

Luigi Savio Margagliotta
The drawing of the territory's form

Abstract

The term *construction* indicates to the territorial and geographical dimension a practice that is not exclusively about building, but about the meaning and value of a process of reinterpretation and formal restructuring of the existing. In relation to the *space to be represented*, therefore, the type of *representation of space* changes, which must describe not only different scales but also the elements and relationships that define it, as well as communicate, even at the big scale, a spatial form and idea of space. The canonical drawings and urbanistic representations give way to the invention of an almost biographical writing, aimed at describing intentions, interpretations and relationships between forms through the use of an expressive code that lies somewhere between concept and image.

Keywords

Architecture — Territory — Form — Drawing — Expression

The topic of drawing here addressed is related to the transition in scale of the architectural design: on the capability and consistency of Drawing in representing and communicating a spatial form and an idea of space even to the big scale, territorial and geographical.

The development of *territory representation* proceeds hand in hand with the succession and evolution of the *visions of territory* that change over time, which is why we want to initially propose the events that over the course of the second half of the twentieth century led to the most recent theories, as well as the related forms of design writing.

Since the last century, the relationship between space and time has changed radically, both in terms of technological advancement that has increased the speed and expansion of settlement and infrastructural processes, and in terms of the increasing speed of travels and the possibility to reach every part of the globe in ever shorter time. As man's radii of action and the extension of his interventions change, the dynamics of mutation in the territory vary accordingly and with them the scales of the project, which must confront broader dimensions and new topics that no longer concern only the scale of the city and its surrounding but the bigger scale of the territory in which the former is included.

However, the combination and expansion of these accelerating phenomena has made evident the inadequacy of the usual design tools and the absence of big scale intervention techniques capable to control the effects or provoking them. This opens at both practical and theoretical levels to reflections that concern not only the research for an updated design methodology, but also the need for an appropriate means of expression to represent its intents.

The design in the territory

The design at the territorial scale was until the last six decades linked to the theme of the city; only after a series of events it did assume its own thematic autonomy. It was in fact the onset of problems related to conurbation and uncontrolled city expansion that gradually shifted the plane of architectural debate beyond urban limits.

In 1930 the geographer Walter Christaller published his theory on central locations, in which the city was considered in an integrated view as the physical pole of the surrounding territorial system. From that moment, as Emilio Battisti states, the city is recognized as structurally connected to its territorial surroundings; a connection from which it will no longer be «conceptually admissible to speak of the city in isolation from the territory» (1975, p. 224).

It was evident that something was changing: new and relevant topics required the widening of the viewpoint towards broader dimensions and new criticalities heralded the need for renewed tools to push beyond the design and functioning of the *forma urbis*. The apparent unresolved disagreement between city and countryside¹ on the one hand, the problems related to the dislocation relations between production-service-residence places on the other, and finally the changing physiognomy of the city into a metropolis, or megalopolis, which, was advancing unchecked engulfing the surrounding land in disorderly fashion, gave an account of an indisputable truth: in order to defuse some of the effects produced by modern urban planning practices, it was not enough to have recourse to predictive logic and zoning, but it was necessary to question of new spatial figures capable to find answers to the emerging problems².

Such was the premises of the 1962 Stresa Conference in which *city-territory* was the central theme, a new dimensional entity that was now to be based on the decentralization of the city's load-bearing functions and their more extensive and homogeneous re-location. «What is the fundamental dimension to be referred to in our urbanistic development hypotheses? What, too, is the structure that frames our formal research?» (1962, p. 16). These are the fundamental questions that Giorgio Piccinato, Vieri Quilici and Manfredo Tafuri ask about the current situation: that is, does the term of *city-territory* indicate only a change in scale or also a different visual angle in dealing with the rapid changes that were taking place?

The design of territory

Parallel to the hypotheses for countering peripheralization and urban sprawl that still identify the system-city as the sole focus to be resolved, a different point of view is asserted extending the concepts of space and architectural form to the entire territorial context. The urbanocentric conception is abandoned in favor of a vision that recognizes the structure and materiality of the entire territory, as a concrete space operable through the tool of the project design: a morphological context of which the city represents only one of the elements contained therein, on par with the natural facts and the other anthropic signs; as well as an autonomous system and an exhaustible resource, to be understood, re-signified and protected through architectural operations. Similarly, territory represents the result of the layering of successive actions. And this means not only more or less modified physical environment, but also behavioral attitudes to it referred (Olivieri 1978, p. 14).

