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ID 1448 | PUBLIC SPACES AS A PLANNING DIMENSION: MILAN CASE STUDIES AND POTENTIALITIES

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1 INTRODUCTION

After a long apathy phase, a combination of increased real estate pressures and international initiatives like Expo or the latest Triennale revival, heavily activated in Milan the realization of new public spaces and revitalization of old ones. Which include, among others, architects new inner city neighborhoods and landmark buildings, new design and fashion urban network spaces, car limitation policies to extended urban pedestrian areas. However, Milan urban renewal path is concretizing through heterogeneous results as they were the proceedings which inspired these transformations. Indeed, each of these modified areas has been individually conceived, being absent any meaningful high scale planning indication outlining an overall transformative vision of the city. This is clearly reflected in the Milan increasingly fragmented geography (Secchi, 2013), where the collective urban dimension has been often degraded to the rank of a public spaces collection to be consumed, rather than an urban structuring spatiality seeking connections. Such an attitude drives to the weakening of the heterogeneous but highly intertwined urban complex which has always characterized this city. The overlap of historical compact frames and contemporary fragmentations, as well as different densities, gave rise to the actual Milan spatial condition, where emerge considerable public spaces potentials that could lead to fertile experimentations. But if public spaces are trivialized, they end up becoming self-referential entities, missing the task to condense differences and relations of the city.

This paper will deepen some of these potentials from the consideration of public spaces as active devices within which to develop connective systems responding to contemporary urban complexity inputs (Mada-nipour, et al. 2014). Milan chosen case studies will be then investigated from a critical point of view, but also as an opportunity to activate vibrant and pervasive urban backgrounds able to react effectively to the incessant changes of the city. This required to go beyond mere voids furnishing design actions, which is the prevalent approach to the theme adopted in Milan since recent time. The proposed investigations, had adopted instead a structuralizing approach to intercept topics emerging from the many and different environments urban frameworks involved in the new or revitalized public spaces analysed and in some cases re-designed. The paper will thus draw on specific design and exploration experiences evolved at the Urban and Territorial Planning Lab and the Urban Studies Course of the Polytechnic of Milan which we've held, and in partnership with various stakeholders and scholars, to highlight interpretations, hypothesis and glances for a new approach to public spaces as a key theme within with to re-design Milan's contemporaneity. 'InFractures' is a design research in which are systemized and reconnected sets of empty in-between spaces at various scales innervating, through different intensities, areas from the city core to the eastern suburbs. Through 'TimeLapseCity' are investigated and interpreted new or deeply changed inner city public spaces, analysing their unexpected urban characterization in the light of everyday life uses, behaviours, practices, effects on the surrounding context. 'RipCity' deals with a globalizing real estate insertion in a crucial environment between compact core and urbanized Milan region, deepening public space design hypothesis with the task to reconnect clashing contexts. 'AgorUP' tests a public spaces network utilizing flat rooftop surfaces, so as to consider alternative urban landscape inputs in the collective dimension and fruition of the city. Selected key steps of these researches will try to advance new perspectives on the public space delicate role in the definition of the contemporary city, providing cues for its interpretation and design.

2 PUBLIC SPACES IN MILAN. SOME GROWING AUTARCHIES

The goals of the many and different actors involved in the development and renewal of urban environments in the contemporary city show to be increasingly indifferent of any enhancement of public spaces inherent values, nor the evolution which could reveal their urban structuring potentialities. To the increase over the last decades of wide real estate developments disseminated in every medium and large European city, to which are added the innumerable urban rebirth and district reuses, corresponds a widespread and deep banalization of the collective dimension. The impoverishment of its social, formal and cultural values, so as the incapacity to preserve or trigger relations between parts and elements composing the city, is now the dominant character of most of the new and revived public spaces in the western city (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 2013). Eloquent signs of this are seen in the loss of the plurality which should articulate their configuration, so as the self-referentiality it is usually conveyed. In fact, the research of predictability in the actions taking place in a public space had brought to a spatial overdesign to guarantee it, but also to globalization of the design to implement it. It is not uncommon to experience public spaces producing endless déjà vu of styles, patterns, materials, forms, conformations, so as architect's spread design brandings. This flattening primarily coincides with the dropping of the public space from the interrelation domain to that of the consumption. A shifting which emphasised its increasingly autistic nature, together with the repetition as the preeminent identity device (Bauman, 2001). Indeed, the introverted character of many of the contemporary public spaces originates in an imbricated social, economic and cultural transformations weaving, of which the market rules are perhaps the most obvious inputs to be intercepted. Much more pervasive and subtle can be instead those linked to the people's behaviours, to the new social fears (Ellin, 1997), to the constantly changeable intolerances forms, to the expressions of individualisms and exasperated privatizations, to the growing social inequalities, and which have drained the public space since long. If today, the capacity of public space to be a powerful urbanity making is recognized by everyone, it must be also said that it is often conceived in a highly destructive manner both from design and urban policy points of view.

