COMPARING HABITATS

A geography of dispersed urbanization. Reading the lines of the parcellaire

AUTHORS
Guillaume Vanneste

AFFILIATIONS
1 LOCI - Faculty of Architecture, Architectural Engineering, and Urbanism, University of Louvain-la-Neuve (UCLouvain), Belgium

CONTACT
guillaume.vanneste@uclouvain.be
Abstract

In a two-period exercise of comparison – the synchronic regional and the diachronic local comparisons - the article aims at describing typo-morphological construction and modification of the parcellaire, defined as the system of land property division, regulating the territorialisation of our societies. Parcellaire is about lines and limits of the constitutive territory’s elements and their relations, it is about giving space for human being and organizing it as a shared asset. The parcellaire, seen as the common element of these dispersed landscape, everywhere present and complexly interweaving rural and agrarian patterns of cultivated fields with elements of the contemporary city, unfold new reading of what was once called a Banlieue Radieuse, through the construction of a lexicon of forms. The transformations, line by line, of these geographies, tell us about the fine construction of a territory of dispersed habitat and the future of the very same.

Keywords: limits, parcellaire, land division, palimpsest, re-edition, city-territory, dispersion

A context of dispersion

In the contemporary city, today’s dispersed urbanization and fragmentary spatial conditions are the result of a long-term process of construction of the territory[1–3]. Constant relations between humans and nature have built artefacts organizing the space inside which we live and move. Within this structure, the acute, repeated and iterative modifications, divisions or merging of plots are agents at work in the constitution of a fond territorial, a palimpsest (note a), which profoundly impacts the construction of this layered and intermeshed territory. In the evolution of this palimpsest, the parcellaire is a determining element, as a lineal substrate for land and soils, welcoming further artefactual constructions, urban materials, agricultural elements, drawing landscapes. We can read the form of several territorialisms in the accumulation of these traces, since they are the spatialization of uses, movement, appropriation and ecological or societal organization human groups have founded on the territory in relation to other groups or materials.

Modernism, capitalism and the industrial age have been standardizing the tools and rules meant to organize, distribute, protect, give access and appropriate both land and territories. Those land management and planning tools, which we will name in a global yet simplistic word as zonage, are conceptually built under the assumption of functionalism and property rights and - and in line with the fundamentals of modernism - under the idea of tabula rasa. Therefore, these tools were not initially much applied in tracing out the geomorphological shape of the territory and the history-based reading of the land [4]. Nevertheless, through the school of French historians and geographers such as Demangeon, Bloch, Febvre or de la Blache and Italian or Swiss architects such as Muratori, Rossi, Gregotti and Bernoulli, questions of territorial form have been reclaimed in the debate on its transformation and continue to be reclaimed by archaeologists, planners, landscapers and other disciplinary fields today. Emerging from this tradition, spatial and temporal concepts such as agglomeration and dispersion as well as permanence,
Persistence and disappearance are used to describe the evolution of the spatial and collective construction of the ground. Yet practices of urbanism and operational planning are still carried out based on strong functionalist tools.

In the ambiguous contrast between the physical characteristics of the territory - bearing witness to past configurations, set between product - the actual production of a territory - and project - as a future state - Belgium has been developing its own idiosyncratic forms of dispersion. We will focus our investigation on southern Belgium, characterized by diffuse urbanization, whose constitution has been generated by a fine network of railway-based infrastructure and centrist political decisions regarding land-use, ownership incentivation policies and affordable public transport [5–8].

Reconstructing the layered geography of some samples through cadastral evolution and using then, in such a dispersed context, typomorphological comparison as a tool usually dedicated to more urban environments, will be a key, a lens in which to observe the repetition of patterns, to seek anomaly of phenomena, in order to describe the banal construction of this type of urbanization. By broaching the subject of the parcalleire, we intend to emphasize a certain spatial reading that would not be understandable without this dedicated approach. Graphical methods from the Atlas Genevois [9] will be borrowed for this exploration. Our tool of comparison relates a priori on an idiogetic approach and will help us to understand the roots and rationalities of this specific fond territorial. It is also a way of imagining a possible future transformations, showing that a re-edition [10] of the city-territory based on its inner lines and constituents rather than on standard land use planning, can lead to more sustainable, collective and urban habitats.

The parcalleire as a reading tool in the city/country dilemma

In territories of dispersed dwellings, the opposition of city versus country is a concept that seems to have disappeared in favour of the Anthropocene paradigm. Not willing to conclude on this never-ending dialectic theme, we use it rather as a concept to gauge or evaluate the level of relations and interactions between the open and built elements of the territory.

