

The environmental and artistic park as a place of enhancement and identity of post-industrial heritage.  
The Park "Spina 4" in Turin

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# The environmental and artistic park as a place of enhancement and identity of post-industrial heritage.

## The Park 'Spina 4' in Turin

**EURAU'12**

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*ABSTRACT. In the paper, the relationship between the use and appropriation of public spaces and the landscape quality are investigated in terms of technical performance and aesthetic perception.*

*The applied research of LABA & A, Politecnico di Torino and Albertina Academy of Fine Arts with the City of Turin, is aimed at an innovative way to follow and complete the process design and execution of the new park "Spina 4", of about 45,000 m<sup>2</sup>, funded by the European Community.*

*The transdisciplinary approach responds to the research for new quality of public space, not only technical and functional, but perceptual, sensory, cultural, aesthetic, environmental, combining innovative technologies and site specific art, consistent with urban regeneration.*

*KEYWORDS: public spaces, public art, transdisciplinarity, landscape, park.*

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## **1. The micro-landscape and public art in the reconstruction of public space**

The experimental research of the "Laboratory of Art & Architecture" (LA&A) deals with sites in the scattered city, in which the acquisition of quality promotes - such as Pier Luigi Crosta said - a "process of interaction" through which people constitute themselves as a "subject collective".

In various approaches, it highlights the importance of upgrading the contemporary city through the design of various micro-spaces, with a view of *widespread quality*, especially in suburban areas.

The design for an outdoor public place can become an opportunity to test a collaborative and interdisciplinary method, starting from the framework of requisites specified by the local government and active citizens groups.

The focus is on the role of the experimental design scenarios as the generator of a *creative milieu*.

Open spaces, in the urban periphery, are often places in which there is an imbalance between the perceived needs compared to the actual functions, recognizing that it carries a high potential of non-expressed transformation. In the demands expressed by the inhabitants, it is clear that they did not view the spaces and streets of the neighborhood as a resource of community life, or an element conducive to the development of a local identity and feelings of social participation.

The design approach of LA&A of public areas architecture, public art and the urban landscape need this kind of creativity to reconstruct the memories of the place and the community, and to develop sites of sensorial use.

The public spaces are treated as environments that are open to host diversity and variety, meeting places for different cultures, places for exchanges and spontaneous communication that can accelerate the processes of urban regeneration.

The requalification design scenarios are considered the potential offered by the multimedia technologies that are rapidly becoming accepted elements of artistic expression, as well as to apply traditional languages in new and innovative ways and to combine urban agriculture and ecological measures. The underlying theme, is the objectivity of art, as soon as it is forced out of the protected spaces of the museum and into the daily life of the city.

## **2. The Ecological Art in the public space**

A study approach, that has been considered for the recovery of post industrial area has the Ecological Art. This approach calls for an essential concept of the Land Art: space / natural re-naturalized, not built, is where the designer experiences physically and conceptually, suggests a new way of seeing and experiencing from the public, to recreate a new quality of landscape.

The green area between the streets is seen as a potential place "other", "oasis of well-being," recalling the installation of Robert Smithson's small ship with thick vegetation on the river, opposite the docks for his re-urbanized natural and as a source of comfort and aesthetically pleasing.

Robert Smithson has asserted that "perception is prior to conception, when it comes to site selection or definition. One does not impose, but rather expose the site - be it interior or exterior (...). The unknown areas of sites can best be explored by artists."<sup>1</sup>

During the 60s, Robert Smithson primarily has produced large and small Land Art projects "where the artist's materials consist of natural phenomena or of nature

itself". The artist used the neglected state as starting point and basis for creative activity, whether on land, water or in the air: it involves working within the site and with moving oneself within the site in order to use the things created by nature.

At the same time, other artists - for example Alan Sonfist - are occupied re-forming the micro-landscape from the standpoint of nature itself. Their works are individually quite different, but what they have in common is that the art works reflect the concerns of increasing numbers of biologists, ecologists, architects, planners and legislators attempting to develop ethics that addresses man's relationship to the land.

The first Eco Art creation of Alan Sonfist - "Time Landscape", 1965, commissioned by Department of Transportation - is a oasis of growth in the midst of the metropolis, placing the ancient indigenous plant species of New York in the contemporary landscape<sup>2</sup>.

In the U.S.A. and in Europe a green movement has been started, which want to combine technical know-how with the environmental sustainability sensibilities. The creative approach is able to grasp perspectives or reveal traces and significances that the techno-scientific and sociological disciplines cannot grasp with their tools alone.

