AGRI–CULTURA URBANA
SHARING HUBS OF TRANSITION
IN CORTIJO DE CUARTO IN SEVILLE, SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

The modern dichotomy between the urban and the rural is increasingly affected by the superimposition of urbanisation processes on the rural landscape, usually contributing to the disappearance of the agricultural heritage. Thanks to a high degree of awareness towards the necessity of natural capitals in human life, today the interdependence between man and nature is progressively becoming of fundamental importance. Contemporary issues related to urban overgrowth, food supply and depletion of material resources increase the necessity for urban planning processes in rural areas to apply principles of integration with the existing context. It becomes the role of contemporary urban planners to carefully manage the natural capital and develop urban sustainable strategies to fulfill human needs in the respect of the eco-system.
Particularly, this thesis investigates the controversial relationship between the urban and the rural in the case study of Cortijo de Cuarto in Seville, rural area in the southern suburb of the Spanish city currently subjected to traditional urbanisation processes of urban sprawling. The focus will be to highlight the potentiality of this land as agricultural heritage and propose a development strategy based on three hubs of transition from the urban to the rural landscape, looking at the features of the local context toward the preservation and valorisation of its identity. Therefore, Agril-Cultura Urbana stands out as an urban development program that looks at agriculture as a landscape experience from a social, economic and environmental point of view, enhancing a culture of integration between local agricultural activities and urbanisation programs, taking into consideration the benefits of both citizens and the environment.
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INTRODUCTION
Over centuries, urban development processes have claimed to solve population growth issues by expanding cities’ boundaries towards rural areas, increasingly affecting the relationship between the urban and the rural, segregating agriculture land at the edges of the urban sprawl, and considering it as something only related to economic and productive outcomes.

This attitude can be seen as the result of a consumeristic model at the basis of our society that looks after economic interests, without considering the impact of human actions over social and environmental issues.

Urban planning becomes a fundamental factor in determining how the city grows and places itself towards global problems that concern, for instance, urban overgrowth, food supply and depletion of material resources. In fact, it could offer alternatives for new developing peri-urban areas¹ that look after the needs of citizens and of the environment, breaking the dichotomy city/countryside and combining the voracious flow of the urban sprawling with the mild presence of the rural land.

Such an approach would give rise to programs able to introduce the agriculture activity within the metabolism of the city, so that to involve citizens and empower local communities, giving them the tools to become self-sufficient in food-production and use of renewable resources, while less dependent on global processes.

Currently, several initiatives all over the world aim to propose such alternatives within cities and peri-urban areas. Among these, the urban agriculture program, which proceeds towards shared notions of community gardens and urban farming laboratories², and the eco-

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¹ Peri-urban areas can be described as the transition zone between the city and the countryside. They are the result of the post-modernist peri-urbanisation, defined as a process of “disperse urban growth that creates hybrid landscapes of fragmented urban and rural characteristics”. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peri-urbanisation)

² F. Lohrberg, Urban Agriculture Europe: Agriculture Interacting with the Urban Sphere, in Lohrberg, et al.
villages, communities, micro-societies applied to existing social structures, usually inspired by traditional principles of sustainable living, such as the permaculture method. These initiatives are usually promoted by local associations or small groups of residents, which oppose themselves to a socio-economic system that is increasingly compromising the development of their cities, as well as the possibility for them to live in healthier and less-individualistic urban environments.

The Spanish city of Seville is the perfect example of a metropolitan area in perpetual evolution, where citizens’ initiatives are currently encouraging the local government to invest money and resources on vacant areas of the city and its suburbs, with the aim of turning them into urban community gardens, allotment gardens or agriculture parks. Such investments become great chances to revitalize neighborhoods, to improve job opportunities in the city and to involve inhabitants in agriculture programs that allow them to harvest their own food and to rise awareness upon traditional process of food-production.

However, such significant approaches have not been applied yet to urban planning processes for the expansion of the metropolis towards the rural areas. This is the case of the developing neighborhood of Cortijo de Cuarto, in the southern peri-urban area of Seville, originally characterized by agriculture land and country buildings, but currently subjected to an urban planning proposal from the local Municipality for the expansion of the residential areas all over the rural landscape.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to investigate an alternative approach to conventional urban planning methods applied to the Cortijo de Cuarto’s area, by proposing urban development strategies that would rather highlight the value of the existing agricultural land.

Urban Agriculture Europe, COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), Berlin, 2016, p.8.
Such an approach will imply the possibility to involve agricultural activities within the urban program, so that to provide local communities with social, economic and environmental benefits, as well as creating attractive hubs where the relationship between city and countryside becomes concretely possible.
2.0
THE URBAN
AND THE RURAL
Due to increasing population growth in urban areas, which currently represents the 54% of the World’s inhabitants, cities are expanding rapidly, but they are often overlooking the necessity of a thoughtful planning. One of the main urban development forms originated by this growth is the so-called urban sprawl, identified by a disordered, dispersed and low-density expansion of peri-urban areas.

According to the United Nation report, in 2050 the 70% of the population will live in cities and urbanisation processes in rural areas will dramatically increment, continuously replicating a lifestyle based on principles of consumerism and linear economy. As is already happening, such an attitude will lead to high social and economic impact, also affecting the ecological system and the planet.

Since the Industrial Revolution, urbanisation processes keep accelerating by following the linear model of the traditional industrial economy based on the principles of importing materials and producing waste.

Contemporary societies still apply this model at the basis of their lifestyles, choosing to lose livelihoods through the adoption of methods of offshoring and automation, industrializing agriculture, and compromising traditional hubs of practical and cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, such a system often omits layers of social inequality, speculation, limitless waste production as well as economic power and control. As stated by the architect and urban planner Marcel Smets:

“Capital investments follow their own

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 The Story of Stuff, storyofstuff.org
logic according to the fluctuations of the real-estate market, and choices upon the construction of the city are not taken in accordance to a visible relationship to their physical environment”.

Such an attitude leads to flows of development with imposition on rural areas, with the aim of achieving the maximum economical profit with the less amount of resources, not taking into consideration the integration with the surrounding land, but rather imposing its grid infinite times according to economic interests as urban devourer of land. An important consideration needs to be made over the fact that the linear economy model is not only applied to traditional urbanisation processes, but it also concerns linear methods of production related to croplands. In these terms, the human action over the landscape is not accomplished through new building areas, but rather though the intensification of cultivated land for economic and productive purposes.

In “The Landscape Urbanism Reader”\textsuperscript{11}, the Italian architect Andrea Branzi defines such appropriation of landscape and fields as “The weak urbanisation”\textsuperscript{12}, interpreting agriculture as an extreme evolved industrial system, while Kelly Shannon refers to it as “the domestication of nature”\textsuperscript{13}, highlighting the only programmatic consideration of productivity behind it.

