

lab 1_04
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Alighiero Boetti, The thousand longest rivers in the world, 1979

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“Every meaningful activity can generate text: painting, composing music, filming, etc..[...] If the theory of the text tends to abolish the separation between the different art disciplines it is because their artworks are not anymore considered as simple ‘messages’ [...] but as perpetual products, statements, which the subject keep on debating on: this subject is certainly the one of the author, but also the one of the reader. Therefore the theory of the text provoke the valorization of a new epistemological item: the reading [...]. The theory infinitely widens the freedom of the reading, and, more than this, strongly underlines the (proficient) equality of writing and reading [...], - where – true reading is when the reader is the one who wants to write” [1].

1.1

the paradox of authenticity
act upon the existing as ‘re-writing’ (physical) space
by gennaro postiglione

[1] R. Barthes, Teoria del testo, in Scritti, Einaudi, Torino 1998, pp. 240-241. [2] R. Barthes, op. cit., p. 240. [3] K. Ganguly, Migrant Identities, "Cultural Studies" n. 6, gennaio 1998, p.38. [4] H. K. Bhabha, The Third Space in J. Rutherford (ed.), Identity, Community, Culture, Difference, London 1990, p. 211. [5] I. Chambers, Paesaggi migratori, Genova 1996, p. 88. [6] "The presence of these exceptionally strong and characterized spaces, which volumes are often lacking any external emphasis, confirms the existence of an historical stream in past and present design history, that turns deliberately its attention on the interiors. It is a praxis that is neither interior design, nor plain architecture, it doesn't exclude other operative ways but looks at 'human beings' with more attention and concern and it can be named Interior architecture. Flora, Giardiello, Postiglione, Legittimità degli interni, editoriale "area" n. 50/2000, pp. 2-3. Interior Architecture is among the most important disciplines within a study course that should educate professionals that are able to act upon the existing; unluckily this attitude is lacking in Italy since the main concern is always either on 'technical' or 'stylistic' issues, cancelling any interest for 'the space' or its possible uses. [7] C. Norberg-Schulz, L'abitare, Milano 1986. [8] As remembered by E. Jabès in Il libro dell'ospitalità (Milano 1991) it is important to underline that language is always hospitable and capable of that infinite hospitality that allows to build 'your home' in 'other's house'. in the same way as when acting upon something built. The space and the place achieve the same ability to host something stranger as it happens in language.

The pure and uncontaminated concept of the other (the work) has been crucial for the anti-capitalistic critic of the cultural economy of the western world in modern age. [...] But who can define authenticity then? Once again (someone) stands for the observed assigning him a position' [5] and an universal value in accordance with the western order of things. In this way the idea of a 'moving significance', immerse in the circumstances, originates and demolishing the basis of the monolithic authenticity that was traditionally accepted. A fuzzier notion focuses on the productive action of the subject and on the productive condition of the object introducing an intermediate space were subject and object are overlapped and where their meanings become plural. Although it is more difficult to define, this concept is not less reliable of the (counterposed) idea that used to build a system of power and justify the action through the invention

If we undertake Roland Barthes theory and metaphorically transpose it from the field of literature to the one of architecture to gain a possible operative method, we should define the scope in which the model could be useful and valid. Although the equality between the reading and the writing of a text appears a clear and logic fact in literature, it is much more complex to transfer the procedure of decoding/creating to the field of architecture were we immediately encounter the physicality of the matter, the weight of the thirddimension and the oddity of the concept of void.

There's no living (inhabiting) without hospitality and living is – to say it with Norberg-Schulz [7] – an existential phenomenon more than a physical need. There's no gesture without a place willing and available to receive it and the place has always been accommodating, it has always welcomed the gesture, and life. Some places – either natural or artificial – are destroyed by intense exploitation or abandoned in decay for the ineptitude of someone to inhabit them, some places are 'colonized' by the aggressive violence of univocal gestures. Many places have been built with no care for their distinctive characters, with no interest for their specific fundamental elements,

Of course every text contains a specific physical dimension, since it is written (or printed) on 'physical' pages, but it establishes a different relation with the user: it is the book, we might say, that enters and inhabits the reader, when, by reading, fragments of text temporarily move 'into' the user. On the other hand, every act of understanding or 'reading' an architectural artifact implies the action of entering/inhabiting a physical space. Nevertheless, with all the diversities of the case and not without a (necessary) specific knowledge of the discipline, the comprehension of an architectural work is the result of a 'reading' that becomes productive through a constant process of separating/rejoining. Reading a building, in fact, implies 'deconstructing' in order to recognize the fundamental elements and seize the design principles to achieve a new level of understanding. In the same way as in the textual practice of language, the point is not to discover the meaning that the text/work is supposed to contain, an univocal meaning crystallized into the work/product, but the production of a new 'significance' that "emancipates the signification's statute and makes it plural"[2]. There's not actual distinction between the identity of the author and the one of the reader, and it is precisely this need to define the two roles that fall off in the practice of text, refusing a 'metaphysics of the classic subject' that used to be subordinated by

dialogue with for all the reasons that provoked the act itself. A careful analysis and reading of the existing context enables the architect to recognize and underline the elements characterizing the form and the space which the new structure will be put in relation with. This process of knowledge shouldn't try to discover or 'unveil' hidden meanings but rather remain a semantic activity that becomes, therefore, 'production'. By breaking off the 'monological state' of the architectural work the comprehension becomes wider and the authenticity as unique/original can start to be dismantled. This idea arises from a profound critical revision of the Kantian aesthetic where the artwork and the spectator are counterposed and stranger to each other. In the textual practice, and then in the thinking about 'difference', subject and object lose their 'stability' and the same borders that used to mark their ambit become uncertain, as transitory elements, introducing a 'practice of representative perception' that presupposes the mutual imbrication [3] of the one and the other. In a similar way, Bhabha talks about the 'third space' as a new semantic and relational place that originates from the impossibility of defining in an exact and fixed way both the object and the subject as well as their reciprocal boundaries [4]. '[...] This implies an inevitable weakening of every abstract interpretation of the idea of the authentic.

of the authentic and the original. In this way the reader becomes profoundly responsible, the old beliefs provided by the myth of the authentic are left behind and a new relationship with the work is established. The reader is eventually a direct and active author in that productive process of significance which he has been always excluded from. From 'discoverer', or even just 'spectator', the designer becomes, as well as the author, 'craftsman' in a continuous confrontation with his work that, as we already stated before, evolves from product into production. Moving the discussion onto the specific field of architectural, it is necessary to remark that working on 'what is built', acting within a given space, arises the issue of the attitude of the place to give hospitality. Every project that 'finds its home' inside an existing realm, measures and challenges the ability of the space to welcome the gestures and the structures that are necessary acts give new use to the same space. Researching to which extent a place is able to host is a fundamental passage in a design process that is not willing to be 'colony' of space, but guest. This way of designing could – ultimately – happen as the mere, simple insertion of furnitures and objects into an inhabitable space and this might be the perfect challenge for the designer's ability to understand the hospitality of the built matter and to perform in a built environment [6].

with no concern for their form, but only with the stubborn superimposition of an alien, foolish design act. [8] This has been very true every time the architectural process was carried on 'running after' the myth of the authentic as an ontological legitimization of the project through a continuous search for the origin and the primitive state. It is not possible to 'get back home' since we must now deal with progressively complex negotiations and interactions that are dissolving and hybridizing the original state of the work that survive only in the movement, in the transit and in the incapacity to stand still. Freed from the obsession for the authenticity, and from the utopia of the 'return to the roots', driven by a healthy will to research, read and understand an existing space as it is, with its imperfection, with its history of transformations and transitions, architects of the second modernity managed to combine the attention for the context without giving up that necessary productive attitude that should sustain every project. To these designers and to the ones that successfully followed their path we should look at today. The work as text, the space as place for gestures, the project as 're-writing' and the search for hospitality are then the fundamental elements of a praxis that express itself through a conscious manipulation of the existing that is continuously transformed as its authenticity is disintegrated.



Caspar David Friedrich
Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog
1817

1.2

landscape and human scale

by lorenzo bini

[...] At the higher end of the circular valley a river fell off the cliffs into a great cauldron of vapor and thunder below; after this it slid along the base of the cliffs until it found a gap at the other end of the valley, where it hurried discretely through with no rapids, no cascades – a great thick black rope of water moving swiftly downhill between the polished flanks of the canyon. Beyond the gap the land opened out and became smiling; a village nestled on the side hill just outside. [...]

Paul Bowles, The Circular Valley [1]

A project dealing with the description and the planning of the territory seems to demand an attempt to define an intriguing term: *landscape*.

It is widely known that in the late 16th century, dutch painters used the word *landschap* to denote a 'picture of natural survey' and this origin implies the interaction between an *observer* (man) and an *object* (nature). It might be in this interaction that the 'mystery' is contained if every attempt to depict landscape (in visual art as in literature) is pervaded, according to Franco Farinelli, by a 'mist', or 'fog', that 'both Goethe and Humboldt agreed on' [2].

In one way or another, Landscape always seems to arise the crucial topic of our interpretation of things, it always implies the presence of a human being in front of a wide clear view (or panorama) with a number of features and defined boundaries. These views are not (or not anymore) necessarily formed around concepts of untouched nature or which locate the observer outside of the picture, the landscape itself.

For many people, the dense mesh of city buildings is their landscape and their art may reflect this. For others, human intervention in the natural world may be seen as the ideal environment and "visual pleasure" may be brought about by views of cleared tracts of land juxtaposed with threatening wilderness [3].

More than that, today we are familiar with a series of metaphorical expressions like *cultural landscape*, *political landscape* or *social landscape* overcoming the original idea of a physical relation to 'the land', 'the earth's surface'. But even circumscribing the problem in a strictly disciplinal environment there's always an *aura* of complexity when, for instance, Frederick Steiner states that 'Landscape is related to land use', but it is also 'more than a picturesque view; it is the sum of the parts that can be seen, the layers and intersections of time and culture that comprise a place, a natural and cultural palimpsest' [4].

Landscape is not simple. And if its mystery used to lay under the philosophical issue of the 'perception of things', it is even more puzzling today for our manifest inability to understand, represent and manipulate the complexity of things.

Never stop planning

Probably, it all started in the eighth millennium BC in the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates. First a bleak featureless landscape was turned into a rich green oasis simply patterned according to the science of agriculture.

Then the first designed garden rose from the contemplation of the miraculous effects of irrigation.

It was perhaps in that particular moment, with the action of designing a 20 meters high 'artificial hill' (The Ziggurat of Ur) on a flat and apparently infinite territory, that the practice of 'planning' originated and became manifest. Since then, every intervention on the territory is the result of a process that reduce the complexity of the world to a series of coordinates or categories.

Things haven't really changed after our positivist belief in the usefulness of science started to collapse at the dawn of the 20th century with Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. Although we became progressively conscious of the weakness of our 'mental constructions' in basically every single discipline, we never really gave up planning. According to John Friedman 'planning links knowledge to action' [5] and it might be this attitude of achieving things that drives our continuous attempt to manipulate things despite all the failures, despite all the crisis.

Reading the territory

There is an ironic assonance between the words *territory* and *terror* which Franco Farinelli [2] is pointing at not without reasons, and it takes a certain amount of *ubris* to get started when facing the landscape as the macro-context of a project.

The architect is always proposing an interpretation of reality, and to develop a vision he starts searching for coordinates, relations, structures, conditions 'on field'. It is like walking on a fuzzy terrain, utilizing every time 'experimental' tools... it is a gamble.

Despite the absence of a clear, functioning method, the territory is approached as a 'physical entity, sum of signs, geometries, traces' [6] and these aspects become references to the activity of 'planning'.

By 'reading a territory' we try to explain the meaning of things just as well as, when reading a text, the significance of words is never fixed, never unique, but always open to interpretation.

Reading landscape with the purpose of giving an interpretation implies a continuous activity of writing (or sketching) in the attempt to make things clear, to possess and conquer things.

The geographical, abstract and (already) reduced survey of a territory is 'delaminated' into a series of diagrammatic layers, information are verified on site and eventually updated, reality is, once more, compressed and crystallized into a naive (even if extremely complex) pattern.

It is precisely through this untiring activity of 'separating and merging' that the project is laid out, it is on this terrain that we might exceed that 'terrifying impasse' and start planning.

Don't forget to put poetry...

The term 'territory' implies an idea of vastness that can only be 'seized' through the brutal (but necessary) reduction to a 'geographical map'.

The scale of the landscape is on the contrary associable with the human scale; it has always to do with a view, and the extension of this view is determined by the perception of the eye.

When the project enters the scope proper of the landscape the interference of the elements becomes more direct and emotional. In a meeting with students in 1957 Le Corbusier pointed at 'the sky' and 'the site' as two of the major theses on architecture [7].

Although distant, mysterious and overwhelming, those physical elements allow the architect to operate within a much more reliable construction of cause and effects. It is on this level that the project become, to say it with Giuseppe Dematteis, 'implicit' [8].

In this environment it is possible to understand and express the effects of natural light on walls and volumes, the lines that were drew on paper can be traced on the earth, the orientation of a window, the direction of a path, the pattern of a planted field can be explained to ourselves and experienced by others. It is not a scientific terrain the one we are moving on, and no project that confronts with nature can be conceived without intuition, neither it can be carried on without poetry...

The problem of 'understanding the world' which is, according to Karl Popper, 'of interest for every human being' and which is laying under the word 'landscape' making it so intriguing, is still very far from being solved, but once we are back at the familiar scale that 'keeps the link' between our body and nature we can eventually proceed with our construction with more confidence.

[1] Paul Bowles, *Collected Stories*, Black Sparrow Press

[2] Franco Farinelli - *Geografia*, Einaudi

[3] Landscape, from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, www.wikipedia.org

[4] Frederick Steiner - *The Living Landscape*

[5] John Friedmann - *The Place of Planning*, Auburn University

[6] Gaia Redaelli - *Paesaggi Invisibili*, clup

[7] Luigi Snozzi - *The site; nature and man's work*, Abitare 206, July-August 1982

[8] Giuseppe Dematteis - *Progetto implicito*, Franco Angeli

This 1st year design lab was conceived as an ambitious 'design-experience' joining the scale of the territory with the one of landscape and then architecture.

The wider general interest, which set this study course in continuity with others carried on during previous years, is the will to 'act upon the existing'.

Despite the vastness of this year's overall context, the real aim has been once again to set the focus on 'human activities' and 'gestures' which are the 'triggers' to investigate and discuss architectural design issues. Since the work of the architect is here conceived as the organisation (transformation) of the space that 'hosts' those activities, the barriers or categories between 'interior' and 'outdoor' are not considered very relevant.

Nevertheless the specific exercise of the Martesana Canal in Milan offered a further possibility to start from a 'distant perspective' and requested a further effort to find 'a way to handle' things on a urban, or even regional, scale.

We have therefore proposed a series of simplified (and perhaps naive) steps to approach the territory with more confidence, we established guidelines to 'restrict the field', we suggested and accepted approximate and sketchy interpretations, but we tried to communicate and to test with the participant students a practical operative method.

The basic principle was the delamination of a number of suggested layers into a series of diagrams that could depict the most relevant characteristics of the project areas. This exercise implied an understanding of the existing elements as well as a constant effort to establish an autonomous, original way to represent them. The phase of reading (and re-writing) the territory has been deliberately compressed and simplified with the aim of 'leading' the students to the scale of architecture.

The activities of laying out the existing infrastructures, drawing the movement of the rivers, handling the orography of the territory, marking the density, the size and the location of urban centres, gave rise to the first thoughts and intuitions.

This fundamental work of interpretation and representation unveiled the themes and the places which could be the focus of specific projects, the places which we could 'act upon'.

Having marked a number of critical 'spots', portion of the land were defined and organised into 'structures without volume'.

The basic ground movements or adjustments and the insertions of ephemeral 'open' architectural structures (like roofs, terraces, paths or perrons) were the only available tools to act upon the landscape.