«Territory is not a data, but the result of several processes», André Corboz writes about it. «In other words – he continues –, territory is object of construction. It is a kind of artifact. And since that it also constitutes a *product*. [...] Consequently, territory is a *project*. [...] These different translations of territory into figures refer to an indisputable reality: that territory has a *form*. Indeed, that it is a *form*. Which, of course, doesn't necessarily have to be geometric» (1985, pp. 23-24).

In light of the current conditions, the territorial topic is now more central than ever since new and different complexities related to the advance of a conflict involving both marginal and extended territories are added to the previous ones, in which forms, practices and cultures acting through complex relationships and ancient balances are dying out (Falzetti 2015, pp. 10-11). Reasoning about the capabilities of architectural design as a tool able to producing visions and about the process of *form's construction*, which has no dimensions but rules and principles, thus becomes necessary to analyze and understand the phenomena of the world and to be able to intervene in his processes of transformation that affect all scales of the artifact: from the building, to the city, to the territory.

The drawing of territory

The term *construction* indicates to the territorial and geographical dimension a practice that is not exclusively about building, but about the meaning and value of a process of reinterpretation and formal restructuring of the existing. In the architectural design on the grand scale, which contributes to the construction of a formal whole, not only the dimensions but also the composition of space change, determined by the spatial relationships between distinct, even distant, elements. In relation to the *space to be represented*, therefore, the type of *representation of space* changes, which must describe not only different scales but also the elements and relationships that define it, as well as communicate, even at this scale, a spatial form and idea of space. Canonical drawings such as plans, sections and elevations, often referring to artifacts of the smallest dimensions, are thus replaced by planimetric and perspective views suitable for reproducing the field under examination in its entirety. Similarly the urbanistic illustrations give way to the invention of an almost biographical writing aimed to describe intentions and interpretations through the use of an expressive code «that stands halfway between concept and image» (Pellegrini 1966, p. 103)³.

A very important date for the historical and thematic development of the topic is that of 1963-64, the year of Salvatore Bisogni and Agostino Renna's graduation thesis precisely titled *Introduction to the Naples urban design problems*⁴. It is no coincidence that this turning point occurs just in Naples, an area in which natural facts, first and foremost that of Vesuvius, which has always been a physical and symbolic landmark of the Parthenopean environment, impose themselves with considerable formal and evocative impact.

The study questions the big scale morphological problems in the face of the research for a design methodology that seeks to overcome the operational impasse, which is why a non-descriptive but more specifically design point of view is applied. Initially, the authors perform a decomposition of the field by analyzing the present features in isolation, to finally propose an urban model without hierarchy of levels, in which orographic structure and building fabric, natural pre-existences and anthropic layout, constitute a formal and inseparable continuity: a complex «[...] "Design"

