



**ENGLISH TEXTS**





## TITLE OF THE ISSUE

### Rome. Visions from *Coda della Cometa*

## DEBATE

### The strategic role of Coda della Cometa

*Roberto Secchi*

From recent events of Ilva in Taranto, comes the need of a reflection on integrations between design and ecology, redefining our operational practices with a particular attention to the issue of rights: work, mobility, accessibility, health and beauty. A right, in order to be called such, must be shared. Architecture can be a domain of agreement: between man-made actions on a territory and life cycles of nature.

The visions on the territory that stretches from Rome to the sea belong to those principles. It is the image of an environmental infrastructure that will reduce hegemonic pretensions on the specificity of places that it innervates. The legacy of *Agro Romano* drainage is alive but in danger. The gigantic urbanization process threatens that balance. We should redeem this territory and transform it in city development priority. The inadequacy of present situation mainly concerns the waterfront question. The *Isola Sacra* district is the nerve center of this coast, in relation with Rome through its river. We should create a continuity with the direction of urban voids all around the river, to reach the metropolitan city scale. The connection with airport system is the primary structure of the future of the city, to reconnect it in a global relations system. The cross axis Berlin-Palermo and Barcelona-Varna has been already drawn, the *Coda della Cometa* is a possible center of this cross of axes.

We would not suggest any brutal compaction of Rome and the sea. We are looking for a balance between open spaces, environmental and infrastructural networks, public and private transport and housing. A balance between the large scale of relations imposed by globalization and the medium – small scale in which we still can value diversity and identity issues.

### The sea as a destiny for Rome. A long-term history

*Piero Ostilio Rossi*

The complicated relationship between Rome, the Tiber and the sea has ancient roots, that refer to the foundation of the city myth. In Imperial age, Claudio and then Traiano realized a port system at the river mouth, that had in Ostia a mainly residential and commercial district and in *Portus* the effective port city, with all delivery, storage and distribution equipment.

In 1870, when Rome was proclaimed capital of Italian Kingdom, the city was an anomaly in the peninsula structure: most of Italian cities were included in a complex and well integrated territorial system, while Rome was surrounded by an actual desert. In this desert – *The Campagna Romana* – inhabitants living conditions were terrible and malaria reigned supreme. In last three decades of nineteenth century, questions of Tiber waters regimentation,

wetlands draining at its mouth, *Campagna Romana* resettlement and river navigability represented different and inseparable aspects of the same problem, looking for the conception of a port on Tyrrhenian Sea. Between the seventies of the nineteenth century and early twenties of the twentieth, countless hypotheses of intervention, investment programs, proposals and projects followed one another. The drainage of Maccarese, Ostia, Isola Sacra and Campo Salino ponds, launched between 1884 and 1892, paved the way for reviving proposals of commercial and industrial city development towards the sea. In the mid-nineties the discussion focused around the new port construction. Paolo Orlando started in those years his tireless propagandist and entrepreneur activities: in 1904 he formed the *Comitato Pro Roma Marittima*, immediately after First World War he began to build the *Borgata Marina* of *Ostia Nuova* and in 1919 he gave birth to the *SMIR*, an independent institution with the task of building an external port in Castelfusano and an internal one in San Paolo district, including all industrial zones and necessary infrastructures, with connecting channels and a railway to the sea.

The idea of a port for Rome never became a reality, but since the twenties an important infrastructure system between Rome and the sea was realized: the Roma-Lido railway (1924), the seaplane base *Carlo del Prete* (1926), the Roma-Ostia highway (1928) and the *via Imperiale* (1938), completed in the early fifties.

Many of the projects for *Ostia Nuova*, starting from 1908-1910, put the focus on the urban waterfront theme. Through this waterfront the new Ostia village, but especially Rome itself – the capital city – would have earned an overlook on the sea. In this overall vision we have to include the scenic roundabout design of Roma bathhouse, built in 1924 (then destroyed during the war), as well as the subsequent projects by Adalberto Libera (1933-1934) and Alfio Susini (1940-1941) for Castelfusano. Another project proposal on this theme was faced twenty years later by Pier Luigi Nervi (1962-1968).