The following Milan's cases aim to highlight crucial fractures occurring on public spaces, and which spatial consequences reverberate at different scales in the whole city. One is the increasingly widespread prevailing of rigid borders on permeable ones, especially in recent public spaces designs. The growing design tendency to create enclosed collective environments, whether they are outdoor spaces like squares and other kind of urban surfaces, end up to frustrate the public space everyday negotiation aiming to inclusion and integration, rather than to the exclusion. This in Milan is achieved through barriers of various nature, ranging from the detachment of public soil from the city level ground (e.g. Piazza Gae Aulenti) to the dense buildings edges tendency with the purpose to hold the collective dimension, but with the effect of isolating it (e.g. Citylife recent urban project). In the same way, the compulsive filling of public space with shopping malls and globalized brands to economically support its existence, gives clear evidence of the deep deprivation of meaning to which is subjected, not to mention the retraction of the public financing which often lies behind that. The conceptual ground of this is also in a mix of real estate interests and convictions, which sees in the introverted public space a better housing market option to promote and develop. But also the just mentioned increasingly withdraw of Milan municipality from investing in public spaces making, thus letting the costs – therefore, their ideation - to the private investor and its beliefs, that are rarely sponsor of spatial experimentations, nor of meaningful dialogs with the urban context. Another fracture comes from the rigidity within with who is actively involved in urban transformations and implementations interpret the society. Indeed, there is a persistence of outdated and traditional views subdividing the whole citizens into sort of monolithic and opposed groups, when not classes, e.g. the resident and the users, the young and the olds, the families and the singles, the native and the foreigners, to name just a few of the categories to which a public space is usually referred to (Innerarity, 2006). This banalization often animates since the ideation and design phase, and in the dominant Milan urban policy debate, denoting the incapability to include the vast collection of pluralities characterizing any contemporary society and to go beyond rooted ideas (Breen, 2004). An attitude that in most cases produces disconnections between spaces and utilizers, revealing inadequacy to hold the social fluidity and its displacements, and ending up to bridle the innate unpredictability of public space, which is one of the necessary condition to trigger an authentic spatial vitality.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The following considerations emerging from Milan's case studies are the results of analytical and design kinds of academic research. But in both cases, a project glance has been used to interpret the urban areas in which the researches have taken place. In fact, from a methodological point of view, the teaching team, the students, and all the other subjects involved in the different case studies, have shared the belief that the interpretation of the city can be particularly fertile when is contaminated with design ideas, regardless of whether it is the final aim of the research. As a design idea here is meant not a specific solution for a given space, nor any hypothesis of an articulation of soils and volumes. Rather, it means a sensibility to perceive the potentialities of a place, its role if seen it from an extended urban prospective, its transformative capacities. The intersection between a design feeling and the analytical deepening of an urban reality doesn't mean to be trapped in a hypothetical and personal vision influencing urban investigations. It allows instead to narrow the research field, to relate the work to a background of possible transformations as a creative selection for analytical choices avoiding to get lost in observations covering every aspect, dynamic and phenomena.

In addition to this, the research has followed common traces in the modalities through which investigate the different areas and urban themes, though leaving wide margins of variation to better consider the many heterogeneities characterizing them. A first framework of morphological reference consists of spatial types imagery to describe the relationship connotations at different scale between an object or an area and the context, e.g. clusters, bubbles, islands, threads, etc. But other morphological considerations emerged by the analysis and classification of the edges and described also their interchange status, e.g. the degree of porosity, permeability, continuity, fragmentation, spread. These morphological considerations were all related to different scales of observation, to highlight any variation when expanding or detailing the scale reference.

Finally, all the data collection, economic and social studies, including interviews and data variations over time, functions and uses detecting, other urban cases comparisons, have always been related to the aforementioned morphology considerations to validate or to question them.

3.1 INFRACTURES. URBAN RE-COMPOSITIONS

"InFractures" is a project investigation working on different scale urban void sequences identified in the north area of Milan tissues. This is an area of the city developed along three railway tracks and the city central station [Stazione Centrale], today still representing a very perceptible partition of the city. Even if it can not be considered a physical barrier, it generated recognizable spatial consequences. Indeed, the railroad embankment, however widely permeable by cars and pedestrians, acted as a strong three-dimensionality which had decisively influenced the urban morphology and framework definition, like urban snips, abandoned plots, rears and internal corridors, infrastructures remnants. Since the twentieth century and the post-war rebuilding period, the contact between the new city quarters and the sinuous shape of the railway had resulted in a series of in-between spaces characterized by rough geometries, and of which isn't easy to imagine re-uses. To a larger scale, the railway had instead provoked the succession of many residential introverted neighborhoods, added to the presence of high-speed infrastructure axis which historically led to the major urban factories on the northern edge of the city. This has determined the

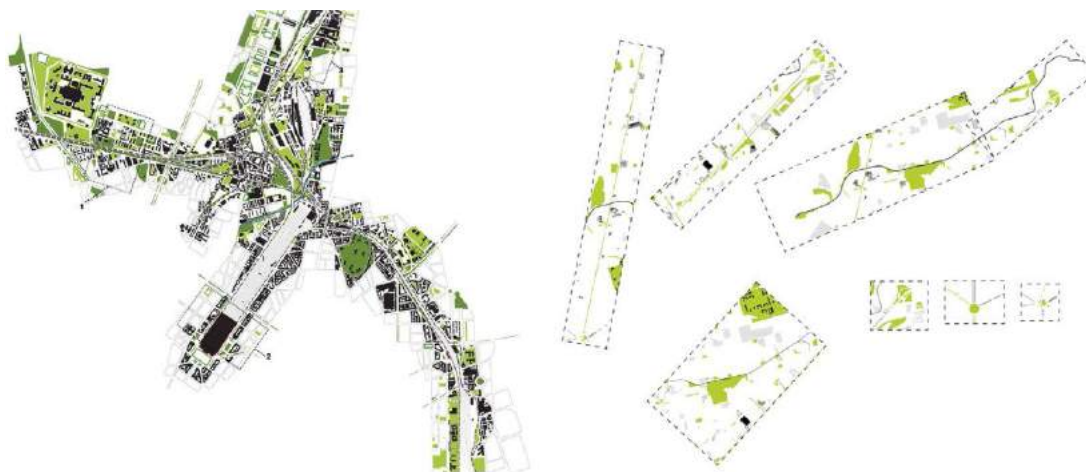


Figure 1 - InFractures. Images by Stefano Manzoni and Mattia Santambrogio

tendency to divide the expansions of this part of the city following a large urban mesh partition, and giving rise to plots composed of extensive dense urban blocks. In many of these fragments are located the social housings, defined by mono functional articulations, as well as the absence of significant reciprocal relationships (Fig.1). Among them, in an ideal continuity with the nearby railroad, there are unused lots and large in-between spaces with a tremendous potential to insinuate a mixité able to trigger urbanity in areas that are to be considered Milan's almost central areas. But also to create urban dialogs to call into play new continuities, which are not those of unused voids sequences.

