

# In the “Course of Recognition”:<sup>1</sup> Notes on a new urban imaginary

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“The Horizontal Metropolis—a Radical Project.”  
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## Metropolises in search of an image

During an interview<sup>2</sup> conducted in fall 2014 in the context of the *Horizontal Metropolis* research, Thomas Sieverts, looking back to the work done on the *Zwischenstadt* (Sieverts, 1997) and in the light of its more recent developments, interestingly warned about the necessity and urgency for these particular urban conditions of “finding a soul.” In the author’s opinion, in fact, these extensively inhabited and hybrid territories, being unable to evoke a vivid and clear image in their inhabitants<sup>3</sup> and, thus, to exist as “a whole”<sup>4</sup> and a “subject,”<sup>5</sup> still heavily suffered owing to their “in-between” and fragmented statuses.

The fact of responding to precise “urban” characteristics such as, for example, a certain density of the settlement<sup>6</sup> (McGee, Ginsburg, and Koppel, 1991) or the way in which its various parts were used<sup>7</sup> (Indovina, 1990) didn’t suffice to fully consider them city pieces; for the author their emotional recognition, the ability to suggest a “metropolitan imaginary” to those who inhabited them on a daily basis, represented the fundamental condition for them to be considered—to all effects—“metropolises.”

Sievert’s position with respect to the ability of these territories to evoke a metropolitan imaginary seems particularly relevant if we think that today despite the evidence of their physical presence and their material functionality in the imaginary of their inhabitants these “Metropolises do not exist,” they “remain an abstraction,” they are rarely seen as such within the cultural debate, and under no circumstances are they able to influence—as city pieces—policies and collective action.<sup>8</sup> Despite decades of research and dissemination, in fact, a misapprehension of these territories’ logics seem to persist both in planning practices and in urban design interventions, while “shared perceptions of what this territory is and visions of what it should or could be, seem still to lack.”<sup>9</sup> In the absence of an overarching vision, the risk is that territorial change continues to be propelled by individual/economic interest only feeding a process of “perpetual space consumption” where “*ad hoc* strategies rather than contributing to the solution, exacerbate the problem.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite their originality in animating the contemporary debate on the “Horizontal Metropolis,” the warnings expressed by Sieverts are not the first of their kind, echoing,



for example, those launched by Kevin Lynch in the early 1960s within his study on the “sprawling” American city. Already in those years, in fact, the risk could be sensed of a growing gap between the material condition of a transforming urban environment and the perception of the same by its direct users, the inhabitants. “We are rapidly building a new functional unit, the Metropolitan Region, but we have yet to grasp that this unit, too, should have its corresponding image,” warned Lynch. “We must learn to see the hidden forms in the vast sprawl of our cities” (Lynch, 1960: 12).

A “strong environmental image,” a “familiar, distinctive and legible environment,” in the view of the author proved not only to offer security but also “to heighten the potential depth and intensity of human experience, encouraging greater attention and participation.” The social role played by a “vivid physical setting capable of producing sharp images” (Lynch, 1960) represented, already at that time, a fundamental framework for both conceptual and physical reorganization of space. In his writings, Lynch would in fact encourage precise actions, able to ensure for the inhabitants the ability “to actively form their own stories to create new activities” and new, “robust” spaces.

To consider the inhabitants’ ability to operate and to effectively<sup>11</sup> act upon their everyday environment directly—closely related to their capacity to build legible images of the same, means opening up a whole research agenda reflecting on the extent of the impact that a changing awareness of the “Horizontal Metropolis” could have on the development of its future design and form.

It seems, in fact, increasingly difficult as well as counterproductive to imagine a project for these extendedly urbanized territories that neglects the potential of their users’ agency including its less tangible but still powerful imaginative component. This could represent instead a fundamental lever to reorient and pool incoherent and inconsistent actions toward more robust and shared territorial “visions,” able to mobilize innovative yet well-grounded urban projects. The size that more recent forms of territorial urbanization are gradually taking (Brenner, 2014) clearly measures the urgency of this move, especially within the understanding of landscape as a layered deposit of cultural representations (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988) able to mobilize the “social body” and to produce—in turn—space.

### Three series, three *plateaux*

Alongside fundamental operations such as the construction of original maps (Measures) aimed at a “prospective” description of the analyzed territories and the formulation of a set of design operations (Projects), this research has attempted—through the production of a series of videos—to outline some initial reasoning on the images emerging from and produced by what we call the “Horizontal Metropolis.”

The metropolitan areas of Venice, Lausanne, Boston, Hangzhou, and the Alpine Valais, selected as case studies for the whole research, have been here read through three different levels of interpretation—“Theories,” “Landscapes,” and “Practices”—hence the production of three thematic series of videos.<sup>12</sup>

The first series, “Theories,” attempts to show the “Horizontal Metropolis” as through the attentive and trained eye of a scientist, someone accustomed to analyze an object carefully

and through an “oriented” gaze, through successive and bounded interpretative levels; someone who constructs an image having one already in mind. This is an analytical gaze that observes the inhabited space from the inside while keeping in mind a global understanding of the same; that combines external and internal vantage points. It is a gaze that conveys a precise intellectual “positioning.”

The second series, “Landscapes,” views the metropolis from the outside and from above, through the cold, analytical gaze of an aerial video camera mounted on a drone; it shows the territory as it presents itself in material terms, through the alternation and interweave of its vegetal and mineral elements, through its most evident dynamics of the flow of water in rivers and canals or of the movement of traffic along roads and highways; it captures the landscape through the forms and rhythms with which the various components of the “urban palimpsest”<sup>13</sup> determine the character of the ground surface.

The third series, “Practices,” offers—on the contrary—an “internal” portrait of the metropolis, scanned by the fresh, pragmatic gaze of those who come to terms with it on a daily basis, those who directly experience its conflicts and paradoxes; it’s a gaze focusing on the part rather than on the whole, subject to continuous corrections and adjustments.

The intent in the combination of such different vantage points was dictated on one side by the evident need to venture into and “widen the view upon” an extremely complex territorial condition, and on the other, by the possibility of identifying, in a plural territorial description, new break points or inconsistencies useful to complete—as much as possible—a necessarily partial picture. As if, to reference the figures of de Certeau, only in the constant dialogue between the Icarian and the Dedalusian gazes (de Certeau, 1984), between the “seeing knowledge” and the “walking wisdom,”<sup>14</sup> was it possible to fully explore a still unfamiliar metropolitan space.

In this frame, the choice of video as the means of investigation allowed the testing of precise descriptive operations, such as, for example, to selectively superpose different levels of interpretation or to juxtapose apparently incompatible vantage points. In the effort of building a set of comparisons, the naive pursuit of recurrences between different contexts assumed to mark the same phenomenon was purposefully avoided, whereas work was concentrated on the building of descriptive–interpretative frameworks, specifically and independently capable of dialoguing (Bianchetti, 1994) with each other, from different perspectives. A series of frameworks in which the different interpretations, the subjects raised, being on the same level, “sometimes conflicted and sometimes reinforced each other” (Secchi, 1990). Comparison was thus here intended in terms of a “dialogue” between the different parts and perspectives, never isolated, but constantly mirroring and influencing each other. The comparative advantage of video as a scientific language became evident when, “by accepting to make visible only what could be visible, it managed to make invisible what it had to be.”<sup>15</sup>

The three “portraits,” as a whole, seem to be outlining the skeleton of an extremely diversified but mostly coherent urban and territorial system, characterized by utterly original rules, spaces, and times.



## Series 01: Theories

7 videos—12 minutes each

Interviews conducted by the author in fall 2014 at EPFL. Each scholar is asked to narrate the story of his “model” in the perspective and framework of the “Horizontal Metropolis” hypothesis. All contributors are seen against a black backdrop.

This series, opening both the exhibition and the research, welcomes the visitor in a sort of “chorus,” an assembly of thinkers, reconstructing—in stages—part of the history of thinking on the “Horizontal Metropolis.” It includes six interviews conducted during fall 2014 with six authors, who, starting from the 1960s, proposed a critical analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon of urban diffusion: Jean-Michel Roux on *Rurbanisation* (1976), John Friedmann on *Agropolitan Development* (1978), Francesco Indovina on *La Città Diffusa* (1990), Terry McGee on *Desakota* (1991), Andrea Branzi on *Agronica* (1995), and Thomas Sieverts on *Zwischenstadt* (1997). A voiceover by Bernardo Secchi,<sup>16</sup> while defining the “Horizontal Metropolis” concept, formulates the hypothesis of the entire research, outlining the field in which the six authors, taking cues from their individual work and intellectual posture, will subsequently take position.

