



## Urbanistica n. 127

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The future of town planning and *Urbanistica*

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*edited by Federica Legnani and Michele Zazzi*

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*edited by Anna Moretti, Marco Facchinetti, Paola Pucci*

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## Road's integrated planning in Emilia-Romagna

Lucina Caravaggi

The Region of Emilia-Romagna promoted the drafting of Guidelines for *an integrated planning of road infrastructure* through a competition held in 2001-2002. The interdisciplinary working group that carried out the study presented briefly in these notes is made up of Susanna Menichini (coordinator), Lucina Caravaggi, Luigi Napoli, Rosario Pavia, and Giovanni Zallocco. The document, entitled *Stra(de)paesaggi* (edited by L. Caravaggi, S. Menichini, R. Pavia and published in 2004) contains a critical presentation of the work, while the Guidelines will be published in their entirety by the end of this year. The Transports Planning and Logistics department, the Roads Department and the Valorization and Protection of the Landscape department of Emilia-Romagna Region have contributed to the elaboration of the Guidelines. The inspiration behind the Guidelines is the belief that the territory cannot be considered a 'neutral' support in the design and planning of infrastructure, but constitutes the central point of reference for the plans. In other words, the territory has not been used as a banal reference for choosing the layouts, or as the subject of mechanistic environmental impact assessments, but as a creative reference within the definition of the choices and configuration of the spaces. Starting from this hypothesis, in the Guidelines there is an experimentation of a possible manner of integration between road planning and a 'conscious' interpretation of territorial contexts and local landscapes, and in

particular the possibility to firmly correlate the variables connected with safety and improvement of the road system performance with the 'contextual' variables referring to the various landscapes through which the road passes and which it helps build and modify. Roads and landscapes are no longer considered autonomous objects to be correlated, but a "genetically recognizable set", called ironically in Italian *strapaesaggi*. In an attempt to avoid a catalogue of generic recommendations or, on the other hand, the umpteenth technical type handbook, the Guidelines are situated in an intermediate area, proposing a possible manner of working, a path for developing the decisions to be shared with various parties working on road planning and useful to the Region for directing the funds. For many years now the necessity to rethink road planning, resuming the dialogue with today's territories, has been asserting itself, but the difficulties of a continuing technical and administrative separation that relegates roads to a shielded sector (especially from the standpoint of funds and project management), together with a widespread nostalgia for lost rationality models (and irremediably lost landscapes) that characterizes numerous design studies from within, seem to prevent the 'realistic' imagination of new *strapaesaggi*. In an attempt to increase plans that are 'adequate' for numerous contemporary needs-demands-expectations connected with roads (coexistence of heterogeneous types of traffic, safety, environmental comfort, route legibility, enjoy-ability of itineraries), the Guidelines propose a route that is open but not generic, characterized by a circular arrangement

(without obligatory entrances and exits), but with some inescapable itineraries. The open structure of the Guidelines also serves for the updating, implementation, and modification of e design indications, after checks, experiments, and indepth analyses by both the regional authorities and the numerous users. In the first case, the design sense of the relationship between the road functioning and territorial connections is outlined; in the "Contexts" section, it is advisable to consider the role of the road with respect to its context, regardless of the size of the structures to be planned (the term 'context' has been expressly assumed as a trans-scalar reference). The notion of 'context' refers to the infrastructure, settlement, and ecological functioning parameters of the territory, considered indispensable for the construction of the decisions, very different from what happens in the weak and useless framing (a term that presupposes the existence of a frame-existent, within which a new object can be placed) documents. The key documents envisaged by the Guidelines in this section refer to the terms 'road functioning' and 'structure'. The relationship between road and possible plan scenarios is dealt with in the section called "Landscapes", within which various and apparently heterogeneous operations converge: a closeup reading of the physical-spatial differences inside the various contexts; a study oriented toward the perception of the road by different parties (in relation to problems of functionality, safety, public health, etc.); regional planning decisions and recognition of the local demands that are increasingly crowding around the planning of new roads; selection of design

themes capable of giving collective meanings, and possible added values, to a single work; interpretation of the layout as the relationship between road, ground, and areas of interaction (on the basis of the choice of layout, the road becomes a rut, side, barrier, gutter, overpass, underpass...). This way the term 'landscape' definitively abandons the meanings of the landscape-frame in favour of new meanings, as hoped by the European Landscape Convention, and in particular by the impossibility of considering a landscape without reference to certain parties, and by the landscape that becomes the logo of a new, desired 'sustainability' (environmental, social, economic, etc.). The spatial interpretation of the road-landscape relationship in the Guidelines refers to the concept of 'rhythm'. Through the study and critical development of rhythm, every road can be recognized on the basis of specific and distinctive spatial characteristics, which are more or less readable in the current state, and the identification and highlighting of which is one of the most important and innovative tasks of the infrastructure project. This type of elaboration is contained in the first project sheet. The rhythm is meant as a spatial cadence that can be identified through the perception of the road from within, the complex product of a particular combination of linear sequences, intersections, and junctions. The elements in play, already identified as responsible for the rhythm, are selected and observed closeup on the basis of their recurrence (situations that are frequently repeated) or exceptionality. The first family of relationships to be planned is the one responsible for the

continuity of the road, which involves the side spaces of the layout. The second family is that of the intersections, referring to natural or artificial elements (streams-bridges, direct accesses, side buildings-settlements) responsible for the 'internal' rhythm of a certain road route, and thus characterized by recurrence, resemblance, and continuation. The third family of relationships is that of the distribution junctions which generally refer to infrastructure or settlement elements responsible for the interruption of the continuity of a layout (large accesses, turn-offs, variations of the roadway or road system in relation to the change of the context of a settlement, environmental, etc.).