Being the very first design lab for the participants, the problem of organising an architectural structure into the landscape has been again reduced to few basic (but crucial) issues: a catalog of several existing projects has been edited and made available for the students 'insertions' into the different sites. By avoiding the problem of 'designing from scratch' the focus has been voluntarily moved upon the orientation, the view, the exposition to natural light, the dimensional comparison between the inserted buildings and the surrounding natural elements...

The manipulation of architectural matter within an existing environment (or landscape) was the ultimate goal of this design lab but this activity had to be continuously motivated, subordinated and justified by envisioning, claiming and depicting the 'human activities'.

There is in fact no architecture, we believe, without the happening of man's gestures.



1.3
in walkabout city
by marco navarra

pictures by salvatore gozzo

A fork in the road usually indicates that a choice has to be made, but it could even represent the possibility of taking different paths so that we can see objects that we would not have expected to find. [...]

Often borders change their consistency and their form according to the hour, the day or the season. These lines, creating a crossroads of phenomenon, form a healthy structure that innervates the area. In particular, a railway represents an anomaly, because its confining lines coincide exactly with the territory. It delimits an oblong area with fencing and its tracks break up the continuity of the fields and the cadastral houses.

[...] Railways have been an instrument of high priority in the process which pushed urban areas within the territory, by means of a network of infrastructures built by principles and its own minor construction jobs.

As Foucault noted, in fact, already at the beginning of 16th century, "the city was no longer seen as a privileged place, an area within a territory made up of fields, forests and roads.

Cities are no longer islands that escape common rights. From then on, cities with the problems that arise and the particular configurations that they take on, serve as models for governments, who must, rationally, apply them to the territory as a whole".

In this way, "railways are a new aspect in the relationship between space and power. They have to lay down a communication circuit that doesn't necessarily correspond to the circuit of traditional roads, but has to hold in consideration the nature and history of any given society. In addition, there are all the social phenomena that are generated by the railway, both regarding the resistance that they produce and the transformations that occur in the people and their habits". The railway, therefore, belongs to those heterotopias that Foucault often described because "it has the power to juxtapose, in one precise spot, different places that are incompatible, and can bring about the complete separation from time in its traditional sense".

A traveller, sitting in his compartment, gathers different impressions from the scenery, that may be far away and irreconcilable, while he moves suspended in time, away from his daily routine. The movement reconstructs the real elements, that have been recomposed and mixed with memories, in an imaginary landscape. [...]

The railway, placing the traveller under certain rules and obligations (tickets, luggage, controllers), responds to the principle that "the heterotopias assume a system of openings and closings that both isolate them and allow them to be penetrated.

It isn't possible to enter unless you have a certain permission and if you haven't made a certain number of gestures". [...]

The railway was inserted into the original landscape like a deep furrow or a wound.

In fact, it existed with its own rules and principles that corresponded to the needs of the machine. The route was designed, in its planimetric-volumetric aspect, by the technical and mechanical characteristics of the locomotive: slopes not to be above 2% and the radius of a curve not inferior to 10m. In particular, the narrow gauge railway used by locomotives which were fuelled by coal were characterised by closer tracks that allowed for a reduction of the radius of a curve and a more contained dimension. The construction technology,

founded exclusively on man power with little use of machines, imposed a rigorous study of the compensation of the movement of the ground so to create an equilibrium with the trench diggings or when filling certain areas. The construction, therefore, continued alternating diggings and fillings, as can still be seen today when you move along the remaining route where the rhythm is syncopated at the beginning and end towards the landscape. [...]

The railway was composed with the same elements as the buildings around it (stations, stops, trackman huts, gate keeper huts) and the frame works (viaducts, bridges, over bridges, drains), and, also, by linear elements such as the tracks and drainage canals, and surface elements such as side walls and terracing that reordered the different ground levels.

This division into parts was in direct relationship with the geography and the history of the area forming, positioning and measuring each individual element.

The railway track ran for 35 kilometres between Caltagirone and Piazza Armerina crossing different types of agricultural and natural landscapes [...]

The description of these fragments, with their intersections and sedimentations, has slowly become the project itself.

Redesigning the outlines, accompanied by the registration of their consistency and substance, has formed a plan over which the new path has been traced.

The remains of the railway can still be seen even though it is has been closed, and this has generated a series of spontaneous uses that have kept it alive until now.



The railway's abandoned real estate, its slow deterioration, the transformation into ruins; this has all acquired an unsuspected role and form. The loss of their function has uprooted a new character.

These buildings, like magic boxes, permit us to see and discover the landscape. The smooth surfaces, in the foreground, squash the distant scenery giving them a two-dimensional form where colours and substances are transfigured into signs. Their identical facades, which are repeated every two kilometres, become an inexhaustible catalogue of horizontal lines, that redesign the landscape, every time they are moved by lightweight volumes. At the same time, the windows, like orbits without eyes, capture fragments of mountains, fields and bushes, allowing us to see details of the landscape. Other parts of railway constructions, even in a minor way, play a role in the measuring and underlining of the landscape.

[...] The railway track, resembling a long and soft running shot, allows us to assemble different sequences in which the images shot with precise techniques (frames, horizontal surfaces, horizontal lines, piano sequence) form themselves in such a way as to be seen.

The long movement of this new axle in the territory, allows us to combine vision with other types of experiences. The park, like a strange machine, disassembles and reassembles the worldly things we know, astounding us and teaching us to see unsuspected relationships between different things.

[...] This operation concerns the invisible ties between landscape, buildings, remains and history, so that a wider regeneration of unused resources (peasant buildings, monuments, environmental wealth, landscape) is put into act. In this sense, the retrieval of the railway track and its transformation into a cycling or riding path, [...] together with the use of the solid railway as a strip park is a fundamental operation leading to the retrieval of a fabric that is today abandoned. This naturalistic walk must be considered as a newly conceived infrastructure, that, innervating a linear park developed on the solid railway, is made up of a row of cypresses and a compact and variegated ground surface along the sides of which are planted rows of bushes. There are two intersecting plains that are part of the project and which develop the landscape theme: the park's construction material (the rows of trees, the surfaces, the gardens, the colours, the smells, etc) and the construction of ways of seeing and recognising the agricultural and natural landscape by using different principles and instruments both classic, like the frame and the horizon line, and contemporary, like the sequences, editing, and the running shots.

Objects with different scales and measurements, set up along the path, pave the way for these possibilities and they are systematically recognisable as parts of the park. The antique theme of enchantment, which has always been present in various forms in gardens in the Western world, is entwined with these fundamental park elements.

[...] This scenario, starting from the back bone of the park, provides the possibility of developing into an agricultural park if the new techniques used for biological farming are diffused together with activities involving scientific and teaching research. If this is so then the productive activities would intersect with the sporting, tourist and scientific activities favouring a reciprocal exchange and influx.

[...] the park would be able to easily transform itself depending on the needs of the moment. Reusing the ex-railway line as a strip park allows us to rediscover an emergency that designates a meeting point where we can reactivate the energies found in the landscape and in the area. The strip park gets this characteristic of "no area" from the railway, a pure distance that is produced in the interstice. The project has tried to develop the potential of this characteristic by proposing a strategy of levels: spatial, geographic and temporal levels. The strip park must be what is "between", that which materialises into a space that is suspended between things, between different cities, connecting them in an anomalous way and drawing into itself the urban routine, and, at the same time, placing itself between the agricultural and the productive activity, between the drive of the sportsman, the suspended time of the traveller and the nervousness of the tourist. The strip park project re-proposes an interlacement between what is appropriate (place, history, geography) and the typical serial of every infrastructure (the row of cypresses, the pergolas, the pavilions/trackman houses).

[...] What is already known belongs to the infrastructure of the park, a rhythm that gives form to those elements, making the different areas and the different conditions visible and recognisable. The rhythm, therefore, underlines two conceptions and characteristics of time: time as continual duration, uninterrupted flux, full and flowing vitality; and discontinuous time, granular arithmetical in events, intervals and instants.

The row of cypresses beats time while the pavilions/trackman houses recite the refrain that roots the park to the ground. The rhythm and the refrain form the organising principle of the park constituting the fixed horizon on which to measure the changing of events and nature. Like the underground, the linear park runs quickly over its coloured surfaces offering the possibility to get on or get off at different points or stations where you can enter different levels. The course can be followed as a sportsman, depending on the day, as a tourist, stopping at every encounter, as an enquirer, wandering along the transversal paths, as an agriculturist, exploring the areas of innovation where you can see the biological farming of antique products belonging to this area, as a botanic, looking for bushes typical of the Mediterranean undergrowth. The strip park is an open system, that, through a minimal number of interventions, is able to catalyse and activate different forces and economies, from private ones to public ones, from local ones to community ones.



In Man Ray's photo, the dust on the Grand Verre of Duchamp, like an impalpable veil, traces and reveals incisions and relieves so that an unsuspected image comes before our eyes.

The photograph shows improbable developments and fixes the apparition giving an idea in which contingency and duration, objectivity and the imaginary meet simultaneously producing a spark, a sudden thought.

On one hand the dust cancels images by covering the material and the colours, but on the other hand it emphasises what it covers by putting it into a new context, producing a new meaning. Scenery redesigns something that already exists, tracing it and putting it into another context, a new figurative frame, a new imaginary segment. The remains of the unused railway, carved into the territorial surface through a vigorous theory of sections, have been reactivated by, above all, reconstructing a movement of eyes and bodies within its remains, and, then, underlining the presence with a row of cypresses. In fact, if it is difficult to find the foot that has left a footprint, it is easier to reinvent the movement that the footprint implies. What is left behind is a sign that awaits a meaning, awaits an encounter.

[...] During this experience, every intervention on the landscape was characterised by a series of local interventions and a continual dialogue was built with installations and performance, in which, very often, the artist's body became the connecting ring between different worlds. Nature is revealed to be an energetic field with unstable borders, where every transformation implies a way of putting together or taking apart the forces available and the possibility of producing intensive quantities, that un hinge the established balance and open up to other possibilities concerning order. This process generates falls and re-establishments concerning the complex relationship between the forces in play and the proportion between attraction and repulsion, which is innate in their movement.

The opposition and the conflict between the different forces of the landscape produces an open series of intensive elements, all positive while never expressing a definite equilibrium in the system, but an unlimited series of stationary states through which the field of energy renews itself.

Man Ray's photo brings to light, brings to life a look, or better still, the happy encounter of a look with the sudden action of a veil of dust.

Architecture sets into action strategies and works that can produce the meeting between a glance, a body and a living substance. Architecture, when the definition of landscape is involved, corresponds to the recognition of the beauty of nature when it appears and its transformations. [...] Throughout the 1960's and the 1970's, these techniques were experimented and improved upon by Land art and "Arte povera", that had worked directly with the landscape, showing the subtle differences between other similar but distinct interventions such as: digging, incisions, scaring, touching, pressing and impressing. In this way attention was drawn to the construction of landscapes as a gesture and thought. It is no longer seen as an inanimate material to frame within a view, but it has become a field of energy that must be activated by using new instruments and new actions.

Architecture by measuring itself against the landscape can be imagined as a scripture, a relatively strong earthquake which causes our conscious to vacillate, causing a loss of words.

It is this act which, in one single intervention, unites everything that cannot be grasped together in the flat space of representation.

Writing has to produce speed, the passage of energy, changes and variations in the state of consistency, new concatenations of form, usage and in the way of life.

A landscape project must know how to latch on to an interrupted line, to add a segment to a broken line, get it to pass between two cliffs, along a narrow gorge, or beyond emptiness, there where it ends.

Landscape loses its line of escape by being a territory, that movement that shifts natural elements towards a new creation, a new concatenation of life.

It as an emergency which is always produced in an interstice, a pure distance, the space between a territory, an environment and a subject, a community, a culture.

2_reading / writing the context

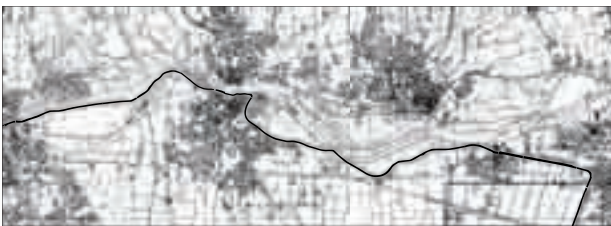
the lab provides a number of information to the participant students.
the package contains overall plans, aerial pictures, reference texts.
the martesana canal is divided in four frames which follow the water flow
from north east (where it leaves the adda river) to south west where it
enters the milan city center.
the students are grouped in four teams (one for each frame) and lead by a
member of the teaching team to the first site visit.
the reading of the information, the collection of evidences on site, the
reproduction through photographs and drawings are the first steps
toward the understanding of the place. the 1:10.000 scale plans provided
by the lab are too weak to draw conclusions, they can only be of help to rise
more doubts... more questions. each frame stretches for approximately 5 km
and presents in itself discontinuous conditions: different morphology, different
atmosphere, different degree of degradation and urbanization.
even bigger diversities can be surveyed among the four frames in which the
canal has been divided.



aerial pictures in this section are taken from the book:
'Rappresentazione del paesaggio dei navigli della Mantovana e di Paderno'

Milano : Regione Lombardia.
Territorio e Urbanistica, 2000. - 143 p. : ill. ; 24x28 cm
curated by Umberto Vascelli Vallara

• frame 1
[trezzo d'adda - cassano d'adda]





trezzo sull'adda

trezzo sull'adda



vaprio d'adda

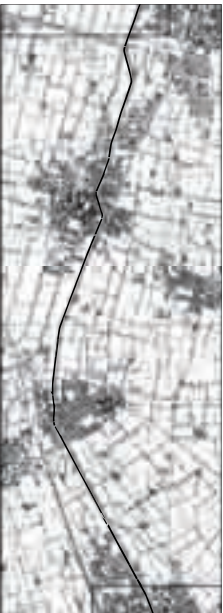






cassano d'adda

• frame 2
[cassano d'adda - gorgonzola]





cassano d'adda







bellinzago lombardo



• frame 3
[gorgonzola - cernusco sul naviglio]









• frame 4
[cernusco sul naviglio - milano]



