

Since the beginning of the third millennium, the rapid changes that contemporary societies are facing are radically transforming the perception and the structures of our cities. New topics seem to dictate the political agenda, suggesting alternative options to manage the emerging urban mutations.

An increasingly "data driven society" is forcing the migration into an almost immaterial world, prompting Information and Communication Technology together with the Smart City.

The crisis of the traditional real estate industry, propelled by the global finance system, is contributing to re-evaluate the theme of Public Space as a "space of encounter, sharing, experience and inclusivity", mapping the everyday life to discover unexpected Urbanities, through the application of innovative strategies and tools.

As an immediate consequence, new "forms" of cities are strongly brought to our attention: the "city of sharing", the "city of temporariness", the "city of Life between buildings", giving an unexpected impulse to incremental Urbanism of evolving cities.

In such a way, the very idea of the city is radically under discussion. We are then required to answer these numerous questions in order to define the scientific coordinates for the City of the 21st century.

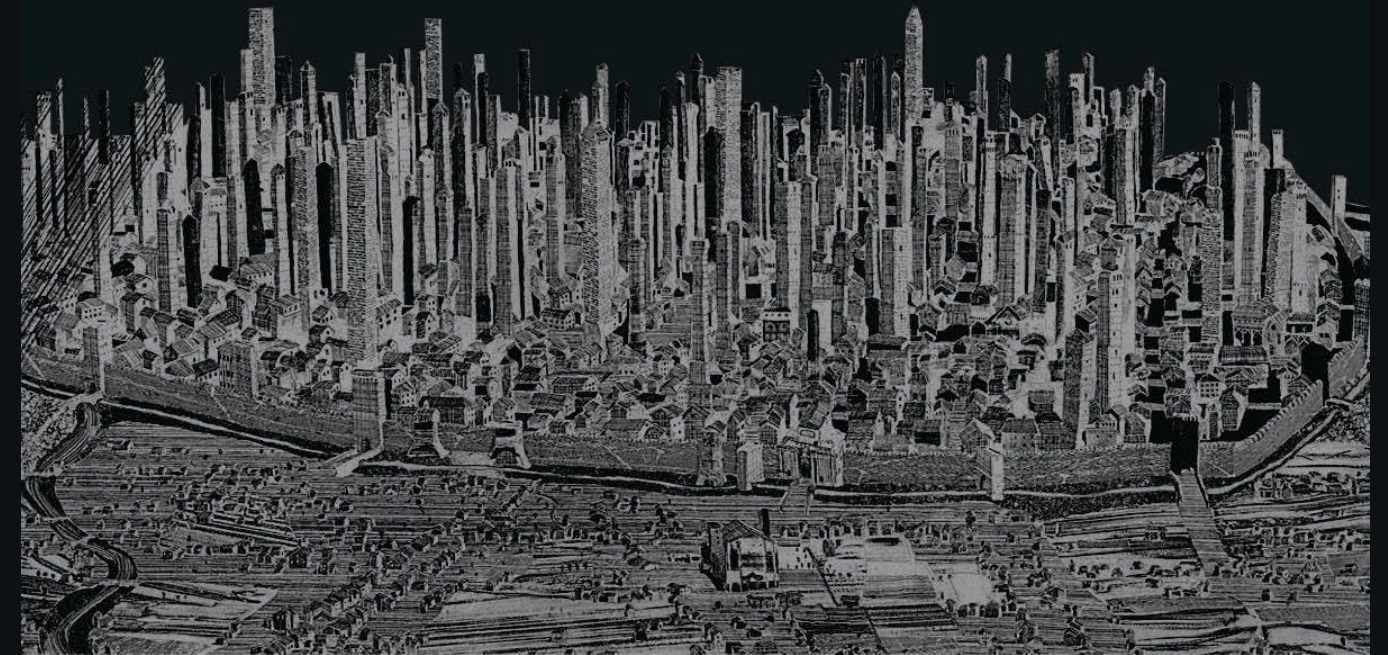
Morphology and Urban Design - new strategies for a changing society. 6<sup>th</sup> ISUFitaly International Conference | Bologna, 8-10 June 2022. Book of Papers.  
ISBN: 978-88-941188-9-6



# Book of Proceedings

MORPHOLOGY AND URBAN DESIGN 6<sup>th</sup> ISUFitaly International Conference | Bologna, 8-10 June 2022

Marco Maretto, Nicola Marzot, Annarita Ferrante



6<sup>th</sup> ISUFitaly International Conference | Bologna, 8-10 June 2022  
**MORPHOLOGY AND URBAN DESIGN**  
new strategies for a changing society

*Marco Maretto, Nicola Marzot, Annarita Ferrante*

ISBN 978-88-941188-9-6





ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE



**Università  
degli Studi  
di Ferrara**



**UNIVERSITÀ  
DI PARMA**

urbanform and design

**U+D**

**U+D urbanform and design**  
online journal  
<http://www.urbanform.it/>



**Researches in Architecture and Urban  
Morphology**  
<https://www.r-a-m.it/>



Ordine degli ingegneri della provincia  
di Bologna  
<https://www.ordingbo.it/>

**architettibologna** 

Ordine degli architetti di Bologna  
<https://www.archibo.it/>

**ISUFitaly**

International Seminar on Urban Form  
Italian Network  
<http://www.isufitaly.com/>

Contacts

Phone: +0668878832

Fax: +0668878832

Graphic design and layout by Francesco Scattino





6<sup>th</sup> ISUFitaly International Conference | Bologna, 8-10 June 2022

# **MORPHOLOGY AND URBAN DESIGN**

new strategies for a changing society

# PROCEEDINGS

*edited by*

Marco Maretto, Nicola Marzot, Annarita Ferrante

*with the collaboration of*

Silvia Tagliazucchi, Francesco Scattino, Greta Pitanti

ISBN 978-88-941188-9-6

# Contents

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Organization      | 9.  |
| Presentation      | 13. |
| Foreword          | 17. |
| Plenary Sessions  | 22. |
| Conference Themes | 59. |
| Index             | 60. |