In the framework of experiences in the U.S.A., the "ecoventions"<sup>3</sup> are proposed and produced in collaboration with community members and local specialists such as architects, botanists, zoologists, ecologists, engineers, landscape architects, and urban planners. The stakeholders' role is of paramount importance to an ecovention's survivability, since citizens are the stewards who will protect and maintain the ecovention once it's built.

The creativity is applied in relationship to art history, cultural and social history of the territory and in terms of current ecological practices in the public spaces. Among the first, Mel Chin has considered the use of plants as remediation and sculptural tools capable of bringing into reality the return of life to devastated landscape. The artist has materialized science, technology and art, working with biotechnological experts and using hyperaccumulator plants (plants that have evolved the capacity to selectively absorb large amounts of metal or minerals in their vascular structure) as remediation agents. He has begun *Revival Field*, the best known ecovention, in 1990 - in Minnesota and after in Pennsylvania and Germany -, a conceptual and scientifically grounded work, developed with the intention

### **3. The innovation in micro-urban landscape**

The focus on sustainability and creative forms of exploitation of the sites, in relation to their territorial and urban context, connote so many contemporary experiences of the design approach to public open space.

Since the 90s, the so-called "radical landscape" or "innovative Landscape" design has become an new approach - theoretical and operational - to garden design, outdoor architecture and infrastructure as a means to promote environmental remediation, generate ecological renewal, inspire civic responsibility, enhance quality of life and enhance synesthetic perception.

This approach has shown how design can innovatively address environmental, social, political and economic concerns, as well as provide solutions that promote regenerative outcomes with an aesthetic utilization of 'green technology' and with ri-naturalisation of facades and leisure areas.

Nature is incorporated in a conceptual landscape, which can consist of poor materials or 'architectures' of colour, light and sound.

Martha Schwartz and Markus Jatsch in the environmental recovery of post-industrial Emscher Park, at Gelsenkirchen in Germany, have designed a "Red Corridor," defined by two walls made from stacked haybales, which marks the axis

from an important local monument to the point of intersection of this axis with the infrastructure lines. The hallway is symbolically coloured red, the power and blood color. The space of the hallway is very narrow, forcing the visitors to think consciously about who can pass when two people meet; in a very immediate way, it poses a critical attention to restore meaning to the place.

The term "spatial practices" proposed by Jane Rendell appears appropriate to envisage interventions that "transgress the boundary between art and architecture"<sup>4</sup> and dialogue with the social and the aesthetic, with the public and private sectors.

Under investigation are the abandoned places, "terrain vague", which may become symbols to rebuild a sense of community, to develop public policies that are shared. The spatial practices, deriving from land art and performance art, have influenced the work of artists and architects, who seek to question architecture's and city planning's relationship with dominant economic and cultural forces.

#### **4. The park "Spina 4"**

##### **4.1 The urban transformation**

The experience in progress in the city of Turin concerns a sustainable brownfield redevelopment, the future urban park called "Spina 4", in peripheral zone characterized by a fragmented urban fabrics and connoted by a recent post-industrial transformation.

The morphological design of the park is the permanence of a prefiguration in the City Plan (1995): an urban form that evokes the re-naturalization of former industrial site, on a great new urban boulevard from the north to the city centre, obtained by undergrounding of the railway.

The future park has an extension of 45,000 sqm. The first phase of post-industrial action has caused the near-total obliteration of the traces of the industrial past, in the next phase's attention to the quality of the environment has further integrated the conservation of architectural heritage. Demolition (2005-6) are conserved part of the "cathedral" for steel production of reinforced concrete with three naves, built in the '20s and Hennebique patent, and the water tower, in the late '30s. The urban open space is bordered to the west by a historic margin, the elegant architecture of the proto industrial complex "Docks Dora" (1912), north and south by new residential buildings.

In the design of City of Turin, the grave situation of soil pollution with heavy metals, hydrocarbons and PAHs, is dealt with "on site" treatment of the soil layers for mixed waste and installation of a capping of farmland. In 2010-1 the phase of reclamation is performed in the autumn of 2012, the start of construction is planned.

##### **4.2 The design concept for the park characterization**

The Future Park "Spina 4" can be read from two perspectives:

- the system of public spaces to innovate / upgrade, which should answer the complex question of use and green facilities in the neighborhood;
- the place able of creating attractive urban scale, to meet, however, the question of overcoming peripherality.