In this regard, it can be noticed how such imposition over the landscape, analysed either from the urban development or the cultivation growth point of view, it usually leads to quantitative benefits as the main goal rather than qualitative ones. What is currently missing is a community and environmental approach to the urbanisation process in rural areas, both in terms

\textsuperscript{11} The Landscape Urbanism Reader, Charles Waldheim editor, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2006
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
of city development and cultivation growth. For this reason, it becomes very important to start reimagining cities and the way they work, as well as to foster societies towards a new life-style by improving their relationship and co-operation with the eco-system.

New urban strategies need to substitute the traditional linear production economy with a circular one, based on a socio-ecological approach with sharing hubs of production and interaction.
The urban/rural dichotomy traces its origins back to the Ancient Romans\(^4\), when the urban sphere corresponded to legal systems and administration, but also trades, industrial production and education, while the rural sphere dealt with the production and supply of food, energy and fibers.\(^5\) Such dualism still characterizes our society, although during early twentieth century European industrialization brought farmers to move from the countryside to the city with the hope of improving their quality of life\(^6\). Consequently, the developing cities of nineteenth and twentieth centuries transformed agricultural land into factories, houses, streets and parks, leading to a new perception of urbanity, clearly opposed to that of agriculture.\(^7\)

Classic urbanites from nineteenth century describe themselves as the contrary of rural farmers\(^8\). Surely, the two groups often differed in education, economy and culture; however, their role within the society was strictly related\(^9\).

Due to industrialisation, globalization, and specialization of cropland, today the differentiation between the two has become less significant, so that “modern farmers produce for the world market, while buying their own food in the supermarket, with their families working or studying in the city”\(^10\).

When referring to urban agriculture, the term “urban” need to be considered in relation to urban features of modern cities.

In fact, European urban areas are boundless and characterized by different patterns of green areas and peri-urban spaces, often sprawled

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\(^{15}\) F. Lohrberg, *Urban Agriculture Europe: Agriculture Interacting with the Urban Sphere*, in Lohrberg, et. al., op. cit., p.8.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) H., Vejre, et al., *Can Agriculture Be Urban?*, in Lohrberg et al., op. cit., p.18.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
and undefined\textsuperscript{21}. In these undefined spaces, urban agriculture activities often find their dimension as a sign of resilience acted by local communities.

In this regard, since the Industrial Revolution, the notions of allotment gardens and garden cities took an important role within the design of new urban areas, with the aim to provide citizens with the opportunity to produce food themselves\textsuperscript{22} and making urban agriculture as an integrated part of the big metabolism of the city\textsuperscript{23}.

The actors involved within the participatory process of urban agriculture are several, even though their role can sometimes become ambiguous, leading to the question: Who are the farmers?\textsuperscript{24} According to F. Lohrberg et al. in Urban Agriculture Europe\textsuperscript{25}, there are three groups of farmers: full-time, part-time, and hobby-farmers. Usually, these groups are either the owners of the land they cultivate, or they have rented it on a legal basis, contrarily to several other actors who work on lands that belongs to private or public authorities.\textsuperscript{26}

Urban agriculture also deals with a market dimension that detaches itself from mainstream agriculture distribution related to the food industry, while preferring local (urban) market oriented to local residents\textsuperscript{27}. This would encourage neighbours to the use of local and organic food and products, improving the relationship and communication within people of the community and fostering the local economy.

When applying urban agriculture programs to city planning, it becomes important to make a distinction between the gardening

\textsuperscript{24} Rykvert op. cit.
\textsuperscript{25} Rykvert op. cit.
\textsuperscript{26} Vejre, op. cit., p. 21.
\textsuperscript{27} Vejre, op. cit., p. 20.
and the farming level\textsuperscript{28}. While urban food gardening involves agricultural activities from a social perspective and with a low economic interest, the urban farming is mainly based on the production and distribution of products within the local and regional proximity, with a main economic intention behind it. This thesis will mostly focus its attention and intervention on the level of the urban food gardening (Figure 1). Urban food gardens can be divided according to individual or collective production. Individual production refers to family gardens or allotment gardens. Family gardens produce food only related to the household, while allotment gardens are composed by small plots that are usually rented out by institutions or organizations through a tenancy agreement. Allotment gardens can be rented not only by individuals or families but also by associations that turn them into community gardens for social or educational activities.

According to Urban Agriculture Europe\textsuperscript{29}, allotment gardens initiatives have always been common in Northern, Western and Central European countries (Figure 2), where their functions have changed over time from self-food production to leisure activities. Mostly in Western Europe their role has been reinvented as opportunity to highlight the importance of healthy life-style in a socially and physically active environment\textsuperscript{30}. Collective production, instead, encompasses educational gardens, therapeutic gardens and community gardens. Educational gardens propose activities that have as main purpose a garden-based learning according to environmentally and climate-friendly practices\textsuperscript{31}. They are managed at the municipal level but are directly dependent on the personal engagement of teachers and public support\textsuperscript{32}.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{29} Ibid.
\bibitem{30} Ibid.
\bibitem{31} Ibid.
\bibitem{32} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
Municipal initiatives that involve educational gardens are increasingly spreading today, such as in Utrecht, Zaragoza and Lisbon, as well as food gardening programs introduced in primary school curriculum of Czech Republic. Finally, community gardens are characterized by collective features that not only concern the food production but also the creation of communities through the establishment of meeting spaces and social connections. They are mainly oriented on the production of organic food, so that to include also facilities for the composting.

The organization of these gardens depends on communities that manage the rules themselves, usually occupying vacant spaces within the city or in the peri-urban areas, always after agreements with authorities or owners of the property. These activities have been spread all over Europe, for example, in 2011 in Madrid, community gardens were established in several neighbourhoods, consequently to social demonstrations by the anti-austerity movement '15-M', which reclaimed the use of vacant urban spaces for collective initiatives.

Urban agriculture initiatives can then vary according to social, economic, and city-regional strategies. However, they represent a very good opportunity in order to raise awareness on agriculture-related activities and techniques, encouraging local residents to practice resiliency and self-provision, as well as fomenting the social benefits of a life in community.

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
URBAN FOOD GARDENING

INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTION

FAMILY GARDENS

COLLECTIVE PRODUCTION

COMMUNITY GARDENS

LOCAL MARKETS

EDUCATIONAL GARDENS

THERAPEUTICAL GARDENS

Figure 1. Urban Food Gardening
URBAN AGRICULTURE NETWORK IN EUROPE

Figure 2. Urban Agriculture Europe networking activities. From F.Lohrberg et al. p.9.
Agriculture and Urban Space

Over centuries, the agriculture land and the urban space have been significantly interdependent, even though during the twentieth century their relationship was progressively detached, due to processes of industrialisation and globalisation that turned agriculture land into a powerful instrument for increasing economic interests and productivity. This approach also appeared in European urban proposals of that period, for instance in the Garden City surrounded by farms, pastures and forest by Ebenezer Howard\(^ {36}\), or in the modernist separation of functions between productive land and built up areas by Le Corbusies, in order to “increase efficiency and diminish conflicts between the two areas”\(^ {37}\).

