Roman Countryside between Reality and Imaginary: the Representation of a Stratified Landscape

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Abstract

A landscape is always the result of the sum, on the one hand of natural and anthropic transformations and, on the other, of the readings and interpretations attributed to it: this is why its representation constantly oscillates between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of reality, or rather, between reality and imaginary. If each of these factors, objective and subjective, informs and enriches space with a different temporal imprint, each landscape presents itself as a diachronic record of several landscapes that have succeeded one another over time.
Faced with ancient landscapes marked by the condition of palimpsest, it is necessary to implement techniques and methods for representation to express both the character of stratification they embody and the dual nature, objective and subjective, that characterizes their description. Through a graphic exercise in two 'acts', this contribution intends to apply this tension to the landscape long referred to as the 'Roman countryside', a topos in iconographic representation since the 17th century.
The territory of the outskirts of Rome provides a model for the investigation of landscapes similarly connoted by the condition of the palimpsest, demonstrating how drawing, thanks to its inherent operation of synthesis, constitutes a powerful tool for analyzing and describing the transformation of space through the phases that have overlapped and erased in it, giving tangible form to what most intangible exists: time.

*Keywords: Roman countryside, ancient landscape, rural landscape, drawing, time.*

From territory to landscape

''To a sensitive, imaginative man who lives, as I have for a long time, a life of constant feeling and imagining, the world and its objects have, in a sense, doubles. He sees with his eyes a tower, a landscape; with his ears, he hears a bell ringing, and at the same time his imagination sees another tower, another landscape, hears another ringing. All the beauty and pleasure of things lie in this second world. Sad is the life (and it is like this for most) that sees, hears, and feels objects that only the eyes, ears, and other sensations register'' [Leopardi 1928, p. 871].
Double the tower, double the countryside, double the sound of the bell: between the pages of his labyrinthine compendium of notes and memos, Leopardi postulated the existence of a dual vision and cognition of the world:

one exterior, linked to the senses and appearances; the other entirely interior, fruit of man's imaginative capacity. Similarly, the territory, in the definition given by André Corboz [Corboz 1983, pp. 22-27], is a palimpsest formed by events of two types: on the one hand, by the constructive actions, gestures, and transformative interventions concretely carried out in places by nature and man; on the other, by the observation and direct experience of each subject, through perceptive actions and acts of conscience within cultural recognition. In other words, the resources and the physical-naturalistic and historical characteristics (the natural structuring of a territory) constitute the ordering and generating premise of the plots and structures ordered by man (the anthropic structuring) [1]. However, it is only through

Fig. 1. From the study notebook: collage of landscapes of the Roman countryside (graphic elaboration by the author).

valleys and plateaus

aqueducts

ruins

meadows

towers

farmhouses

water courses

woods
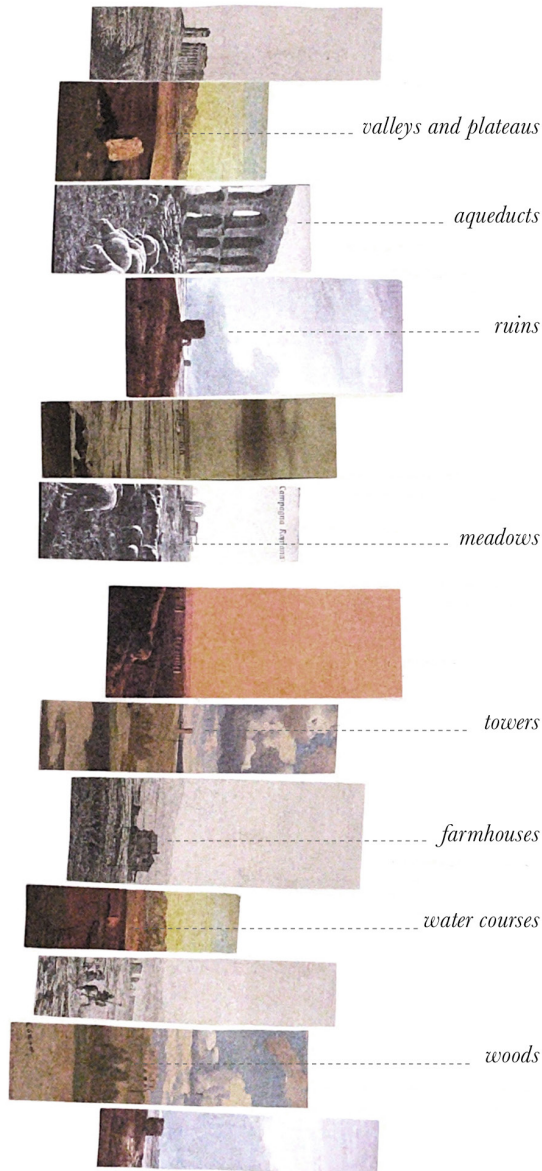
the gaze of an observer that the palimpsest of the territory thus formed 'activates' and finally becomes landscape.
"Every landscape exists only for the gaze that discovers it. It presupposes at least one witness, one observer" writes the anthropologist Marc Augé, pointing out that "this presence of the gaze, which makes the landscape, presupposes other presences, other witnesses, or other actors […] for there to be a landscape, it is necessary not only that there be a gaze, but also a conscious perception, a judgement and finally a description. Landscape is the space described by a man to other men" [Augé 2004, p. 72].
Through different modalities, tools and impressions, the mental representation and description of a portion of space has always allowed its understanding and control: "to represent the territory is already to take possession of it" [Corboz 1983, p. 25]. We could go so far as to affirm, using Corboz's words again, that "there is no territory without the imaginary of the territory […] as a project, the territory is somaticized. It can be spoken of; it has a name. Projections of all kinds cling to it, transform it into a subject" [Corboz 1983, p. 24]. Every landscape therefore carries with it a bundle of stories and representations that make up its shared image: its imaginary.