The six contributions, all related by a common hypothesis and framework,<sup>17</sup> build a composite though concerted analysis in which the individual positions, although diverse and guided by different entry points, seem to mutually reinforce and complete each other.<sup>18</sup> The dialogue gradually built between the Horizontal Metropolis hypothesis,<sup>19</sup> and those advanced by the six authors, is lively and fed by multiple contact points even if characterized by an element of fundamental difference: while the invited authors reflect on, and describe exclusively conditions of urban dispersion, the Horizontal Metropolis hypothesis proposes a broader interpretation,<sup>20</sup> reasoning on diffuse as well as on compact urban conditions, as a whole.

Very diverse territorial conditions are disclosed, all differently characterized by “radically new urban qualities” (Smets), defined by “new practices and needs” (Indovina), and offering to the imagination “alternative forms of development” (Friedmann) and design; they have a tendency to inspire projects that “no longer require a fixed structure but rather a great transformability of architectural aggregations, all provisional” (Branzi).

The unusual (for the time) territorial awareness that all the scholars display though concerning geographically and culturally diverse territories, echoes—to some extent—the works’ different publication dates which, despite the fact that most of these authors have come into contact only very recently in many cases are surprisingly close.

Although in different ways and in different moments in time, all authors expressed a strong critique of consolidated urban models, which were often “incapable of interpreting and coming to terms with the changes underway” (Indovina). The applicability of the traditional dichotomy between *rural* and *urban* and the resulting policies designed to keep them separate were among them commonly seen as a manifestation of a “culturally artificial division” (McGee) which had to be necessarily overridden and which, already at the time, had no place in reality. The overcoming of the *rural–urban* opposition matched the inconsistency of obsolete building and territorial typologies<sup>21</sup> and introduced the necessity for new and more flexible types (Branzi), able to suggest original and “innovative modes of territorial management” (Indovina) or to allow new uses and practices (McGee).

Albeit with different degrees of intensity, all authors interestingly report a strong rejection of their texts by the general public. While John Friedman’s *Agropolitan Development* model was named “Mr. Friedman’s development nightmare” by recognized scholars and longtime colleagues, Thomas Sieverts was “heavily attacked and accused of being an advocate of the landscape’s destruction” he was “publicly ridiculed” and called the “traitor of the original European city.” Bauer and Roux were also fiercely criticized for their “excessively empirical” and “immoral subject,” a clear form of “insubordination to national policies.”

The emphasis with which the different authors recount the misadventures of the past, clearly echoes their late success, related to a recent wave of deep reinterpretation of and renewed interest in their work.

The positive approach to a phenomenon commonly interpreted as being negative, pooled all the authors who, in contrast with the trends of the time, understood the phenomenon of dispersed urbanization more as an opportunity to be grasped than a problem to be solved: a landscape with evident negative externalities but characterized by “economic vitality and flexibility” (Sieverts), by “relevant environmental qualities” (Indovina), and able to “reduce collective costs” (Friedmann) while “increasing self-determination” (Smets) and emancipation dynamics. A territorial condition desperately calling for a “new era of planning,”<sup>22</sup> capable of deploying “new knowledge through interdisciplinary teams” (McGee), and to counteract the individual and partial responses of self-organized processes (Indovina).

The idea that the described models, despite notable differences, may represent different faces of a common dynamic and are therefore not isolated episodes but comparable attempts to recognize, within the profound mutation of the contemporary city a new urban principle, seems, in these interviews, to find fertile ground.

## Series 02: Landscapes

5 videos—10 minutes each

Shots taken with a camera mounted on a drone, at a height of approximately 40 meters above ground, moving at a speed of 10 m/s. Structuring waterways and/or infrastructures are kept in the center of the shot.

The second series offers a less filtered image of the metropolis, consisting of five flyovers through the selected case studies: the metropolitan areas of Venice, Lausanne, Boston, Hangzhou, and the Alpine Valais. A shared protocol makes the different portraits comparable.

Even if falling on territories with very different climatic and cultural conditions, the five metropolises, observed from above and from similar vantage points, seem well suited for comparison, where common and shared rationales are combined with particular and site-specific features.

At first sight, from the sky emerges the image of a sparse, thin carpet of built patches embedded in an agricultural matrix and varying in function, use, and size. A hybrid composition of detached houses, religious buildings and spaces, “big boxes,” factories and industrial platforms, and small and medium-sized centers lying all inside a common territorial frame whose strongest contextual layouts are vegetal and infrastructural. Here



agricultural, industrial, and residential space, along with spaces for work, trade, services and leisure time, are part of a layered territorial construction, a palimpsest<sup>23</sup> revealing continuous variations, structured and gradually transformed according to repeatedly differing territorial speeds and logics. Alongside the minute mixture of functions present in smaller centers, in all cases an association of functionally homogeneous areas, emerge in the form of residential plots, small to medium-sized industrial areas, scholastic complexes or shopping malls, forming—in some cases—stretches of commercial streets or articulated settlement systems. Larger mono-functional elements stand out as “monuments” unable to weave priority relations with the “rest of the landscape.”<sup>24</sup> These fragments that at first sight set up physical and formal relations of “otherness” with the minute residential fabric and with the agricultural system, call for new and complementary relations with the surrounding landscape.

Thanks to the physical distance held by the drone while capturing the images from the sky and to the critical one built through the dialogue with the other parts of the research, the first impression of chaos, initially driven by the great variety of surfaces, forms and materials, soon gives way to a set of “interpretative figures” emerging from a more careful analysis of the landscapes’ manifold elements and able to describe—selectively—the metropolis’s multiple underlying “rationalities,” thoroughly described in the second part of this book. These figures seem helpful not only to decipher and deconstruct the “architecture of” the metropolis but also—and especially—to relate, structure, and organize the spaces of its project, to build a projective discourse on an heterogeneous object and condition.

Through the lens of the “Archipelago figure”—for example—certain territories, as the ones of Boston or Lausanne, can be read as systems of constructed islands, embedded in broad, green expanses. Archipelagos shaped by the growth of old and new fragments, “urban islands in a green sea” offering a vast “repertoire of complementary facilities”<sup>25</sup> and elements of an “explicitly antithetical nature.”<sup>26</sup> Here, the voluntary “cooperation of islands,” sharing generous swaths of vegetation and multiple infrastructures, describe a “space without a center, in constant tension between the need for dialogue and its own individualities” (Cacciari, 1997). The “green sea,” composed of extensive agricultural swaths of land, at times reinforced by systems of parks and forests, hosts public infrastructures and facilities<sup>27</sup> and marks the distance between the metropolis’ different elements; it materializes in the form of a dense forest in the case of Boston or a thick and minutely organized agricultural fabric in the case of Lausanne.

In the case of Venice, the “green support,” consisting of finely infrastructured, cultivated lands, engineered over the centuries by knowledgeable agricultural and hydraulic logics with the purpose of making inhospitable lands habitable and productive, has—in time—actively organized the metropolis’s different components, through a broad and thick infrastructural skeleton, a “network.” A composite mesh of drainage canals, farm tracks, systems of embankments, and roads<sup>28</sup> allowing “unidirectional flows,” “multiple linkages and inherent possibilities for passage” (Habraken, 1998) to take place within an extensively cultivated field. This network of weak and discrete territorial structures that made the development of the metropolis possible, call today for a phase of deep reinterpretation and reimagination.

### Series 03: Practices

5 videos—10 minutes each

*Interviews conducted with four actors for each case study, always including at least a farmer, an entrepreneur, and a common laborer. Questions are conceived to interrogate their lifestyle, and their perspective on the territory and its most recent transformations, on the eventual conflicts emerging daily from the relationships with other practices/other stakeholders, and on the potential for alliances. For each interview, additional shots of the environment were made to interface stories and landscapes.*

The third and last series collects 20 interviews with a selection of stakeholders from the five case studies.

The portrayed territories, infrastructured in the past for agricultural production, have become broad regions within which different populations with different lifestyles coexist and where different social forces are at work. A territory used extensively in which each small portion and each item or material is assigned a specific role or function, in which each space appears to be used differently and charged with its own specific meaning: a “palimpsest” comprising a rich deposit of continuously reconstructed materials, where each layer involves new and overlapping practices.

The different landscapes offer countless possibilities of location, multiple types of spaces enabling ever more different lifestyles and trajectories; here the Horizontal Metropolis can be read as the sum of mainly individual approaches related to different modes of dwelling, working, recreation, and lifestyle. Each actor moves according to individual rules of behavior, local rationales based on the pursuit of specific ends and leading to the construction of elements repeated in extensive or less extensive sequences in space.

The multifunctional and diverse character of these territories is thus reflected in the lifestyles of their inhabitants, who over time have learned to make good use of these territories’ considerable potential; a lever for emancipation but also for the implementation of—occasionally incompatible—practices and objectives.