In typomorphological analyses one can read or study a city by describing three main elements: networks, built artefacts and parcalleire. We simply assume this is still valid in a less dense area, in dispersed territory[7]. Furthermore, we state that specifically developing this third theme for dispersed territory could bring new knowledge related to the constitution and
transformation of the same. Indeed, a quick glance at the cadastral matrix (fig.1) can already allow us to read some phenomena of the territorial construction on this scale. Rivers can be seen, almost as if the hydrographical network were represented. Areas where the land is fragmented are indicated by lighter and darker spots. In this way some more sizeable figures, given textures, given points and exceptions appear. In other word, reading the parcellaire matrix, even on this smaller scale, knowledge on the logics of the territory can be constructed - knowledge that is partially known through other keys of reading, and completely new inasmuch as intrinsically related to ground division and its logic. Parcellaire representation renders the structure and rationalities of the land readable.

A stretch of ground can bear several realities or meanings and a plot of land can support several uses, practices, names and interpretations or definitions. Any random plot of land can at one and the same time be seen as a private estate, the site of a house, the place of a garden that both bears ecological qualities and supports the inhabitants’ games and practices. It is also a piece of national territory as well, part of a department, of a commune, a piece of terroir which can be recognized in its form or in the plants and materials which grow upon and constitute the same. It is neither completely city nor country. It produces spatial references to organize complex relations inside society.

What interests us in the parcellaire, linked to those first statements, is the fact that if you consider it as a tool, a lens through which to read the territory, it eludes the binary question of city versus country, artificial versus natural, by not considering whether the plot is built or not, whether it is artificial or purely nature. When looking at a parcellaire, we restrict ourselves to looking at an inherent infrastructure of the territory, a pattern on which rationalities and artefacts are drawn. Parcellaire is about lines and limits of the constitutive territory’s elements and their relations, it is about giving space for human being and organizing it as a shared asset.

A second point of using the plot as a reading tool, lies in the cultural tradition of individual housing with private developers in Belgium. In a short text titled “la Belgique ou la Banlieue Radieuse” written by Marcel Smets [11], Belgium is depicted as a land where country and city have found an equilibrium and where the image of the garden city is strongly involved in the way the population has developed an anti-urban imaginary. Driven by this appeal of spatial conditions as being the representation of social conditions, a large section of the middle class population has built their houses there, helped by the government in a welfare state political context, using the plot and the individual house as the main agents for transforming the territory.

Taken as a palimpsest, the parcellaire - this land division physically marked on the ground - could in some points encounter the idea of a
monument, as in Riegl’s definition [12]. It represents, for the collectivity, a memory of past uses, past constructions, materially inserted on the ground or defined in juridical documents. Inside the line of the parcellaire lies the traces of relations between humans and their territory. It is the living record of their ecology. As a monument, it conveys certain values and represents a form of heritage for the community that built it. The parcel - in this case the residential parcel - is therefore the representation of social accomplishment. It becomes a spatial figure which represents a social being and supports social relations. In an individualistic and discretised manner, by means of single family-house plots, the parcellaire has been erected as a monument of social representation.

Four valleys as case study: selection and assumptions

Our investigation is focussed on an area situated at the south of Brussels Metropolis and north of the industrial Sambre-et-Meuse coal area, called the “Moyenne Belgique”. This sandy, loamy region, sloping gently from South to North, harbours the sources of four main rivers that all swell to become tributaries of the Scheldt. Seen from West to East, these four water courses are the Dendre, the Senne, the Dyle and the Gette. They flow South to North and form four main valleys or watersheds that create a strong territorial structure for settlements and isolated dwellings. These findings lead us to consider this area as a pertinent physiogeographical assemblage worthy of study. The four valleys share territorial positions that are similar but not identical. Our task is to observe whether the production of land divisions occurs generically or whether it presents vernacular features.

A first cursory examination reveals that the parcellaire and the pattern of dwelling show some specificities. These intertwined lines of the mesh are shaped in ways that can be visually recognized on a large-scale map of the territory. According to the dimensions, the forms, the way they aggregate, the parcellaire presents various grains telling us about the land, ground and soil organization. Comparative tools will help us to describe and explain similarities or varieties in the “grain” of the cadastral matrix.