The drawing as 'synthesis'

Each of these external and internal, objective and subjective factors informs and enriches the landscape with a different temporal imprint: each landscape thus presents itself as a diachronic record of several landscapes that have succeeded one another over time. Faced with ancient landscapes marked by the condition of palimpsest, it is necessary to implement techniques and methods for their representation to express both the character of stratification inherent in them and the dual nature, objective and subjective, that characterizes their description.
As the architect and drawer Luigi Franciosini writes, drawing reveals: each creative process goes through the state of consciousness to discover elements and their reciprocal relationships within an "archive of images captured by experience. Hence an idea (a creative process) is produced (or rather influenced) by the images that agitate in our 'already seen', remaining profoundly conditioned by them" [Franciosini 2023, p. 38]. Similarly, Saint Augustine, in the incipit of the chapter of the *Confessions* dedicated to memory, referred to a treasure of ideas and images deposited

in the abyssal space of our mind as in an interior world: "I come then to the fields and vast quarters of memory, where lie the treasures of innumerable images of all sorts of things introduced by perceptions; where also are deposited all the products of our thought, and all the things introduced by perceptions. I then come to the fields and vast quarters of memory, where rest the treasures of the countless images of all sorts of things introduced by perceptions; where also all the products of our thought are deposited, and all that was sheltered and set aside, and which oblivion has not yet swallowed up or buried. When I am in there, I evoke all the images I want" [Agostino, Libro X, cap. 8, 12].

"The richer the articulation of this mental vision [...], which arises from the integration and complicity between the real dimension and the immaterial and psychic dimension of memory, of affinities and consonances, the more intense the outcome of the communication will be" [Franciosini 2023, p. 38].

Faced with the temporal depth embodied in an ancient landscape, drawing proves to be a powerful tool for synthesizing the phenomena, transformations and impressions that are

Fig. 2. Diagram of the agricultural landscape of Rome transformation (graphic elaboration by the author).
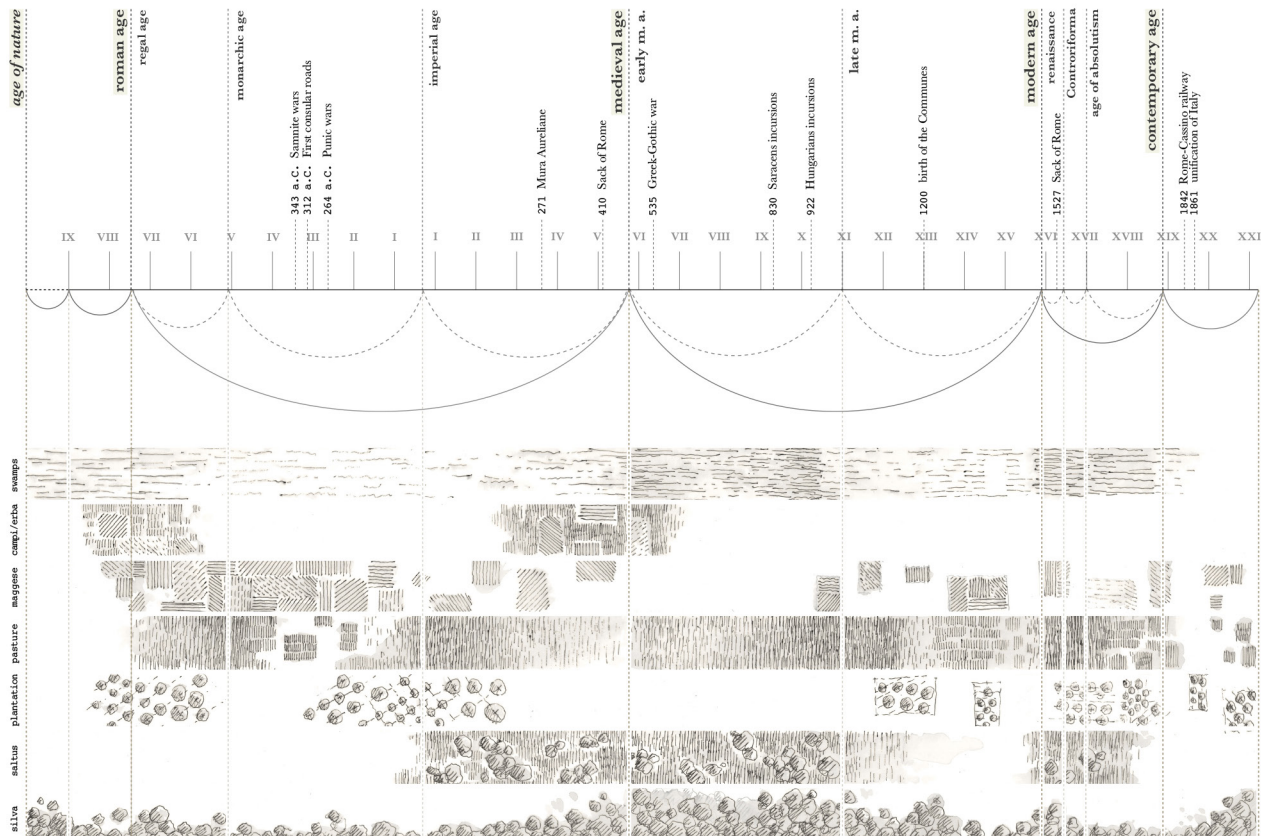
Fig. 3. Map of Rome's ancient linear infrastructures and natural systems (graphic elaboration by the author).

stratified in a portion of space and agitate in memory. In this sense, drawing is an exercise that, from a complex reality, tends '''to re-know', 'to divide', 'to re-compose': to go back from the interrelated image to the elements constituting its structure'', whereby structure is meant ''the essence of architecture, that hidden, latent order that is reflected in the quality of form'' [Franciosini 2023, p. 38].