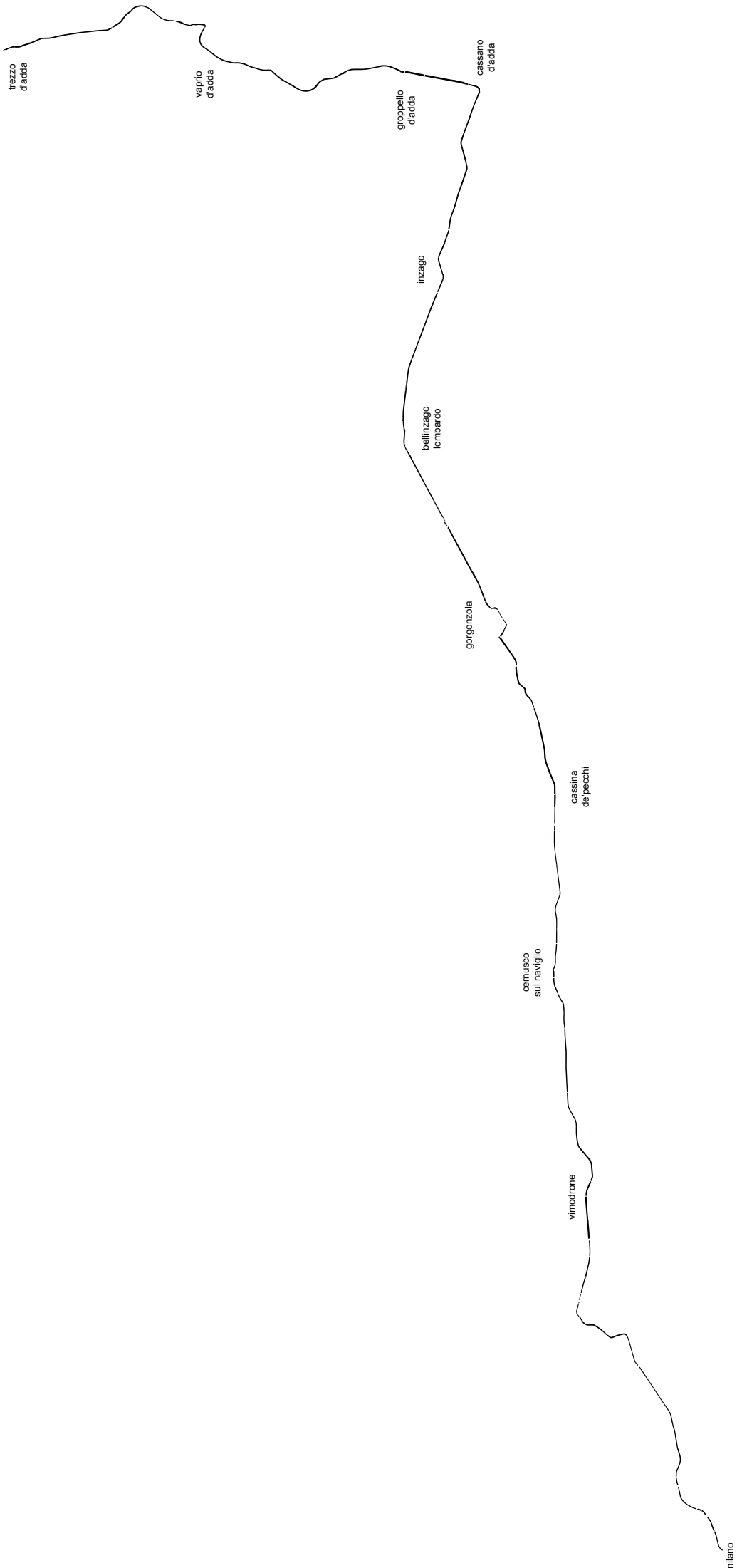






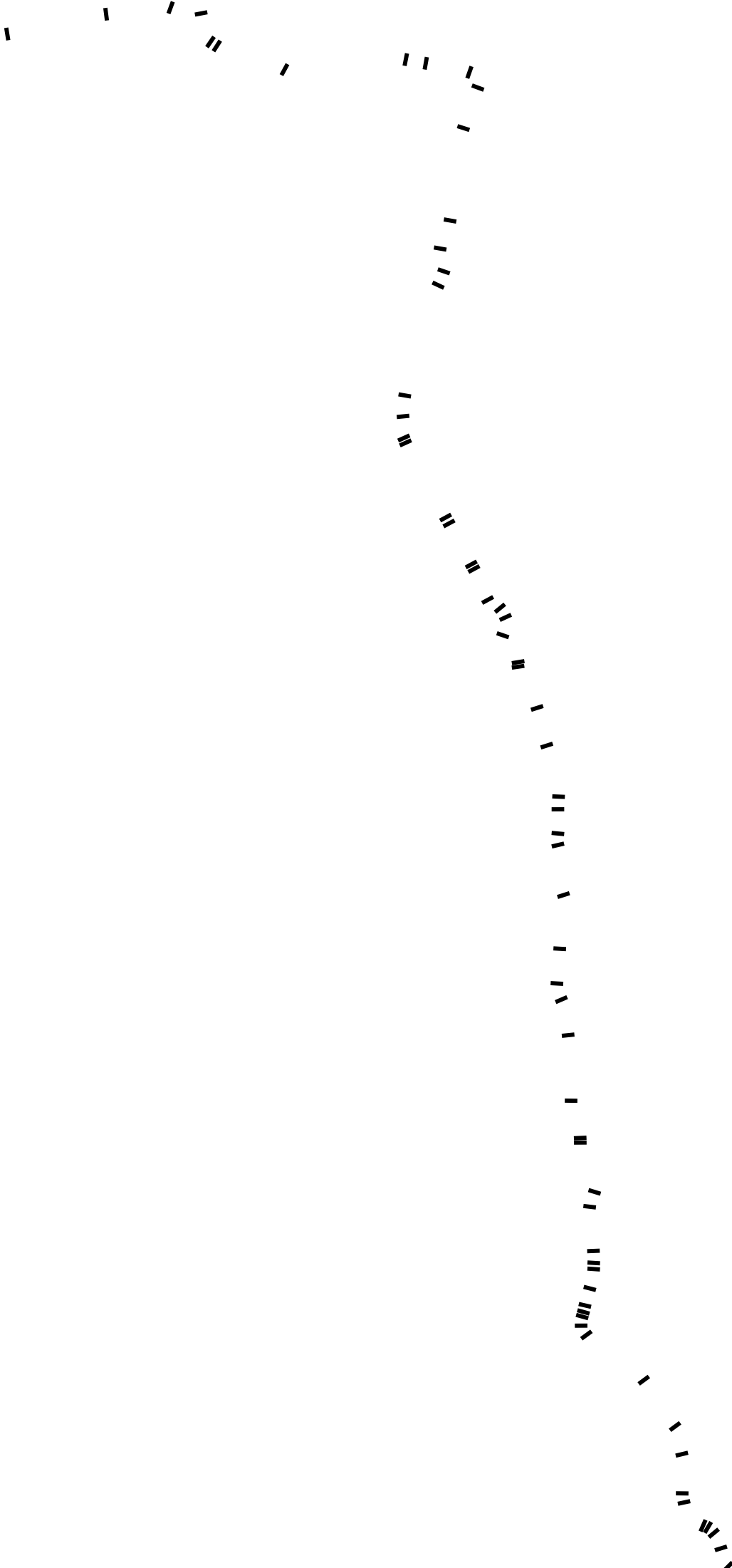


a series of 'delaminated' diagrams of the canal is provided as well.
these drawings are deliberately synthetic to enable the students to
approach their vast portions of landscape.
the short duration of the lab forces to simplify and compress the analysis
to privilege the design phase.
the quantitative analysis consists of 5 diagrams that the students are asked
to read, understand, verify and re-represent in order to make a sort of
census of the 'things' that exist on site.