Here, a first reserve must be made. If we wish to study the specific physical division of the ground, and the ways the limits between the elements are built, we should bear in mind that the parcellaire does not always reflect the realm of the physical site. Neither do the lines grounded and materialised in the territory always belong to a particular parcellaire.
We choose to observe the *parcellaire*, and only the *parcellaire*, without built elements in the case of the four valleys, in the part where they cross the *Moyenne Belgique* [figure 1]. The next chapter intends to succinctly describe the forms of the parcels through two comparisons. In a synchronic comparison on a larger scale, we will observe the way plots are agglomerated in each of the four frames selected in each valley. The frames are 10km per 15km, centred on the space of the valley itself. We will browse them from West to East. In a diachronic comparison, using 2km per 2km square frames, featuring areas chosen in each of the valleys, we will compare the configuration of two territories at two different moments in time, seeking to observe the process of plot transformation. Conclusions will be drawn hereafter.

**Plot typo-morphologies. Synchronic comparison**

**The four valleys**

In the *Dender valley* (fig.1), the overall patterns show a patchwork of middle sized plots, with a size gradient slightly lesser in the north than in the south. The plots are mainly grouped in clusters surrounded by a perimeter of thin non-cadastral space. Inside these clusters, the organisation can differ from the more ordered [predominance of one or more directions in the plots lines] to the more “random”. In the centre of the frame, one can clearly distinguish a denser figure, showing a greater density of smaller plots, which even though heterogeneous among each other draw a concentric figure. In certain places the plots are smaller and even more dense, and they agglomerate in a variety of shapes from concentric to linear. Continuous lines of non-cadastral spaces are readable among the network of lines, determining the organisation of the surrounding plots. There are relatively few large and very large plots. Seeking a characteristic of synthesis, this area could be described as a territory of plot patchworks, a coherent medium-resolution texture punctuated with smaller plot agglomerations.
In the Senne valley [fig.2], we notice a heterogeneous environment and a larger variety of situations. The plot patchworks are still readable in the western part of the frame, while they tend to dismantle on the eastern side. Broad continuous non-cadastral lines cross the territory. In some part of the frame, a network is clearly recognizable in the plot shape. Hence the densification of smaller plots does not occur as regularly as in the Dender valley. The southern part of the frame shows some nodes of agglomerations, while the northern part presents more linear developments, tending even to form a sort of grid. Here too large and very large plots are few and far between, nevertheless, here the difference between agglomerated plots and more extended configurations the four valleys shows the greatest contrast. This area could be described as a linearly infrastructured and heterogeneous territory.

Fig. 1 - Synchronic comparison of the four valleys: the Dender valley (drawing by author based on cadastre 2009. Source AGDP)
Fig. 2 - Synchronic comparison of the four valleys: the Senne valley (drawing by author based on cadastre 2009. Source AGDP)

In the Dyle valley (fig.3), larger plots alternate with a great number of smaller plots linked by a strong shape of continuity emerging as a figure. Small plot agglomeration is largely related to this network figure which divides itself in a dendritic manner from North to South in several branches. The land patterns tend to be more diverse from one part of the frame to another. Aside from the patchwork on the western part of the frame, in the eastern part we notice the apparition of regular elongated anisotropic rectangular plots, often aligned to a transversal line that crosses the area or connects areas of smaller plot. A notable feature which appears as an autonomous object is repeated several times within the frame: large allotments of medium-sized plots distributed in bunches around an inner branch shape. This area could be described as a continuity network territory.
In the Gette valley (fig.4), the average plot size is notably smaller than in the three other valleys and inside the frame, smaller from West to East. Even more than in the case of the Dender valley, it gives an impression of texture. The westerly configuration of open plots resembles more that described in the case of the Dyle valley: rectangular, oriented and aligned. In the South of the frame, one notices a concentric figure made of larger plots on its periphery, organized in relation to smaller plot, in the centre. As in the case of the Dyle valley, the agglomeration of denser and smaller plots underlines a network figure of continuity. A strong figure emerges to the northwest, with very small and dense plots. This area could be described as a territory of median sized elements.
Browsing the typo-morphology of the cadastral map and carrying out this broad literal description teaches us about the generic recurrences or the unique specific nature of territorial configurations.

Elements of agglomeration: a lexicon

In a first attempt to characterize the parcellaire and whether it shows specific patterns and differences in our study territory, we have gathered some map extracts showing repeated patterns and plots forms. The goal of the lexicon is to set a toolbox literally based on the parcellaire geometry and form in a pristine reading which could be crossed in a later phase with other territorial elements such as urban tissue, agriculture or hydrography, etc. Here is a non-exhaustive descriptive list of patterns, geometrical and geomorphological organization of the parcellaire.