### Development projects towards the sea 1870-1941

*Maria Clara Ghia*

The vocation of Rome to be reconnected with the sea, set aside after the Imperial age but never entirely forgotten, returns to be a central theme since 1870, for redefinition of new born Capital aspects and qualities. First projects are backed by Giuseppe Garibaldi. He looks at Tiber accommodation after the overflow as «urgent need», with a unified project for drainage of *Agro Romano* and harbour construction. A remarkable series of project proposals follows, some of which are still unpublished. Meanwhile, since 1904, Paolo Orlando began his work for the construction of a city harbour connected to the city through a waterway and a railway. This project is configured as an holistic vision for city development to the coast and it should have ended with the creation a new commercial and



industrial area around new Ostia urban core. As a counterweight, in 1912, Dario Carbone plans on the right bank of Tiber a masterful designed waterway, with an inner harbour near the San Paolo Basilica and an outer harbour in front of Fregene pinewood. In this project as well, a new urban core is developed on the seaside, connected to Rome through an high speed electric rail. Then, the projects supported by Mussolini, who appropriates the ideas of city development towards the sea and seems to insist at first on a large port system construction in Isola Sacra district. Many visions take shape, some of them favouring agricultural aspects of this territory, some promoting industrial development, some insisting on commercial aspects of harbour construction, in any case making the point on importance of connections between Rome and the sea, also as an incentive for recreational activities increasingly in demand during last century, due to middle class rapid growth. A narration of suspended projects, whose sings have been deleted from different trends of city development, but which become part of our imagery and encourage us to reflections for the future.

## E42 and Coda della Cometa

*Piero Ostilio Rossi*

We are used to assume that the decision (1936) to realize the E42 in the *Tre Fontane* area has been a crucial starting point for a process of reconfiguration of the city, based on a urban development strategy oriented towards the sea. Studying the projects developed in those years (Giovannoni, Marconi, Libera, Ufficio Tecnico E42) a more complex reality appears, which suggests that this development direction choice may precede the Exposition District localization.

We owe to Gustavo Giovannoni the idea of Rome *in forma di Cometa*, considering the consolidated city as its head and regarding its long tail towards the sea. He formulated this image in 1938-1939 and Marcello Piacentini took it up again in 1942 with the *Variante Generale* plan: it can be considered the first and only directional plan in Roman urbanism history.

The choice of developing the city towards the sea had to do only partially with urban nature reasons: it was an ideological resolution above all, mainly consolidated after Ethiopia conquest and Empire proclamation (9 May 1936). However, the decision was based on a tradition of studies, programs and projects that lasted for more than sixty years.

Starting from the end of the thirties, while discussing on the new Plan configuration, in the *Coda della Cometa* territory some housing projects were realized, and they were the real setting up of its urbanization: Borgata del Trullo (1939-1940), Casette Pater complex in Acilia (1940), Villaggio San Francesco in Acilia (1951-1953), Vitinia district (1948), INA Casa district Casal Bernocchi (1958-1960) and Casalpalocco neighborhood (1961-1962).

## Shapes of water

*Francesca R. Castelli*

The system of drainage channels is the result of a drastic transformation of the landscape carried out in the last centuries on a territory that has always been dominated by the fresh waters of the Tiber which met the sea water at its mouth and formed the large east and west pools.

Though the local landscape is characterised by farming activities developed on the hydrographical network, the whole area is now interested by a slow but progressive abandonment, and the eco-system is loosing its natural elements and its biodiversity.

The low quality of water and especially the bad conditions of channels make irrigation difficult in the periods when the water flow is weak, and at the same time can cause great problems in case of storms.

A set of interventions on landscape together with some urban planning strategies would contribute to reconsider this system as an 'environmental infrastructure' able to purify water and air, to regulate flows and at the same time to conceive new land uses and new systems to let urban population actively use this area.

The project strategy envisages the creation of a number of artificial wetlands that will allow for a water purification, a management of the area that would imply a low impact on vegetation in order to preserve the water ecosystem, an extension of the natural area for hydraulic purposes, the valorisation of green tourist paths. The final result would be the rehabilitation and revitalisation, also from an economic point of view, of large portions of the territory.

## Recent landscapes, scenarios for transformation

*Fabio Di Carlo*

The territory between Rome and the Sea, nowadays, tells of natural and human metamorphosis of a «young territory», in terms of natural and artificial geomorphologic modifications and current forms of use. The sedimentation of the coastline built approximately two kilometers of territory in two thousand years, formed wetlands and wooded areas that, until the end of the XIX century, built a macro design in the form of an organic matrix, where the only signs of artifice were the Roman vestiges of the harbors system and roads layout.