Based on these premises and on the conviction that, as Henri Focillon wrote, ''the hand is action'' [Focillon 2002 pp. 105-130], this contribution intends to address the tension of synthesis belonging to drawing to that ancient landscape long referred to as the 'Roman countryside', a true *topos* in iconographic representation from the 17th century onwards, when travelers on the Grand Tour began to cross the Alps to reach Italy (fig. 1). Through a graphic exercise in two 'acts', two possible methods will be explored to conduct a regressive and stratigraphic investigation with the intention of understanding the transformation that space has undergone over time until reaching its current state, in a 'decryption' of the ancient landscape.

Act one: drawing 'transformation'

Looking at a satellite image of the metropolitan area of Rome, the first impression will be that of a discontinuous urban form and of an open territory fragmented by the urban spread. Despite its centrifugal expansion, the city has nevertheless retained its distinctive polarity with respect to the surrounding territory, which, shifting the point of view further away, makes it appear as ''a 'city in the desert': a massive concentration of buildings and population, 'floating' in the countryside'' [Lelo 2016, p. 24]. This was not how it must have appeared a century ago, if we consider that two thirds of today's Roman built fabric is the result of the expansion that followed the Second World War [Insolera 1993, pp. 187-203]: ''the Roman countryside is silence and desert'' [Cederna 1956, p. 183], wrote Cederna in 1956. However, the premises for the radical transformation of the Roman Agro from rural to urban was laid long before, with the repeated efforts to tame a hostile land. Through the almost cyclical repetition of certain forms, the agrarian landscape of Rome evolved slowly, opposing a particular 'inertia' to change so stated Emilio Sereni in his *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano* [Sereni 1961, p. 410], a text that allows us to retrace the evolutionary history of the landscape of the Rome outside the walls in the light of the incessant dynamic relationship between city and countryside. Reinterpreting the formal categories described by Sereni, the first graphic 'act' sets out to depict this history with the aid of drawing, which, by resuming the characteristics of each formal phase of the landscape, proves to be particularly capable of describing its 'transformation'.

The outcome of this operation is a graphic (fig. 2) whose reading is supported by the description in the following paragraph and a glossary (tab. 1).

'Drawn' history of the Roman countryside

''The agrarian landscape is that form that man, in the course and for the purposes of his agricultural production activities, consciously and systematically imprints on the natural landscape'' [Sereni 1961, p. 29].

As Sereni points out [2], we can speak of agrarian landscape starting from the Etruscan and Villanovan ages (8th century BC), but only the Roman conquest and colonization, with the definitive triumph of fallow land over the system of fields and grass, gave the form of this landscape universal

Ager	In Roman times, the cultivable land that extended outside the *suburbium*.
Agro romano	The vast rural area, flat and hilly, that extends around the city of Rome, coinciding politically and historically with the area of influence of the municipal government of Rome. The term was restored by Flavio Biondo in the 15th century.
Roman countryside	The vast undulating plain of southern Lazio crossed by the lower Tiber, which extends into the territory surrounding Rome as far as Anzio with the nearby hilly plain, including part of the Roman countryside, up to the border with the Pontine countryside.
Fields and grass	Agricultural system that provides for the coexistence of cultivated areas and grazing areas.
Castra	Born to fortify the *curtes*, small castles heralded the more complex structure of the castle. In the 11th century it included the walls, the keep or main tower, the baronial palace and the church.
Compascuus	In Roman times, the *compascuus* lands were areas intended for grazing "open to the uses of the communities or neighbouring owners" [Sereni 1961].
Curtes	Evolution of the domuscultae, small, enclosed settlements, more agricultural than military in nature.
Tillage	Processing carried out on land that has never been used for agriculture or has been uncultivated for a long time.
Domuscultae	Literally 'cultivated houses', agricultural districts established by the Church in the 8th century, described as "groups of small villages with one or more churches and with numerous farms cultivated in various ways" [Tomassetti 1910].
Feud	Feudal ownership of land consisted of the personal dependence of direct producers, owners of plots of land that they cultivated by paying the owner a rent in labor, nature or money.
Limitatio	Roman form of measurement and division of agricultural land, which is imprinted on the landscape by tracing two fundamental lines (*cardo* and *decumanus*) and others parallel to them, from which a regular grid results.
Maggese	Agricultural practice, which was formerly carried out in the month of May, which consists of carrying out a series of operations on poor land left to rest to prepare it for subsequent cultivation of cereals.
Massae	In the Middle Ages, a group of small agricultural estates.
Silva	Selva, wood, forest.
Saltus	According to the definition of Elio Gallo, a combination of woods and pastures, characteristic of the landscape of the imperial age [Sereni 1961].
Suburbium	In ancient Rome, a strip of land around the city walls extending from two to eight kilometers and intended for vineyards, vegetable gardens and productive activities necessary for the sustenance of the city.

