

MIAAW

2021

2026 Olympic Games and the City

Politecnico Di Milano

School Of Architecture Urban Planning
Construction Engineering



MIAW

The MIAW-Milan International Architecture Workshop is the international intensive programme at the Politecnico di Milano - School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering, that provides an international design forum for schools, teachers and students, but it is also an informal platform to discuss issues and share ambitions that education implies. Its aim is to stimulate cross-over thinking between researches and practitioners in the design field, involving different scales and encouraging an interdisciplinary approach towards design problems. Each class has an international guest professor of high profile whose activity and interests are related to the different study courses and disciplinary areas characterising our School.

Miaw 2021 / 2026 Olympic Games and the City

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MIAW 2021

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01. INTRODUCTION

Ilaria Valente

Dean, School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering

The MIAW – Milan International Architecture Workshop is the international intensive program of the School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering of Politecnico di Milano. It is an international design forum for schools, teachers and students, but it is also an informal platform to discuss different issues and share ambitions. The aim of the workshop is to stimulate cross-over thinking between researchers and practitioners in the design field, involving different scales and encouraging an interdisciplinary approach towards the design problems. Each class of the workshop is held by an International Guest Professor of high profile whose activity and interests are related to the different study courses and disciplinary areas characterizing our school. In 2021 edition five professors were involved: prof. Roberto Cavallo from Delft University of Technology (TUD), prof. Hervé Dubois from ENSA Paris-Val de Seine, prof.ssa Donatella Fioretti from Baukunst at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, prof. Sebastián Irrarrázaval from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and prof. José María Sánchez García from ETSAM Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. To them we send our most heartfelt thanks.

The MIAW 2021 edition focused its attention on the event of the 2026 Winter Olympic Games Milano-Cortina. The workshop allowed to experiment new architectural approaches that will make the Olympic Games physically-responsible, socially-sustainable and environmentally-friendly. The classes focused on urban strategies and architecture projects to be implemented in the sites dedicated to the Olympic Games in Milan, with the intention of transforming the event in an opportunity for the city through a long-term regeneration process.

The workshop took place remotely due to pandemic restrictions. Thanks to the inexhaustible and extraordinary enthusiasm of students, assistants and professors, we have successfully managed to transform restrictions into an opportunity to experiment with new forms of didactic innovation. This publication aims to summarize the work carried out and settle the many disciplinary reflections discussed.



02. THE AREA OF PORTA ROMANA

About a research

*Francesca Belloni, Annalucia D'Erchia, Massimo Ferrari,
Elvio Manganaro, Claudia Tinazzi*

ABC Department, Politecnico di Milano

Undertaking a research, in architecture as in other disciplines, requires a scientific point of view, a strategically open horizon that sets itself the objective of knowing and arranging the material that until now has only been collected around a topic, without the clarity of a story that finds its resolution through the project only at the end. The relationship between knowledge and project methodology is resolved in the overlapping of contents. Research with an objective of knowledge is itself the first step of the project whose transformative ideality cannot disregard the study of the reasons that have built the realities we live in. The tools proper to urban analysis, but also the help provided by a layman's eye that interprets the characteristics of the environment through parallel disciplines, contribute to the necessary sensitive argumentation that in the study of the city, as the main and extremely complex device dedicated to community life, discovers and rediscovers research methodologies that both chronologically and diachronically, that both in the comparison and in the separation of the settlement logics, and in the rewriting and in the interpretation, increases the certainty of the adequacy of the result of our intervention.

Returning to talk about the urban project today, therefore, means relying on the possibility that the discipline of architecture, declined at different scales and in the most different contexts, takes the city, still starting from its constitutive idea, as its main and privileged space of action, without any presumed nostalgia. It means - in these years that have marked the turning point that places the condition of urbanization beyond half of living on the planet - tackling the theme

of the transformation of the context in which we live with the capacity of a strategic tool that over the last seventy years has defined, often with great quality, model intervention strategies and consequent achievements, based on the conditions of research and knowledge that are, as incipit is, the necessary conditions for any transformation. It means - finally - concentrating on the deeper cultural knowledge that before any project demonstrates a possible path to development.





From fields to rail-yard: the area of Porta Romana

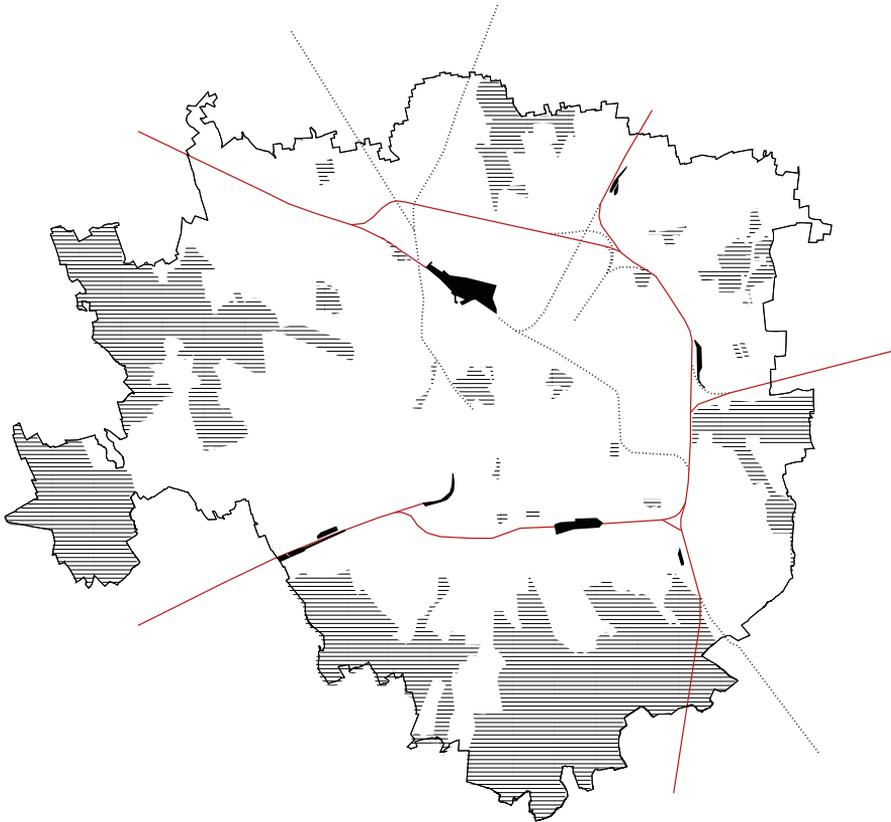
Annalucia D'Erchia

ABC Department, Politecnico di Milano

The Winter Olympics Milano - Cortina 2026 was, as often, a happy pretext. The need to interpret - in the context of a teaching workshop - the theme of living and the definition of a village, destined to house the Paralympic and Olympic athletes, imposed the need to develop a precise and concise discourse on the area of the Porta Romana former rail-yard that, in a very few lines and with the signs that are familiar to us, would be able to describe this place, identified as a discussion table, to the students guided by their visiting professors. An opportunity for study and research to arrange a semi-finished and instructive material that makes clear the reasons for the genesis of this area, its intrinsic characteristics, the transformations over time and the rules that have defined and continue to define the relationship between this part of Milan and the structure of the entire city, innervated within the Po Valley territory.

Located in the southern part of the city and geometrically defined by the projection of the current Corso Lodi and Via Ripamonti at a lower level, the railway level, the former rail-yard of Porta Romana is close to the historic external road network that delimits its northern side, fitting like a gem into the necklace of the iron rail that, built piece by piece from 1840 onwards, without closing it, still encloses the city today. In this way, together with Porta Genova, San Cristoforo and Rogoredo, that, of this belt, dot the portion to the south, Lambrate to the east and Greco and Farini to the north, the Porta Romana terminal is part of that system of disused areas that have become interlocked, suspended voids within the fabric of the saturated city. Delimited by inaccessible margins, these voids, within the project that envisages their transformation, are read as devices, potentially, of “mending” and “urban regeneration”, in all cases places that are waiting to assume a disposition towards a city that has grown and changed with estrangement from their surroundings.

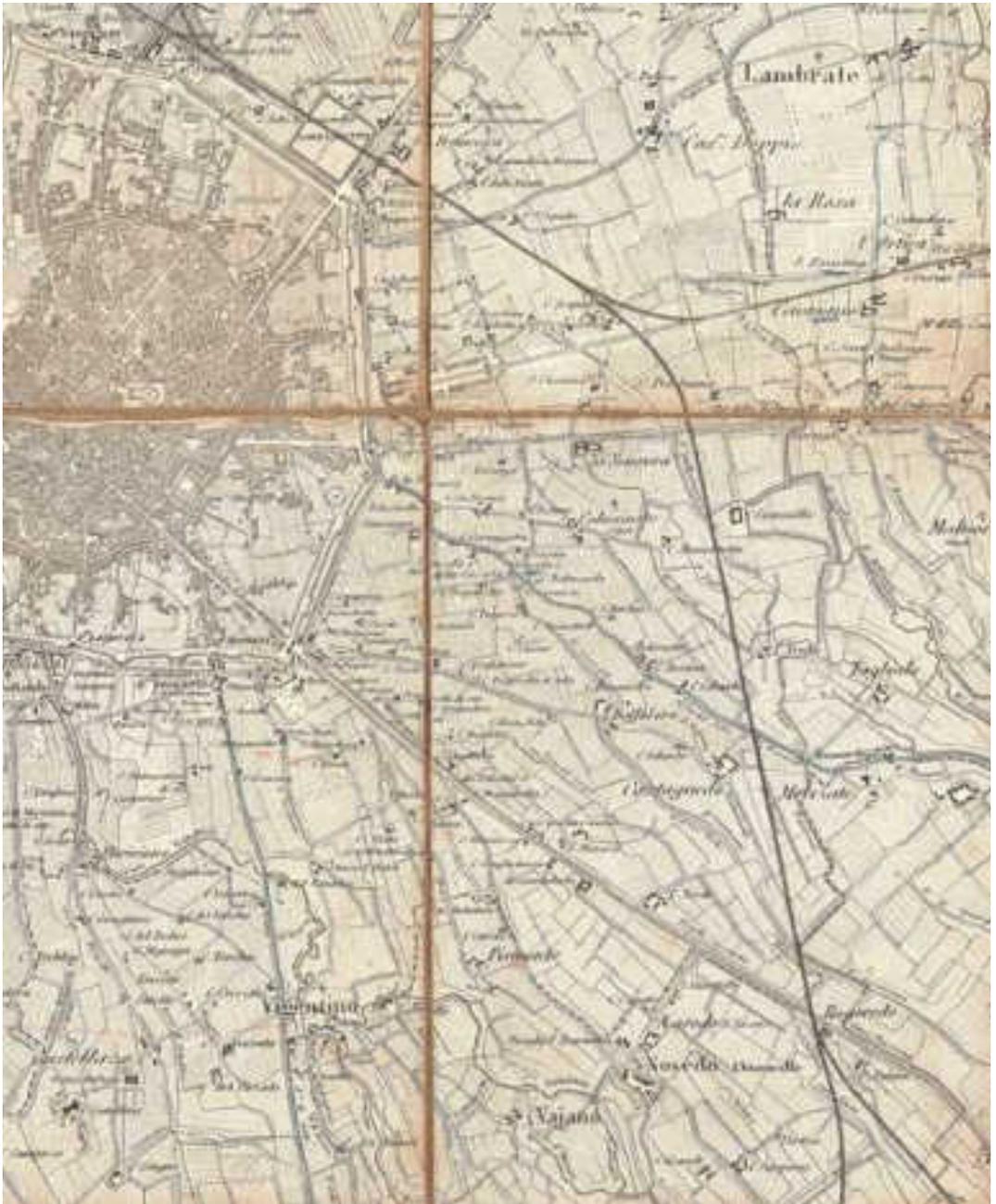
We can recognize two worlds that coexist, overlap and in some ways



System of rail - yards

contaminate each other. The consolidated configuration of a Milan that remained compact within a series of enclosures made of walls and natural and artificial canals, subdivided into quadrants, is well described in the selection of historical maps and representations, some of which are very different, of the “Ducato”, later the “Grande città” of Milan, up to the drawings of the first regulatory plans that had the aim of giving order to the expansion of the city, closely linked to the arrival of industry and the railway between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, the arrival of modernity.

With interpretations that are not always shared and with some contradictions,



Map of Milan, detail. Giovanni Brenna, 1865

from the Beruto plan to the Pavia-Masera plan, to the Albertini one, the rule of growth has followed the directions indicated by the series of traces identified in the radiocentric city. These signs have become so strong that they have remained and become the skeleton of these first suburbs and that, radially, went out from the city gates looking out of the territory. A territory, the one of the south of Milan, which, developing below the line of the resurgences, was and is a dense water system. A network of canals and irrigation ditches that watered the fields, in the layout of which we can recognise the organisational rules defined by the Romans, traces of centuriation in which the entire Po Valley is rationalised and which, at times, follows the even minimal slopes of the land in order to exploit all its potential.

Thus, within the two roads that frame the area of the rail - yard, opened in 1891, but whose footprint appears for the first time in the 1885 version of the Beruto Plan, we can recognize the ancient routes of the Via Emilia, which connected Milan to Piacenza, and the Strada Vigentina, which linked Pavia to Milan, the Vettabbia canal and the irrigation ditches that criss-crossed an area dotted with the productive buildings of the “cascine” and the religious complexes of Chiaravalle Abbey and Viboldone Abbey. A rural landscape whose echoes can be heard less and less since the railway imposed itself, as severe as planning.

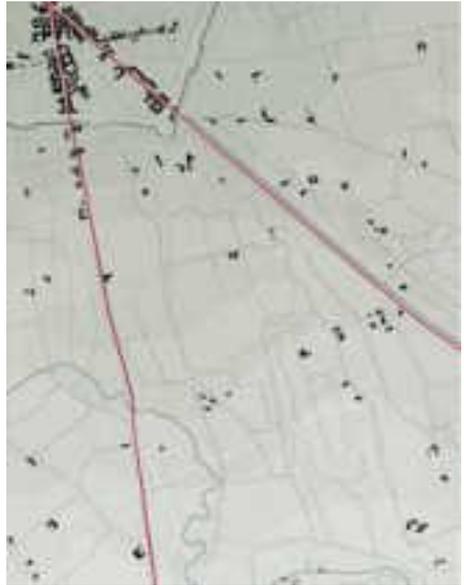
“The union between the railway and the city took place in two ways all over the world: either the railway entered the city, adapting itself to its structure, or it approached the city without entering it, forcing it to change its structure” (De Finetti, 1969). In Milan both attitudes can be recognized.

The first iron road was the one that in 1840 connected the city to Monza with a “head layout” station outside Porta Nuova, and a second station, of the same type, for the line to Treviglio outside Porta Tosa. This first stroke of progress, sitting down with apparent silence in that portion of territory between the city and the irrigated countryside, appeared for the first time in 1865, in the precise map by Giovanni Brenna, but it was already cutting the Lazzaretto, built between the 16th and 17th centuries into two parts, heralding its demolition. The 1885 plan, whose structure was taken up by later plans, overlapped with the national railway belt, with the two passenger stations and four rail - yards in via Farini, Porta Garibaldi, Porta Romana and the Sempione marshalling yard.

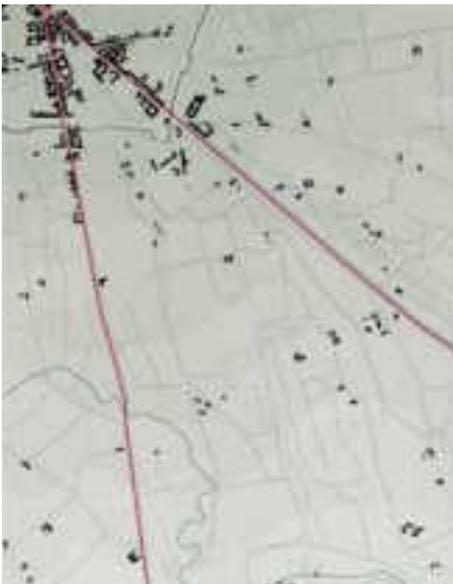
Thus, radial streets intercepted concentric ones and the two wide ring roads.



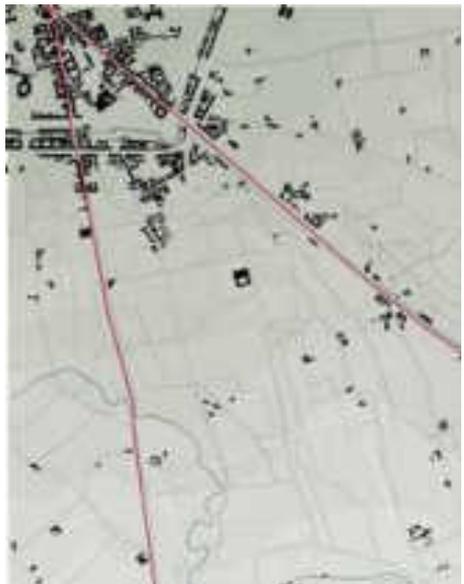
Graphic processing from
Catasto Lombardo Veneto, 1702
Corpi Santi di Porta Romana, foglio 4, Cadastral map



Graphic processing from
Giacomo Pinchetti, 1801
Città di Milano, Map of Milan, detail



Graphic processing from
Giovanni Brenna, 1865
Map of Milan, detail



Graphic processing from
Cesare Beruto, 1889
Town planning scheme of Milan, detail



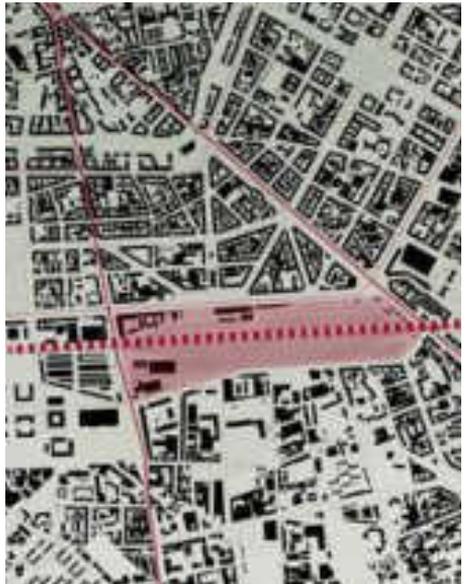
Graphic processing from
Giovanni Masera, Angelo Pavia, 1912
Town planning scheme of Milan



Graphic processing from
Municipality of Milan, 1946
CTC - Carta Tecnica Comunale, Map of Milan, detail



Graphic processing from
Municipality of Milan, 1972
CTC - Carta Tecnica Comunale, Map of Milan, detail



Graphic processing from
Municipality of Milan, 1990
CTC - Carta Tecnica Comunale, Map of Milan, detail

The first followed the route of the demolished Spanish walls, the second ran about 500 metres from the first and was intercepted by diagonal avenues and squares. It also formed the physical boundary of the territory covered by the plan. Margins that still belonged to the fractioned municipality of the Corpi Santi, where old and new industries began to be placed without rules, “along the railway lines disorderly building aggregations, officine, workers’ houses, balconies, latrines, laundry hanging in the wind” (Denti, Mauri, 2000). This imprecise relationship between the urban landscape and the rural landscape, crossed by in the making industries, is the most recent characteristic of this portion of the territory.

For these reasons, an attempt has been made to translate the recognized features into a series of maps accompanying these pages, which are useful for understanding the dynamics of this mutation, while at the same time underlining those strongest signs that still remain today. Attempting to recount this modification over time, through a comparison at the same scale and using the same graph, this work has had the aim of making evident the complex, and often contradictory, relationship that binds the city and the countryside, the area of the rail-yard, the last piece of the city moving southwards, “which subordinates one of its parts, the working-class city, and pushes it towards the countryside” (Monestiroli, 1995), the area of the Parco Agricolo, the last beats of a rural territory that, viceversa, rises.

Interdisciplinary overview

The complexity and contradiction of this Milanese fragment are often made evident by storytellers and artists who better than others are able to crystallize and interpret the state of things and the spirit of the times and places in transformation.

The image that Milan had to give of itself, until just before the arrival of modernity, was the one that Carlo Bossoli and Francesco Citterio give us in their panoramic views.

In these views, it almost feels like we are at the top of one of the buildings in the Rebecchino block, which still stood adjacent to the city’s most majestic late-Gothic cathedral building. The district, consisting of a single block, was

demolished thirty years later, around 1870, in order to build a churchyard more suited to its cathedral. We can recognize the compact configuration of the time; the Piazza del Duomo defined by the Palazzo Reale and by the elevations of the neighbouring quarters, where, in a short time, the Galleria would have made room to connect the new Piazza Duomo to the Teatro alla Scala one. The view of the Alps closed the horizon, at the edge of a succession of crops; snow-capped peaks from which came that breeze recounted many times by Alex Visconti in his chronicles on the 'Milano di una volta'. But an even more explicit witness to this precise condition that characterised pre-industrial Milan is its counter-field. A green ring enclosed the compact city, the bastions on which people used to walk on feast days and from which the same crops are visible and, more rarefied and distant, the city. And so, the area of the Porta Romana rail-yard, with the coming of industrial production and the railroad, as recounted in the maps, became the last offshoot of the city opening out towards the countryside and the first organized system to be encountered coming from it.

Furthermore, the urban landscapes by Mario Sironi return us well the spirit of modern times.

A sequence of prints that, repeated, punctuated the first industrial suburbs, where production and living blended together seamless. The factories, recognizable by their characteristic roofs and smokestacks, the fences that protected the city from the railway system and separated the system of goods handling from the passenger transport one, without denying relationships.



But Umberto Boccioni had already recognized these signs, by telling them as they became. Almost like a reporter, he had recorded the birth and transformation of the Porta Romana rail - yard area. He had lived for a couple of years at number 23 of Via Adige, in one of those diagonal lines planned by Beruto.

In the Officine a Porta Romana, even more than in Mattino, we find those same features of Sironi's suburbs, but we can give them a name. We can recognize the arches of the AEM power station and one of the large chimneys that characterize it. But a sequence of chimneys disappears, in the background, in its own smoke, restoring the image of a very active productive landscape. A hustle and bustle of people flanking that wall, which keeps the tracks away from the city but does not close them off, is a portrait of a frenetic society in full development. On the other side of the street, in the foreground, stands the almost completed construction site of the Mulino Besozzi Marzoli, built between Via Adige and Via Crema. The scaffolding is being dismantled, leaving the windows free, so that it can still be identified today. Similarly, *La strada entra nella casa* continues in a more exasperated manner to describe the speed with which industrialization takes over spaces and society. Next to the Besozzi Marzoli building site, we can glimpse another yard, the Molino Verga one, where we can recognize the foundations and the first elevations. Once again, the factories and chimneys, which are getting closer and closer, blend into the urban fabric of the houses. The streets cross the railings of the balconies, including the one from which the artist's mother, often present in these compositions, looks out. As other women do, she, and we with her, looks at this urban scene in which daily life is confused with the work of the factory.

Buildings on the edge

But these representations also tell us that what we experience today as inaccessible enclosures actually were not meant to be. Not a continuous line, but a hatching left some gaps to allow the tracks to leave the area of the yard and directly reach the factories nearby. These production buildings, all of them built in the same period, contributed to defining the edge of the built city, albeit in the messy and promiscuous manner already described. In the case of Tecnomasio Italiano, for example, it was the factory that extended towards the



Mario Sironi, Periferia, 1921

railway. After merging with the Brown Boveri company, in fact, it expanded its production system in 1909 with the construction of the historic complex in Piazzale Lodi. “On the ground floor there were the warehouses where the trains came in to deliver the raw materials needed for the production of electric motors for industry [...] This area was chosen as the site for the factory because it was connected to the railway station”. This was a concrete exception, since all the other sites had a different relationship with the rail - yard. The railway fence was interrupted by the mills that Boccioni had made as the scene of his stories.

From the station, passing through the gates, the tracks led directly into the interior of the Besozzi Marzoli Mill and the Molino Verga. The construction of the former, begun in 1908, was completed in less than two years and gave Italy

one of the most modern and technological factory of the time. It housed the mill, warehouses, offices, garages, changing rooms for workers and the silo.

In spite of the change in use - the complex has become a residential system and the silo a multi-store car park - it is still possible to recognize it at a glance thanks to architectural scores.

The Molino Verga was built along Via Isonzo at the corner with Via Mantova and its two entrance towers still stand there. Here the train crept into the heart of the block. From a mill to the headquarters of the Stabilimento Saiwa, now the building houses a hotel and has retained the same dimensions and layout.

But the yard's enclosure was also interrupted on the south side. Here the tracks reached a complex, also built around 1910: the prestigious distillery of the Società Italiana Spiriti-SIS. Today, acquired by Fondazione Prada, it host its headquarters. "The Fondazione is not a preservation project and not a new architecture. Two conditions that are usually kept separate here confront each other in a state of permanent interaction—offering an ensemble of fragments that will not congeal into a single image, or allow any part to dominate the others."(Rem Koolhaas, 2018). The OMA studio has chosen to maintain from



Umberto Boccioni, Officine a Porta Romana, 1910

the existing complex, seven industrial buildings, to which it has added three new structures: a space for temporary exhibitions, an auditorium and an exhibition space for the foundation's permanent collection and its activities, placing this place within the more complex artistic and cultural panorama of contemporary Milan.

In any case, until the 1970s, it was not uncommon to see freight wagons coming out of the station wall and going to the production areas of the district, populated by workers, wagons, trucks and busy people; the same busy people of the Officine di Porta Romana, who arrived by train at the passenger station.

The small passenger building no longer fulfils its original function as a ticket office and waiting room, but continues to stand on the level of the railway. At one time it was accessed by crossing a small bridge from Corso Lodi, but now directly from the same. But the historical photographs bring back memories of the most hectic years, when travellers who had just arrived would take the stairs to reach the city. They were the workers of the factories and the railway station, but also the employees of the Consorzio Agrario di Milano e Lodi and the workers of the AEM power station in Piazza Trento.

The Consorzio Agrario, portrayed by Gabriele Basilico in *Ritratti di fabbriche*, together with the well-known service structures of the rail - yard, will soon become Corte Ripamonti, a complex of student residences that will be adjacent to a2a's new office tower, inside the power station complex. The latter was built in 1903 by engineer Tito Gonzales and opened in 1905. It was intended to supply heat and electricity to the city of Milan, countering the monopoly of the Edison Company. A symbol of industrial growth, the power station with its three tall chimneys was decommissioned in 1952. Today, the building continues to serve as a substation and houses the historical photographic archive of the Fondazione AEM, as well as the more recent *Oggi prima di domani*, a photographic project promoted by the same foundation, which contains a series of shots that records the state of the rail-yard system today.



1. Consorzio Agrario di Milano e Lodi



2. AEM Power station
Piazza Trento, 13 (1905-1910)



3. Ex Molino Besozzi Verzoli
Viale Isonzo



4. Ex Molino Verga
Viale Isonzo

1.

2.

3.

4.

6.

5.



5. Ex distilleria SIS Società Italiana Spiriti - Largo Isarco, 2



6. Porta Romana station
Corso Lodi



1. Corte Ripamonti
Via Ripamonti



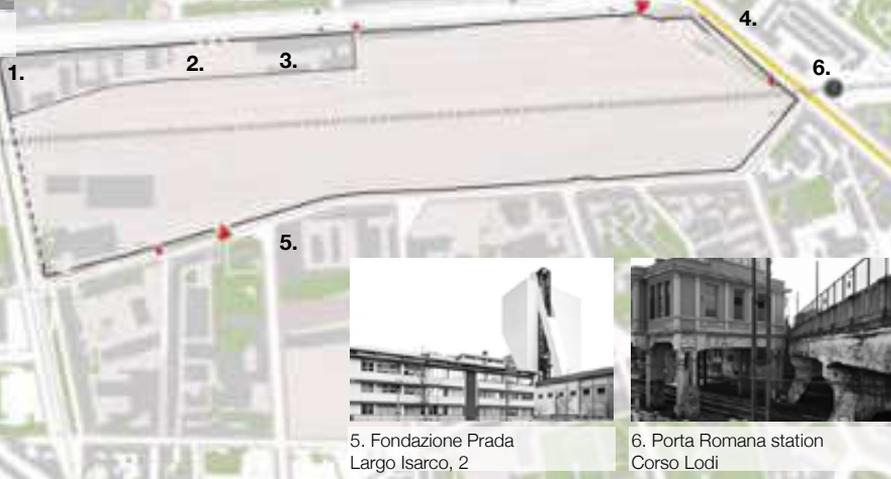
2. Torre A2A - Piazza Trento
Piazza Trento



3. Centrale AEM - Piazza Trento
Piazza Trento, 13



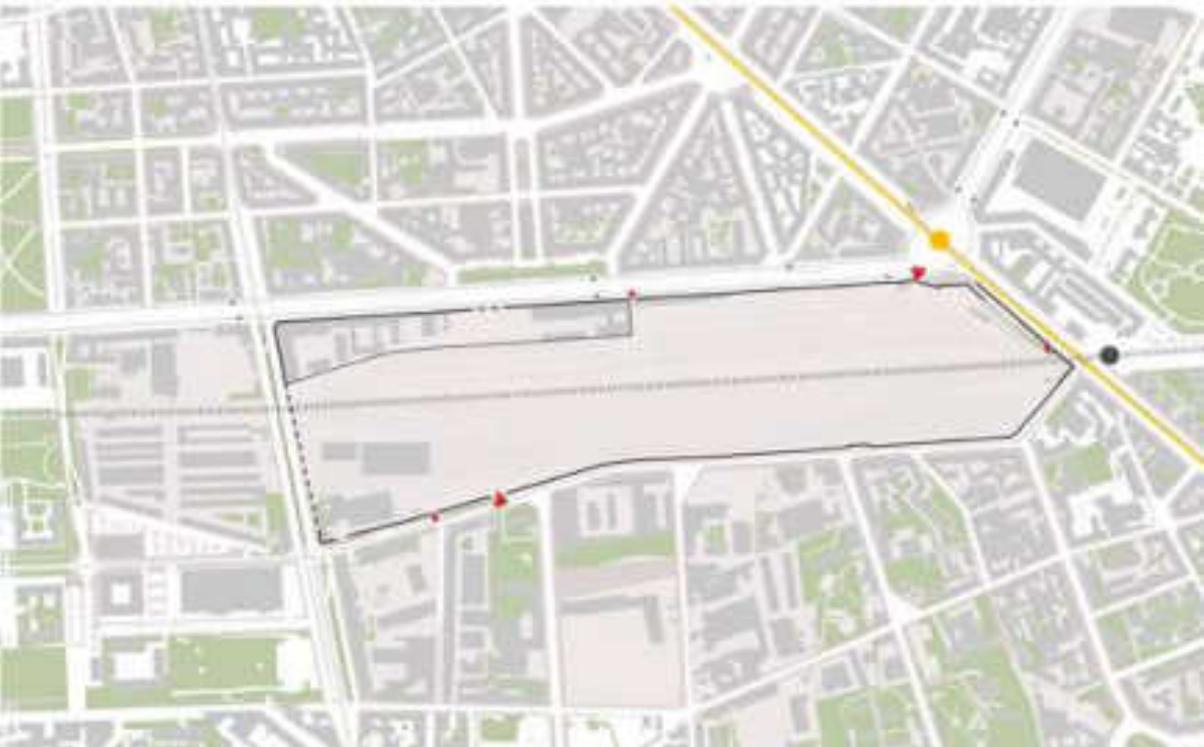
4. Ex Tecnomasio Italiano Brown
Boveri - Piazzale Lodi, 3 (1909)



5. Fondazione Prada
Largo Isarco, 2



6. Porta Romana station
Corso Lodi



- +++++ RAILWAY
- METRO M3
- CIRCULAR BUS
- AUTOBUS
- TRAM

- WALL
- SECONDARY WALL
- - - - FENCE

- ▶ ACCESS
- ▶ SECONDARY ACCESS

Porta Romana current situation



Gabriele Basilico, 1978
Via Ripamonti, Porta Romana rail-yard, service structures

Two gazes

The recent contemporaneity of the Porta Romana rail-yard offers various possible readings. Two different gazes in particular characterize the singular points of view of two photographers who frame - in their personal "focusing" on reality - different perspectives; places that are geographically and chronologically distant, but also sentimentally distant in terms of personal sensitivity. Two parallel gazes that have in common a deep research between architecture and sociology that does not stop at the appearance of showing but seeks to investigate, with the differences underlined, the state of the art of the places we live in our cities. Two complementary gazes that inside and outside the rail-yard enclosure translate, with means refined by years of work, the reality often distractedly



Giuseppe Corbetta, 2016
Via Ripamonti, Porta Romana rail-yard, service

observed by those who live it. One shot, another, a sequence of images open up a corresponding path of reflection that shows how blind our attention is without a perceived reflection. Distant times and modes are equivalent in the search for the space green-grey coloured inside and grey-black outside a city that excludes and freezes its history without knowing how to give it new life, the archival reading that catalogues and compares spaces without any other words than images. Francesco Radino and Marco Introini thus become the actors in a dialogue at a distance, an urban comedy that through continuous cross-references provides us with an exclusive reading, a staging that represents the city in its less obvious nature, a resilience that stops change with no possibility of reflecting on the spaces that have been concluded except with respect to the logic of speculation.

The confrontation is measured in different perspectives, alive with geometries and tight, loose compositions, demonstrating - if there were still a need - that the photographer's attentive eye not only documents the world but also allows you to imagine its future.

