both from the commercial point of view, giving a work attribute to the constancy and effort of the rural activity, both from the standpoint of the exhibition, conferring an attribute of art to the product of agricultural work. In this way, these spaces promotes aggregation, integration, sociability and the formation of new professional skills.

To the west, however, the park spaces relate to the consolidated presence of the two large hospitals. In this sense, in fact, the western wing is organized to accommodate spaces that decline the aspect of health promotion, prevention and care through the link with animals in the open space.

There are areas for pet therapy, care farming, but also for experimental research on agriculture as therapeutic device. On the edge areas the park is related to the characteristics of the urban materials that define its perimeter and therefore with respect to the road presence mitigation areas are set up through the placement of dense trees that define a protection diaphragm. To the north, however, the trees form a very permeable edge related to the great altitude jump and the engraved landscape of the valley. The path on the northern edge is characterized by the presence of panoramic points that rhythmically measure its development through the areas of green exercise and wilderness therapy.

## Conclusion

The evolution of the urban morphology and of the rural identity of the area of the San Rocco valley in Naples allows to verify how the city is an entity in constant transformation, strongly dependent on human activities.

The therapeutic agricultural park project for this area of urban extension offers the possibility to experiment as an urban recovery strategy can base its design principles on an identity in the making, but is also be able to renew, once more, the agriculture features in terms of healing devices.

To the growing demand for public green spaces is offered a response in terms of large peri-urban open spaces, re-qualifying the pre-existing rural context and supporting the presence of large hospitals' structures through therapeutic open spaces.

The projection in the future of the shape of this part of the city takes place through the health and prevention culture's development, intertwined with that one of the re-appropriation of the multi-faced agricultural identity of a fragile and peripheral urban area.

This planning strategy that moves between city and nature, between urban and architectural project, contributes to placing the extension city and its rural identity again at the center of development and wellbeing policies, with the possibility of expansion of its benefits even beyond borders of the agricultural park.

**Figure 1.** Routes within the area of the San Rocco valley between the vineyards and the Naples Metro viaduct (photograph by the author, 2017).



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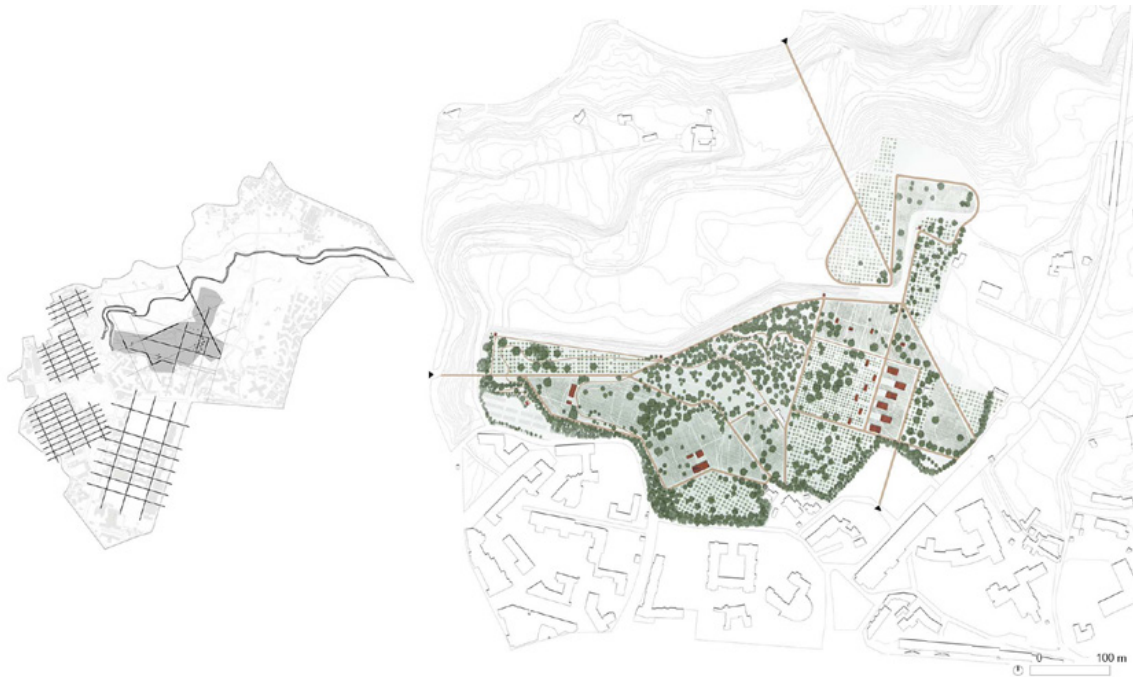
**Figure 2.** The rural area of the San Rocco valley with the tower of the Biological Institutes on the bottom (photograph by the author, 2017).



**Figure 3.** The rural area of the San Rocco valley with the Naples Metro viaduct (photograph by the author, 2017).



1098 **Figure 4.** Concept and masterplan for the agricultural park proposal.



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