The teaching team and students have therefore investigated these open spaces sequences, considered together with the widespread structured and functionalized ones, trying to recognize in them sets of configurations that at the different scales could establish a fertile background for design experimentations. They have been identified different typologies depending on the dimension, spatial position, relationships with buildings or streets, visibility, potential connectivity, accessibility, and referring to spatial configurations like island, plug, linearity, dot. The abacus derived from it, highlighted above all a precious plurality to gather in urban systems apt to condense heterogeneity as an urban lymph (Fig.1). The interpretative and design work had the goal to transform urban disruption into new reconnection systems introducing through those large urban blocks new frameworks to activate positive tensions between fronts and rears, solids and voids. The innervation of alternative mobility through the enhancement of cycling and pedestrian paths also played a main role, well as generating a widespread public space system to counterbalance the introverted urban blocks and high-speed road combinations.



Figure 2 - InFractures. Images by Stefano Manzoni and Mattia Santambrogio

The projects have in particular worked on the continuity of bearing areas connecting well-established parts of the city and large green areas to the city's edges, thus acting both at district and town scale. In the design shown here (Fig.2) is perceptible this double spatiality, where different building typologies are kept together by a continuous public surface that as a linear plug relates one of the great urban axes leading to the north Milan's metropolitan area with an important urban park located on the east edge of the compact city tissues. The extensive permeability and porosity of this new urban configuration nullify the little significant rears sequence on the fragmented unused and empty spaces, so to sew the existing large urban blocks through specific typological and density choices.

3.2 TIMELAPSECITY. URBAN RELATIONSHIPS FRAMING

As mentioned in the introductory paragraph, since 2014 Milan begins to be considered a city again under the spotlight. Its preparation for the EXPO captures the world attention, although not only for the Universal Exhibition which is going to take place. Indeed, it is in the expansion of the city from the fashion and design field to the one of the so called “urban renaissance” that has been perceived a Milan’s rebound . This is evident when scrolling through the press review since 2014 of the most important newspaper in the world. If compared with the one of the previous twenty years, where fashion and furnishing designers city was celebrated, Milan suddenly reveals as a destination to experience great urban transformations. Which combined with a series of some historical districts gentrifications occurred since the end of the 80’s, giving raise to a new common perception of Milan as a city of vibrant and collective spatiality. The Boeri’s Vertical Forest, Hadid’s residential blocks, the Liebeskind’s and Isozaki’s skyscrapers, Koolhaas’s Prada Foundation Museum, Chipperfield’s Museum MUDEC, Sanaa’s Bicconi University Campus, the multi projected Porta Nuova District, the Foster’s new district Santa Giulia, undoubtedly testify of an urban rewrite of the city. However, far from the usual urban renaissance rhetorical within which such transformations are often described, it is equally undeniable that these projects acts as individualities in the urban tissues, constituting at most a sort of virtual architectural tourist itinerary. A prestigious assemblage but whose implications in terms of collective spatiality must be rationally examined. Many and articulate are in fact the forms of collective space individualism linked to these new urban appearances, as well as the public dimension forms of privatization they bring to light.

“TimeLapseCity” is an urban investigation experience characterized by an in-depth path about different collective spaces uses of some very thematised areas in Milan. Among these, three reveal to be particular useful to underline meaningful issues and dynamics of spatial exclusion. The re-composition of city maps returning implied, hidden, overlapped, excluded, mimetic, conflictual and contradictory aspects has had the purpose to provide new grains and glances to be juxtapose to more conventional images and representations. Holding this perspective, it has been experimented the overlay between different description, analysis and interpretation techniques ranging from interviews to data collections, detachment and re-design of constituent layers, behaviours studies, to re-determine some spatial interrelations and meanings.

3.2.1 GAE AULENTI SQUARE: BEAUTIFICATION AND EXCLUSION

The first case is piazza Gae Aulenti, a recently realized square in a new luxury settlement of 290,000 square meters of offices and residential buildings now fully owned by Qatar Investment Authority. It’s a square soon came to the collective imagination as a new centrality of the city, but which conformation represents one of the most contradictory and exclusive urban spaces that Milan has ever seen realized.