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Marco Introini, 2018
Scalo Porta Romana | Courtesy Fondazione AEM



Marco Introini, 2018
Scalo Porta Romana | Courtesy Fondazione AEM





Francesco Radino, 2018
Scalo Porta Romana | Courtesy Fondazione AEM



03. WORKSHOPS

The MIAW – Milan International Architecture Workshop is the international intensive program of the School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering. It is an international design forum for schools, teachers and students, but it is also an informal platform to discuss different issues and share ambitions. The aim of the workshop is to stimulate cross-over thinking between researchers and practitioners in the design field, involving different scales and encouraging an interdisciplinary approach towards the design problems. Each class of the workshop is held by an International Guest Professor of high profile whose activity and interests are related to the different study courses and disciplinary areas characterizing our school.

The MIAW 2021 edition will focus on the event of the 2026 Winter Olympic Games Milano-Cortina. The workshop will allow to experiment new architectural approaches that will make the Olympic Games physically-responsible, socially-sustainable and environmentally-friendly. The classes will focus on urban strategies and architecture projects to be implemented in the sites dedicated to the Olympic Games in Milan, with the intention of transforming the event in an opportunity for the city of Milan through a long-term regeneration process.

WS.A
Hervé
Dubois



WS.A

Hervé Dubois

Tutors: Arianna Scaioli, Silvio Lussana

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 Delepine Gaia
 Elwaleed Abdelaziz Ali Sara
 Gao Lina
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 Mazzucchi Michela

Ozorno Arriaga Ana Laura
 Paganini Lorenzo
 Papais Carolina
 Portalier Antoine-Marie Jacques
 Valery
 Restelli Lucrezia
 Saeidi Sahand
 Singh Advicka
 Stringhetti Marco
 Tan Yueqing
 Wang Ying

Hervé Dubois: Graduated at l'école d'architecture Paris-Belleville. Since 2015, he is teaching at ENSA Paris-Val de Seine (CPS president since 2018). He is visiting professor at Politecnico di Milano (2013-2020). In 2008-2015 he was teacher at ENSA Marseille. 2002-2008 teacher at ENSA Lille. 2001-2002, invited teacher at Politecnico di Milano. 1998-2002, teacher at ENSA Lille. 1995-1998, associate teacher at ENSA Lille. 1991-1994, assistant at Ecole d'architecture de l'Université de Genève. Since 2015 he is Architecte-conseil de l'état in French Guyane.

Linear infrastructure

The atelier investigated the regeneration of Porta Romana rail yard by defining an urban project that answers the necessity of designing an Olympic Village and prefiguring a new stratified urban geography. The intervention proposes a multi-scalar and multi-thematic approach developing both large networks and local connections to foster a new shared vision of living through the definition of a raised public space connecting the city with the landscape and the Alps.

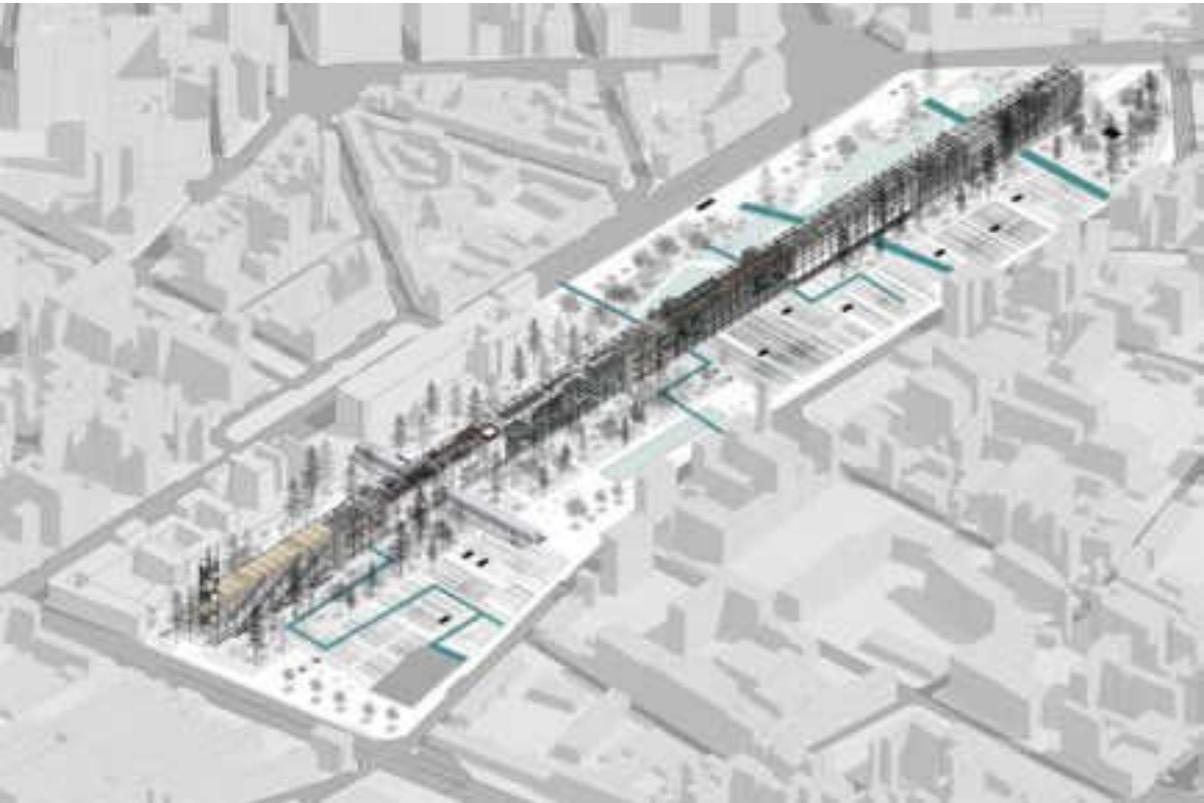
At first, the students divided into eight groups focused on a survey and collecting information, data and images to think critically and propose an initial design approach structured around specific topics they identified.

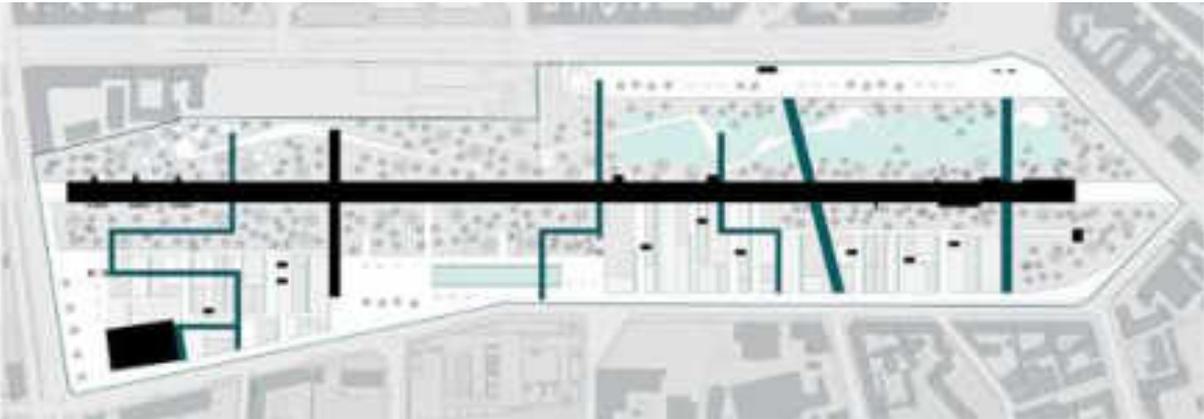
It leads to the definition of a common objective strategy that aims at localizing a linear infrastructure that flows horizontally above the railway lines. Two groups have defined its double frame through a primary structure, 10x10 m, that remains and describes stronger relations and a secondary one, 5x5 m, which is lighter and can be modified, allowing the city to evolve.

One of the groups focused on the ground floor, which is entirely free and configures a performative urban landscape able to answer the future city's challenges and mend the gap created by this underused area. Parallely, six groups worked with the linear infrastructure developing a vertical city, and looking into the dualism between public and private by integrating housing units, shared spaces and public facilities. Through this, the students conceived an interlinked vertical connection system, using the section as a design tool to understand the spatial relations among those plugged-in elements.

The last floor – a street in the sky – is designed by the last group in contact with the previous one and organize the relation to the Milanese cityscape and the north's alps mountains.

In conclusion, the atelier's final purpose was to allow a common work aiming at a shared objective, intersecting different points of view during the whole design process, to set up a more participative and cooperative approach for a holistic urban design project.

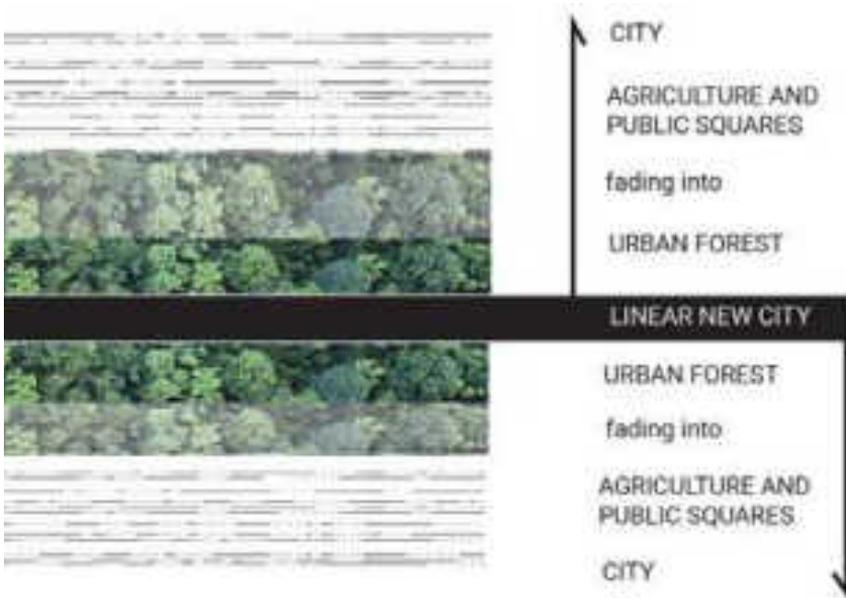




Performative Landscape | Masterplan



Performative Landscape | General elevation from the southern side of the railway



Performative Landscape | Decreasing density principle



Performative Landscape | General elevation from the southern side of the railway yard



Performative Landscape | Cross-sections along the linear infrastructure



Performative Landscape | General elevation from the southern side of the railyard



Performative Landscape | Communal agricultural spaces

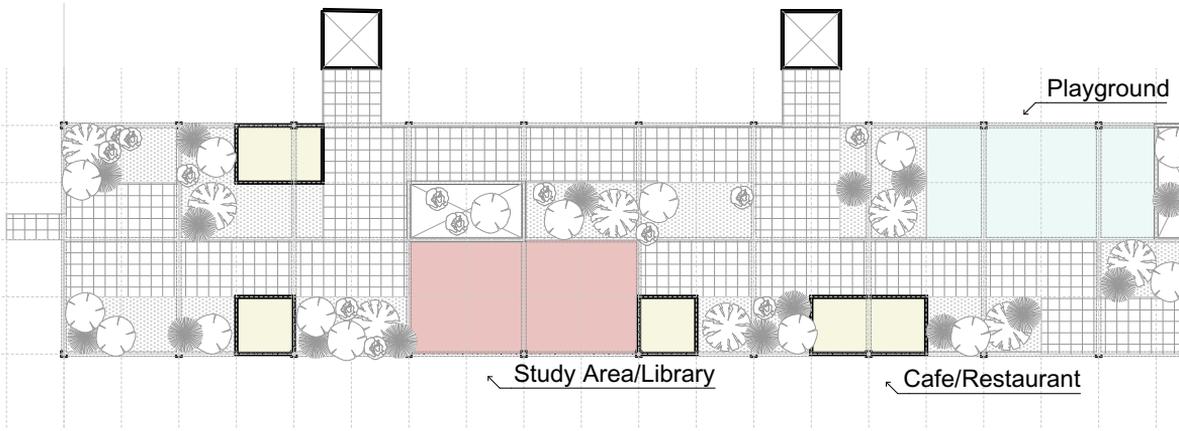


Performative Landscape | Water squares and public spaces



Performative Landscape | Wetlands and green spaces for urban resilience

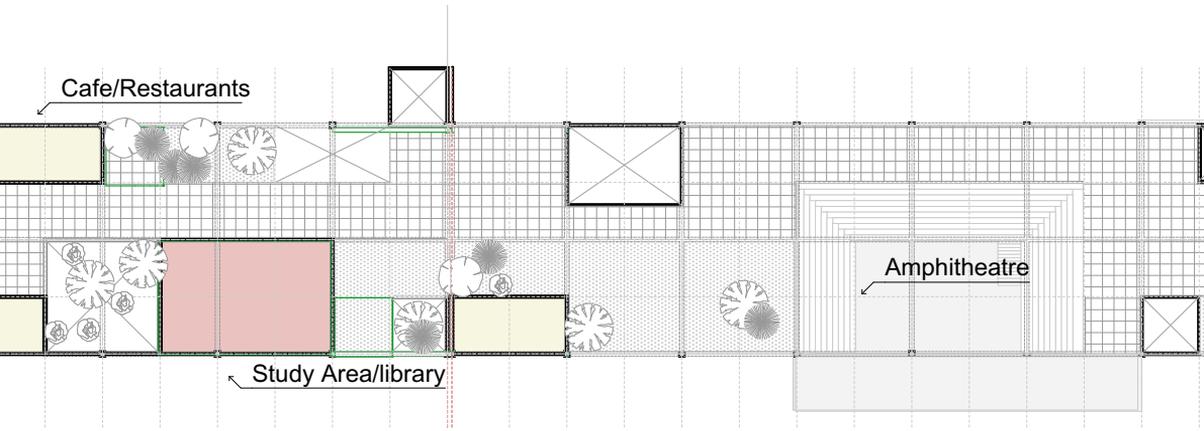




The street in the sky | New urban public ground. General Plan



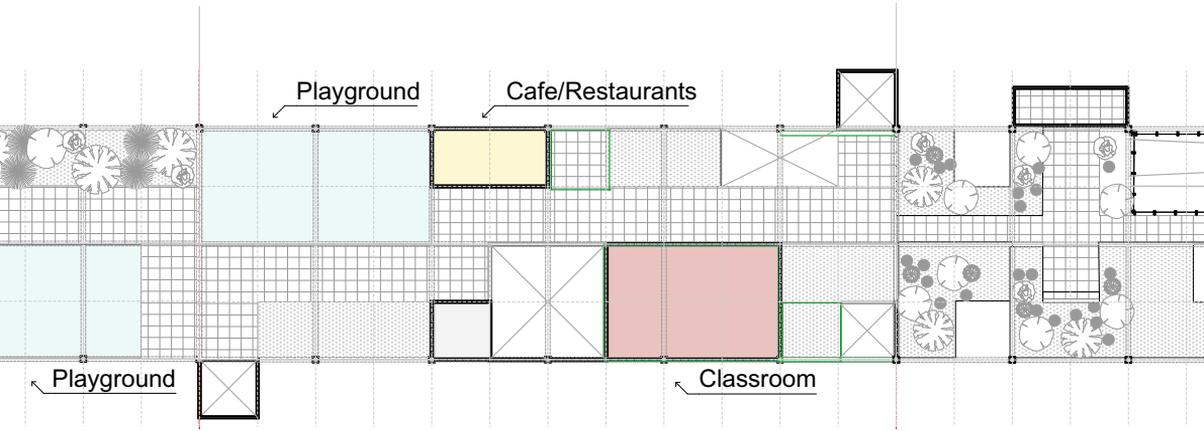
The street in the sky | View of the communal gardens on the rooftop



The street in the sky | New urban public ground. General Plan



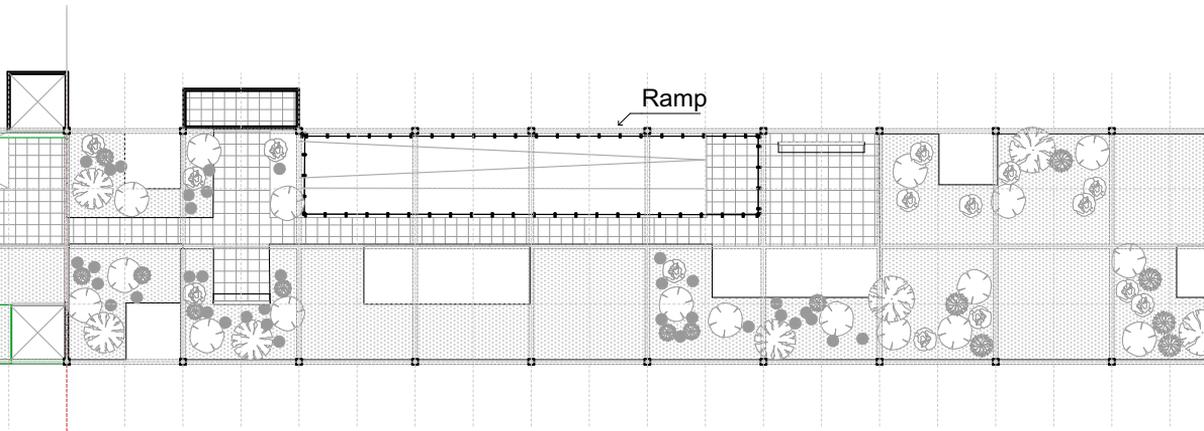
The street in the sky | View of the amphitheatre on the rooftop



The street in the sky | New urban public ground. General Plan



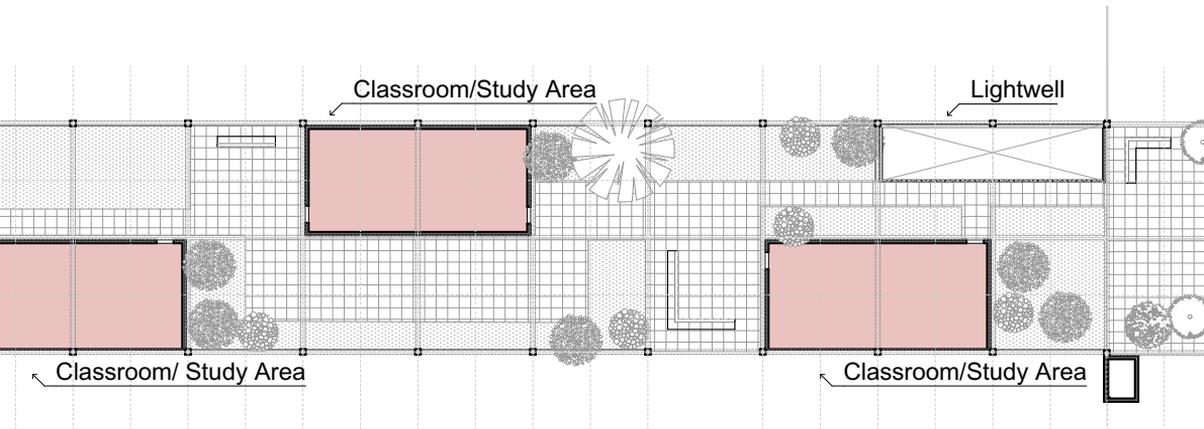
The street in the sky | View of the Milanese skyline from the rooftop



The street in the sky | New urban public ground. General Plan



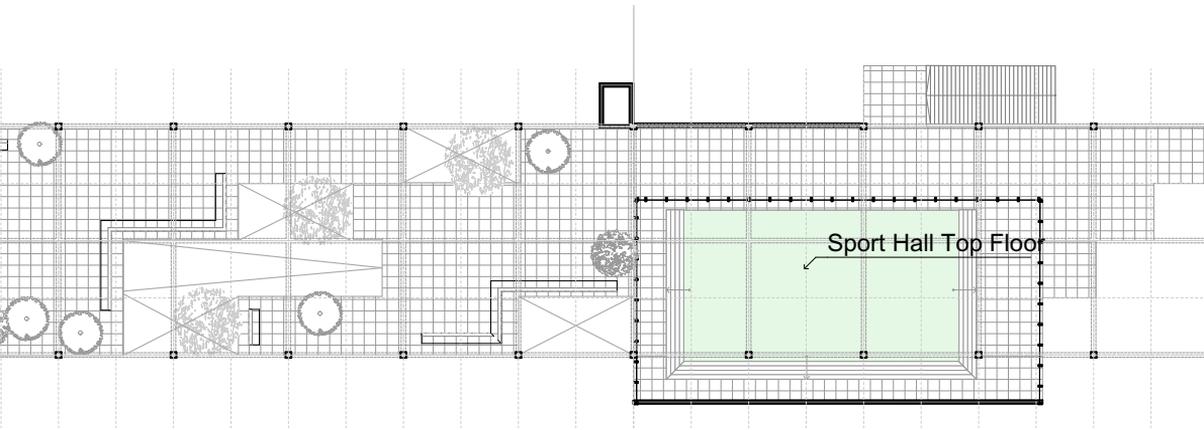
The street in the sky | View of the vertical farm from the rooftop



The street in the sky | New urban public ground. General Plan



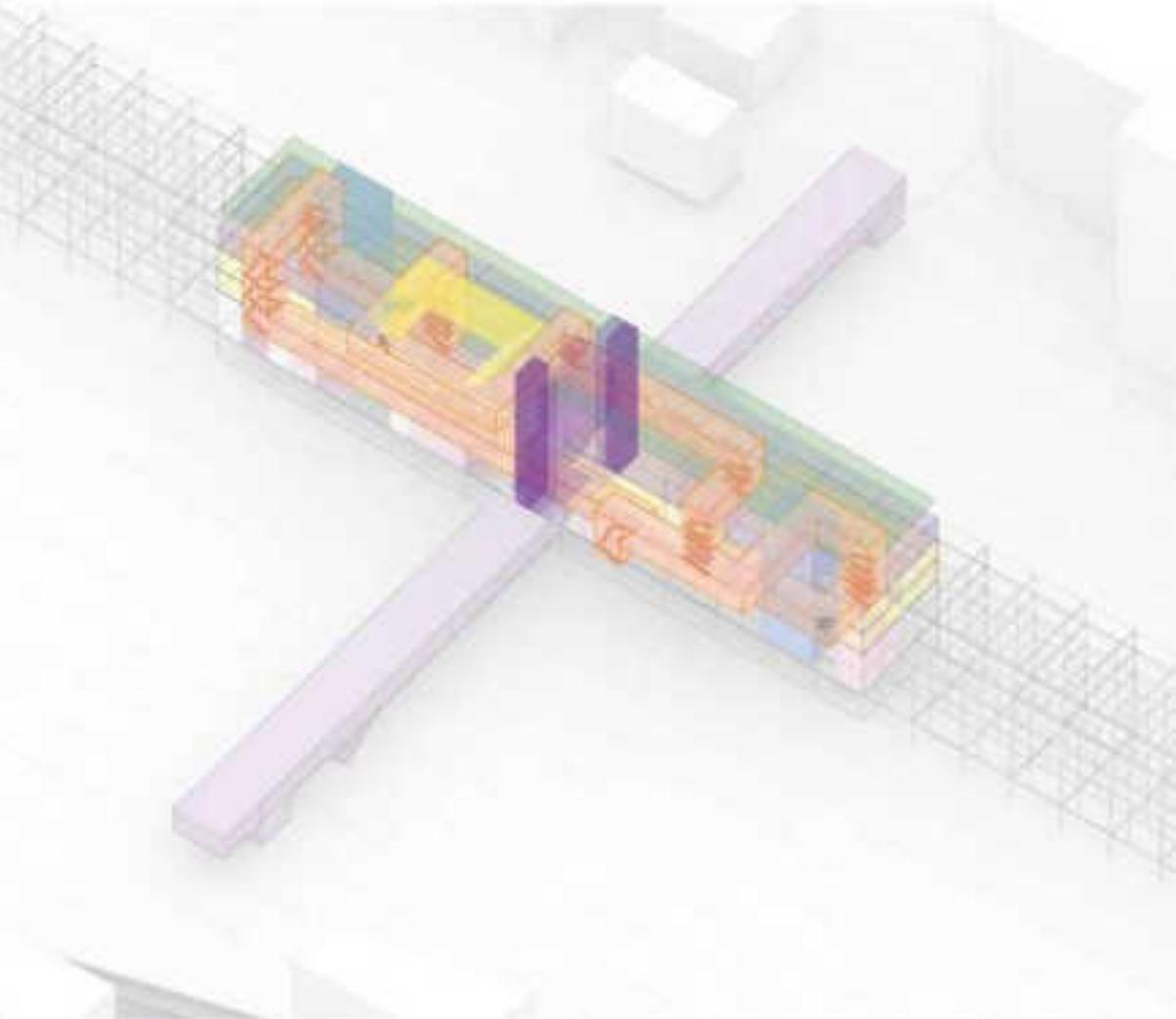
The street in the sky | View of the system of Lightwell on the rooftop

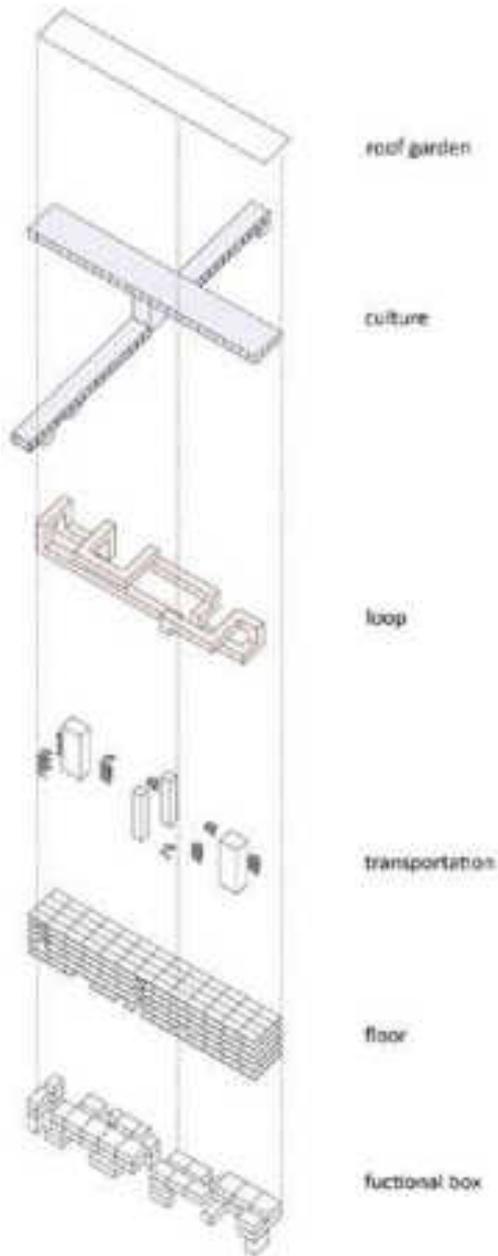


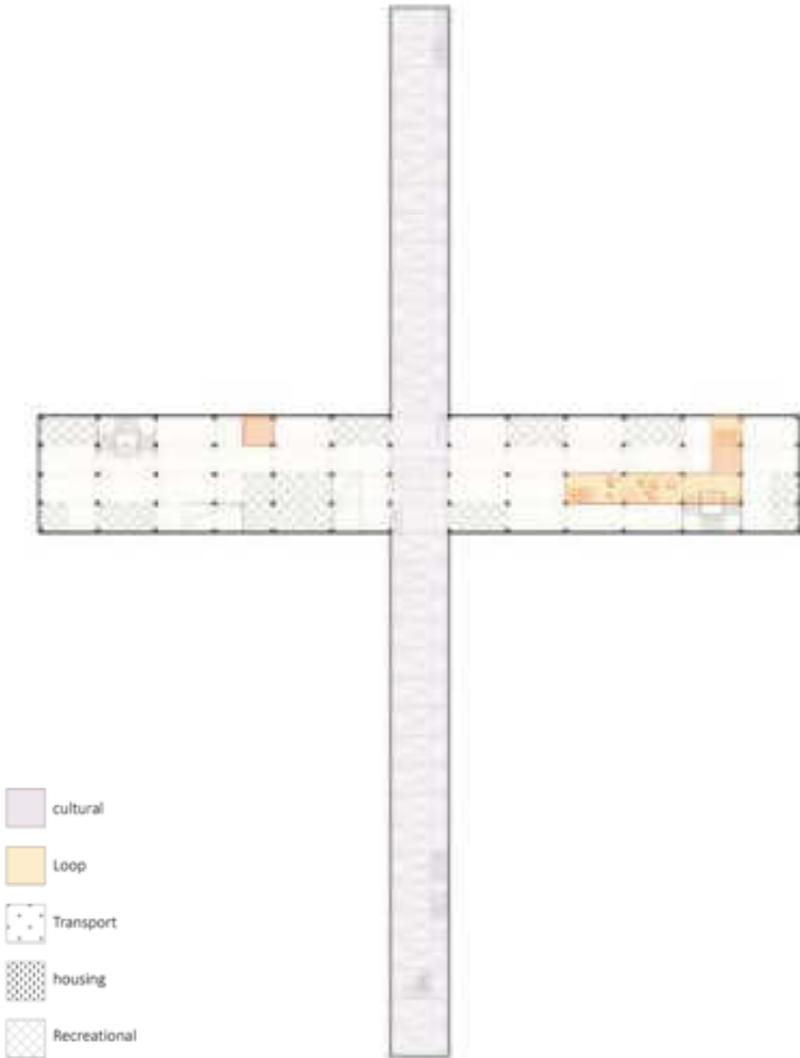
The street in the sky | New urban public ground. General Plan

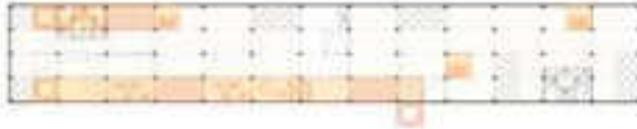


The street in the sky | View of the Sport Hall on the rooftop

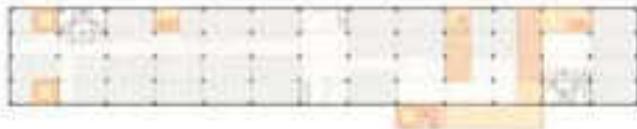




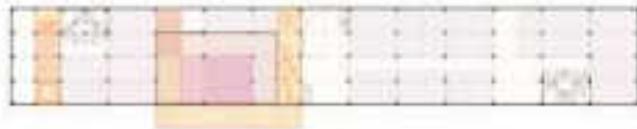




Vertical City_Group 5 | Second Floor Plan



Vertical City_Group 5 | Third Floor Plan



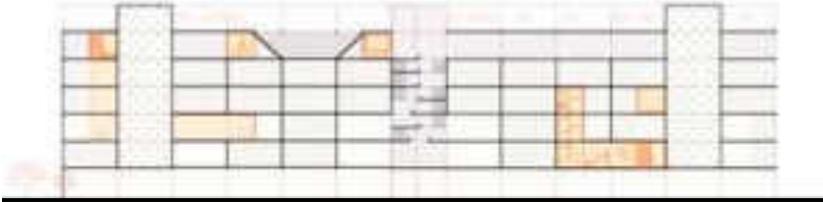
Vertical City_Group 5 | Fifth Floor Plan



Vertical City_Group 5 | View from the transversal element



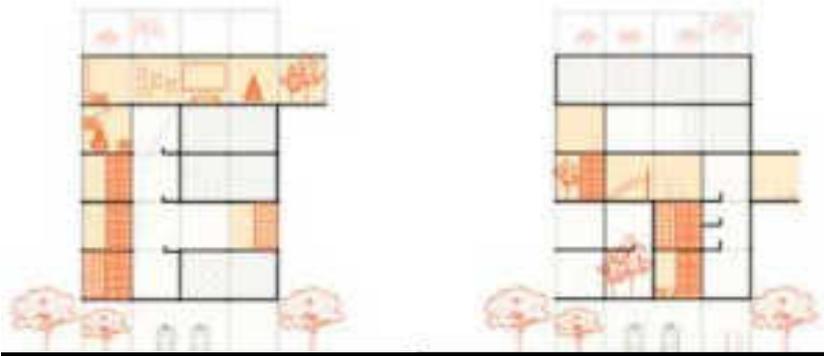
Vertical City_Group 5 | Inside the linear infrastructure



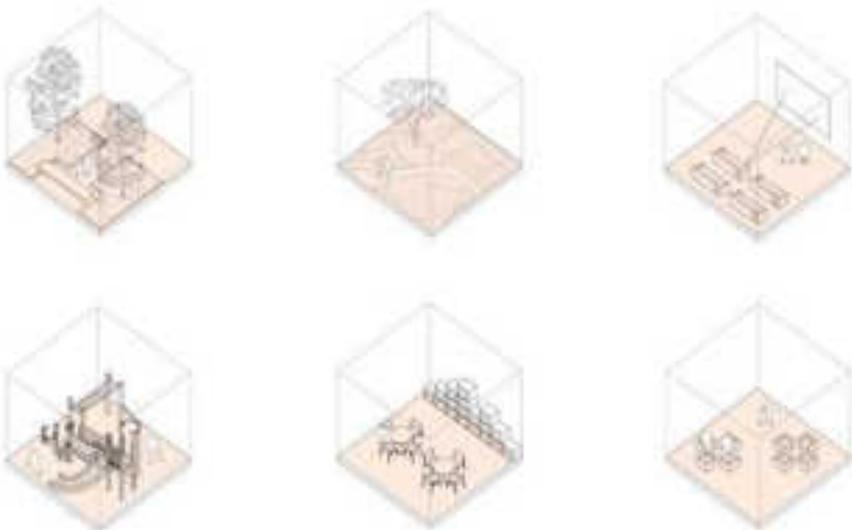
Vertical City_Group 5 | Longitudinal section