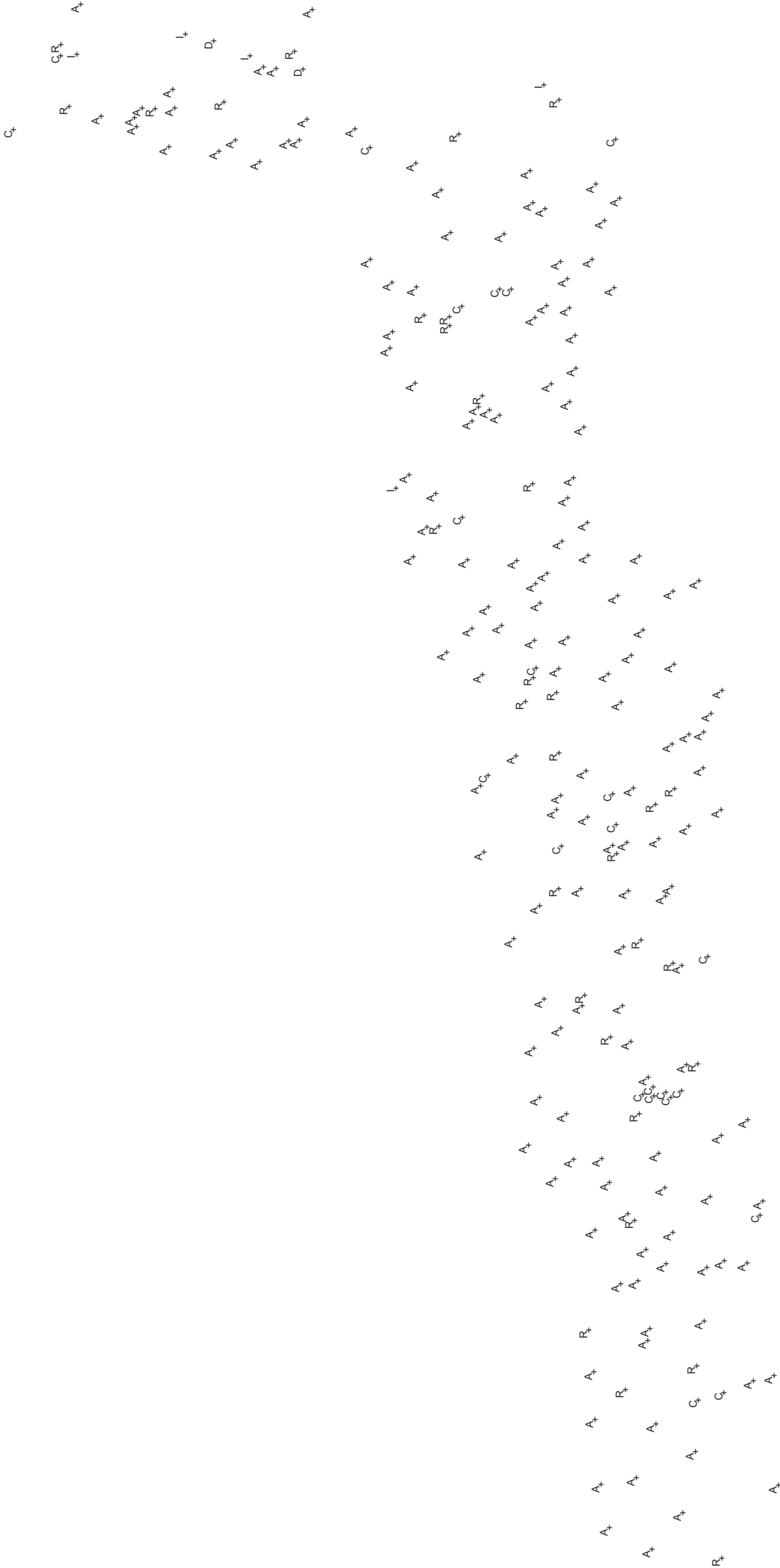


• the martesana canal

• bridges

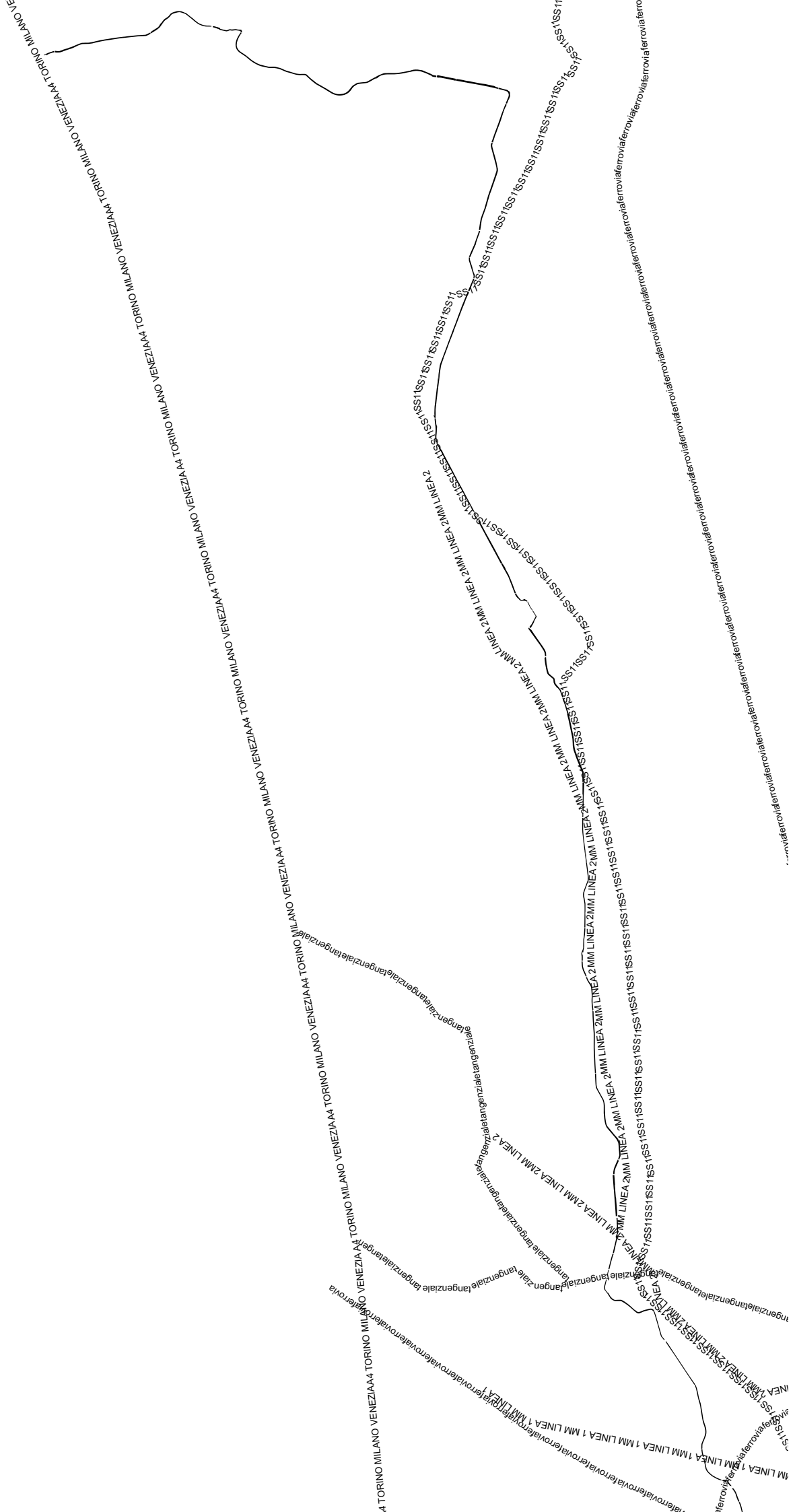


A rural
C civic
R religious
I industrial
D water installations



• relevant items

• network of roads





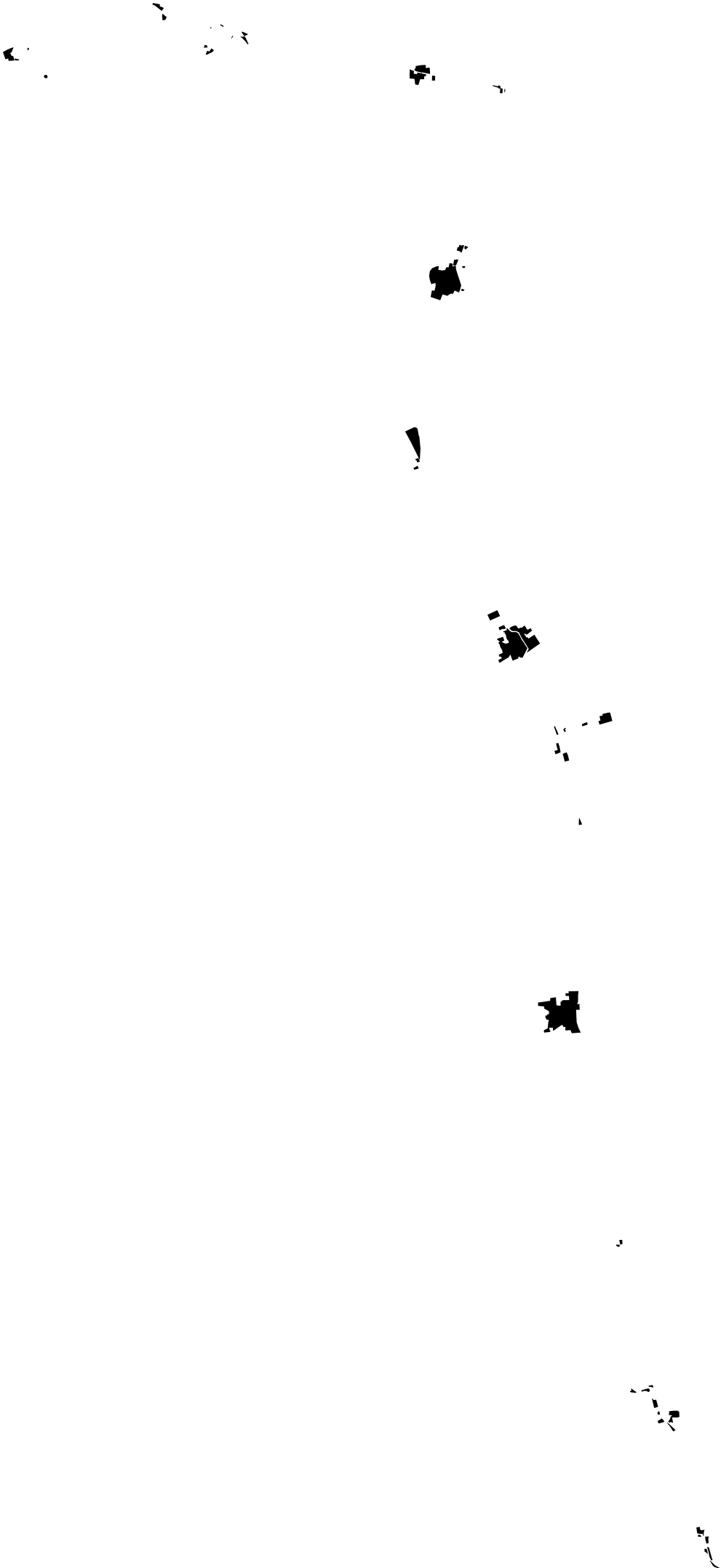
• green areas

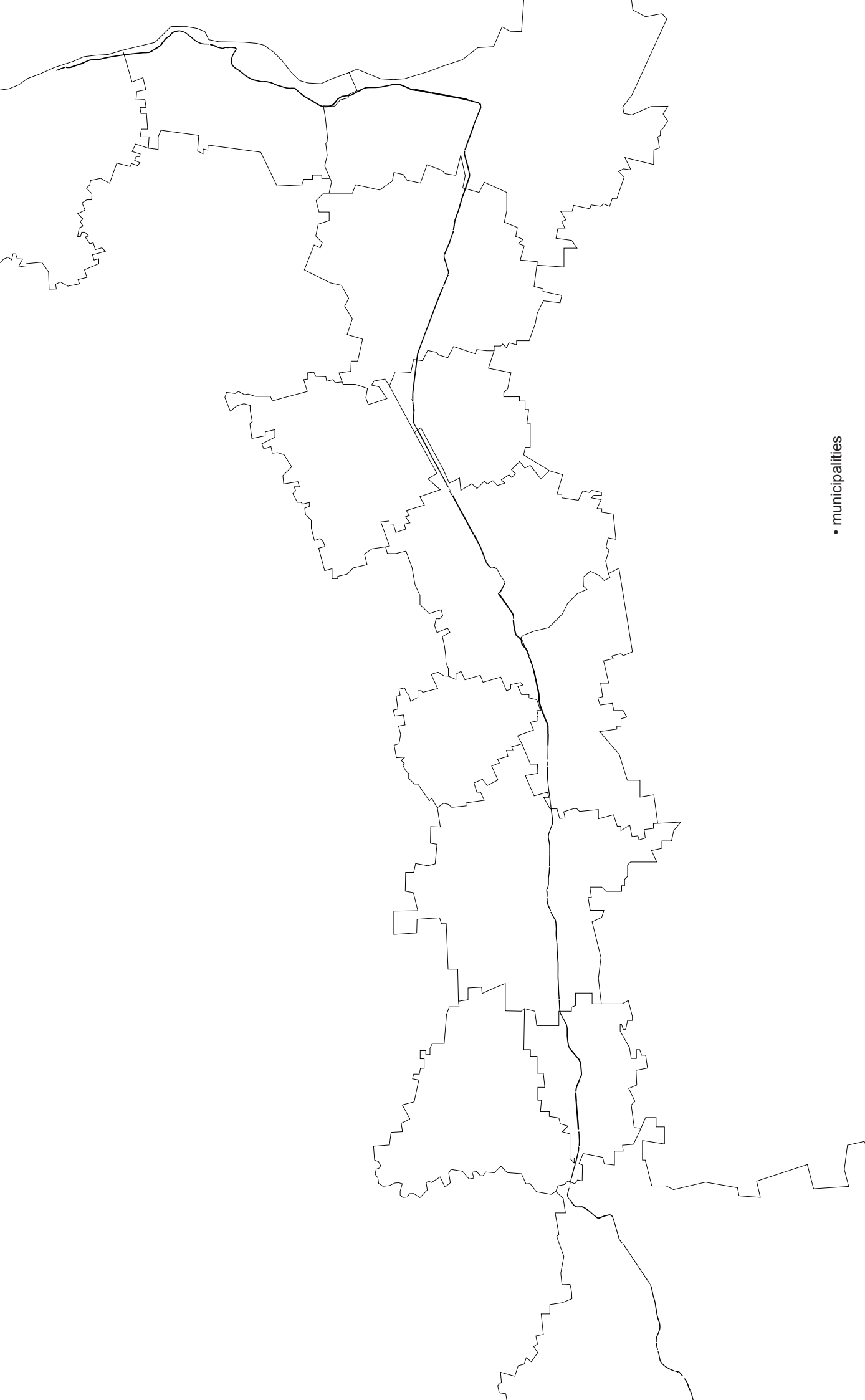
5 more simplified diagrams are the basis for the qualitative analysis.
here the students are asked to go further adding their
 'interpretation' to the information received.
from the mere 'reading' of datas they step here into a more
 problematic 'understanding' of things.
 it is not enough just to count and measure items,
it is necessary now to take a position and make a statement.
 in this phase the students start to focus on problems
and begin to spot possible themes to develop into design proposals.

2.2
the interpretation of things

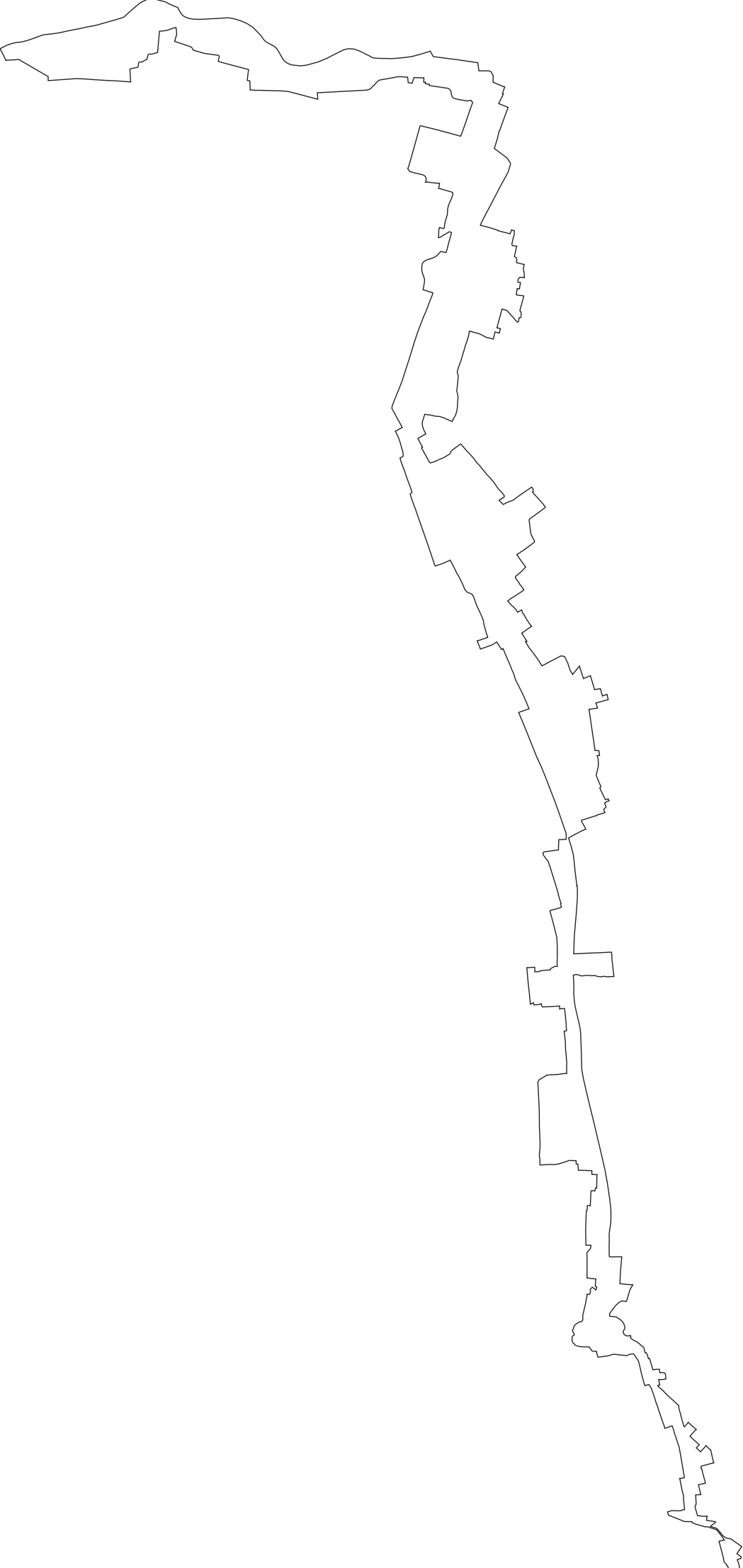


• historical centres





• the canal bound zone



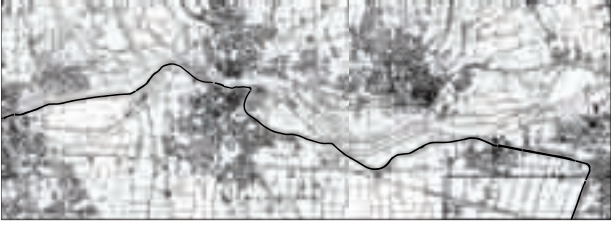
- architectural landmark
- natural landmark
- problematic item
- relevant item

- particular items

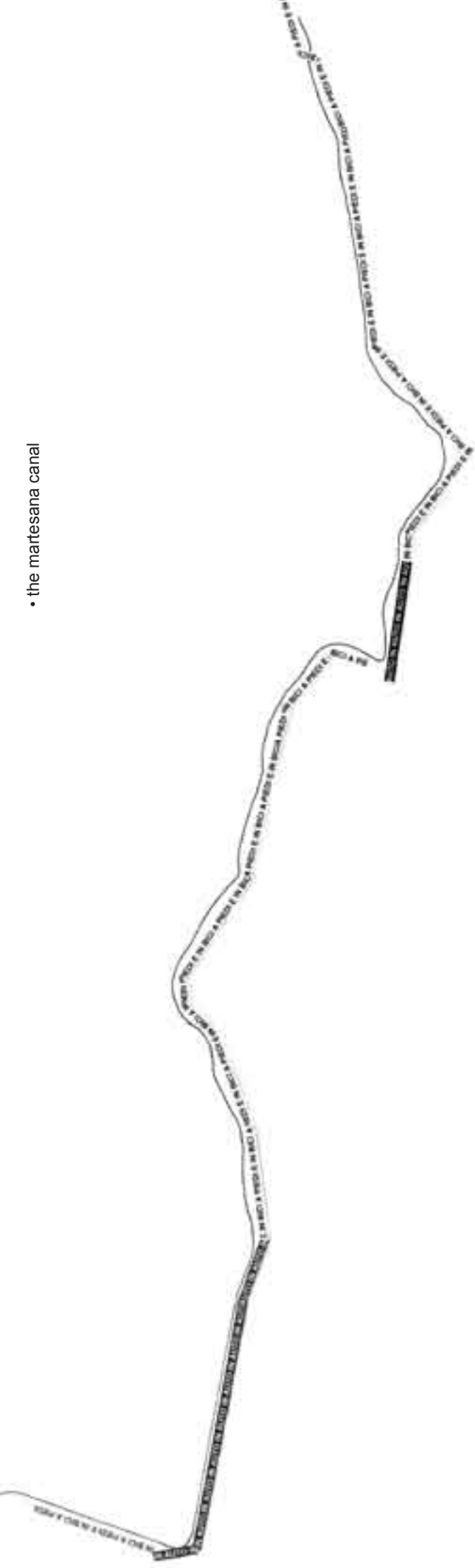
supported by the information collected on site, the students are asked to study, revise and redraft the 10 delaminated diagrams given by the course. this exercise on the vast project sites has a triple purpose: 'elaboration' consist in matching reality with its 'conventional' (and reduced) representation; 'interpretation' is the understanding of things, their meaning, their causes and effects; 'representation' is the re-issuing of the given drawings in a particular, original way that summarize the analysys work and reflects the acquisition of a personal, original expressive technique.