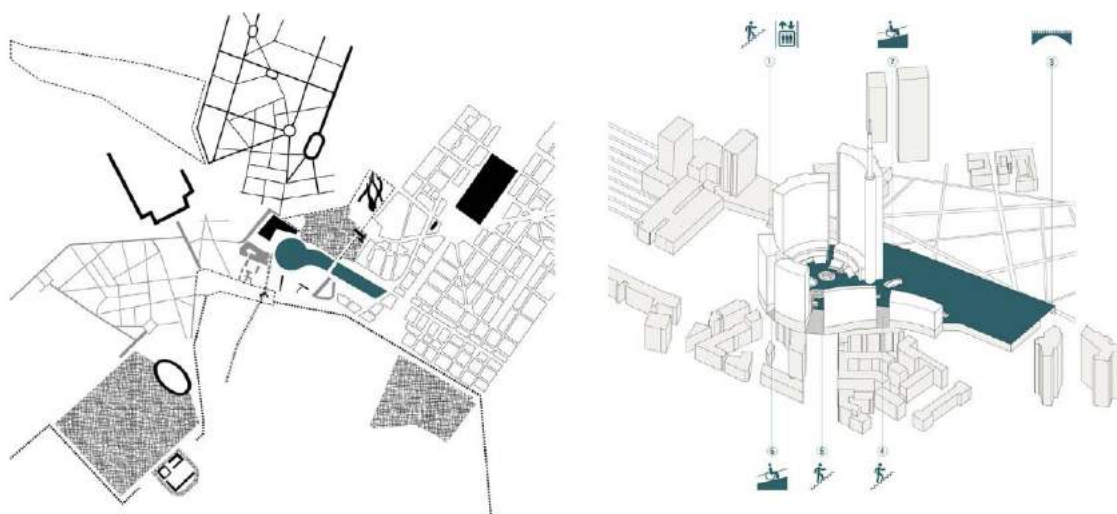


Figure 3 - Gae Aulenti Square. Images by Martina Orsini (left), Arianna Manzinali, Lorenzo Merigo, Matteo Pigni, Silvia Cassader and Stefano Iacolina (right)

The whole square is detached to any spatial dialog with the context. Indeed, the surrounding connections take place through gangways or stairs that are linked to what are considered to be strategic points, like the fashion and design district of Corso Como and the historic district of Isola, which in recent years has undergone a massive gentrification process. The beautification and overdesign to which the square was subjected, with intricate floorings, fountains and water games, so as shelters of every shape and style – but not a tree - can not mitigate the total sense of urban alienation and isolation that characterizes it. This segregating modality lies in real estate considerations, which saw in the choice to rise from the city the attempt to create a protected environment in the middle of the city centre. As a kind of gated community with a very selected permeability, it constitutes one of the broader examples of Milan's public space individualization, where the denying of the very essence of a square become the distinctive trait, as investigations and drawings of "TimeLapseCity" researches reported and analysed (Fig.3). They particularly focused on the lack of positive domino effects of this act of urban revitalization on the surroundings, and on the lost occasion that an intervention on such a delicate point of the Milan fabric it could have represented. In fact, this process of revitalisation in the dense city should not be limited to restricted zones but could spread to the whole area, bonding various parts of the city developed separately, due to the presence of the abandoned area on which this new district has been built. The new district could play a vital role in the creation of new active margins, and where some opportunities of urban re-signification could take place. Indeed, the need of public spaces capable of relating to other city areas, subjects and objects, and, as much as possible, being open to cross influences, clearly emerges from the opposite effect produced by the self-referential public space that have been finally realized. The diagrams produced by the research experience show instead the attempt to control through the design the realized public soil, depriving it of urban fertile opportunities. The whole new settlement and the square in it isolate themselves from the context through physical barrier of the elevation from the city soil, condemning the unwanted parts to isolation. Among them, a regional railway station, which instead of being considered an important connection with the extended urbanized territory, has been considered a point of possible social degradation from which to separate. To emphasized Gae Aulenti Square self-referential character, despite its being the core of a whole new district, it is a folding building like a snail that surround it, offering to the outside world a flat and impenetrable mirroring surface.

3.2.2 TORTONA DISTRICT: SPORADIC POROSITY

The second cases have focused on Tortona design district, a former industrial area originally located in what was the south margin of the historical city tissues beyond the railway belt toward the agricultural lands. Since the 1980's, advertising producers, fashion designers, photographers and artist's ateliers began to reuse abandoned factories spaces giving rise to one of the first gentrifications in Milan. It's characterized by of an urban plot originally mixing important manufacturing realities like steel, large scale porcelains furnishings, energy production, and with a consolidated network of supporting small manufactures. The urban grain is thus very discontinuous, with many scale shifting given by the interweaving of giant buildings with extremely wide outdoor storage surfaces and smaller buildings, often also mixed with residential, and with their smallest and intimate courtyards. To this was added an urban fabric made also of after-work spaces and union-workers headquarters innervating of sociality the large manufacturing urban blocks. In concrete terms, this size blend had made possible the many replacements while maintaining a strong space and uses differentiation. In fact, it wasn't necessary to subdivide the space, since larger spaces have settled major functions like MUDEC museum, the Scala's theatrical scenery laboratories, world-famous brand showrooms (Fig.4). The factory gates which for a long time had enclosed a feverish Milan's humanity, today are open to the world through the recurring 'something-weeks'. At the known in the world Design-Week and Fashion-Week, are now in fact to be added the Food-Week, the Music-Week, the StreetFoodParade-Week, the SkateFilmFestival-Week, the Spring-Week, etc.



Figure 4 - Tortona district. Images by Marco Attucci, Thays Colli, Goffredo Duranti, Matteo Paronuzzi, Pedro Petry Franceschini and Andrea Pirinoli (left), Matteo Baggiarini, Eleonora Catozzi, Giuseppe Rizza, Sara Barone, Heran Yang, Anqi Zhan (right)

A first crucial aspect emerged through the urban investigation is the massive gentrification to which the area has been subjected. Although it has not been promoted by real estate organizations, and the urban market has leaned on an already consolidated urban transformation, the self-definition and the pervasiveness through which the replacements have occurred haven't mitigated the effects of social selection and expulsions. In fact, this self-managed transformation promoted by some pioneers of the gentrification, had been so deeply influencing the collective imagination to become a kind of powerful social filter deciding between admitted and not admitted, and going well beyond the economic discriminant. This has had its concrete evidence in the management of revitalized space. In fact, in the early stages of this transformation process, large industrial enclosures were purchased and split by professional communities, and the introduction of new subjects was decided on a case-by-case basis based on social, cultural and identity affinities. Since the beginning, the large industrial courtyards became sort of gated communities, with locked gates and surveillance services. With this, the connective social fabric linked to work-manship disappears, being replaced by a plethora of restaurants supporting the 'something-weeks' visitors. It has therefore lost the enlarged meeting dimension of a social community, being substituted by very restricted ones (Fig.5).