The type of use and location of the production fields in relation to the city or its surrounding areas often corresponded to important functional features, such as the economic model adopted\(^ {38}\).

Recently, such an attitude of submission of nature to man decisions appears less dominating, thanks to environmental issues and material resource consumption that have made their interdependence possible again. In this scenario, urban agriculture has been considered “appealing for making the relationship between food production and city visible and thus renewing the historic tie between culture and cultivation”\(^ {39}\).

The decision-making approach on the city-planning level becomes, therefore, indispensable when establishing the general parameters for the layout of the urban agriculture landscape.

According to F. Lohrberg et al.\(^ {40}\) strategies of ‘placemaking’ refer to the spatial features of urban agriculture areas, characterized by food gardening spaces or agricultural

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\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.


\(^{40}\) Licka, op. cit., p.118.
farms, need to be planned in relation to other urban elements, e.g. buildings, infrastructures, but also to urban activities as well as urban landscape elements, for instance parks, recreational gardens, open meadows and so on\textsuperscript{41}. Neighbours activities and spaces are also important features to be considered, together with boundaries, buffer zones or permeable connections that will influence the quality of the sight and the feeling of the space\textsuperscript{42} (Figure 3).

Contemporary urban approaches consider urban agriculture as a possible permanent element within the pattern of the city, often able to revitalize urban design through the installation of community gardens, vertical farms, roof gardens\textsuperscript{43}, etc. The latter can be developed either in urban plots within the city or in enclosed rural zones resulted by the sprawling of urban areas.

According to S. Paradis et al.\textsuperscript{44}, the way in which urban agriculture is located usually corresponds to a 'patchwork model' that occurs in the periurban (a), transurban (b) or intraurban (c) area\textsuperscript{45} (Figure 4).

Urban agriculture strategies encompass agricultural processes and activities that aim not only to develop the structure of the city by applying ecological principles and preserving the ecosystem, but also to improve the quality of life of residents.

In fact, leisure and recreational amenities, local markets, educational activities and social interaction characterize these areas, helping to achieve the goal of the European Landscape Convention\textsuperscript{46} to fight the standardization and homologation of landscape in Europe through the promotion of landscape preservation and local cultures\textsuperscript{47}.

Spatial features of urban agriculture characterize landscape patterns,

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} S., Paradis, et al., Agriculture in Urban Space, in in F., Lohrberg, et al., op. cit., p120.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p.121.
\textsuperscript{46} Council of Europe 2000.
\textsuperscript{47} Paradis, et al., loc. cit., p. 121.
ZONING FROM PRIVATE GARDEN TO THE PUBLIC VIEW

Creating a buffer zone

Keeping an open view by introducing distance

Figure 3. Relation between agriculture and the urban space. Reinterpretation of diagrams by the author from F. Lohrberg et al. pp. 117-119.
a) **Periurban localization**: Fringe agricultural landscapes

b) **Transurban localization**: Mix of urban and agricultural landscapes

c) **Intraurban localization**: Productive enclave landscapes

Figure 4. Localization aspects. From F. Lohrberg et al. p.121.
which usually vary their size and shape according to their function (Figure 5). Farmland patterns with large-scale units refers to entrepreneurial farms or agricultural parks(a), collective patterns of medium-scale can be used as community or allotment gardens, also combined with individual plots(b), and Individual patterns of small-scale, composed by family gardens, rooftops or individual gardens(c)\(^{48}\). In each of these cases, accessibility features need to be considered in order to enhance a good landscape perception. For instance, a plot with private access can be designed in order to have a visual connection with the adjacent public space, while a community garden, even though organized according to individual plots, can be planned as an area with public access and recreational spaces for all, so that to improve opportunities for social interaction\(^{49}\). Moreover, the role of urban agriculture within cities becomes fundamental in terms of local enrichment and regional development\(^{50}\). However, conventional measures of urban-planning regarding the preservation and implementation of agricultural landscape may not be effective, because of contemporary urban development strategies that threaten urban agriculture opportunities through the consumption of land for building purposes. Alternative strategies should be rather proposed at the urban planning level, in order to encourage community commitment and local socio-economic development, towards the preservation of open agriculture spaces in metropolitan areas.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 122.

\(^{49}\) Paradis, et al., loc. cit., p. 122.

Figure 5. Urban Agriculture patterns in different scale. From F. Lohrberg et al. p. 122.
Our era demands new strategies of urban growth according to principles that look more at environmental issues, social equality and local economy. The concept of the social-ecological approach is based on the integration between people and the environment both on a local and regional scale.

The cultural geographer David Harvey argued that the projection of new possibilities for future urbanisms must derive less from an understanding of form and aesthetic and more from an understanding of process, and dynamic relationships among several different agents on the planet.

Indeed, the basis of ecology relies on the importance and care of such factors bound together. Even though ecology as a discipline is usually conceived as only related to elements in nature, it should be rather considered in terms of the continual actions produced by cultural, social, political and economic agents that evolve the shape of the environment over time.

Hence, the contribution of ecology within the urban field is that of considering all its forces and agents as continuous networks of inter-relationships, with the aim of providing citizens with new urban programs that will help them to enhance resiliency and become more independent from global models of production and consumption. Such programs will represent alternative solutions to traditional urban development approaches, by highlighting the importance of the integration of cultivated land and farming activities within the city and the community development program in rural areas, rather than proceeding with design methods of brutal imposition over the landscape.

Urbanisation strategies based on the social-ecological develop-

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52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
ment aim to integrate communities through urban strategies based on a self-sufficient production of food and energy, developing architectural typologies integrated with the context, and implementing biodiversity through the adoption of permaculture methods. Contemporary urbanisation processes in rural areas need to integrate the production activities of croplands and livestock within the urban growth program of the city, where growth is not conceived only in economic terms but also in cultural and social ones, with the aim of providing societies with empowered local economy, knowledge and subsistence. Such an approach would allow to find solutions against the chain of dependency on industrialization and globalization processes that are taking apart the self-identity of contemporary societies.

As stated by the landscape architect and theorist James Corner:
“We need to reinvent our cities and their relationship to people and nature by re-localising production so that cities are generative rather than extractive, restorative rather than destructive, and powering rather than alienating, where prosperity flourishes, and people have purposeful, meaningful work that they enjoy, that enables them to use their passion and talent.”