Tab. 1. Syntetic glossary on the Roman countryside (elaboration by the author).

validity. The nomenclature used to identify the extra-urban territory of Rome dates back to these times: already in the Republican age, around the *urbs*, the city within the walls, extended the *suburbium*, "a strip from two to eight kilometers destined for vineyards, vegetable gardens and productive activities" [Cianci, Colaceci 2015, p. 2344], beyond which, up to the slopes of the Sabatini and Albani volcanoes, the marshy countryside of the ager developed. The pastoral agricultural landscape with enclosed fields of ancient Rome integrated the forage base with woods and promiscuous grazing on public or '*compascuus*' land. It was only after the Samnite and Punic wars, with the profound technical, economic and social transformations, that the economy of plantations, mainly of vines and olive trees, took hold. Between the end of the republican age and the beginning of the imperial age, the pastoral economy prevailed over the granary culture, resulting in a new extension of the landscape of woodlands and pastures known as *saltus*. Finally, in the period of the lower empire, this process of degradation of the agrarian landscape restored the prevalence of the field and grass system with open fields. The decadence of the Roman countryside coincided with the moment of the empire's highest power, when the land ended up in the hands of a few noble families who initiated the latifundia. Then, from the early 5th century B.C., the barbarian invasions caused the plundering, devastation and decay of the urban centers of life, continuing the process of disintegration of the pastoral-agricultural landscape, with the prevalence of fields open to hunting and grazing without defined forms and boundaries. The cutting of the arches of the aqueducts by Vitiges' Goths, who barricaded themselves in the so-called 'barbarian camp', caused the flooding and the subsequent swamping of the countryside. In the early Middle Ages, the common need to defend oneself and contain the decline of agriculture led to the fortification of the countryside: the first castra were born to fortify self-sufficient agricultural centers, the *curtes*, *domuscultae* or *massae*. These institutions were the first centers of the landscape reorganization, but they were not enough to foster a true recovery of agricultural activity, on which wild pig breeding, hunting, and forests overgrown with wild beasts continued to prevail. The process of degradation of the agrarian landscape reached its peak between the 8th and 10th centuries, with the incursions of the Hungarians and Saracens. Then, following Charlemagne's coronation as Roman emperor, the feudal system and the granting of royal lands in remuneration for military service began.

age.	landscapes.	elements.
age of *nature*	landscape of *form*.	hydro-geomorphological structure: *valleys, plateaus, volcanic lakes, waterways.*
etruscan age	landscape of fallow fields and vineyards.	fields of geometric shapes; hedges, walls, roads; vines.
roman age	landscape of *limitatio*.	regular grid.
	landscape of viability systems.	roads and aqueducts.
	pastoral agricultural landscape.	closed fields and lands of the *compascuo*.
	plantation landscape.	vines and olive groves.
	forestry-pastoral landscape of *saltus*.	woods and pastures.
	beautiful landscape of the urban villa.	suburban villas; thermal complexes; Walls.
	landscape of open fields and grass.	field and grass system.
medieval age	landscape of ruin and the "dead" city.	ruins, spontaneous vegetation.
	landscape of the fortified countryside.	*castra*, towers, *domuscultae, curtes*, farmhouses.
	wild forest landscape.	woods, wild animals, hunting, free-range pig farming.
	landscape of transhumant pastoralism.	large transhumant flocks of sheep and horses.
	locally organized landscape.	Marrana water canal; mills.
	suburban agriarian landscape.	closed fields; tree and shrub plantations; local road network.
modern age	"beautiful" landscape of ruins (Reinassance).	sections of restored aqueducts.
	landscape of the inhabited.	*desert* of the countryside, except for wild farming.
	landscape of the Rome of Sixtus V.	*Acqua Felice* and *mostre dell'acqua.*
	landscape of the flat landfills.	reclaimed lands.
	landscape of villas and estates.	large estates.
contemporary age	landscape of railways.	railways; via Tuscolana and Appia Nuova.
	landscape of the great reclamation works.	reclaimed lands.
	landscape of *borgate*.	shacks along the Felice aqueduct and via del Mandrione.
	landscape of building boom.	*palazzine* and residential neighborhoods.

Fig. 4. Abacus of the main historical landscapes of the Roman countryside and the elements through which they reveal themselves (graphic elaboration by the author).

The evolution of the phenomenon of castellation and the slow revival of plantations made the period between the 11th and 13th centuries decisive for the reworking of the agrarian landscape thanks to the first reclamation, irrigation and tillage works. During this period, wild livestock farming was replaced by the resumption of large-scale sheep farming, more often transhumance. With the birth of the '*comuni*', between the mid-11th and early 12th centuries, the multiplication of feudal concessions and the increase in population density made individual initiatives on the landscape more incidental: it was the major '*comuni*' and seigniories that gave the greatest impulse to land reclamation and irrigation works.

The beginning of the Renaissance period saw a widening of the gap between northern and southern Italy: while the Po Valley increasingly represented the center of agricultural progress in Italy, sheep farming based on transhumance continued to prevail in the south. After the devastation caused by the Sack of Rome, the age of the Counter-Reformation represented a new period of political and cultural decadence. Despite the work of enlightened scientists, land that had already been reclaimed became swamped again, while others remained deserted due to malaria or were home to wild hunting and farming. Pastures and meadows spread again, while the cultivated areas decreased: this was a new chapter in the already well-known phenomenon of degradation of the agrarian landscape, which now contrasted with the remarkable technical capacity of the time.

Not even the age of the Risorgimento, unlike the central-northern provinces, marked important transformations in the regime of land ownership or in the agrarian systems of the Roman countryside. Thus, the Agro Romano preserved for a long time the traditional system of fields and grass and the predominant transhumant sheep farming. "The landscape still repeats the forms (or rather the absence of well-defined forms) that we have already been able to detect in the paintings of Poussin or Coleman" [Sereni 1961, p. 410]: this is the characteristic *inertia* that Sereni attributes to this territory.

Only the ideal impetus of the Unification of Italy and the desire to make Rome the capital of the Kingdom projected the almost abandoned and uninhabited countryside outside the walls into the heart of urban planning, intensifying the pace of land reclamation to prepare the railway infrastructure. However, the Agro's most significant transformation was yet to come. Very soon, rural and urban will no longer constitute a dichotomy, blurring into each other with no possibility of return.