## Communities and Governance

- 68 Type, rule and exception.  
*Michela Barosio, Martina Crapolicchio*
- 80 Città Giardino Aniene. A persistent experience of quality in urban design.  
*Michele Bianchi, Elena Ogliani*
- 92 Ethics, Resilience and Legacy. Some observations on the concept of territory defined by Saverio Muratori.  
*Pina Giusi Ciotoli*
- 102 The definition of borders as a possibility to shape the open space of the city.  
*Ermelinda di Chiara*
- 112 Mapping a genealogy of the in-between the buildings starting from post-war CIAM reflections.  
*Elena Giaccone*
- 124 In)forms of empowerment. The role of the project in inclusive urban transformation processes.  
*Santiago Gomes*
- 136 The concept of "Venustas" in the current design practices.  
*Andrea Guidotti*
- 146 Self-organized peripheries in Mediterranean cities. Examples from Rome and Jerusalem.  
*Munir Khader, Giovanni Fusco*
- 160 Notes for a morphological critique of the notion of territory: The 'archipelago' as a paradigm of the contemporary urban condition.  
*Nicola Marzot*
- 174 São Paulo - the changing city.  
*Solange Moura Lima de Aragão*
- 180 Urban morphology in urbanism: towards a more holistic paradigm.  
*Lucia Nucci*
- 186 Bologna and the Porticoes, the form of a shared space.  
*Valentina Orioli*
- 192 Tourism as impulse of urban and social transformation - Local frames of a global phenomenon.  
*Christina Papadopoulou*
- 198 The School as the City: Rewriting and Collaging an Urban Morphology. Vimercate Schools Campus' Design.  
*Laura Anna Pezzetti, Helen Khanamiryan*

- 212 A strategic-multidisciplinary approach to reduce the seismic risk. Ongoing activities within the Adriseismic project.  
*Giorgia Predari, Lorenzo Stefanini, Angela Santangelo, Giulia Marzani*
- 224 CONF.I.A.N.Ç.A. | a moment of stillness, self-reflection and connection in the ever-moving reality of modern societies.  
*Vicky Simitopoulou*
- 234 Smart Façades for resilient cities.  
*Ilaria Spasari*
- 242 From urban morphology to collective intelligence: co-designing public walks for a new neighborhood narrative.  
*Silvia Tagliazucchi*
- 254 Architects' roles in community regeneration with 'Residents Deep Participation'.  
*Han Wang, Li Bao*

## **New Methods & Technologies for the Urban Analysis**

- 264 Exploring how Amman's Abdali redevelopment project is considered state-led gentrification through text mining techniques.  
*Ruba Alomary, Javis Ebu Otia*
- 278 The new form of the old city. The case of les Halles, urban reasons and project's choices.  
*Claudia Angarano*
- 290 GIS-based procedure for urban fabrics characterisation. The case study of Bologna.  
*Anna Chiara Benedetti, Carlo Costantino, Riccardo Gulli*
- 304 Overwrite the real.  
*Alessandro Gaiani*
- 314 METYS: METropolitan CarTography for Sustainability. Modeling Metropolitan Landscapes through maps for Urban-Rural Morphotypes Projects.  
*Valentina Galiulo, Antonella Contin*
- 324 Climatic Performance of urban texture: public spaces in Venice Fabric.  
*Barbara Gherri, Marco Maretto, Daniela Maiullari, Chiara Finizza, Alice Monacelli*
- 334 Reading morphology through diagrams. Exploring methodology.  
*Rossella Gugliotta*

- 344 Typological process of the historical courtyard houses in Yazd, Iran.  
*Nahal Khorrami, Alessandro Camiz, Alessandra de Cesaris*
- 360 Morphogenetics of small size towns. The analysis of urban fringes in internal Ligurian centers.  
*Giampiero Lombardini*
- 372 Parametric analysis of urban form, from geometrical to topological.  
*Luca Maricchiolo*
- 386 Parametric Architecture and Operational Research: an attempt to apply Luigi Moretti's theory on today's urban design analysis.  
*Martina Meulli*
- 392 Learning from Monasteries. New Collective Spaces for Naples Ancient City  
*Salvatore Pesarino, Ferruccio Izzo, Luigiemanuele Amabile, Lorenzo Giordano*
- 402 New methods and Technologies in Urban Analysis: How Dynamic Morphology influences the transformation of Public Space.  
*Greta Pitanti, Marco Mareto*
- 412 A Systematic Approach to Urban Block: Defining Automatic Tool for Urban Form.  
*Didem Turk*
- 422 The role of the urban project in the transition from city to smart city. Case studies in Umbria.  
*Paolo Verducci, Valerio Palini*
- 430 Exploring the evolution process of the urban form model of Xiaoxihu Block in Nanjing from the perspective of topological networks.  
*Xiao Xiao, Zidong Liu*

## Reading the Changing Urban Form

- 440 Street space as contact space; a comparative analysis of street regeneration projects between Rome and Barcelona.  
*Francesca Ambrosio, Sophia Arbara*
- 454 Mapping Time. Structures for the Imagination.  
*Lamberto Amistadi*
- 464 Reading the changing Urban Form of Siberian Cities.  
*Daria Aleksandrovna Belova*

- 476 The formation process the Regio quartadecima Constantinopolitana. Relocating Constantine's walls.  
*Alessandro Camiz*
- 486 Novi sed antiqui methods and techniques for urban analysis and project. Knowledge and design for the Vkhutemas museum in Moscow.  
*Renato Capozzi, Federica Visconti*
- 496 The typology of the "Sandal Bedestan" in the Grand Bazaar, Istanbul.  
*Irem Ezgi Çiftçi, Alessandro Camiz*
- 508 The dissent city's urban form.  
*Maria Fierro*
- 520 Programmatic and paradigmatic components. Iconology in the relationship between Architecture and Urban Morphology.  
*Tommaso Lolli*
- 530 Reading the ancient city: projects for the archaeological area of Tyndaris. The form of the nature, the form of the city, the value of the monument.  
*Oreste Lubrano*
- 542 A lesson about the form. Dissonances and complementarities in Luisa Anversa Ferretti's and Giuseppe Samonà's projects for the extension of the University of Cagliari.  
*Andrea Manca, Giovanni Battista Cocco*
- 550 Alternative models for city-density: the city built on itself.  
*Elisa Maruelli*
- 558 The built form and urban morphology in the historic city of Korça, Albania.  
*Ledita Mezini, Jona Muçollari*
- 570 Historical urban renewal as a preface to current city changes. The case of Ciutat Vella, Valencia.  
*César Damián Mifsut García*
- 578 Reading the urban form through the green-grey armature as a tool for spatial regeneration: the case of Piacenza.  
*Federico Mistò, Carles Crosas Armengol, Antonella Contin, Julián Galindo González*
- 590 The concept of porosity in the Japanese reality.  
*Alice Monacelli, Marco Maretto*
- 600 Mapping the evolution of urban form in Tirana  
*Jonila Prifti*
- 610 In-formal settlements: recurrent patterns and permutations. Mapping the changing morphology of informal settlements.  
*Ana Ricchiardi*

