

**“It is necessary to create access systems to the regenerated areas with a great quality of pedestrian and cycle connectivity for the spaces that were previously isolated. This type of connectivity is fundamental and it is clear that all of this can only be achieved through global thinking, thus not limiting the interventions to the area of interest, but extending the network of cycling to the whole city, creating a large capillary system functionality and attractiveness”**

**(Stefano Boeri)**

## Interview to Stefano Boeri

### Stefano Boeri Architeti

Veronica Ferrari

The issue of abandoned railway stations and their rehabilitation within the existing urban fabric is currently much discussed and subject to reflection by various actors, from public administration, to private companies, to designers and competent technical professionals. The contemporary city continuously develops new needs in terms of public space and *green systems* such as parks, gardens, in particular related to light infrastructure and intermodal and sustainable mobility.

Stefano Boeri, today one of the most famous Italian architects in the world thanks to projects such as Bosco Verticale<sup>1</sup> realized in the Isola district in Milan, has shown to be very sensitive and purposeful on this question. The architect Boeri carries out research and development on urban reforestation projects through the use of nature as a design element and the vertical densification for the liberation of the soil, projects in favor of environmental sustainability, biodiversity, land consumption and resources and technological innovation.

Stefano Boeri Architeti, along with four other international architecture firms, at the invitation of the company Sistemi Urbani<sup>2</sup> and the municipality of Milan, expressed his vision on the issue of the recovery and reconversion of abandoned railway stations. The subject, pending the program agreement between the Municipality, the Region and the

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1 – Bosco Verticale is a project completed in 2014, by Stefano Boeri Architeti. The project consists in two residential towers with facades completely covered with arboreal essences.

2 – FS Sistemi Urbani is a company that aims to enhance the assets of FS Italian that are not functional to railway operations, with particular reference to stations, to nodal and transport infrastructures and to available assets.

Ferrovie dello Stato company, is very important not only for Milan and Italy, but also in the European urban planning debate.

**What will be the role of disused railway stations in the Milanese metropolitan landscape? And what is the scenario to prefigure for these spaces?**

The Milanese railway stations cover an area of approximately 900,000 m<sup>2</sup>. My personal belief is that not less than 90% of these square meters, should be destined to public areas and permeable green, with a concentration of available massing, according to an index that is around 0.65 as required by the Plan drawn up by the municipality of Milan. What is envisaged is a discontinuous scenario, which changes according to the different areas and the market's attractiveness. The volume will focus on the edges, with a system of buildings that is extremely permeable on the ground, thus favoring interaction between the city, the city's nodes and the new intervention. The *new city* will rise upwards, where possible, and will be designed above all to host spaces for young people, so as to transform Milan into a city that can offer, not only services, but also a good perspective on life over the long-medium term. It is necessary to think about the introduction of mixed typologies, a sort of *buildings city* that contain a great functional variety: residences, offices, clinics, artisans with residence, places of worship, etc.

**We have seen a possible configuration of the volumes, about the open space, what are the conditions and viable solutions to mend the former railway stations and the city?**

Regarding the theme of open space at first there is the question of the treatment of the track belt. It is necessary to imagine a continuous coverage, where possible, in the active band of tracks and a complete decommissioning of the inactive band. The coverage of the active strip of tracks could allow the construction of a system of large natural spaces consisting of parks, hills, meadows and woods. This is what the city of Milan needs, bringing a large dimension of naturalness within a dense and highly built urban fabric. The challenge is to find connections at the passage of architectural scale, and to continue through linear green systems that utilize the unused tracks, when possible the railroad protection bands, and when the railway track is not possible to give continuity to these large green areas. Thinking overall it is possible to establish a sequence between the airports, from the largest Farini railway station, Porta Romana, Porta Genova etc., and also involving the north-west side of the city, incorporating the Bovisa district into the project and continue to the Expo area.

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**How can we proceed and what are the sustainable solutions to be adopted in an urban regeneration process focused on the recovery of these areas?**

It is essential to integrate the green element, clean energy – from an underground geothermal ring – and sustainable mobility, and to image a different system of connections. The idea is to have a band of active tracks, a circle-line, a user guaranteed by a sort of tram-train, a high-tech public vehicle that can go on tracks which succeeds then to cover every quadrant of the city, so as to close the circle of mobility. I have already stressed the need to create a network of sustainable mobility and intermodal transport, combining the use of public transport to private vehicles such as cycling. It is necessary to create access systems to the regenerated areas with a great quality of pedestrian and cycle connectivity for the spaces that were previously isolated. This type of connectivity is fundamental and it is clear that all of this can only be achieved through global thinking, thus not limiting the interventions to the area of interest, but extending the network of cycling to the whole city, creating a large capillary system functionality and attractiveness.