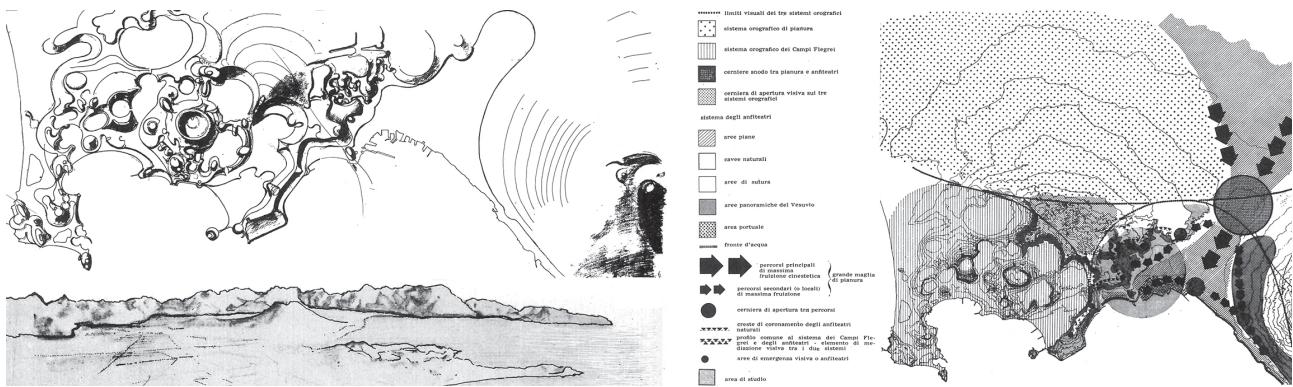


Fig. 1

Salvatore Bisogni and Agostino Renna, Introduction to the Naples urban design problems. Spatial interpretation of the orographic condition of the area, 1963-64

Fig. 2

Salvatore Bisogni and Agostino Renna, Introduction to the Naples urban design problems. Visual and kinaesthetic enjoyment fields of the amphitheater system, 1963-64

Fig. 3

Salvatore Bisogni and Agostino Renna, Introduction to the Naples urban design problems. Expressive model for emerging areas, lines and fabrics, 1963-64

not to be understood as a visually well-ordered whole, but as a “field” of formal relationships between the constituent elements» (Bisogni and Renna 1966, p. 131).

The term *Design* here takes indeed on the double meaning of tool and composition; it is both a means of representation and the object of representation itself. This is important to grasp that the theme of Bisogni and Renna’s work is twofold, as it investigates in its entirety the design question of big scale but also the problems related to its representation. «The set of their drawings, suspended in a productive ambiguity between symbolic image and objective projection, is [...] capable to depict all the material, geographical, typological and historical complexity of an urban and territorial whole», Vittorio Gregotti in fact writes (1974, p. 7). Bisogni and Renna state that they initially operated in the usual way, using planimetric drawings to represent the organizations of the area; then, through diagrams and bird’s-eye views (Figs. 1, 2), «it appears the attempt to substitute for realistic type direct annotations some symbols tending to represent relations between forms rather than forms» (1966, p. 129). The representation of territory until then limited to an urbanistic vision is definitively overcome by a drawing capable to illustrate in an autographic and interpretative way what has been analyzed but also what has been inferred and proposed: the images of concrete forms are transported to the plane of symbolism and formal evocation, highlighting the formal relations among them through the preparation of *expressive models* (Fig. 3), synthetic and evocative elaborations in which suggestions and one’s own interpretations are also translated into drawing.

Several design researches began in those years, now focusing on the form and structure of the territory. Carlo Doglio and Leonardo Urbani constitute two particularly relevant figures and, for academic reasons, also in