The multidimensionality of the park is in relation to different functions and images of their outside living spaces, through the paths connecting the interior living spaces and places of service and trade in the neighborhood. The project idea is to delineate the park as a system of "rooms" and "corridors" to live outdoors, where

the artistic and creative practices have role to improve the quality of environmental performance and sensory experiences connected to the activities that may perform: meeting, leisure, meditation, recollection, nature education, game, aggregation of groups, organization of events.

As part of the natural landscape, the draft "sequences places" has examples of famous theme parks, in cases of urban development - such as "Pinocchio park 'Collodi, with the green design of Pietro Porcellai and the masterplan of Marco Zanuso<sup>5</sup> that have highlighted sculptures by Pietro Consagra - or in cases of rehabilitation of marginal areas - such as the park Pellizzola in Cento ("Il giardino del gigante"), which gives shape to a visionary childhood dream, through the 'Cooperative Design' and the self-construction.

The plan "**Promenade Art and Culture Industry**" has been developed based on previous project experience and teaching, the multidisciplinary analysis performed on the critical current of the neighborhood, the cultural issues related to the historical memory and social identity, the potential to increase the quality of public space in connection to the urban changes, architectural and social progress.

The research project consists of: the development of an ideal project prefiguring a new condition and a new urban identity; exhibition and comments on the results by the community, through a role of cultural mediation; the development of guidelines and technological characters for the final project of the local government; the communication and involvement of the people so that the public spaces become places for convivial or contemplative activities, points of references and factors of aggregations.

The Ideas competition (July-September 2010) for the completion of the park was open to students of the Italian Academy of Fine Arts, Faculty of Architecture and Design. Through a workshop (8 to 11 November 2010) the authors of the selected projects have been compared, outlining the guidelines for the masterplan and detailed design. The design approach aims to find new quality of public space - functional and technical but perceptual, sensory, cultural, aesthetic, environmental - combining technology and public art - art as a site-specific forms and careful use of social - coherence to the urban renewal project.

The experimentation has involved the City of Turin, with the direct funding of the project outcomes, under the European 'Urban barrier of Milan ', which is funded under the Regional Operational Programme ERDF 2007-2013 of the Piedmont Region, activities III.2.2 "Redevelopment degraded areas", axis III "Territorial Redevelopment".

The competition aimed to define the park's creative scenarios, according to the following guidelines.

Industrial memory. In the area there are remains of industrial architecture be enhanced.

New urban centralities. A goal is the creation of exceptional and attractiveness factors at the urban level in a suburban neighborhood through art, architecture and landscape of public spaces.

New neighborhood identity. The search for new identity in relation to the social fragility due to the significant immigration, the loss of the traditional relationship factory - home.

Water evocation. The representation of water in the park is linked to memory channel crossing the urban area, resource for the proto-industrial development.

Universal design. The design must respond to the question of use and accessibility for people with different skills and age.

Environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability is aimed at maintainability, facility cost containment, recyclability, use of green materials and local energy self-sufficiency.

#### 4.3 The Master-plan in progress

The winning projects of educational competition are developed to the level of detailed design, with the technical and artistic advice of the Politecnico di Torino and Albertina Academy of Fine Arts.

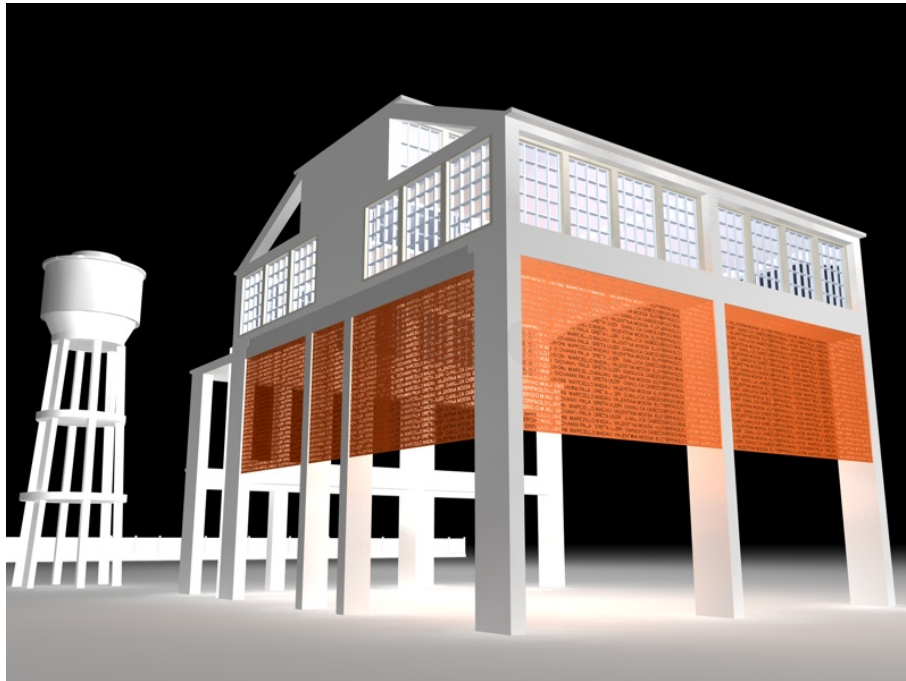
Following the results of the competition and workshop, the in progress park masterplan is aimed at the construction of art works, according to the available budget (**Fig.1**).