2.3
synthesis
elaboration, interpretation and representation

• frame 1



- the mantesana canal

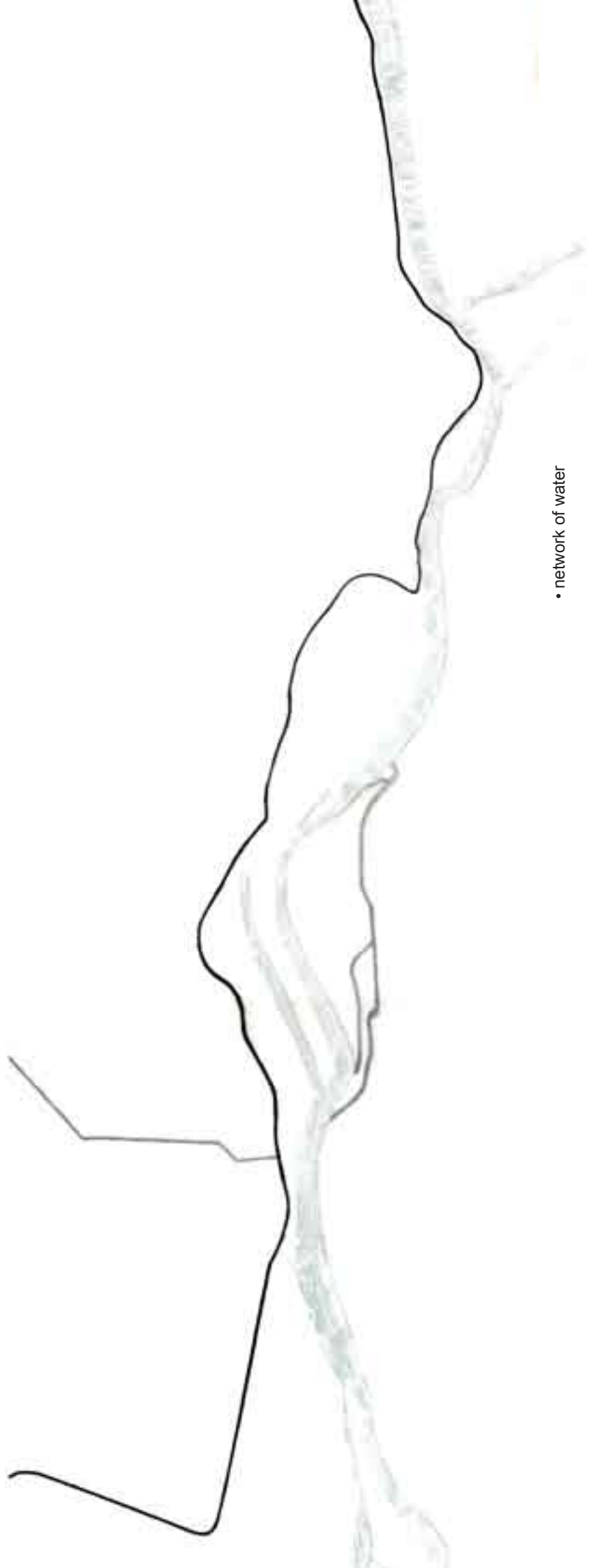




• bridges

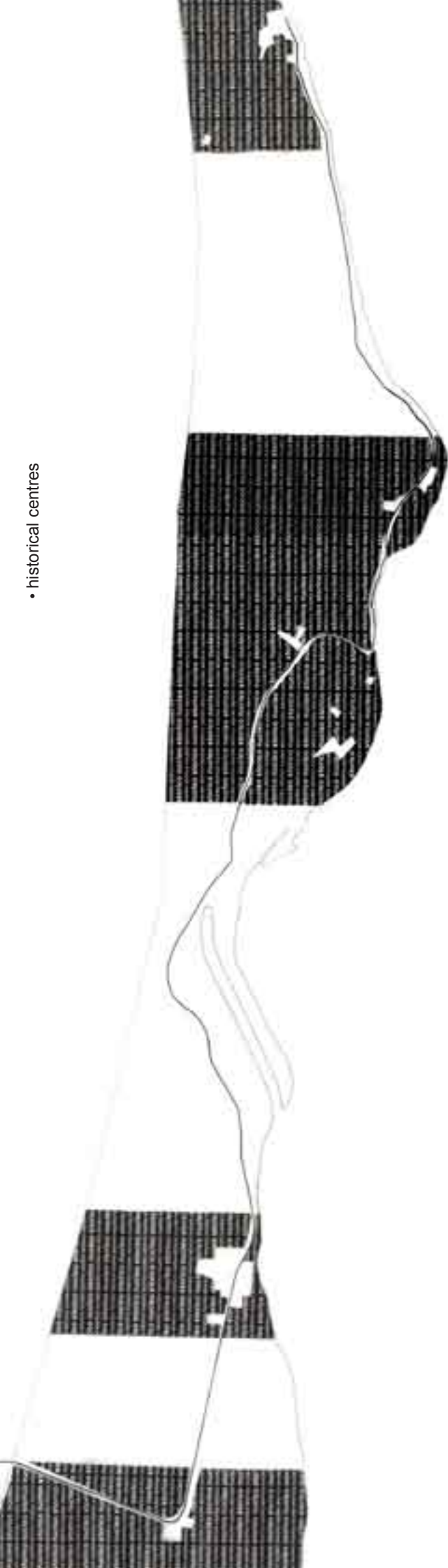
• green areas

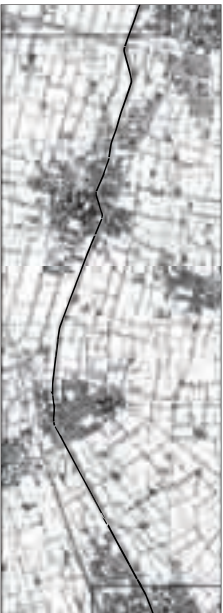




• network of water

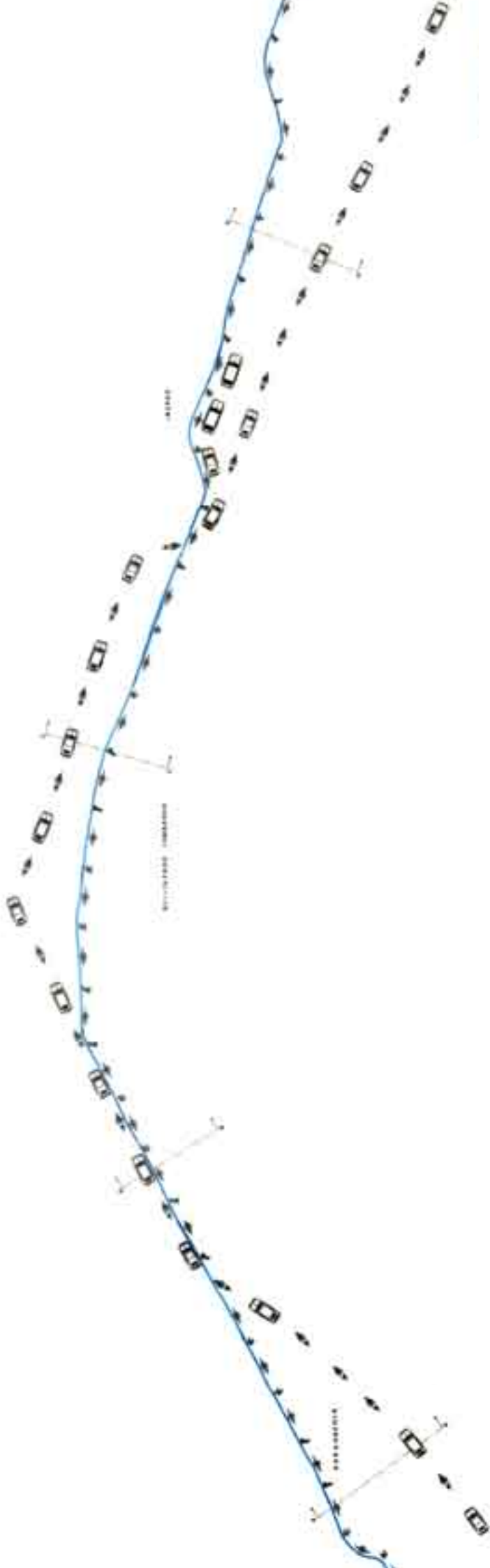
- historical centres

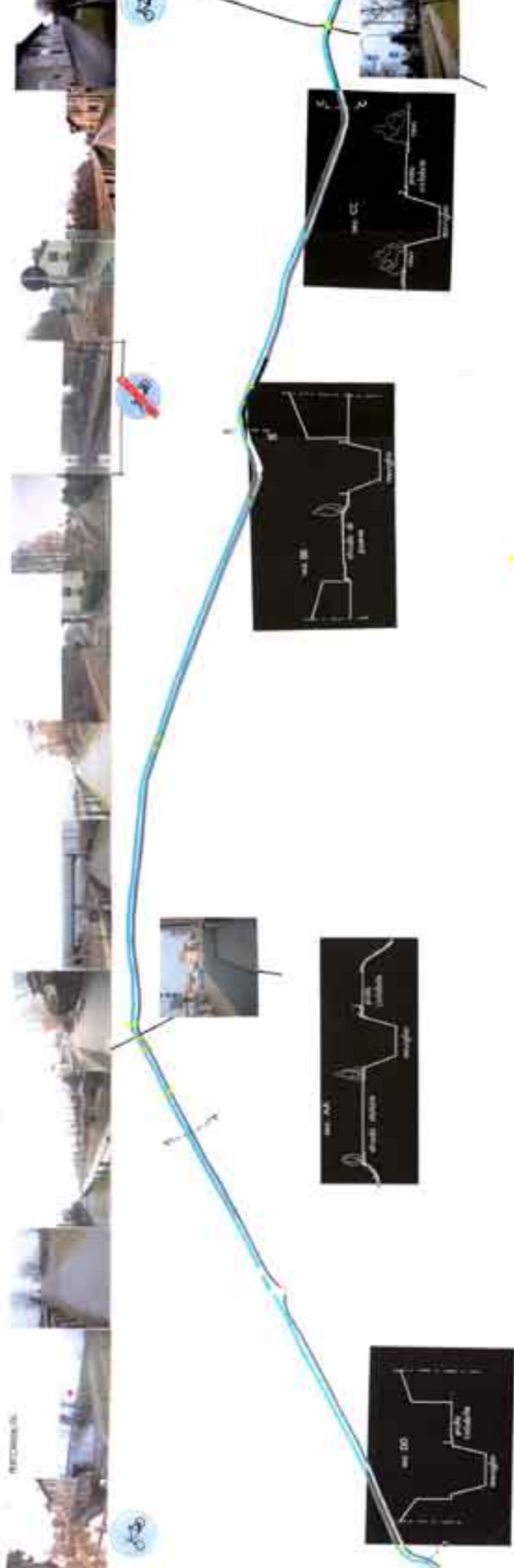




• frame 2

- the mantesana canal

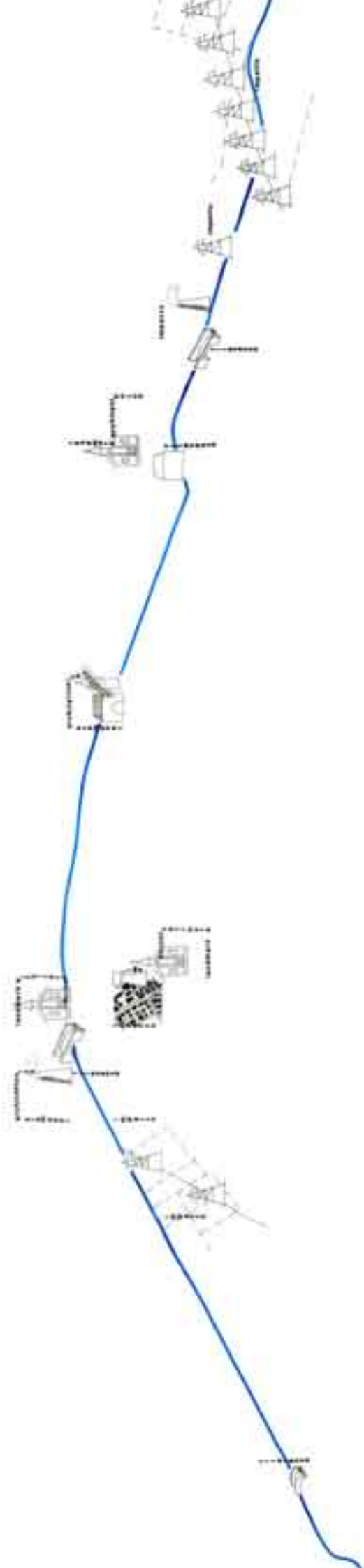




- the martesama canal

• bridges





- relevant items

• green areas





• municipalities

• municipalities



• frame 3



• green areas





• green areas



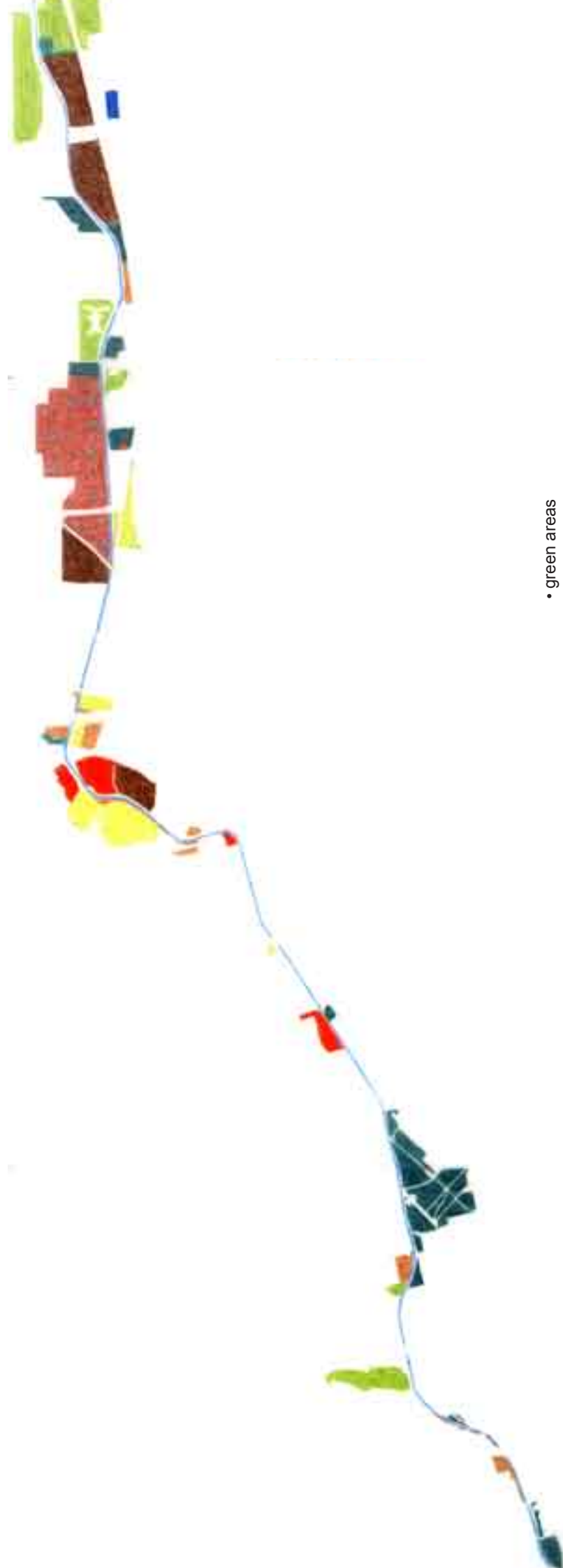
• municipalities

• frame 4



• network of roads



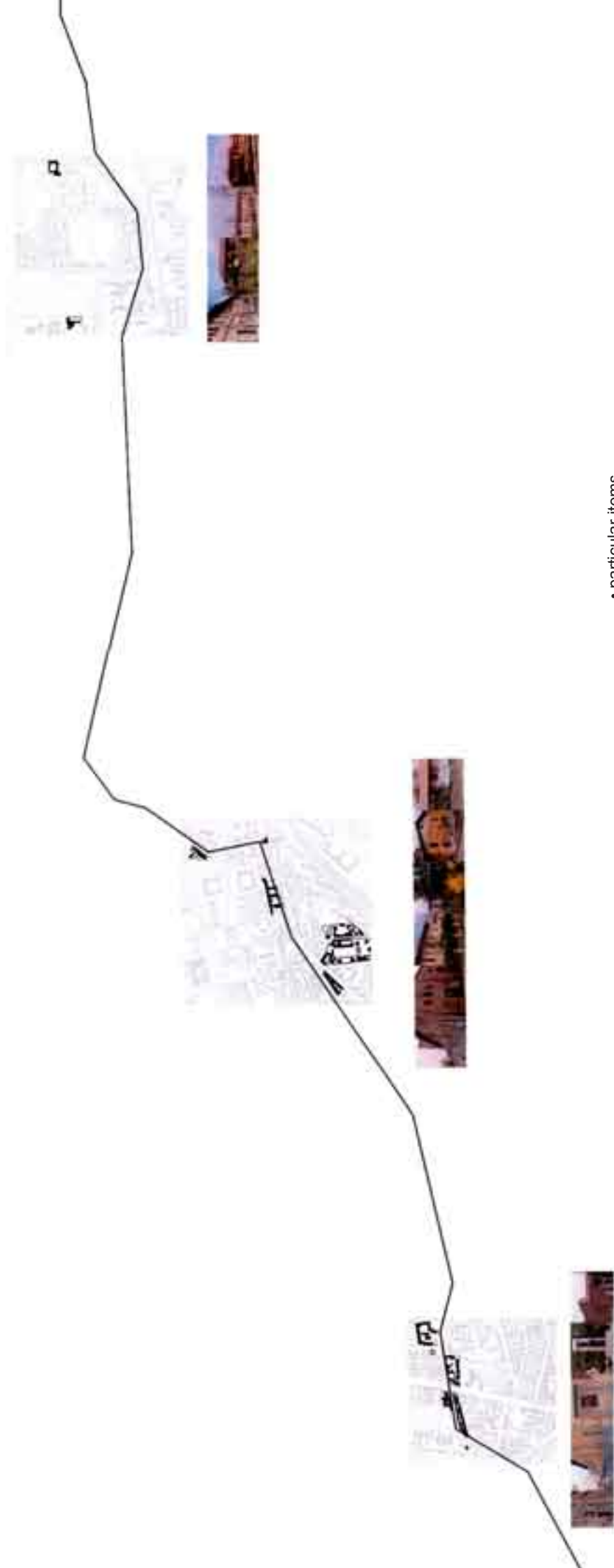


• green areas

- the camal bound zone



- particular items



the manifesto is a panel that every student is asked to produce in order to 'programmatically' state the most authentic, profound concept on which he/she intends to develop the project. the manifesto should consist in the accurate layout of one or more images (drawing, photograph or collage) and one sentence or 'motto': the message should be clear, simple and synthetic but also intriguing and original.



3_building a linear system

the teaching team provided a series of elements (or hintings) to guide and simplify the students in their first approach to designing and planning within a natural environment. these list of 'tools', although incomplete and not systematic, is intended to stimulate and support students proposals and to provide a very basic vocabulary that they might make practical use of during the design phase.