The research has highlighted and schematized through diagrams these public and collective intermitten-cy modalities. Despite the dominant spatial and uses typologies involved, the flexuosity inherent industrial spaces themselves, their malleability and declinations opportunities, the district can't be considered permeable and porous. The many parcelling and mixed activities are accessible and connected by the large but extremely gated industrial courtyards. These surfaces are thus permeable for collective and public transit when they become a percolated ex-hibition space. In the everyday life of the city, apart great museums and art galleries, and some small injections of co-working spaces promoted by the municipality, they remain as secluded bubbles sequence. With the second wave of reuses, this stiffness has further accentuated. The establishment of luxury design and fashion brands headquarter-s occupying whole industrial blocks – e.g. Armani, Moncler, Fendi, to name a few – are ordinarily open to insid-ers only.

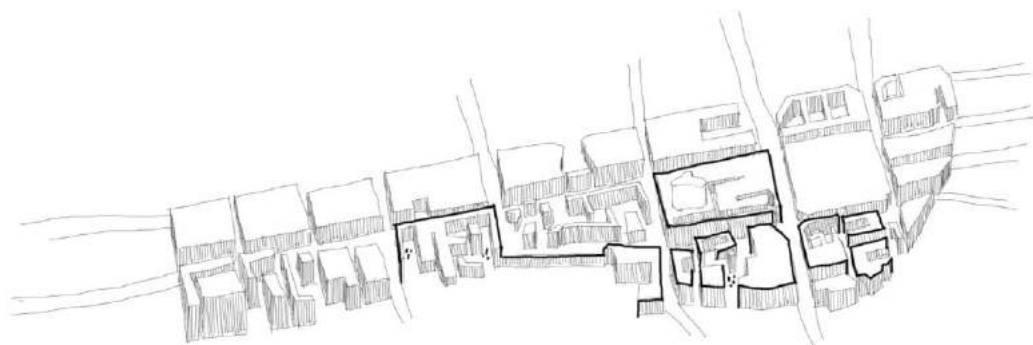


Figure 5 - Tortona district. Image by Alessandro Arosio, Jessica Emma Manzoni, Mattia Meregalli, Pietro Nobili Vitelleschi

3.2.3 CORSO BUENOS AIRES: URBAN SCALE NON-LIEU

The third case proposes an investigation of Corso Buenos Aires, one of the longest shopping road in Europe (1.6 Km) and historically coinciding with a suburban axis connecting the inner city with the metropolitan-scale territories. Specifically, it was linking the Milan city core with Monza, home of the summer Royal Palace, as well as one of the most important industrialised region in Italy. When at the end of the nineteenth century, Milan planning extended to outside the city walls, involving pre-existing urban elements, this axis had been re-designed in a definitive way just close to Universal Exposure of 1906, thus localizing a dense sequence of new urban blocks. In what was a planning attempt at a cautious mixing, the road was split into two parts: on one side it was decided to locate the social housing, on the other the bourgeois one. It's a division today still alive, deeply marking the urban bands referring to this road despite its actual complete homogenization. In fact, since it has become a globalized shopping street, it no longer appears as a boundary/connection between two social spheres, but rather as a completely autonomous element inserted within two very different urban districts. If originally it was a mixed commercial space where elegant shops were coexisting with neighborhood stores, its progressive logo branding transformation made of it an urban scale non-lieu, a sort of alienating strip totally unrelated to its context. In the recent decades, the two urban bands developed along the commercial road have turned into two of very representative Milan contemporary urban environment. The one originating form social housing actually accommodates an extremely vital and mixed neighborhood, where different ethnicities, especially from North Africa, India and China, coexist with young professionals and retired employees. A very complex and stratified urban environment, where several generations and backgrounds identify one of the most intense area of urbanity in Milan. On the other side of the road, the large blocks of the bourgeois city are innervated with tree-lined boulevards and linear green squares, and in the recent times subjected to virtuous and experimental participatory urban actions involving residents and workers of the area. Here the social mixing is less varied, although in the years it has lost his prevalent residential connotation and has mixed with specialized professional offices and shops, well as users of its public outdoor collective spaces also coming from other urban areas. The investigation had focused both on the strangeness and contradiction emerged by the dematerialization of the road typical of urban scale non-lieux and its effects in relation to different contexts and urban scale. Three are in fact the dimension references at which it has been analysed. The first, deepens the road as a single urban component, taking into consideration its materiality, uses and users perceptions, the spatial organization, the transformation over time. From the spatial point of view, the original division has shifted in height. In fact, the incessant sequence of shops creates a sort of almost immaterial base on which lay the late nineteenth century architectures, like a fluctuating parallel city. The sense of detachment between the two sections is further sharpened by the fact that the base is the expression of a globalized repetition, while the city that overwhelms is a very local architectural mixing of Liberty Style and typical Milan's residential courtyard typologies. At this same scale, the relationship between the users and the space is exclusively based on the consumption, putting in the background its essence of being a public place (Fig.6). The road here is just a device leading from one inside (shop) to another (shop), to end in an under (subway), translating with great realism the Virilio's Ville Panique twilight of certain urban places. The second dimension of investigation, gives evidence of how variable in the contemporary city can be the concept of in-between space, which commonly is referred to unclassified and uncharacterized spaces of the city. Indeed, although apparently extremely vital, this long shopping road is like a in-between element, separating the late revolutionized bourgeois and working cities. But as other research diagrams emphasised, at the large scale Corso Buenos Aires also marks other boundaries, like the ones between the city core and the northern urban expansions and the other between the compactness of the ancient urban tissues and the increasing fragmentation of the suburbs. It is not then its boundary identity that has been questioned over time. Rather, the forms and the meanings through which it occurred. If in its first demarcation, this place was conceived as a margin in the sense of a place of mutual contaminations, today it represents a suspension, or also a cut, which interrupts the city.