Following a slow process of erosion of the traditionally agricultural open territory [Lelo 2016, p. 16], the Roman Agro, now barely recognizable in the narrow mesh of the urbanized –which, as it expanded, went on to occupy every available space– survives in fragments within the marginal city [Casadei, Franciosini 2014, p. 23] in the system of parks and protected areas that ensure the discontinuity of the urban region (fig. 3). These pieces form a system of residual 'lost areas', often sites of degradation waiting for a real estate valorization to be swallowed up and metabolized by the urban machine; yet, although their distinctive features are greatly altered by construction, "some places, more than others, still hold the capacity to speak to us of this land's recent past" [Casadei, Franciosini 2014, p. 23]: it is to the 'decryption' of this ancient and stratified landscape that the second 'act' of this exercise is addressed.

Act two: drawing 'stratification'

It has been said that a landscape is formed through the stratification of two types of elements: on the one hand, the transformations carried out by natural and anthropic actions; on the other, the readings and interpretations that are given to those transformations. In this way, many times overlay in each landscape: from the very long times of the actions that have molded the shape of the land to the narrower times of man's rewriting of the soil; from the cyclical times of the transformations of the territory to those measured in the briefness of our perception, or, again, to the immeasurable ones linked to the collective imagination of the past.

These times, that traverse and shape the landscape, crystallize, like imprints, in its elements. Summing up these imprints, we observe that time, in landscape, possesses a wider depth and a more fluid form than we imagine. "To the non-isotropy of space corresponds a non-isotropy of time" [Amadio 2009, p. 215]: a single, immutable time is replaced by a "plural one that, intersecting with space, becomes landscape" [Amadio 2009, p. 215].

Moreover, if each of these times informs and enriches the palimpsest, "each landscape presents itself in a diachronic sense, as a record of landscapes that have succeeded one another over time" [Amadio 2009, p. 215]. In the words of Franco Zagari, "in the same physical space we perceive
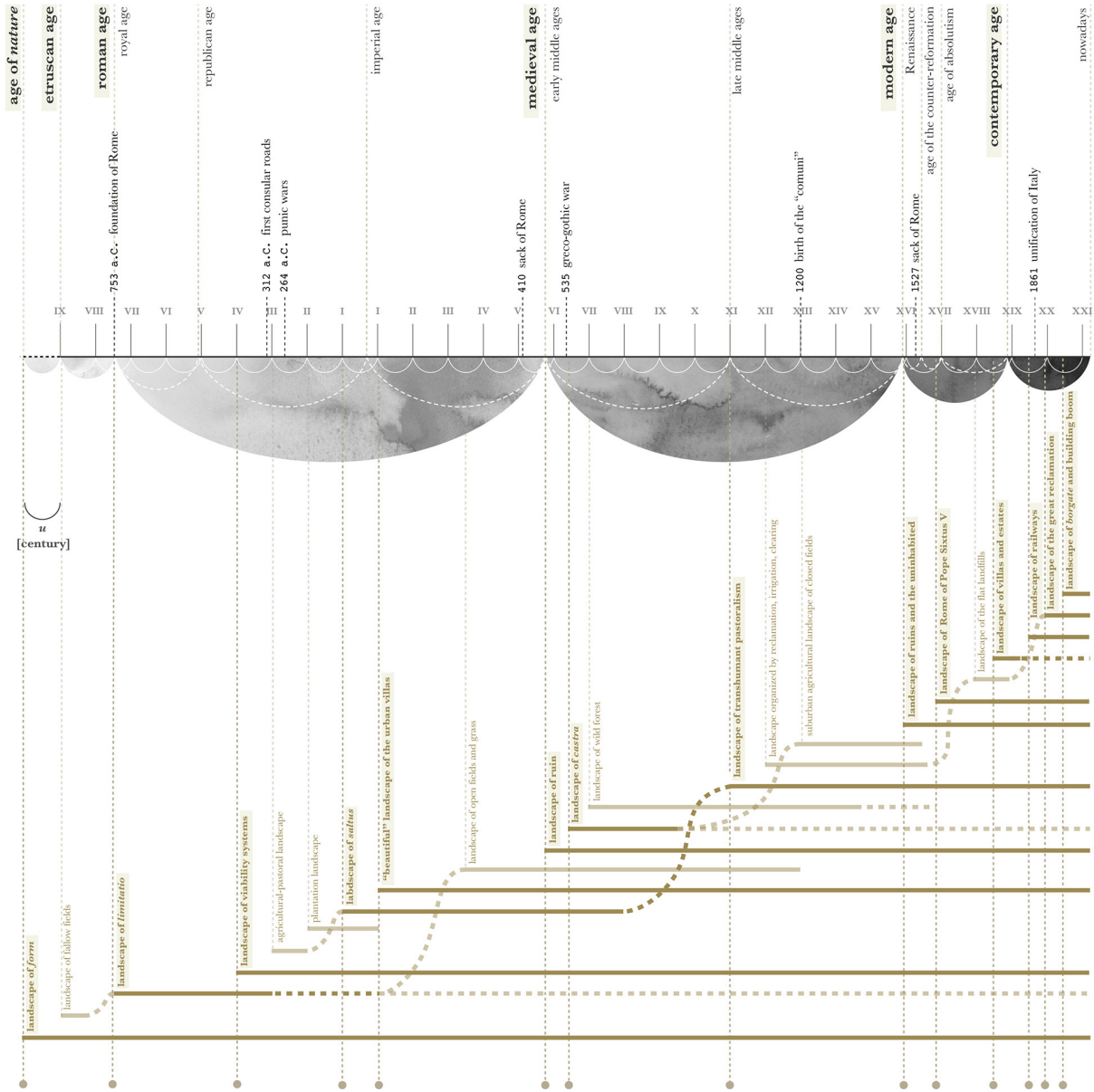
Fig. 5. The deduction of the main historical landscapes along the chronological timeline, whose unit of measurement is the century (graphic elaboration by the author).

the existence of several similar but different landscapes, and their existence is not precisely marked by an orderly rotation in the arc of hours, instead, vices, vocations, conflicts, synergies are released" [Zagari 2009, p. 211].
These landscapes, which present themselves to our eyes as «different and co-present arrangements in the same scene» [Zagari 2009, p. 211], survive through certain traces. Recognizing these traces, assigning them to a precise landscape, 'decrypting' the palimpsest is the operation that this exercise sets out to do.