3.1 tools

garden

enclosed introverted place for contemplation, enjoyment and recreation.
usually ornamental ground where a variety of plants, flowers and vegetables is cultivated and combined with other natural elements as stones, water and wood in very different combinations and typologies.
requires a high level of maintenance.

nursery

enclosed area where young plants and trees are grown for sale or planting elsewhere.
the pattern is usually very rational and the management, either private or public, has a specific commercial purpose.
requires a high level of maintenance.

vegetation

row

linear screen of trees with ornamental (marking and making more prominent perspective views, signing axes and paths) or protective function (visual barrier or sound buffer).
requires a low level of maintenance.

hedge

fence or boundary formed by closely growing shrubs or bushes can be composed in ornamental way (labyrinth) or simply laid out to mark the borders of a terrain and provide visual barrier.
requires medium level of maintenance.

wood

area of land, usually smaller than a forest, that is covered with growing trees.
it is usually planted with the aim of 'producing wood' and it quickly develop into an uniform environment with a pleasant atmosphere that naturally becomes public amenity.
requires a very low level of maintenance.

wilderness

uncultivated, uninhabited and inhospitable area invaded by spontaneous vegetation.
although it is usually an abandoned and unplanned region, the work of some contemporary landscape architects has introduced wilderness as a specific planning tool.
requires no maintenance.

wetlands

land consisting of marshes or swamps.
it is a humid and inhospitable environment that has the potentials of climatic balance and can therefore become a strategic planning element
requires no maintenance.

water

as activity...

elements like canals, lakes, basins, pools or docks with a recreational or sportive public function

as decoration...

reflective water surfaces, formal water frames or ponds with an aesthetic and ornamental purpose.

as service...

fountains, wells, canals, shower installations can be used for irrigation, general supply of water or refreshment.

as culture...

the Martesana canal, the docks and little creeks are elements to be preserved as public heritage.

as attraction...

fountains, installations, cascades, or any sort of water feature with a playful and surprising aim to gather and attract people.

hard surfaces

parkings

large areas should be planned to host cars, motorcycles and bicycles employing different materials (concrete, turf, asphalt, gravel). different uses of these surfaces through the 24 hours should be envisioned as well.

urban squares

public spaces with a strong relation (physical and psychological) with the urban fabric are supposed to become gathering places, meeting points or areas for events and social occasions.

skateparks

special areas designed for skating provided of ramps, stairs, handrails, banks or completely dug in the ground (skate bowls) can be either made of concrete, iron or wood.

playgrounds

enclosed surfaces for sports like basketball, volleyball, soccer, tennis... is it possible to employ concrete, asphalt, tartan or wood.

roads

organisation and upgrading
of the existing network of roads
for the circulation of cars
within the park system.

bridges

designing new bridges for
pedestrians or cars across
the canal or rehabilitation
of the existing ones.

pathways

tunnels

planning subterranean
passages to provide safe
communication for pedestrian
and bicycles or to isolate cars
from natural areas.

bicycle paths

organisation and upgrading
of the existing network of paths
for bicycles, rollerblades,
scooters and skateboards.

paths

planning a series of paths with
different materials, morphology
and environment for pedestrian
walks through the different
portions of the park.

railways

a small sustainable scenographic
train could be also imagined as a
transport mean for kids, elders or
disabled people to cruise the
complete stretch of the park.

towers

light hollow structures equipped with inner stairs with the function of providing a higher point of view toward the surrounding landscape.

toilets

small pavillions scattered along the pathways and inserted in the park structure.

small architectural structures

amphitheaters and perrons

elements dug into the ground with the purpose of providing people a place to gather, rest or attend public events.

roofs

bowers, sheds, gazeboes, or any other light structure without volume to provide a place for relaxation or a comfortable walk.

kiosks

mono-functional structures with reduced size and with the purpose of providing a commercial (newspapers, snacks, drinks..) or cultural (information about the park, maps, guided toors) service to the inhabitants of the park.

pavillions

small buildings that can have very different and more cross-sectional functions: culture, art, horticulture, gastronomy, etc..). the functions can be actually planned or invented; the pavillions should be recognizable and carefully inserted in the landscape.

the analysis, the reading and re-writing of the place provide the tools to develop a sketchy and simplified project of their 'green linear system'. it is nevertheless requested that the representation is easy to understand and interpret.

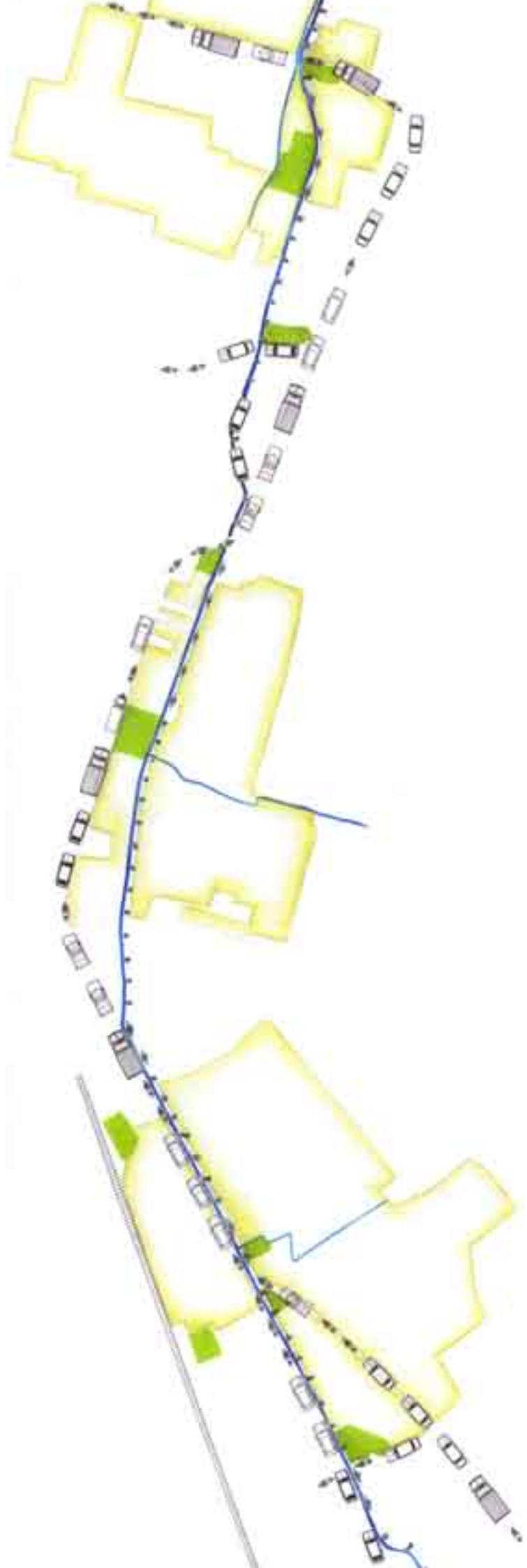
it is a diagrammatic layout which helps to express the potentials of the area, the ambitions of the designer, the urban structure of the intervention, which give answers to problems, meet the needs and finds possible solutions to the critical issues.

although the 1:10.000 scale implies a very distant perspective on the landscape the effort here is to 'render' the overall structure of the system 'distilling out' the relevant items from the analysis work into a well organized panel. a series of icons should be strategically placed to 'spot' the critical situations where the students are willing to work inserting architectural and natural elements.

the crucial step here is to understand what could a green-system be: is it a public, articulated space? is it open, artificial, complex and homogeneous? is it all these things together or its the exact opposite?







4_manipulation

4.1 strategy of the 'blow up'

a basic method has been developed to enable students to handle
with self-assurance the difficulties of jumping from a big scale
to a more detailed one.

the technique consists in selecting a defined portion of the site
(one of the 'critical situation' previously marked in the
meta-project exercise), in 'blowing it up' to a bigger scale that
allows manipulation and eventually in re-inserting the area
into the overall plan.

although the operation might seem sketchy and tricky,
it has the advantage of enabling the 'zooming in'
without losing a link to the wide territorial context.

the students are asked layout every drawing or panel into a
specific format provided by the course.





the course provides a catalog of realized projects.
each student is asked to understand, research, discuss, analyze and re-draw at least 5 of these (or other) projects. this exercise successively enables to insert these architectural structures into the given project areas.
this operation of transferring a building into a different context bypass the 'problem' of 'designing from scratch' and move the discussion on other issues such proportions, orientation, re-use and relation with the landscape.. issues that are crucial in the formative process of this study course

4.2
100% catalog



herzog & de meuron_studio remy zaugg



carl vigo hølmebakk_brick uthus



kazuyo sejima_villa in the forest



archea ass. and c+s ass._ticket office



eduard böhtlingk_roulotte markies



mvrdiv_small pavillion



ville ara_lookout tower



vmx_bicycle parking



teun koolhaas_polderblik house



snohetta_fishing museum



c. gambardella_pavillion



abalas and herreros_gordillo



gigon + guyer_seeing pavillion



dezso ekler_installation



jensen & skodvin_pause areas



sean godsell_kow house



herzog & de meuron_frölich house



p. markli_museum



jean prouvè_maison tropicale

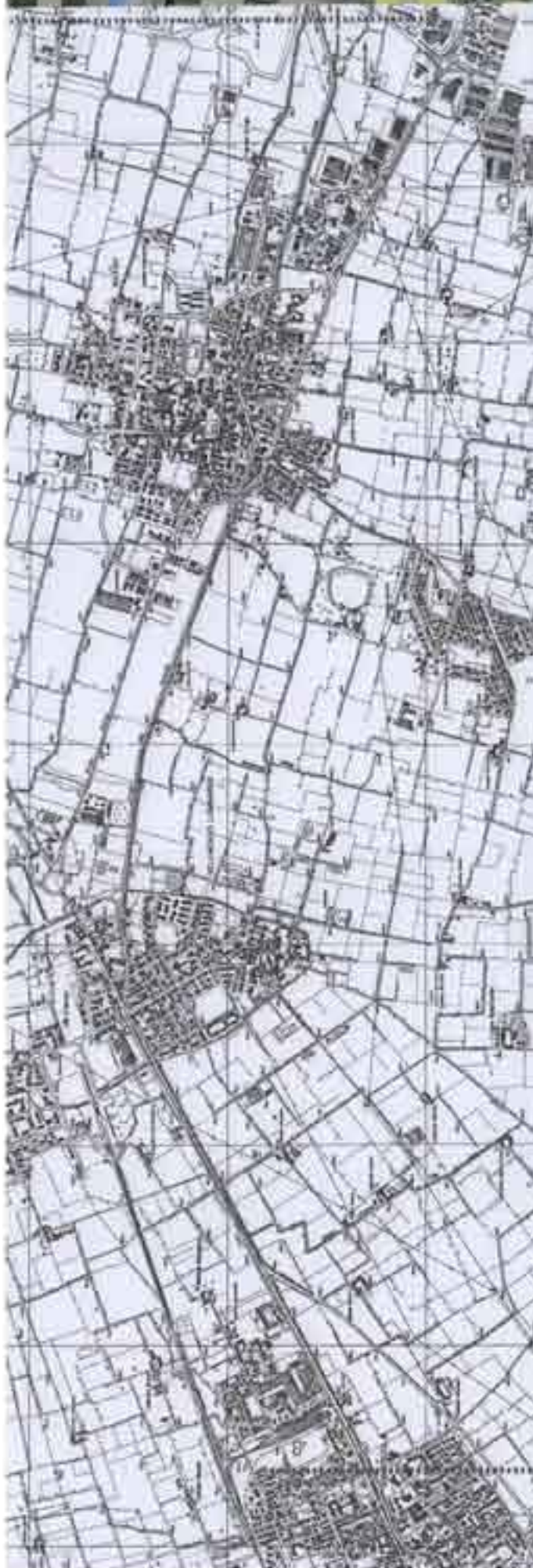


frediani gasser_service building

the applications of the previous exercises to the specific areas
are 'collages' that render in a 'continuum' the
environment and the selected structures.
on this dialogue between architecture and nature the students
start developing their autonomous projects.
with these first visionary, abstract, sketchy projects
the students experience the manipulation of the landscape and
transfer their ideas into a balanced form.
the simplicity of this action helps to define and depict the
ideal 'atmosphere' of the environment and shows the
achievement of the tools to conquer the project.









the last phase of the lab is the one where the students are asked to combine the different elements into an organized project. through the process of the course every student should have understood the context and represented it, everyone has defined problems and critical situations, then a series of answers have been proposed. the first attempts to manipulate the sites have been carried on as well. at last everyone is given the opportunity to choose a theme and consequently develop an autonomous proposal within the framework of the 'green-system'.

the goal of the lab is essentially to transmit a possible methodology to read, understand, and represent the complexity of man-manipulated landscape.

the terrain on which the course operated is vague and uncertain, there are not valid categories, neither safe rules. although the overall ambition has been set on a fairly high level (especially for students of the first year) the experience of a series of simple steps from a regional scale to the one of the 'architectural' project, produced a variety of proposal that can be only summarized in the few examples of this section.