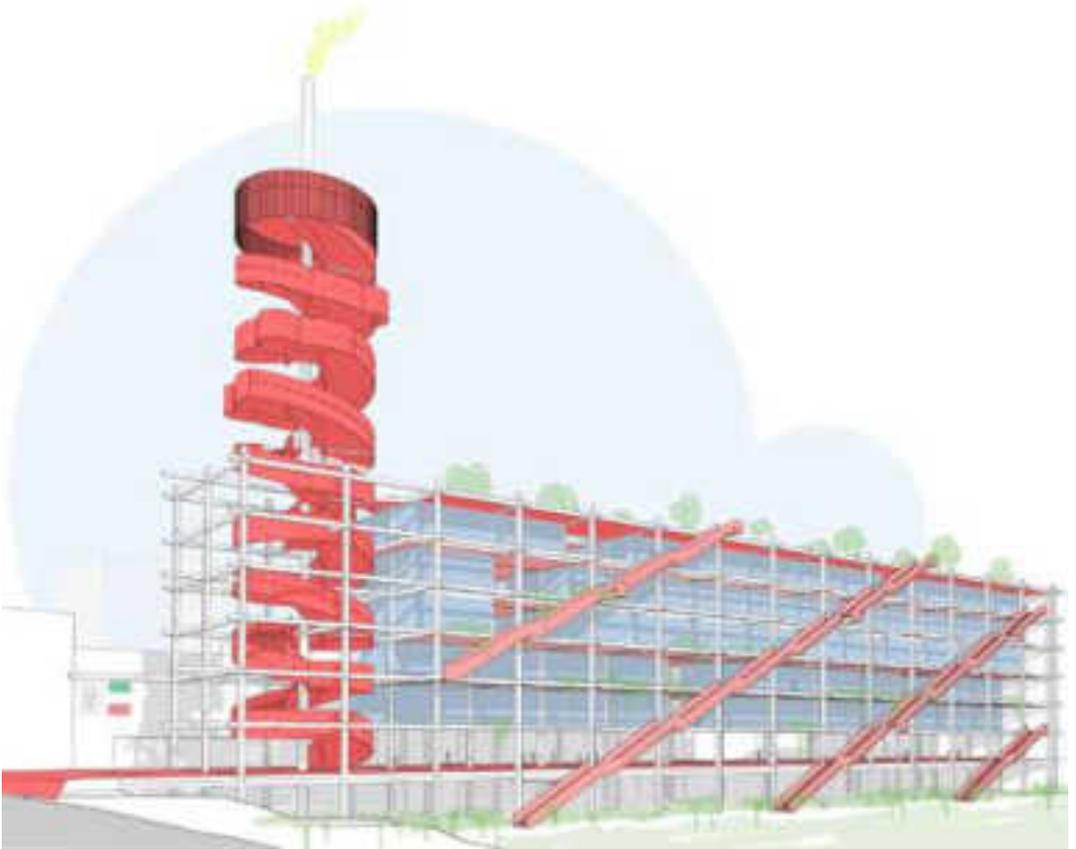
Vertical City_Group 5 | Cross-section along the linear infrastructure

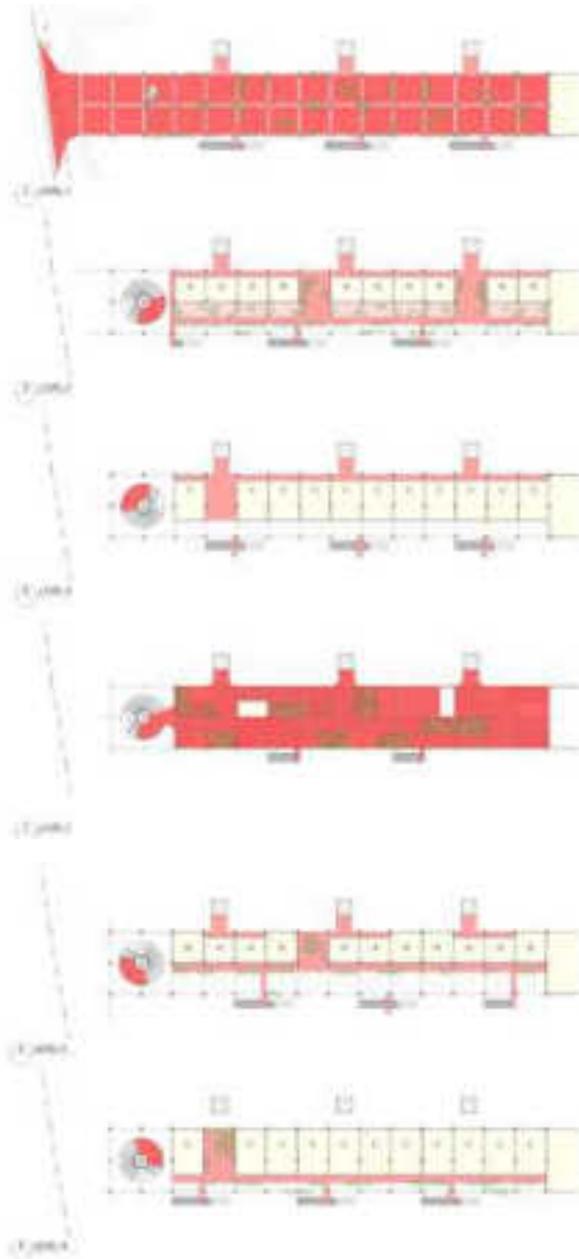


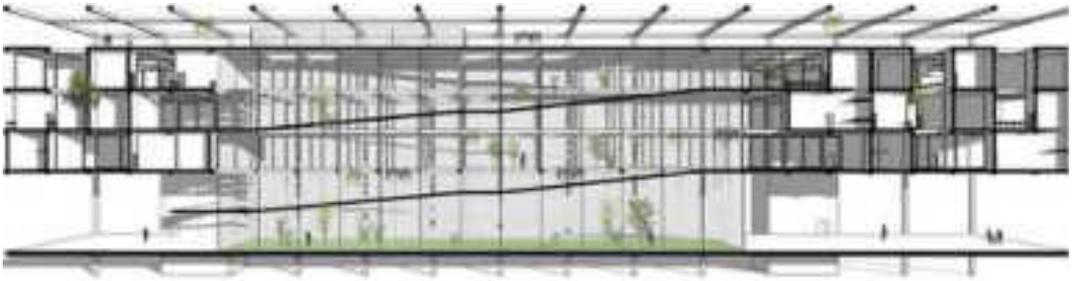
Vertical City_Group 5 | Cross-sections along the linear infrastructure



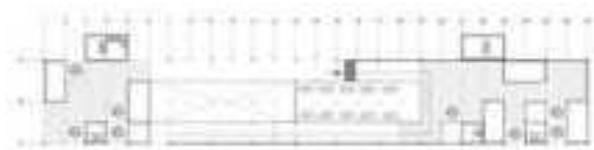
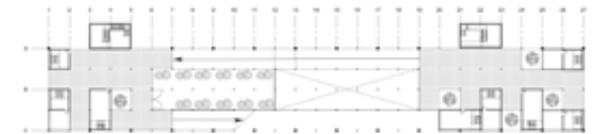
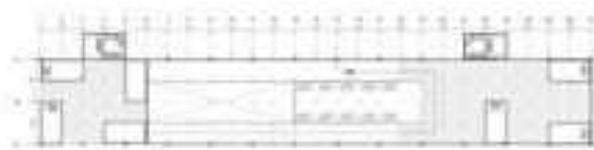
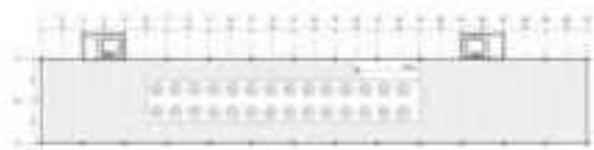
Vertical City_Group 5 | External view from the urban forest and Abacus of spaces of the loop's modules



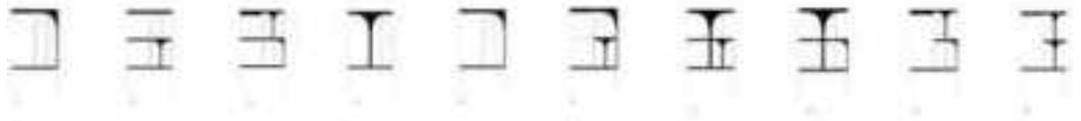




Vertical_City_Group 3 | Longitudinal perspective section

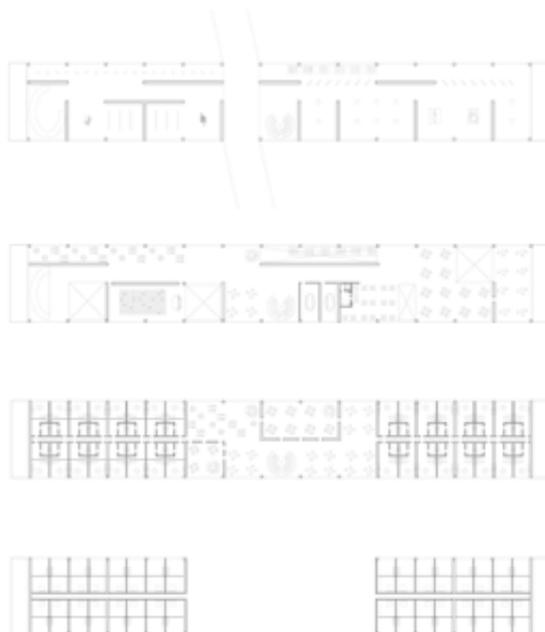


Vertical_City_Group 3 | From the top: plan of ground floor, first floor, second floor and third floor

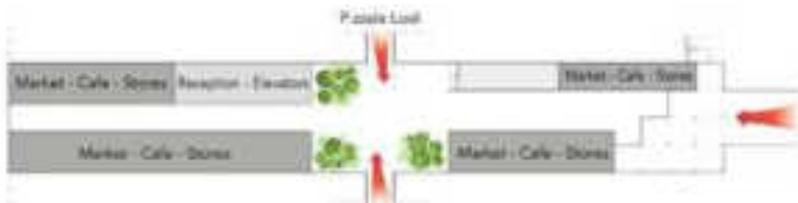




Vertical City_Group 4 | Urban analysis



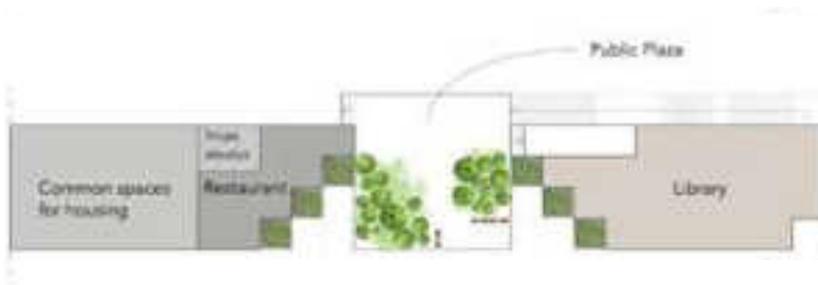
Vertical City_Group 4 | Plans of the intervention



Vertical City_Group 6 | First Floor Plan



Vertical City_Group 6 | Fourth Floor Plan



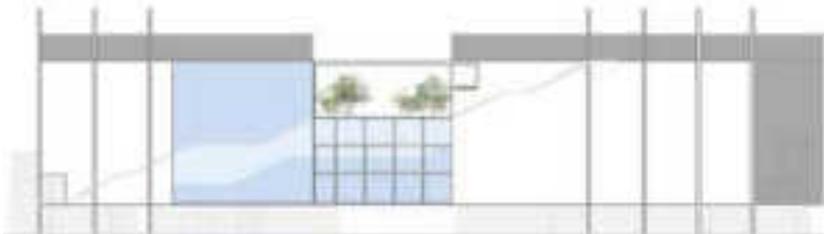
Vertical City_Group 6 | Fifth Floor Plan



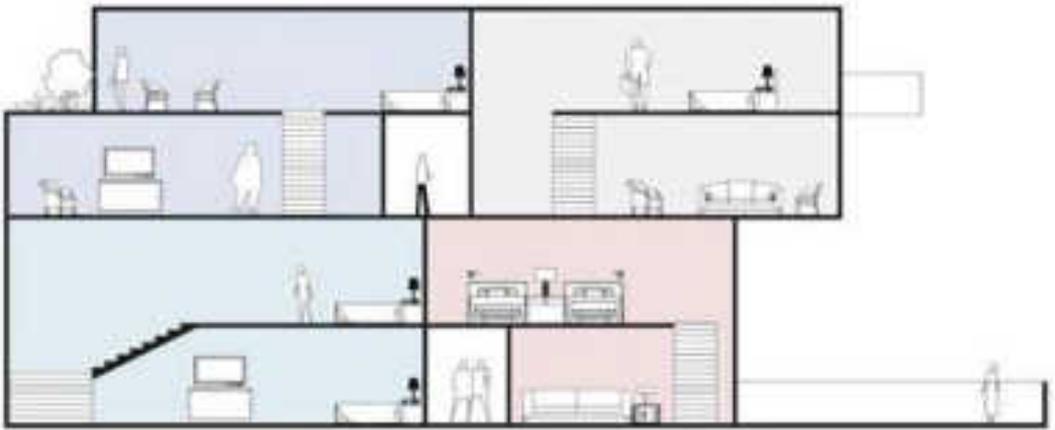
Vertical City_Group 6 | Cross-Section along the linear infrastructure



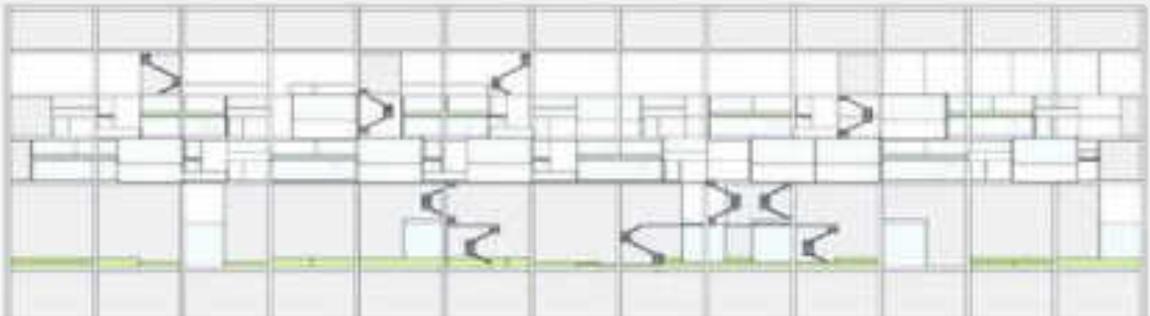
Vertical City_Group 6 | South Elevation



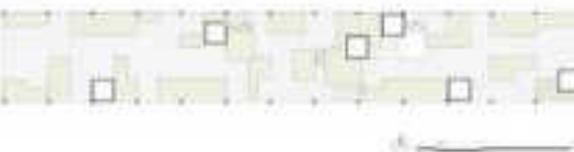
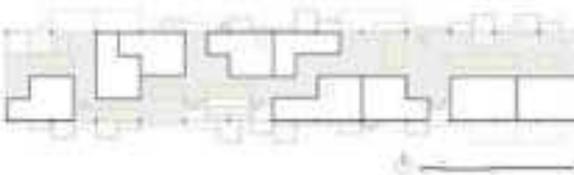
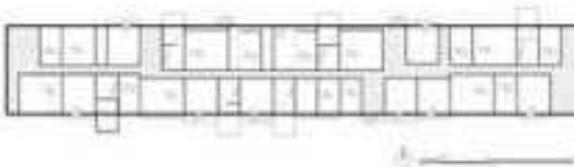
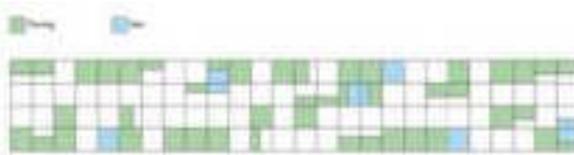
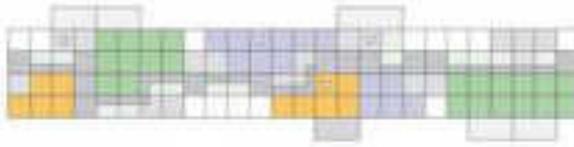
Vertical City_Group 6 | North Elevation



Vertical City_Group 8 | Cross section of the housing

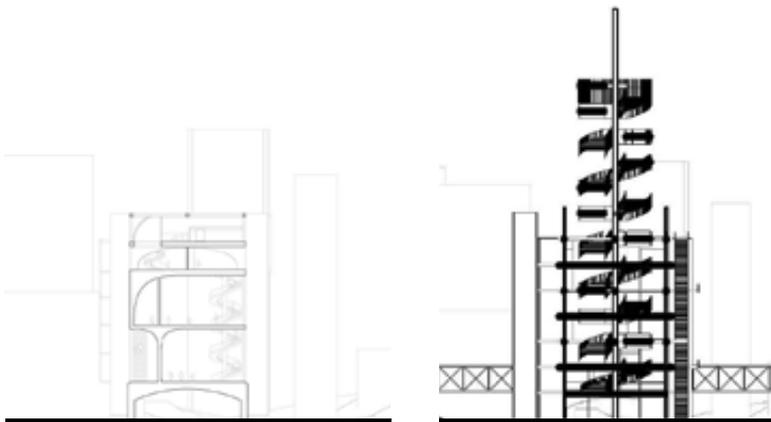


Vertical City_Group 8 | Longitudinal section





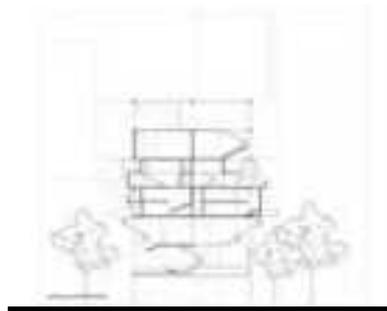
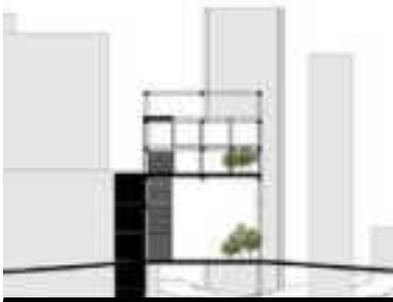
Vertical City_Group 3 | Perspective cross-section



Vertical City_Group 4 + Group 1 | Cross-sections along the linear infrastructure



Vertical City_Group 3 | Perspective cross-section



Vertical City_Group 6 + Group 8 | Cross-sections along the linear infrastructure

WS.B

Donatella

Fioretti



WS.B

Donatella Fioretti

Tutors: Alessandro Raffa, Gianluca Pelucchi

Participants

Abdurrahman Furkan Balci
 Arif Sertan Taşdelen
 Barbara Gudeljevic
 Bozhen Cao
 Eesha Shrivastava
 Eva Valentini
 Guangping Tao
 Ilaria Donadel
 Irem Karabulut
 Made Harris Kuncara
 Qiyang Zhang
 Riccardo Pastrello

Ryan Azhar
 Shaohang Qiu
 Simone Scalcinati
 Siyi Wang
 Sofiiia Zozulia
 Uliana Averina
 Wanfei Shan
 Xiaohui Yu
 Xiaoyu Li
 Yiging Qui
 Yingyi Ding
 Zahra Mastaliparsa

Donatella Fioretti studied architecture at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura in Venice and at the University of Kassel. In 1995, she established a collaboration with Piero Bruno und José Gutierrez Marquez in Berlin and Lugano.

The office's projects are mainly resulting of successful competitions. Focus of their work are libraries, museums, kindergartens, schools, universities and housing.

Some buildings are realized in UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

"Bruno Fioretti Marquez" has won awards for design excellence, among them the German Architecture Prize, the DAM Prize for Architecture in Germany, the Hugo Häring Prize, the BDA Prize Berlin, the Detail Special Award, the German Brick Award.

Teaching and participation in workshops, seminars, lectures and juries in Germany and abroad. From 2004 until 2008 Donatella Fioretti was an invited professor, between 2011 and 2017 she held a full professorship, both at TU Berlin. In 2018 she was appointed to the chair of Baukunstklasse at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.

Elusive palimpsest

The 2021 Miaw intensive workshop had been challenging for many reasons: on the one side, it had been a relevant opportunity for questioning, through design, possible development scenarios for Porta Romana railyards.

Considering the commitment of the Politecnico to be an essential key player for the future development of the city, we asked the students to be critical about the program, the size and the disposition of the building volumes that should be outlined in Porta Romana. This site will be crucial for the upcoming transformation of the area.

We discussed how to approach this complex void during the workshop, reinterpreting its identity, dealing with its elusive inner palimpsest, made of abandoned industrial buildings, of fragile elements like disused rail tracks, steel poles and spontaneous vegetation.

On the other side, the workshop had been the occasion to experiment with teaching allowing students with different cultural backgrounds, interests and approaches to work together remotely.

We were surprised by the students' considerable engagement and their consistent, sensible and poetic proposals.

Each of the four groups had to take a critical position on the future of the Porta Romana railyard, articulating their design scenarios on three interweaving hypotheses: a landscape, an urban and a typological concept.

Multi-belt_ The borders of the site had been reinforced through the consolidation of the perimeter. According to the surrounding contest, the 'belt' reacts differently, redesigning the relationship between the city and the former railway yard, which becomes a multifunctional urban park.

Re-stitching Porta Romana_ A light, meandering structure on thin pillars reinforces the transversal connections between North and South. It redefines the void through a sequence of spaces in which ecological and urban functions coexist in a common ground, echoing the agricultural landscape's rural patterns of the nearby Parco Sud.

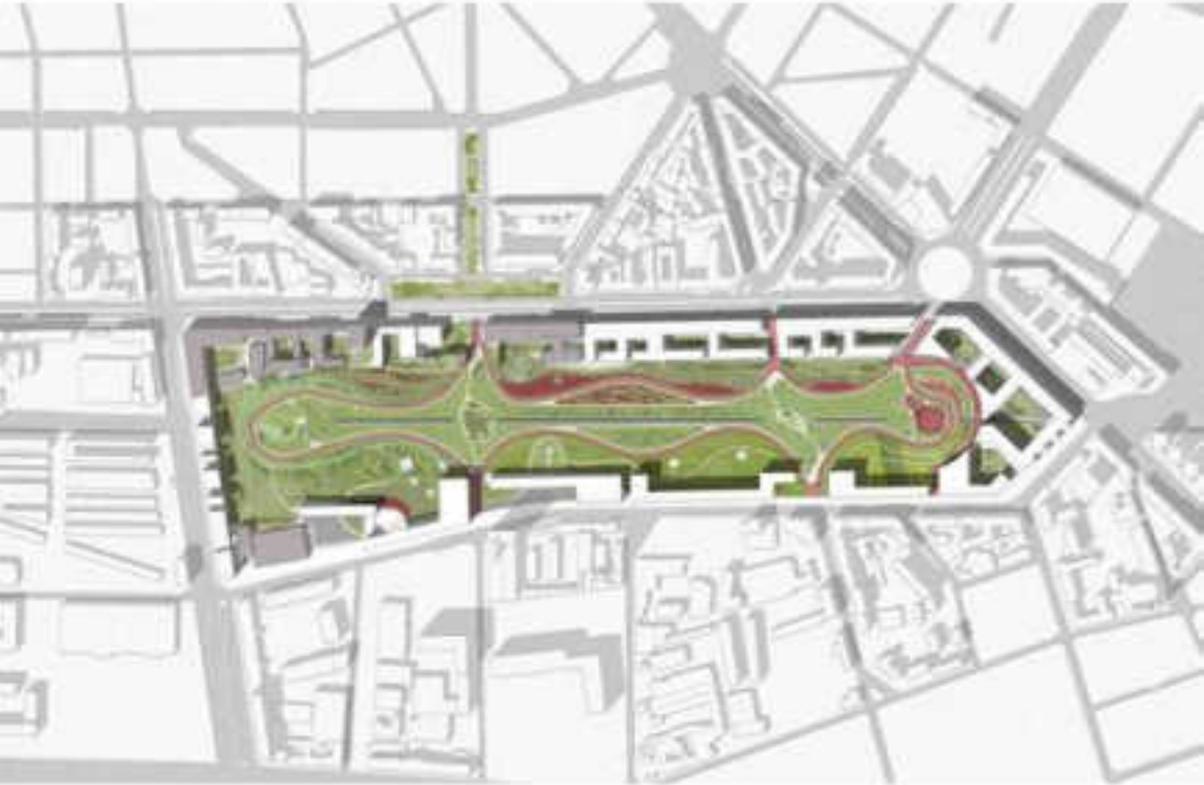
Green Flow_ The consolidation of the North edge of the site with a linear sequence of blocks ending with a tower is part of a multi-scalar, resilient, ecological strategy. The resource management of soil, water, wind and the reuse of abandoned railway artefacts contribute to defining a park with specific and consistent connections with the heterogeneous traces of the area.

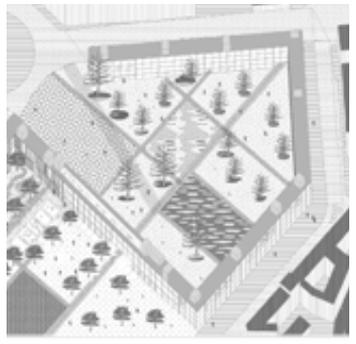
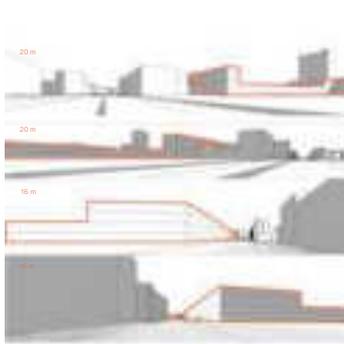
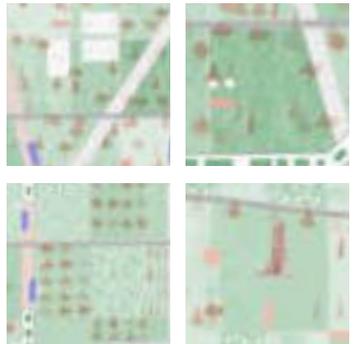
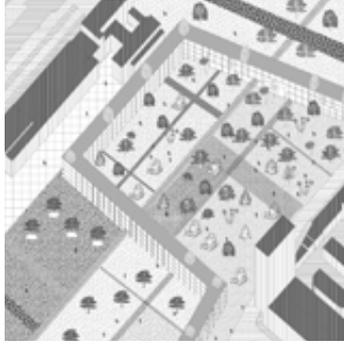
Binario km 1.24_ The linearity of the railway becomes the occasion to articulate a weak configuration of architectural pieces. It is made of linear blocks, towers and bridges which react with a new 'ruderal' landscape, in which the integration of disused rail tracks, existing industrial buildings and spontaneous vegetation create a park profoundly rooted in the collective memory of the site.



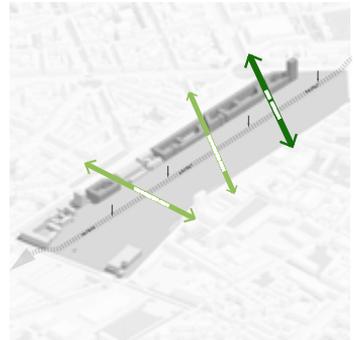
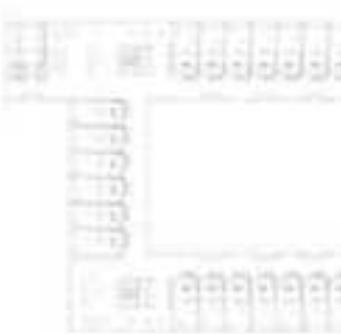
Kiefer's 'laßt tausend Blumen blühen', 2012.
(© Anselm Kiefer, courtesy Gagosian Gallery, photograph by Charles Duprat)

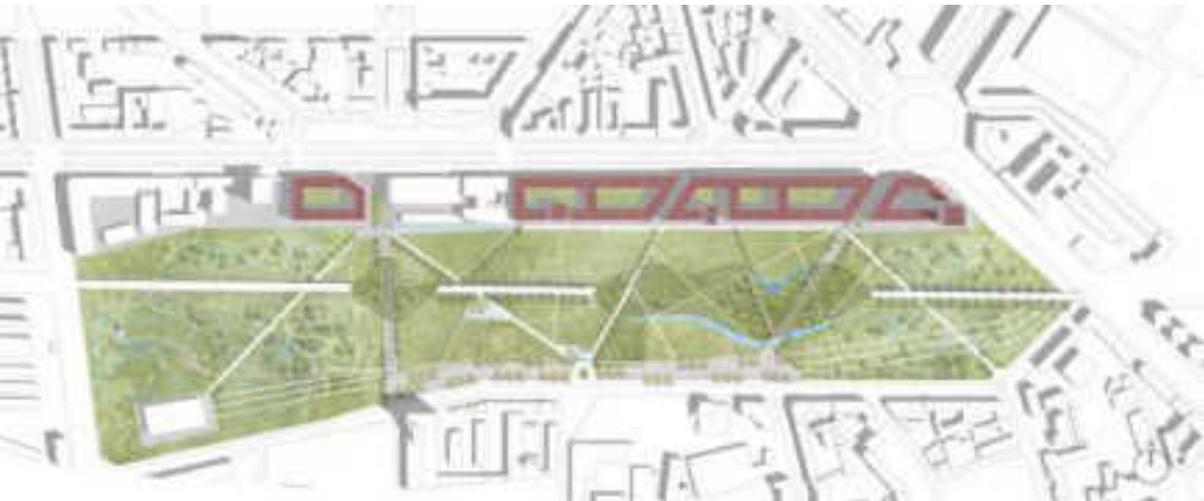


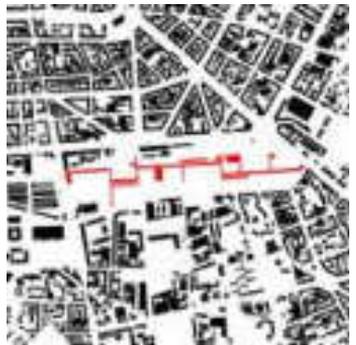
















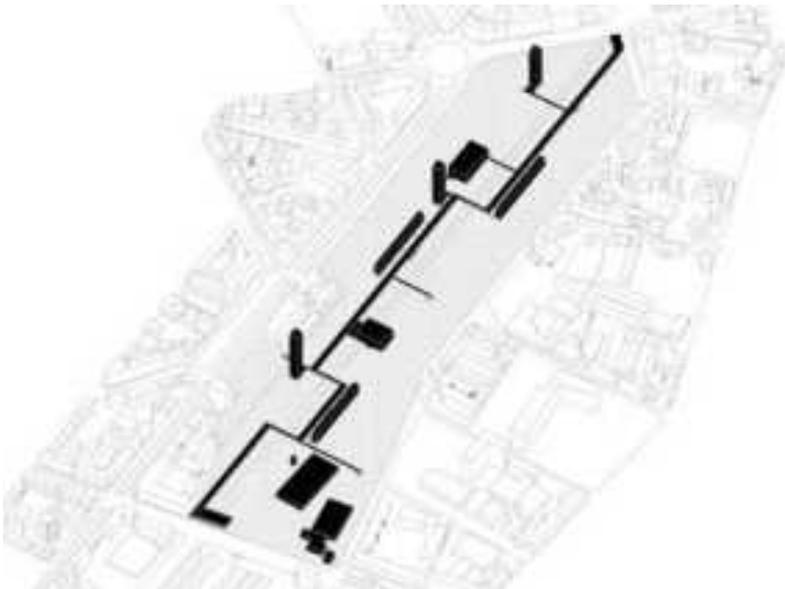
Multi-belt | Bird's eye view



Re-stitching | Bird's eye view



Green flow | Bird's eye view



Binario Km 1.24 | Bird's eye view



Binario Km 1.24 | Conceptual view of the the residential buildings



Binario Km 1.24 | Conceptual view of the the ruderal landscape



Binario Km 1.24 | Conceptual view of the main walkway and residential building



Re-stitching | Conceptual view of the residential building and Torre Prada



Re-stitching | Conceptual view of the residential building and Torre Prada from the train



Green-flow | Conceptual view of the ruderal landscape



Green-flow | Conceptual view of the ruderal landscape



WS.C

**Sebastián
Irarrázaval**



WS.C

Sebastián Irarrázaval

Tutors: Bice Ghetti, Riccardo Rapparini

Participants

Bardem Tatiana
 Casiraghi Marta
 Castelnuovo Silvia
 Chen Minghui
 Chen Ting
 Delle Donne Nicholas
 Delmedico Michelangelo
 Ekhina Maria
 Gadru Shikha
 Ghanaie Negin
 Gokkaya Serra
 Huang Jingjing
 Konyalioglu Emrecan
 Luo Yi

Mimica Tanja
 Montero Lopez M. Jose
 Navidbakhsh Aida
 Nguyen Trung Kien
 Padovani Davide
 Pham Hong Ngoc
 Pirovano Federico
 Pluda Carlotta
 Sforza Caterina
 Tekci Kardelen
 Vapelnik Valeriia
 Yener Fulya
 Zhou Yue

Sebastián Irarrázaval was taught as an architect in the Universidad Católica in Santiago and the Architectural Association in London. In 1993 he set up his own practice in Santiago. In 1999 he receives the AOA (Architecture Offices Association) award to the most outstanding young architect and was awarded at the Architecture Biennial in Chile. Teaches design studio at the Universidad Católica de Chile since 1994 and has taught as visiting professor in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA, 2007) and the Istituto Universitario de Architettura de Venezia (Italy, 2016, 2020). His projects have been published worldwide in specialized magazines, among them: Casabella, Arquitectura Viva, ARQ, and A+U. Practice work has been exhibited locally and abroad. Recent exhibitions include XV Chilean Architectural Biennial, Venice Biennale, Shenzhen and Hong Kong bi-city Biennial where he received the Public Choice Award and the Milan Triennial where he exhibited and ideal city for Africa. Irarrázaval has been awarded twice at the WAVE International Workshop held at IUAV in Venice (Italy, 2014-2015) and has been shortlisted for the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize (USA, 2016) and the Architecture Swiss Award (Switzerland, 2017). Recently his project 2Y house was chosen among the best 3 projects of the year by Archdaily and his latest project Public Library of Constitución has been granted Merit at the AZ Award (Canada, 2016), Honor at the Wood Design and Building Award (Canada, 2016) and RIBA Award for International Excellence (UK, 2017). Recently Irarrázaval has been awarded Eero Saarinen Honorary Lecturer by the Museum of Finnish Architecture (Finland, 2017) and Riba International Fellowship by the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Sew the edge

We can affirm that any architectonic or urban project is the product of the possibilities and restrictions posed by the following: first - a problem; second - means at hand to solve that problem; third - a vision or purpose that leads and orients the use of those means. Regarding the first one (The Problem), the challenge seems to be very clear and is the following: there is a railyard that divides the site in two and prevents the integration of the city. It is essential to highlight that this limit is not a line but an area, and we make this distinction to underline that the rail (the line) is not where the limit takes place. It takes place in an entire field.

