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The reform we want

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**Urban plan for parco Ottavi: from the competition to the definitive plan**  
*Andrea Bondonio*

It is a widely shared opinion that for real improvement to the quality of our cities, the re-qualification of that large part of the territory comprised between the periphery and the sprawl city is perhaps the key. In Reggio Emilia the project for the transformation of parco Ottavi into a new precinct for 3.000 residents in the west section of the town's limits constitutes an unedited case for Italy, that particular responds to this strategic need. One of the main outlines in the design competition guidelines for the site, was that a large part of the area must be designated to city park, a green lung of around 9 hectares aimed at connecting the new master plans system of greenery, as proposed in the new design, with the existing agricultural countryside (a true priority to conserve this type of landscape is well defined in the existing town and county plans). Today the site presents itself as a large agricultural inlet of some 50 hectares, comprised between the directory of urban expansion of the via Emilia and of via Gorizia (Fig.1-2). Mostly thanks so far, to the careful attention paid to the existing indications as laid out in the town plan in act and the fact that the area belongs to a sole proprietor. The winning design solution is conceive around a large almond shaped green centre that will become the heart of the master plan site, this park becomes the most important net of connection-almost a focal buffer zone between the other functions that will include: residences, a shopping centre, tertiary area, a sport centre, and a scholastic complex. The shape of the park recalls the

elliptic form of the original gardens surrounding old villa Terrachini with an axis longitudinally crossing the site, existing agricultural area plasmas this form. From the central park the green network will connect itself with another two urban parks as foreseen in the town plan and to be developed in the adjacent precincts: 'Orologio' and 'Peep Pieve' and it is well inserted in the surrounding urban landscape. The project aims on developing an articulated and continuous series of green rooms able to provide a type of identity to the open space, closing the gap between the new built up area and the agricultural margin.

A second theme, crucial to the design competitions outline and carefully addressed in the project is the problem of overcoming the actual infrastructural barrier that divides the site into two separate sections, constituted by the local train line heading for the village of Ciano d'Enza. This track will become the future light metropolitan line, as foreseen in the prg and later will be sided by the new vehicle penetration axis towards the cities centre. With the design of a large artificial hill, risen some 7 meters above the countryside's existing level, a vehicle and footbike path is provided joining the actual asseveration of these two areas of the site. On the top of the rise a central piazza will be formed surrounded by commercial and tertiary use-and within the hills mass the train station and two floors of in ground parking will be built. (Fig.4).

The layout of the residential pattern is quite apposed to the idea of a monolithic 'grand ensemble', but is rather envisaged a series of small unit buildings, huddled around their court yards. Each court is comprised prevailingly of apartment blocks of different heights,

organized around connecting spaces and access routes for both transit and play (protected from traffic). These protected passageways also respond to the developers brief regarding the architectural language; to create a contemporary re interpretation of the typical rural agricultural courts of the territory.

The necessity to create a unified built up landscape is one of the crucial principle in the local applicative building regulations, in which it is also outlined the necessity to use local designers for much of the work. These regulations; with parameters that are more quantitative then qualitative provide guidelines that each individual designer should follow for their constructions, responding with solutions, that although varied should be coherent with the overall design of the area. On an architectural scale the buildings should follow the overall map of the master plan and respect the delicate rapport with the territory. The shared theme remains however to aim for an overall 'quality of the design' and living environment, with particular attention to detail above all to the transition zones, loggia, porticos, basement and border areas.