Patchwork. The plot patchwork is a form of agglomeration that can be found in the four valleys. This collection of plots looks like a patchwork of different tissues composing a plaid. The patchwork pattern doesn’t present a specific orientation but rather assembles the plots in a way that they all appear intertwined. Inside the patchwork, size and dimensions of plot vary. Several average sizes of
patchwork pattern in the different valleys [for instance, Dender and Gette valleys present very small patchwork patterns] can be observed.

*Plots organized by a main direction.* Recurring regular plot organization can be found when a linear element gives an orientation to a group of plots. This situation usually presents the form of an assemblage of main squares or rectangles subdivided into several rectangles of the same length, but whose width reduces with the amount of subdivision inside the square. In some cases, this leads either to a strip, by the linear juxtaposition of those ‘squares’, or to an almost orthonormal matrix, literally drawing a grid on the land.

*Agglomeration of small plots.* The densification of smaller plots in our area are numerous but variable in some features. Firstly, the organization inside the node of density presents different shapes, from concentric to grid-like or semi-open. Secondly, their repartition on the territory occurs according to variable parameters such as intra nodal distance or hierarchic relations between the nodes (for instance, one bigger agglomeration and many smaller ones, or an even repartition of medium-sized plot agglomeration). We should pay attention to how these geometries relate to the geometry of one of larger plots in close vicinity. Sometimes, a concentric or linear organisation of the dense small plots is echoed in a larger surrounding plot, the same way as a magnetic field would organize iron filings.

*Very large plots.* Especially in the Dyle and the Senne valley, large plots emerge as autonomous figures. If we cannot as yet assume their land use by only looking at their shape, we may speculate about the specific uses, property or land cover that might befit such large plots: agricultural field, woodland or forestry domain, infrastructure, industry, equipment, quarry, domain or exceptional element. Very large plots often appear in a combination of two or more plots grouped together.

*Network organized plots.* We have observed some figures of continuity comprising the juxtaposition of small plots on a large scale. Seen together, they draw a dendritic system. Our focused approach to the *parcellaire* should fall outside other parameters of analysis; yet in this case, we should simply observe that this figure coincides with the water network, making the location of the streams and their low valley readable through the *parcellaire*. This is mainly the case in the Dyle and Senne valley, where the slope is steeper.

*Autonomous allotments.* These forms are extremely recognizable. Groups of plots are distributed around one or several dead-end branch systems, in a stem-like structure. They develop a geometrical autonomy to the overwhelming context since the direction of the plot is rarely impacted by nearby *parcellaire*. Their size is variable both regarding the plots and the dimension of the aggregation. They often surround the agglomeration nodes, developing a peripheral situation. Looking at the *parcellaire* without preconception, we might stop our
description here, but if we consider the built elements, it becomes clear that these patterns are the paradigmatic and standardized production of the sprawl.

All these forms of plots correspond to different spatial organizations. Their functioning, production and evolution depend on complementary aspects that the research should investigate deeper. However, they are the obvious result of operation of transformation, erasure, rewriting, correction of the territorial palimpsest and therefore testify to the process of production of land division and parcellaire. We now may ask ourselves in what way their configuration might influence further developments and, in the next step, we will inquire into the historical construction of those forms.

Evolutions of dispersed forms of dwellings today. Diachronic comparison.

The parcellaire, as we have explained in the foreword, is a dynamic element. Therefore, we will approach its temporal dimension to understand its modification. A diachronic comparison will here be explored and will complement the first comparison made.

Similar to other western countries, Belgium underwent important urban changes during the era of industrialization in the 19th century, and subsequently during the reconstruction after the two world wars. The spatial organization has changed, due to societal and technological changes, or to the historical and economical context of reconstruction. Among other matters the policies implemented by governments to enable the lower classes to become property owners did much to generate land transformation and urbanization of the countryside.