The limit is a surface created by noise, risk and even the energy and space required to cross that rail line. Therefore, we can affirm that the site itself is a frontier with all the challenges and opportunities this notion represents.

About the second one (The Means), our tools will be a set of diagrams (rules of composition) that students will translate into urban forms and an abacus of structural and construction techniques that will build those forms.

We will work with the following means (tools):

- Compositional Diagrams: Branches, Combs, Dots, Knots and Lines,
- Structural Systems: Grids,
- Building Systems: Steel Modular Prefab and Wood Modular Prefab.

Concerning the third one (Vision or Purpose), we can affirm that, in the context of an academic workshop, an actual and valuable architectonic or urban project must get ahead of the current state of the art and challenge the status quo.

To do that, it is essential to leave behind our prejudices and individual preferences and stay open to listening to the silent cultural shifts that

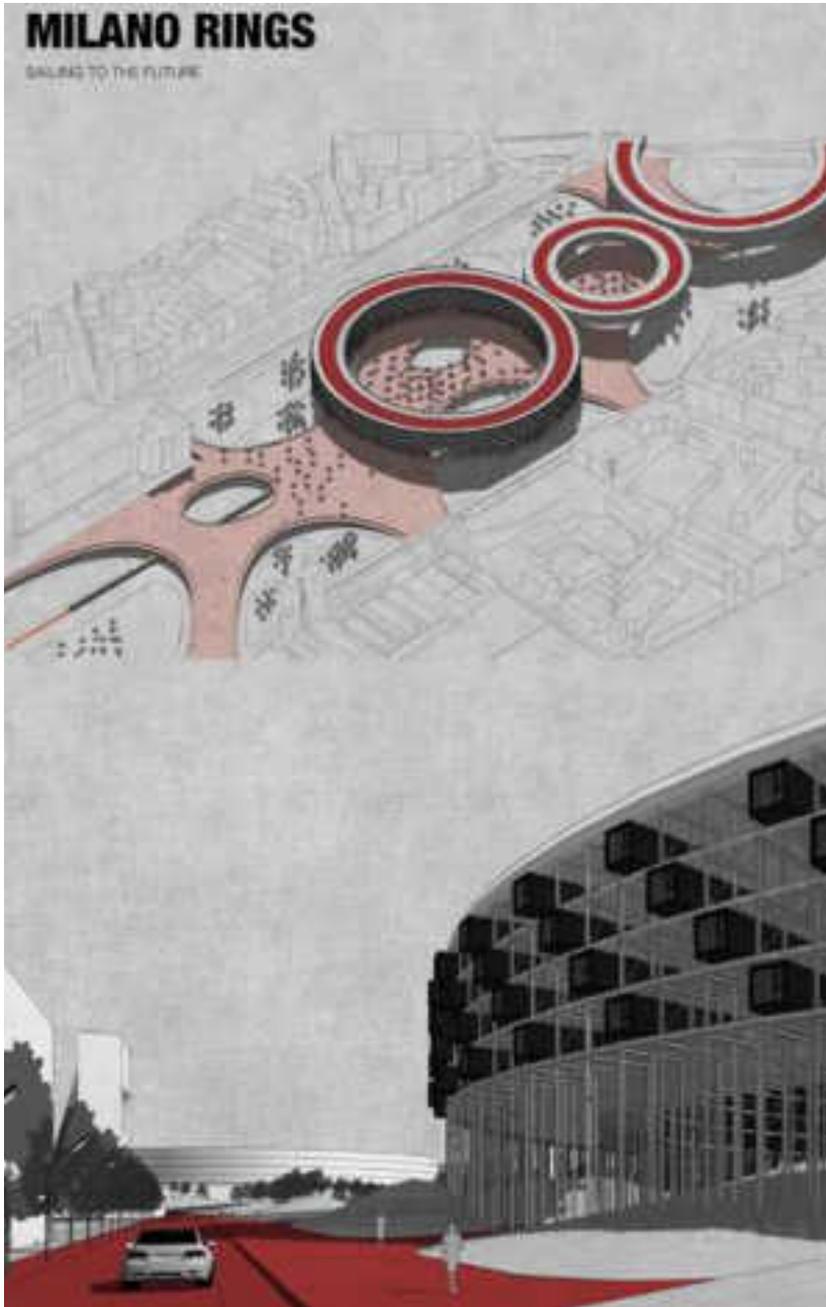
are taking place, influencing current and future changes in taste, values and, ultimately, ways of living.

We have identified five cultural shifts. They are as follow:

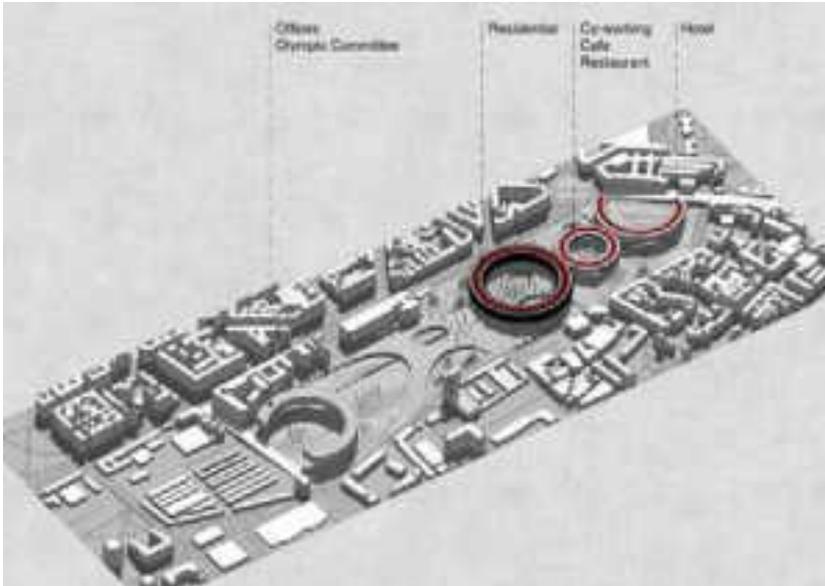
1. Coexistence = Need to end old dichotomies nature/city, humans/nonhumans and learn from new insides about wilderness and plants cooperation. Animal Kingdom is no longer the paradigm but the Vegetal Kingdom.
2. Cero footprints = Healthy building systems that can be easily dismantled, built fast and keep the ground not touched.
3. Autonomy = Everything at hand and mix-use.
4. Equality = Need to mix social classes and ages plus ruled and governed common spaces.
5. Pandemic-Telecommuting = need to fight isolation through public spaces for rituals and casual encounters such as Social Infrastructures.

The methodology consisted of thinking by doing and, to trigger ideas, we used the art of translation.

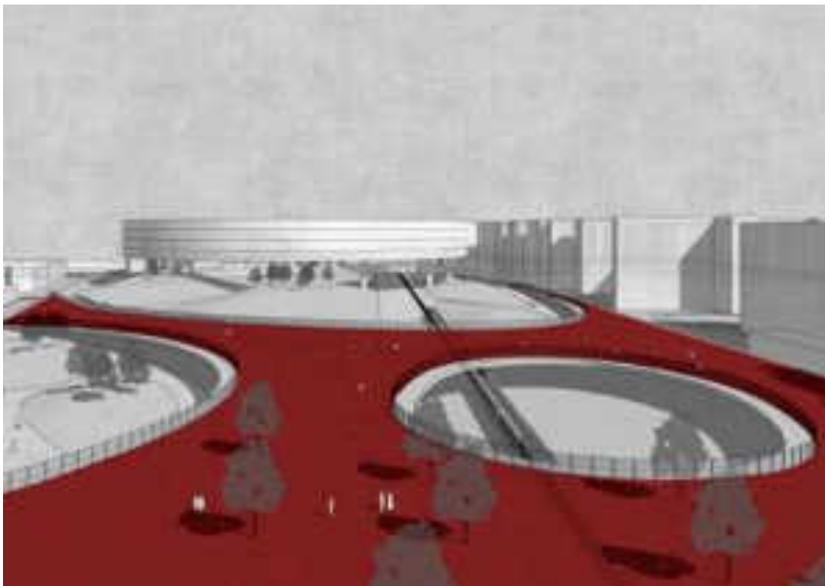




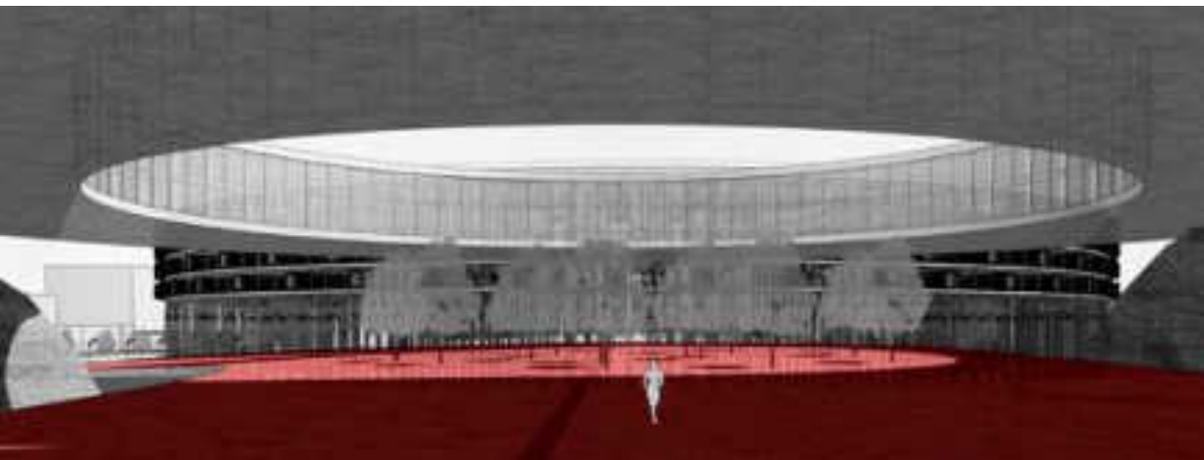
Milano Rings II | Manifesto

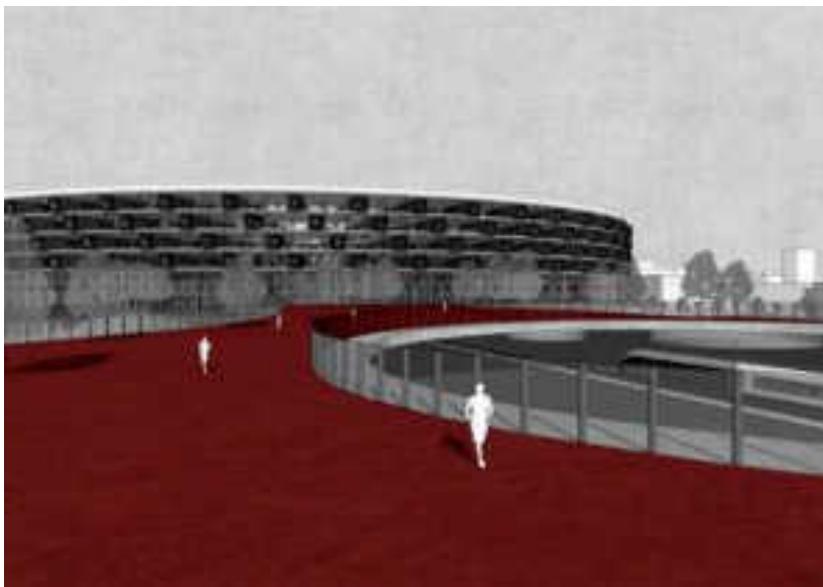


Milano Rings II | Aerial view

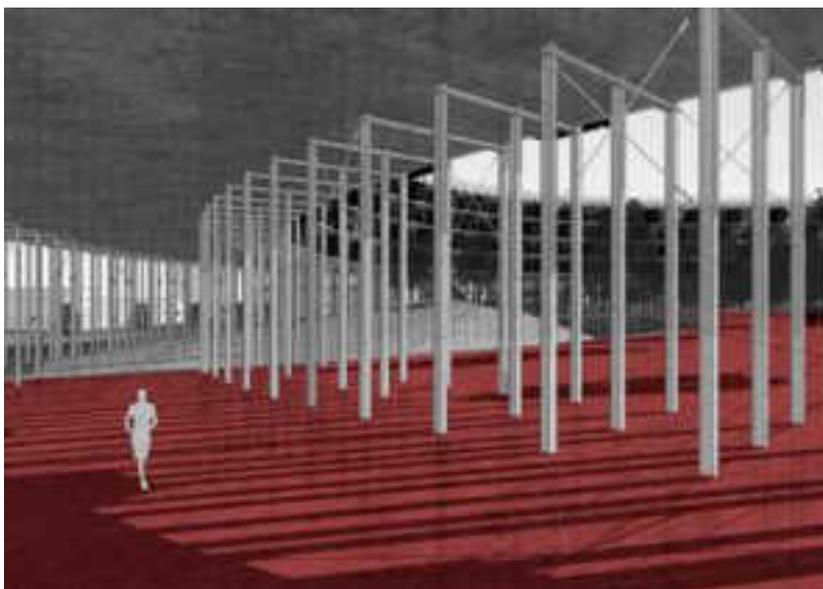


Milano Rings II | The slab and the city





Milano Rings II | A running coverage



Milano Rings II | Living the ground



The Iceberg | Manifiesto

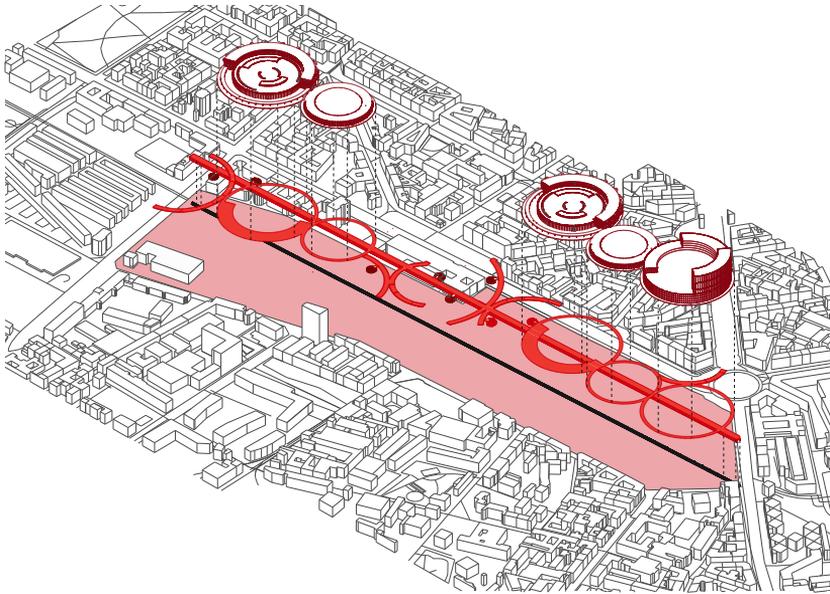


The Iceberg | From suggestion to structure

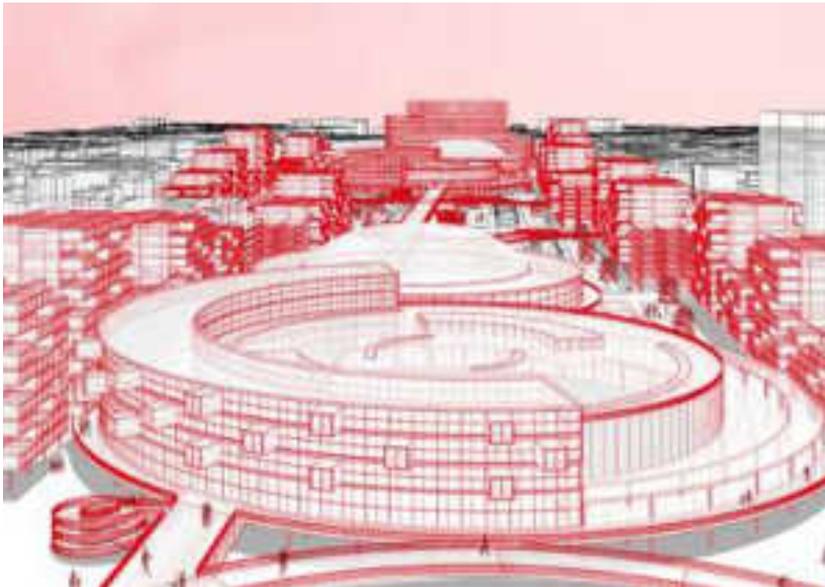


The Iceberg | Framing the horizon





Joining Urban Matter | Isometric exploded view: circulation and nodes



Joining Urban Matter | The system of arenas

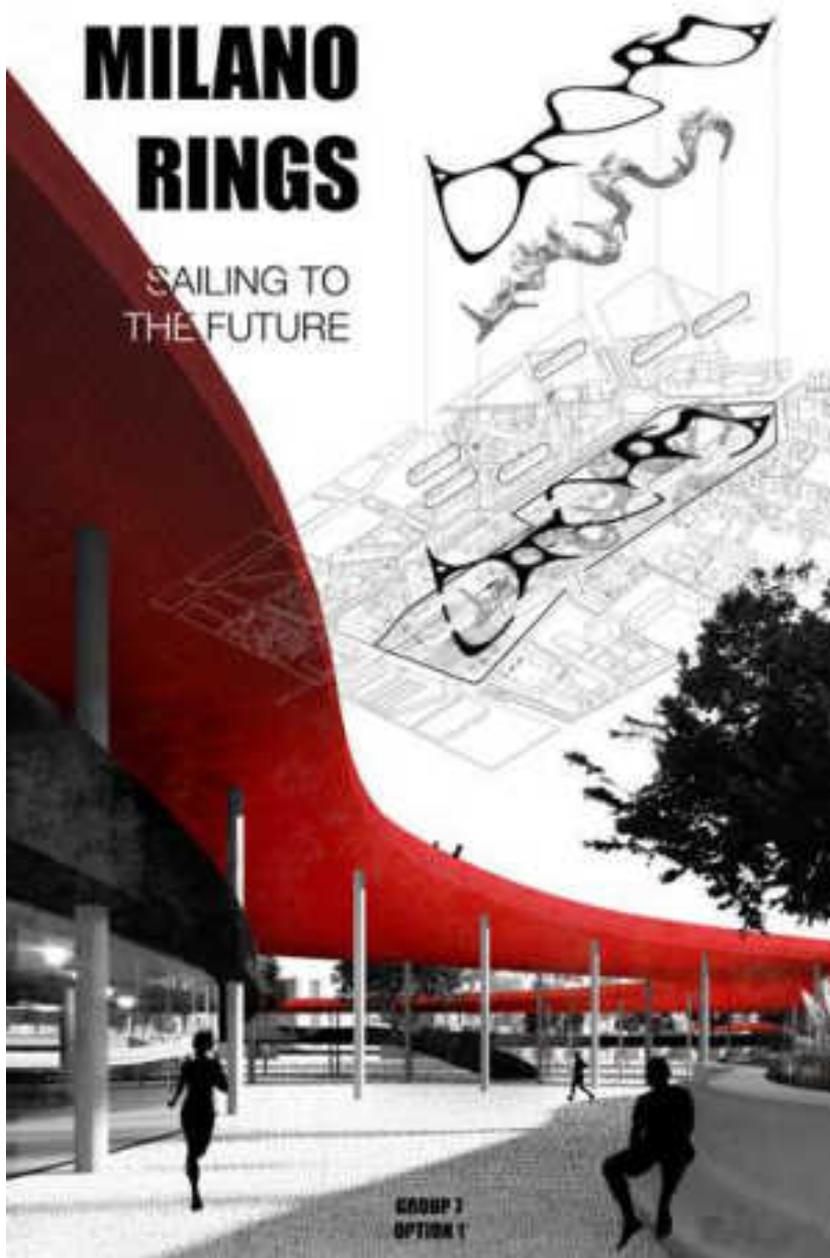




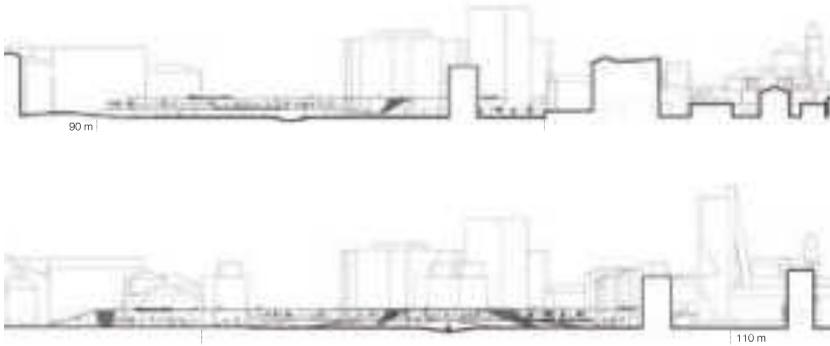
The Folding City | Different heights for a new balance between technology and nature, built and green



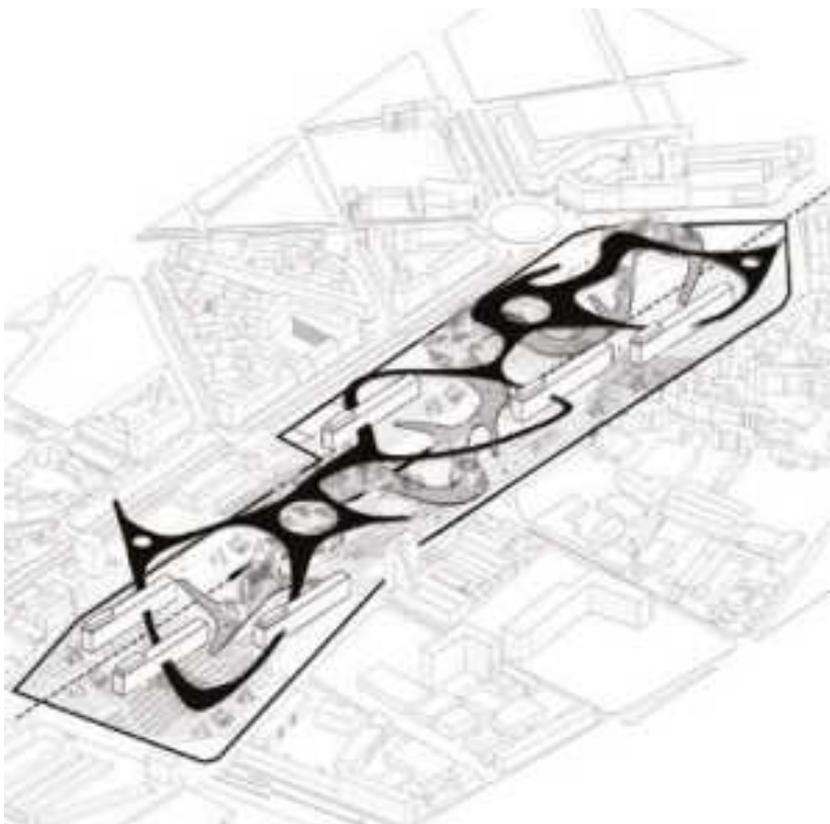
The Folding City | The system of cycle and pedestrian paths