STATO DI FATTO

PROGETTO





NUOTARE

CAMMILARE

PEDAL ARE/DRUMS

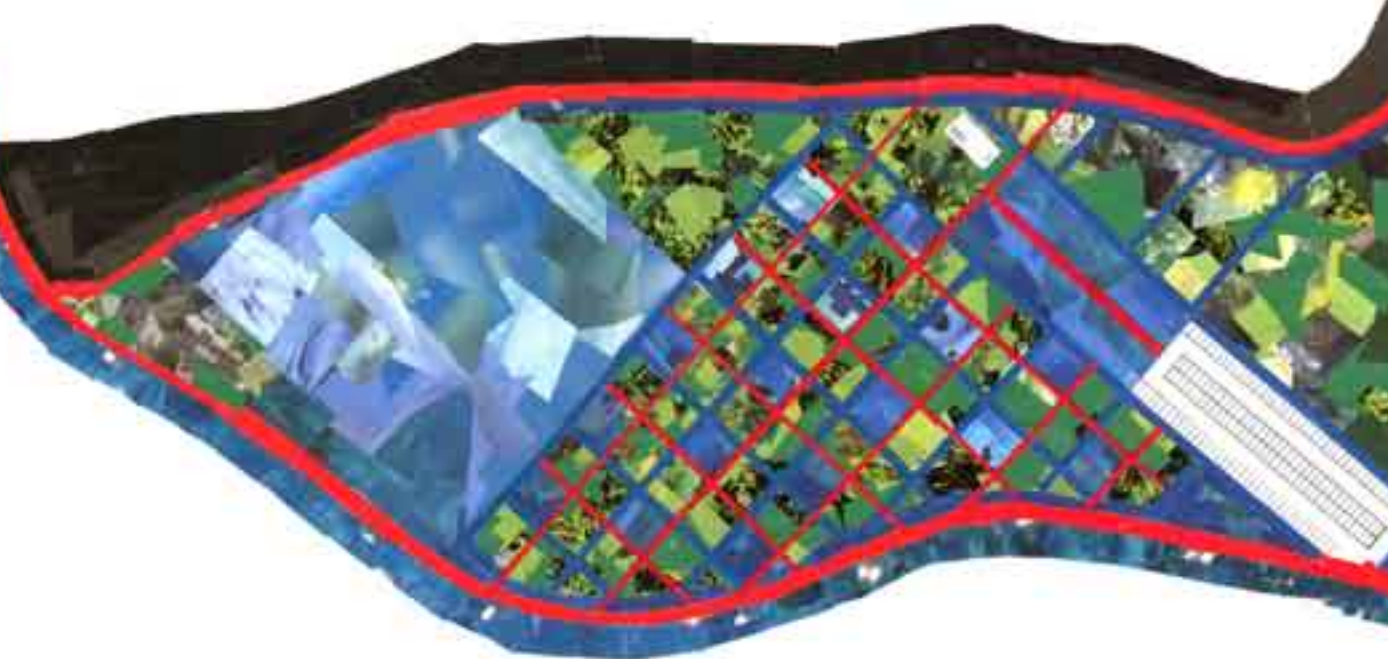
METALLICA

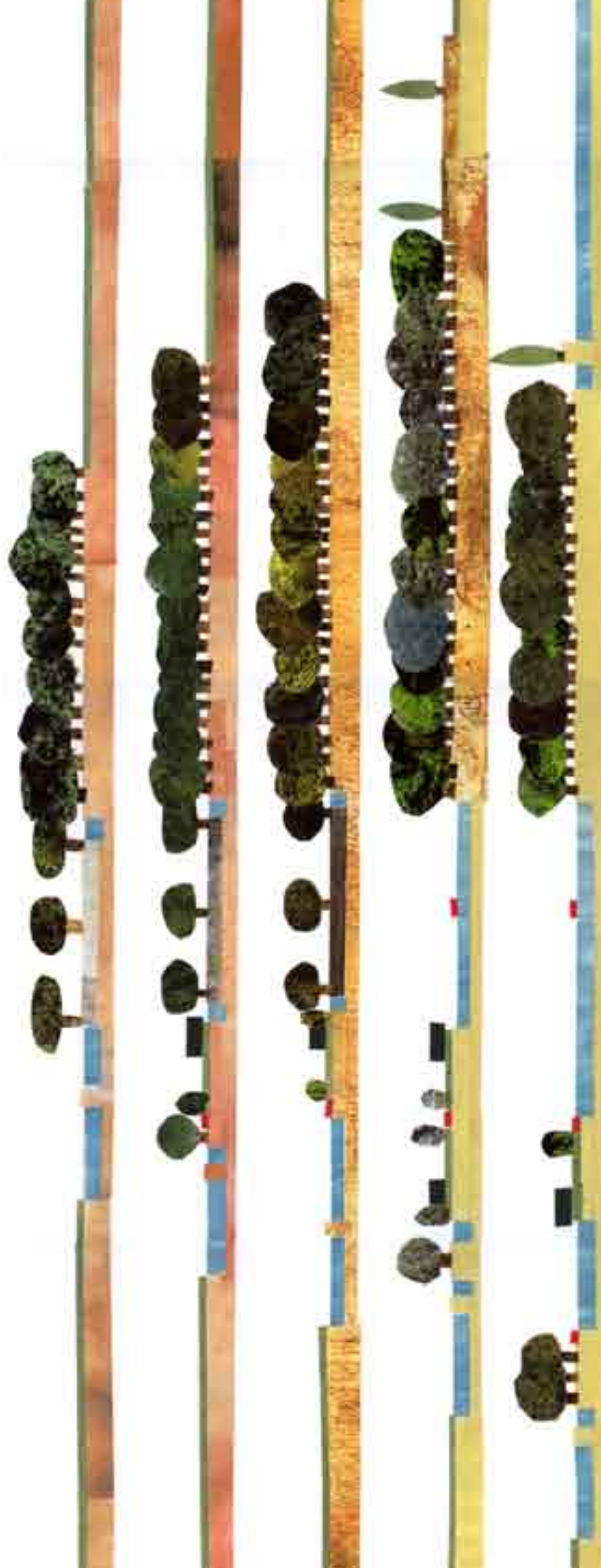
CEMENTO LIS

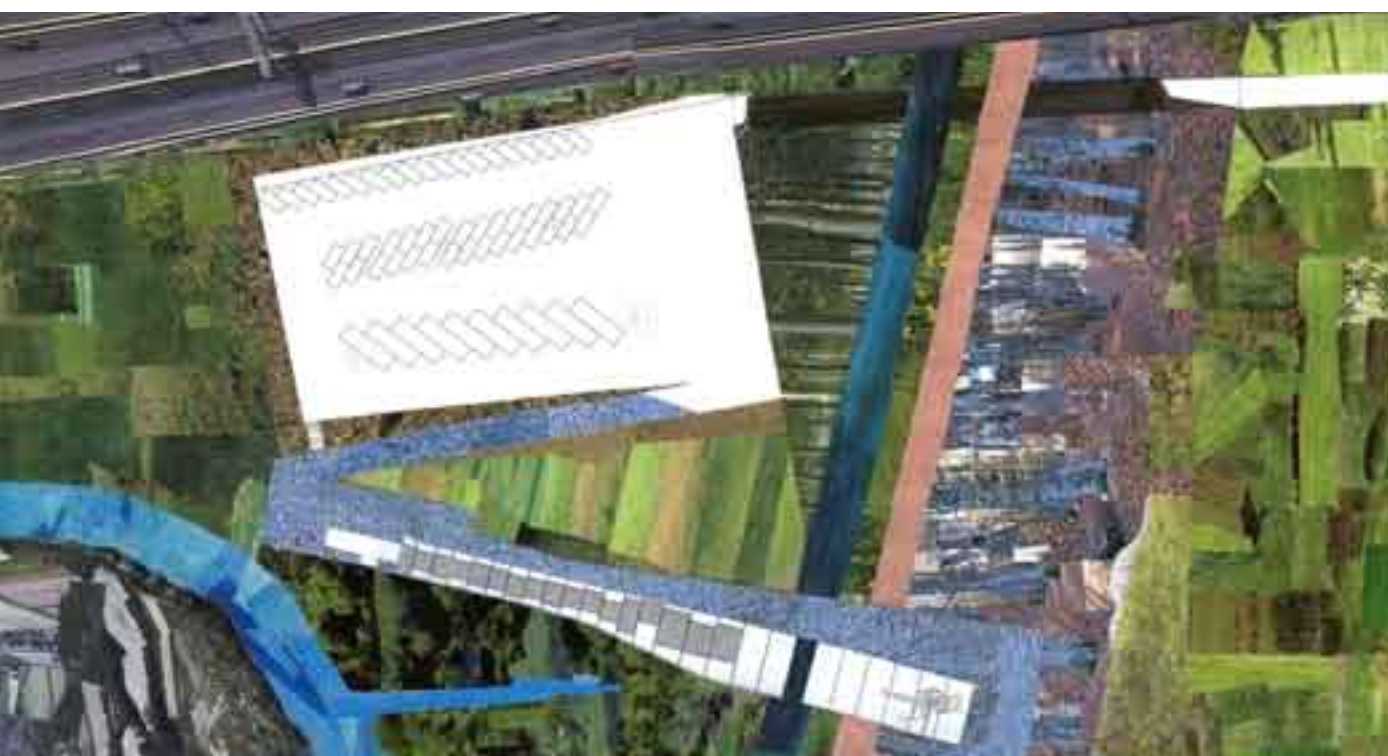
resina artificiale

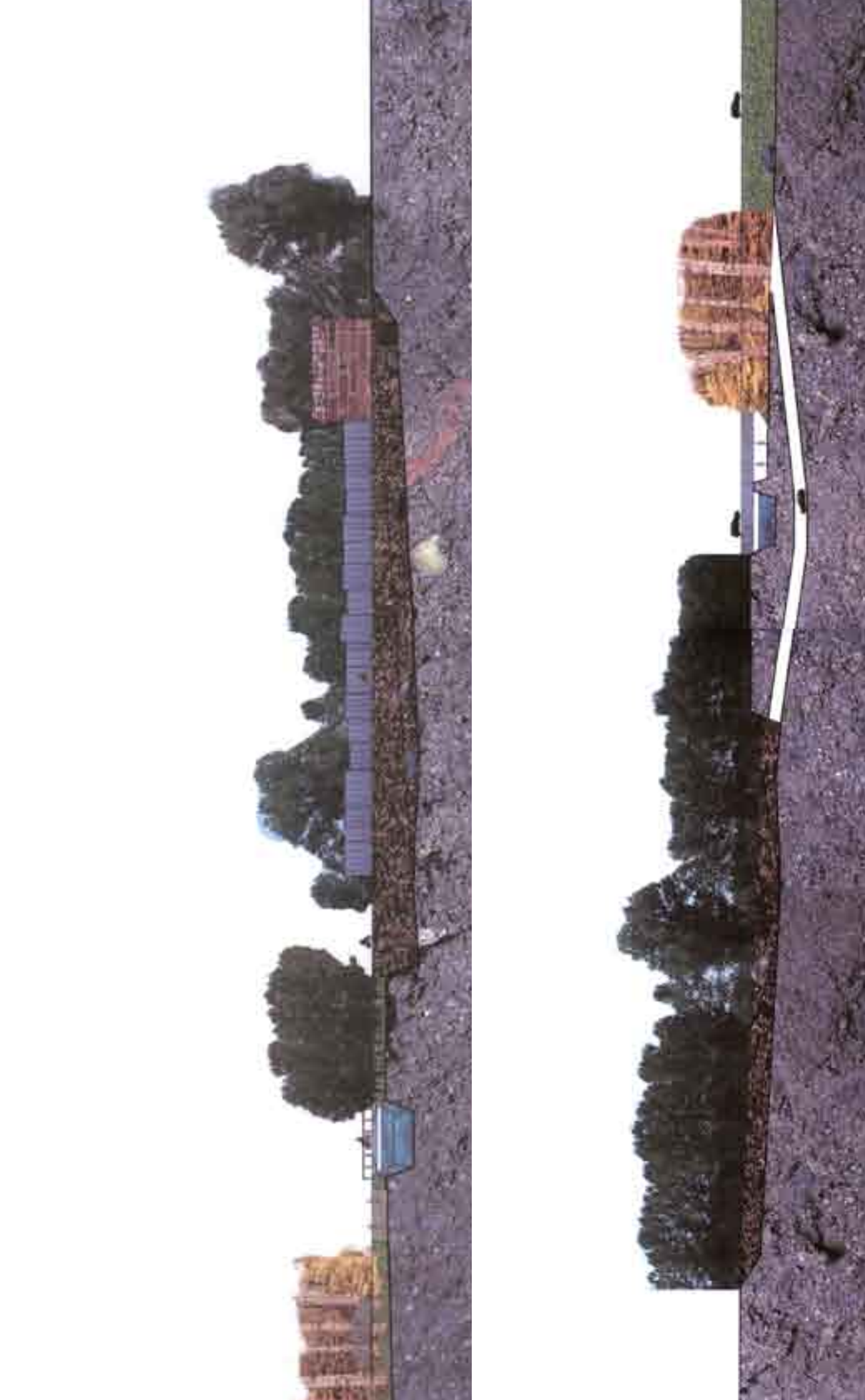
coloreto cemento

en









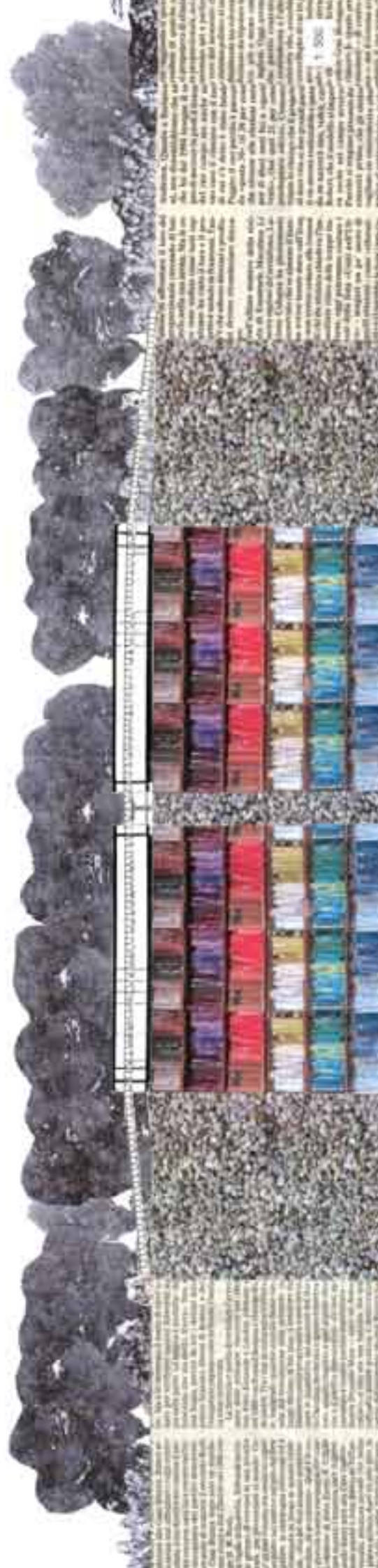




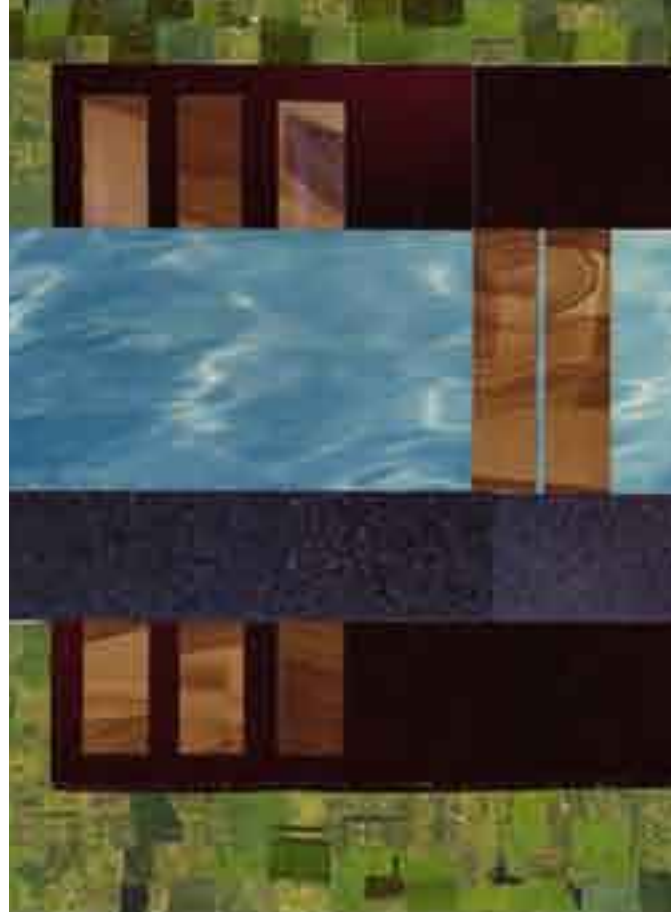


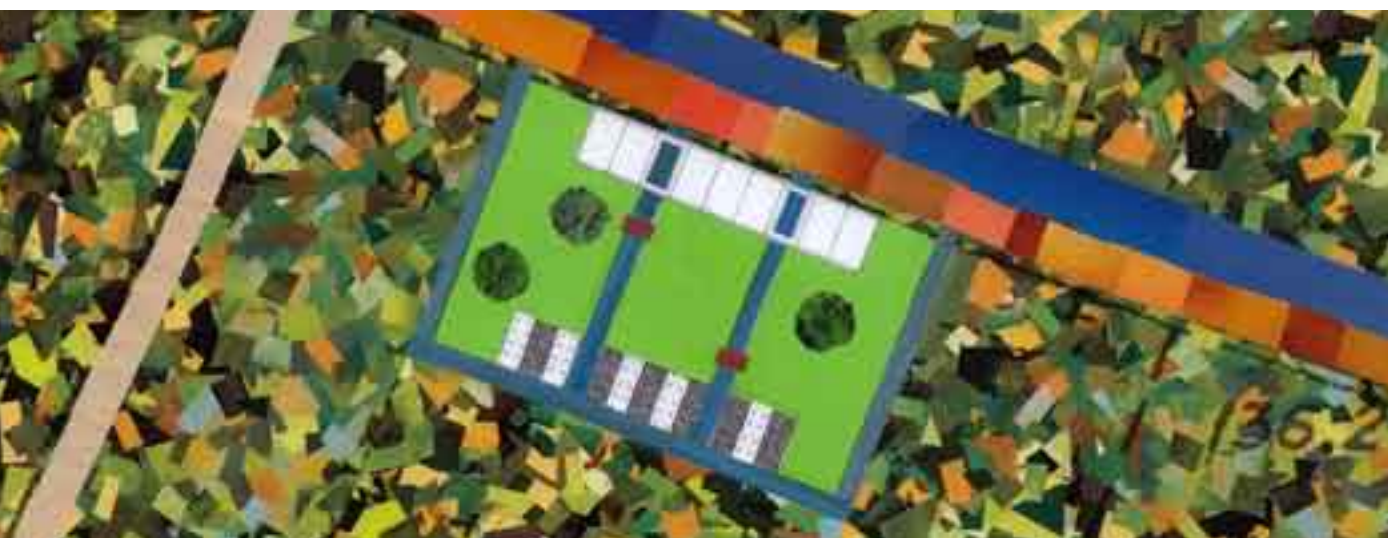










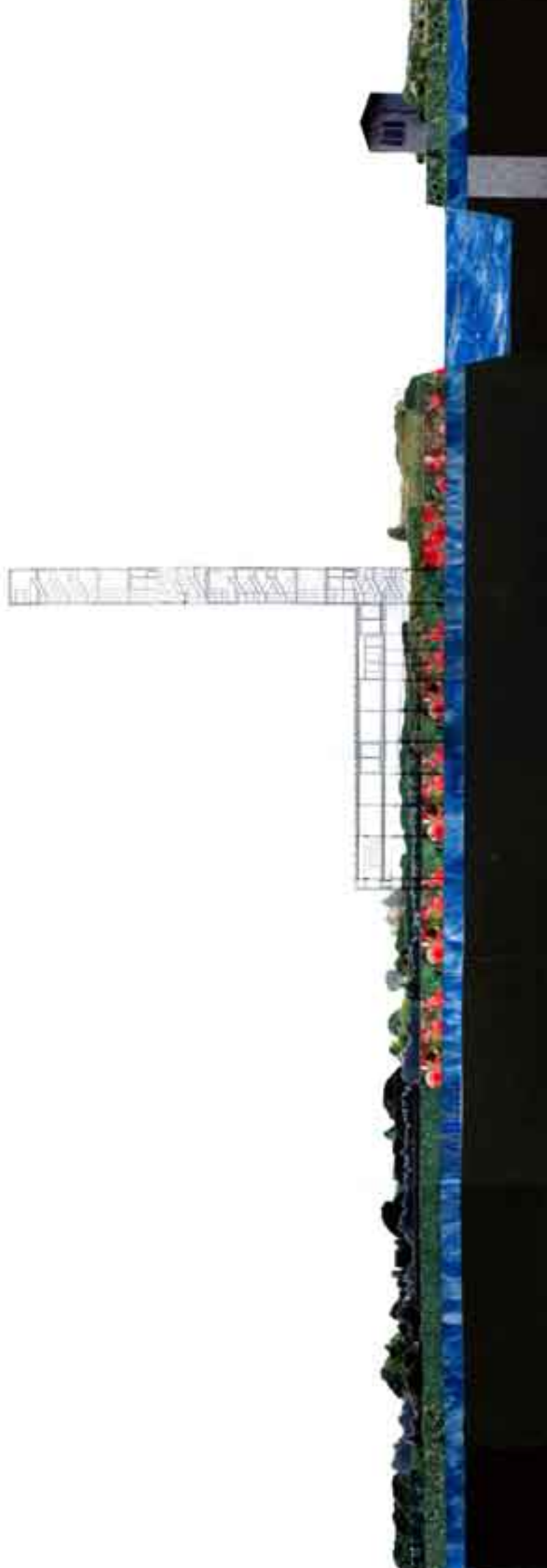




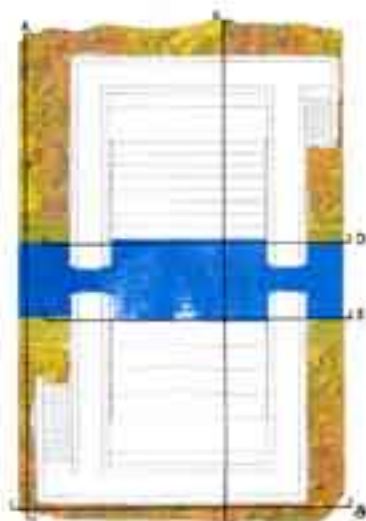
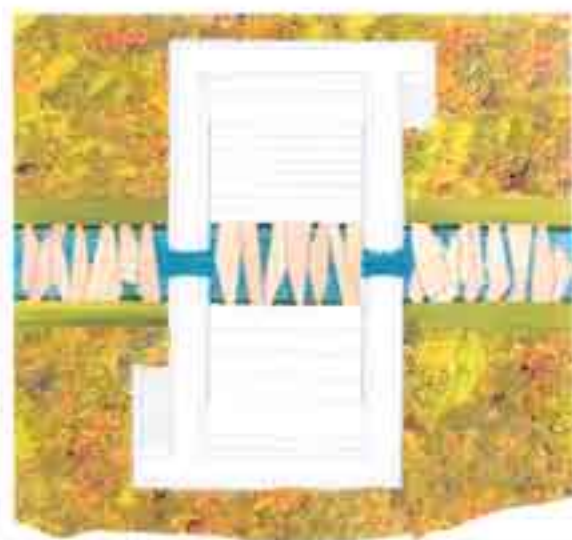










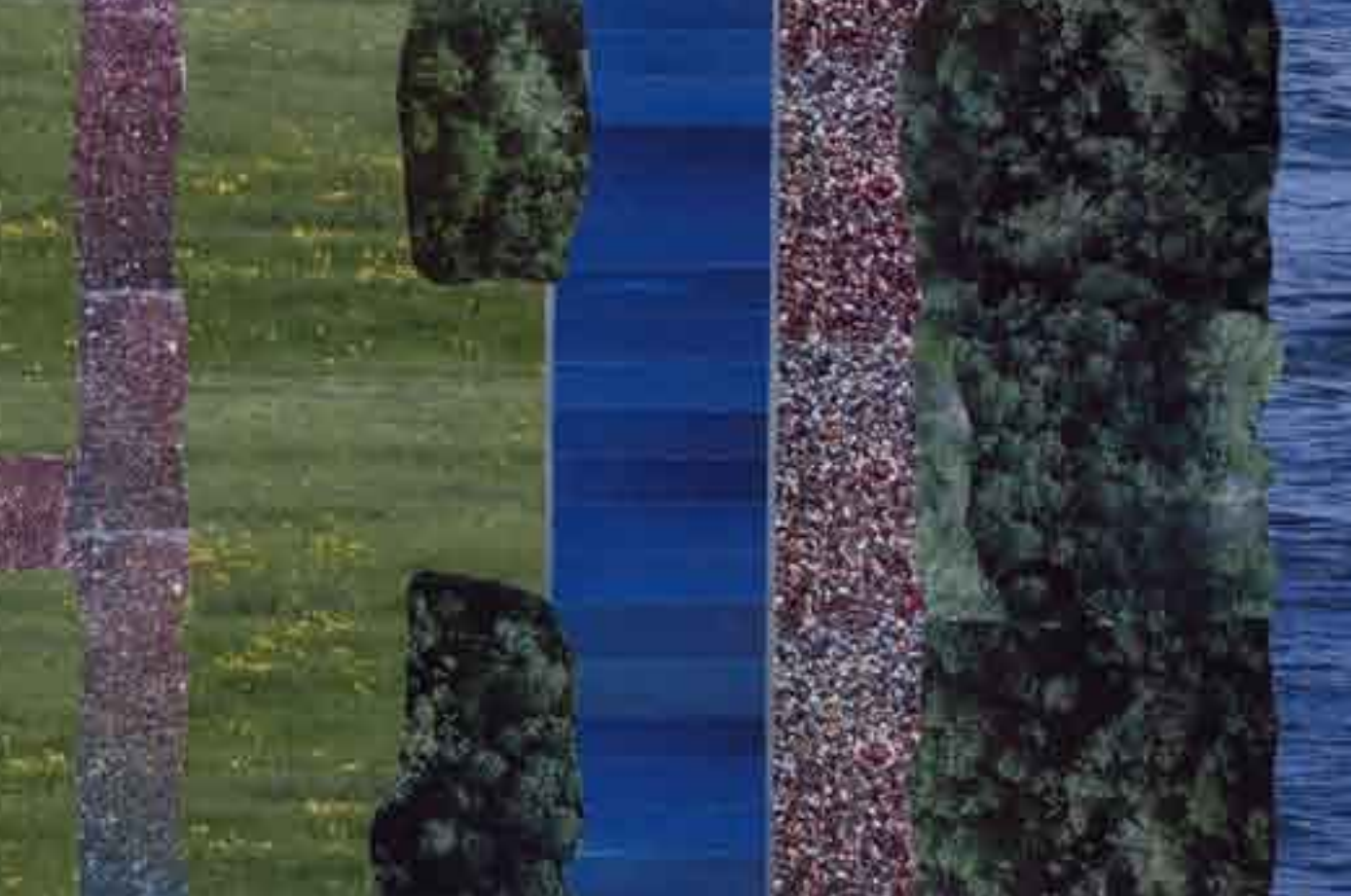






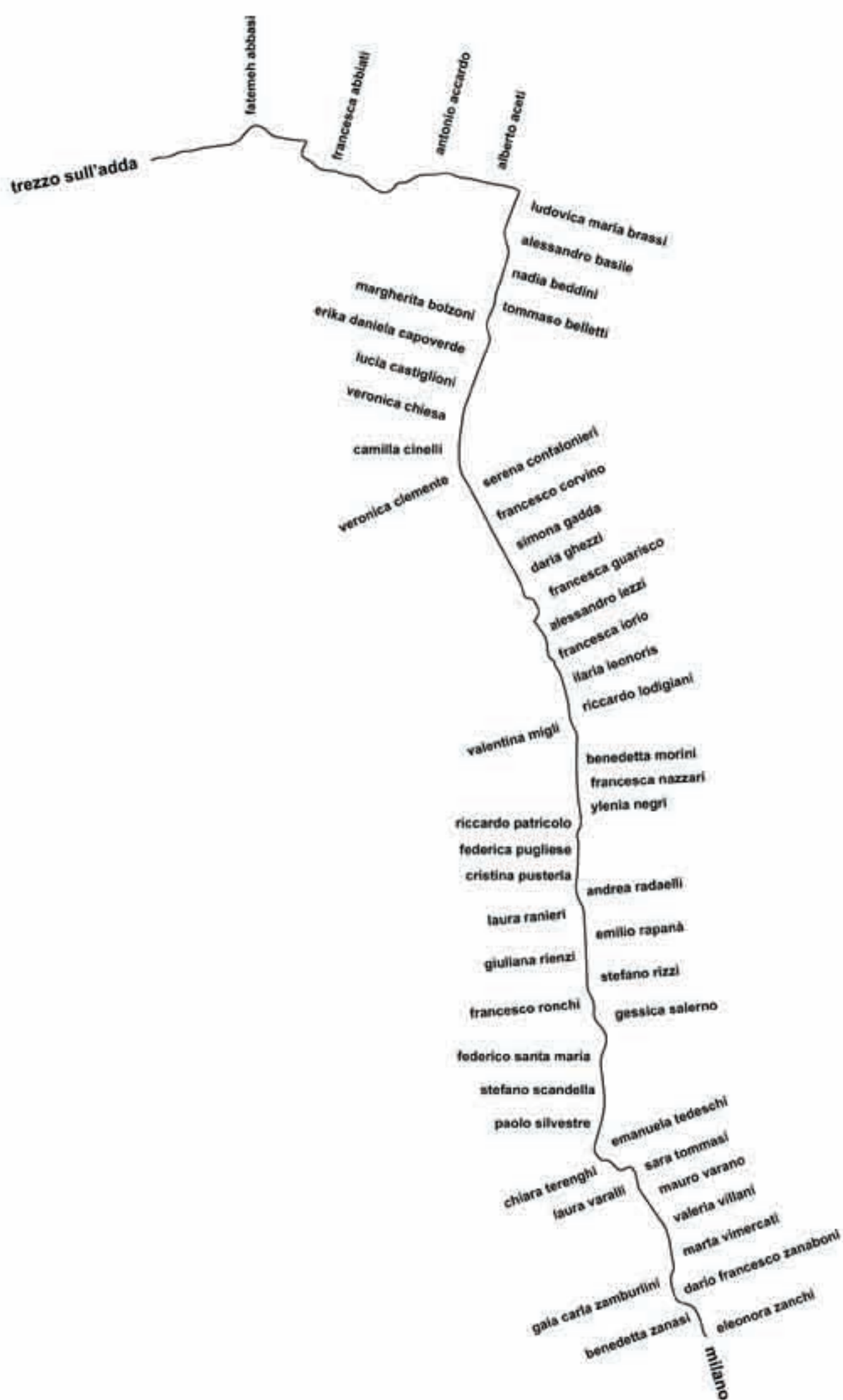






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Gennaro Postiglione is Associate Professor in Interior Design and Museography at The Politecnico di Milano. His researches along the years have focused on the relationship between cultural traditions and modern architecture, with specific attention to Nordic countries and culture of dwelling. He is the leader of the first Modern European Architecture - Museum net (www.meamnet.polimi.it) which aim is to preserve, promote and divulgate the cultural heritage represented by European architects' own houses. Author of several books, he is promoting through publications the knowledge of the Nordic architecture in Italy. <http://king.rett.polimi.it/~postigli/CVs/>

Luciano Giorni is an architect that studied with Achille Castiglioni (Milan), Michael Alder (Basel), Joao Luis Carrilho da Graca (Lisbon) and graduated with Cino Zucchi and Pietro Nicolini. He has collaborated with Ag Fronzoni in Milan and has opened his independent office in Pavia in 1999. In 2000 he has won (with Andrea Borlini e Marina Dallera) the 1st prize for a public building in Vigevano (Italy) which was opened in 2005. In 2003 he has been short listed for the 'Italian architecture golden medal' with a project for a private house on the Alps in Chiesa Valmalenco.

Bruno Vaerini studied at the Art Academy in Rome and then moved toward interior architecture opening a professional office and working on several Interior architecture projects that have been published on various architectural magazines like Abitare, Casabella and Domus and exhibited in Cologne, Milan, Bergamo and New York. He is currently teaching at the Politecnico di Milano and has lectured in many architecture schools abroad. A monography about his work, 'La scatola interna 1984-1991 di Bruno Vaerini' has been curated by Manolo De Giorgi and published by Electa.