The four valleys

To investigate the transformations of the parcellaire, we are going to represent the cadastral modification with two drawings in the four study cases [fig 5. to 8.]. This time, we zoom in on a square of 2km by 2km in each valley, chosen to encounter the main pattern highlighted in the lexicon. Two moments are selected as historical milestones to proceed in this diachronic comparison. Today’s representation of plots is extracted from the 2009 database of the Belgian cadastre, while Popp’s map, drafted between 1840 and 1880 and the first complete and homogeneous countrywide cadastral map, will give the initial picture in terms of comparison. For each discretized element, plot limits, permanence, modification or disappearance will be represented. Here we borrow the graphic methodology from the ‘Atlas
Genevois’, realized under André Corboz’ direction in 1993 [9]. Again, for each sample, only the parcaille is represented, without the built elements, this both in the configuration in 1850’s and that of today. The parcaille of the 19th is drawn in black, while today’s parcaille is drawn in red, showing modified or new plots. Lines that have disappeared through time are represented with dotted lines.

The first striking element to observe is the amount of red lines and their positions for each case. The redder the overall drawing, the more the plots have been modified. It corroborates the patterns explained in the first comparison, showing their progressive apparition. From there, processes can be underlined, some features can be recognized, in the four cases, that constitutes a first attempt to write a second lexicon of these mutations. What interests us is to understand how forms of dwelling have evolved and in what way the spatial conditions proposed by these habitats, might or might not be related to social conditions or driven by aspiration for other social conditions, as the image of the ‘Banlieue Radieuse’ illustrates.

After investigating the transformations of the plots between Popp’s and today’s map, we can recognize some patterns described hereafter. The geographical recurrence of a transformation pattern is taken as evidence of its representativity of parcellarisation processes. We can note that the sample is smaller than in the first comparison and the findings might have to be checked before being generalised. We will then describe how they evolved between Popp’s and today’s map.

**Fig. 5** - Diachronic comparison of the square samples of 2x2 km: Brugelette (Dender valley) (drawing by author based on Popp map and cadastre 2009. Source AGDP and KBR)
Fig. 6 - Diachronic comparison of the square samples of 2x2km: Virginal-Samme (Senne valley) (drawing by author based on Popp map and cadastre 2009. Source AGDP and KBR)

Fig. 7 - Diachronic comparison of the square samples of 2x2km: Genappe (Dyle valley) (drawing by author based on Popp map and cadastre 2009. Source AGDP and KBR)
Transformation processes: a lexicon.

**Patchwork.** The divisions revealed by comparing Popp’s and today’s map almost leave the patchwork fabric of plot analysis untouched. Some of the patchwork arrangements are diminished in surfaces by side-effects pertaining to one of the following topics. But as far as we observed, we didn’t see a strong mechanism of division inside the patchwork matrix itself. When it occurs, it only adds or divides a plot here and there.

**Densification along a line.** Set out along recognisable lines that imprint a main direction to a set of parcels nearby [the contrary of the patchwork], parcel divisions occur quite regularly, subdividing a single plot into a limited number of elongated parcels. This phenomenon can be found when examining short segments as well as seemingly continuous lines, virtually joining the nodes of small plots. Another process to be explained, that appears different from the first one, entails the apparition of some clearly linear “cutting lines” to be found on the territory, often resulting in the segmentation of former plots with a new geometry, though without significantly impacting the nearby *parcellaire*.

**Densification of a node.** Popp’s map presents nodes of agglomerated small plots, just as today’s cadastral map does. The diachronic
confrontation shows an incremental rise of the plot subdivision within and around these primitive nodes, either confirming some vernacular form already present in the node, or else juxtaposing a new patch of small plots with their own divisional organisation. In some cases, this densification of nodes leaves some of the bigger plots undivided, in some cases all plots are divided, the entire set being merged into a group of equivalent-sized plots.

**Very large plots.** The larger plots that are visible on a regional scale aren't always visible in the 2x2km sample. Nevertheless, larger plots are mostly undivided. When they are divided this is mostly into two lesser sized plots, otherwise they are occupied by some autonomous allotments.

**Network organized plots.** The recognition of a network figure in the plot organisation is even reinforced in today's map compared to that of Popp. Continuity along a system is already readable on the 19th century map but extends through time.

**Autonomous allotments.** The recognisable figure of autonomous allotments identified earlier mostly occurs on large or very large plots. We assume this is enabled by the disposal of one or a few big plots at the same time. Indeed, the relations between the branch-like shape and the plots leads to an interdependent relation that needs to be installed in a single step.

**Lessons from the comparison**

We will try to sum up what this short two-period exercise - the synchronic regional and the diachronic local comparisons - has taught us.

The first set of synchronic comparative maps helped us to set up the context. We are now able to identify some patterns, due to their repetitive occurrences in the different cases. Indeed, the comparison has helped us highlight the specific plot structure in each valley of this Moyenne Belgique area, described as a dispersed territory made of fragmented, rather small plots.