Historical time and chronological time

Plural times are stratified in a landscape, corresponding to different landscapes: alongside a chronological time, marked by centuries and dotted with events, there is another time, fluid and multiple, which we will call historical time, and whose unit of measurement is the landscape [3]. On the line of chronological time, we can place the moments and events in history that have generated precise landscapes: the abacus in figure 4 collects, for each epoch, the landscapes identified and, under the heading 'elements', the traces through which they manifest themselves. Many of these landscapes have evolved into others, while others have survived through certain traces that are still visible: we will call them main landscapes, or macro-landscapes (fig. 5). Taking these macro-landscapes as the unit of measurement, we can scan the historical timeline in equal parts (fig. 6). This operation highlights the non-correspondence between the two timelines, "between a constant and regular rhythm, which can be divided into centuries, decades, years etc., and an irregular, diluted, syncopated or broken rhythm, articulated in landscape images" [Casadei 2016, p. 132].
In this investigation, along a chronological time span of more than 29 centuries, from before the foundation of Rome to the present day, 10 macro-landscapes are identified that take on different temporal quantities in themselves. The first line, depicting the classical temporal division into equal parts, is divided into as many segments as the number of centuries of the discussion. After having identified in it the salient moments in history that generated a landscape, that same line is again articulated through unequal arcs to subtend different temporal quantities. The next diagram, therefore, takes the landscape as the ordering principle: the timeline is no longer divided into as many parts as the number of centuries, but rather into ten portions, as many as the number of

principal landscapes identified. Each age, thus, "is articulated into one or more landscapes, defining its own duration and therefore a commensurate capacity to influence the structure and image of the landscape" [Casadei 2016, p. 133]. This representation allows us to give tangible form to time: to visualize how and to what extent different cultures and ages have been able to take root and persist in the territory. As can be seen in the diagram that follows this operation, between the different ages, placed side by side in chronological order, there is an overlapping of one unit: "this procedure is justified by the (abstract and debatable) assumption that the capacity of cultures to influence the image of the existing landscape is directly proportional to their historical duration and that each culture inexorably erases a quantity of traces of the previous one" [Casadei 2016, p. 133] and, in a certain sense, it is precisely in these overlapping arcs that the most interesting features are condensed.
This schematization, although obtained by a mechanical procedure, gives a credible result: the different ages and cultures appear to balance each other, providing the image of a stratified landscape and confirming its perception of today.
Finally, a final interpretative operation assigns each of the ten identified macro-landscapes "a predominant character, a synthetic and narrative image" [Casadei 2016, p. 51] expressed through a collage. Alongside this narrative image, each of the ten macro-landscapes is assigned a pattern that briefly describes its formative and settlement logic (figs. 7, 8), with the aim of capturing the lying figure and fundamental theme of each landscape.

Synopsis of landscapes of the Roman countryside

The first arc, coinciding with the age of nature, is dedicated to the landscape of geo-morphological and hydrographical form, which "already contains in itself the reason and explanation for subsequent developments" [Castaldi 1977, p. 49], and which we read today in the smooth alternation of valleys, plateaus and watercourses.
This is followed by the landscape of the *limitatio* of the Roman age, with its regular grid marked by the network of linear infrastructures of roads and aqueducts, characteristic constituent elements of the Italian agrarian landscape [Sereni 1961, p. 49].
The third image describes the landscape of the villas that, with the expansion of the Empire and the great availability of servile labor, capillary constellated the latifundia.
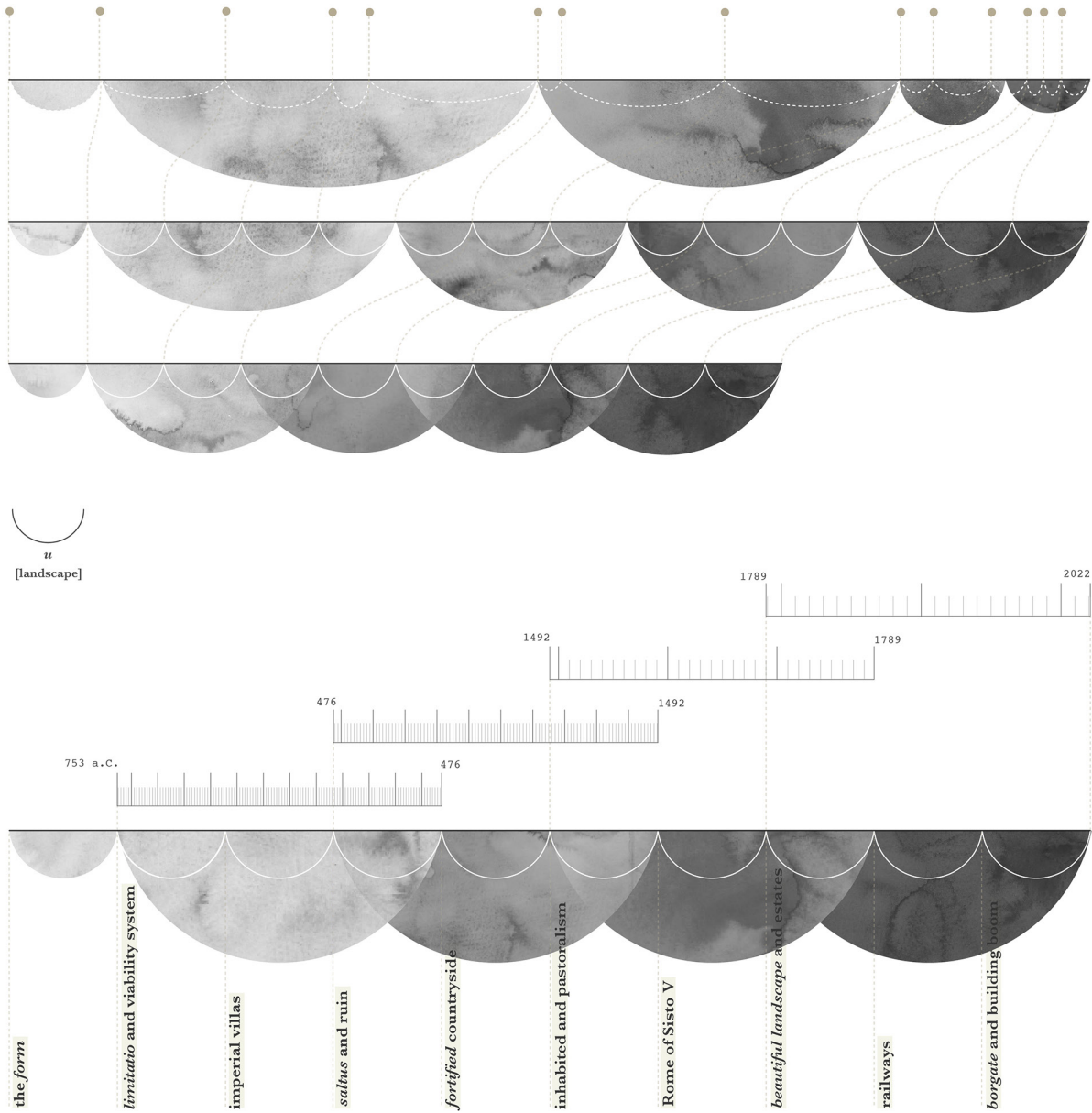
u
[landscape]