Multifunctionality may in fact, easily trigger conflictual dynamics: where cultivated landscapes, for example, are used as parks by a rapidly growing population (Lausanne), new regulations to reconcile old needs with new practices are repeatedly and firmly invoked by a number of actors. Water emerges as a sensitive issue in all cases, lying behind most conflicts; those connected with pollution (agricultural and industrial), but also those related to excess, as in the Italian case, or shortage, as in the American case, of water. Here, the gradual lowering of the inhabitants’ territorial awareness and of the related capacity for unmediated action on the ground (the gradual loss of ecological consciousness and practical capacity is revealed in most cases) seem to exacerbate (Hangzhou, Venice) rather than temper the problem.

From a different perspective, a small number of stakeholders (Venice, Lausanne) consider the multifunctionality of these spaces (the agricultural one in particular) a key element for a virtuous functioning of the system as a whole,<sup>29</sup> such as for the diversification and multiplication of working and income opportunities.

The increasing presence of urban dwellers living and moving around inside the agricultural fabric and the related possibility of taking advantage of emerging “up-sides”



such as, for example, large voluntary labor-pools ready to work for free in exchange for “weekly immersions in nature” (Boston) or the growing liveliness of farmers markets (Lausanne), seem to gradually encourage local farmers<sup>30</sup> to observe these emerging dynamics with interest and not only with suspicion.

The multifunctional character of the territory increases also the possibilities for multi-employment and flexibility: in several cases small and medium land owners have highlighted how while working full- or part-time in industries or small factories, they manage to fully cultivate and maintain their own fields (Venice, Hangzhou).<sup>31</sup>

In these territories the availability of existing infrastructure and of flexible and cheap industrial spaces has allowed, over time, the development of highly specialized niche industries in which the flexibility and robustness of family work has constituted an irreplaceable strength (Venice, Lausanne, Hangzhou). The conscious and targeted choice to remain small and to specialize the product (Venice, Lausanne) has enabled them, in many cases, to reach high-quality and niche markets.

More recently the growing possibilities offered by teleworking practices to maintain high-profile jobs while living in “remote” areas, is greatly reorganizing populations’ positioning patterns within which—for example—freelancers or small companies increasingly choose to locate in a territory according to the benefits offered by the “natural” environment or by advantageous taxation regimes (Valais) rather than for the proximity to productive centers. The high quality of life offered by the generous green/cultivated spaces is—in fact—giving rise to new forms of “presential economy”<sup>32</sup> thriving upon the “health benefits” (Valais) offered by the landscape or simply the “chance to live immersed in greenery” (Boston, Venice).

Interestingly, the hybrid nature of these territories, their incomplete and “open” structure, heavily feeds the imagination and the imaginary of their inhabitants, also. The strong transformation and transformability to which the different landscapes are repeatedly subject to, have proven to be evident to, at least, two of the interviewed actors who, without being asked, have proposed prospective visions and scenarios for the future of their territories (Valais, Venice). The necessity manifested by the actors, to project their everyday-life space in the future to the point of proposing utterly new categories and definitions, highlights not only a strong territorial awareness but also the desire and urgency to imagine a new system of reference and rules.

### Towards a new imaginary

In literature, “imaginary” has often been discussed through its collective and “practical” dimension. Paul Ricoeur calls the way in which social groups understand themselves via images the “practical function of imagination” (Mei and Lewin, 2014), which he extends to the idea of “social capacities” (Ricoeur, 2004), emphasizing the relationship between social imaginaries and social practices. More generally the imaginary/action pairing is consistently recognized by scholars emphasizing the hypothesis that imaging precedes action,<sup>33</sup> defining, in turn, its spatial fallouts.<sup>34</sup>

In this frame, the collective creation of a shared imaginary,<sup>35</sup> of new “conceptions of place having the power to mobilize, coordinate and inspire” (Healey 2001) the different stakeholders’ actions, seems necessary to trigger sound territorial strategies, able to activate<sup>36</sup> the Horizontal Metropolis’s latent “qualities” and to build new alliances and

coalitions triggering greater synergies, such as the ones between different stakeholders and their practices<sup>37</sup> or between the natural and the built environment.

To see the territory with “new eyes” (Smets), to imagine it in a different guise, entails a profound reconsideration of deeply rooted beliefs and—in certain cases—a radical reversal of perspective where “instead of the destruction of landscape, we would see the mutual penetration of city and landscape; instead of the loss of urban character, a new kind of manifold urbanity: instead of missing density a new potential for richness in the “openness of the urban system and instead of the destruction of nature, new forms of urban landscapes rich in biodiversity but also in culture” (Sieverts, 2014).

Today several decades after the release of the first publications reporting the emergence of a “new form of city” while the need to develop a project for these territories seems to be generally acknowledged, it is still not clear what role will be played by their direct users, what will be the weight of their agency and their collective capacity seen as the general feeling is that “good architecture, good urban design and urban landscaping will not be enough” to adequately address ongoing changes.

*“The truth of our condition ... is accessible to us only through a certain number of imaginative practices, among them, ideology and utopia.”*

Paul Ricoeur, 2007<sup>38</sup>



1 The title alludes to the work of Paul Ricoeur, in particular to his understanding of social capacity as directly related to social imaginary and to the nexus he proposes between collective representations and collective abilities.

2 Part of a series of six interviews conducted in the fall of 2014 in Lausanne (EPFL) by the author in the context of the HM research (Lab-U) with six authors who, since the sixties, have proposed a reading and a critical analysis of the phenomenon of urban dispersion.

3 "(...) the Horizontal Metropolis will remain a cognitive abstraction, as long as it is not experienced with emotions, in the form of visions and dreams." (Sieverts, 2014).

4 During the same interview, Thomas Sieverts explains how—in his view—the Horizontal Metropolis, besides a challenge, embodies a hope for its inhabitants, a hope for a more sustainable way of living, for a more "just" city, in other terms, for emancipation.

5 As described by André Corboz: "Cette nécessité d'un rapport collectif vécu entre une surface topographique et la population établie dans ses plis permet de conclure qu'il n'y a pas de territoire sans imaginaire du territoire (...) étant un projet, le territoire est sémantisé. Il est *discourable*. Il porte un nom. Des projections de toute nature s'attachent à lui, qui le transforment en un sujet" (Corboz, 1994).

6 "The inhabitants are distributed in these territories according to urban densities."

7 The inhabitants "use the parts of these territories as parts of a city."

8 "As long as this emerging Metropolis is not experienced with emotions, in the form of visions and dreams, it will never become an important part of the public cultural debate and never influence politics and collective action" (Sieverts, 2014).

9 With reference to the article: Travasso, N., 2018, "Inventing a common home: an experiment in the Ave Valley" in Viganò, Cavalieri, and Barcelloni Corte, 2018.

10 With reference to the article: Declerck, J., 2018, "Between Plan and Pragmatism: Families of Challenges" in Viganò, Cavalieri, and Barcelloni Corte, 2018.

11 Or, we could say, virtuously.

12 While the first series is linked to the spaces and times evoked by the interviewed authors, the other two refer to precise spaces and times: the five case studies selected for the research project and the spring of 2015, when the videos were shot.

13 As introduced and described by André Corboz (1983).

14 Icarus, who manages to escape the "urban labyrinth," sees the world in a vertical, panoptical, and global perspective, the "cartographic abstract eye"

representing "the pleasure of seeing the whole, looking down on"; Dedalus, who remains without wings in the labyrinth, sees the world in a horizontal, partial perspective, immersed as he is in an ocean of physical and concrete sensations.

15 Here, I directly refer to the position of Lévy (Lévy, 2013). "L'image et en particulier l'image en mouvement, peuvent conduire à des malentendus pour qui cherchent à démonter et à remonter les logiques sociales. Ceux qui ont cru pouvoir fonder une démarche scientifique en se contentant de regarder, nous ont simplement montré la pauvreté de leurs lunettes. Nos yeux produisent des images souvent à partir d'autres images et il se passe dans cette fabrication des choses importantes. (...) Regarder la ville nous oblige à renoncer au profond, à nous contenter de la surface des choses et à nous y concentrer. L'avantage comparatif du cinéma comme langage scientifique peut éventuellement se manifester lorsque en acceptant de ne rendre visible que ce qui le peut l'être, il parvient à rendre invisible ce qui doit l'être."

16 This is an extract taken from a double interview conducted with Bernardo Secchi and Paola Viganò while constructing the vision for Brussels 2040. See "The Horizontal Metropolis—a Radical Project" in this volume.

17 The interviews were conducted over a short time span and all in the same environmental conditions.

18 Over and above the numerous differences such as, for example, the different authors' scales of analyses and their consequent level of detail, or the deep cultural diversity that characterizes the contexts in which they operate, important affinities deserve to be noted.