Hence, it is time to seek for new guidelines for urban developing contexts in rural areas, in order to create urban programmes that embrace the opportunities given by the context and to let communities take their chance to become independent from a global economy always instable and that does not look after the interests of the many. The main goal is to encourage newly developed urban areas to become self-sufficient, productive, and resilient, creating new opportunities to reclaim the local knowledge, involving inhabitants in making things, harvesting food, producing energy, and to raise

55 Corner, loc. cit.
awareness on the flow of products and waste.
Indeed, the social-ecological development would encourage a strong circular economy by fostering the local production and sharing data globally through the internet, generating a system with less waste and carbon reduction goals, educational programs and skills development, as well as the creation of job opportunities and subsistence.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{56} Diez, Ede, Tooze op. cit.
2.5 LIVING WITH THE ECOSYSTEM: PERMACULTURE AND RELATED APPROACHES

All around the world bottom-up initiatives have raised to foster new sustainable and collaborative planning in order to increasingly combine contemporary urban structures with agriculture activities, providing citizens with the opportunity to live in a healthier environment and to grow food in front of their houses. The permaculture method can be considered as one of the first attempts towards new ecological design approaches. It was founded in mid-1970s by David Holmgren and Bill Mollison, as a “positivistic” response to environmental crisis facing modern society, by highlighting the importance of the environmental slogan “think globally, act locally”.

It states the importance of integrating natural processes and resources in population’s everyday life, through approaches of cooperation with the ecosystem rather than superimposition. Permaculture design principles are applied to every aspect of human society and its connection with nature, in order to enhance population needs such as food and energy through a resilient approach, in the respect of natural ecosystem. As an ecological design system, permaculture design relies more on the interconnections between things rather than individual parts, and it reproduces patterns and relationships found in nature in order to yield enough food and energy for supplying to local needs. The main goal of permaculture approach is to reduce environmental impact, transforming societies by slowing and reorganizing the production-consumption cycle, so that to empower people to shift from being dependent consumers to becoming responsible and productive citizens.

Currently, several communities all around the world are already applying permaculture methods at the basis of their life-style.

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Among those, it is interesting to highlight the ecovillages community network and the Transition Movement.

Ecovillages can be considered as micro-societies located in urban or rural areas, living laboratories “designed through participatory processes to regenerate their environments. The social, ecological, economic and cultural aspects are integrated into a holistic regenerative development model that is adapted to local contexts.”

They are oriented towards low-impact actions through the self-production of food and the use of renewable energies, as well as high-quality lifestyles based on important community principles. Surely, when talking about community, one of the essential social features of it is the sharing factor. Sharing of sources, like food and energy that are produced, but also sharing of knowledge and skills, since every single individual needs to play an important role for the livelihood of the community itself, not only from a social point of view but also as workforce.

At the same time, the Transition Movement applies the permaculture design method to achieve resilience and face the urgent issues that are affecting contemporary societies, such as climatic change, depletion of no-renewable resources, social and economic inequality as well as the myth of a never-ending growth. Originally, the pioneer of the movement was Rob Hopkins who, inspired by the permaculture approach divulged during 1970s by Holmgren and Mollison, published the books The Transition Handbook, fostering people around the world to stop being passive actors of contemporary production-consumption processes, and rather making the difference simply starting from very little changes in their local reality.

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60 https://ecovillage.org/about/gen/

Figure 6. The transition network’s homepage. Source: https://transitionnetwork.org/

Figure 7. The importance of creating healthy groups and learning how to work well together. From “The Essential Guide to Doing Transition” p.12. Source: https://transitionnetwork.org/
The main goal of transition movements is to achieve these changes on the local scale, by catalysing new projects, enterprises and investment opportunities, creating networks with neighbours and taking advantage from every kind of resources that the place where they live can offer.

The general principles of the Transition Movement are based on the respect of resource limits and the achievement of resilience thanks to the active involvement of every member, making transition as an experimental approach through a learning network, positive visioning and creativity.

It proposes common activities on both a cultural and economic scale in order to foster the circular economy of local realities, for instance, incentivizing urban farming initiatives in no-used areas, fostering neighbours to get closer to traditional processes of production and to consume and sell local products.

Over years, the Transition Movement has created a virtual network of all the Transition Movements from all around the world, where people share their activities and their experiences, being of inspiration for who is keen on adopting the same principles and starting making a small change within his/her community. (Figure 6-7)

In this regard, Spain is a country where the Transition Movements are very active in almost every main city.

One of the most important transition movement hub is located in Granada, where several groups of local residents are encouraging a more sustainable development of the city, starting from local initiatives between neighbours, such as community farming, social cooking activities, movie-screenings on global issues and so on.

The transition movement in Seville is not largely developed yet:

63 https://transitionnetwork.org/
64 Red de Transición (http://www.reddetransicion.org/) is the Spanish virtual network of Transition Movements currently existing in Spain.
however, smaller groups of locals are developing specific initiatives on their own, such as community gardens, organic markets, educational parks or the creation of an alternative energy model for the self-production of electricity.".

66 SOM ENERGÍA. https://blog.somenergia.coop/etiqueta/sevilla/
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URBANISATION AND AGRICULTURE IN THE SPANISH CONTEXT OF SEVILLE
Figure 8. Plan of Seville in 1890. Vegetable fields provided food for the city. From F. Lohrberg et al. pp.139.
Figure 9. Map of Seville today. The red circle highlight the analysed districts of Bellavista and Cortijo de Cuarto in the southern edges of the city.

Source: https://es.goolzoom.com/
The Spanish city of Seville is the capital of the autonomous community of Andalucía. Founded as the Roman city of Hispalis, it was later dominated by Muslims from 712 until 1247, when King Ferdinando III of Castile began the conquest of Andalucía, entering in Seville in 1248. Since its origins, Seville has been considered a florid city, both in social, economic, and cultural terms. Its location along the Guadalquivir, the most important river of southern Spain, made Seville an economic centre of great relevance. Over centuries, agriculture has been the most important activity for the subsistence of the region, for this reason the 45.74% of the Andalucía’s territory is characterized by cropland. Currently, Seville has a municipal population of 700,000 inhabitants and a metropolitan population of around 1.5 million, making it the fourth largest city in Spain. Over time, the city has expanded concentrically around its historical centre in a quite condensed way. However, as usually happens in contemporary metropolitan developments, the city is sprawling by rapidly replacing the rural land without any integration with the existing context. The peri-urban landscape results then highly fragmented between the urban and the rural areas (Figure 10). According to the regional plan of Seville, the southern suburban area of the city urges new proposals for the treatment of its edges that today are designed by adopting planning strategies belonging to post-modernist trends. The latter concern the development of small sprawl districts mainly composed by residential areas that are entirely dependent on the main city, which is considered as the centre of job opportunities, cultural events and services. Usually, the fragmentation of the built environment towards the rural land is the outcome of regional regulations that state the intention

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1. [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andalusia](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andalusia)
not to build in certain areas, so that newly residential neighbourhoods appear as constrained spaces of the conurbation phenomena.\(^3\) The agricultural land of this area also results scattered by a disarticulated infrastructural system composed of one main road (N IV), which connects Seville with Cadiz, playing the role of “backbone" for the southern district of Bellavista and the adjacent land of Cortijo de Cuarto (Figure 11). The latter represents the site of study of this thesis, resulting as one of those scattered residential areas in the southern suburb of the city that imposes its presence over the agricultural landscape.