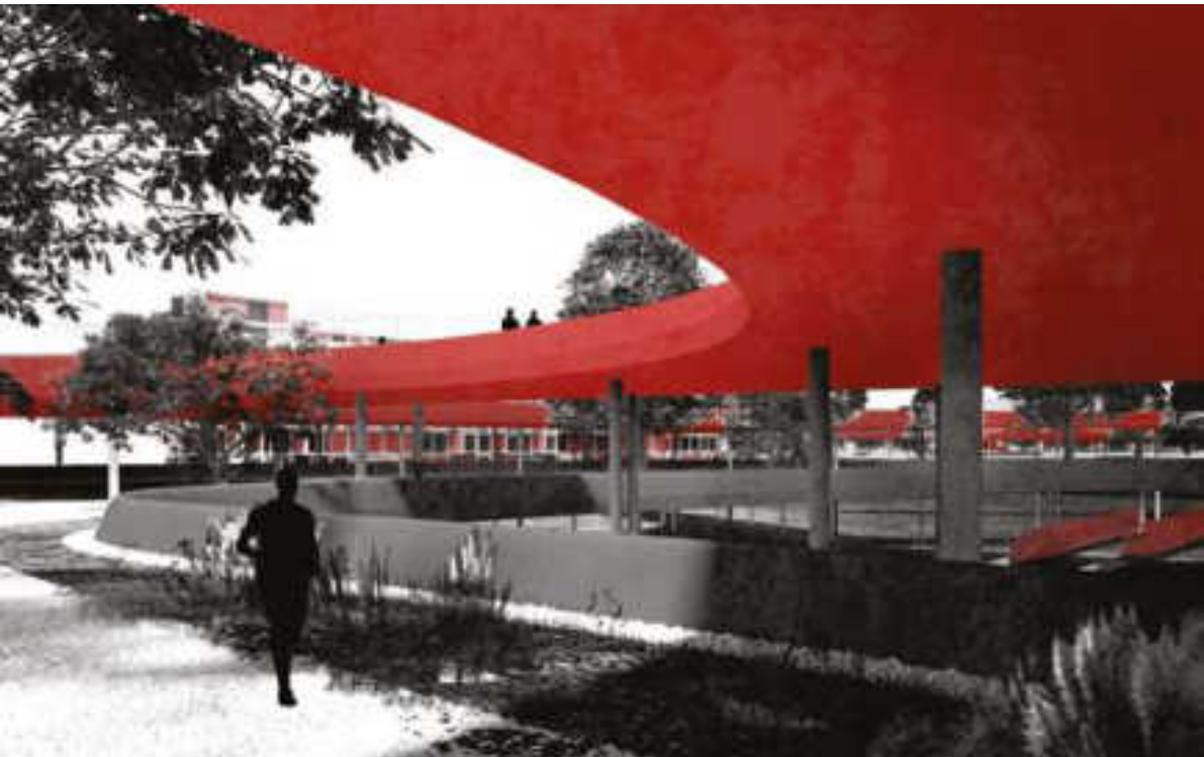
Milano Rings I | Manifesto

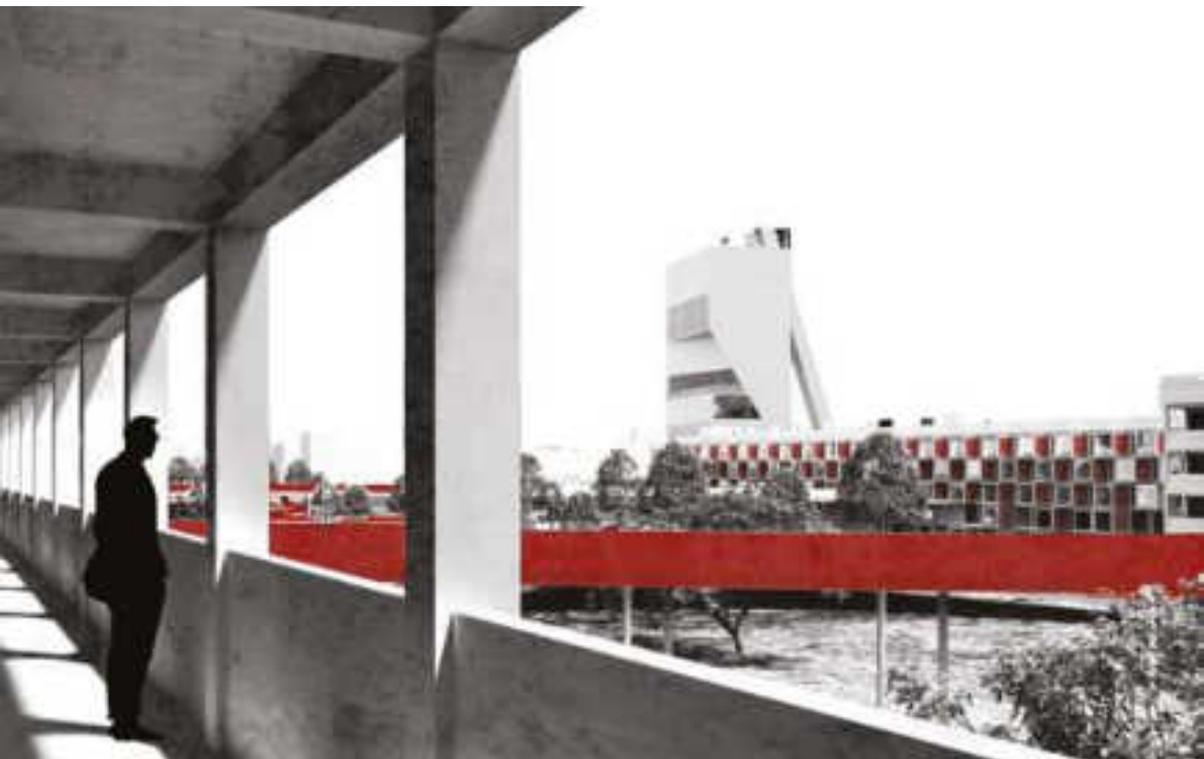


Milano Rings I | Urban sections

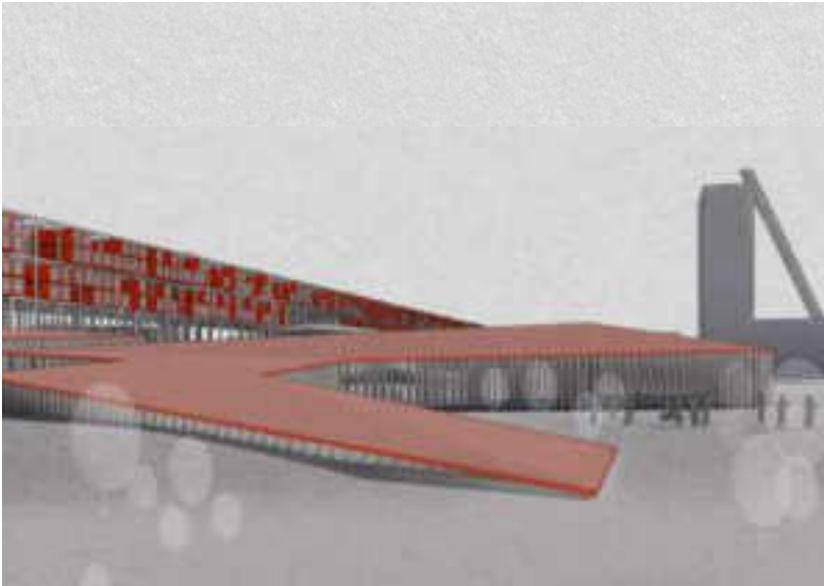


Milano Rings I | Axonometric diagram







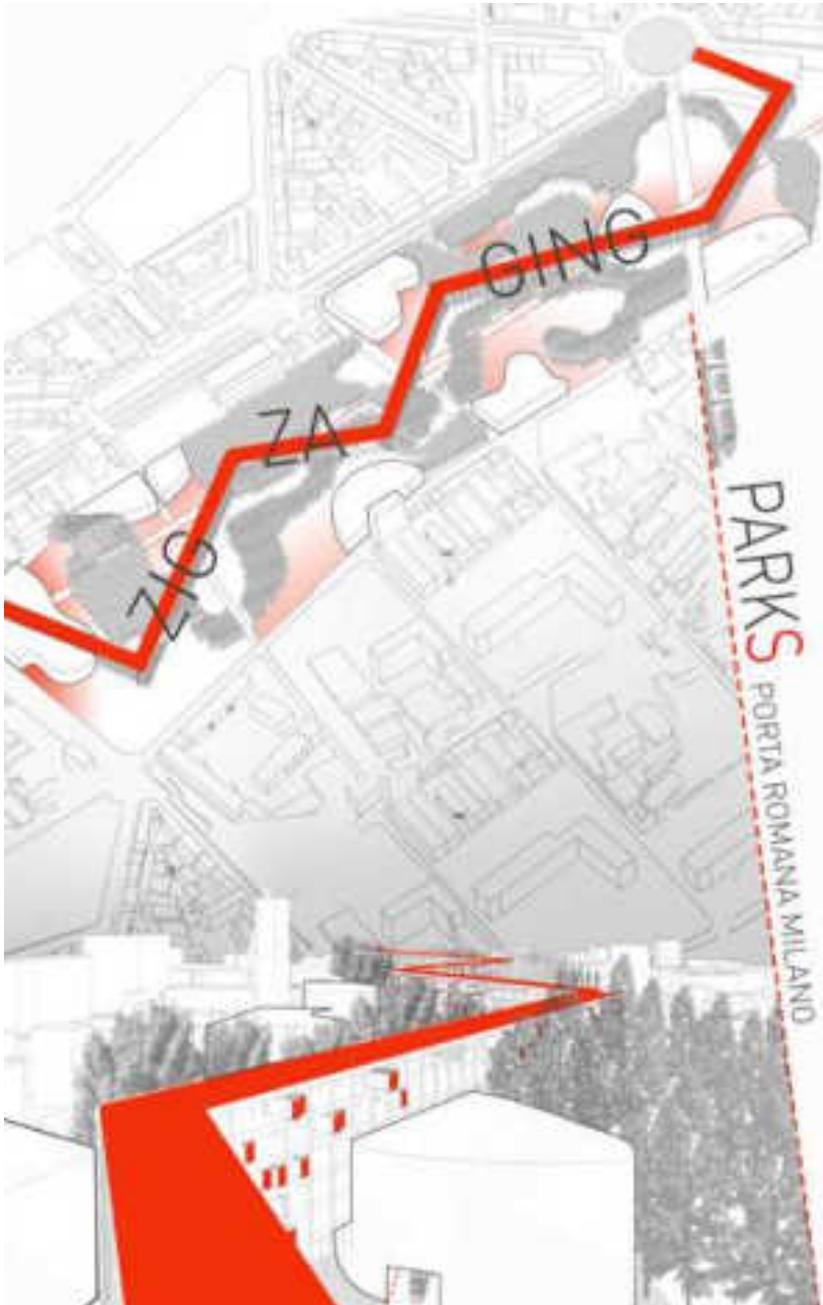


Unifying Membrane | The branches: walking on the public spaces



Unifying Membrane | View from a branch to a node







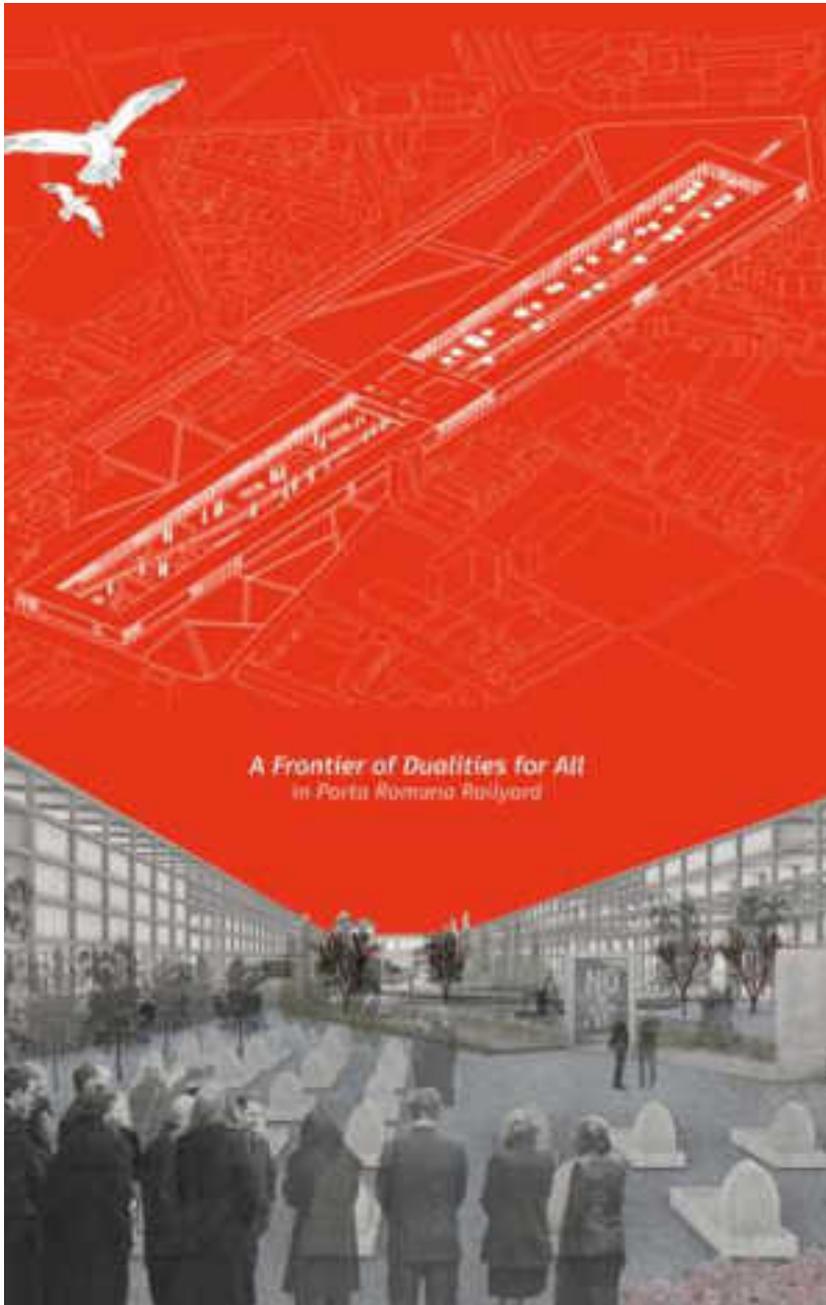
Zigzagging Parks | The main front: structure and modular system



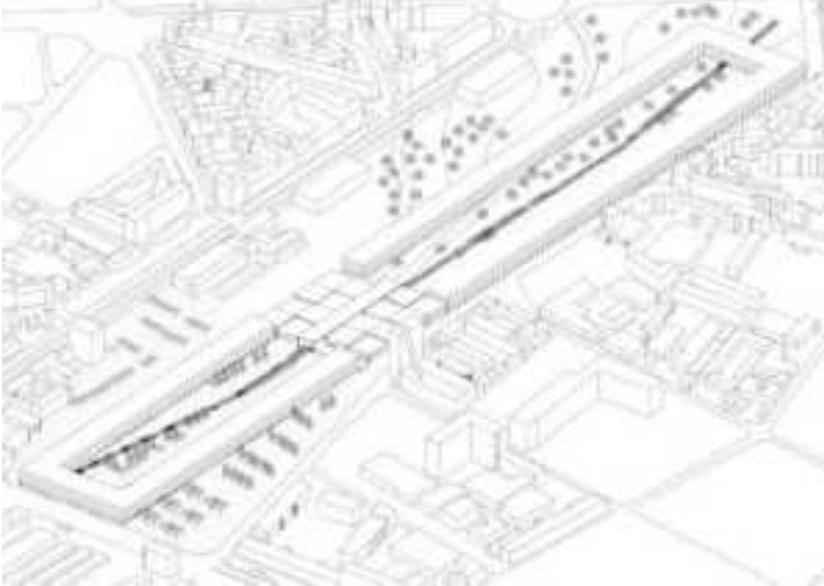
Zigzagging Parks | Living the "streets-in-the-sky"



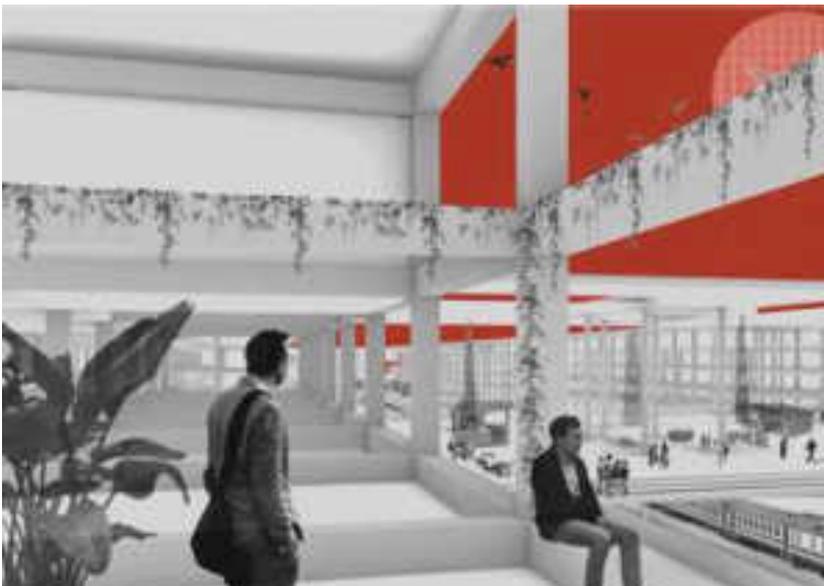
Zigzagging Parks | A look from the sky to the ground



A Frontier of Dualities for All
in Porta Romania Railway



A Frontier of Dualities for All | Masterplan



A Frontier of Dualities for All | A look to the central platform

WS.D

Roberto

Cavallo



WS.D

Roberto Cavallo

Tutors: Yuliia Batkova, Michele Porcelluzzi

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Roberto Cavallo is an Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture where he is currently head of the Section Theory & Territories, chair of the group Architectural Design Crossovers and member of the departmental Research Steering Team. He has been Director of Education for the Faculty of Architecture & the Built Environment (BK), Delft University of Technology (TUD) between 2014-2019. He rounded up his PhD at the TUD in 2008, obtained the ius promovendi from the TUD Board of Doctorates in 2017, and is currently supervisor of several PhD candidates as promoter and copromoter. In 2018 he was elected council member of the EAAE (European Association of Architectural Education), and he is founding member of the Architectural Research Network ARENA. His research contributions and scientific publications are touching upon theory, education and practice ranging from the urban to the architectural project and have good impact in terms of valorisation as well as in terms of number of research projects and initiatives on national and international level. He has an extensive experience in organizing, coordinating and leading international workshops, symposia, conferences and exhibitions, and he is often invited for (keynote) lectures and as member of scientific committees in international academic events in The Netherlands and abroad.

Multi-layered Porta Romana

How does the city work as a multi-functional, layered entity?
What would be the impact of the local dimension in the macro-dimensional urban context?

In this framework, how can the transformation of the urban void into a mixed-use living area interrelate with the overall city's character and grounds?

Being at the eve of the upcoming global event of the Olympic Games and exploring its potential long-term implications for the city's future, it is essential to envision transformative strategies to uncover the specific significance of the Porta Romana railway yard area.

First, through an individual kick-off proposal, each student has presented a personal vision concerning the assigned challenges of the project area.

After that, drawing upon the cross point of the diverse train of thoughts, students began developing their ideas and strategies in multidisciplinary groups.

Through the combination of various background experiences, all groups started sketching freely, motivated by the extensive analytical study of the city as a whole and the specific readings of the intervention area itself.

That approach generated several creative proposals, touching upon material and immaterial interpretations of the site and its context. Secondly, the students, via the questioning of "What?", "Why?", "For whom?" adapted the initial strategy sketches to the site area conditions, working on urban proposals dealing with urgent local and social questions.

Taking into consideration the specific requirements for the Olympic

event could be seen as a limitation. However, it was an opportunity to thoughtfully think about the area and how recreation and public domain could play a role in the landscape infrastructure, accommodating the layering of intensive and diverse programs. All the proposals assume the recognition of the urban space as a ground for different daily journeys, a variety of stories, experiences, desires and needs.

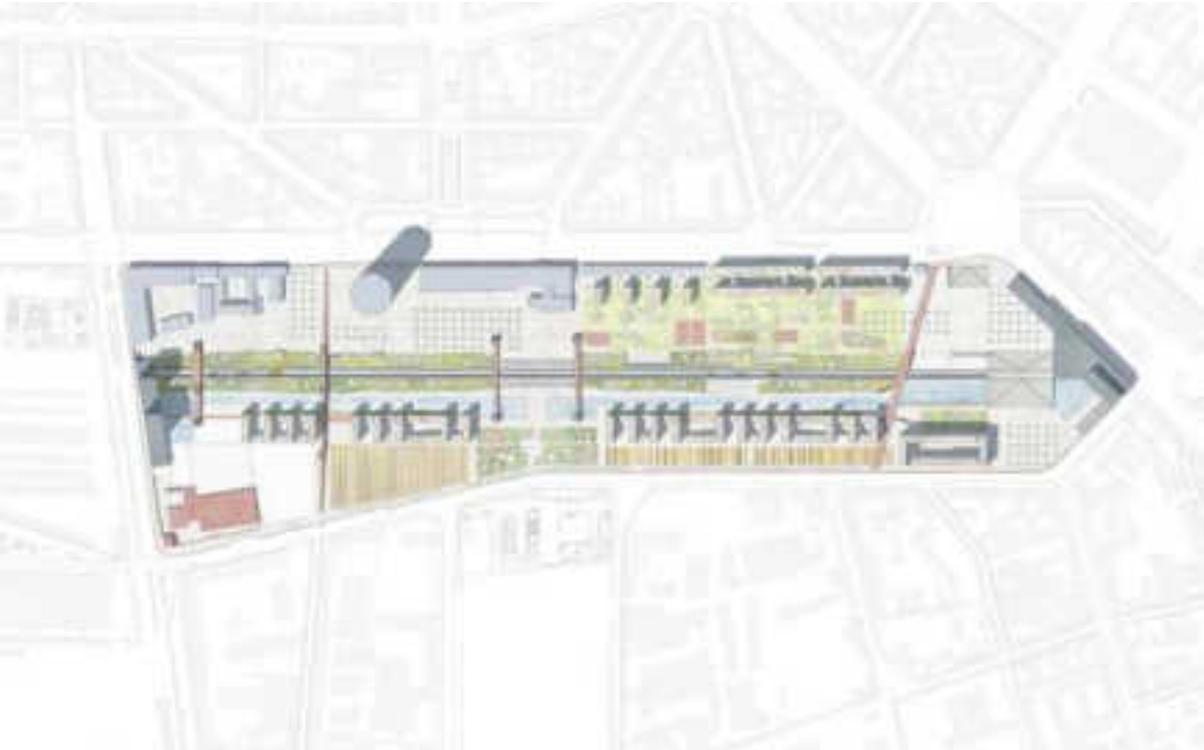
Further developing the individual proposals, each group member has assimilated the methodological approach, bringing into the debate synthesis and shared design thoughts, resulting in a unique spatial and figurative representation of personal reflections.

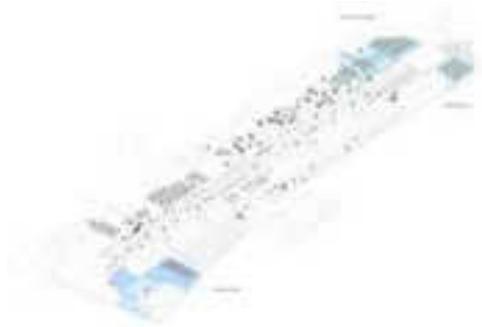
The genius of the creative process enhanced both individual and groups' imaginative power.





Porta Romana: porous border | Overall axonometry of the project





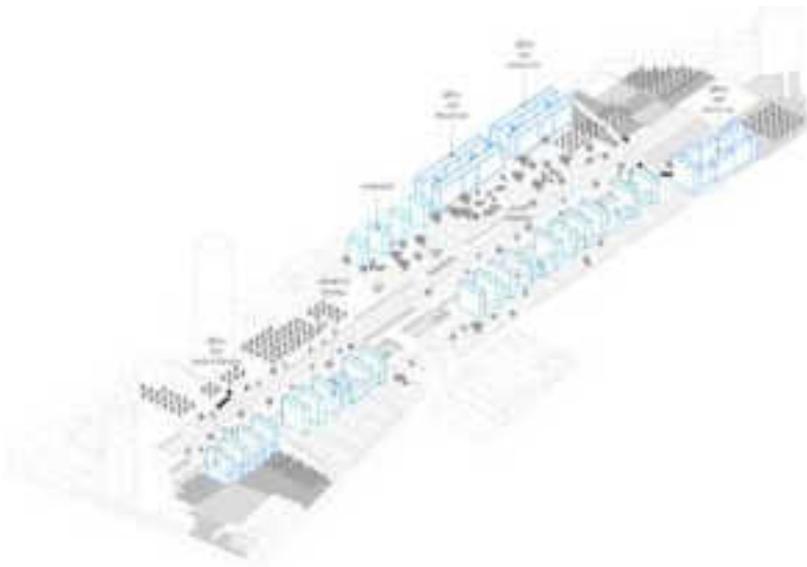
Porta Romana: porous border | Two new squares



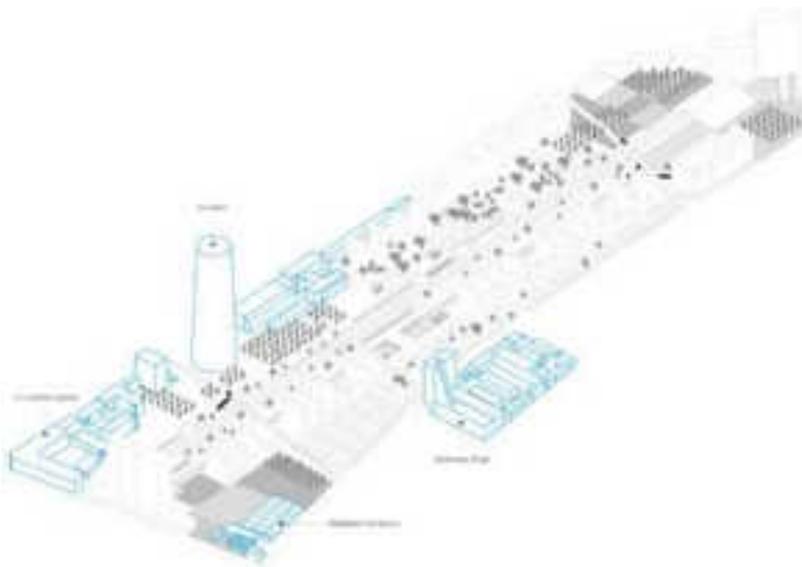
Porta Romana: porous border | The system of the canal and the green buffer



Porta Romana: porous border | The two renewed suburban-railway stations



Porta Romana: porous border | The disposition of the residential and office buildings



Porta Romana: porous border | The pre-existing elements taken into consideration in the design process



Porta Romana: porous border | The panoramic towers and the Fondazione Prada's tower



Porta Romana: porous border | Secret garden in the residential buildings' courtyard

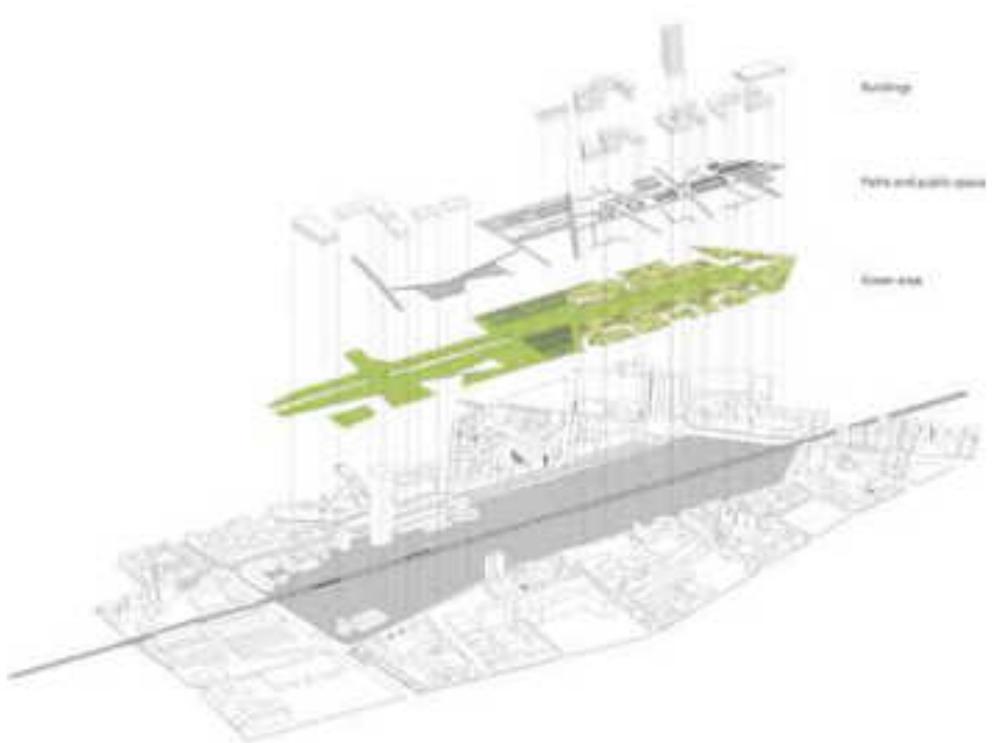


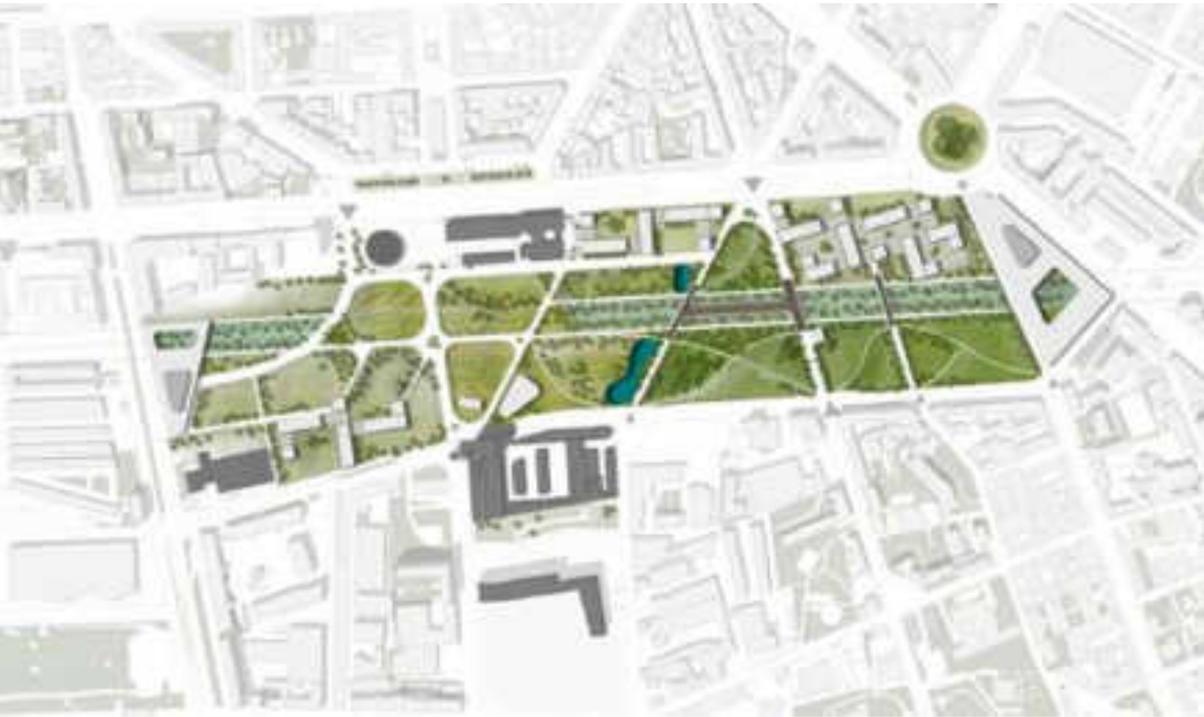
Porta Romana: porous border | A new public space along the canal



Porta Romana: porous border | Green buffer / Linear park





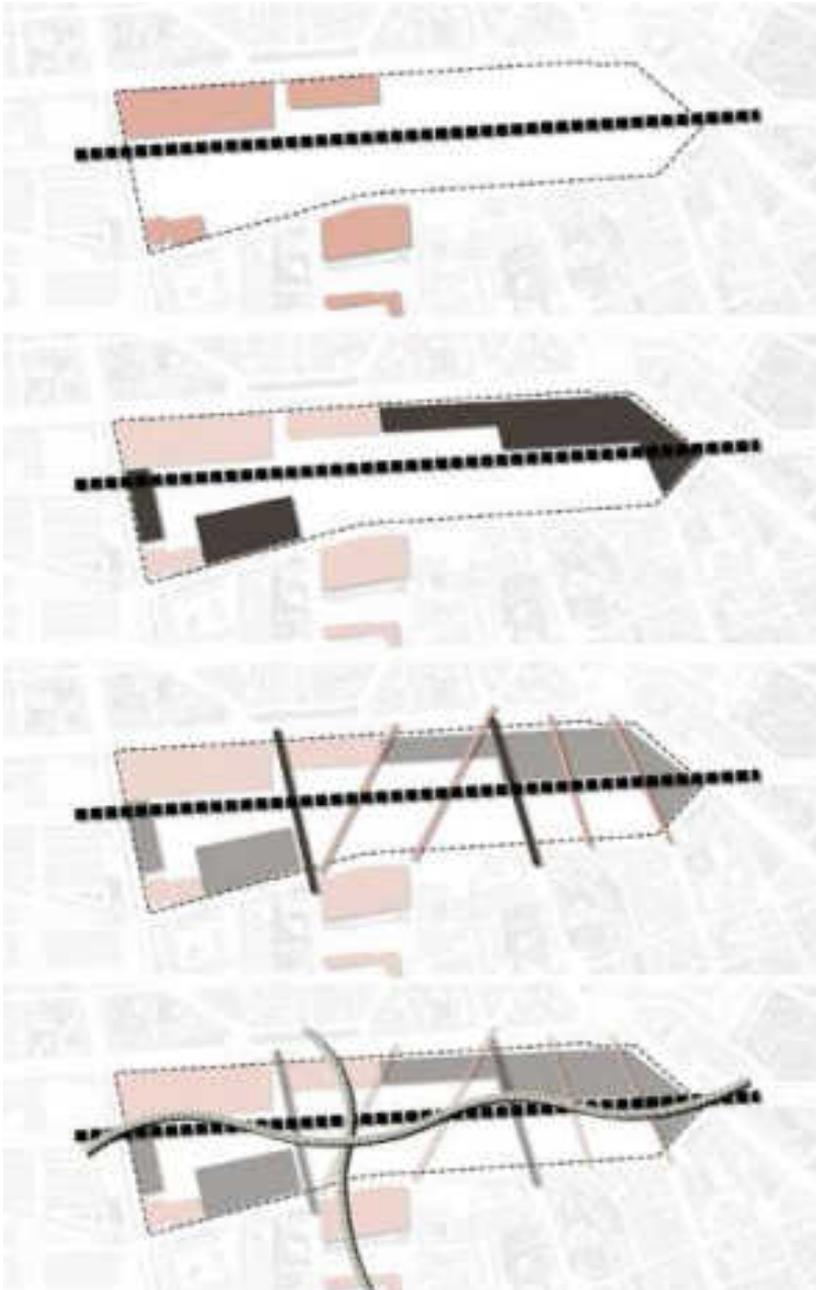




Yard of Coalescence | A new public space for cultural activities



Yard of Coalescence | The park as a new urban oasis for Milan



Yard of Coalescence | The design process that defined the masterplan

WS.E

**José María
Sánchez
García**



WS.E

José María Sánchez García

Tutors: Pedro Escoriza Torralbo, Renato Righi

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Pablo Antonio Arana Parra	Marta Mazzarisi
Acelya Nilgun Balickci	Juan Carlos Medina Pereyra
Yiyun Cao	Inessa Mnatsakanyan
Arianna Capitanio	Camilla Mondolfo
Adrian Valentin Chiusdea Volmer	Lucrezia Picinali
Irene Costadone	Greta Possi
Omar El Hassan	Filippo Tognocchi
Desislava Georgieva	Sara Tosi
Neda Georgieva	Matteo Tuti
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Jiahuan Li	Runxin Zhang
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José María Sánchez García is an architect graduated from E.T.S.A.M. Escuela Politecnica de Madrid, 2002 graduation year. International Doctorate. PhD thesis: "The Bath case.", 2006. Excellent evaluation with unanimous mention cum laude. Full professor at ETSAM, Escuela Politecnica de Madrid (2008-2020). Invited Professor at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio (AAM, 2015-2019), Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (ETH ZÜRICH, 2014-2015), Università di Venezia (IUAV, 2015-2016), Universidad de Navarra (UNAV, 2013-2014 and 2019-2020). His work has been awarded and recognized on various occasions, of which it is worth mentioning the First Prize obtained at the BSI SWISS ARCHITECTURAL AWARD in 2014; the First Prize X BIAU Bienal Iberoamericana de Arquitectura y Urbanismo 2010 and 2016, the First Prize of the AR + D Architectural Review for Emerging Architecture in London and the Architectural Record's Design Vanguard Award in New York in 2009. It is also worth mentioning at the Spanish level, the Honorable Mention of the "Premio de Arquitectura Española 2017"; the First Prize XIII BEAU Bienal Española de Arquitectura y Urbanismo in 2016; the First Prize Luis Moreno Mansilla, COAM Madrid in 2014 and the First Enor Prize 2014. José María is Honorary Member, International Fellow, of the Royal Institute of British Architects, RIBA, 2017. The work of the studio has a direct relationship with the teaching and research activities carried out in the field of architectural design. Of the buildings built, the studio followed all phases of the project, from the initial phases to construction supervision.

Infrastructural condition

From the beginning, the work carried out in our design atelier was intended as a collective one, as if all the 30 students were in only one group. Our goal was to reach different projects based on an underlying idea that evoked an analogy between infrastructure and architecture. Therefore, starting from the investigation of the project area in the first days (which unfortunately in various cases was done “at a distance”), the students were invited to make radical decisions regarding a way of understanding Porta Romana, interpreted as a large border area between a consolidated historical city (with nineteenth-century blocks) and a more widespread industrial city, but also more generally between the town and its countryside/suburbs.

A big part of the week was dedicated to a critical analysis that quickly became an open conversation with students.

Parallely, during the week, lectures by the professor and the assistants were alternated. In the first case, they showed his built architectures; in the second one, they focused more on references that managed to help students in a general way to identify their path in the area and their way to design it.

We also managed to invite Professor Massimo Ferrari for a morning of reviews, who tried to focus the students more on the relationship of their project with the city in terms of size, meaning, alignments, and typologies.

Given the premises, the conclusion was awaited with drawings, to sum up the projects obtained by showing them as singular results of more general work and theory.

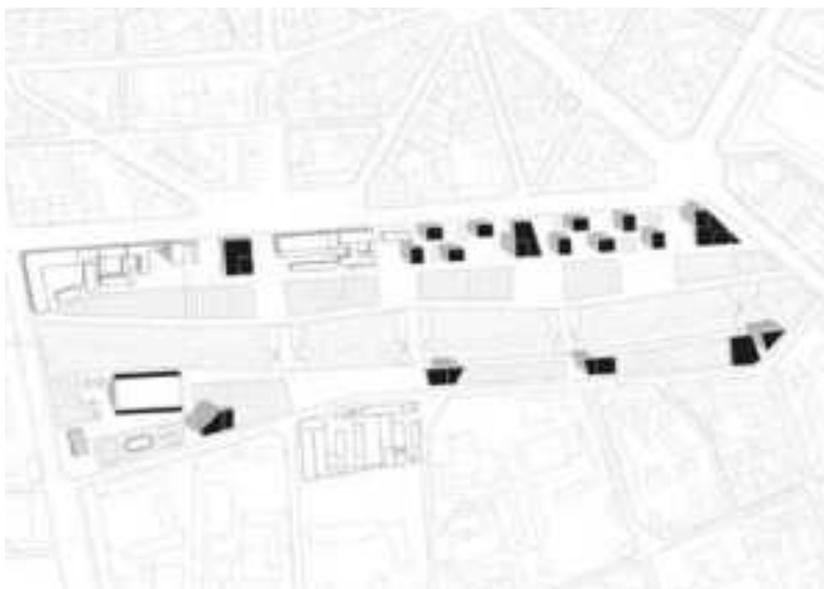
The way to show these works has been done in a collective and, let's say, theatrical way, everyone by fragments and few words had to give some impressions about his works but in a joint talk.

We are happy to have been able to establish a dialogue with the students, and we are satisfied with the results compared to such a short time. The drawings, especially the last ones, show a commitment and a comprehension we didn't expect. It was a beautiful experience.