19 Initially formulated in 2010 by Bernardo Secchi and Paola Viganò.

20 An interpretation related—more in general—to the new forms that the contemporary city has taken in recent decades.

21 As those typical of the modern movement.

22 "Having underrated the phenomenon and imagined it was possible to bring everything inside the urban walls led to the consequence of having no advance in planning since the 1970s" (Sieverts, 2014).

23 With reference to the term as proposed by André Corboz (1983).

24 As happens for the large factories in the Chinese case, or for the military airports in the case of the Alpine Valais.

25 See Ungers, O. M., 1977, "Berlin: a Green Archipelago."

26 Differently from in Ungers' Berlin, a "city in retrenchment," here the "Archipelago" takes shape from the gradual expansion and reinforcement of existing and the formation of new urban elements, with a thrust from the inside towards the outside.

27 In the Swiss case, the highway coupled with the railway find space along the riverbeds, in the agricultural plain.

28 Always tightly bound to a dense constellation of small historical centers.

29 In relation not only to multifunctional production (food, but also energy and the ecological network), but also to multifunctional use. Farmland, within the dispersed built fabric, often takes on the role of leisure area as well as living space. Behind the main roads where urbanization is denser, between industrial settlements and ancient countryside paths, people use the agricultural territory for their recreational activities or as an opportunity for creating space for "active mobility."

30 The economic value of agriculture per hectare in these territories is still high to the point where even small land tenures are still well cultivated. This is owing to the soil being highly fertile, to the traditional cultivation of profitable cash crops, and to the easy exchange with nearby city markets.

31 The metropolis's productive areas, featuring in most cases small-to-medium industrial spaces, single or small groups of warehouses, are always located in proximity of both cultivated and inhabited tissues. Owing to these conditions of amalgamation and permeability, these small "productive islands" have, in some cases, also proven to be capable of building fruitful synergies with neighboring units.

32 Regional economies that rely not on their productive base but on their presential base; we refer here to the work by Olivier Crevoisier and Delphine Guex.

33 See also the section "Imaginaire: movements, modes, and meanings" in F. Bahrami, 2018, "Automobility beyond car: introducing a new coordinate system for transforming urban mobility." PhD thesis.

34 Social imaginaries, influencing political, cultural, and social dimensions, are considered able to define their spatial fallouts. "Just as a society is unable to do what it is not dreamt of by its members, it cannot stop acting out what is part of their dreams." (Holton, 1973).

35 A "rich" imaginary able to "interiorize" the complex system of territorial coexistences seems fundamental to avoid the reduction of complexity to mere juxtaposition of uses and users.

36 Thanks to representations fostering "a shared practice of noticing place qualities" (Healey, 2001).

37 To find a new equilibrium between natural systems, food production, and urban environments, stakeholders need to see things interdependently.

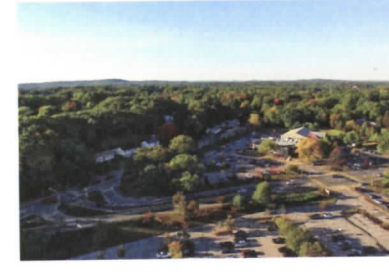
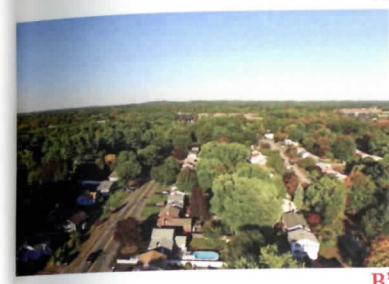
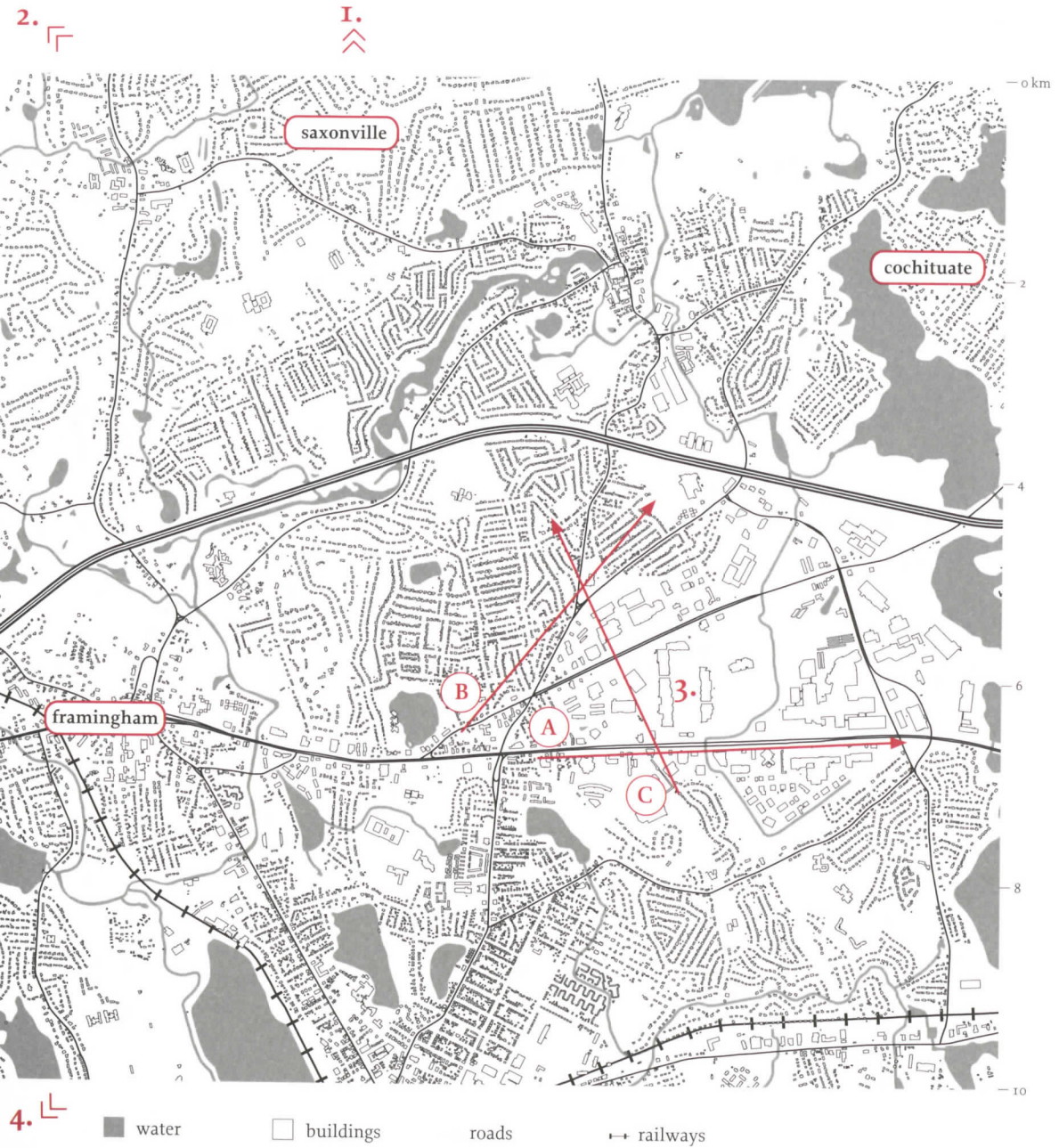
38 Cited in Mei and Lewin, 2014.



hm boston









**1. Danielle, 31, and Matt, 30  
Freelancers**

D: I work in marketing for my parents' business. I grew up in Wellesley, a couple of towns over. When we started looking for housing, we came across north Framingham. It is much more affordable than Natick and you get a bigger house too. M: We are so close to everything, I work from home and I commute all over the state, it's close to all of the highways. D: I have

about a 20 minutes commute in the morning, I take back roads, so it's so much easier. M: The neighborhood around here is such a small, very low-populated. It's just nice to go for a walk after work down the street too. Very safe. Just drive down and then you can see the Campanelli ranches, some of them put a second floor on, every one has its own unique style from being redone. D: the Shopper's World area, that used to be different, I just remember growing up and going there, and it was a big courtyard

in the middle, and all the buildings surrounding it, now it's not as tight of a community there. More shops, more bars opening up, we go there for fun. M: I think that the big positive about Framingham is the school districts, and the Shopper's World is bringing everybody to see a different side of Framingham. M: What we really liked about this neighborhood is that all the schools around here were great. I want the kids growing up in a safe neighborhood.