1789   2022

1492   1789

476   1492

753 a.C.   476

the *form*

limitatio and viability system

imperial villas

saltus and ruin

fortified countryside

inhabited and pastoralism

Rome of Sisto V

beautiful landscape and estates

railways

borgate and building boom

Fig. 6. The construction of the historical timeline, divided into landscapes (graphic elaboration by the author).

The landscape of ruins and *saltus*, then, is the result of the devastation and decay following the barbarian invasions and the new expansion of the forests in a widespread disintegration of the agrarian landscape.

The fifth landscape relates the phenomenon of the fortification of the countryside that arose from the common need to defend and stop the decay of agriculture, with the fractioning of the territory into self-sufficient agricultural and defensive districts.

The landscape of the uninhabited and of pastoralism leads back to the period of political and cultural decadence of the age of the Counter-Reformation, which recorded a new involution of the agrarian landscape: lands that had already been reclaimed returned to marshland, while others remained deserted due to the raging malaria or became the scene of hunting and wild livestock breeding.

The seventh landscape recounts the papacy of Sixtus V, an important moment in the social and economic reorganization culminating with the radical redesigning of Rome's urban structure, which included the construction of an aqueduct that reused the remains of ancient conduits that ran through the Roman countryside.
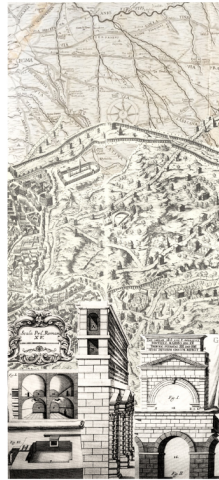
The eighth image portrays the 'beautiful' landscape of ruins and estates corresponding to the Age of Enlightenment in which, after centuries of neglect and oblivion, the Roman countryside became a *topos* in iconographic representation.

The ninth landscape describes the infrastructural interventions that affected Rome following the Unification of Italy, when, with the demolition of customs barriers, the railway became the agent of a national-scale re-elaboration of the forms of the agrarian landscape.

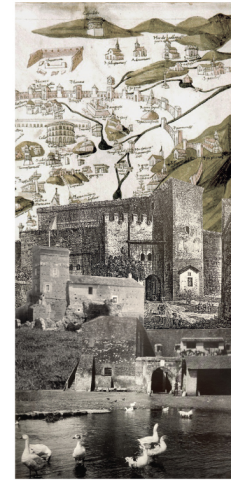| landscape of *form*	landscape of *limitatio* and viability	landscape of the imperial age villas	landscape of ruins and *saltus*	landscape of the fortified countryside

Fig. 7. *The first five macro-landscapes of the Roman countryside, expressed through narrative images and patterns (graphic elaboration by the author).*

Finally, the tenth and last image shows the growth of the post-war suburbs driven by economic and social housing interventions accompanied by numerous illegal settlements: concluding the synopsis of landscapes of the Roman countryside is the landscape of the borgate and the building boom.
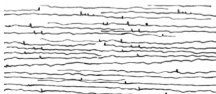
Conclusion: drawing 'time'

The reading proposed by the two exercises, assuming a diachronic interpretative key, focuses on the territory of the suburbs of Rome, a privileged space in which the features of a rural suburb are maintained alongside the properly urban landscape and in which the considerable functional and semantic sedimentation translates to a rich and articulated image. Thus, in this scanning of space, a decisive weight is also assumed by forms of settlement that are manifested with more labile signs, but no less consistent in terms of material culture, demonstrating how the landscape is above all "the place of time" [Venturi Ferriolo 2009].