Fig. 4

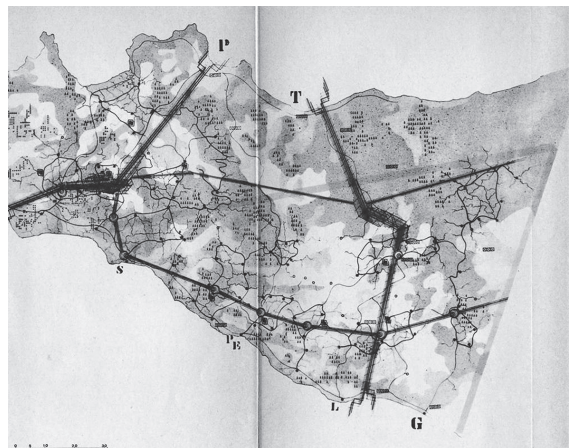
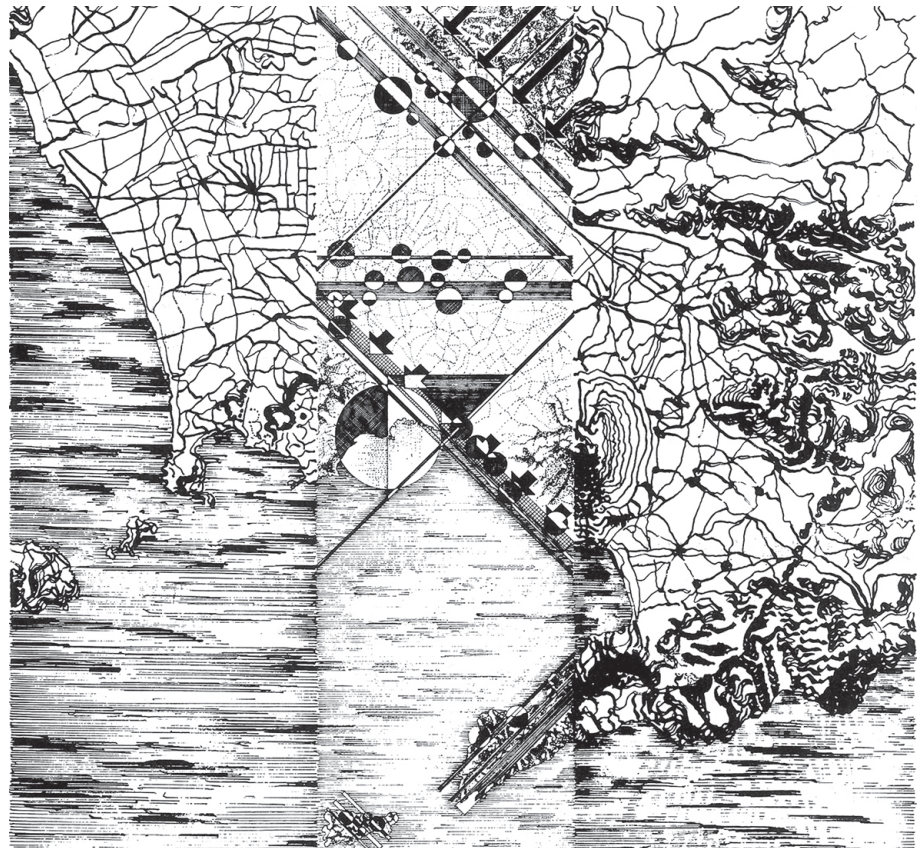
Carlo Doglio and Leonardo Urbani, Neapolitan area. Structure of territory and liquefaction (liquefaction?) of artifact, 1970.

Fig. 5

Carlo Doglio and Leonardo Urbani, La fionda sicula. Piano della autonomia siciliana. Text and context: identification of formal presences corresponding to Belice valley, central-southern belt, Corleone and Palermo area, Etna, 1972.

Fig. 6

Carlo Doglio and Leonardo Urbani, La fionda sicula. Piano della autonomia siciliana. Polyducts and land use, 1972.



some ways two bridges between Naples and Palermo regarding the applied methodology. At the base of their design theories are inferred a certain degree of *abstraction* that unites the form-structure dynamic of the territory to the system that identifies it in a given period, and the use of an expressive language capable of offering cultural interpretations of the territory (Doglio and Urbani 1970, p. 35). These assumptions are perfectly matched by the visions the two architects propose for Naples (Fig. 4) but above all for Sicily. Specifically, the drawings in support of *La fionda Sicula. Piano della autonomia siciliana*⁵ (Figs. 5, 6) and *Braccio di bosco e l'organigramma*⁶ (Figs. 7, 8, 9) fully demonstrate the complexity to illustrate a discourse that holds together the natural and the intangible data, whether economic or administrative. And it's precisely the research for a *mathematically impossible sum between different elements* that leads to a form of drawing that must at certain times necessarily abandon objectivity in order to succeed in communicating an idea. The result is drawings that partly depict the structure of the territory through the analysis of orography, and

