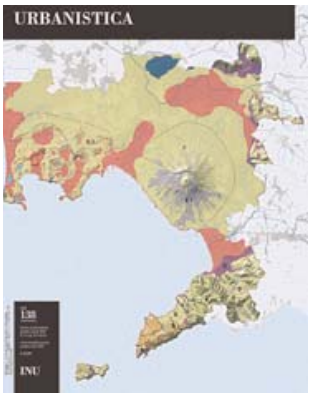

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Pierluigi Properzi — Plans, housing question and modernization of the country

Problems, policies, and research

edited by Attilia Peano, Claudia Cassatella — Atlases of the landscape in Europe
Attilia Peano — Atlases and landscapes
Attilia Peano, Claudia Cassatella — Methodological proposals for the management and promotion of Piedmont landscapes
Claudia Cassatella — Social perception of the landscape and the Atlases
Mauro Volpiano — The Atlas as a metaphor for the history of territory and landscape
Angioletta Voghera — The European context
Jordi Bellmut, Maria Goula — Experiences on the landscape catalogues for Catalonia
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Projects and implementation

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Roberto Gambino — A heritage to defend and exploit
Francesco Russo — The Ptcp of Naples: from the plan of 2003 to the new proposal of 2008
Paolo Castelnovi — The landscape in the plan
Alessandro Dal Piaz — Naples Ptcp directions
Immacolata Apreda — Settlements system
Stefania Caiazzo — The assessment of territorial contexts and the landscape analysis
Massimo Fagnano — Agricultural landscapes in the Naples province: a heritage to be protected
Antonio Carbone, Michela Iamarino, Fabio Terribile — A soil science to urban landscape planning: the case study of Naples and its surroundings
Maria Mautone, Maria Ronza — Cultural heritage, landscape and metropolitan system: is planning possible?
Vincenzo Russo — Sustainable mobility for Naples' metropolitan area
Angela Maria Digrandi — Statistical analysis in support of territorial planning
Mariarosa Albano, Clea Martone, Michele Russo, Valeria Vanella — Gis for spatial co-ordination planning
Enrico Gualini — Knowledge and action in the 'structural' interpretation and representation of territory

Profiles and practices

edited by Paolo Pileri — Consuming land, consuming the future
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Sophie Schetke, Theo Kötter, Benedikt Frielinghaus, Dietmar Weigt — Assessment of sustainable land use in Germany: the project Fin.30
Kjell Nilsson, Thomas Sick Nielsen, Stephan Pauleit — Integrated European research on sustainable urban development and periurban land use relationships
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Methods and tools

Rosario Pavia — Zoning, zooning

Michele Talia — Reform of territorial governance and the new urban order

Clovis Ultramari — By the way, what urbanism really is?

The landscape in the plan
Paolo Castelnovi

In the plan landscape plays a crucial role: it constitutes the matrix for recognizing the structural aspects of territory, both those affecting it as a whole and those concerning its own, separately considered, parts.
Through a synthetic landscape analysis, it is possible to develop a structural framework which shows the fundamental interrelations between the 'basic elements' of territory and other factors which might present a more-than-local relevance. This structural framework serves as a tool for verifying the potentials, the sustainability and possible negative impacts of the strategic proposals regarding infrastructures and development-sustaining policies.
To this end, long-term factors and relationships have been selected to be protected from use in an unrehearsed fashion, or in a way which might cause irreversible changes, derived from short-sighted actions.
The structural factors have been divided into three categories. The 'primary factors' (the geomorphologic and natural structure of the ecosystem, exceptional and strong in the area of Naples); the 'secondary factors' (the stratified traces of human settlements, from the archaeological sites, of exceptional value, to the urban and rural areas, which still influence the new urban development); the 'tertiary factors' (derived from collective images and perceptions, and which result into the identity landscapes and in their aesthetic evaluation, of great cultural force too).
Hence, in order to define the strategies of the plan, and taking these extraordinary resources into account, it has been fundamental to highlight the criticalities and the territory-deterioration processes which threaten the whole above mentioned three-tiered structural factors sequence. In particular:
- the 'stifling' of the historical structure of the rural territory, threatened and harmed by the chaotic urban development and by the impact of infrastructures;
- the concentration of residential settlements along the coastline, that, apart from being very dangerous from a seismic and volcanic point of view, cuts also the ecological and cultural connections existing between land and sea.
Structural 'long' networks are in the worse condition, the following in particular:
- the ecological connections, due to the strong discontinuities in the vegetation and in the hydrographical net, and because of the blocking of the last corridors which connected naturalistic areas between Naples volcanic districts (Campiflegrei) and the Vesuvius;
- the landscape connections, with relation to the loss of local identity, particularly in the metropolitan suburbs and in the scattered settlements situated along the coastline;
- the functional and infrastructural connections, because of a deficient vehicular and rail system.
The structural complexity of the Naples area is related to the coexistence of very different local contexts.
Landscape can be viewed as the identification moment between a given local community and its surrounding territory.
Landscape is the active factor of social construction of the strategic project.
Starting from this interpretation of landscape, as in the intent of the European landscape convention, at a local scale some areas have been identified, distinguishing two different levels:
- the Local settlement areas (Lsas), based on homogeneous internal landscape characteristics. The Lsas usually encompass three municipalities: this is the fine thread for distinguishing specific aspects in a vertical, top-bottom approach, in order to implement, literally, 'on the ground' the wide-area policies, both at a regional and at a national level. Hence, 22 Lsas have been set, some of them with broad overlap areas. Furthermore, two Integrated settlement areas (Isas) (the Costal one and the Vesuvius one) encompass some of these Lsas, as far as issues involving strategic and unifying choices are concerned;
- the Identity landscape areas (Ilas, totalling 83, compared to 91 municipalities), subdivisions of Lsas, according to the dimension of subjective self-acknowledgement by local communities. In this context the shibboleth is the bell-tower, the city square of the medieval Good government archetype. The Ilas in the Plan project are the more basic tools for territory enhancing and regulating policies, especially where such policies require participation of communities and of local authorities.
At the second level, the specific factors of the Plan have been defined in a more detailed way. Areas or landscape elements to be safeguarded pursuant to the provisions of the Code have been selected. Moreover, at this level it has been possible to recognize the existing connections between landscape elements which, taken as a whole, constitute the ever changing and evolving local identity heritage, which should be taken into account when the drafting of local-level urban instruments is concerned.