- 624 Diachronic urban morphology: The formation process of Ait Ben Haddou, Morocco.  
*Imane Saidi, Alessandro Camiz*
- 636 Character and applications of Historical Judgement in architectural and urban design.  
*Francesco Scattino, Marco Maretto*
- 644 The Trullo dwelling type in historical core of Alberobello. Survey on relationship between urban morphology and building typology.  
*Raffaele Tarallo*
- 654 The urban morphology of cities in the future: Évora and Setúbal – Portugal.  
*Maria Céu Simões Tereno, Manuela Justino Tomé, Maria Filomena Mourato Monteiro*
- 666 Architecture and culture in cities with a gender perspective. Complex evaluation from antiquity to the present.  
*Maria Guadalupe Valiñas Varela*
- 678 The city of the dead: an in-vitro city. Rethinking Liège starting from cemeteries.  
*Giovangiuseppe Vannelli, Marc Goossens*
- 692 Drawing as a multidisciplinary tool. A semantic experimentation in Venice.  
*Chiara Vernizzi, Chiara Finizza*
- 702 Three flyovers in the city of Lisbon.  
*Pablo Villalonga Munar*

## Design a Sustainable Urban Form

- 712 Piazza dei Cinquecento Alberi. Interweaving Uses and Spaces for Rome's Central Station.  
*Luigiemanuele Amabile, Marianna Ascolese, Alberto Calderoni, Vanna Cestarello*
- 722 Patterns of Intention Project hypothesis for San Siro district, Milan.  
*Francesca Belloni, Francesco Bruno*
- 736 A modern and ancient way of making a square.  
*Nicola Campanile*
- 748 Urban regeneration. From the edge of the city walls to the proposal for a square at Porta Maggiore in Rome.  
*Paolo Carlotti*

- 758 The city between nature and artifice. Space and form of Prague river's settlements.  
*Domenico Chizzoniti, Yuliia Batkova*
- 768 Urban morphology and anthropogenic heat flux. Case studies in Barcelona.  
*Helena Coch, Agnese Salvati, Antonio Isalgue*
- 778 Saverio Muratori. Architecture and reality.  
*Francesca Delia De Rosa*
- 786 Salerno in the making: sustainable urban regeneration proposals for the disused railway area of ex scalo merci.  
*Felice De Silva*
- 798 A sustainable and social-orientated re-shaping of the urban building blocks.  
*Annarita Ferrante, Rachele Corticelli, Cecilia Mazzoli*
- 810 Cities and earth's shape  
*Luigi Franciosini*
- 822 Searching for the sustainable "form" of the city.  
*Andrea Iacomoni*
- 828 Before and Beyond adaptation. An integral review on local perspectives for morphological transformability.  
*Diego Reinaldo Moya, Diego Andrés Sepúlveda Carmona*
- 840 Designing a sustainable urban landscape. Between urban and rural morphologies.  
*Giulia Annalinda Neglia*
- 852 Urban Form Balance in Landscape's Folds.  
*Rita Occhiuto*
- 864 New centralities in the widespread city  
*Camillo Orfeo*
- 876 Continuing to Write in Small Historic Cores. A Design-Led Strategy for Meda's urban blight.  
*Laura Pezzetti, Helen Khanamiryan, Maria Giulia Atzeni*
- 888 Recovering a lost identity. The ancient river village at the origin of Noventa Padovana.  
*Enrico Pietrogrande, Alessandro Dalla Caneva, Massimo Mucci*
- 896 From Mastercampus to Mastertown: forms of a self-reflective urban community.  
*Carlo Quintelli*

- 906 Formal / informal / syncretic. Towards a different notion of sustainable city.  
*Antonio Vito Riondino*
- 918 Margins in contrast: the former Palomba quarry in Matera.  
*Giuseppe Francesco Rociola*
- 930 Sustainable land reading.  
*Jlenia Ruggiero*
- 944 Shaping the ecological transition: addressing technical strategies from a design point of view.  
*Kevin Santus*
- 952 Prolegomena to a theoretical course in urban morphology based upon the relationships between the shape of the city and the shape of the map.  
*Marco Trisciuglio*
- 964 Morphology, Morphogenesis, Metamorphosis. The need of a lexicon.  
*Marco Trisciuglio, Federico Vercellone*

## Reading U+D Prize

- 972 Piecemeal Planning. Survey on San Gimignano.  
*Marco Marino*
- 978 Architecture, urban form and landscape: the work of Bruno Violi in Bogotá.  
*Serena Orlandi*
- 990 The city of macroisolato. A tool per the urban regeneration project of the medium-size city.  
*Giuseppe Verterame*

## Continuing to Write in Small Historic Cores. A Design-Led Strategy for Meda's Urban Blight

Laura Anna Pezzetti<sup>1</sup>, Helen Khanamiryian<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department ABC Architecture Built Environment Construction Engineering. Politecnico di Milano. Piazza Leonardo da Vinci, 32. 20133 Milan.

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>laura.pezzetti@polimi.it; <sup>2</sup>helen.khanamiryian@polimi.it

Keywords: *Historic centre, regeneration, architectural and urban rewriting, public space design, old and new.*

Conference theme: *Design a Sustainable Urban Form*

**Abstract.** *The phenomenon of abandonment and decay of historic settlements affects not only secluded villages but also the core of small towns where inhabitants prefer to quit former rural nuclei to live in terraced houses. Over time, this has provoked the decline of economic activities, vitality and finally urban blight. The historic core of Meda, a town north of Milan known for its dynamic economy and design furniture brands, has lost its urban role, vitality and character although is a morphologically defined settlement of ancient formation and is part of the monumental area on the top of the hill. While urban regeneration is usually studied in terms of economics and policies, this research funded by the Municipal Government has tested the regenerative role of the architectural project, exploring its operational nodes at different scales within the culture of the "urban project". Based on the reading of urban structures and tissues, it defined a contextual design-led strategy to re-imagine and enhance the town based on rewriting strategies. The strategy defined the heads of the urban system by rewriting dilapidated buildings and urban ground, extending to configure a sequence of space-places of encounters while penetrating into semi-private courtyards and gardens to prolong public space as a dynamic and fluid element. By interpreting the urban form potential, the multi-scale design-led strategy was conceived as a driver to enhance historic buildings and courtyards by cultural industries and private-public partnerships, to attract and support new neighbourhood commercial activities, to create pedestrian areas and places of encounter and social interaction.*

### **Urban Blight in the Historic Centre**

The phenomenon of abandonment and decay of historic settlements affects not only secluded inner areas and undeveloped towns but also, unexpectedly, the core of flourishing small towns where inhabitants prefer to quit historic nuclei to live in independent terraced houses. Over time, along with higher consumption of land in the town outskirts, this phenomenon has provoked the decline of economic activities, vitality and finally urban blight.

This paper presents a set of integrated design-led regeneration and enhancement strategies developed for Meda in the framework of the Research Contract between the Meda Municipality and the Department ABC, Politecnico di Milano, led by the author.

Meda is a municipality of 23,528 inhabitants in the Brianza area, north of Milan, a town well known for its dynamic economy and design furniture brands. Set between the plain and the margins of the hilly region, it is the epicentre of a linear conurbation of 13 municipalities.

Although its historic core is a nucleus of ancient formation, morphologically defined and part of the monumental area on the top of the hill, it has lost urban role, vitality and character.