In the park, the remains of the steel and mechanical engineering architectures will overlook the "Industry Square", which is designed as an covered and paved space for public events. The industrial remains may become urban land-mark, through interventions of art mobiles, lighting and sound, which can improve the value and memory.

The bright patterns on the drum of the water tower reinterpret typical gestures of industrial work, while along the high sides of spans of the steel industry, perforated metal panels will report the names of factory workers (project Paola Basso, Gianluca Gabiddu, Valentina Mossa, Giovanni Fedele Pala, Greta Uleri - Academy of Fine Arts in Sassari), intervention on the collective memory involving former workers (**Fig.2**).

A lightweight flag structure will use the natural force of wind or clean energy to become a mobile sculpture and aerial work "tower in time" (project Alessandra Salvatori - Academy of Fine Arts in Foggia) and it will run along the body of the water tower.



The "Industry Square", will also includes put back furniture for play as the "chessboard" (Lomartire Antonio, Fabrizia Persano project - Academy of Fine Arts in Lecce). To the west the boundary wall, which separates the park from the historic industrial buildings, will be marked by murals and high reliefs, following the scan between the pillars. The art work "footprints of history" (project Federica Ferri - Academy of Fine Arts Brera in Milan) represents, with the graffiti art, the theme of Italian historical memory through arms of cities and regions, re-read in essential forms. The work "the faces of the polis" (project Academy of Fine Arts in Sassari) witnesses the local history through emblematic faces, revisiting historical techniques in relief mosaic. The work "face" (project Elisa La Loggia - Academy of Fine Arts Brera) in fiberglass and out of scale profiles of faces, addresses the issue of social and ethnic diversity.

In front of the border wall is expected to be the linear "Square events" which can marked - alternating with mural art works - by a series of light volumes overhanging the wall, cabin-'abitacolo' of former industrial image. These prefabricated multifunctional modules for temporary and restaurant, permit to open the activities of the Docks to the park front (project Giancarlo Maloni - Politecnico di Torino). A sculptural "portal" will serve as information-exposure volume and door connection between the old buildings, in conceptual relation to the industrial buildings (project Alessandra Miori - Politecnico di Milano).

The area between the border wall and the "Industry Square", future east entrance to the park, will be marked by elements such as 'menhirs' (project Cristina Raisi - Academy of Fine Arts Brera): high masonry parallelepipeds finished with fresco painting of various textures, marked by writing on the theme of Italian monuments ("colors - in time") and exposed to the deterioration of the time.

North-west, the long masonry wall will be designed as a testimony of the products in the industrial work site, constructing a "time line" of high reliefs with the help of school children (project Rosaria Galbato - Academy of Fine Arts in Catania).



The corner of the historic wall will be topped with imaginative installation volumes- "small houses", that rise up from thin lines as stilts. The intention is to create the "houses" that express the model of living of different ethnic groups and communities in the neighborhood, through a participatory process. In the triangle north of the park, enclosed by buildings, will be realized "Butterfly Garden", designed as a "room" for intimacy and rediscovery of nature, consists of flowerbeds with plants that bloom from spring to autumn. The garden and meadow to attract butterflies will rise with an elliptical path (project Viviana Liotta, Angela Viora – Politecnico / Academy of Fine Arts) (**Fig.3**).