A new density for the porous city | East-West aerial view



A new density for the porous city | Masterplan. Density and porosity



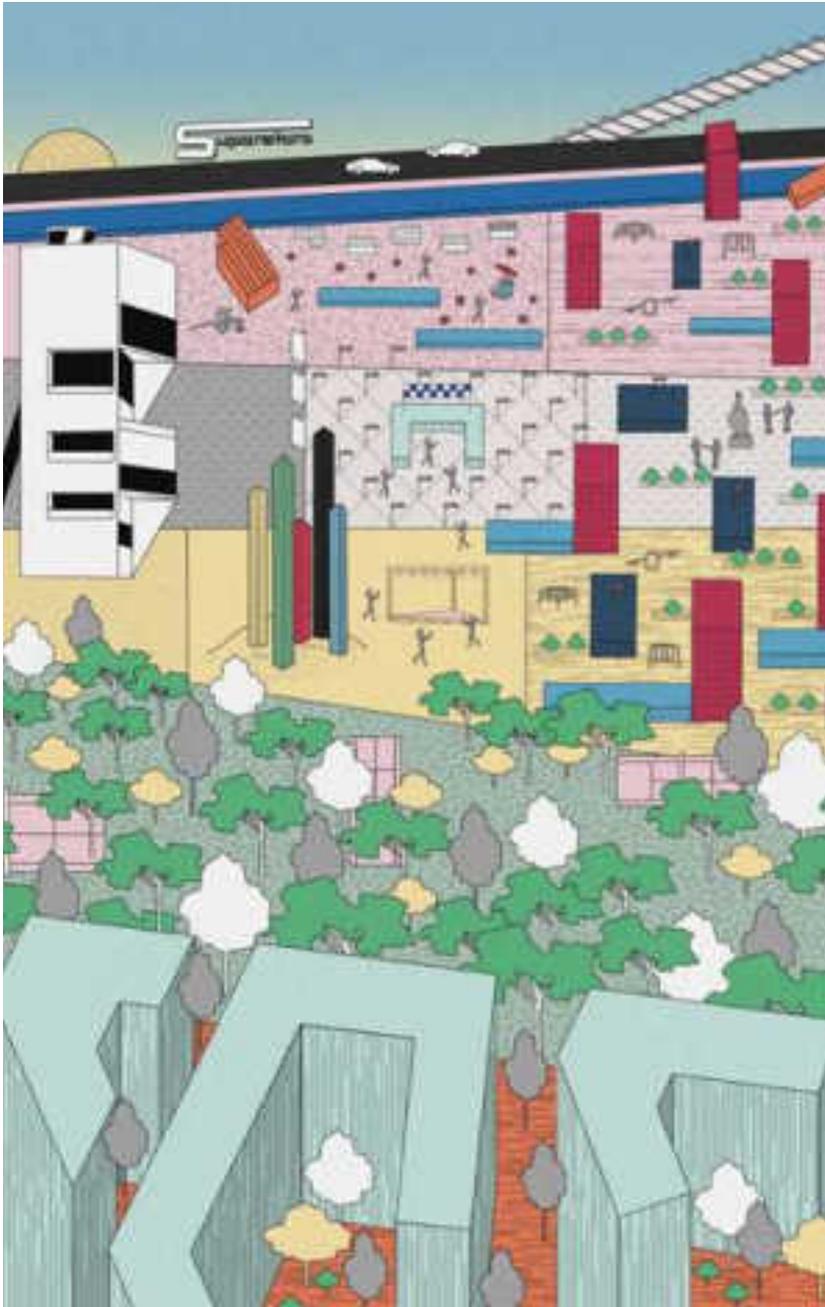
A new density for the porous city | Axonometric view. Density and porosity

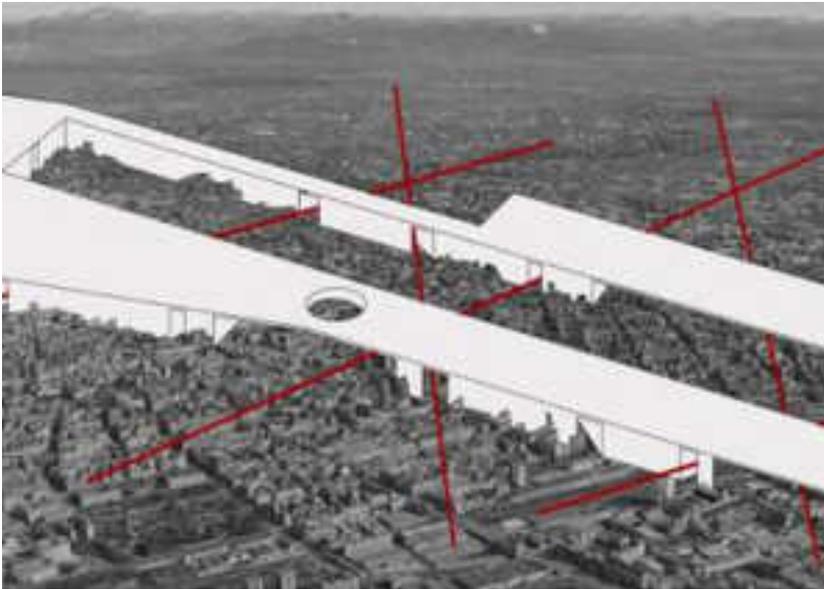


Towards programmatic affinities | Project narrative: scene 1



Towards programmatic affinities | Project narrative: scene 2

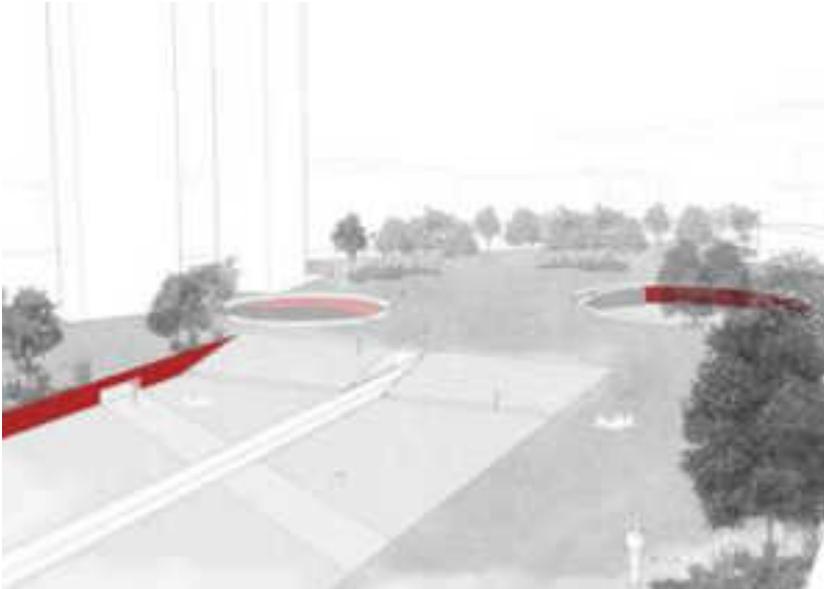




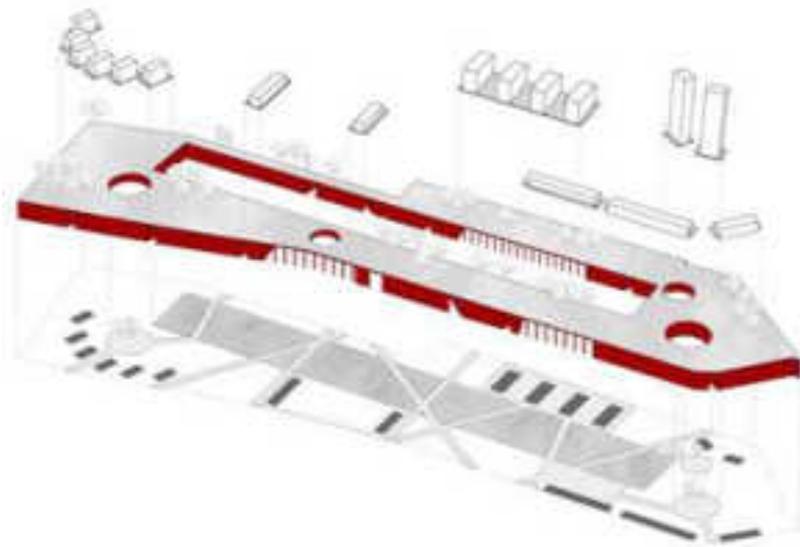
Double Layer | A common basement



Double Layer | Masterplan



Double Layer | Two levels public spaces



Double Layer | Axonometric diagram

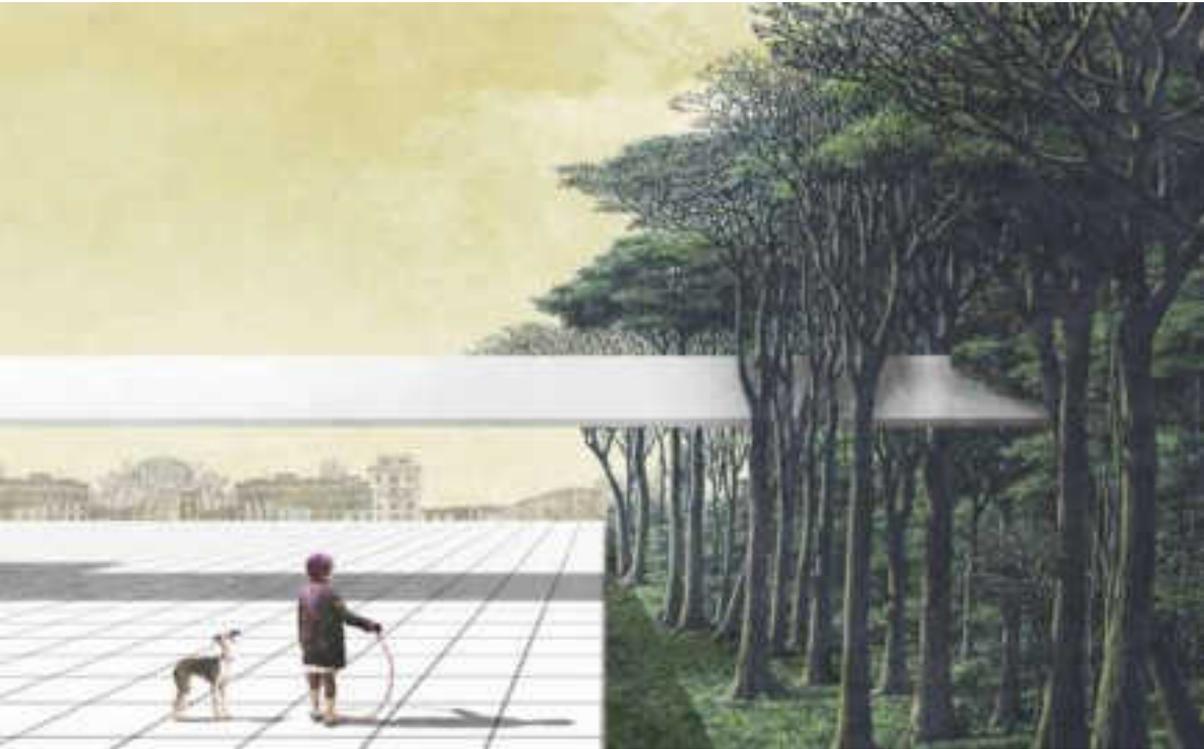


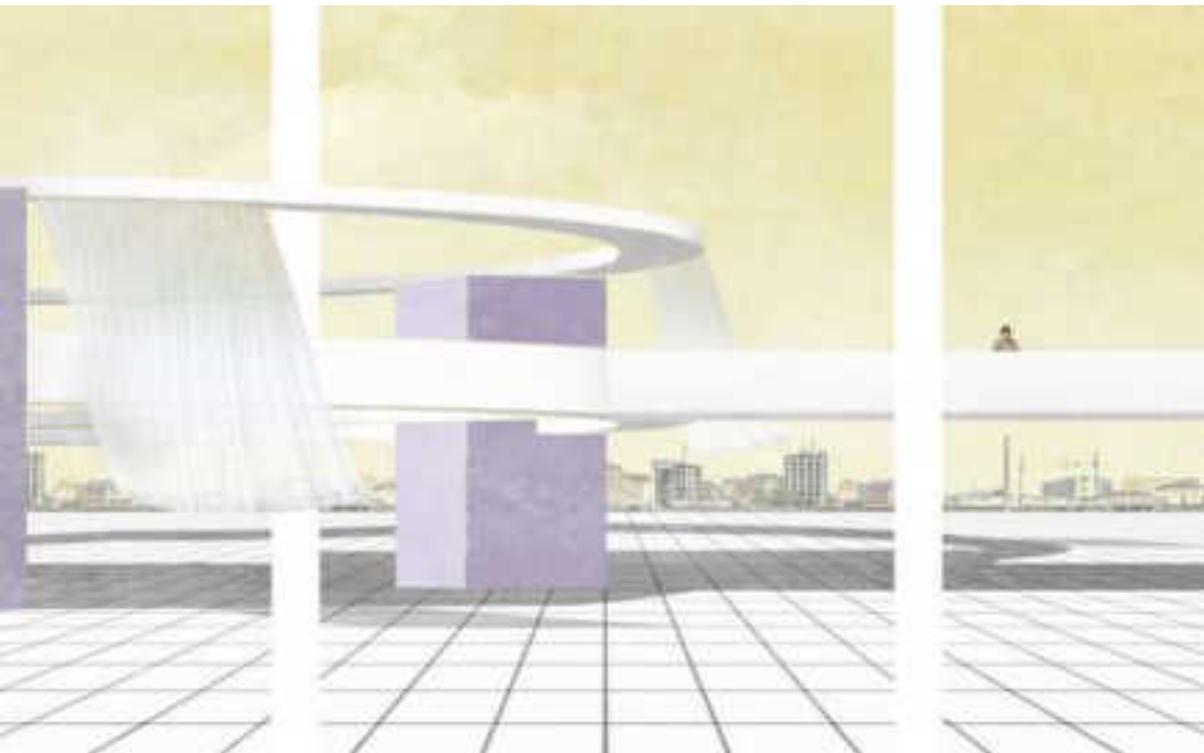
Re-link Porta Romana | Aerial perspective



Re-link Porta Romana | The ring









Stitching the city | The raised square



Stitching the city | Urban livings



Stitching the city | Connections





Re-link Porta Romana | Axonometric view



Re-link Porta Romana | Urban jungle



Re-link Porta Romana | Olympic collage



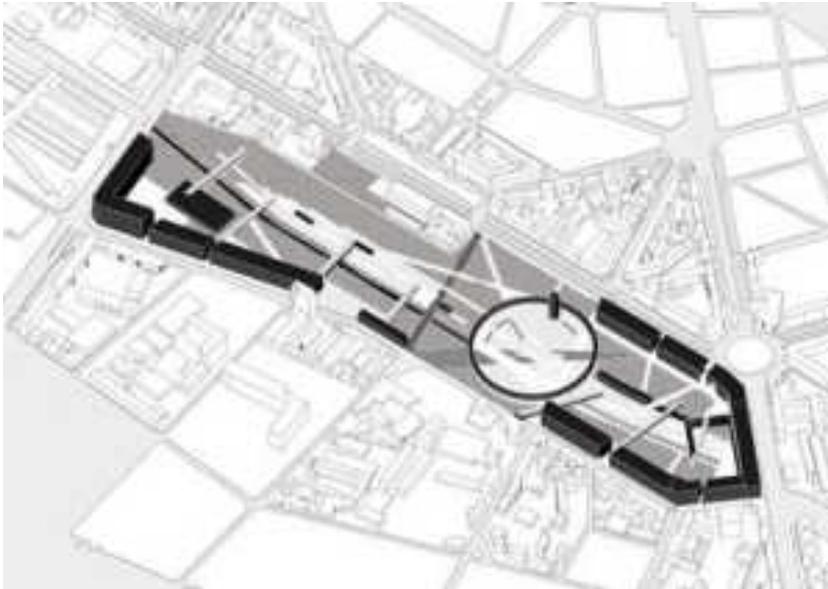
Re-link Porta Romana | Protected park



Re-link Porta Romana | Structural condition



Re-link Porta Romana | Feeling the path



Re-link Porta Romana | Axonometric view



Re-link Porta Romana | Reticular shelter



Re-link Porta Romana | Porta Romana vintage



What is an urban project for?

*Francesca Belloni, Massimo Ferrari, Elvio Manganaro,
Claudia Tinazzi*

ABC Department, Politecnico di Milano

Massimo Ferrari – In referring to the theme of the urban project, in the broadest and most generic sense of the term – in other words, the act of composing separate parts for a whole within an ancient, historical, or in any case multi-layered city – Ignazio Gardella recounted an extremely pointed metaphor to do with medicine to underline the active role of history and the continuity of the transformation process in a city: “In nature and in society, as at school, the gradualness of the process ensures that continuity without lacerations which is the normal condition of any healthy tissue. But this is without excluding the tears and the more drastic surgical interventions which may occasionally prove necessary in the presence of diseased or damaged tissue.” (Gardella 1960) It’s interesting to note that, for Gardella, this consideration was actually linked to a profound reflection on the condition of the school and on the value and tools of the project. Looking at the conditions in which we operate today, both in the school and in society, what Gardella said more than fifty years ago seems more relevant than ever.

On the other hand, I don’t think it’s even necessary to recall how the theme of “environmental pre-existences” repeatedly discussed in post-war Milan after the 1955 “Casabella” editorial has come down to us with all the arrogance of an indispensable dialogue. I personally believe that Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ lesson marks a new beginning for all of us when it comes to awareness of the role of the past, local geography and

tradition, in both the construction and reconstruction processes, in both the urban project and in an architecture that is more apposite. Perhaps we might say,

comparing ourselves to the figure of the writer, that the truest significance which translates the relationship with memory, in generality and in accidents, is hidden in the words of T.S. Eliot that we have made our own: “This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.” (Eliot 1917)

In an awareness of the need to re-establish even today, as in critical moments of past urban and social history, concrete research into the possible ways of inhabiting the consolidated city, the theme of the urban project within many urban voids – defined, green, and collective spaces, enclosed by but never closed to the city – is arguably the field of investigation on which to try out contemporary models, aimed at defining essential principles. This might yet again clarify the role of the Urban Project. Today more than ever we really must ask ourselves: What is an urban project for? Does it still make sense to talk about an urban project?

Francesca Belloni – In response to Massimo’s provocation, in light of the outcomes of the Milan International Architecture Workshop (MIAW), no less than the recent projects presented for the transformation of the Porta Romana marshalling yard, and aware of how Gardella’s words can open up to issues that are still current, it may prove useful, as well as necessary, to reflect on the processes of transformation that we’re witnessing, tracing these reflections back to the specific issues of the urban project and to the tradition of the studies on these issues. All of this while advancing the hypothesis, in some ways definitely unpopular, that talking about urban projects today is actually a false problem, since every project is by its very nature ‘urban’, regardless of the goodness or otherwise of the transformations it induces and of the reasons which determined it. Not only that: hiding behind this definition risks transforming the issue into one of those many slogans which are in themselves irrefutable, but basically not very useful unless placed in the right perspective. From this point of view, definitions such as ‘urban project’, ‘sustainability’, ‘regeneration’, ‘green city’, etc. now suffer from being profoundly generic, so much so that they tend to be used on any occasion as common topics of conversation.

Without going into the merits of the variants which the notion of urban design has adopted from the 1960s until today, I'd like to recall only a handful here, to underline that in reality today's debate takes place on other levels: urban design as an alternative to urban planning, as a median term between interventions on the architectural or territorial scale, as an (operational) method or design theory aimed at transforming the city on the basis of a system of rules or principles and elements (for example paths, durable elements, hierarchies, spatial organization systems, and so on) or as an aptitude for defining public spaces and an attention to their role within the urban structure.

The projects which are transforming Milan today are of a very different nature and have nothing to do with these systems of formulating the problem, much less with the tradition of studies on the city.

At this point, it seems necessary to premise a method or perhaps, simply, make a note in the margin. Personally, I would exclude a priori any nostalgic retreat in favour of a productive critique, because, if, as Massimo has often affirmed, the specific nature of architecture is to represent the world it's progressively transforming, that is, to interpret the society in which it is operating, then I would like to recall here the well-known statement by Winston Churchill that: "We shape our buildings and thereafter our buildings shape us." This is a self-evident fact, hard though it may be to accept in some cases, regardless of any evaluation of the actual project. At this point, at least one clarification is required, however, linked, as mentioned earlier, to the intrinsic urban nature of any project. Actually, it's not possible to state that the numerous projects which are transforming our cities, Milan first and foremost, do not produce an urban sense; indeed, it's precisely this characteristic which often constitutes their distinctive trait, starting from the marketing techniques with which they are proposed and promoted, and ending with their daily use. But what kind of urban sense? Conceivably, this is the crux of the matter and an index of the transformation of the city sooner than a physical or cultural one. Those ongoing proposals, and many of those created over the last twenty years as well as the most recent ones, suggest a totally different system of values; first and foremost a widespread urban marketing technique in synergy with an advanced communication policy, which have managed to shape the buildings produced. And this also means in concrete terms: suffice to look at the visual communication which

characterizes these interventions and the use of photorealistic renderings, used as a design vehicle before the dissemination and promotion have even begun. However, although in these projects the relationship with the city is not interpreted from a disciplinary point of view, this is not absent either, but concerns and produces an urban sense of a different kind, an economic, social, and even environmental urban sense, which deviates from, or better, does not deal directly and intentionally with urban architecture, that is, with the architecture of the city as a whole, but concentrates its efforts in defining the object in relation to the positioning of the proposal. This would seem to be a different job from the one that is taught at the desks of the schools of architecture, and for this reason the attention that Gardella focused on the condition of the school, in itself inseparable from any reflection on the tools of the (architectural) project and on its disciplinary, cultural and social role, should today be addressed to clarify for us first, and then for our students, what it is. Especially given the changed and changing conditions in which we work and the current metrics to evaluate the delicate process of transforming the city and the end results, the correct balance between understanding the new dynamics and a critical examination.

Elvio Manganaro – I would like to try taking a step back, because I'm not convinced that when we talk about urban design it's clear to everyone what we're talking about. We use the term in an understanding that we might also describe as qualitative, in the sense that it's not a sufficient condition for a project to insist in the city that it's an urban project. An urban project is that architectural project which questions the city beyond the contingency of the occasion. Massimo Ferrari recalled the beautiful definition of Gardella, which I did not know and which, in my opinion, in a fair, pragmatic and also Rogers-like way, if you will allow me, establishes a criterion of balanced behaviour between continuity and discontinuity, avoiding unnecessary extremism and affirming instead that a solution must always be sought on a case-by-case basis. Then again, we also need to reflect on the fact that this approach presupposes a transitive role for the city in the internal processes of designing and making architecture.

To avoid confusion, we must remember that behind any urban project there is the idea of the city as an architectural artefact. If this idea falters, the urban project as we're used to understanding it here in Milan perishes. If the city is a

network, a flow of immaterial data, if the centre of gravity shifts from the form of the city to the relationships between the players involved, the governance procedures and negotiation practices, then I don't think we can still talk of an urban project. Certainly, still a project, but conceivably not urban.

In short, the point is the relationship between architecture and city: does it still make sense to read the city through architecture and architecture through the city? Is this relationship still capable of producing that odd form of knowledge which we call precisely 'urban design'? It's a question of understanding whether today the city still has this centrality for young architects.

Note that I'm not speaking only in terms of morphological continuity, because often the discontinuity, the tearing, the denial of certain superficial relationships, affirms others which instead draw on deeper structural reasons, which even have distant historical roots and which it may be time to bring to the surface. Just think of De Finetti's obstinacy in denying Beruto's city a restoration of the ancient south-east/north-west footprint which the formal reversal of the monumental cemetery in Piazza d'Armi had tampered with.

It's the idea of the city as a work which is in crisis today, an idea which perhaps, in a way that is closer to home for us, we might introduce starting from Samonà's book on cities, which is a text that in some way triggered all the work on the city carried out by the generation of Rossi, Canella, and Aymonino, and that was precisely a generation who, by intertwining architecture and city, identified the latter as the moral horizon of architecture and also as the horizon of linguistic research. I say this, because we sometimes forget that the last great authorial season of Italian architecture was also the season when the city was most present. So, this is the last point I want to touch on. Because it seems to me that once the need for this relationship with the city ceases, also the research into the language of architecture ceases, it turns on itself, because the horizon within which this research has always sat disappears, here in Milan at least, in other words, the city. So it appears to me that the thread which ties together the city and the language of architecture has snapped; and I'm using the term 'language' deliberately, to understand both the semantic and syntactic or formal aspects of the architectural project. If the language of architecture today is not a problem in our schools, then the city will no longer be one either, since it will cease to be the privileged text of the linguistic interrogation, limiting itself to a series of

opportunities to mend, or repair, or enhance. It's this impossibility of separating city and architecture that constitutes the urban project and perhaps also its limit.

Claudia Tinazzi – As Elvio has already pointed out, I too believe that never as today – in the disciplinary dialogue around the great table of architecture that is increasingly heterogeneous in its instrumental interpretations – can we ignore a shared direction with respect to the deeper meaning of the term 'urban project'. Already for those like me who attended an Italian faculty of architecture at the beginning of the 2000s, this awareness and this unique address of significance has been increasingly waning, if not within the classrooms of our design studios then certainly in the context of the debate around the city and its transformations in a political sense, or towards society.

On the other hand, at the end of the last century – perhaps overly optimistic about the passing on of a value which with E. N. Rogers had strongly welded the city to the project, its memory to the necessary transformations, then immediately strengthened by the studies which, with Aldo Rossi, definitively linked the terms *architecture* and *city* – the practice of and attention to the urban project found in the design translation the militant force of certain witnesses, much more than in any theoretical framework.

If I think of two short publications such as *Temi Urbani* by Antonio Monestiroli (1997) or Aldo Rossi's book-interview *Luoghi Urbani* (1999) then it seems to me that at a certain point, the project – or rather the many projects, for example, for Milan, but in general for certain sectors of Italian cities – needed to verify the goodness, or better the robustness, of certain assumptions in the formal pre-eminence of the results.

And in this natural passage, we could say from theory to practice – thinking of the beautiful metaphor of Marti Aris regarding the relationship between Centring and the Arch – of a certain generation of architects (who were also theorists and teachers), perhaps in some cases the meaning of 'urban project' was exploited in favour of an almost purely dimensional reasoning, shifting the attention from the meaning to the content, and from the method to the object. Today too there is a risk – forgive me if I'm trivializing – of reducing reasoning to a problem of scale, because I believe that the urban project has no limits of scale (we can think of Mies and his project for the Federal Center which is first

of all the design of a void, a public square) and that the term ‘urban’ – here I agree with Francesca – should be inherent to any intervention within a more or less historicized city.

The debate around these urban themes through the practice of the project as a possibility of criticism (in a positive sense) of the city, which has seen a succession of competitions for entire sectors of the city in Milan, from the area of Via Farini to Garibaldi-Repubblica, or again from Porta Genova to the Bicocca area, I believe, albeit in the difference of the points of view that Elvio was talking about, that an urban project is “that architectural project which questions the city beyond the contingency of the occasion”.

With Massimo we had the opportunity to look again at the many projects which Aldo Rossi imagined for his city, Milan, and I say ‘imagined’ because by his own acknowledgement few, very few projects were actually built. However, if we line up all those projects often left on paper and the written reflections that accompanied them, we find that ‘question’ regarding the city, that desire to read its deeper character as well as to criticize its less coherent parts, which then springs from an “idea of the city” right outside that contingency, which today guides many choices, a contemporary idea of a metropolis, in the case of Rossi and Milan, capable of balancing the most deeply rooted tradition of matter, of geology, of durable elements and ways of life and the most radical adherence to contemporary themes.

While on the subject, I happened to re-read a text by Aldo Rossi which I think is very clear in telling younger students of a possible stance of the project towards the city, which recovers that horizon of the city as a ‘collective work’, leaving aside the great theme of the ‘form’ of our works of architecture: “At this point it is clear that there are no shortcuts to design other than the whole construction of this discourse; even with its critical moments, with its unresolved difficulties, with the complexity of its motivations. The individual character of the city and the buildings become aspects of the design problem; the relationships existing between types and forms have not yet been sufficiently explored, just as the significance of the city itself has not been sufficiently explored. Finally, what we’re looking for in the study of the city we live in is the attempt to proceed with the construction of an analogous city; in other words, to use a series of different elements, linked together by the urban and territorial context

as cornerstones of the new city. This analogous city uses places and monuments of a system whose meaning lies in history and is built around them, thereby defining its own form. From this concept of the analogous city, I think we could develop a valid new theory of design and offer positive indications and results with large-scale urban architecture projects.” (Rossi 1970). Here, then, talking about an urban project finds its reasons in the ability – I believe still necessary – to know how to read, culturally but also politically, those remarkable points of our cities, those cornerstones, those traces, those patterns, those meanings that are not always evident, to cement them to the contemporary story, imposing a strong bond with our own time capable of prefiguring the future closest to us.

MF – Were we to begin by considering the cultural multiformity and the multi-complex stratification of contemporary society in the most avant-garde succession traced by a militant anthropology, we would realize that once again the most exciting result of the goals achieved can be attested to the ability to build links and reasons to the dynamics of development, to the relationships that link study choices to expected results, to the spaces that identify strategies and – beyond the contingencies that are often not always so influential – ways of implementing transformation phenomena. Once again, leisureliness as well as the continuity of anthropological phenomena is a possible horizon, a conscious parallel for many disciplines, not only those based on the humanities. An ‘anthropological gaze’ may prove useful to shift attention to how we look and not where we look, to instil in us that “perpetual principle of disquiet”, a precious weapon against a status quo that aspires to be recognized as ‘the only one possible’. Implementing designs, defining positions, making the imagined come true, are at the same time relationship links and methods of intervention which are primarily cultural within the complexity that has come down to us. The specific nature of the urban project as a tool capable of summarizing positions and proposing architectural implementations has more to do with two distinct but strongly linked terms, order and arrangement. Ordering and arranging – linked in meaning to their respective etymological roots – identify the origin of an action typical of a discipline which defines spaces and which, before any other, imagined the city. In this sense, an urban project has no scale, it refers to an urban sense but as a settlement method contemplates all kinds. Once again,

we can relate the considerations proposed in the most happily disciplinary lines which, as always, coincide with the broad and present discussion that departs from shared themes and considerations to the most unobtrusive coincidence and overlaps the architectural experience; this continuous deferral, this coincidence and verification of understood topics establishes a constant and necessary level of discussion, a common ground within which exchange is worth more than confrontation. Aldo Rossi, cited many times, already identified the proposed theme back in 1970, orienting the vision of the city (inseparable from a knowledge of its historical structure) in a quest for an awareness that not only recognizes reasons and homogeneity within the individual parts, the broadest phenomena that generated them, but also the bonds that firmly cement the various parts together. The internal narrative of each individual chapter and the structured index of the entire volume clarify these distinctions precisely, encroaching on an infinite literary criticism and an explicit expressive figuration.

EM – I would add one more consideration: the urban project is fine, but what then counts – at least for me – is what lies behind the formula, in other words the ‘world’ which produced that tool, if you see what I mean. A ‘world’ where history and form intertwine but also conflict, because the reasons for the form are not historical, and modernity and tradition are the extremes of a discourse which always presents itself as new, never ever resolved once and for all, either in terms of the city or architecture. For this reason, it seemed important to me not to distinguish between city and architecture before. The crisis of the urban project is the crisis of a role, of an architect’s idea, the urban project is not one tool among many, but is the only way we know of imagining cities and architecture and imagining them together. So, I think we should stop tormenting ourselves if what we have known as an urban project is no longer the cultural and disciplinary paradigm through which contemporaneity interprets the city and architecture; it does not matter if its transitive charge and its ability to be a shared tool have faltered: the urban project serves those who still believe in a certain ‘world’, full stop. It only matters what we’re able to do with the tools we have at our disposal, in short, we need to drag ourselves out of the ditch by our hair. As far as I’m concerned, it’s the ability to give those tools an internal experimental twist, even a radical one – but this is probably just my idea.

FB – I fully agree with what Claudia said and it seems to me that the sore point is precisely the link with our own time, which is certainly the goal of every project – in Loos’ sense of adhering to the ethical and aesthetic spirit of one’s time, but which, as Elvio points out, inevitably presents us with a series of issues that are difficult to resolve within the canons of the discipline of the last fifty years, without running the risk of barricading ourselves behind a mannerist self-reflection, which can only lead to isolation, and not just cultural. I mean that, if what interests us is the city as the field of action of the architectural project, above all due to our inability to think of the project as an isolated artistic or linguistic object, then we must necessarily acknowledge that the city itself seems to make unsolicited requests that are easily ascribable to disciplinary issues alone, which indeed more and more often are collateral or even a hindrance in the physiological carrying out of urban activities. I would return to the theme of ‘urban sense’, underlining the profound difference between this notion and that of an urban project: how can we reconcile the season of the Modern and the work on the city carried out by the generation of Rossi, Canella, Aymonino – to which Elvio rightly refers – with the utopian, or perhaps it would be better to say atopian visions (views) that interpret and feed the urban imaginary of recent transformations? It would be easy to distinguish partisanly between good and bad, to attribute to globalization or gentrification a prevalent urban landscape that does not distinguish between Milan and Paris or between Tokyo and New York, at least in the intentions of the images that describe the architecture not (yet) built. But between these two apparently irreconcilable opposite poles – that of urban marketing and that of the city as a cognitive horizon, even sooner than a physical place – what possibilities do they offer? Perhaps we should have the courage or naivety to argue that there is no reconciliation, to admit (to ourselves), as Elvio openly declared, that the urban project is no longer a viable paradigm and to accept that all possible address updates may not suffice to act in a culturally and disciplinarily profitable way in the contemporary world. It seems that Rossi’s problem, to which Claudia referred, is posed once again in the light of a different operational horizon: “developing a valid new design theory”.

And again it was Rossi who wrote: “Let us now observe a monument: the Pantheon. We shall leave aside the urban complexity that presides over this architecture. In a certain sense, we can refer to the ‘Pantheon project’ or even to

the principles, to the logical statements, which presided over its design. I believe that the lesson I can take from these statements is as current as the lesson we receive from a work of modern architecture; or we can compare two works, and see how the whole discourse of architecture, however complex, can be understood in a single discourse, reduced to basic statements. It is then that the architecture presents itself.” (Rossi 1968)

We must therefore accept to deal directly with the reality that surrounds us and admit that the paraphernalia we’re equipped with must be revised, updated and integrated to respond to our own time, whatever that may be. In fact, I do wonder how it’s possible to ignore the contingency of the occasion. Is it not precisely through the contingency of the occasion that the project, by accepting to deal with all possible *hic et nunc*, interrogates the city, and vice versa? This is because it does not seem possible to me – once again naively – to think that beauty does not reside in our touching first-hand, through the constraints, difficulties and resistances of reality, the things of experience, in immersing ourselves in them, strengthened by the possibility of “reducing the discourse to the basic utterances” and starting over again from them. It seems appropriate in this sense to close with a quote from Franco Rella regarding Rilke’s comment on a poem by Baudelaire, recently mentioned by Carlo Moccia in one of his lessons: “Horror is such because it has no figure. Not to love or embrace it, but to give it a figure, this is the task: this is ‘the design that is slow to come’, as Baudelaire said.” (Rella 1993, 152)

CT – It seems to me that we could continue for a long time to fully unravel all that has been raised in this discussion and above all to try to better define the terms of an urban project idea that is contemporary to us, that is, adequate to our time or perhaps – once again – only through the practice of the project. I’m referring to the comparison of different points of view: through the practice of the project, we could concretely face that “world” of which Elvio speaks, or that “battlefield” for an architect in whom the deep knowledge of the history of the city and its form encounters but also clashes with new settlement needs, with new themes and new relationships. To do this, however, perhaps it’s necessary to think of an idea of the city; in the end each era – as we know – must imagine the idea that best represents its own identity, otherwise we would not have behind

us everything that we have, or what is engraved beneath our feet. Everything is therefore based on generosity, and I would like to say on the willingness of us as architects to seriously address the theme of the “city”, its history, its form, and its meaning. I have always been very impressed by the wealth of points of view – often also conflicting – which some competitions of the past closest to us have been able to offer concretely by putting the theme of the urban project at the centre. I’m thinking above all, for example, of the Garibaldi-Repubblica project in Milan and I believe that even today, lining up some of the many interpretations, from Aldo Rossi to Gianugo Polesello, from Guido Canella to Giorgio Grassi, would clearly show us how a project basically always has the possibility, and perhaps the duty, to express an idea based on the certainty of the primary role of architecture in the construction of the city, of our cities. Perhaps it was with this expectation that we participated in the construction of this MIAW workshop.