The present weakness of the historic core may be ascribed to a couple of dichotomies characterising this centre's structure. The first dichotomy is the combination between the peculiar origin of the town, linked to a Benedictine monastery rather than a village, and the geomorphological features of this medieval nucleus. The toponym of Meda itself, probably originating from the Latin "meta" (bump), explains the topography since the medieval Monastery of San Vittore has dominated the territory and later the village from the top of the strip of moorland descending from the Groane, at the foot of the first hills of Brianza. The second dichotomy is that when the monastery was abolished and transformed into Villa Antona Traversi by Leopoldo Pollak, around the early 800s, the hill foot was included in the villa's park and encircled by a high wall. The Heritage Superintendency's refusal to consider any alteration of the wall that would allow opening the park to the city life, has determined the separation of the centre's monumental core, deprived of any activity, from the nucleus of rural formation developed downhill. Besides, the other wall of Palazzo De' Capitani's garden (1600s) and the long abandoned Ca' Rustica (1500s) have contributed to the lack of vitality of the old core.

Paradoxically, the strength of the town, its heritage, coincides with its main weakness.

As requested by the Municipal Administration, the first phase aimed at outlining a proposal for the regeneration and revitalisation of Corso Matteotti, that is, the historic axis currently largely neglected and dilapidated. Despite its emphatic title of "Corso", the axis of the historic Contrada Pozzobonelli has a small road section, entirely devoid of public spaces, widenings or trees. The long and high walls of the two historic villas form a physical and visual barrier that keeps their gardens hidden from view.

Overall, being devoid of life, environmental quality and attractive activities, Corso Matteotti is hardly a place where citizens would want to live or even just have a walk.

### **Methodology: Spatialisation of the Temporal Dimension and Iconism of Urban Form**

Urban regeneration is usually studied in terms of economics and policies. On the contrary, this research funded by the Meda Municipal Government has tested the regenerative role of the architectural project, exploring its operational nodes at different scales within the Italian culture of Urban Project and in the light of rewriting ontology (Pezzetti, 2020). Based on the reading and interpretation of urban structures and tissues, it has defined a contextual Design-Led Strategy to enhance and re-imagine the town through insertions, rewriting and infills.

The Meda PGT, conceived around 1965-68 has an eminent author, Giuseppe Samonà, who described the principle of courtyard aggregation "followed until the middle of the 1800s" as a

principle "of considerable urban interest even if expressed in a simple form, adequate to the rural economy of which it was the expression" (Samonà, 1968). Notably, he suggested demolishing the wall of the Villa Traversi, "leaving free to pedestrians the view of the park and the slopes", as he foresaw the Corso Matteotti as an almost pedestrian street.

Some theoretical concepts expressed by Samonà were also taken in consideration by the research: the identification of "contexts" on the base of the historic and morphological character and the permeability of historic spaces.

The research began with an in-depth 3D Laser scanner and photogrammetric survey conducted by the ABC Department, producing through points cloud a 3D model and graphic reconstruction of the facades of the whole Corso. These graphic renderings integrated our elaboration of specific data sheets related to each single building, serving as a knowledge base of the status quo to advance precise Guidelines for the refurbishment and enhancement of the private properties in the framework of the overall regeneration project<sup>1</sup>.

The research performed a series of synchronic and diachronic readings of the centre's urban form based on historic maps and documents.

The combination of information derived from the Lombardo Veneto Cadastre (1850-73) and the Brenna Map (1850) was particularly interesting since it allowed capturing the forma urbis of the primitive fabric of the rural and proto-industrial formation that developed around the hill, on the plain ground, as a necklace.

Two orthogonal pristine axes were identified highlighting the persistent urban role of Contrada Pozzobonelli's axis and two types of rural courtyards. This northwest-southeast axis featured a twofold character, the northern part being less developed given the presence of the hill slope and walls fencing wide properties, while the southern side was defined by a compact building curtain formed by U-shaped courtyards open to their backyard vegetable gardens, given their position on a flatter ground.

A first analysis made use of diachronic and synchronic historic sections. By spatialising time in layers, the diachronic sections clarified permanencies and modifications of the fabric, often performed on the same plot footprints.

Along the Contrada Pozzobonelli's axis, the mapping by historic sections also showed that the vegetable gardens and farmland patterns became the footprint for the urban development south-westward. The 1914 map records the opening of two new roads necessary to the blocks formation. Although this new grid was not filled until the 1980 section, it entailed demolitions in the central part of the building curtain. Besides, all historic sections mapped the persistence of the two old municipal country roads and of the "Salita delle Benedettine", clarifying that the second "salita" (alley) did not exist at the time of the Theresian Cadastral map (1721).

The courtyards of the northeast-southwest axis (now Via Santi Aimo and Vermondo) were, instead, mostly enclosed and weakly related to farmlands, which were limited by the Taro Stream. Besides, while the Contrada's axis coincides with Corso Matteotti and still structures the east part of the centre, the northeast-southwest axis underwent a shift since the early 1900s, as the boundary wall of Villa Traversi soon became an obstacle to the life of the village. The axis shifted to the new Via Solferino, while eastward, since 1879, the Milan-Asso Railway (Northern Lines) reinforced the separation of the historic centre from the modern expansion.

The already-written urban text appears, therefore, as *tabula plena*, that is, a stratified accumulation of architectural objects and voids; forms, signs and material textures; memories,

---

<sup>1</sup>The survey was conducted by the team of prof. Cristiana Achille, while the Data Sheets and Guidelines were drawn with the specific contribution of Prof. Rossana Gabaglio.

traces and absences, whose meaning needs to be understood.

It is in this marked "canvas" that successive remodelling finds its own place (Machado, 1976). Diachronic maps and their overlapping show the core of Meda as a Composite Landscape Unit, "a superposition of largely extended presents" (Focillon, 1934), that is, a stratified time in which succession and synchronism, anticipation and survival coexist juxtaposed at the same time.

If time is spatialised in layers, architecture, similarly to archaeology, becomes interpretative (Pezzetti, 2020). The perspective of working by stratification and continuing to write on an urban text already dense with signs becomes constitutively hermeneutic.

Therefore, our descriptive analysis intentions the object and becomes reading: it starts from a question and is critically oriented with respect to the analysis. It interprets rather than merely illustrating the pre-existing status (Norberg-Schulz, 1996).

The synchronic reading of the centre's settlement structure is aimed at grasping the gene of its constitutive essence resulting from the ascertained superimposition of different writings, in its potential of form, figure and function. It is a matter of grasping the latent order (Pezzetti, 2019) underlying a composite structure consisting of multiple writings that need to regain meaning for the present.

Interpretative Readings bring to light the iconism of the urban figure, that is, a synthetic image revealing the town's essential meaning bridging form and contents, signified and signifiers. As Samonà stated in 1980, "the signs of visual language (...) are not partly conventional or partly significant, but only significant; they are in fact iconic signs, that is, images".

