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Recovering river landscape
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RIVER RECYCLE: AN URBAN AND LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITY.

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Throughout history there has been an important transformation in the spatial meaning of rivers. Their role has changed, from geographical, continuous signs, to fragmented lines, collectors of separated and discordant values. This corresponds also to an alteration of their integrity and, consequently, of their meaning compared to landscape perception.

Many factors have contributed to this change, among which two should be highlighted. The first can be related to the utilitarian role of rivers, whose exploitation, according to diversified demands, has been one of the main reasons that brought to a continuous modification of these infrastructures and to the spatial and functional congestion that nowadays characterize them. The second is related to their considerable natural instability. Factor that has favored the transformation and, at the same time, prevented the achievement of a “definitive” structuration.

Today river landscape demands to be profoundly recycled, especially compared to the need to solve relevant risk factors, to recover urban, peri-urban and rural, built and open spaces, and to retrieve the original sense of continuity and proximity, both in physical, that symbolical and ecological terms. This means returning to the rivers material and ethereal value, giving back their domain to the disciplines of space, especially architecture, along with engineering.

Each river system must be considered according to its complexity. Actually each one is able to influence both the geographical and the local scale, working on a network system, interacting with artificialized systems built and lived by man. For these reasons, and for the generative power linked to infrastructures, rivers can be considered as a possible medium through which rethink the spaces, providing a direction for redesign and heal the shattered landscape inherited from the materialistic post-industrial culture.

These considerations opens some relevant methodological and operative issues.

One of this is linked to the necessity to describe such complexity. For this reason architectural discipline has to imply, recover and improve its traditional knowledge based on maps, drawing and other visual media. This description is fundamental in investigating physical, perceptive, social, ecological, functional values and weaknesses, with the aim to highlight the overlapping and especially the presence of conflicting or collaborating factors. Process that introduces many operational issues, including the necessity to fundamentally alter the physical structure of the territory, including the removal of some parts of it, to restore safeness, quality, meaning.

A programmatic process of disposal, removal and partial, consolidating, reconstruction of buildings and artefacts constitutes the occasion to introduce rivers and, more generally, water's cycle as fundamental term of comparison for urban and landscape recycle, opening a new phase in urban design.

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