A very different landscape structure was created starting from 1884 still the fascist period, ended with the reclamation of lands, the «Bonifica», that we can see today: a network of channels of great regularity and hierarchical organization, accompanied by a system of farms that, together with the introduction of the eucalyptus, represented an element of novelty and strangeness in the landscape. A new open scenario, hatched by a land division reminiscent of the plains of the Po, almost «alien» compared to the soft and complex shapes of the Roman countryside. An alien and rare landscape, as such, deserves to be valued.

The pinewoods of Castelporziano and Castel Fusano, the River and the lands of Bonifica, represent today, along the Sea front, the possibility of a new great project of «widespread park»: rethink to those landscapes as a unit in which could coexist settlements, residential and service, with new green economies and a wide range local opportunities. It might be a strategy to help achieve the goal of reconnecting Rome with the sea, with a view of sustainability and social sharing.

## Landscapes along the river system

*Cristiana Costanzo*

Historically it has been the fluvial geomorphology to have



most influenced the processes of consolidation of the cities: from the close relationship between water and landscape, we are faced with sedimentation of facts and events that constitute the history of the local landscapes and reflected on their forms.

Rome is no exception, because the ecological corridor along the river Tevere represents an element of reconnection of urban and suburban areas with its agricultural landscapes and the coast to the south.

If the first reclamations for productive purposes are Etruscan, then Roman times to the Middle Ages, in the 700 the landscape conditions on this site are those of four centuries before: an almost impenetrable jungle, but representative of an integrates and autonomous unit plant, until 1870s when the ruling class of the Italian State decide to reclaim the lands radically around the capital of the new Kingdom of Italy.

By this time, the positivist approach to the construction of the modern city has certainly acted as a function of new sophisticated and more pressing needs, however, the absence of spatial planning tools capable of handling such processes of development and predict short-and long echoes term, has helped to hide the structural and symbolic significance of this riparian landscape by reducing its sign of something else different from the environment, from the territory and from the landscape itself.

Silent landscapes through which the addresses of the new Regional Landscape Territorial Plan are now demanding their recognition and exploitation, to claim a new interpretative key and a new and different physical accessibility, without deleting the multiple agricultural and riparian identity, but inserting it into a form of planning can overcome the economic, ecological and cultural conflicts, answer to urban sprawl.

## Agriculture to recover urban landscape

*Andrea Bruschi*

The land between the historic city of Rome and the sea has undergone a chaotic urbanization marked by rambling building events. An american city parody which, in addition to the disordered structure, we are concerned about the growth mechanism: a principle of addition lying on a low-level housing market. This expansion paradigm raises fears of a similar fate for the unbuilt areas, ready to return to the saturation mechanism of the soil as soon as the economic situation shows favorable. The areas near major roads have taken over time the most various uses, others hardly preserved the original agricultural use, while others are in a state of neglect showing little aptitude for alternatives vocations to wild building. Neglecting these areas is equivalent to await their fate and give up the regeneration of a city where the critical issues are related to an embalmed and sectoral mobility and to the lack of public services and spaces. It is therefore to identify new life cycles for the sector Rome-the sea. A recovery program of Rome-the sea sector should adopt a «strategy of the vacuum» pursuing goals such as reducing the tendency to building sprawl, the introduction of diversified and land anchored gain forms, the ecological recovery of urban landscape, in order to the realization of an integrated with open space city. A scenario is an high-level agriculture use, providing different colture types depending on size, location and phytoclimate of lots. So agriculture not only as a recycling tool, according to a landscape criterion, but as an economy review principle of the entire area.

## A city of houses between Rome and the sea

*Roberto Filippetti*

The aim of the text is to reconstruct and interpret the development of urban settlements, between Rome and the sea, from the late nineteenth century till now. Here, in the short span of a century, a highly urbanized area has arisen; settlements have played a central role in the definition of the urban form in this part of the town. During this period, however, these territories have grown in a manner different from what was expected. The idea of a linear expansion structured beside the axis formed by the Tiber River was partially contradicted by the chaotic development of the settlements. Speculation, sprawl and illegal buildings, especially since the second half of last century, have changed the structure of these territories affirming, even in this part of the city, the models of the fragmented metropolis.