3 Ibid., p.23.
Agriculture constitutes a relevant source in Europe both from an economic, social and environmental perspective. However, the replacement of traditional farming activities with intensive agriculture practices has led to environmental problems such as soil erosion, water pollution, and the loss of biodiversity. According to the study published in 2002 by Gonzalez J.M, Soriano J.M. and Aguirre I. about the preservation of traditional types of tomatoes in the urban context of Seville, local varieties need to be considered a humanity heritage, since they represent the outcome of the work and effort of many generations of farmers. The main reason due to their urgent disappearance is related to the implementation of the industrialized agriculture, also named as “Green Revolution”.

Conventional industrialized agriculture, which considers productivity as its main purpose, is sustained by the institutional support and big multinationals and it is based on four technological principles: mechanization, fertilizers, pesticides and genetically modified seeds. According to FAO’s survey, every year an average of 50,000 varieties of interest for the agricultural sector are lost. Even though reforms of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) in 1990s, 2003 and 2008 have led to some improvement of the situation, a bigger effort must be done in order to achieve a contemporary balance between “agricultural production, rural development and preserving biodiversity in agriculture”.

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4  According to the European Environment Agency, almost half of the EU’s area is characterized by agricultural land managed by farmers. (https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/agriculture/intro)
8  González, Soriano, Aguirre, loc. cit.
"the environment"\textsuperscript{11}.
Therefore, new development strategies need to be undertaken within the urban program in order to start considering agriculture an essential feature of local identity that needs to be preserved.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
3.3 ONGOING INITIATIVES OF URBAN AGRICULTURE IN SEVILLE

Where the city and the cropland meet, pockets of opportunities are created; hybrid spaces that could be reused by enhancing the integration between the urban-cape and the rural landscape. The existing territory of Cortijo de Cuarto owns big potentialities in order to enrich the urban program with agriculture-related activities, so that to improve the relationship of the inhabitants with the rural landscape.

The Spanish city of Seville is already involved in several initiatives in order to get citizens closer to agriculture, which constitutes a fundamental presence in the Andalusian landscape. According to the Gerencia de Urbanismo of Seville (Urban Planning Department), the local Municipality has recently proposed to buy and reuse unused urban allotments, with the aim of converting them into vegetables gardens (Figure 12).

The main goal is to provide each neighbourhood of the city with allotment gardens, localizing them in green spaces already belonging to the Sistema General de Espacios Libres (General System of Green Spaces), so that to reduce the risk of contamination of the horticulture. The identification of suitable places for establishing the new allotment gardens have been carried out according to sustainable principles of accessibility and mobility, in order to make easier the connection of these new urban spaces with the existing bicycle lane, creating vegetables gardens within less than 15 minutes distance by bike and 30 minutes walking. The Agencia de Viviendas and Rehabilitación de Andalucía (Housing Agency and Rehabilitation of Andalucía) is in charge of contracting and financing the necessary works in order to parcel out the territory and facilitate the access to the allotment gardens, as

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12 Smets, loc. cit.
13 Noticias de la Gerencia de Urbanismo, article from 1st April 2017, http://www.sevilla.org/urbanismo/paginas/noticias/noticias_detalle.asp?key=958
14 Ibid.
Figure 12. Urban allotment gardens in Seville. Green leaves in the map show the already existing allotment gardens, while the white leaves the ones proposed.

Source: Gerencia de Urbanismo de Sevilla, Department of Infographic.
well as providing them with irrigation system. According to surveys\textsuperscript{15}, the 90% of people that were interviewed support and valorise the importance of such a proposal, also seen as a way to empower the community involvement.

For the design strategy, the Gerencia de Urbanismo is going to apply a model of allotment gardens that will make possible the relationship between both the gardening use and other public activities, in order to turn them into authentic collective gardens. At present, the local government manages 900 allotment gardens in the city\textsuperscript{16} donated to residents to cultivate their own fruit and vegetables. Thanks to the positive response of citizens upon the activities related to these new green areas in the city, the Junta de Andalucía (Council of Andalucía) plans to convert 42 hectares of land into allotment gardens.\textsuperscript{17}

The participation process related to these activities involves 2000 people, with the aim of fomenting ecological agriculture as well as establishing the principles for a new model for the city. After a training course, 300 gardeners will be able to cultivate their own ecological products for self-consumption and commercialization. Eight collectives will be on charge of the biggest allotments, while the smaller ones will be assigned to specific citizens\textsuperscript{18}.

\textsuperscript{15} Noticias de la Gerencia de Urbanismo, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{17} Noticias de la Gerencia de Urbanismo, article from 1st April 2017, http://www.sevilla.org/urbanismo/paginas/noticias/noticias_detalle.asp?key=958
\textsuperscript{18} Huertos Urbanos, Agencia de Viviendas and
PROPARQUE EDUCATIVO MIRAFLORES

A well-known community garden initiative takes place in the Mirafloros Park, located in the northern peri-urban area of Seville. Originally, the field was treated as agricultural landscape with vegetable gardens and country properties that progressively disappeared due to the urbanisation process during the 80s, when it was turned into an abandoned dump of 90 hectares surrounded by social housing.

Due to this situation, in 1983 the association ProParque Educativo Mirafloros (Educational ProPark Mirafloros) took over the management of the abandoned fields and the ancient constructions with the aim of preserving and reusing the historical, cultural and natural heritage for educational activities, able to maintain and transmit the cultural values of the agricultural site (Figure 13). The participatory process for the design, the realization and the management of such initiative involved the inhabitants of the neighbourhood (Figure 14). The project also included the rehabilitation of La Huerta Las Moreras, with the creation of 185 allotment gardens and school gardens, as well as greenhouses and a centre of autochthonous seeds.

The important aspect of the ProParque Educativo Mirafloros is the environmental rehabilitation of an abandoned area of the city through the development of a program that involves not only local neighbours but also the public administration, enterprises and universities, all towards the preservation and reactivation of the urban agricultural heritage for social and educational purposes.