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Porta Romana railyard and Olympic village: reflections and contributions from MIAW 2021

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Introduction

Italy has hosted the Winter Olympic Games on two occasions: the first at Cortina d'Ampezzo in 1956 and the second at Turin in 2006. In 2019, the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2026 Games to Milan and Cortina – a great opportunity for the two cities, for the Lombardy and Veneto regions and for the whole macro-region of Northern Italy, which will directly or indirectly experience the main and collateral events. In addition to the opportunities, however, there are risks of poor planning and management, which internationally have been evident in many mega-events, among the most famous of which were Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and Sochi (Russia)¹.

The 2021 Milan International Architecture Workshop (MIAW) has contributed to the current reflection on the development of the former Porta Romana railway yard, which is intended to accommodate some of the functions of the Olympic Games, and the long-term impact of the proposed transformations

1. Major mega-events include the Olympic Games, the Football (Soccer) World Cup, World's Fairs (Expos), regional games and individual sports games, such as the Super Bowl (Müller 2015). The Sochi Games in Russia were intended to become a reference point for local sustainability, but in reality they led to an ecological disaster (Müller 2015b). However, all Olympic Games since 1960 have gone over-budget (Müller 2015), and in many cases, the social price has also been high: the Rio de Janeiro Olympics exacerbated existing social differences through large forced relocations from the favelas of Rio. In that case, the situation had already become difficult because of the series of major events that had occurred in the city in the previous decade (McGuirk 2016).

on the city of Milan. MIAW 2021 was an open online event² held on February 12–20, prior to the announcement of the winning project³ for the railyard; it was led by high-level international guest professors and ended with the presentation of the students' work.

The framework of intervention between mega-events and Milan railway yards

The working group organising MIAW 2021 focused on issues related to one of the most important transformations taking place in the city of Milan – that of the railway yards – which is entwined with another topic of great importance for the future development of the city – that of the Milan and Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games. The topic was framed with a long-term view of the project area, investigating the possible developments after the Olympics and integrating the site into the broader framework of Milanese urban development and regeneration, in synergy with the network of former railway stations. Today, the railyards⁴ are among the most substantial urban voids requiring intervention, and the debate and process of formulating an agreement⁵ between the municipality and the owner, Ferrovie dello Stato, was long and laborious. Nevertheless, the development guidelines for these seven vast areas have been very clear since the beginning (the first formulations date back to 2005): real estate improvement, green space with road and cycle networks, and the reactivation of part of the

2. Researchers on the topic of mega-events and participants in the ongoing railyard development contributed to the opening and closing events, including Pierfrancesco Maran, the Councillor for Urban Planning, Greenery and Agriculture of the Municipality of Milan, and the Laboratorio Permanente studio - the joint winner (with OMA) of the competition to redesign the Farini and San Cristoforo railyards with their Agenti Climatici plan. <http://www.scalimilano.vision/concorso-scalo-farini/> last visited April 26, 2021

3. The Campo Selvatico project, nominated on March 31, 2021, won the tender for the Porta Romana site. It was created by a team that included Outcomist, Diller Scofidio + Rendro, PLP Architecture, Carlo Ratti Associati and ARUP. <https://www.scaloportaromana.com>, last visited April 25, 2021

4. The former Milanese railway stations are Farini, Greco-Breda, Lambrate, Porta Romana, Rogoredo, Porta Genova and San Cristoforo, and they trace a semi-circle around the Milanese centre, covering a total area of over 120 ha (Infussi, Montedoro and Pasqui 2019).

5. Agreement signed in July 2018.

track transportation (Infussi, Montedoro and Pasqui 2019). These areas could become an important system of open spaces by erasing the interruptions and barriers they have generated, so the projects for them must also aim to reconnect the diverse and long-divided urban sections.

The city of Milan has had recent experience of redevelopment and international repositioning, starting with Expo 2015, and of repopulation and tourist improvements of the Alpine area. The strength of the city's Olympic candidacy is of looking beyond the realisation of the event, with a view to long-term sustainable development of the entire involved area, a more contextually integrated design and a series of actions on different scales that would bring a widespread improvement to the region (Di Vita and Basso 2020).

Mega-events have often been detrimental to host cities - creating urban voids, economic losses and social tensions (Müller 2014, 2015, Kassens-Noor 2016). Expo 2015 was problematic, but it was ultimately positive: the local political conflicts and episodes of corruption that emerged a year before the event fuelled considerable difficulties, yet the Exhibition was a success in terms of the number visitors, the legacy of the infrastructure, the improvement of public spaces and the extended cultural production in the city beyond that focused on the Exhibition site (Di Vita and Basso 2020). The view of the Olympic Games is therefore positive and part of the process of the city development that is already underway and is positively accepted by the citizens. The proposal developed between Milan and Cortina brings together very different areas and dynamics; it involves small towns, 17 UNESCO sites, cities of art and iconic places, and it reuses existing sports facilities with a high symbolic value⁶, such as the stadium and the sliding centre built for the 1956 Cortina Olympics. In this context - of the railyards and the Olympic Games - more than 150 students of the Politecnico worked, led by the international professors invited for the tenth MIAW: Roberto Cavallo (TU Delft), Hervé Dubois (ENSA Paris - Val de Seine), Donatella Fioretti (TU Berlin), Sebastián Irrarázaval (Universidad Católica de Chile) and José María Sánchez García (Escuela Politécnica de Madrid). Each teacher approached the topic based on his or her experience, sensitivity and professionalism, but following the direction to think of spaces

6. With the exception of the Palaitalia sports hall planned for the Santa Giulia area of Milan.

that would allow the reuse of this part of the urban fabric and its inclusion within the broader city development. The workshop was also held remotely, and this allowed, with a didactic innovation forced by the current pandemic, the development of further reflections on working methods and experimentation with new methods of teaching and interaction.

The organisation of the workshop: an online MIAW

Having defined the theme, the area of intervention and the title of the workshop - MIAW 2021 The Olympic Games and the City - The challenging urban regeneration of Milano Porta Romana rail yard - the search began for bibliographic materials on the topic of mega-events and for graphics, cartography, photographs and artistic framing of the area of Porta Romana. After confirming that it would not be possible to deliver the workshop in person, the didactic activity was organised with a calendar of introductory, educational and institutional online appointments. The programme was also enriched by a series of short events open to the public: the Lunch Talks, which were daily sessions during which the invited teachers could create their own professional path and design experiences. The teachers were supported by tutors and super-tutors who coordinated the work in the Teams platform virtual classrooms with the support of other sharing tools (Mirò, OneDrive, WebEx etc.). Furthermore, to ensure participation in the workshop in spite of the remote format, particular attention was paid to communication through the blog and social media⁷. Finally, having sacrificed the in-person element, a virtual exhibition and this publication were created.

Characteristic features and main results of the five ateliers

Despite the diversity of the design and didactic approaches of the five visiting professors, the initial approaches were consistent, but they later diverged in their organisation and development. The ateliers – all mindful of the substance and identity of Porta Romana as an important piece of the history of the city – focused more on life after the Olympic Games than on 2026 itself. The evaluation of each group was therefore born from a solid awareness of the area's importance

7. <http://www.miaw.polimi.it> and <https://www.instagram.com/miaw.polimi.architecture/>

and history, and this resulted in proposals firmly rooted in the context with a consequently greater chance of success and acceptance. Basic information was taken from a preliminary investigation – made available by the organisers of the workshop – and by an inspection of the area that, for many of the participants, was conducted remotely using smartphones and video calls.

The following is a brief characterisation of the approaches of each atelier:

Roberto Cavallo's Multi-Layered Porta Romana was based on the concept of the city as 'a system of systems' in which the impact of the area on the urban system is crucial. The resulting projects took into account the needs of the Olympic Games and proceeded with a design approach comprising overlapping layers of necessity and time. In the first phase, the students were asked to work individually to formulate their personal opinions; they were then grouped into multidisciplinary groups for the formulation of project ideas.

Hervé Dubois' atelier, Linear Infrastructure, addressed the issue with a multi-scalar and multi-thematic approach, designing a linear infrastructure strongly focusing on international networks and local connections. The macro-project imagined a linear element connected with the nearby landscape of the Alps, providing raised public and green spaces along the old railway line. The students worked in groups that focused on parts of the building: two on the definition of the structure, six on the vertical city and two on the road-in-the-sky. The result was a harmonious and holistic project.

Donatella Fioretti's atelier, entitled Designing the Railyard's Elusive Palimpsest, had a critical attitude towards the demands, dimensions and volumes of the buildings required by the Olympic plan, and it focused on a reinterpretation of the identity of the Porta Romana void. The students, partly in person, partly at a distance and coming from very different cultural contexts, were organised into four working groups; on the recommendation of the teacher, each had to formulate a landscape, urban and typological proposal.

Sebastián Irrázaval's atelier, Sew the Edge, was grounded in the idea that the design activity and its results must be oriented and guided by a profound vision, taking into account the functional demands, tools and problems posed by the context. The assumptions for the realisation of the projects were based on five cultural guidelines: the coexistence of the plant and animal worlds; the zero footprint; autonomy; equity and the social inclusion of age and gender; and

spaces to fight isolation.

Finally, José María Sánchez García titled his atelier Infrastructural Condition, conducted the work as a collective and presented the result in which the city - considered as an infrastructure - is reconnected by reconnecting what the Porta Romana railyard has divided: the dense historical urban fabric with the industrial city and the urban with the rural. The workshop included lessons on the presentation of references, with significant involvement from the tutors, which led to an analysis and discussion that ended with a theorisation that, in the final presentation, was presented as a collective theatrical representation narrating the soul of the place.

MIAW 2021: innovations and contributions to the regeneration process

Thinking of the railyards as places that create urban quality, the developed projects contribute with transformative ideas to the reflections on the Porta Romana railyard from the viewpoint of giving the city a new landscape and a place capable of both welcoming life and creating relationships with the context. The different characterisations of the ateliers and their varied approaches to enhancing the identity of the area and the programme of the Olympic Games produced a rich diversity of works and ideas. Some themes were touched on by all the projects as essential design elements, including Porta Romana as a border area - a break in the urban fabric that separates one Milan from another - and the railway as a place with a strong cultural identity for the city. To these were added the topics of nature and landscape, which were present in all the solutions and differently developed. All the projects saw in the railyard a piece of the city of which it had been deprived and the opportunity to turn the void into a green space to be returned to the city and to its citizens by rediscovering the fluidity of the paths and the continuity of the urban fabric and by respecting the local memory.

Perhaps the proposals presented have a major shortcoming: that of not being firmly inserted within the system of the city of Milan, contextualised both in the framework of the actions planned for the Olympic Games and in the dynamic regeneration path either begun or foreseen in the other six railyard areas.

The relationship with the Winter Olympics and with the city of Cortina could have been investigated more in detail, although the aim of the workshop

was to produce projects for only a segment of these urban spaces and systems, which are already connected by a wider and more complex urban project.

MIAW 2021 was an opportunity to deepen research on the identity of Porta Romana and to highlight the need to preserve it in the design proposals.

Ideas were also stimulated on the risks of bad management of a mega-event, inspired by both international case studies and the recent Milanese experience of the 2015 Universal Exposition.

The Politecnico was thus able to offer the municipality new reflections and new perspectives on the city, developed by highly qualified designers from very different contexts. Finally, from a didactic point of view, it was possible to experiment with a new online formula for an international workshop, which enriched the educational offerings, the teaching skills and the communication and information tools. In this context, a need was seen for this publication, which differs from those of previous events mainly in the greater number of written contributions, which seek to compensate for the lack of fluid and open discussion during workshop days. The virtual exhibition is also configured as an interactive moment in which to use further new means of communication and representation to share ideas and elaborate content at a distance.

In conclusion, the workshop produced significant and interesting project results; it is evident that the in-person modality is of fundamental importance - particularly in our profession and our faculty - for establishing a direct connection with the context to be understood and transformed, but it was nevertheless still possible to develop valuable proposals. The hope is that these reflections and design ideas will not remain merely an exercise within the academy but may represent an effective contribution that influences the actions of the municipality of the Porta Romana area.

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The Porta Romana railway station in its historical dimension: the basis for the project

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The Milanese railway stations has had extraordinarily interesting discussions, converging in equally interesting studies and publications which, in general and in a nutshell, have dealt with the recovery of these areas from an urban, architectural, environmental, economic, and social points of view.

From 2005 to today, the problem of the use of these areas has also involved the Politecnico di Milano, which, following an agreement with the Municipality of Milan, researchers for the reconversion strategies providing that, as in the case in question of the Porta Romana station, of the Society F, must take into account the conservation of a part of the railway line (the train station is in the connection line of the S9, Saronno-Albairate line of the suburban service managed by Trenord).

The workshop MIAW, at Politecnico di Milano, has chosen, once again, to take care of this subject, and it has developed between February and March 2021, in the same period of the outcoming of the competition on this area and the selection of masterplan by the workgroup led by Outcomist, with PLP Architecture, Carlo Ratti Associati, Gross. Max, Nigel Dunnett Studio, Arup, Portland Design, Systematica, Studio Zoppini, Aecom, Land, Artelia, Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

According to the winner masterplan, the area is conceived as a model of integration between greenery and the city. It is foreseen the Olympic Village of the 2026 Winter Games which will be transformed into student housing with approximately 1,000 beds.

As expected by the strategies defined by the municipality with Politecnico,

the masterplan was subjected to observations from the community of citizens and professionals, observations that must be incorporated in the final project.

In a nutshell, the development of the area, by almost 190.000 square meters that since 1891 saw the freight yard open to the public and in 1931 the inauguration of the passenger station.

The railway station was grafted onto a portion of the Spanish walls demolished in several points, opening the city to its new expansion linked to its industrial development. Nowadays, the area is interested in the reclamation activity undertaken with the elimination of the tracks, still acts as a passer-by station and presents, despite its fragmentation, many elements capable of confirming its identity. However fragmented and incomplete reality, it is still able to offer the narration about itself.

“The unfinished, if it constantly tends to overcome itself, has a seduction for every ardent spirit that is equivalent to that of perfection achieved”¹.

The fragmentation shows voids or lacunae in whose design interpretation they are opposed to the concept of “full”; the idea of “places”, opposed to “non-places”, offer stimulating suggestions useful for identifying plans and addresses for use and design. They have been read in their building potential and attractiveness, in relation to the political strategies used for their management. It is necessary that the place does not lose its identity and that a monumental (as memento or memory) value is recognized in what remains. The monumental character is not that conferred upon the conception and construction of a service useful for the development of Milan, but it is the one, as Choay says, suggested a posteriori².

An attempt was made to relate the opportunity they could offer by balancing the volumetric proposals of the new building with those of the possibility of increasing the city’s greenery. The problem of the Milanese railway yards can be analysed from the point of view of urban regeneration which, as Petrilli underlines, is identified as a “protean” phenomenon.

In fact, “*it would be configured as a meta-juridical element, as a sense and a mission that characterizes the entire regenerative operation, regardless of how much it is actually preponderant in terms of the work to be carried out, or even in terms*

1. Marc Bloch, *Apologia della Storia o Mestiere di Storico*, 2009, Kindle Edition

2. Françoise Choay, *L'invenzione del patrimonio storico*, 1993, pp. 7-11

of the results achieved. It would be a characterization that goes beyond the strategic vision, external to its *raison of being*". This is the case of the widespread (and controversial) relationship between urban regeneration and culture, which leads to what someone calls "*cultural regeneration*" or "*culturally guided regeneration*"³.

By culture we mean, today, the cultural industry, the cultural production and, in this sense, the cultural sector that can act as the new manufacturing sector.

What we want to emphasize here is, instead, the cultural significance of the place itself and the importance that the traces of its functions, now obsolete, can have in order to pass on its memory to the future: precisely to avoid that the past becomes a "foreign country"⁴.

For this, the remaining signs must be assumed and included in the architectural project which must be able to make this stratification intelligible.

The design of this space as well as its conservation must act as collectors of information useful for passing on the documentary dimension of presence as well as absence. It is necessary to recognize its value as a historical document, traceable in its position with respect to the development of the city, and in the signs that can still be found, and which testify to its use and functions. In fact, and taking up the lines of the previous speech, one wonders if it is possible to consider the area of the railway yard as a historical document, like a monument, recognized as such *a posteriori*, that is, whether it is legitimate to attribute to the surviving signs of its existence a documentary value for this, therefore, historical. It is a historical value given *a priori* and *a posteriori*.

A priori because historicized by the reasons that led to its construction, transformations and disposal. *A posteriori*, because certainly part of a collective memory of those who made use of the airport and of those who using the area, not having lived its function, will at least have the clues to ask themselves what the destination of the area was giving reason for the new transformations.

These same transformations must, therefore, be understood as historicized moments of the area in question which has not only a memory value, but also an

3. Emanuele Petrilli, *La rigenerazione urbana a guida culturale, ovvero come usare la rigenerazione urbana per creare utilità attraverso la cultura*. In: M. Passalacqua, A. Fioritto, S. Rusci, 2018, p. 265.

4. David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country – Revisited*, 2015, Kindle Edition

identity value as it testifies to a specific historical-cultural moment, in particular the social and economic one in Milan.

As Hobsawam states: “*The destruction of the past, or rather of the social mechanisms that link one’s contemporary experience to that of earlier generations, is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomena of the late twentieth century. Most young men and women at the century’s end grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in. This makes historians, whose business it is to remember what others forget, more essential at the end of the second millennium than ever before. But for that very reason they must be more than simply chroniclers, remembrancers and compilers, though this is also the historians’ necessary function*”⁵.

As Augé states, the stations are “non-places”, because are places that we “cannot be defined as relational or historical”. They are not anthropological places (in sense of the possibility to have “experience of relations”), because they are transit points. But if they are not able to integrate earlier places, they can be integrated by the future events, and for this reason, the station become part of the history of the place itself⁶.

“*Today it is said that a new social disease would loom over us: that of memory. ... the dimming of consciousness and historical knowledge in society seems to go almost unnoticed. Yet it is a widespread phenomenon in many environments and in different social groups, especially threatening the new generations and the world of education and devastating that of politics*”⁷.

(Nora Lombardini)

The phenomenon of the decommissioning of railway yards represents a great opportunity to think about a possible reorganization and rebalancing of the city of Milan. On the one hand it represents the possibility of operating on a large portion of the territory now incorporated into the urban fabric of the city, on the other it offers the starting point for a broader reflection on the strategic role

5. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991*, 1995, Kindle Edition

6. Marc Augé, *Non Places. Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, 1995, pp. 78-80

7. Adriano Prospero, *Un tempo senza storia. La distruzione del passato*, 2021, p. 5.

that these areas can assume not only in relation to the immediate context, but towards the whole city. Specifically, among the various disused railway yards, the one of Porta Romana covers that role of limit between the outermost portion of the city, where the building dates back to the early twentieth century and stands on the sidelines with the agricultural areas, and the compact urban structure of a nineteenth-century city, derived from the transformations due to the Beruto Plan. This is configured as an Italian interpretation of the nineteenth-century planning experiences for urban expansion in European contexts.

In a purely Italian declination and considering all its possible variables, it is proposed to address the contrast between the typical geometries of the plan and the complexity offered by the system of pre-existing structures, represented, for instance, by the monuments, the water system and the industrial portion of the city.

An area that has been defined as an urban gate, in a system of relationships, transits and exchanges with the surrounding context. The area, upon careful analysis, offers a possible unitary design, given by the continuity that can be found, albeit in a difference in proportions, shapes and intended use of the blocks, in the alignment with some north-south axes. In this interpretative hypothesis, the Porta Romana railway yard assumes a possible role of mediation, of connection between the two portions of the urban fabric of the city. The railway yards, in their status of abandoned and neglected places, need to be investigated as spaces where it is possible to see reflected the consequences of profound changes on the city. The rules of this change cannot be sought only in the logics that dominate the production system, in a transition between the industrial phase and the post-industrial phase that also affected the city of Milan.

Ultimately, there would be a risk of adopting a myopic gaze, unable to grasp a deeper and more interesting urban phenomenon where spaces and structures represent the physical and secondary manifestation of a change that has invested, first and foremost, the complex layering of economic, anthropological, and symbolic values. It follows that the terms for approaching a new discussion on the fate of railway yards cannot fail to take into consideration a fair number of factors, of a physical, functional, economic, and social nature, for example, while keeping our gaze fixed on the possibility of defining a character in the relationship to the city and citizens.

In terms of protection, we usually find ourselves having to define the importance of the object to be safeguarded. Recognize its historical significance for the community in that impossible distinction between a monument loudly recognized by the community and a cultural good not attributable to the list of protected assets, but equally essential for the transmission of the memory and identity of peoples. In this case, in addressing the study of railway yards, the problem arises at the early first stage: on an immediate analysis the railway yard can be perceived as an urban void.

The heterogeneous nature inherent in the definition of the contemporary city is manifested with great evidence in the areas of railway stations, defined by built agglomerations alternating with large empty spaces. In the general panorama of the railway yard, the built agglomeration appears as a secondary element compared to the larger presence of an apparent urban void. The result, inevitably, is that the railway yard assumes the role of a place extraneous to the city, unable to infiltrate individual and collective desires on the merits of the recognition of belonging, identity, sharing. But to the eye of the architect (and towards his role of transmitting knowledge to citizens) these spaces cannot be considered as empty, but rather as a set of elements to which it is possible and at the same time necessary to give shape and expression of form through a new project.

The human evidence on the territory, as the urban and infrastructural layouts, buildings and architectures, can be considered as “signs” of the past.

The railway yard must assume the role of a schedule where to recognize a process of stratification on the territory of signs, traced geometries, plots, transformation processes and repeated forms, which at the same time investigates the real settlement function that not only the material pre-existences, but the theoretical formulations also played in the construction of cities and territories⁸.

As Jokilehto states “*the cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs, either artistic or symbolic, handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind. As a constituent part of the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, as a legacy belonging to all humankind, the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognizable features and is the storehouse of*

8. Angelo Torricelli, Scali ferroviari. Responsabilità e ruolo del progetto urbano. In: S. Protasoni, 2013, p. 13

human experience. The preservation and the presentation of the cultural heritage are therefore a cornerstone of any cultural policy"⁹. For this reason, it is essential to refer to the analysis of signs, as a fundamental preliminary phase as a guide to the development of a project that is conscious and aware of its role in transmitting to posterity a past that is still alive in the fragile traces left orphaned by immediate legibility.

In the case of the Milanese railway yard, it is clear that the already complex urban stratification has been marked by the overlapping of the railway system. The technical reasons for an infrastructure made up of its own rules and needs has been superimposed as a further level in the existing schedule, triggering, at the local level, new geographies of both a symbolic and an economic nature.

It is therefore necessary to identify new macro-areas, which have already been mentioned, now measuring them in all their impact on the territory.

The mono-functionality of the space, used as a railway yard, has somehow suspended the rules of urban dynamics for a long time, and today, the need for a purely infrastructural nature has disappeared, the need to mend not only spaces and forms is clear, but also activities, values and meanings of places, in all the complexity of reading the signs that remain. The need to grasp these signs avoids the logic of the universal model, which operates indifferently in the false utopia of possible globalized metropolises. In intervening in this complex area, one is invited to act in terms of an archaeological metaphor, where an idea of space is identified as a complex entity, a stratified deposit of traces, clues, inscriptions and cancellations, with respect to which the architecture is called upon to broaden its gaze to involve historical, anthropological, geographical and aesthetic research around the question of the meaning of the transformations concerned over a long period of time and in a broad perspective¹⁰.

In an urban context such as that of Milan, but which can also be extended to the European scale, it is essential to think in terms of a non-linear time, made up of transformations that involve divestments, operating over long as well as short time, dictated by accelerations such as from slowdowns. In this context,

9. Jukka Jokilehto, *Definition of Cultural Heritage. References to documents in History*, 2005, p. 4

10. Sara Protasoni, Luoghi abbandonati. La costruzione del paesaggio. In: S. Protasoni, 2013, p. 182

a hypothesis of archeology of contemporary space is aimed at reading, as in the section of an excavation, belonging, consonances, genealogies, repetitions, discontinuities; to identify the reasons underlying the processes of formation and transformation of places, while addressing the problem of their dislocation in space and time. In this sense, the archaeological metaphor provides the tools to renew that relationship between (critical) conscience and project¹¹.

Even if the assessment of cultural heritage is changeable along the time and the space, it is also, necessary, that, time to time, it is identified, known, analyzed, maintained, conserved and transferred to the future. In this way the contemporary city can have its own formal continuity, as was the case with the ancient city, it can establish new relationships between its parts and prevent their isolation.

In this way the project investigates the deep cultural essence of the city: it becomes deciphering and new writing action on the city.

(Elena Fioretto)

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Green hills of Milan

Camillo Magni

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A recurring theme in academic debate has to do with the value of pairing the urban transformations promoted by public administrations with the teaching exercises carried out by students at universities. When in the summer of 2020, we decided to make the focus of the MIAW the transformation of the Porta Romana rail yard for the construction of the 2026 Olympic Village, we saw it as a relevant option for two reasons: first, it provided a means of stimulating students to reflect in greater depth on what is happening in their city through the eyes of a designer, an architect, tackling the great issues of urban life; second, it meant that the design explorations offered by the students, free from the many constraints that squeeze these events from every angle, could become in impulse for disciplinary reflection. Finally, we thought that it could be a way of further cementing our university's leading role in the debate on Milan, which we hope will grow increasingly open and participatory, especially as regards issues of public heritage. However, the timing of this operation surprised us all: the MIAW took place at exactly the same time as the international competition organised by the Fondo Porta Romana, and we now find ourselves commenting on the results of our workshop whilst in the city, the usual controversies rage on, the politicians remain silent, and the operators boast a renewed sense of confidence.

Porta Romana is simply the latest in the long series of urban transformations that have marked the history of Milan over the last twenty years, radically changing its shape. That is why it is interesting to observe this event in the context of certain broader reflections, not with the aim of reconstructing the profile of the events or expressing any sort of neat, concise judgements, but instead with a view to cultivating the ambition of observing what is happening through the eyes of an architect, asking the important questions about which architectural figures are most decisive in defining these urban transformations.

The contradictions of Milan's urban transformations

The Lombard capital is going through a moment of great cultural ferment that

is reflected in the upswing of the real estate market and the capacity to attract human and economic resources, giving rise to a situation of urban renewal that is increasingly clear and widespread. This undeniable trend, however, conceals a more complex condition that involves the various players, the architects, builders and administrators. First of all, from an architectural standpoint, it is interesting to point out that the authors of the most important urban transformations are foreigners (OMA, Herzog & De Meuron, SANAA, Zaha Hadid Architects, Arata Isozaki, David Chipperfield Architects, among others). The developers themselves, to an increasing extent, are often international investment funds, with forms of implementation that replicate established models from foreign contexts. This situation – without nationalist rhetoric – reveals the coexistence of two distinct worlds: on the one hand the major projects in foreign hands, and on the other a local professional sphere that works with dedication on a series of projects we might define as works on the small or medium scale. Looking through them, however, one senses the lack of a widespread level of architectural quality (if not in certain sporadic and heroic examples), and one runs aground on a level of mediocrity and a provincial system of patronage that do not live up to the opportunities offered by this new phase. This aspect seems paradoxical if we consider the history of Milan and that “cultured professionalism” that marked its architecture in the 1950s and 1960s. It seems even more paradoxical if we compare Milan to European cities like Barcelona, Zurich, Lisbon or Porto, where urban rebirth has been implemented through the spread of quality produced by good local architects and processes, instead of the concentration of a few, powerful real estate operations. A second aspect has to do with the role played by public entities. Without delving into complicated assessments, the enormous difficulty of developing complex urban processes is there for all to see. Timing and procedures are the great uncertainties that hamper growth, more than costs. The public administration, in the wake of a territorial development plan formulated across administrations from different sides of the political spectrum, seems to be sailing without instruments, more at ease with small operations than with a broader vision of the city. This has led Milan to transform itself in episodes, almost solely through the initiatives of private interests, influenced but not governed by the local administration.

The history of Milan’s rail yards themselves - of which the Porta Romana

area is one - sheds light on the absence of a unitary and strategic vision, or at the very least, a common thread (if we exclude the only the aspects related to railway travel). The Greco rail yard (one of the least attractive from a property development point of view) is being transformed through the process linked to “Reinventing Cities”; meanwhile, the more desirable ones such as Porta Romana, San Cristoforo and Farini (coincidentally amongst the first to have been launched?) were quickly targeted by the major players on the international property development scene, thus giving up the incredible opportunity of building a unified strategy that would be comprehensible and significant for the entire city. Or perhaps the strategy is in fact to build nine new episodes that will together create a different constellation of Milan.

Finally, one last consideration of an economic character: the rebirth of Milan represents an exception not only on a national but also on a regional level. The city grows without managing to drag the neighboring territories along with it, relegating that much sought “metropolitan region” to a condition of subalternity. What happens in the city does not happen on its outskirts, and the economic and cultural centrality of the capital remain separate from the economies of the neighboring territories (see R. Camagni, «Casabella» no. 872¹).

The astonishing concentration of economic and landowning interests focused solely on the city of Milan are framing the debate within a mainly financial context, largely sidelining the cultural, political, social and territorial components. These three aspects, from different perspectives, feed the same concern: that the rebirth of Milan is not the start of a long wave capable of having a deep impact on the city’s culture and economy, but instead an autonomous event, separate from the territory in which it appears, a spasmodic reflection of a single moment (Expo 2015?) induced by foreign players and protagonists. The fear is that this period will come to an end without leaving any legacy, and that Milan has represented only an opportunity for the concentration of speculative interests.

1. Roberto Camagni, Milano torna a crescere. Forza e limiti del “Terzo Rinascimento” in Casabella 872, aprile 2017, pp. 26-32.

The aversion to the city and the panacea of green spaces

The limitations of all this are entirely clear in the results of the urban design and architectural declinations produced in Milan over the last few decades. After all, the shape of the city reflects the values, interests and professional skills of those who build it (be they public or private), along with the economic powers supporting it. The contradictions governing the transformation of the city can be seen in the modest quality of the construction work, which systematically gives the impression that an opportunity has been missed to contribute to the improvement of the city. Of the many and varied flaws afflicting the city, I shall attempt, in this short piece, to focus my attention on two points which, in my opinion, represent two sides of the same coin: the aversion to the city's urban character and the poverty of its public space, in which the figures of the "park" and "green spaces" have become the only rhetoric through which consensus can be garnered and the absence of quality veiled.

To put this in the context of a broader reflection: in a recent piece published in Casabella, Francesco Dal Co analyses the work of Le Corbusier in light of the recent book *Le Corbusier. Des Canons, des Munitions? Merci! Des Logis ... SVP*, edited by Jorge Torres Cueco and Juan Calatrava². In this essay, the author highlights the aversion that the Swiss-French master had towards the city as a symbol of the ancient order of things, as diametrically opposed to the new spatial configurations better suited to the "radieuse" society of the future that technicians and "men of action" would be able to build. In his writings and drawings, the street is the very image of the illness the city represents: «*la proposition révolutionnaire des temps modernes est celle-ci: "mort de la rue"*». Along the *rue corridor* run "*désordre, laideus, immoralité*"; from the streets the city derives its tentacular configuration – "tentacular": the adjective that sums up all the ways of indicating a distaste for the city. The streets reproduce poverty, they are the preferred place of irrational consumption: through the street, the sick city infects the bodies of those who live there, and their morals. For "*cette ville magnifique*

2. This is the reproduction and translation from French into Spanish of the 1938 text "*Des Canons, des Munitions? Merci! Des Logis ... SVP*" that Le Corbusier edited for the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* in Paris in 1937. Jorge Torres Cueco and Juan Calatrava, *Le Corbusier, Canones, Municiones? Gracias! Viviendas ...* Por favor, una exposición, un pabellón y un libro: Le Corbusier, 1937-38, Abada Editores, Madrid, 2020.

plongée dans la moladie”, *logis* is the name of the cure prescribed by Le Corbusier: «*la naissance d’une nouvelle civilisation est marquée par cette préoccupation décisive: créer des logis*»³.