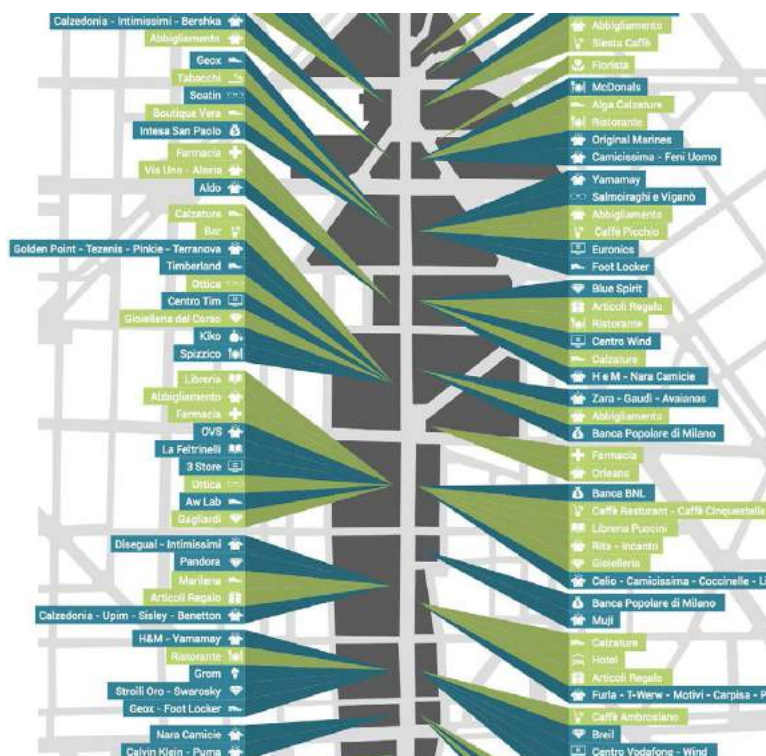


Figure 6 - Corso Buenos Aires. Image by Matteo Crippa, Jacopo Tassoni, Andrea Angiolini

3.3 RIPACITY. AROUND URBAN THINGS

Santa Giulia District is the redevelopment project of a former industrial area and for which deepening we have involved, in a very fertile dialogue, Risanamento Srl (the expressly established estate company), Foster + Partners Office Design, and a number of consultants, stakeholders, and public and private institutions. It is one of the biggest reconversion areas in Italy (land area 963,000 sqm; GFA 614,000 sqm) located between the consolidated Milan tissues and the margin of the sprawled city, overlooking a vast agricultural park toward the south limit (Parco Sud). The project site is currently under a slow realization due to the never ending economic crisis effects and related housings devaluation. The new district is part of a consolidated urban area consisting of public housings, disused industrial fabrics, agricultural residual areas, historic villages remains. The whole area is surrounded by an infrastructure system with high speed roads and railways connecting this place to the vast territory scale. However, such accessibility system produces a physical barrier at the everyday scale, making this place cut out of the corporal context perception and fruition. The prevailing characters of settlement is a spatial organization for enclave clearly distinguished by functions, but also by social belongings and cultural backgrounds, to which must be added disseminated empty plots waiting to be built. In such a context, the new Foster designed district fits un-critically this city area, sharpening the existing and poor urban relations due to its introverted and self-referential physiognomy.

The theme of the enclave as both specific typology and critical element of this area, has been explored and concretized in thematic maps with the aim to make evident the physical outcomes of immaterial dynamics, social and economic settings, spaces uses, but also potentialities emerging from these urban criticalities. Foster's project has in fact contributed to bring to the fore the properties of introversion common to the whole context. It had clarified the introversion as a settlement principle, but also as an individualism reaction to a generalized spatial identity lack, due also to the rarity of public and collective spaces. When we then explored and simulated through design scenarios and proposals to introduce some degree of porosity in such rigid morphologically situations, it soon became reasonable to figure that any massive intervention on the enclave - either old or new - not only was probably unrealistic, but seemed less effective than intervening from the outside inwards. Indeed, the space in-between enclaves has been ignored by both Foster Project when conceiving its edges, so as in the Municipality negotiations with the real estates developer. But if considered in a structural manner, it may constitute a new connective network within which restart a relationship-setting between fragments, to open to new orders and

combinations between them, to gather fluidity and plurality between the existing monolithic elements. And through this approach, it could be also overcome the common belief which supposes that to make trigger any urban vitality would be enough to scatter a plethora of collective functions and activities around. A tendency, this one, increasingly widespread not only among the great architecture offices, but also in the demands of the municipality when negotiating. The avoidance of useful dynamic dialectic with pre-existing small-scale urban milieu systems and with social, economic and spatial inequalities proliferation, is instead at the base of many agonizing urban contexts where new settlements are dropped, and with the bitter surprise of not being then able to trigger the imagined vitality so well represented in 3D images and simulations.