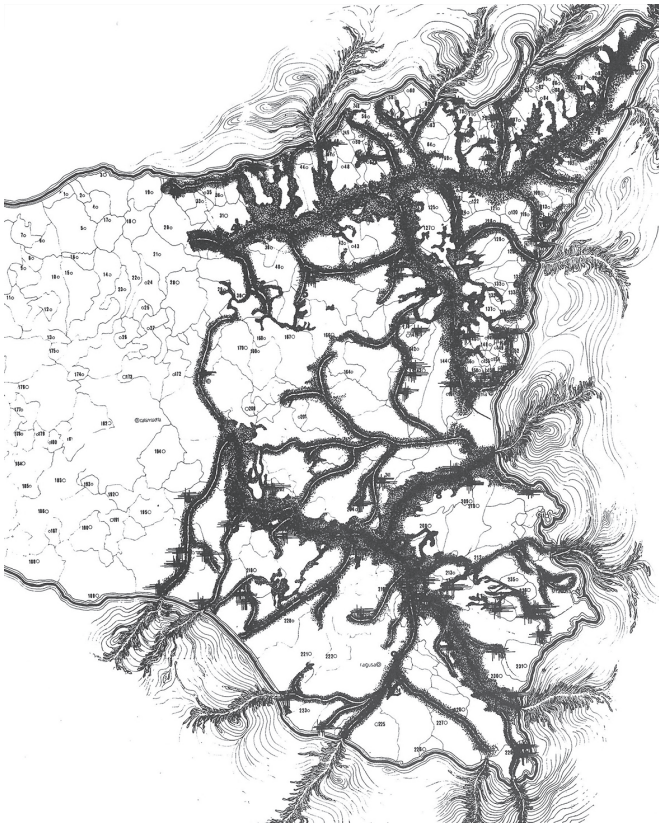


Fig. 7
Michele Procida, *Braccio di bosco e l'organigramma*. Forest Arms, 1984.

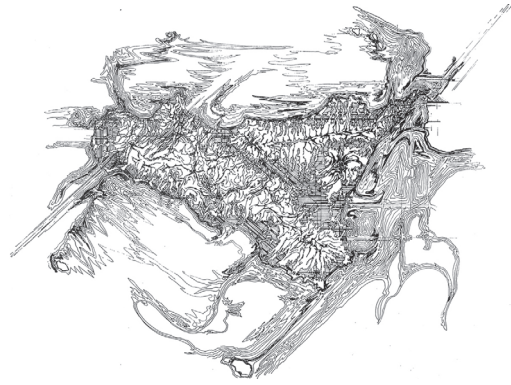


Fig. 8
Leonardo Urbani, *Braccio di bosco e l'organigramma*. The birth of design, 1984

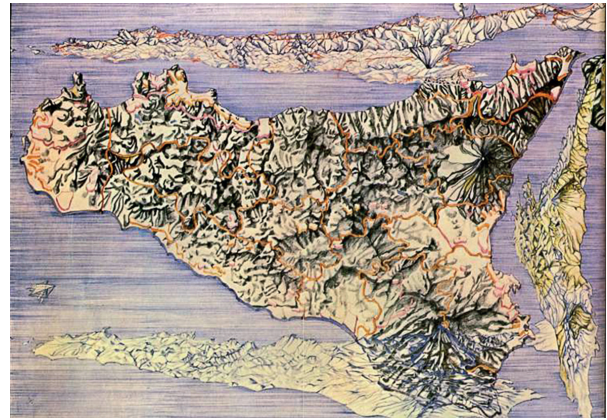


Fig. 9
Nicola Giuliano Leone, *Braccio di bosco e l'organigramma*. The three Sicilies: Ionian, Tyrrhenian and of the African canal one, 1984.

partly drawings (of considerable aesthetic content both for creative invention and technical execution) to whose formal interpretation is entrusted the sense of design intention.