Coming back to the present day, the most recent projects in Milan seem to reiterate this aversion to the city without, however, evoking any sort of “bright future”. Indeed, whilst the areas being developed are tightly bound to the established fabric of the city, the projects themselves look elsewhere, aspiring to distant figures and promoting suburban lifestyles. They refuse to dialogue with their immediate surroundings, instead opting for an abstraction that is deliberately divorced from the morphological and typological characteristics of the city. Aware that the formal unity modelled on Renaissance-era examples is no longer practicable and that the city is “built in parts”, as illustrated by Oswald Mathias Ungers⁴, or that it can be traced back to the figure of the archipelago (“the archipelago city”) offered by Pierluigi Nicolini, these examples seem to go even further: they mark out a clear boundary with the urban character of the place. Much as per Le Corbusier’s view, the most denied figure is the unity of design between street, green space and plot, replaced instead of confusingly alternative spatial evocations. Historically (but also in other ways), the urban character of a street has always been measured by density, complexity, and the coexistence of different uses and functions. Conflict and congestion are merely the complex ingredients that must be combined in order to give these spaces their proper urban value. The very safety of those passing through this place is the result of the co-presence of multiple uses and actors. This is what the history of the European city teaches us. Conversely, in the most recent property development operations in Milan, the street as a device is robbed of its power due to the difficulty of getting conflicting uses and functions to coexist, such as the pedestrian system with the road traffic system, residential use with commercial use, vegetation with mineral soil. The figure of the street is thus dismembered: cars on one side and pedestrians on the other, commerce and business coagulated

3. Francesco dal Co, L’avversione di Le Corbusier per la città [“Le Corbusier’s aversion to the city”], in Casabella 918, p. 96

4 Florian Hertweck, Sébastien Marot (eds), Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas, *A manifesto (1977), The City In The City Berlin: A Green Archipelago*, Integral Lars Müller.

into containers whilst the residential section is set back from the continuous façade in order to protect the supposed values of privacy. Not that these choices are wrong, per se: they are simply interpretations of a suburban way of living that is not appropriate or fitting for the metropolitan context of Milan. From a planimetric point of view, these settlement principles are devastating: the buildings themselves move away from the street grid, dissolving the figure of the block and producing large plots with isolated buildings floating within them, protected by rigid gates, their ground floors becoming impermeable, eventually reducing the street to the function of a mere roadway or commercial boulevard. It is at this point that the redeeming figure of the park makes its appearance: “nature” becomes the panacea of contemporary living. “Living in a city, but within nature” is the recurring slogan within which a confused disciplinary vacuum is so often camouflaged. Reading the reports offered by the various promoters gives you the impression of going back in time, reviving the dogmatic slogans with which Le Corbusier papered the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* during the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*⁵ in Paris in 1937, in which the narrative technique hinged upon the “banalisation of the counterpoint”. Of course, the problem has nothing to do with the use of natural elements in urban design, but rather the distortions produced both by the property sector - which hides its speculative interests by fuelling the commercial imagery that best suits and profits them (namely the house immersed in greenery) - and by the public promoters who ceaselessly pursue the flighty consensus of citizens through the falsification of rhetoric that is, in actual fact, highly impractical to implement. All that prevails of this supposedly ecological vision is the aesthetic aspects, a semblance of woodland window-dressing, much to the detriment of any deeper reflection involving production and construction systems, as well as real-world lifestyles. Testament to this is the fact that no property development operation has ever been entirely allocated to parkland, which is instead used as a complementary device with which to delicately pepper new construction

5. «Indeed, in the pavilion, responding to this logic, chained together in a synecdoche, the images chased one another like slogans, and the slogans were graphically transformed into images. This was also true of the projects he put his name to, apodictically presented as representations of a revolution involving all kinds of settlements», Francesco dal Co, op. cit., p. 81.

operations on a vast scale⁶. The very form in which urban green spaces are designed immediately throws up some critical issues: the recurring image is that of a “wilderness”, entirely divorced from the urban character of the empty space, neatly inserted into a built environment in which the same settlement principles apply to both the buildings and the empty spaces (the court with its courtyard, the blocks with their gardens, the urban fabric with its city park). Conversely, recent projects evoke a grotesque naturalistic image of suburban greenery, a third landscape à la Gilles Clément boxed into rigid dimensional containers. The rich and rigorous ways in which modern urban planning designs a park have been replaced by an idea of pervasive greenery which is both falsely spacious and falsely wild - an approach better suited to non-urban contexts than city centres. The contradictions here are obvious: the boundary between public and private, for example, is no longer defined by buildings as was once the case in the historical blocks, but rather by a system of fluid open spaces in which a variety of homes now float around. However, these forms are the result of processes of architectural window-dressing that stop at a superficial aestheticisation of the project, in which the permeability of the spaces involved does not have the disruptive force of the open city, which is capable of ignoring the limits of private property; instead, the seemingly vast expanse is constantly interrupted by long sequences of gates and barriers (disguised as splendid hedges) which emphatically mark out the perimeters of the land and reject the settlement principles that inspired them, namely those of the open city. Let us look at a concrete case: CityLife.

The design of the blocks is separate from that of the streets, and the buildings are reminiscent of a model of the open city that is systematically interrupted by the recurrent presence of gates and separations, resulting in a park made up of many flowerbeds that is better suited to the businesses that characterise it than to any possibility of a pleasant stroll. As a result, one might quite naturally wonder

6. In this regard, it is interesting to compare the recent rail yard projects with what happened following World War II in the Porta Genova rail yard in Pagano. Almost the entire space was transformed into a public park (not without some considerable conflict, in view of the evolution of the 1938 General City Plan, under which it was intended to be a business centre, later replaced in the 1960s by the current public park), allowing for the creation of the Palavicino gardens. Today, only the Porta Genova rail yard has seen its cubage shifted to the other rail yards.

about the democratic sense of this place and its subservience to the commercial uses that promoted it originally. The very way in which parks are designed hides other misapprehensions: they are exaggeratedly varied spaces, systematically fragmented, filled with all sorts of equipment and featuring plant life intended to suggest a somewhat implausible wild naturalisation of the territory. What's more, the many facilities also highlight the need to use attractions as a way of compensating for a void in the design itself, as if the presence of vegetation alone were not sufficient to constitute the identity of a park. It is an overwriting of signs that very clearly expresses the difficulty of designing a garden for what it represents: a green space, an area of plant life, within the city. Much like an ugly car that attempts to compensate for the shortcomings of its design by being equipped with infinite optional extras. The result is grotesque: parks that are incapable of producing an urban character, of expressing the values of the city, even through the use of greenery. They do not fit into the context, yet at the same time, they lack the power needed to evoke a different imagery of living - a power held, for example, by the German *Siedlung* or the English garden cities of the early 20th century.

The result is grotesque, often miniaturised reproductions of public gardens: “a Burle Marxesque garden in bonsai format”, spaces that more closely resemble «the gardens of medieval cloisters than the populated public courtyards of Baroque cityscapes»⁷.

It is worth reflecting on the reasons behind this progressive impoverishment. Whilst for Le Corbusier, there was an urban aversion rooted in his aspiration to offer a different kind of “bright future”, in the Milanese examples, the dominant orientation is sadly a commercial one. Consequently, the green space becomes not a design figure, but a market product that serves to commercially promote property development operations. There is no ideology in these observations:

7. Cino Zucchi, *Urban Housing*, in *Lotus 120*, p. 8. «*Within this state of affairs, a do-it yourself city planning on a miniature scale tries to find the adhesive between the individual buildings. With the disappearance of the ideal of social solidarity, the space between buildings does not appear to take the form of the “neighbourhood unit” so much as that of a bonsai version of the Burle Marx garden: a contemplative, rarefied space, which permits the activation of social interactions, but can also be enjoyed in a purely visual way from protected interiors. In this sense it is more like the gardens of medieval cloisters than the crowded public courtyards we see in baroque urban views.*».

the history of the city is inextricably bound to private property development and speculative processes. As such, today's problem is not one of economics or speculation, but rather one of design culture, of urban figures to be used as points of reference, of values to be shared and lifestyles to be followed. If, for example, we compare the transformation of the Bicocca district⁸ with that of CityLife, twenty years later, we can see many similarities in the role (be it positive or negative) of the private operator, whereas the models, forms and urban typologies used for reference are incomparable: the former evokes a consolidated city, whilst the latter conjures up only anti-urban imagery.

Finally, one last marginal consideration: the communication used in urban transformation processes.

This now-ubiquitous aversity to the city is also evident in the ways in which these processes are narrated. The hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of built environment are represented by wild, bucolic hills of rolling green populated by endless kites and colourful balloons; the rooves are green, as are the roads, their surface alluding to the absence of cars, asphalt, or even mineral soil. The city has disappeared, with the chaotic complexity that governs it mitigated by the redemptive power of nature. It is the triumph of a nauseating falsehood. These are representations of public and living spaces created in the vein of the most persuasive commercial advertisements aimed at falsifying the content in order to convince the viewer to buy the product.

Communications that run through both private and public channels, with the latter making it all the more difficult to swallow. Little by little, this formal vocabulary is turning citizens into consumers and the city into yet another product to be marketed.

8. The Bicocca district is the result of an international competition held in 1985-1988 and won by the Gregotti Associati architecture firm. The jury was chaired by Bernardo Secchi. CityLife is the result of an international tender won in July 2004 by the CityLife consortium, made up of Generali Properties S.p.A., Gruppo Ras, Immobiliare Lombarda S.p.A., Lamaro Appalti S.p.A. and Gruppo Las Desarrollos. In this case, the jury consisted of an internal committee supported by 11 internationally renowned experts (including Kenneth Frampton and Deyan Sudijc), who did not have voting rights.

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Sensory and phenomenological aspects of the urban project

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Hermeneutics of urban space - Milan and the big events

The regeneration of the former Porta Romana rail yard in Milan is part of a larger transformation of the city, which is redefining the face of the entire South-East urban sector, from its ancient industrial vocation to a cultural and tertiary one. This process has been started by the establishment of the new headquarter of Prada Foundation, introducing new functions - linked to art, fashion and design - and attracting new city users. The transformation was implemented by Symbiosis intervention, between Adamello Street and Orobia Street, and it will be completed by the construction of the empty rail yard, according to the recently winning master plan of the competition promoted in December 2020.

Once considered as the first peripheral area of the city and today fully absorbed into the fabric, this neighborhood has great potentialities to promote urban sewing, reconnecting the urban tissue and bringing back important collective functions within the city.

As for other important episodes in the recent history of the city - for instance Expo 2015 - the regeneration is activated by a big event: after decades of debate, the process is triggered by the successful candidature for the Winter Olympic Games Milan-Cortina 2026. While big events have played a leading role in the relaunch of the city, enhancing its international attractiveness, they risk associating urban transformation to rapid and often “emergency” occasions, with tight deadlines, producing an unequal growth linked to appealing morphological episodes, despite lacking medium-long-term planning of the interactions between the environment and the social and dwelling habits.

Undeniably, part of the responsibility must be given to public authorities, who are not always able to assert their role of coordinating and guiding processes,

leaving the initiative to individual operators (Castaldo and Granato 2015). Part, however, is the consequence of a theoretical lack in the architectural debate, which is losing the link to social, cultural, and perceptual balance of living territories.

Ideology and urban security. Ethical foundation of postmodern city

The renewal of Milanese city through international models, and their relationship with the local tradition, is not only an aesthetic problem, but also and primarily a social one. As described by Bauman, through the term “gated community” (2005), the development of contemporary cities seems to respond to logics of “exclusivity”, producing separation and detachment among the population, who no longer have common foundations.

The theme intertwines with a series of concepts, as the one of “security”, which according to Bauman is an essential element to understand the social dynamics of the city: the fear of different, mistrust, the renunciation of confrontation, the creation of limited sharing areas pertaining to specific social groups, self-induced forms of segregation. Historically, the bond between these antithetic thrusts has been identity, involving the local and shared habits of living and perceiving places. Identity recalls a collective memory to local inhabitants, producing implicit and unwritten regulations, fostering mutual assistance and peaceful coexistence among people. In 1977, referring to the Greek polis, Mario Vegetti summarizes this reflection with the term “ideology”. According to the author, urban experience is governed by an “ideology of the city”, which makes social cohesion possible: “ideology is not compact enough to erase tensions, but it is powerful enough to mediate social conflicts on the long run” (Vegetti and Lanza 1977, 13). The post-modern era, significantly defined as the “crisis of ideologies”, has produced a radical change in this horizon, leading to the emergence of new types of ideologies. Today, the moral horizon is somewhat taken for granted, as the result of omni pervasive and globalized references which take shape in an indisputable “law”, which is transitory with respect to local life. No longer referred to the elements that built daily experience, contemporary ideologies lose their power to absorb and resolve local contradictions, simply tracing back to an increasingly complex control apparatus.

This tendency has resulted in the current spread of sophisticated and pervasive surveillance systems. It is quite simple to point out the contradiction that what should represent the guarantee of local security is instead experienced by local people as a punitive instrument (Svendsen 2017), fostering an impersonal control, expression of a hostile decision-making apparatus. The “eye of the camera”, often considered as a cure for all ills, is the expression of an idea of protection that takes increasingly distance from real contexts, fostering disconnection with local alliances, reciprocal agreements, and protection among the population.

The consequence of this phenomenon is producing an overall flattening of “ethics”, in its etymological meaning – from the Greek *ethos*: community rule, local habits – affecting the idea of urban coexistence, as referred to a common space capable of reconciling, while giving expression to, the many instances that characterize the experience of contemporary metropolis.

These reflections raise some questions to the new master plan of Porta Romana rail yard: what is the “collective ideology” that supports the future transformation? Which common spaces will be created to foster new “places of common consciousness”? What strategies will be adopted to increase the security of place?

The “body” of architecture. Lived space and multisensory as tools of the project

Our reflection leads to questioning the relationship between the project and the “context”: a well-known term in the contemporary debate, born exactly in Milanese school, well expressed by the architectural style from famous architects as Caccia Dominioni, Gardella, Ponti, Zanuso, Asnago Vender, BBPR (Pierini and Isastia 2017). The introduction of the most recent architectures, some of which inspired by global and international references, generates a necessary “encounter-clash” between tradition and progress, conservation and change, local meanings and in vogue architecture.

To defuse tensions among these thrusts, it is useful to reflect upon the relationship between architecture and perception, according to some positions that have recently returned at the heart of the reflection (Canter 1977; Lynch 1966; Paci 1957). The category of “lived” space, introduced by Enzo Paci in the

Fifties, takes a particular meaning, referring to a broad conceptual background from the 19th century phenomenology.

The salient point of this approach is the need to consider the active role of the “object” within its place. This role must be understood through an inevitably multisensory emotional-perceptual scenario, which goes far beyond the visual transformation of space. Architecture is a part of the “flesh and stone” that give shape to the city, as Richard Sennett called it (1994): it has a “body”, therefore, that gives off its own smell, speaks its own language, sings with its own voice – to resume Paul Valéry’s suggestion (1988).

One of the most radical, and perhaps not yet adequately analyzed, revolutions in Western civilization is precisely the change of the “minor” sensory scenarios of the cities. The transformation of the olfactory environment (Corbin 2008), produced by the landfill of sewers, the birth of cemeteries, the development of waste collection systems, the neutralization of industrial fumes and exhaust gases, involves a huge change in the symbolic horizon of the city. The same can be said for the sonic environment, totally reshaped by the industrial revolution, which broke the thousand-year-old balance between natural and artificial sounds, altering social conventions, urban perimeters, the sense of belonging of the individuals to their territories (Mocchi 2020).

In face of this change, the contemporary world is characterized by the affirmation of no-quality sensory scenarios, with prevalent negative meanings for the subjects, based on the equivalence between “quality environment” and “absence of disturbing elements”: “silence” is the synonym of “good sound”, “absence of smell” of “good smell”. This encourages the consequent loss of affection for the environment, improving the role of screens and devices integrated with our body as the most effective tools for conveying useful information. Senses lose their importance, becoming a surplus for daily activities.

But never as in this case literally, what we throw out the door comes back through the window. The illusion that experience can be regulated by ad hoc sensory landscapes, entirely produced through artificial means, proves ephemeral and fragile. As much as technologies are becoming powerful and efficient, the awareness of the impossibility of this perspective is raised. Whether we like it or not, we live in a relational space, and the environment is the main vehicle of our information.

Architecture is challenging this scenario in a predominantly passive way, limiting to perform tasks through the installation of sensory barriers, acoustic or olfactive isolations and filters that allow the achievement of thresholds provided by the regulations, uncritically accepted as constraints. The affirmation of a colorless, odorless, tasteless and completely smooth material – as glass – as the protagonist of contemporary architecture is a significant coincidence, which inaugurates a complex transformation of the relationships between the building and the environment, in a physical as well as social and cultural sense (Mocchi 2016).

Environmental Design for Porta Romana rail yard regeneration

“Environmental design” is an interesting approach for reflecting on Porta Romana rail yard regeneration, putting together some of the suggestions proposed in this article. As Romano Del Nord said, environmental design “exceeds the mere functional perspective in favor of a perceptual-sensory one” (2014, 52). The design action is called to define the characteristics of environment on the basis of physical, functional, psycho-emotional and relational needs, with reference to both individuals and communities’ values (Schiaffonati, Mussinelli and Gambaro 2011).

The concept of environmental design is supported by a settled tradition, started with James Marston Fitch in early Eighties and deepened in more recent years by authors such as Maldonado, Zanuso, Magnaghi, Schiaffonati. The new architectural approach is in continuity with a new consideration of the regulatory instruments, going beyond the physical characteristics of place to include cultural, social and economic scenarios. Law is no more limited to intervening ex-post on the territory, to amend project errors, but is redefined in a preventive and proactive approach, able to quantify and simulate in advance the consequences generated by the transformations (Tartaglia 2018).

The core of the reflection is the notion of “environment”, as a concept capable of opening a “new field of investigation” – as Losasso defined it – representing “the basis for fostering ideas and methods for compatible relationships between places and architecture, in ecological, political and governance dimensions” (2017, 8).

This interpretation of the project is appropriate to frame the transformation of the former Porta Romana rail yard in Milan, due to the residential, symbolic, and social complexity that characterized the place. The public of the district is in fact non-homogeneous, in relation to different ways of living the area: for simply passing through, tourism, resting, permanently residing, housing student facilities and hotels, working reasons. Therefore, the perception of the large void takes different forms: now characterized as an insecure space, now as an opportunity, as a hope, as a home, as a place of passage, as a memory. The different possibilities for reaching the area – by car, bicycle, on foot, using the trolleybus or tram, by metro or by rail – define additional perceptual scenarios, which make the interpretation of this place even more articulated.

The area is limited to the East and to the West by two overpasses, representing well-identifiable barriers, creating high points that define a recognizable and unitary space, perceived in a single glance. The wide perceptual trajectories make it possible to look across the immediate surroundings, establishing relationships with the new buildings that grow around the sector. “Being” in the area means, therefore, relating with the urban scale, in a wide spatial perspective and in relation to even distant visual goals. This helps the spatial location of the users, promoting their awareness of living the place, encouraging their sense of belonging and participation.

Perceiving the surroundings means grasping the historical industrial vocation of this urban sector, clearly expressed by the morphology of some buildings, such as the former Tecnomasio Brown Boveri headquarter. This reactivates a collective memory, recalling images from futurist works by Boccioni and Sironi, and more recently pictures from photographers such as Gabriele Basilico and Berengo Gardin. The rail yard becomes the gateway to a still alive industrial city, whose signs can be found in the rusty iron binaries that cross the place, and in the overall organization of the urban tissue, marked by the difference between the rigid grid of Beruto’s plan to the North and an irregular development to the South. Underlying the importance of these elements is a way not to lose an essential identity of this sector and more in general of the South-East area of the Milanese metropolis. This identity is nowadays embodied by the rail yard void, whose perceptual characteristics are far from the contemporary urban experience, referring to silence, absence of movement, dustiness, abandonment.

The poetic strength of these elements can be summarized in a particular emotional factor: sunset. The orientation of the area, placed exactly in an East-West direction, and the low profile of the buildings in the surroundings, allow to perceive this phenomenon, normally excluded from the urban experience, obscured by the increasingly vertical evolution of contemporary skylines. The void lets a glimpse of nature filter inside the city, up to the Alpine arc of Monviso and Adamello, introducing a different time and rhythm from the daily routine ones. The red-pink-orange colors of the sky and the clouds create in the evening an emotional atmosphere able to affect the perception of other urban elements: the sound of cars, the smell of the roads, the scent of the few herbs that grow spontaneously within the void. The chaos of the traffic itself is slowed down by the peaceful calm perceived in these moments. Inspired by sunset, the dialectic between man and nature takes on a deeper meaning than the ubiquitous reference to “green”, normally considered as a cure for all ills, generating increasingly hybrid landscapes, hardly attributable to artificial or natural experiences (Bellini and Mocchi 2017). What form will sunset take in the new city? What elements will strengthen it? What is the urban outline that will frame its future revelations? The answers to these difficult questions will determine the success of the project, making it necessary to reflect on the continuity between the existing and the new city, more than on the idea of realizing another autonomous “happy island”, incapable of embracing the complexity of the urban experience.

The proposed reflection tries to summarize the emotional-symbolic-cultural scenario that should be considered at the basis of the project action, necessarily contradictory because of the continuous tension between the collective and the individual points of view – the subjective perceptual moment, punctual and localized, and the set of shared and historicized relationships. In this contradiction, then, lies the sense of the transformation: a translation that is at the same time a betrayal of the original meaning, necessary for opening unpredictable perspectives. Present-future, physical-symbolic, interpretation-prescription, singular-collective, common-private are some of the dialectics that must have their place in the project, for creating a better future city.

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Porta Romana rail yard: a story waiting to be told

Tools and design strategies for new architectural scenarios

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The transformation of the Porta Romana rail yard is a central aspect of the plan for redevelopment of Milan. It represents an opportunity to re-design a new part of the city, something that has already been done in the past starting with the project for the industrial area of Bicocca. It is a complex story that began in the Eighties and Nineties with the first major closures of production sites, and continues to this day. Back then, the focus was on recovering the industrial areas that were abandoned following radical changes to the forms of production. These areas included Marelli, Innocenti and many others of a small size, such as those of via Tortona and Lambrate. Now, instead, the aim is to transform infrastructural and logistic areas: spaces that were once strategic but not directly relating to production (Shannon and Smets 2010).

The new project for the Porta Romana yard is part of a broader one concerning the recovery of the railway yards in Milan. It is a system made up of seven yards: Farini, San Cristoforo, Breda-Greco Pirelli, Lambrate, Rogoredo and Porta Genova, and of course the one of Porta Romana. The decommissioning and substantial recovery of these railway yards mark a new and decisive period involving processes of abandonment and contraction to free up portions of land. The extent and location of these areas requires careful consideration of the tools, processes and architectural works needed to regenerate these parts of the city. The railway yards represented, for Milan, the main backbone of the freight transport system, an infrastructure which, following the changes in the industrial system, were fenced off and left to gradually fall into disrepair.

This period raises several important questions because it marks a paradigm

shift with respect to the transformations for Milan and, more generally, with respect to the disposal of abandoned factories and warehouses formerly used for heavy industrial production. These forms of production are now carried out via virtual and telematic channels, and no longer by traditional means of transport. The decommissioning of the infrastructure could represent a decisive step towards a different form of production, of an intangible, technological and social nature. What directions will this process take and what implications will it have?

Specifically, each area tends to take on different connotations and destinations: the Porta Romana railway yard, for example, is intended first to host the Olympic village for the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Games and, later, to become a new residential district. This article investigates aspects that are different but interrelated: it describes the stories and projects of transformation underway in Milan and their outcomes and attempts to identify the design tools that could be useful in the transformation of complex spaces.

Transforming Milan: stories and projects with different endings

Milan has changed considerably in the last twenty years: new projects have transformed the image of the city, partially making up for places that have been neglected for years. The recovery of the railway yards is the latest in a long line of stories about projects completed after many years of work, or that have been partially completed, or not gone beyond the conceptual stage. They tell us about the intrinsic complexity of urban projects, the many variables at play and, above all, the role of architecture and its tools used for these transformations (Cerruti But et al. 2017; Multiplicity.lab 2007). Today Milan is an open-air atelier in terms of the number of projects undertaken and for the innovative and disparate nature of the new structures (Brandolini 2005; Capitanucci 2015). It is a lively and intricate story, to be reconstructed critically to understand what has happened and what are the future plans for urban development in Milan.

Among the stories to be told, we will start with the two most emblematic projects that are currently underway (but nearing completion) in Milan: the recovery of the Garibaldi-Repubblica area and the construction of the new City Life district. Both were previously abandoned areas: the grounds of what was the

Varesine¹, and the former site of the trade fair, now moved to the new structure in Rho, respectively. The Porta Nuova project for the Garibaldi-Repubblica area, begun in 2005², is characterised by a series of iconic, imposing and eccentric architectures, which gravitate around Piazza Gae Aulenti, a public space in a position above the railway station (AA.VV. 1992). The project represents a significant step in the transformation of architectural processes and forms in the city; in some respects, the construction of the Unicredit headquarters – by the architect Cesar Pelli – has radically changed the image and profile of Milan. The tower is among the tallest skyscrapers in Italy, with a height of 231 meters. The entire complex, made up of independent architectural objects, is based around two elements: the square, defined by a perimeter of buildings that reinforce its circular shape, and the park of the BAM, Biblioteca degli Alberi. These projects took much longer to bring to fruition than expected due to long design processes, which often led to significant changes to the initial design.

The City Life project is no less significant and controversial: launched in 2004, its implementation officially began in 2007 and is now drawing to a close with the completion of the third and last tower, designed by Daniel Libeskind. The project involves three towers, a large public park and a series of residential buildings. The design of the City Life district is based on two themes that are different but equally decisive. On the one hand, it is compact in terms of construction with three skyscrapers, new landmarks of the district as a whole; on the other, there are also large public grounds that act as a green setting for the buildings but also lend cohesion to the architectural structures. The skyscrapers in the City Life district – Dritto, Storto and Curvo – represent, as their names suggest, the design choices made by Arata Isozaki, Zaha Hadid and Daniel Libeskind respectively. These buildings designed by international architects lend

1. The Varesine station was located in the area of Piazza della Repubblica and ceased activity in 1961, with the inauguration of the Porta Garibaldi station. The space was partially abandoned for years.

2. In 1991, AIM (Associazione Interessi Metropolitani) and the Municipality of Milan, launched a call for ideas for the transformation of the Garibaldi - Repubblica area into a new business centre. As many as 63 projects were put forward, from which Pierluigi Nicolini's design was selected. The idea of building a vertical city and a large green space will be adopted by the Municipality of Milan for the development of the plans for Porta Nuova.

a new image to Milan and replicate gestures and forms already seen in other places (Ponzini and Nastasi 2016). Architecture becomes the protagonist and manifesto of significant historical discontinuity. Porta Nuova and City Life are pieces of a future that raises questions about the architectural choices and designs carried out, as well as the final results of these transformations.

Other stories have had different endings, with many projects still pending. To name but a few, the recovery of the Goccia area in Bovisa, and the partial and unfinished construction of the new Porta Vittoria district which, between failures and changes, will see the development of a future park, doing away with the BEIC (European Library for Information and Culture). These are stories spanning decades, often made up of expectations, projects and visions, proposals and calls for ideas that have overlapped and become intertwined and whose history, if faithfully reconstructed, would form an excellent representation of the real mechanisms of urban transformation³. Many of these pending stories have led to important projects: think of the masterplan for the Goccia area in Bovisa designed by OMA in 2007, with the creation of a series of large circles containing new spaces standing out against the backdrop of the new large park. The Goccia area was the focus of other proposals in the years to come, including, in 2016, a call for ideas⁴ which involved various design groups from the Politecnico di Milano (Moro 2017). The project for expansion of the Campus and the development of a new park appears to be going ahead, with a partnership between the Municipality of Milan and the Politecnico di Milano itself, which will see the transformation of this area within the next few years.

To retrace these events, even just partially, means thinking about the processes, ways and tools with which a project can effectively help in redesigning the city. Architecture becomes part of larger processes and operations where different interests coincide, but not only, and where architecture is called to imagine new

3. We could mention the “*Nove parchi per Milano*” research project in 1995 (AA. VV. 1995), the call for ideas for the Garibaldi-Repubblica business centre in 1991, the most recent studies for the transformation of the Goccia area in Bovisa, or that of Porta Vittoria; and more precise and successful transformations, such as the Fondazione Prada project or the Hangar Bicocca project.

4. The call for ideas “*Un parco per la ricerca e il lavoro a Bovisa*”, promoted by the Politecnico di Milano, took place in 2016 and saw the definition of 10 different projects for the Goccia area.

visions and futures which, in many cases, come about after long delays, changes and adaptations.

Tools, strategies and visions for the recovery of railway yards: a story waiting to be told

The recovery of the railway yards represents an important step in the context of the ambitious projects for Milan and is significant in terms of the strategic location of the railway yards. A few days after the announcement of the winning project of the call for ideas for the Scalo di Porta Romana masterplan⁵, it seems appropriate to define tools and strategies that could be relevant to the project: starting with the visions of the five ateliers involved in MIAW 2021, the results of which are covered in this volume. With this in mind, I would first like to return to a project that is relevant to this story and that concerns the current transformation of the Farini and San Cristoforo railway yards, in order to better understand the reasons and key principles of the winning project entitled “Climatic Agents”⁶. The project imagines new environmental conditions for development and proposes two ecological devices: one green – the large park – for Scalo Farini, and one blue – a linear water system – for Scalo San Cristoforo. The project is flexible in its definition of built space. It imagines different scenarios for the growth of Milan and goes on to propose open solutions ranging from significant economic growth to domestic conditions for residential development or manufacturing. The project considers time as a resource: it proposes phased opening of the Farini railway yard, to allow use of the site during the process of gradual recovery. It would therefore involve opening one step at a time over a period of thirty years, until complete redevelopment of the area. The project for San Cristoforo, a less developed area, draws inspiration from the presence of

5. The winning proposal is “*Parco Romana*” by the team of OUTCOMIST: Diller Scofidio + Renfro, PLP Architecture, Carlo Ratti Associati, with Gross. Max., Nigel Dunnett Studio, Arup, Portland Design, Systematica, Studio Zoppini, Aecom, Land, Artelia.

6. The winning team comprises OMA, Laboratorio Permanente, that has worked with Vogt Landscape Architects, Philippe Rahm Architectes, Net Engineering, Ezio Micelli, Arcadis Italia, Temporuso.net and Luca Cozzani. The project report can be found at: <https://www.fssistemiurbani.it/content/fssistemiurbani/it/scali-milano/concorso-farini/alla-scoperta-di-agenti-climatici-.html>

water in Milan, with the creation of a natural swimming pool and a network of pedestrian paths to renew the relationship with water.

The simple measures proposed by Climatic Agents offer the possibility of keeping the project open; a possibility that could also be seen as a danger because it would allow for changes in progress and because an open project is, by its very nature, never complete. Then again, the measures suggest recognition of the fact that an urban-scale project can never result in a finished design, or conceive of a certain future, in the case of transformations that will involve decades of reclamation and work. I believe the project for Farini and San Cristoforo could lead to an interesting vision and development for the railway yards, because they presuppose control of the transformations and careful organisation of the timeframes and stages of design.

The Porta Romana railway yard is, partly, in a similar condition: a big upcoming event – the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics – will mark the start of the transformation, but the project must interpret and work on the future and on what will happen after the big event. It is a project based on two essential periods of time: the time of the Olympics (2026), and therefore of the structure of the Olympic village and the spaces for the athletes; and the time immediately after the games, when the area must be rethought and adapted in a short period, albeit without too much difficulty, with the aim of providing various types of residential buildings, services and a large public park. This is why it seems to me that the concepts of flexibility and variation, as well as attention to the stages and times of such a complex project, cannot be overlooked but must in fact form an intangible yet essential basis for the project. The functional program, drawn up as part of the supporting material for the call for ideas, offers a good description of this volumetric subdivision, of what is green and public, and what is intended for subsidised construction, as well as the various types of accommodation for the athletes. It is a question of imagining two scenarios for different conditions, marked by the end of the Olympics, and by the plans to adapt and reuse the structures put to intense use for a very short period of time.

In the context of this story, which is about to unfold, the work carried out during the MIAW 2021 has attempted to reflect on tools and scenarios for the railway yard and the design of the structures that will occupy the area, as in the case of previous didactic experiments (Feller 2017; Montedoro 2011). In

particular, thought was given to the role of the urban and architectural project and the work required to balance utopia with reality.

Of the possible strategies and, therefore, essential tools of the project that this volume attempts to cover, at least three are worth a mention: the large objects, the line, and the enclosure. The project involves large architectural objects to breathe life back into the Porta Romana railway yard, as can be seen in the many visions and projects from the ateliers of Sebastián Irarrázaval, José María Sánchez García and Roberto Cavallo. The images and drawings describe new urban infrastructures and platforms on the fringes of the railway yard or, to a more significant extent, within it, with autonomous and irregular geometries and new landmarks that radically transform the area of the railway yard.

The line is the second key that emerges in the more utopian project from the Hervé Dubois' atelier, where a linear inhabited infrastructure spans the railway yard; it is an essential object that becomes a vertical building with connections and openings on the ground floor. Another line divides and defines different spaces in some projects of the atelier of Donatella Fioretti which, with great sensitivity, studies the typological aspects of the buildings together with the relationship between the park and the city.

The enclosure is the third possible design option, clearly defined by many projects of various ateliers and in particular that of Donatella Fioretti. The enclosure is a sign of great strength which, on the one hand, reinforces the design of the railway yard and its fringes, and on the other hand tries to establish new measures with respect to the surrounding urban fabric. Different types of enclosure have been developed in keeping with the profile of the yard and that open onto the park which is protected and safeguarded.

The result is a varied panorama of projects, strategies and architectures to transform the Porta Romana railway yard that consider the relationship with the large public park and complement or contrast with the existing urban fabric. They represent critical points of view, ideas and suggestions emphasising the validity of the architectural project and offering fertile ground for transformation of the Porta Romana railway yard.

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