**2. Liz, 41  
Volunteer farmer**

I'm a long-time sharer, and volunteer. I've been a member of the farm pretty much continuously since. So, for me, when I first learned about Stearns, so, you know, I was moving out of Cambridge and moving into the suburbs and it never actually occurred to me that there would actually be a farm and that one could actually get food from it. I see kids here all the time. And

I have brought kids here, and I've had friends with kids working here, and I've worked with kids here. So, I think seeing where food comes from, and having a better sense of eating with the seasons, and I think again with farmers' markets and things people are now much more in-tune to that. Most of Framingham is kind of known for Route 9, and big-box stores, and things like that, and so I think the fact that we have this incredible resource, beautiful farm is very precious. Many times after work or after

a conference call I would come over here and it's just kind of a whole other world, so, you know, to me it's a little bit of old Framingham and I really hope it stays. I mean, I think it's a critical resource for Framingham and for the area. The farm has grown and I think a lot of that is, you know, philanthropy, and volunteerism, and so to me there's a question of how does the board and how does the farm engage with the community in a way that's beyond just doing farm things.



**3. Barbara, 69  
Retired**

When I arrived here I was 19, we really couldn't afford to buy a house, the best prices to rent were in Framingham. Route 30, 50 years ago was nothing like it is now. Route 9 sometimes can be hard to get up and down because of all of the stores. The population has increased, a lot of businesses on the south side of Framingham have been forced to close down. There's a lot of

restaurants. That whole theater complex over by Natick Mall—that's all new. There's a lot more families. They have built a lot of housing that's affordable for families. But, we've also had a lot of people from Brazil move into the Framingham area, they've opened up some of their businesses. Framingham is convenient if you work in town because we have access to the Logan Express, there's a train, the Amtrak, it isn't too far from here. And I think that's why a lot of people move out this way that work

in Framingham. We're close to the Mass Pike, we're close to 128, so it really is a good location even if traffic can be an issue. Water bills are very high here. You pay for your water, then you pay a lot for storage. I like the variety of stores here, but the other Shopper's World was easier to get around. When it was built, I think that it was one of the first malls ever built, it was back I think in the 50s. This one is spread out, it's harder to go from store to store by car.



**4. Matt, 32  
Business analyst**

I think Framingham it's a little bit cleaner than when I was little and a lot nicer, there's more people around. The streets have gotten a lot busier, but other than that, I haven't noticed a whole lot of change. I know that throughout the years, because my family has been from here, the immigrant population has changed over and over again, which just builds it up

differently and it just sort of renews it. I know that the Brazilian population has been growing, which has been an interesting change for downtown. For me it's just convenient living here, I work close by, there's just a lot of convenience around—stores and everything else. You're close to Route 9, but it's not so city-like, crowded or super crowded. North is a little fancier, bigger houses. The south side has got more of the downtown feel, and the north side feels like less stores, less built-up. There's

a lot of parks. Yeah, actually, even growing up here, I never really walked down this area in particular, but there is a lot of beautiful, green places; even on the north side there's quite a bit of woods. I'm biased, completely biased, but yes, I like it here. I mean, there's definitely it's downsides, it can be very busy out towards certain areas. But overall, I think that it's a pretty nice place.

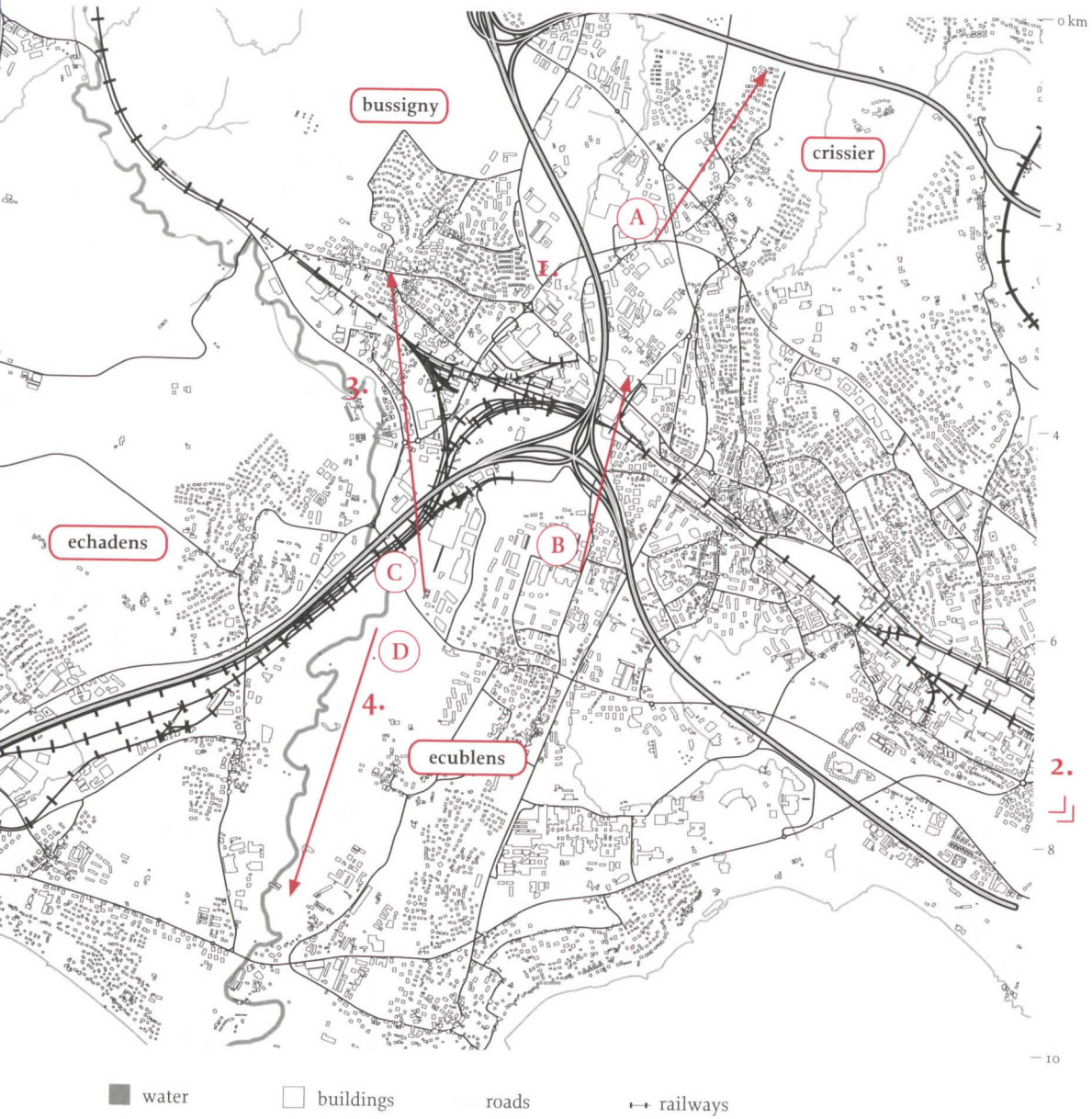




hm lausanne







A

B

C

D



**1. Roberto, 39  
Worker in metal construction**

I began my apprenticeship here in Bussigny making it 23 years that I have worked in metal construction. Over the last 10 years, I have been doing mainly installations in building sites. There are many people working in metal construction in the area, competition is strong, and comes from large companies who can afford to slash their prices, making smaller

companies like ours suffer. I ended up living in Lausanne but I have lived most of my life in Renens where I spent my childhood and school years. At the time in Renens there were almost no Swiss people, there was a mix of many nationalities, and it had quite a bad reputation. Now they have renovated some of the areas in the center of town, it is changing into a nicer area, a more cultural town, younger and more dynamic, which is great. We moved to Lausanne because my wife worked in Geneva, and

the trains which stop in Renens are not direct, it would have taken her ages to commute. I used to live in Renens and work in Chavannes, five minutes away, even reachable on foot; now that I work in Bussigny and live in Lausanne, unfortunately it means that I have to take the train daily, but it's a 10-minute ride. In the evenings and weekends when we go out, we do so almost only in Lausanne but life is very expensive, housing is expensive, and places to rent are difficult to find.

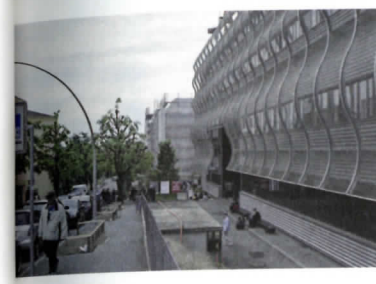


**2. Marc, 32  
Graphic designer**

I am a graphic designer, I was born close to Lausanne, studied in Lausanne and now I am working in Montreux where I created my agency, with some friends. I grew up in the farm that my grandparents bought in the 1950s and I lived there until I finished my studies. It's still close enough, if you have a car, to the big cities. I started school locally and after I went to ECAL the

Arts and Design school of Lausanne, still only half an hour by car from my parents' home, so up till then I did a daily commute. It was professionally interesting not to work in Lausanne, it allowed us to work in different population catchment areas, while being close to home. I kept the connection with my territory because all of my family but also because the area offers a lot. The skiing facilities are less than an hour away, the lake is directly in front of our house, Lausanne is full of parks. You have the impres-

sion of being part of something alive where things happen all the time, at the same time escape is near at hand. Today was a typical day for me, I left Lausanne in the morning, I came to Montreux then in two hours I reached Martigny for a meeting and in another hour I was in Valais to meet some colleagues. Tonight I am going all the way back to my parents' in Mollens. It might seem unthinkable in another context but here you can do it all by train.