Therefore, reading the iconism of the urban form is more than just reading the aggregation of "edilizia elencata" (building-in a list, Samonà) or the process of "basic buildings" (Caniggia), and the polarisation at a distance of primary urban facts (Rossi, 1966) alone. It means reading the entirety of urban form in terms of figure and landscape to which the project aims.

### **Continuing to Write: the Regeneration and Revitalisation of Corso Matteotti**

In 1980, Samonà wrote that the City is a system of spatial relationships linked by interdependencies. Continuing to write (Pezzetti, 2020) on an already-written text defines design project as a new inscription and layering of signs connected by formal and semantic relations and based on the reading and interpretation of principles, themes and traces inherited from the previous text.

The ontology of rewriting disambiguates it from any reconstruction strategy, as it is rather operating in contexts that require comparison between multiple writings and overlaps, and in the constant work of decoding and recoding of the project.

Architecture itself is a genre of writing that is not only written on, but also actively writing. It defines an interpretative, critical and, therefore, creative act. In rewriting, the reading, interpretation and resignification for the present become decisive.

While buildings are open to changes, the urban figure is the ground where the traces are inscribed and retained. The city, meant as the object of architecture, is always a rewriting of a previous city.

As Samonà stated, working in the Historic Centre means confronting the solidarity between buildings and street and the re-definition of a porous fabric, in its absolute diversity compared to the contemporary city. This solidarity particularly affects the narrow Corso Matteotti, the central part of which is also dominated by the walls of two historic villas that could not be altered in any way.

Besides, the principle of the courtyard type offered a potential key to the regeneration strategy, expanding public space into courtyards themselves as a dynamic and fluid element. Together,

by modifying the Matteotti road tracing, a sequence of space-places for encounters were retrieved, while two dilapidated historic buildings were identified as the system "heads" to be renovated for attractive facilities. The required design strategies, moreover, entailed subtle relationships and readings of the spatial character.

### **Questioning the PGT historic centre boundary in light of urban form**

On the basis of the identified settlement structure and recognition of the centre as a "voluminous text of multiple writings", a first consequence was calling into question the perimeter of the historic centre set by the PGT Urban Plan. It coincided neither with the historic status of the Lombardo Veneto Cadastre nor with the built historic assets forming Meda's "voluminous text of writings". For instance, it excluded arbitrarily some major buildings built before 1927, while including generic fabric built after 1950. This becomes particularly objectionable in relation to the exclusion of the system formed by the municipal complex and Palazzo Mascheroni, as they constitute the node reconnecting the two historic axes. Our project turned this node into one of the heads of the public space sequence and regeneration strategy.

The strategy proposed, therefore, a different boundary including this node that would allow the extension of the Solferino axis as far as the Church of Santa Maria Nascente, while including the farmsteads Bergognone and Pieoda to mark a meaningful fixation line.

Besides, the topographical figure of the historic centre could not be disjoint from the original upper nucleus seen as the head of the territorial strip that is now part of the "Brughiera Briantea" PLIS Park.

#### *Writing the ground: a strategy by themes and figures*

The strategy needs, therefore, to coincide with the topographical figure to reinforce the legibility of the system structured by the two historic axis.

The design study was implemented through the integration of multiple strategies at the urban and architectural scale. The main urban aspects of the strategy include:

- the redevelopment of the historic axis of Corso Matteotti into a 30Km/h area to introduce gradually its entire walkability and pedestrianisation;
- the system-making of historic or disused buildings to be enhanced architecturally for new uses;
- the identification of courtyards as a potential extension of public space also in the perspective of economic revitalisation, to attract and support new neighbourhood commercial activities;
- the formation of "circuits" and thematic routes departing from the Matteotti axis in order to give continuity and attractiveness to a historic centre that is now devoid of vitality, activity and long affected by urban blight.

To start a virtuous process, this strategy needed to be implemented according to three main architectural strategies and related themes:

1. Continuity: the unitary rehabilitation of the entire Corso Matteotti to support walkability through modification of the road tracing to enlarge walkable area, abolition of raised sidewalks, and unity in paving materials in natural stone, urban furniture and lighting.
2. Space-Places, or turning discontinuity into sequence: the identification along Matteotti's sections of the nodes to be remodelled as a sequence of space-places, that is, places of encounter and social interaction with seats, water mirrors, written plaques and trees.
3. Landmarks: the historic buildings located at the two heads of the route, to be redesigned as landmarks introducing and closing the urban sequence, in order to create an attractive pedestrian path along the entire axis.

The design drawings reflects both reading and design re-figuration by integrating the

“omniscient” zenithal reading provided by interpretative maps with the landscape view experienced through peripatetic walk. The first gives account of the settlement form, that is, of the context in its historical becoming and as an intellectual and iconic construction. The second, on the other hand, allows perceiving, also with the senses, only one framing at a time, while requiring the movement of the subject along a designed sequence, exploring the experiential dimension.

The themes to be developed include material textures used as system of signs, restorativeness, and figures of the ground.

The patterns of paving surfaces and material textures were conceived as signs that orient the legibility and use of space: white Apricena stone to identify the places of encounter, Luserna stone for road and level pavements, “rizzada lombarda” (river pebbles that constituted the original flooring) to distinguish the boundaries of the carriageway and some driveways to private spaces. While the colours recall the original paving, between white and grey, the richness of patterns and textures aims at integrating contemporary design with the historic atmosphere.

Restorativeness is a concept borrowed from environmental psychology. It is understood as a quality of physical space producing emotional responses and the necessary regeneration of the physical, psychological, social resources that are diminished by our continuous efforts to adapt to a noisy and confused urban environment. The design introduces restorativeness by water and trees elements. Water recurs in the main space-places according to different themes but always as a quiet and mirroring surface: a restorative element that reverberates a feeling of well-being and quietness in the spaces of encounters, while mirroring the sky and trees hidden by the walls. Trees are also restorative elements and recurring signifiers. The system of pairs of trees that provide shade, screen walls or solve a couple of setbacks are also symbolic references to Meda’s founding myth – the one referring to the Saints Aimò and Vermondo who sought refuge on a laurel tree and later chose that spot to build the church that started the settlement.

Finally, each space-place has its own referential figure of the ground. Following Samonà’s methodology, the Corso was subdivided in contexts according to both formation and contemporary character. We identified six contexts to retrieve the possibility of creating public spaces in this very narrow road. The design developed the contexts through iconic figures of the ground, meant as signifying signs.

Contexts A-B relate to compromised parts at the initial section of the Corso, due to incongruous buildings and setbacks. Design turns these unresolved setbacks into space-places of encounters. The symbolic signifier of the recurring pairs of trees establishes visual targets that announce the sequence and encourage space exploration. The space is also rhythmized by stone benches whose position is identified by “stone carpets” inserted into the flooring.

