CITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD: QUESTIONS OF CULTURE, CLIMATE AND DESIGN

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Rural Open Spaces Perspectives for Fragile Peri-Urban Landscape

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• Abstract (300 words):
The focus is on the peri-urban landscape, placed between suburban settlements and the surrounding countryside. It is configured as an “uncertain” area, unable to have crucial urban relations and convincing rural and agricultural fabric. Different expressions of fragility, both physical and social, coagulate in these places: the reason why they represented a significant object of study for several decades, becoming symbols of problematic urban models. Among the possible regeneration processes, the one that starts from a rural, rather than urban, perspective seems to be the most interesting. Today, what appears essential is considering the peri-urban countryside areas, not as a possibility for the urban fabric to expand, but as the necessary open spaces that complete the suburban fringes’ layout. Actively involving rural areas contributes to a more effective transition between countryside and urban elements and improves a general reinforcement of the open spaces system, thus conceiving as the settlement’s backbone. The importance of inhabiting countryside as loisir spaces for the citizens, beyond agricultural production settings, became more urgent during pandemic times, in which wide open spaces became the safest areas. Therefore, to imagine a multifunctional countryside to inhabit, one of the crucial design tools to work with is the water. Streams innervating the countryside can represent pivotal
devices to rethink transitional open spaces in layout and uses between rural and urban practices. Simultaneously, working with streams allows counteracting or preventing possible water imbalances investing and damaging urban areas due to climate change effects and inadequate ways to anthropize the territories. The more dilatated fabric of the peri-urban landscape allows considering water and its ecological connections as a primary design tool. Peri-urban areas need spatial devices to relate rural and urban elements, connect ecological issues, infrastructures to prevent water instability, and a general perception of open spaces’ habitability, whose critical condition became more impelling. The architect’s vision, a cross-scalar and multidisciplinary one, works as a mediation between natural, built elements and people gestures, assuring “anti-fragile” and adaptive processes to be efficient in constructing landscape.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Architect (2010) and Ph.D. (2015), Lavinia is a research fellow since 2017 and adjunct professor since 2016 at Politecnico di Milano. She is currently part of the research group Territorial Fragilities within the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU), and she is dealing with landscape design issues in fragile peri-urban areas, focusing mainly on mending strategies for fragmented open spaces.

Since 2017 she has taken part in research by design projects, funded by institutions or foundations, concerning the regeneration of landscape and the design of open spaces, both in Italy and in the global south. In particular, she focused on waterway issues, suburban protected areas to enhance or spatial renewal regarding heritage buildings and their surroundings.

Through her teaching activity within a Design Studio of the Bachelor, she deals with the regeneration of urban open spaces with a multidisciplinary approach and a multiscalar design strategy.