Secondly, through the diachronic comparison, we can identify trends, by the repetition of the processes of transformation in space and time. We can see that plot fragmentation was already present in the 19th century and land has continued to be divided up ever since. We note some widespread modifications of the cadastral maps and we mostly observe general parcellisation processes that do not specifically pertain to a single valley. Nevertheless, the divisions conform somewhat to each valley's plot structure or local configuration.
Through the spectre of permanence and disappearance, we see pieces of the territory that are easily eroded, transformed, divided while other pieces could be compared to hard rocks, resisting to transformation over time, even crystallizing nearby elements through their spatial structure. Through all these modifications, relations between actors are constantly resetting the construction of the territory, as a product, a result of socio-economic, environmental or historical processes, and as a project, a conscious design territorializing societal relations [1]. Through time, territory is built by the constant balance of power of many projects which draw and redraw the lines of the parcellaire.

The operation of constructing a sort of lexicon helps us to highlight tendencies and to understand which plot modifications are generalised or site specific, or that constitute the quantic mass or exceptions. By looking finely at each operation of modification, we start to describe the way artefacts are being built upon former lines. This comparison allows us to make some statements as to how the city territory is being shaped by urbanization and the process of land division. Yet, in order to understand the causes and explanations for these phenomena, more parameters beyond purely morphological and typological observations are called for. Nevertheless, some collateral questions can already be raised.

**Future research**

At this point we can announce that we have drawn the first lines of the typo-morphologic portrait of a territory. Other parameters of reading should be added in order to build a more refined knowledge of the complex processes at work in the construction of the territory. Comparative tools could continue to help us understand these other themes. For instance, the relation of the parcellaire with architecture is one line of study that will follow in a further stage of the research. If we can understand the cadastral transformations, we should then further investigate the form of architecture produced in relation to the plots and how they influence each other in their transformation.

Another parameter of reading is the socio-economic processes behind the transformation of the land that, even if not directly related to site contingencies, have a direct and strong influence on the question of the forms they reproduce. Back in the late Middle Ages and during the 18th and 19th century, common lands were broadly dismantled and fractioned [13] leading to the reorganization of an entire territorial land system. Later, during the process of industrialization, the development of capitalism and bourgeois society became important agents of transformation [14,15] Going back to the allegory of the **Banlieue Radieuse** quoted in the introduction, if Belgian dispersed territory is a radiant suburb based on individual private property
and division of land entities, it describes how it has been strongly shaped through the development of medium-sized residential plots and estates. Lastly, it can be stated that the conditions of this dispersed urbanisation, rooted in an urban structure whose rationalities are inherited from the past, have dramatically changed today. Therefore, the configuration of what constitutes this dispersed urbanisation - and thus the living environment for its inhabitants - has changed as well.

If elements from the past, having become permanent, are now mainly still visible in the 'vernacular' structure of the dwellings, what will remain of the more recent transformations of plots? How pliable to further transformations will the new tissues prove themselves to be? How fragile to transformations are the open spaces facing urbanization through the figures we have identified (ribbon-road, allotments, etc.)? How 'expansive' of 'feasible' is it to develop some structures rather than others? The word sustainability synthetizes those concerns, and one should be able to evaluate parcellaire in this light when thinking of urban and territorial planning.

The parcellaire is seen as the common element of these dispersed landscape, everywhere present and complexly interweaving rural and agrarian patterns of cultivated fields with elements of the contemporary city. Trying to understand the urban qualities of this model of dispersed urbanism; the consequences in terms of land transformations; whether the model can support sustainable adaptations; the sense of collectiveness; the publicity of spaces and equally distributed welfare conditions able to be brought through this imaginary - these are the themes that should come to the fore via the reading of the land through the lens of the parcellaire, its property and its mechanisms. Comparisons should also be made with the recent landscape - i.e. the landscape of the contemporary city - already able to recycle its recent tissues, such as that of low quality housing and consumptive parcelling. The transformations, line by line, of these geographies, tell us about the fine construction of a territory of dispersed habitat and the future of the very same.

Notes

a. The word parcellaire is the French term which describes the system of parcels constituting the base of the land division in property. Rather than use the English noun, we chose to keep its French form because of its narrower definition which better suits our purpose. Indeed, it refers to a mesh, a system that has its own specific logic, rather than to a juxtaposition of plots of lands as an adding together of objects, without conferring to this addition an autonomy or a proper rationality.
References