The C-D-E contexts are denser in terms of superposed traces and memories. Along the narrative sequence, they are identified as space-places by the recurring use of white stone.

In these three contexts, the restorative water element, a recurring presence in local geography and history (the Tarò Stream, minor streams and ponds), is repeated to act as a unifying component that marks the continuity of the urban story within variation.

The D context is characterised by the high wall of the Villa Traversi. Design turned the problem into a theme. The existing signs disturb and at the same time orient the new writing. The design of this space-place is composed according to the wall, underlined by a narrow Water Line, a shallow veil of water reflecting the sky and trees hidden by the wall. Two trees and the patterns of a set of benches articulate the writing of the ground, treated as a bas-relief.

Across the road, the C context enlarged the pedestrian area with a mall space-place in correspondence to the intersection with the old Roccolo road (via Orsini), where the last two surviving commercial activities are still located. Particularly, the design recalls and reinterprets the figure of the old Water Well recorded in an historic picture.

The last figure is the Water-Table in E context, where Corso Matteotti meets with the Salita delle Benedettine, the ancient alley leading to the monumental core. Here, the sloping topography emerges, that is, the foot of the hill spur, together with a fragment of the ancient pebble pavement. The reflective Water-Table is a dark triangular-shaped solid collaborating to assume, describe and shape the topographical "mise en forme" of the E site.

### **Continuing to Write: Palazzo Mascheroni as Urban Catalyst**

The two landmarks selected as the heads of the regeneration axis are Palazzo Mascheroni and its square, right behind the Town Hall, to be refurbished as a Youth Centre and extension of the Solferino axis (I context), and the complex formed by two abandoned courtyards in an advanced state of decay, which are going to be purchased by the Municipality (G Context). Palazzo Mascheroni is an abandoned building dating back to the 1920s, selected to be one of the landmarks of the regeneration strategy and recovered as a new urban catalyst, namely the Meda Youth Centre. It used to be the representative and residential part of a furniture workshop. In the PGT, it is listed as a building of testimonial value linked to a craftsmanship traditionally based in Meda.

The mapping revealed that it was originally a U-shaped courtyard, subsequently expanded. Between 2004 and 2007, after production ceased, the wings were demolished to build an underground parking, an unused square and a looming residential building. As only the front building survived, the rear elevation became a self-standing façade. The building underwent an contestable partial rehabilitation of the exterior facades and roof, which falsified its character by making its austere architecture clumsy. The research, instead, has clarified that the reference to the local type of farmstead, characterised by interconnected rooms opening onto a double-order arched loggia, was still operational in the 1900s and the Palazzo was quite similar to Cascina Bergognone.

The restoration and adaptive reuse of Palazzo Mascheroni can be understood as an architectural rewriting just as the regeneration of the historic centre is an intervention of urban rewriting. The design intended to recover the character of the internal façade that used to be an exterior overlooking the loggia. Taking some analogies with Hans Döllgast's reconstruction of the Alte Pinakothek (1957) as a reference, the void of the loggia became by translation the void of a full-height gallery where the staircases were replaced by two elongated stairs facing each other. Treating the staircases as amphi-seatings, internal walls as facades and crossing the void by suspended decks that visually relate levels and dramatize activities, the emptied loggia acts as the Commons, making the space dynamic and suitable for a Youth Centre.

The design writes on the existing site and building through overlapping, allowing the traces and erasures of the historic palimpsest to be seen by uncovering the masonry or keeping it bare, only coated with a light washing. Acting on the character, type and openings through subtle design writing, an unexpected and severe monumentality also emerged.

The design also reshaped an urban courtyard to extend activities outdoor, paying homage to the diaphragms designed by Terragni, who was born in Meda.

By writing again, design performed a twofold action: on the one hand, it restored the building's sense of depth due to the stratification shaped by man and events; on the other hand, it revealed orders that are latent in the type and in the text. This new possibility of existence

strengthened the character of the enunciations independently of the original enunciation, namely in the depth of time in which they exist, are preserved, reactivated and used today.

## Conclusion

The city, as the object of architecture, is always a rewriting of a previous city. Architecture itself is a genre of writing that is not only written on, but also actively writing. It is in this already-written text that successive remodelling finds its own place and coherence.

By reading and interpreting the urban form potential, a multi-scale design-led strategy was conceived as a driver to enhance the historic axis as a pedestrian area and sequence of places of encounter; historic dilapidated buildings as catalysts of cultural activities; courtyards as extension of public space attracting commercial activities of neighbourhood.

## References

- Ajroldi, C., Cannone F. and De Simone F. (eds.) (1994) *Lettere su Palermo di Giuseppe Samonà e Giancarlo De Carlo* (Officina Edizioni, Rome).
- Focillon, H. (1972) *Vita delle forme. Seguito da Elogio della mano* (1934) (Einaudi, Turin).
- Norberg-Schulz C. (1996) *Architettura: Presenza, Linguaggio e Luogo* (Skira, Milan).
- Pezzetti, L.A (2019) *Layered Morphologies and Latent Structures: Reading, Decoding and Rewriting to Enhance Historic Rurban Landscape* (Tongji University Press, Shanghai).
- Pezzetti, L.A. (2020) *Continuare a scrivere nel paesaggio storico: Lettura, interpretazione, figurazione* (LetteraVentidue, Siracusa).
- Pezzetti L.A. (2022) *Studio per la riqualificazione dello spazio pubblico dell'asse Storico di Corso Matteotti e Palazzo Mascheroni*, Project Report, Comune di Meda, Meda, Italy.
- Rossi, A. (1966) *L'architettura della città* (Marsilio, Padua).
- Samonà, G. (1968) 'Relazione', in Samonà G., Cagna O., Samonà A., *Piano Regolatore Generale* (Comune di Meda, Meda).
- Machado, R. (1976) 'Old Buildings as Palimpsest: Toward a Theory of Remodeling', *Progressive Architecture* 57, no.11, 46-49.

## Illustrations and tables



**Figure 1.** A. Synchronic section of Meda in 1855; B. Diachronic development of Corso Matteotti in 1927; C. Redefining the Historic Centre's boundary, main axes and the two urban catalysts (by the authors).