Lorenzo Bini is an architect that studied in Milan (Italy) and Oslo (Norway) and worked with different practices in Italy, Norway and The Netherlands. Through the collaborations with Vudafieri-Partners (Milan), Studio Power (Milan), West 8 urban design & landscape architecture (Rotterdam) and others, he has developed a versatile approach on a wide range of projects: products, furnitures, interiors, architecture, landscape and urbanism. Since 2000 is collaborating with Prof. Gennaro Postiglione on teaching and research. His Milan based independent office (<http://www.studiometrico.com>) is developing projects for interior and outdoor space.

Alessia Mosci studied architecture at the Politecnico di Milano and at the Bauhaus Universitaet in Weimar, Germany. She currently lives and works in Milano, where, in 2002 she co-founded "socially", a project for collaborating young architects, designers and graphics. Since 2000 she has collaborated with Gennaro Postiglione, teaching and researching at the politecnico di milano. Her teaching experience also include NABA (nuova accademia di belle arti), where in 2004 she taught Interior Design with Antonio Gardoni and is currently collaborating with Paolo Bozzuto, teaching "Techniques and tools of representation" at the Faculty of Landscape and Urban Planning – Politecnico of Milano. www.socially.info

Paolo Vimercati Starts his architectural studies at the Politecnico di Milano moving onto Helsinki University of Technology then to London where he gains his diploma in 2000. from 1997 starts to collaborate with different practises, taking part in various projects ranging from elegant suburban residences to franchise shops to branding research applied to interior design. From 2002 he lives and works in Milano as free lance architect where he has cofounded a new structure (socially : architecture) that lives in the space between architecture and design and that has project on European level. From 2000 he is tutor and research collaborator at the Politecnico di Milano.

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