**3. Rodolphe, 72, and Marc, 40  
Entrepreneurs**

In 1961 we started the locksmith and construction business with my father, in 1964 we built our premises here and moved in '65. This meant we were able to grow, our workshop first measuring 100sqm then closer to 150sqm. In 1969 we built our first extension, then in 1985 a second one and then further extensions in the 1990s and 2000s, today having reached

almost 1,700 sqm of covered floorspace. We used to live surrounded by cultivated fields, then in the 80s they started building. Firstly the people mainly came from Renens, Chavannes, Bussigny, and other centers in the region, now we even have border crossers. Since the 50s and 60s when you got out of Renens, that was the end of the built-up area, and after that it was really all fields. Fifty years later you see the huge development we have undergone. If work remains as it is now all the valley will keep

growing. Otherwise in the surrounding villages with the new law will block everything; in Romanel where we live not much is moving, areas have been reduced, no one complains in the village, for the moment everybody is happy that it's not growing too much, on the other side there are other villages like Goyon that are growing very fast. Around here things will also grow, but in 15 years time when the building land elsewhere has been exhausted.



**4. Mireille, 54  
Farmer**

We live here in Renges, a small agricultural hamlet, my husband and I work on the estate and all our workforce is family based. We are really a small family entity with no desire to grow beyond that. For the moment there have not been any issues with intrusion by new inhabitants from the outside, but issues can arise, when people don't understand and respect each other as, for example, when a dog

is thrown a stick to fetch in a place he should not be, like in the middle of our crops. There are some positive aspects of this growth, like the market at the farm. In the futuristic vision proposed by the state where agriculture is treated as a park, we were told that it would be good if the commune could look after some of the existing paths, which are often private, so that people could use them to walk along, so as to create a better network of passages. I think that this idea would work only if it did not clash with our crops. We can agree up to a certain

point and make an effort for the beauty and wellbeing of the landscape, but we also need to be able to support ourselves. Here regarding the landscape, it can be very pretty, but also not very practical. Once they proposed us to put crops measuring 3 m in width at the side of the paths, but then how do you look after them, and how do you pass through them with machines? It's a little utopic. So that's where the main conflicts would be, with the visions of biologists, and maybe some landscape architects too!

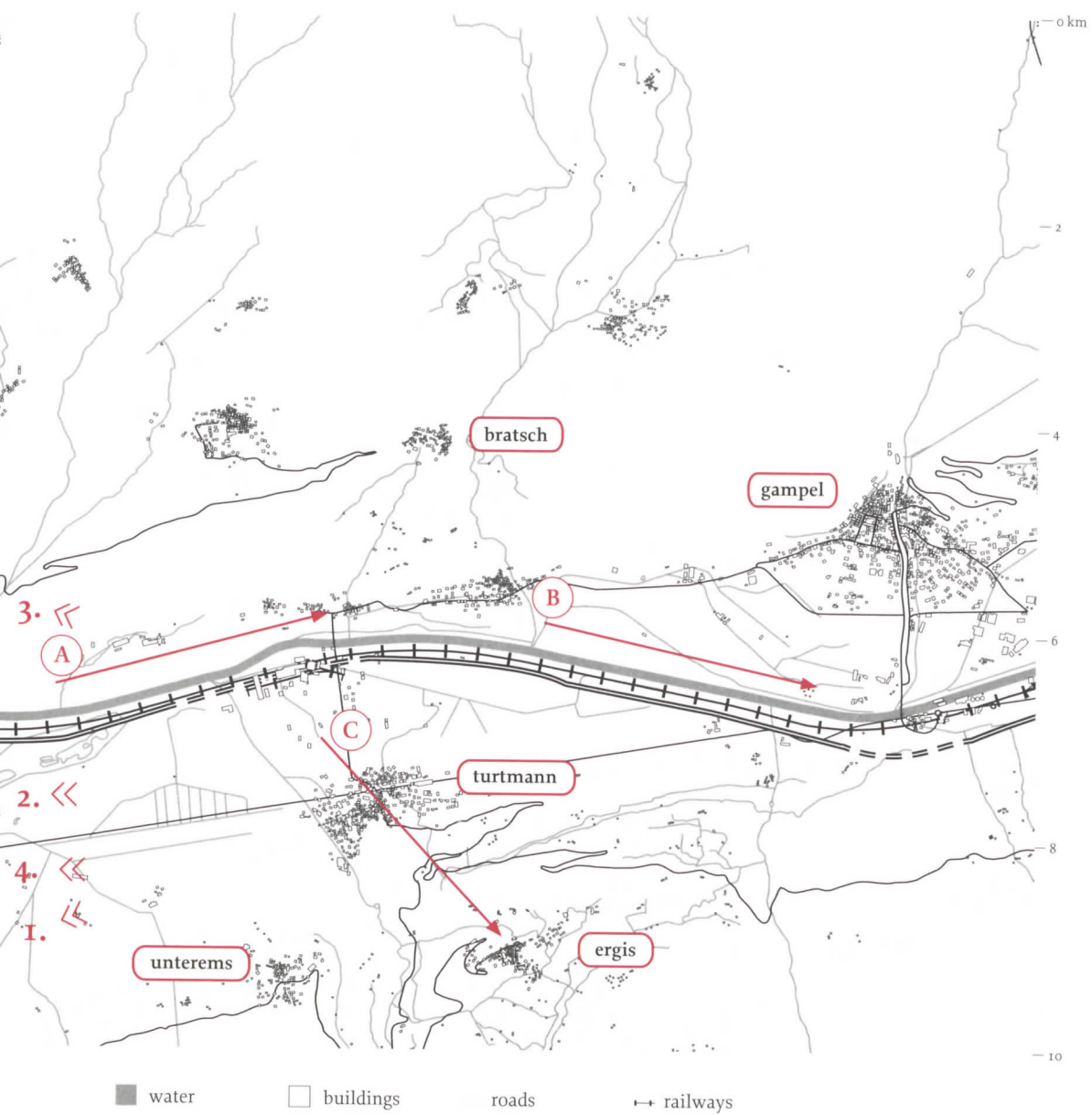




hm valais







C



**1. Hubert, 35  
Farmer**

The Valais is a fantastic canton, in 30 minutes you are in the mountains, it has an enormous potential because we pass rapidly from 500 to 2500 m; we have water everywhere, underground, on the surface, in the mountains we never risk being without snow. But unfortunately it is not always that well organized, as for agriculture, we are the second fruit produc-

ing canton in Switzerland so we pollute the most using pesticides, the state of the soil is not very good, but there is nobody who wants to improve it. I have the impression though that people don't really want to change. We should valorize these existing forests, use more of the territory to build houses; it is sad because at the moment we place the houses on the sides of the Rhône, where they won't last that long because of flooding; if we built them in the high terraces, instead, with good

solar exposure, you wouldn't need other forms of heating and would have much lower energy costs; we are in one of the sunniest cantons in Switzerland. If on these terraces, instead of cereals we grew fruit trees, we could keep the animals more easily down in the plain and we wouldn't put them at 2500 m where we have all our clean water. Many of these pastures have been nitrified, where we have had sheep for 30 years, we will need another 30 to 40 years to let biodiversity come back.



**2. François, 60  
Technical manager**

It is challenging to extract resources to satisfy construction needs while adequately safeguarding the environment, as well as addressing the needs of the population. Residential areas are rapidly expanding and are getting ever closer to extraction sites, where there are issues with noise and dust. The main area we are looking at in our sphere of activity is recycling, which

offers us viable opportunities for the future. For example, we see that when an old road is dismantled to be rebuilt, certain materials can be recycled, and the same occurs with concrete, by planning a clever deconstruction, instead of a plain demolition, a significant part of the materials can be saved and re-used in reconstruction. The cost of maintaining a mountain environment with its relative economic activity, including road and rail connections, is high because the population catered for is

low. Yet this is a characteristic of Switzerland, a system where part of the financing from the more prosperous areas goes towards supporting the peripheral network. In the Plaine du Rhône all the activity is concentrated, we have the Rhône river, main cities, manufacturing, and agriculture. The problem is that with the increase in population and the development of industrial areas, a number of sites and building plots in the lowland are in high-risk locations, should the Rhône overflow.