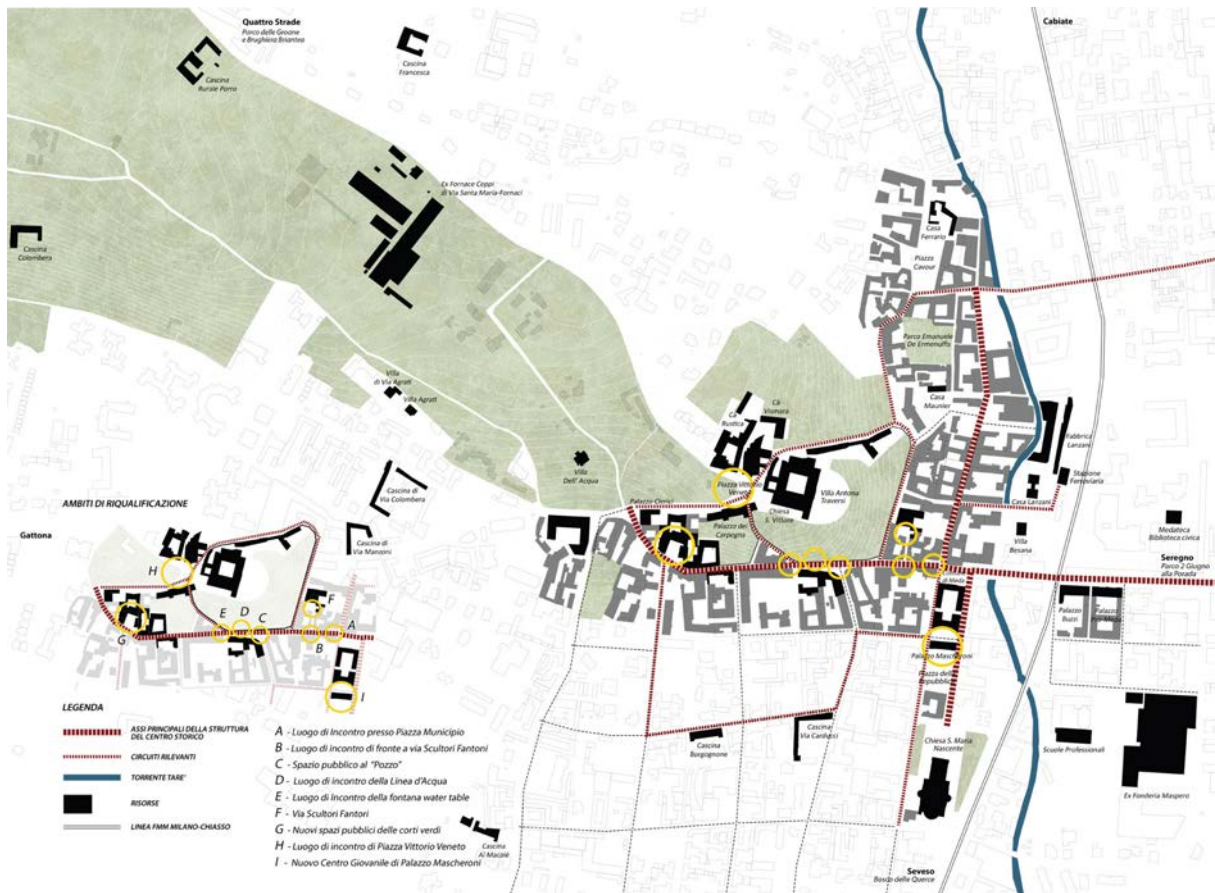


Figure 2. The regenerative strategy and design contexts (by the authors).

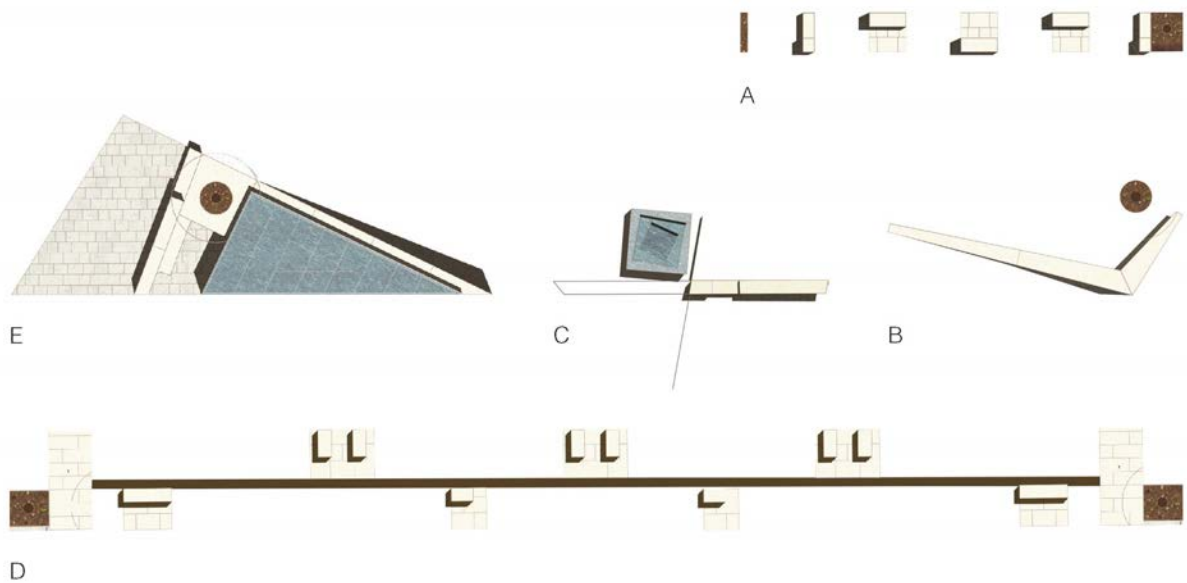


Figure 3. The "figures of the ground" of the space-places in Corso Matteotti (by the authors).

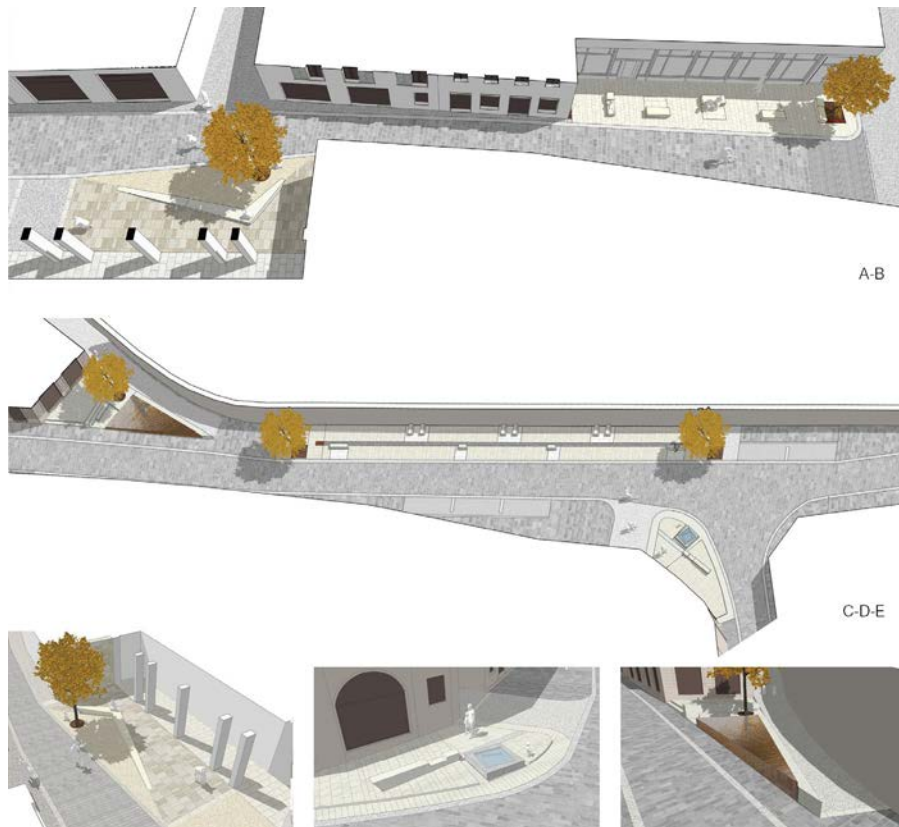


Figure 4. The space-places in contexts A-B and C-D-E (by the authors).