Up the hill there will be an orchard, a symbol of urban agriculture, with trees representing different regional and national identities, let it be run by local associations, after a course of botanical knowledge and a public event of planting (project Antonello Ghezzi, Clare Cavalleri - Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna). The central park area, built on a light gradient from the main access to the east, will be marked by the cor-ten steel structures installation "being in the time": a path on the theme of time and history (project Maria Immacolata Simone, Giuseppe Di Liddo - Academy of Fine Arts in Foggia), which concludes the "Square wellness", space for fitness activities (**Fig.4**). This facilities area exceeds the height difference from the street, with terraces made of recycled ecological elements, whose design continues into metal mesh elements-sculptures ("journey beyond barriera") to construct geometries plant (project Alberto Gianfreda, Academy of Fine Arts Brera). The main route in the park is also marked by the installation arc metal "evolution", which interprets the theme of memory nature-artifice-renaturation (project Jessica Pelucchini - Academy of Fine Arts in Urbino).



The entrance on the main path will be dominated by a "door" with a high metallic structure, the shape of which originated from a square extends to a multiplicity of directions, and by means of cuts and folds follows the three-dimensionality of a complex volume (project Sergio Inglese, Academy of Fine Arts in Palermo). At the base, the squared parterre alludes to the shape of the Roman castrum and recalls - in the former city of industry - the foundational "quadrilateral" of the Roman city ("cardo and decumanus") (**Fig.5**).

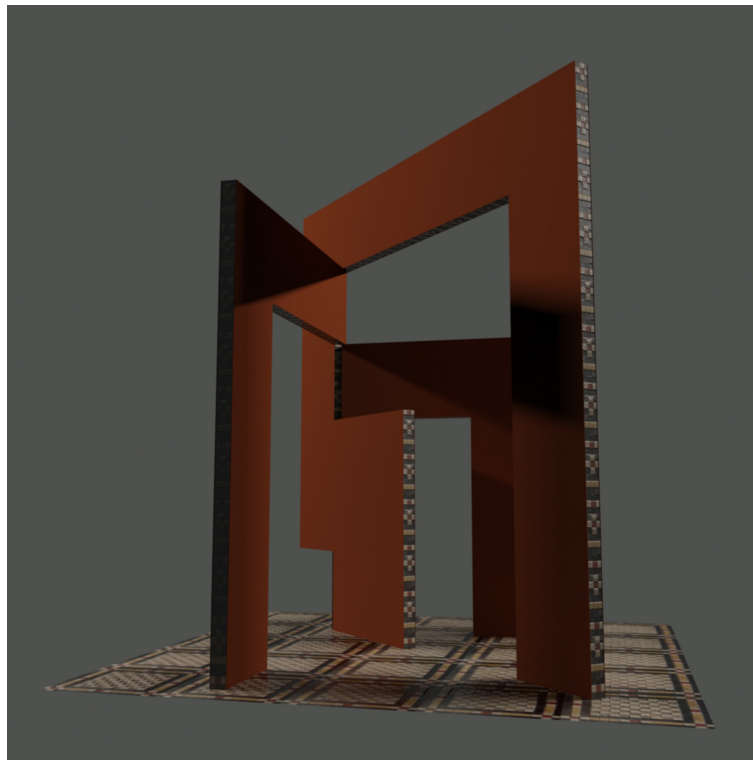
The park system also provides the location of repeatable and replaceable items-sculpture, having functions of signal and furniture, which can be disseminated in public spaces and become elements - logo of brand identity for the neighbourhoods. The sculpture - furniture "mechanicalgesture" (project Daniela Nieli - Academy of Fine Arts in Catania), in steel and cement, is inspired by the inner workings of industrial machines to become an imaginative play element.

The session - barrier "gear modules" (project Desiree Fanara - Academy of Fine Arts in Catania) follow a typical picture of the factory to build serial concrete components, modular and combinable, using special formwork.

## 5. Conclusions

The research project moves between urban and local planning, to build a path - a identifiable 'fil rouge'- which opens with "rooms" designed as liveable micro-landscapes, characterized by the design of soil and botanic garden, by the presence of barriers and art-works.

The temporary results of the project approach tend to highlight the essential features to a "landscape's socially and culturally constructed scenic qualities, and associated 'gazes' and 'stories' "<sup>6</sup>. From landscape design to spatial practices, the attention is paid to signs and symbols that can be understood by the inhabitants and to enhance the quality characters and identity factors of the public places.



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## Biography

Rossella Maspoli is graduated in Architecture at the Politecnico of Torino (1985); she is a PhD doctor in "Building and environmental rehabilitation" at the Università degli Studi di Genova (1992).

She is researcher of Technology of Architecture; professor in the Academic Courses in Architecture Science and in Architecture at the First School of Architecture at the Politecnico of Torino.