But the landscape is "a ray of arrows that continue in all directions, a space that always implies other spaces and whose limits are difficult to establish" [Calvino 1974, p. 14]: the territorial dimension of the Roman countryside offers itself here as an applicative case of a regressive and stratigraphic method of investigation that can be extended to landscapes similarly characterized by the stratification of different times.

In this way, this model of study can demonstrate how drawing, thanks to its own operation of synthesis, constitutes a powerful means of investigating the transformation of the

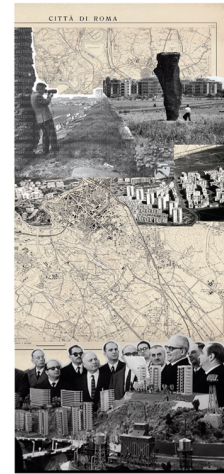*Fig. 8. The last five macro-landscapes of the Roman countryside, expressed through narrative images and patterns (graphic elaboration by the author).*

landscape through the phases that have been layered and erased in it, with the aim of giving tangible form to that which exists which is most intangible: time.

"If you want to describe a place, to describe it completely, not as a momentary appearance but as a portion of space that has a form, a sense and a reason, you have to represent it crossed by the dimension of time, you have to represent everything that moves in that space, with a very rapid motion or with inexorable slowness: all the elements that this space contains or has contained in its past, present and future relations. That is to say, the true description of a landscape ends up containing the history of that landscape, of the set of facts that have slowly contributed to determining the form with which it presents itself to our eyes, the equilibrium it manifests at every moment between the forces that hold it together and the forces that tend to break it apart" [Calvino 1974, p. 7].

Credits

The considerations in this article are mainly the result of the studies conducted as part of the master's thesis obtained by the author in Architectural Design and History at the Mantua Campus of the Polytechnic of Milan (academic year 2021-22), with Prof. Luigi Spinelli (supervisor), Prof. Marco Introini (co-supervisor) and Prof. Cristina Casadei (co-supervisor), and entitled *The desert and the giants. The re-signification of the ancient aqueducts of the Roman countryside through the experience of its landscapes*. The analysis described in the third paragraph of the article in which, assuming a diachronic interpretative key, the timeline is scanned for landscapes, was inspired and guided by the similar work conducted on the territory of southern Etruria by Prof. and architect Cristina Casadei in her doctoral thesis [Casadei 2016].

Notes

[1] "Every anthropic structure derives from a previous natural structure" [Cianci, Colaceci 2015, pp. 2342-2343]. "The resources and the physical-naturalistic and historical characteristics –considered as a system and in their mutual interrelation– are to be assumed as a primary and priority element, ordering and qualifying the anthropized territory. The historical plots and structures are strictly interconnected with the environmental plots and structures" [Calzolari 1999].

[2] The description of the evolutionary history of the agricultural landscape of Rome to which this paragraph is dedicated is taken from: Sereni 1961.

[3] The operation described in this paragraph in which, assuming a diachronic interpretative key, the timeline is scanned for landscapes, was inspired and guided by the analogous work conducted on the territory of southern Etruria by Cristina Casadei in her doctoral thesis [Casadei 2016].
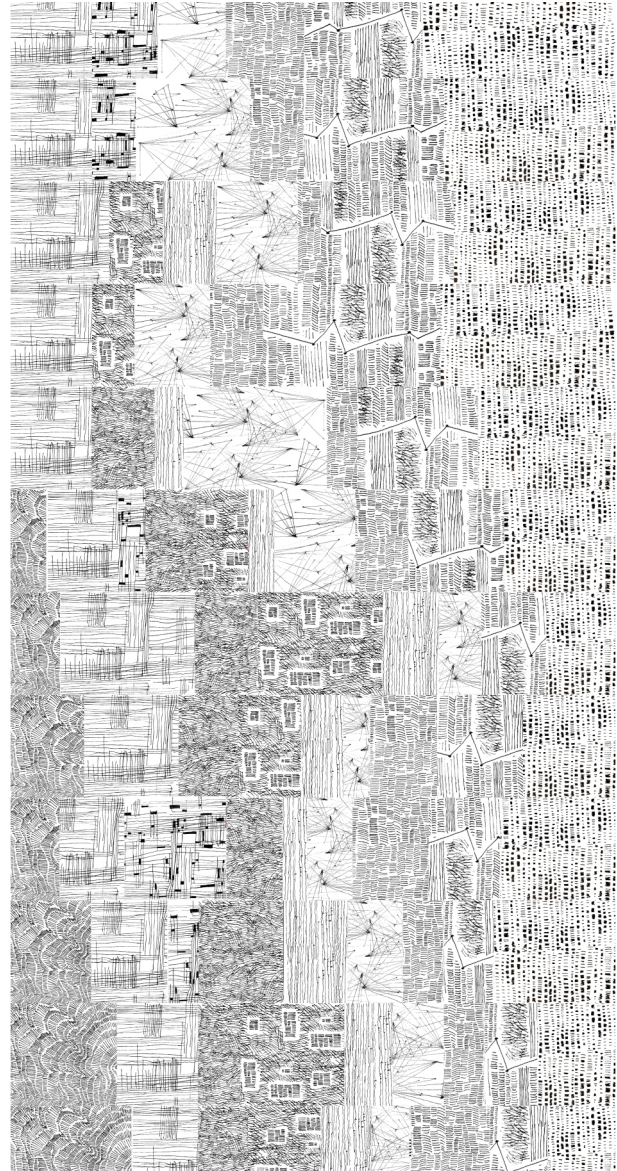

Fig. 9. With reference to a portion of urban space between Parco degli Acquedotti and Porta Maggiore, diagram of the detectable historical landscapes, represented through their respective patterns (graphic elaboration by the author).

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