21 Ibid.
22 “Twelfth century farm buildings, a bridge, a olive mill, a well, and a pool dating back to the seventeenth century.” in P. Branduini et al., loc. cit.
23 P. Branduini et al., loc. cit.
Figure 13. Allotment gardens of the Proparque Miraflores.
Source: http://disenosocial.org/huertos-urbanos-0512/

Figure 14. Residents of the Northern area of the Miraflores Park stand for the preservation of the program of allotment gardens in their neighborhood.
Source: http://sevillaciudad.sevilla.abc.es/noticias/norte/distrito-norte/800-firmas-piden-la-continuidad-del-huerto-del-parque-de-miraflores/
4.0
THE URBANISATION PROCESS OF BELLAVISTA'S DISTRICT TOWARDS THE LAND OF CORTIJO DE CUARTO
According to the regional plan of Seville, Bellavista constitutes one of those districts of the southern suburb of the city with a high demand of urban intervention and development, mostly due to lack of resources and habitability. However, its proximity to the adjacent land of Cortijo de Cuarto, mainly characterized by a fragmented urbanisation, crop-land and unused rural land, may represent a great opportunity in order to solve its problems and encourage a better connection of the area towards the Guadaira River. Indeed, the urban network of Bellavista results well connected through its western borders with the area of Cortijo de Cuarto (Figure 15). This is the only side where an urbanisation development could be possible, because of the restraining presence of the railway on the eastern edge.

Since the 1980s the district of Bellavista has slowly began its fragmented expansion towards the land of Cortijo de Cuarto, mainly with the construction of more residential areas and equipment. Such development took place starting from the unused spots along the historical highway N IV, which is the principal axis of connection with Seville (Figure 15).

The main goal stated by the regional plan is that of creating the new Southern Gate of Seville through the urban revitalization of the area surrounding the Cortijo de Cuarto land and the valley of the Guadaira River. According to such intention, an urban design proposal from the local municipality claims the construction of fifteen-thousand dwellings within 2020, in order to fulfil the demand for residential areas and solve the fragmentation of the site (Figure 18). Surely, this intervention will mainly affect the existing rural land currently destined to croplands and farming activities. However, the land of Cortijo de Cuarto could offer important opportunities for the development
of the area, by providing the local residents as well as people from Seville with an attractive peri-urban program, able to involve the agricultural feature of the land within its activities, as well as a thoughtful and well-planned connection between inhabitants and the rural context.
Figure 17. Collage by the author of the orthophoto of Bellavista and Cortijo de Cuarto.
Figure 18. Proposal by the local municipality for the urban development of Bellavista, with the intention of expanding the residential area all over the rural land of Cortijo de Cuarto. Interpretation by the author.
Bellavista is a peri-urban neighbourhood in the Bellavista-La Palmera district, belonging to the municipality of Seville and located in the southern part of the city. Originally, it did not have any infrastructure, although in few years it became a very well equipped area, so that today it is one of the biggest extension of Seville with good quality of life.

It counts between 15,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, and it is considered a working class neighbourhood.

The urban development of Bellavista traces its origins in 1930s, during the construction of the Prisoners’ Canal (El Canal de los Presos) in the proximity of the area.

As suggested by the name, the canal was dug by political prisoners during the Francoist regime\(^1\), so that the familiars of the prisoners decided to move to this location to be closer to their beloved. This led to the settlement of a population in a good economical state that will increase over time and will give rise to the neighbourhood of Bellavista. Currently, many inhabitants of the district are descendants of those people who came to stay closer to the political prisoners. From that time the neighbourhood started expanding, reaching a high density of buildings between 1980s and 1990s, thanks to the settlement of new services in the adjacent land of Cortijo de Cuarto, on the western side of the N IV. Among these, the Hospital of Nuestra Señora de Valme, the new Cortijo de Cuarto, as well as schools and gymnasium and the Police headquarters.

The residential areas, which mainly make up the neighborhood of Bellavista, are characterized by evident juxtaposition in architectural typologies and density. On one hand, the highly densified grid of multi-family buildings of 3-6 floors on the eastern side of the N IV, and on the other hand, low density single family buildings on its western side. Although the area results very well equipped in terms of services, it still lacks of public spaces and cultural hubs that let inhabitants spend their free time in the area, rather than being continuously dependent on Seville.

\(^1\) The Francoist regime refers to the historical period of the Spanish history between 1938 and 1978, when the dictator Francisco Franco governed the country.
4.3 CORTIJO DE CUARTO

The area of Cortijo de Cuartos is an emblematic place that played an important role during the conquer of Seville by the King of Castile Fernando III the Saint, who in 1248 spent sixteen months of siege in the area in order to conquer Seville. In this period he built several buildings in the area in order to settle the forth (in Spanish “Cuarto”) squad of his army, from which the place takes the name. Indeed, from the hill of Cuarto it is possible to sight a large part of Sevilla until the ledge of Aljarafe\(^2\), an historical area in the western part of the province of Seville. Besides, the Cortijo de Cuarto territory gets its name from one of the historical buildings (Cortijo de Cuarto) that inhabits the hill and that was initially used for military purposes and later as country property with both agricultural and residential functions. The only original remain of the building from the medieval time is a tower fortress next to the door that leads to the main patio. This tower is two floors high and it is finished with crenel. The role of the tower was to control the valley and the city, as well as defending the building in case of attack.

During the settlement of King Fernando III the Saint, the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de Valme was built as recognition for the protection of the Virgin Mary during the Reconquer. According to a popular legend, before conquering Seville, the King spoke to the Virgin Mary in front of a small sculpture repeating the words: ‘Valedme, Señora, Valedme’ (‘Protect me, Virgin Mary, Protect me’). From such legend, the hermitage took the name of “Valme”. Both the defensive tower, the old Cortijo de Cuarto, and the hermitage, currently represents one of the few heritage goods that have been preserved in the surroundings of Seville.

\(^2\) Nuevo Plan de Ordenación Urbanística de Sevilla, Catalogo Periférico.
1. Hermita de Valme

2. Landscape

3. Secondary Road (View of the Police Headquarter)

4. Secondary Road Landscape

5. Old Cortijo de Cuarto

6. University of Engineering Agriculture

7. Pedestrian Path on the Guadaira River Side

8. Guadaira River
Thanks to its historical and territorial features, this area has always attracted the attention of colonial developments towards the southern part of the city.

Over centuries, many other buildings were constructed, with different functions and unequal coherence. The building of the old Cortijo de Cuarto was replaced with a more recent and bigger construction (the new Cortijo de Cuarto) during 60s, maintaining the same function of country property. Today the building is owned by the Municipality of Seville and is used as headquarter for the production and storage of products in the surrounding fields, as well as the livestock of animals, while the old building has been left without use. The topography of the land has always influenced the urban pattern of the area, so that the northern and western sides were kept unbuilt because of the pronounced gradient of the territory, while the southern part was occupied by several urban constructions with different features and functions, although they result not well integrated within each other. Among those, it is possible to distinguish the valuable building of the University of Agricultural Engineering, which was built in 1960 according to the architectural features of the Andalusian regionalist style, providing the area with an increasing rate of job opportunities for the inhabitants, as well as a new centre of agricultural education for the entire province. However, the University is currently closed and the building is abandoned.