**3. Gaëtan, 29  
Director at Musée des Bisses**

The "bisses" are traditional irrigation channels and they still maintain their agricultural function; even if we tend to think of them more in relation to tourism, 80 percent of bisses are still used in irrigation. In 2012 we created the museum; there has been a growing interest in the safeguarding and the maintenance of the bisses, which I think ties in with the global

trend of agritourism and agroecology tied to a growing demand for locally produced food. Owing to tourism a lot of funds are being spent on certain types of bisses, but little research is being done about what is happening to our natural resources, with less land surface being used for agriculture (urbanization). Less agricultural land means a smaller area to irrigate but if we embark on further development of agritourism, or changes in the agricultural system, with more orchards and market gar-

dening, the irrigation system will regain its importance. There are many families who are moving to Ayans now, and the commune is therefore changing. Whereas before it was members of local families, this is changing now as individuals and families from outside come and settle here, as it is a convenient distance between the mountain and the lowland. An influx of people coming from outside has changed the dynamics of the area somewhat.



**4. Patrick, 62  
Contractor**

I'm from Sierre, I did my studies and worked in Geneva, it has now been three years since I have been working full-time, in Vercorin. It is quite exceptional because it allows for a lot of freedom, being close to nature. The quality of life here gives you energy, and we work differently, with the aid of technology and the internet, it is now much easier and pleasant to

work than before. Vercorin is a ski resort, but principally a population center. The place is open and alive, there are many people who live here year-round. There are people who come here at around 50 years of age, for retirement or pre-retirement. There are also young people, who instead of living in the lowlands, prefer to drive for 10 minutes or take the cable car to go to work, especially those who love skiing or nature. There are many who descend by cable car, there are others who go down by mountain

bike and come up by cable car, and I even have a friend who often goes to work by paraglider. We can say that the place has expanded a lot. There has been a lot of construction. Now there is everything in proximity, we use the cable car a lot for everyday things. When you live in towns like Geneva, Zurich, Lausanne and similar places, on your way home from work you go to the gym. Here instead people can go skiing. Clearly the internet has helped a lot.



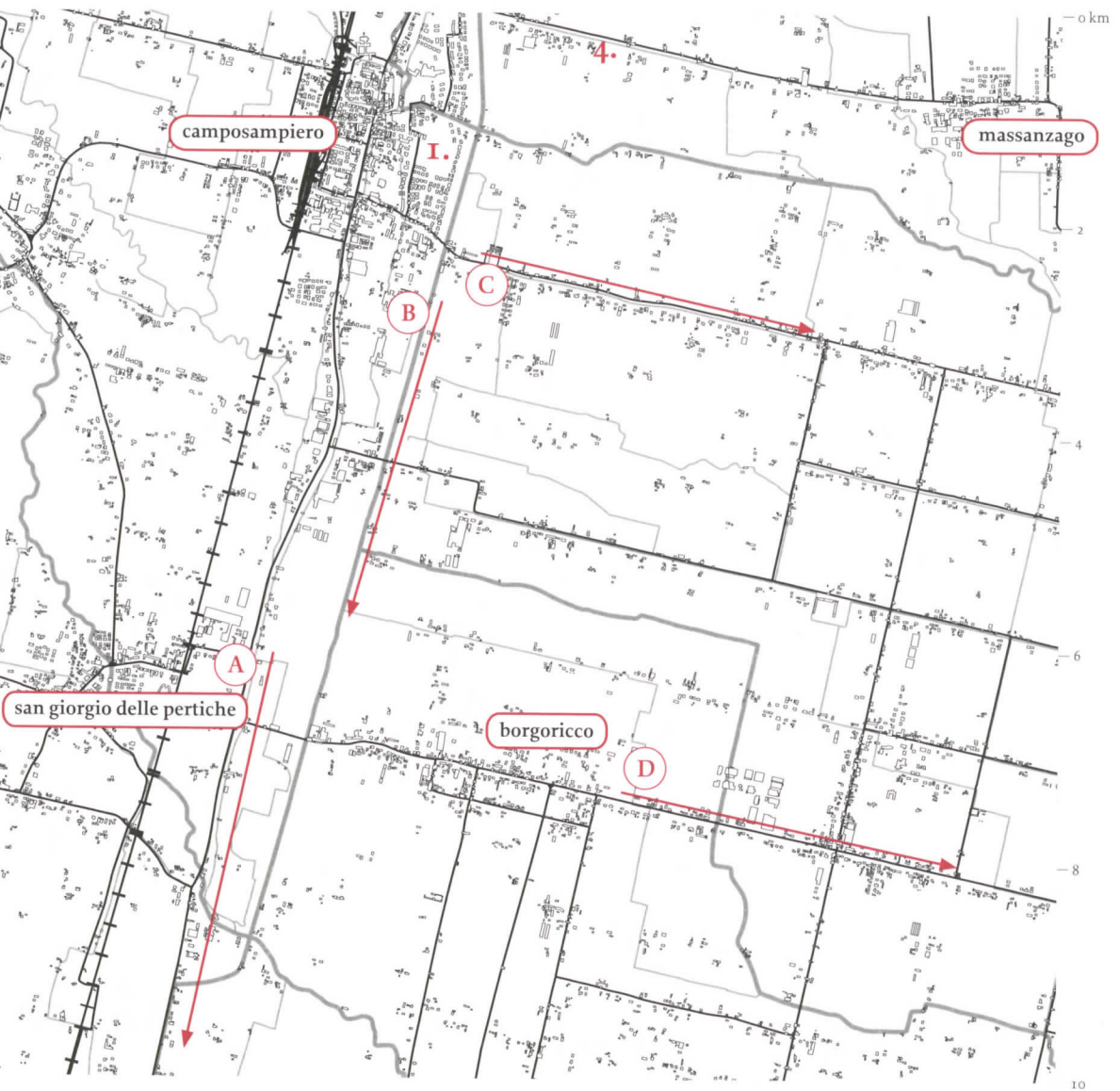


hm venice





2. 



3. 



 water   
  buildings   
 roads   
  railways



**1. Flavio, 40  
Architect**

The Camposampierese Federation was founded in 2011 and covers an area of roughly 226 sq km that includes around 100,000 inhabitants and 1,200 companies. We are essentially a manufacturing area. Many regulations have been passed to contain the dispersion of manufacturing settlements that have sprung up haphazardly all over, in agricultural areas

unsuited for urbanization. These mushroomed, organized themselves, and made the fortune of the area in the last decades of the last century. We have rules that decide the policies and prescriptions for the urban areas and others for the agricultural areas; however, we never see them as an entirety, nor how they interrelate reciprocally, this is a problem and one of the strongest limits. In such a territory that has agriculture covering around 70 percent of the land surface we cannot speak of a "city"

**2. Samuele, 39  
Farmer and entrepreneur**

In '97 I started helping with the family business, working with the crops in the field and looking after the livestock. At that time milk was still very much in demand, hence we increased production and for a while the results were satisfying. But then things changed and I realized that the sole increase of milk production did not bring greater earnings, rather it

created problems. So I changed direction and went from having one sole activity to having multiple activities; I passed from raising livestock for milk, to rearing animals for meat. Having multiple activities worked better in a territory that was no longer agricultural in the strictest sense. I engaged with the perspective of doing different things, from cattle rearing to the agri-tourism with rooms to let and the sale of our products. My strategy was oriented towards diversification, at the time

**3. Giuseppe, 73  
Entrepreneur**

Around here there were only chandelier makers. It was a very poor market, I was the first to have big machines, and the big machines allowed me to break through the market and become successful. Sizeable pieces, very delicate, we made a lot of money. Now we are known even far off, I started up in 1973, the customers know us very well abroad also since we work

on very delicate pieces. We worked with the Marghera Power Station, we did all types of works, we made also big pieces to be placed under the sea in Finland, 500 measure copper coils. With the crisis the value of a piece has gone down, in five years the prices have lost the 30 percent. At the beginning of my business I didn't want too much work and the people were surprised, but this business lasted years, not days. I work here with my wife and son, then we have our staff, not many people, just

**4. Fabio, 55  
Worker and entrepreneur**

The Consortium starts from the highway and reaches the sea. We cut the grass, do maintenance work on the irrigation channels for the reclamation consortium; ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, grass, stakes, and stones. Now when it rains, and it doesn't rain any more as in the old times when the rain was a lot less intense, it's essential to keep the

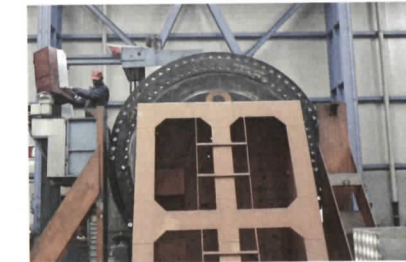
beds clean and free of obstruction. When the emergencies are on we go and take immediate temporary measures and enter the properties then we go back and do more serious work later, even if the funds are ever less. We have been working for the consortium for 52 years now, me, my father, my uncle, for generations but I think that after us it will be difficult. The channels were narrower at the time, then they were broadened, we got rid of the shrubs and trees. Places where, 30 years ago, there was only

without considering agriculture. Perhaps in this time of crisis one has to look beyond, with a vision that might engender new emotions and hence the courage to change. We have to work, not merely to preserve and present a static image; man's action is fundamental, we have to think of the needs of governing society along with protecting the natural landscape. This is a city without a center or suburbs, a city that is livable and probably more "democratic" than others.