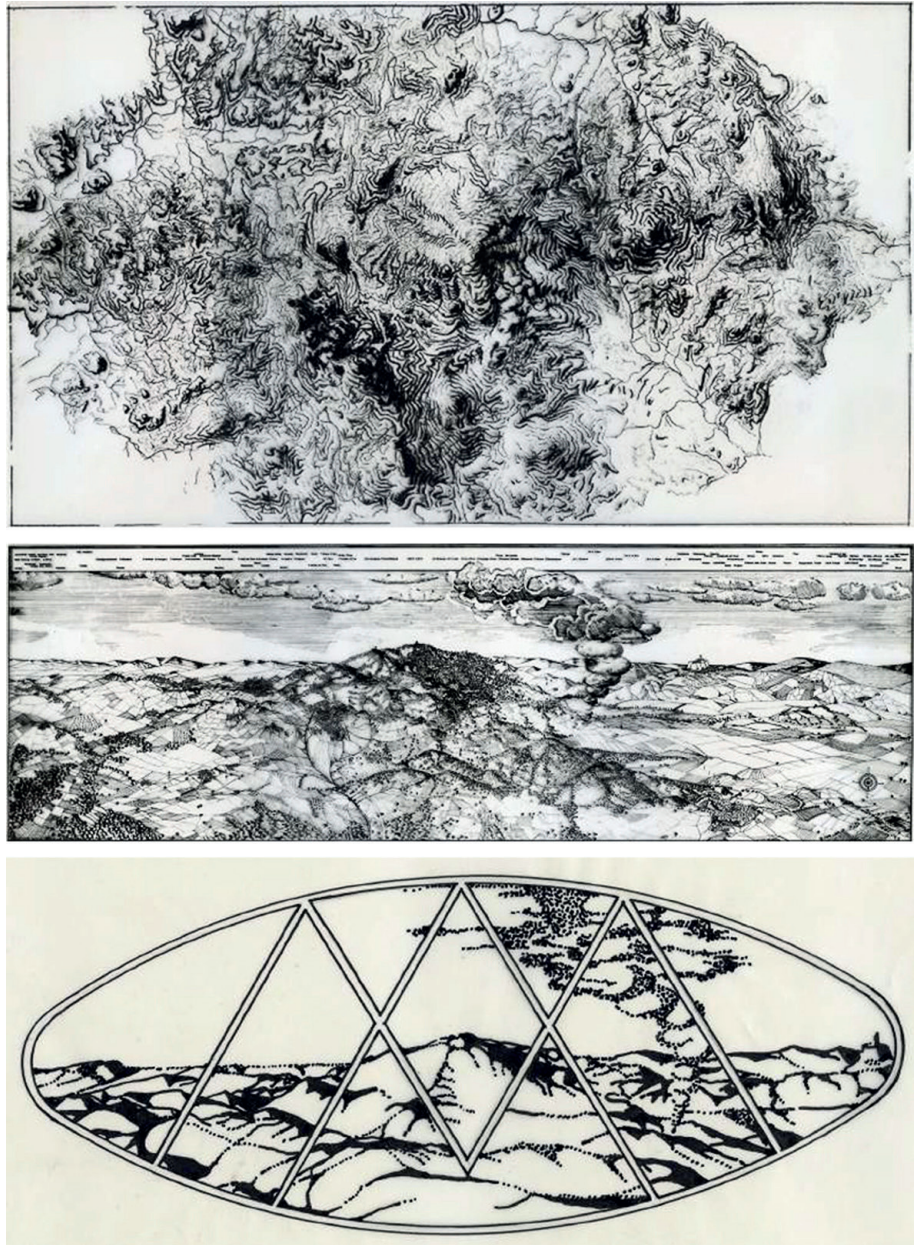
One of the main draughtsmen of Doglio and Urbani's works was Nicola Giuliano Leone, architect and urban planner, author of several projects and town and territorial plans in Italy and abroad. His representations constitute the distinctive feature of his projects, true «endo-products capable to communicate immediately the idea of city and territory in a virtuous symbiosis of sign and thought» (Gabellini 2020, p. 10). This is patient and meticulous work for which digital means of representation can hardly replace the communicative power of a hand stroke with great artistic and expressive value. One experience in particular sums up the importance of drawing as a research tool in Leone's work. In 1979 he was commissioned to curate a perspective that would serve as an icon for the tourist launch of Mount Amiata and to construct a trademark for the production of pork sausages started on the same mountain (Fig. 10). Drawing, taken as a figurative medium through which to understand, to rationalize and to shape the existing, here also becomes a tool to strengthen the social cohesion of a physically unitary territory but divided into eleven municipal administrations and two provinces. Like Vesuvius for the Parthenopean capital, Etna for eastern Sicily and beyond, the figurative constructions of Hokusai's Mount Fujiyama and Cézanne's Sainte-Victoire Mountain, Mount Amiata is elected as a territorial and landscape reference for the construction of an idea of territory, in which the physical element artificially acquires social significance becoming a cultural icon.

«To represent the territory is already to take possession of it – Corboz writes indeed –. Now, this representation is not a cast, but a construction. One makes a map first to know, then to act» (Corboz 1985, p. 25).