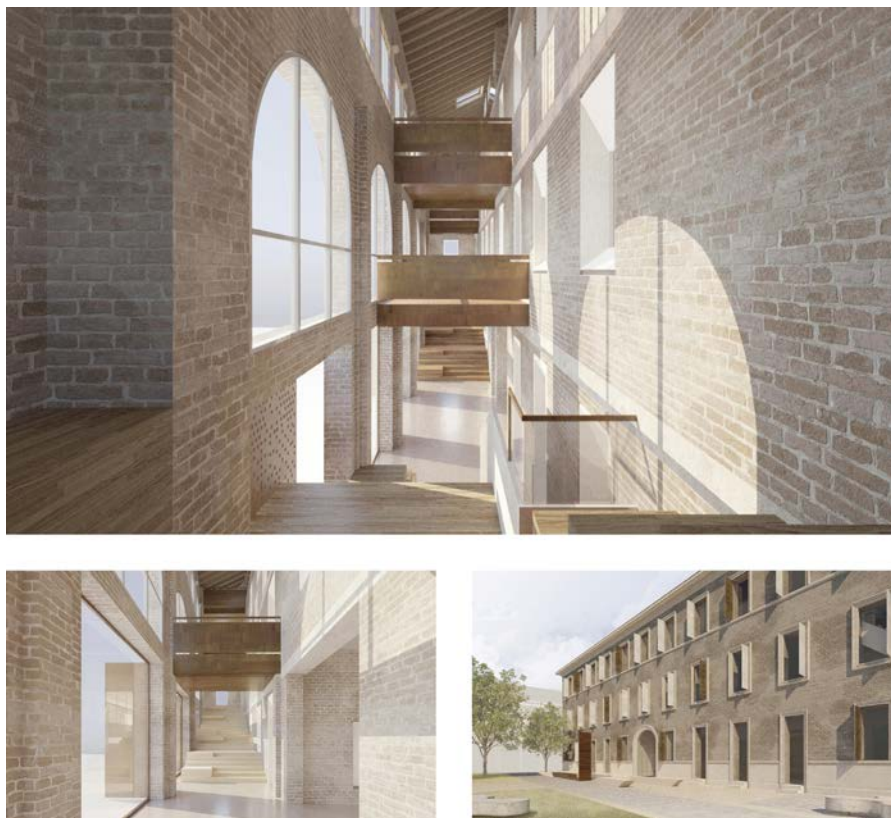
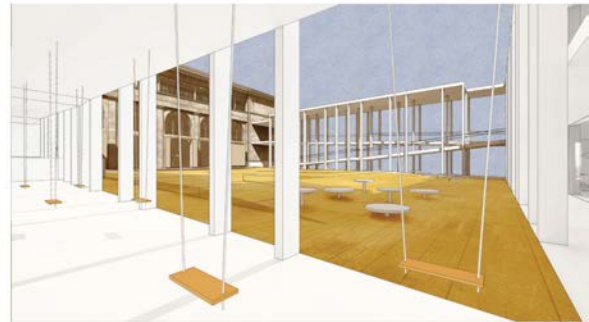
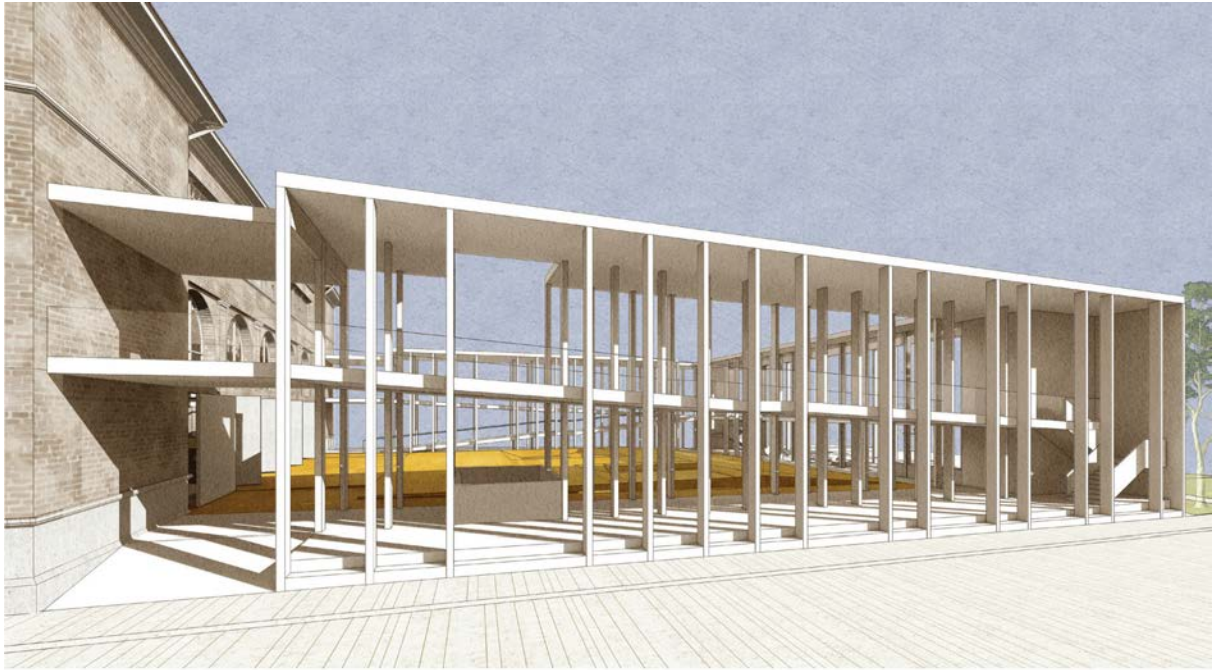


Figure 5. Architectural rewriting of Palazzo Mascheroni as a Youth Centre: the Commons, the entrance, the façade (by the authors).



**Figure 6.** Palazzo Mascheroni's new courtyard: connecting to the existing facade, framing the courtyard and playground (by the authors).