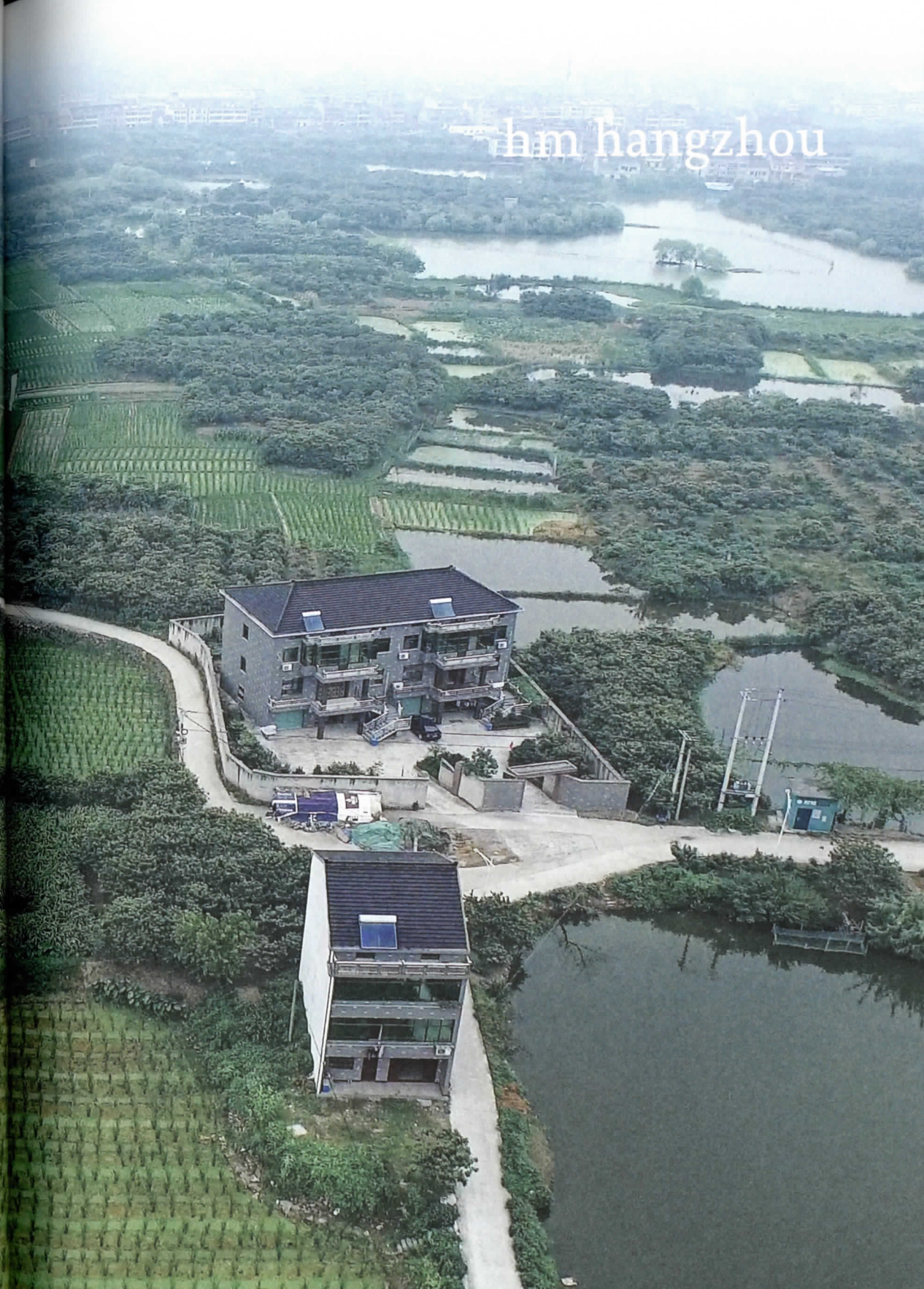
people thought I was crazy, I also got the idea of building a PV installation. With all these activities I can't live far from the place where I work so the choice was to build the house alongside that of my parents. Here we are still in an agricultural context but not completely since we are inserted in the "suburbs of large cities." It's quiet here and we don't have the chaos of the city but we can move if we want to, go to the nearby centers, where we find all the services a citizen needs.

a skeleton crew as it was at the beginning. My son does estimates and everything necessary, then there is the technical office, my wife also works in the office. The work can go on for who knows how many hours, because if you have a piece to finish you have to work until the next morning. Those that rolled up their sleeves, and were able to resist, made it. That's the only way and now, with the current economic crisis, it's even more tough; the prices have collapsed.

countryside don't exist any more. Now things are different, the area is becoming sealed, tarmacked. The water has been sealed in. Once the channels were everywhere, the ground managed to absorb everything, now everything is channeled to one point. Nobody cleans up anymore, before you never found the grass like that, before everything was cut and cleaned, now we have to do it, now people don't care any more, there is not the same maintenance as in the old times.







hm hangzhou





■ water    □ buildings    roads    ↔ railways



A



B



C



D





**1. Jianfa, 54  
Entrepreneur**

I worked in the fields in the 70s and much less in the 80s; in the 90s I stopped. The sanitary conditions in the countryside are bad, not like the European countryside. The electricity network has been upgraded now, some roads are good, especially now every family has private cars. Our factory was originally built in 1977: the activity was agricultural

machinery maintenance, profits were very low. There were only a few cities and towns and as a result agricultural products were not easy to sell and very cheap. In the 90s, the telecommunications industry started to boom and the product became easy to sell, the clients started to come to us. In 1994 the factory was privatized, and from 1995 business was very good. From 1995 to 1998 the factory made a huge profit, more lands were added, the nearby supply and marketing cooperative were also

sold to us; in 1997 we expanded with a new factory building. The industrial park started to be developed from 1998 to '99; now my idea is to reduce labor and increase automation. To be frank, in our generation there was enough labor for industry but things are different in the new generation, very few people are still prepared to work in factories, even now it is difficult to recruit laborers. I live in Linping now, before I lived in Tangqi, every day I drive to work, it takes 30 minutes.



**2. Yougen, 51  
Worker**

I have been working in this factory since 1985. I bought a house and moved here from the countryside, my old house has been left empty. Our family is still involved in agriculture. I take some days off from the factory during the harvest season, we don't grow rice anymore, now we mainly cultivate orchards. The profit from agriculture is about 10 percent of the fam-

ily income. The countryside has changed dramatically, every family used to have rice fields, which are now basically gone. The majority of the rice fields have now been transformed into fishponds and rented out; some people prefer keeping fish to the factory, the life is freer and the fisherman's income could be even higher. Now the majority of the inhabitants in my village have moved to the town, only the elderly and the kids are left in the villages, with many empty houses. I come to work by

car, it takes 10 minutes, it's very convenient, most of our employees are locals, living nearby, the commuting time is 10 minutes for almost everybody; by car, or motorbike, nobody goes on foot anymore, the bus stops right there, but it is not as convenient as private vehicles.



**3. Xiansheng, 63  
Farmer**

We now have very few lands, our lands were requisitioned by the authorities for the industrial development zone over there. We have six family members living in this house, we live together happily! There used to be three villages, now they have been merged into one big village; we have a food market and school

here. One needs money to live in Tangqi town, the rich buy houses in the town. Sometimes it is not really rational, one would buy a house in town but still live in the village, we have an officer still living here who bought a house in the town. The air is better here, and buying food is easier. If one lives in the town, he/she will have very few acquaintances, in the countryside people know each other, that's very good. Our family has relatively big orchards, which earn 4000-5000 yuan a year. Things are

freer now in terms of choosing what to grow. In the '70s the authorities only allowed grain to be planted, cash crops were not allowed, but since the Economic Reform, you can choose your produce, for example fish farming. I am very good at fish farming, something I don't do anymore, the productivity is too low now, the water quality is bad, hence it is too difficult to keep fish. We grow some vegetables in the fields for ourselves, not enough to sell.



**4. Nvshi, 56  
Farmer**

My granddaughter is educated in the village kindergarten, which is very close by. Everything is convenient and pleasant in the village, my grandson is in the school nearby but in the future he will need to go to Tangqi town for the high school.