Another important attraction of the area is the Hospital of Nuestra Señora de Valme, inaugurated in 1982 next to the N IV in order to have a better connection with Seville and the southern suburb. The hospital played a good influence in the improvement of the neighbourhood, both in terms of
new residential areas and new services, such as schools, gymnasiums and so on. Both the historical and functional value of the existing buildings of the area need to be preserved when considering the possibility of new urban interventions on the Cortijo de Cuarto territory. In particular, the reactivation of historical buildings with architectural importance, such as the Cortijo de Cuarto, the hermitage and the University, can play a decisive role in achieving new urban development goals, towards the creation of cultural and educational hubs that highlight and preserve the role of the agricultural activity in the area.
The current urban planning proposal for the development of Bellavista district towards Cortijo de Cuarto seems to replicate the already common model of an incessant urbanisation, which ignores both values and potentialities of the existing context. Therefore, considering alternative strategies for the development program of Cortijo de Cuarto means to achieve urban development needs of contemporary cities while maintaining the identity of a valuable landscape. Such alternatives aim to create sharing hubs of transition through the cooperation and coordination of different important factors:

_The need for housing, by providing residential areas of medium and low density,

_The respect of the landscape, by maintaining the biodiversity of the site and implementing the opportunity of public spaces,

_Development of the local production, by increasing the network of food production and consumption through local markets,

_Development of the cultural value of the site by reactivating cultural and educational buildings, such as the university of Agricultural Engineering and the old Cotijo de Cuarto building, in order to create workshop spaces and places where to share the agricultural knowledge,

_Development of a community empowerment program.

Finally, it becomes interesting to look at Cortijo de Cuarto as an incubator for the development of local opportunities, such as local agricultural activities within the urban context, the improvement of the local economy and the creation of new attractive areas for culture, education and habitability.

Investigating about urban development strategies for the urban planning proposal of Cortijo de Cuarto implies highlighting the opportunities of the context within strategies for the improvement of the area and the enhancement of social, economic and environmental goals.
Figure 19. Proposed landmarks and directions in the land of Cortijo de Cuarto.
5.0

URBAN PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CORTIJO DE CUARTO IN SEVILLE
Thanks to the hybrid character of the territory, due to both the rural and the urban presence, new possibilities are proposed according to the principles of connectivity, accessibility and multifunctionality. In fact, in order to solve the fragmentation of contemporary peri-urban areas and getting inhabitants closer to the existing landscape and its natural processes, it is indispensable to start replacing the conventional planning method based on single-purpose land uses\(^3\) into a more various and empowering programs of cooperation and coordination between the different elements already existing in the context.

The Agri-Cultura Urbana program suggests agriculture-related activities within the urban development of Cortijo de Cuarto as valid alternative to preserve and improve an integrated vision of its predominant agricultural landscape, as well as its social and ecological opportunities.

Initially, the proposal starts from the analysis of the existing rural heritage of the site, in terms of agricultural land and ancient historical constructions, which own great opportunities for the achievement of the new goals of the area.

Particularly the old Cortijo de Cuarto building and the abandoned building of University of Agricultural Engineering with their surrounded agricultural fields, represent important spots where to start from in order to plan a reactivation program of the area according to social-ecological principles and rising awareness among people of the importance of natural processes within the urban context.

The location of such historical buildings in the territory, apparently disconnected from the rest of the built areas, can actually be seen as optimal in order to enhance the transition from the highly condensed neighbourhood of Bellavista towards the more spontaneous and natural landscape of Cortijo de Cuarto.

\(^3\) A., Timpe et al., Urban Agriculture Goes Green Infrastructure, in Lohrberg et al., op. cit., p.126.
down to the Guadaira River. The original topography of the site already predisposes the historical buildings to stand on a slightly high hill, allowing the view of the surroundings, so that to play an attractive role in the new development (Figures 20-21).

The proposal for new strategies starts from an understanding of aims, principles and actors involved in the process.

Figure 20. Three areas of development.

Figure 21. Flow of development and connection with the context.
MULTIFUNCTIONALITY
Three main hubs of culture, education and habitability connected through agriculture-related activities.

HABITABILITY
The proposal for new new residential areas will coordinate the existing agricultural heritage with residential programs of integration with the context.

ACCESSIBILITY
Bike and Car Sharing facilities to foster a responsible and eco-friendly urban mobility.

ACCESSIBILITY
Implemented public Transport Services to make the area accessible and to encourage residents to not use their individual vehicles.

CONNECTIVITY
Enhancing a direct connection of the urban area with the rural landscape and the riverside.
AIMS

- Working on the urban edges of the area in order to connect the urban and the rural through the integration of agriculture-related activities in the development program of the built environment,
- Preserving local biodiversity and the agricultural heritage,
- Rising awareness upon traditional agricultural processes and values through workshops, research, pedagogical activities, cultural events and a vegetable market of local production,
- Enhancing a program of new developed residential areas that involves the agricultural activity in their program, so that to increase food-independency methods, improve the life-quality of residents and empowering the community in common activities and shared production.
**PRINCIPLES**

- Activation of unused historical buildings and surrounding agricultural land,
- Cultivation of local varieties,
- Creation of cultural and educational hubs,
- Development of residential areas that benefit from the rural context by integrating agricultural activities within the design strategy.

The capability of aims and principles to work together is very important in order to achieve a range of multiple benefits provided to the inhabitants in terms of cultural, educational and residential services. Moreover, considering a clear structure of the actors involved is essential to define the participatory process of the proposal. In fact, the local population represents one of the most important components for the sustenance of a socio-ecological urban development.
ACTORS

The sharing activities that characterize the transition hubs proposed in this thesis consider the participation of residents, local government and local associations as a fundamental factor in order to get people engaged and in control of the context they live in. Therefore, a co-management is proposed between:

- Local Government, that takes part in the management of the area, provides economic aids and workforce for the first stage of development and preparation of the site,
- Associations and Non-governmental Organisations, involved in the management and functionality of the program of the area,
- Local Residents, committed in the decision-making process, maintenance and active involvement in the activities.
5.2
THE AGRI-PARK: AGRICULTURAL PARK AND MARKET

The strategies of development designed as alternative to the ongoing urban planning proposal of the area\(^\text{4}\), consider the activation of three main coordinated hubs of activities, such as the agricultural park and food market, the laboratory of agriculture experimentation and the residential areas.

The AGRI-PARK is a hub for social engagements and food sharing. It is the most dynamic core of Cortijo de Cuarto, because of its activities that aim to involve not only inhabitants of the area but also visitors from Seville and foreigners.

It considers the reactivation of the old Cortijo de Cuarto building to house a food market in its patios, as well as a collective café and cooking facilities for community events. This is the place where cultural events take place, from neighbourhoood’s gatherings for religious festivities, to food festivals or simply meetings. The surrounding green area will be used for themed common gardens managed by local associations, while small plots of land will be addressed to rental gardens for people leaving outside the area of Cotijo de Cuarto.