Member of the PhD course in "Technological Innovation for the Built Environment" at the Graduate School of the Politecnico of Torino. She teaches at the II° level Master class in "Building Manager" at the G. d'Annunzio Chieti - Pescara University and the web Master class in "Conservation, management and valorization of industrial heritage" at the Padova University.

She has organized and coordinated the II Level Specialist Master of COREP - Politecnico of Torino in Facilities management del patrimonio immobiliare (Facilities Management of the Real Estate) (2003-4) and various workshops.

Member of UNI Commission for "Maintenance of the civil patrimony" and TICCIH, board member of AIPAI.

She has edited over 80 publications including the book "S.I.M.E. - Informative system for the maintenance building" (1996), the articles "Outsourcing, Benchmarking" (2003), "Conservation, maintenance, substitution of the historical frames" (2004), "Maintenance information systems" (2007), "ProgettoPassante" (2009).

Rossella Maspoli carries out activities of research and advising in the fields of the historical architectural technology, maintenance of industrial heritage, maintenance management of the modern heritage of architectonic and artistic value, management information system and public policies for quality.

Monica Saccomandi is graduated in 'Discipline delle Arti', University of Bologna, and Degree in Painting, Academy of Fine Art, Bologna, Italy.

She has professional experiences in: (2008-12) Collaborative management of the interdisciplinary project "Relazioni in Barriera. Arte Pubblica e Paesaggio Culturale", The project has been financed by The Fondazione CRT-(Turin - Italy), Progetto Alfieri Torino; Coordinator of the interdisciplinary project: "Architecture and places. Local landscape Valorization between identity development and promotion - From Parish Maps to Territorial Brands with Politecnico di Torino"; (1998-01) Erasmus coordinator, Academy of Fine Art Turin; (1995- present) Lecturer in Decoration, Academy Albertina of fine Art, Turin, Italy.

She has performed and coordinated professional courses and workshops: (2010) Workshop Public Art "Promenade dell'arte e della cultura", Art and Architecture together for 150° the Republic Anniversary; (2008) Workshop Self bar with Michel Blazy, PAV ART Pogram, Turin; (2006) Officine dell'Umbria, "Didattica Artistica e Laboratori di Sperimentazione creativa", Trevi Flash Art Museum; (2005) Premiata Officina Trevana, Arte e Laboratori, Trevi Flash Art Museum; (2002-3) «Godart», Art Workshops in schools, Città Sant'Angelo; (2001) Summer residences for artists: "Tra immagine e parola", poets and artists, Trieste; (1998) Two-year vocational training course «Approccio Centrato sulla persona: Counseling e Relazione d'aiuto», authorized by the Ministry of Education, Italy; (1991) Workshop on the anniversary of the Bauhaus in Berlin, organized by the Faculty of Architecture in Milan.

## Legends

**Fig.1** "Masterplan Promenade Art and Culture Industry", Park "Spina 4", Turin, 2011.

**Fig.2** Promenade Art and Culture Industry. "Names of work", project Paola Basso, Gianluca Gabiddu, Valentina Mossa, Giovanni Fedele Pala, Greta Uleri - Academy of Fine Arts in Sassari.

**Fig.3** Promenade Art and Culture Industry. "Butterfly Garden", project Viviana Liotta, Angela Viora project – Politecnico di Torino / Academy of Fine Arts.

**Fig.4** Promenade Art and Culture Industry. "Being in the time", project Maria Immacolata Simone, Giuseppe Di Liddo - Academy of Fine Arts in Foggia.

**Fig.5** Promenade Art and Culture Industry. "Cardo and decumanus", project Sergio Inglese, Academy of Fine Arts in Palermo.

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<sup>1</sup> SMITHSON Robert, *Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site*, Artforum, June 1967. Reprinted in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt, New York, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> STILES Kristine, SELZ Peter, *Theories and documents of contemporary art: a sourcebook of artists' writings*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996, p. 545.

<sup>3</sup> The term Ecovention (ecology + invention), coined in 1999, describes artist-initiated projects that employ an inventive strategy to physically transform a local ecological area (Spaid S., *Ecovention, Current Art to Transform Ecologies*, The Contemporary Arts Center / Ecoartspace / Greenmuseum.org, Cincinnati, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> RENDELL Jane, *Art and architecture. A place between*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> MANDELLI Marinella, PIROVANO Laura, *Porcinai ed il Parco di Pinocchio a Collodi*, in VerDesign, Francoangeli, Milano, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> SELMAN Paul H., *Planning at the Landscape Scale*, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 82.