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Linear(c)ity - A City on the Lines

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The project presents solutions to the widespread problem concerning the sprawl of commercial strips and their connection to the natural environment. In the past 50 years, there has been progressive linear growth along the main commercial road linking the cities of Alba and Bra in the north-west of Italy. To understand this new territorial setting, we started by investigating several distinctive habitats by means of eclectic interpretation, combining objective data, such as functional analysis, with subjective data, such as perceptive analysis and city-user behaviour. We represented six habitats, six transverse cities in this area: the linear city (sheds and dwellings along the commercial strip); the agro city (agricultural fields and farms); the mono city (industrial platforms); the ribbon city (dwellings along the secondary roads); inner city (urban settlements), and the raised city (dwellings on the hills). These habitats are connected by a system of lines: railway, market-way, secondary roads, a river and streams. The next step was to imagine scenery. In the unbuilt part, we represented six types of scenery through a hypothetical programme of urban growth. We imagined a new linear system along the market-way. The project also tried to reconsider the whole territorial system cut by the road. We reconnected ecosystems and paths with green bridges on the market-way. Then we invented systems of 'weak' regulation: systems capable of handling the unexpected, the new, and the reversibility of the process that the system itself sets in motion. We renounced overall control and comprehensive design. We embedded formal devices capable of continually adapting to unexpected conditions. Thus, we created cusps for the new sheds along the market-way: a sinuous parkway parallel to the market-way, with houses and sports amenities, and transverse, high-density strips characterized by a different mixture of functions and density (commerce, production, agriculture, gardens, sports and leisure, dwellings). The bands link the longitudinal lines (railway, market-way, parkway and river), creating different transverse habitats.