The agricultural park allows looking at agriculture not only as production activity but also as a landscape experience. The benefits provided by such place are important in terms of local opportunities and social interaction, providing the area with a range of public spaces and cultural activities that highlight the importance of the natural presence within an urban context where those elements are strongly missing.

\(^{4}\) As previously stated, the local Government of Seville has proposed the extension of the residential area of the adjacent neighbourhood of Bellavista all over the Cortijo de Cuarto’s land. Such proposal will irreversibly affect the rural features of the Cortijo de Cuarto’s area as agricultural land and its future development.
The Agri-Park represents a landscape experience of social engagement and agriculture-related activities.

**Café and Farmshop**
Café, cooking facilities and farmshop. Meeting point in a country setting where to try and buy products made in the area.

**Food Market and Festivals**
A vegetable market with products cultivated in the area and cultural events such as food festivals and religious festivities.

**Agricultural Park**
Themed garden managed by local organisations. A recreational space of natural beauty for adults and children.

**Rental Meadows**
Allotment gardens available for citizens that want to cultivate their own vegetables.

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The Agri-Park represents a landscape experience of social engagement and agriculture-related activities.
The Agri-Park represents a landscape experience of social engagement and agriculture-related activities. Allotment gardens available for citizens that want to cultivate their own vegetables. Themed garden managed by local organisations. A recreational space of natural beauty for adults and children. A vegetable market with products cultivated in the area and cultural events such as food festivals and religious festivities.

Café, cooking facilities and farmshop. Meeting point in a country setting where to try and buy products made in the area.
5.3 THE AGRI-LAB: LABORATORY OF AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENTATION

The AGRI-LAB is a learning-by-doing centre of agricultural education, experimentation and production, managed by local associations in cooperation with the local government and the residents of the area. It takes place in the unused spaces of the University of Agricultural Engineering and it involves workshops and initiating courses to gardening activities for local inhabitants and people interested in food-independency methods or in a life-style closed to natural processes. A research section will include lectures, round-tables and investigation on local varieties and the ways to preserve them from extinction, in favour of contemporary industrialized cultivations. Activities of school gardening will approach children from the several schools of the area to agriculture-related initiatives, as well as therapeutic gardens will help the patient of the nearby Hospital Virgen De Valme to improve their health through the direct contact with nature.

The harvest of these activities will go to the food market and exchanged with locals and visitors, so that to provide the laboratory with some earn to foster its self-sustenance. The role of the AGRI-LAB is to get people involved with agriculture and to approach it as an activity for everyone.
SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE
Laboratory of agriculture investigation, lectures, courses and round-tables with professionals and experts in the field. From researchers to people interested in the practice, all together in a program of reciprocal learning.

LEARNING—BY—DOING WORKSHOPS
Workshops and initiating courses to gardening activities for local inhabitants and people interested in food-independency methods or in a lifestyle closed to natural processes.

CULTIVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION
Investigation through the cultivation of local varieties and the ways to preserve them from extinction. Experimentation in open fields, green-houses and aquaponic houses.

COMBINING THE LAYERS
The Agri-Lab is an hub of agricultural education, experimentation and production, managed by local associations and residents with the economic and organizational support of the local government.
The Agri-Lab is an hub of agricultural education, experimentation and production, managed by local associations and residents with the economic and organizational support of the local government.

- Preserving local varieties
- Learning from natural processes
- Improving food supply strategies
- Reciprocal learning
- Learning by doing
- Sharing the results
- Common decisions
- Common participation
The AGRI-HAB is a program for new residential areas of Cortijo de Cuarto and aims to create a gradual connection between the fragmented edges of the peri-urban areas and the rural land. Such connection will be enhanced by creating new residential patterns of medium and low density and combining each typology with gardening programs of different kind as well as common activities and sharing facilities. While the local residents will manage the organization of the gardening plots, every area will be accessible to neighbours and visitors as public space.

An intervention on existing residential areas is also proposed. Starting from the analysis of existing typologies, which result to be highly densified and enclosed, a development program of green roofs and community gardens is proposed in order to provide inhabitants with the opportunity to experience gardening activities within the condensed pattern of the built environment and at the same time to increase engagement opportunities among neighbours.

The proposed strategy for the development of new residential areas in Cortijo de Cuarto is considered as alternative solution to the highly densified planning for residential areas that usually affect negatively the social engagement among residents and avoid any kind of relation with the surrounding rural context. On the contrary, the proposed residential areas aim to improve the quality of life of local inhabitants through an integrated planning with the rural landscape, and programs for the empowerment of the local community, thanks to agriculture-related activities that improve the social interaction among neighbours, as well as common decisions-making processes and reciprocal learning outcomes.
5.5 COMBINING THE STRATEGIES

Even though the three strategies could be experimented separately, combining them would provide a successful opportunity to enhance integrated goals in the land of Cortijo de Cuarto.

In fact, their coordination leads to a transversal integration of agricultural production, education and experimentation linked through the cultural park, the market and the laboratory, while the program for new designed residential areas approaches agriculture from the inhabitants’ perspective, by ensuring the role of local communities as main actors towards the achievement of a coordinated urban development in rural areas.

Combining the three hubs with appropriate infrastructures and mobility services will also offer the possibility for an agricultural itinerary, inviting visitors from Seville or from elsewhere to explore the beauty of the area by getting involved in the daily local activities of the Agri-Cultura Urbana program.
6.0
CONCLUSIONS
The potential of Cortijo de Cuarto is mainly related to its natural features that need to be preserved and highlighted when considering new urban planning proposals for its development.

The three strategies proposed in this dissertation represent the opportunity not to look at the site as an empty land to fill with buildings but rather as an area full of cultural, historical and environmental features that highlight its rural character.

Indeed, understanding the original identity of Cortijo de Cuarto and the dynamic of its components is the first step towards an adequate intervention of urban development in the site. During the analysis and the period of research in the area, the agricultural presence distinguished itself as the most predominant element; however, the beauty related to its spontaneity was constantly neglected by signs of carelessness due to a lack of functions and inhabitants’ engagement.

The focal point of this research has been that of providing strategies of development that allow local residents, and visitors of the area with the chance to experience agriculture from different points of view and to be involved within its various aspects. Such interventions would contribute to the preservation of the agricultural land and local varieties, rising awareness among people on food supplies and traditional cultivation processes and encouraging contemporary urban planners to look at new possibilities of development of the area that take into account the integration with the rural context.

In conclusion, the adoption of agricultural techniques to enrich the features of the landscape will represent the key point for the urban development of Cortijo de Cuarto in cultural, educational and residential terms, transforming the area into an attractive place with a valuable identity.
7.0
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