The text will trace, albeit briefly, the main stages of this development, observing the slow emergence of themes and forms that characterize the morphological structure of this area. The transformation of urban landscapes will be analyzed through a few key interpretations: the relationship between settlements and geography, the role of infrastructure as ordering element, the contrast between planned and spontaneous settlements and their juxtaposition on the urban level. Finally, contemporary criticalities and potentials will be highlighted, identifying the integration between natural and built elements as one of the central issues for the future of the area.

## Sustainable Mobility

*Giambattista Reale*

The purpose of the project «Roma 2050» is to make a concrete future vision for the territory between Rome and the sea. The study was developed as a part of the research *Coda della Cometa* in the area currently characterized by strong anomalies. Currently, the mobility is deficient due to the absence of links from north to south because of the presence of infrastructure that creates insurmountable limits that also limits the exponential growth of the urban fabric.

This arrangement does not meet the current needs and hampers the possible future developments. The project builds on the existing infrastructure networks according to the sustainable energy and environmental sustainability. The infrastructural ribbon is designed as the backbone of the ecological network in a strategy of assigning to different means of transport, energy areas and the ecological values. The research designs and configures a network infrastructure linked to sustainable paths, from bike lanes to electric vehicles and horse-riding paths. The network *Altra Mobilità* unfolds along the canals, follows the tree lines, coincides with the irrigation channels, underlines the territories of agricultural fields, marks the borders of the built environment, and reaches and connects systemic areas and facilities that are to be regenerated. The new network becomes a powerful tool for reading and understanding of the area. To achieve a sustainable infrastructure network it is necessary to undertake numerous specific interventions, widespread action and functional reorganization.





## An archaeological and naturalistic park for Via Severiana

*Lina Malfona*

Starting to the consideration about two ways of designing, the project of re-stitching and the strategy of the separation, it has been formulated the project proposal for the Via Severiana Archeological and Naturalistic Park, understood as the engine of growth of the entire area. The first section of the park would compare with the presence of the ancient city of Portus and Ostia, that will reconnect through the river and through the Sacred Island, with a new footbridge near the old Matidia Bridge. The second section, from Ostia, would continue up to Severiana towards the Castel Porziano's Tenuta.

Portus would be the head of the park and its connection with the development direction Via Portuense-Fiumicino Airport Road. In this foreshadowing, the station of Porto, currently into disuse would be re-used as a point of arrival at the park and as a node for the exchange of soft mobility network. The project, while reconnecting the archaeological sites according to a longitudinal course, also would develop some transversal axes, thereby developing a more direct relationship with the surrounding urban fabric. These transversal guidelines may extend to the sea of Rome in a network of docks, piers and environmental control towers, which reproduce the sighting system of the ancient coastal headmasters.

In the project vision, the area of the ancient Pond of Ostia, for that is expected the conversion to an agricultural town with neighborhood services, guest houses and accommodation for visitors, takes a strategic value. Acquiring such territorial extension and such integration with the city, the archaeological coastal strip would not look

more like inaccessible, according to the old model of the archaeological park closed and roped off, but on the contrary would become an urban park. Finally, this park should be interrelated to other archeological sites that punctuate the area, as the ancient settlements of Ficana, Decima and Fregeneae, which similarly to Ostia and Portus, should be treated as poles of a network, either to the natural coastal system.

## Visions in the territories of «Coda della Cometa»

*Orazio Carpenzano*

This essay describes the projects developed during the Workshop organized by the research *Coda della Cometa*, aiming to express methods, opinions and solutions on the conceptual premises set during the first year. The responses to this call, which involved four PhDs courses from our Department, have experimented a wide range of design approaches and lines of research. Those, with great autonomy, although in compliance with all data set by each theme, have returned to the research hypotheses, proposals and spatial surveys useful to contribute to the definition of a new vision. Each project has indicated the need to develop different strategies in relation to different environmental, settlements, archaeological, historical and agricultural systems. The historical and environmental values of some existing elements are projected to the surrounding areas as visual guides and trajectories of physical connection in the perception and use of the various landscapes. Among them the landscapes of residential enclaves, scattered unplanned settlements, agriculture, tourism and infrastructure: a broad mix of activities and functions, grafted on a territory as fragile as full of stories.