Through drawing, territory is broken down into forms that attempt to be known through its graphic geometrization. Similarly, in order to design

Fig. 10

Nicola Giuliano Leone, A “perspective” for the Amiata Project: preparatory drawing (general plan of the territory of Mount Amiata's mountain community, Indian ink and pastel on glossy paper) and perspective (final version, with names of urban centers and boraciferous soffions, Indian ink on glossy paper), 1979-1981; Logo for the Mount Amiata producer cooperatives, Indian ink on glossy paper, 1981.



it will be necessary to intervene by recomposing the matter of which it is made up, that is forms assembled in space. However, simple orthogonal projections fail to exhibit the physical, anthropological and immaterial complexities present in the territory. Thus we move on to a less objectifying form of writing, sometimes pictorial, but able to interpret the spatial phenomena of territory, cultural and formal ones, as well as communicating through one and the same sign an idea of design. Architecture Drawing, even at the territorial scale, therefore constitutes an inextricable part of all its phases. In addition to being a tool for analysis and representation, it is also entrusted with the expressive channel: cooperating with the formal aspects, it is in fact able to emphasize theme and accents; and through the use of a specific stylistic code it allows us to understand, along with the work, built or merely imagined, the author as well.

Notes

¹ In this regard, Giuseppe Samonà proposes in 1976 his theory about *The city in extension*, whose ever actual key to understanding lies on the possible «very lively dialectic between the balances of the new spatial relations that will be created between the agricultural territory that has become a city in extension and the big natural territory that is not permanently inhabited».

In: Samonà G. (1976) – *La città in estensione*. Atti della conferenza tenuta presso la Facoltà di Architettura di Palermo il 25 maggio 1976, STASS Stampatori Tipolitografi Associati, Palermo.

² In this same period were the spatial and figurative researches of Ludovico Quaroni, the experiments on the theme of the *unicum* of business centres or territorial parks, or even those on the *continuous city* somehow already introduced at the turn of the 1930s by Le Corbusier who coins the term of geo-architectures: city plans that are developed on the grand scale proposing in the same sign a housing system and a model of mobility.

³ Cesare Pellegrini's design proposals published in 1966 in *La Forma del Territorio* of «Edilizia Moderna» No. 87-88, a sort of compositional exercises defined by the same author with the terms of *figurative qualifying interventions*, demonstrate in this sense an employment of drawing not as a tool of representation but as a means of composing. Pellegrini works with the precise intention to reorganize the structure (*to restructure* precisely) of a part of territory through the insertion of signs, often abstract and of uncertain entity but charged with *formal intention*, that introduce image potential into the surrounding.

⁴ The work related to the dissertation (Supervisors: Profs. Giulio De Luca and Francesco Campagna) was initially published in 1966 in the monographic issue edited by Vittorio Gregotti *La Forma del Territorio* of «Edilizia Moderna» No. 87-88 and later, in 1974, in the volume *Il disegno della città di Napoli* by the same authors Salvatore Bisogni and Agostino Renna with an introduction by Gregotti.

⁵ The project of *La fionda sicula* is first and foremost about the vision of a Sicily as a central point and bridge of exchange within the Mediterranean, proposing a new framework of territorial infrastructures (the *polyducts*) to make crossing and internal transportation easy; then also a *Plan for the autonomy* of a region that is careful of own resources, which focuses on its territorial talents to undertake production activities and a new economic development. In: Doglio C. and Urbani L. (1972) – *La fionda sicula. Piano della autonomia siciliana*. Il Mulino, Bologna.

⁶ In *Braccio di bosco e l'organigramma*, the two architects present a possible model for the administrative and productive development of the region, in which natural geometries and ideal geometries overlap generating a new territorial design governed by a *dual-regulatory approach*. In the Forest Arms, *natural vocations* prevail: these depart from the island's historical-natural lines of force, constructing a territorial fabric for which a *strict constraint* regulation are provided, aimed to safeguard and to preserve its original characters. For the remaining areas, in which instead *territorial indifference* prevails, regulations will be with *agile constraint*, that is, from time to time directed to the emerging needs of individual productive districts and their enhancement. In: Doglio C. and Urbani L. (1984) – *Braccio di bosco e l'organigramma*. Flaccovio Editore, Palermo.

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