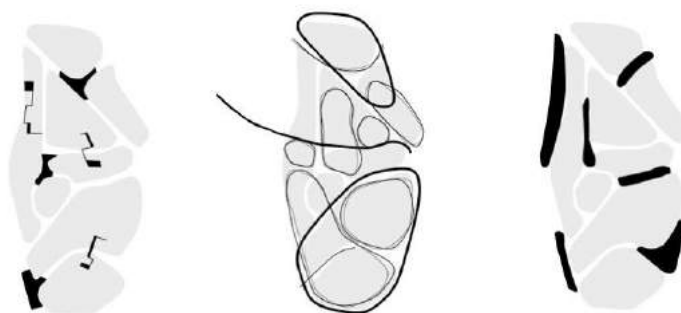


Figure 7 - Hinges, Circuits and Margins. Image by Martina Orsini

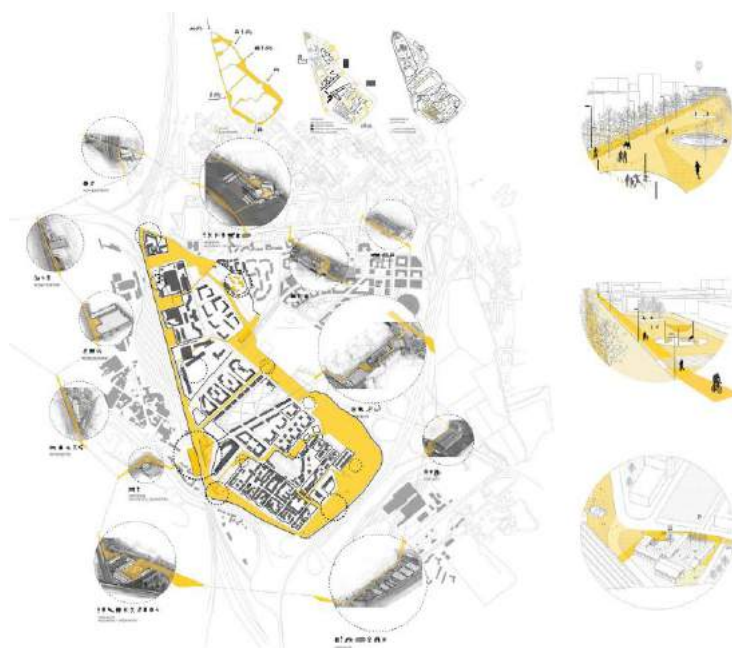


Figure 8 – RipCity Circuits. Image by Francesca Gervasutti

The re-design of soils and surfaces between settlements has been first of all a margins rewriting to include and to engage the constituent urban materials of this Milan's area in new configurations by which to define edges not anymore based exclusively on traditional antinomies. Therefore, the academic contribute to the enlarged dialogue has been the deepening of chosen design devices overcoming the enclaves separation, so to set up a spatial relation systems through which reorganize new and existing public or collective spaces and surfaces in a structural way. Circuits, margins and hinges (Fig.7) have been the references figures to diffuse and reorganize connections between enclaves, and to trigger a constructive and fertile glance.

The 'Circuits' have investigated the potential of continuous and organized systems of variable section of the soils considering enclaves as protected parts of a fluid and open system. The identification of potential continuous spatial loops composed of areas, filaments, empties of varying size and nature, has allowed to

experiment combinations of collective and public spaces in new urban geographies of support and connection between different fragments of this introverted part of the city (Fig.8). The 'Margins' have been instead tried to address and process the areas as complex places with a double value, where one can experience overlapping dynamics of belonging, but also conditions of strong autonomy. To organize them, they have been defined grids or linear devices based on the concept of parallel sliding, with the aim to shape the public space as a dynamic and autonomous entity, and as a support for cross-contamination between the new soil and the enclaves. Finally, the recourse to 'Hinges' spatial systems are to be intended as the juxtaposition between rigidities through flexible but solid connections, and around which the enclaves can rotate and ideally acquire the ability to recombine while maintaining a certain grade of individuality.

3.4 AGORUP. PUBLIC SPACES AS NEW URBAN VIEWS

"AgorUP" is a design investigation inquiring the potentialities of public space as a device to transform the underutilised supermarkets flat rooftops placed in compact urban tissues. Such a quite provocative issue has sprung in response to the observation of several recent public space arrangements in Milan that have been unsuccessfully designed –or overdesigned (Sennet, 2010)– as flat and smooth spaces, unable to permeate private spaces and to trigger connections between volumes and soils, dumping the dialogue with other urban materials to rhetorical diaphragms and transparencies. Contrary to Piazza Gae Aulenti's urban exclusion processes, AgorUP raised public spaces try to link roof surfaces to their context, establishing both physical and visual relationships between new public spaces and the urban landscape. Starting from these premises, the research fosters the design of public space urban systems located in areas already popular as supermarkets are, without producing any soil waste.

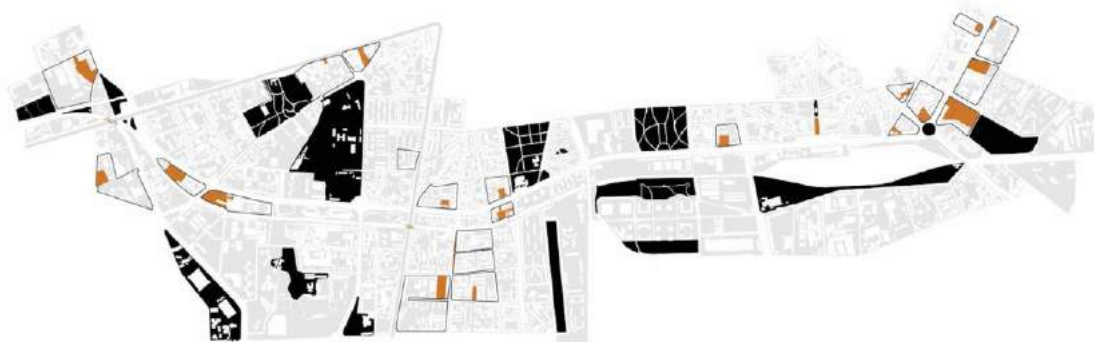


Figure 9 - AgorUp. Image by Beatrice Galimberti

A sheer number of supermarkets with highly underused flat rooftops is spread throughout Milan's urban tissues. Notably AgorUP focuses on Milan southern area, as it hosts a remarkable concentration of these rooftops typologies. Indeed the research site is a linear system oriented towards two parallel infrastructures (urban ring road and railroad) that crosses heterogeneous spatial conditions as compact residential tissues waved by a sequence of small green spaces, mixed-use fabrics without a predominant geometry, industrial sites under transformation, abandoned small scale craftwork platforms, Milan's Agricultural Park fringes, a scattered sequences of great urban voids as abandoned rail yards and high-scale building sites as Bocconi University Campus (Fig.9). In this composite area an almost isotropic carpet of flat roof supermarket is inlaid. Most of the time, these roofs are desolated non-lieux that people cross fast and unpleasantly, feeling an annoying discomfort in passing over. Although united by such a negative connotation, these rooftops presents different features. Indeed some supermarkets roof are big multistorey surfaces, while some others are settled in small areas; some are partially covered while others aren't; some are directly connected with commercial uses below (e.g. being mall parkings) while others are utterly detached; some are on the top of highly visible free-standing buildings while others are hidden in the heart of an urban block (Fig.10).

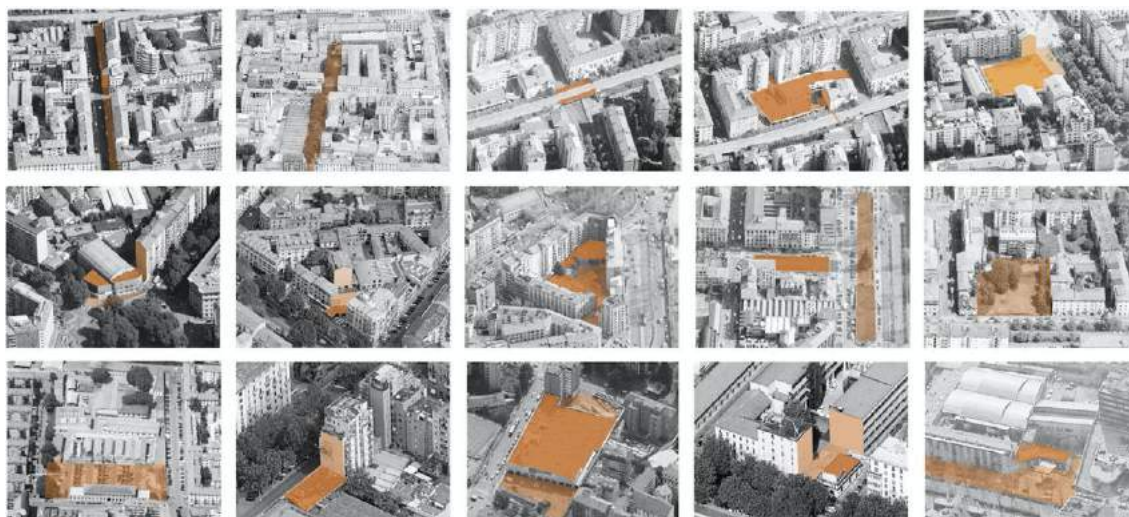


Figure 10 - AgorUp. Image by Beatrice Galimberti

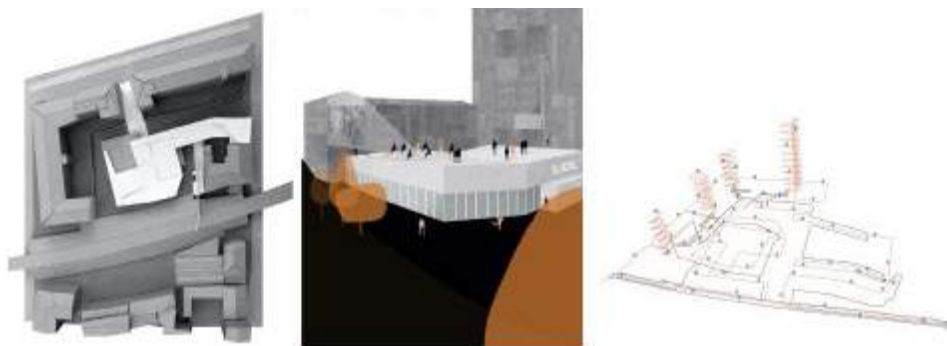


Figure 11 - AgorUp. Images by Monica Bramanti, Beatrice Galimberti and Anna Rossi (left),

Starting from these variegated a context, students' strategies developed different public spaces typologies hosting various temporary or fixed uses (as neighborhood libraries, gathering spaces for associations and communities, recreational areas for elderly, playgrounds, and so forth) (Fig.11). The design outcomes deepened the issue of public use of space related to inhabitants' private and collective spheres (Sloterdijk, 2004). Furthermore, the investigation always deals with the challenge of defining public spaces that, even if raised from the street level, would be welded to their context by setting a continuity with ground level public spaces and building access, so to establish an urban loop of contemporary public uses.

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ID 1451 | CITY UNSILENCED: PUBLIC SPACE AND URBAN DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL SABINE KNIERBEIN

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1 NEW PLACES OF URBAN SOLIDARITY AND RESISTANCE

Around the world, the shrinking capacity of (formal) democratic process has left protesters and ordinary citizens with no other resort than to take to the streets, the emblematic space of the publics, for reinstating democracy. Shrinking democracy, coupled with economic restructuring, constitutes an underlying challenge facing cities and communities around the world. Public space, as a building block and medium of political engagement and social interactions, may represent an alternative space and a vehicle of resistance against systems of shrinking democracy. In its capacity as a vehicle for active democracy, public space in contemporary society deserves greater care, attention, and critical reflection. As movements evolve to confront new challenges, explore new opportunities, negotiate with new actors and circumstances, and utilizing new technologies and platforms, our understanding of the role and agency of public space as lived and political space must also advance.

This is precisely the objective of exploring the linkages between urban resistance and public space in the age of shrinking democracy. With this work and others to follow, we continue to explore public space as sites of renewed hope and possibilities in the quest for a more just, enduring, and democratic urban(ized) society.