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THE CLOISTER OF MONTEOLIVETO IN NAPLES

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ABSTRACT
The Monteoliveto monastery complex is an extremely compound urban artifact, located in one of the cores of the historic area of Naples, has been neglected and repeatedly violated in its urban shape and in its function. The massive urban renewal process that involved the whole San Giuseppe - Carità district in the 70’s, under the Fascist Government, upset the historic urban fabric of the area. This operation created new spatial conditions and new possible relationships among existing historic buildings and new constructions. The Rione Porto e Telegraph building, designed in the early 30’s and completed in 1936 by architect Giuseppe Vaccaro, would have acted as a mediator between the new Piazza Matteotti (its main front) and the more enclosed space of the Main Cloister, one of the few bits of the monastery to survive the renewal plan. Unfortunately a progressive loss of interest for the cloister as an urban space, combined with the different and often inappropriate functions that came over time, caused the current state of abandonment and decay of the cloister itself and of the areas on both sides of the Porto building. The Urban Design Course held by Professor Giovanni Multari at the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples Federico II investigated, through a process of analysis, research, collective debate and design, the possible solutions to rediscover, reuse and regenerate the extraordinary cloister space.

Keywords: Cloister, Centrality, Crossing.

INTRODUCTION
The architectural project is the outcome of a journey of knowledge, of material and immaterial conditions, of the knowledge of places, of thousands of years of events that tell the history of men through the history of the city.

The research was focused on the analytic study of one of the “founding moments” of the city of Naples and its architecture, to draw from this knowledge the tools for a design practice that begins from the ability to outline strategies for urban transformation. Each design process always has an origin, which turns into something else and that has the responsibility to point strategies for the future.

The research that lead to the projects for the Monteoliveto Cloister in the Rione Carità of Naples had to deal with an extremely complex urban artifact, a system composed of different architectures from different eras, conceived with different strategies and different functions, that managed to find a peculiar dimension in the urban fabric on the edge of the historic centre.

The Design Workshop course held by professor Giovanni Multari at the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples Federico II investigated the origins, the evolutions and the current form of the Monteoliveto monastery complex, striving to give back to the cloister that long time lost central role in its insula and in the surrounding neighbourhood.
In this specific case, it offers a special relationship between the historic monastery of Monteoliveto and the insertion of the large modern Poste e Telegrafia building. (Cislaghi 1998). It is one of the most significant buildings in the back then newly founded Rione Carrisi, built on the project by Giuseppe Vaccaro: a parabolic facade with a dark base that supports the white marble masses of the upper floors and an apparently independent canopy roof that appears detached from the body of the building. The design is completed by the grand portal on the front, that leads to the hall that hosts the Statua della Vittoria by artist Arturo Martini. The facade design is clean, elegant, without pediments and columns. But more generally, the facade of the Poste e Telegrafia building insists with a curved shape which manages to keep out of the competition all the other existing buildings. The building presents three different urban fronts, two pre-existing occupied by the cloister and parts of the Caserma Farnegna, and a third one that was initially intended to host the E.N.A Institute in Piazza Carrisi. The Poste e Telegrafia building was designed with a sense of urban composition that has subjugated much of the urban fabric in which it was located, although preserving the seventeenth-century cloister used as a side entrance. The competition for its construction was announced before the variation to the reclamation plan for the area was ever approved. This variant would have changed much of the already urbanized area of the Monteoliveto monastery complex, and would have subverted the ground plan of a large part of the Corso southwards from Via Toledo with a civic centre, that included the Provincia office building, the Palazzo delle Finanze, the Quaestura, the Casa del Mutiato and Palazzo Troise. The main curved facade protrudes from the street front in Piazza Matteotti, reconnects to via Armando Diaz and then joins the Santa Maria la Nova insula on Via Monteoliveto, towards Palazzo Gravina and Palazzo Valletta. The block assigned to the Poste e Telegrafia building has several broken boundaries, repeatedly interrupted and resumed especially on the corner of Via Monteoliveto, that hosts a space dedicated to a sixteenth-century loggia. Moreover, the three arches of the former monastery of Sant’Anna dei Lombardi, on the two corresponding access routes to the cloister square, are doubled. The layout of the streets facing the Poste building and the square on its main front have been conform to the original origamy of the area, where the new business centre was designed on the old town by Giuseppe Vaccaro, who was appointed winner of the competition by the Board of Governors of Poste e Telegrafi in May 1930. (Cislaghi 1998). The monastery front on via Monteoliveto, without the XVI century facade, became part of the project for the new street towards Sant’Anna dei Lombardi and Palazzo Doria D’Angri. The prescriptions of the competition brief were therefore fulfilled: the Poste and Telegrafi building undertakes to build pieces of the new town on the ancient monastery urban fabric. The Rione Carrisi and the Poste e Telegrafi building by Giuseppe Vaccaro are extremely relevant for the link between the processes of transformation and the ancillary relationship that exists between the old and the new, between the existing and the vision that the architectural project needs to put in place. The characteristic of this new centre is, most assuredly, the large building which embraces the two variants of the Rione Carrisi, the INA building overlooking the homonymous square and the main curved facade that protrudes from the street front in Piazza Matteotti. (Carrati 2006)

The curved facade marks a strong link between the reconstructed spaces of the city, made of renewed urban fronts, public places, existing buildings and new constructions, that give the street the proportions for the construction of the Centre. An architecture that is able to define the dynamics of a broader context, which determines the size of the construction of the new urban centre of Naples. The Poste e Telegrafi building was built as new, meaning "new" as a value that can contaminate urban dynamics and becomes a reference model for the urban design, for public works, for a renewed idea of public space. An urban project affected by the choices that led to plan and build a new city that, through the enlargement of Via Monteoliveto, the creation of the terrace towards Piazza Matteotti and the definition of a large public space are intertwined with the structure of the old seventeenth-century cloister. The Monteoliveto complex had a large religious structure made of seven open spaces divided into four cloisters and three gardens. The main rectangular cloister was composed of two orders of vaults supported by seven arches on the smaller side and nine on the larger side. Tucked away in the city centre, attached to the Poste e Telegrafi building and used as a parking lot by the police and as boutique, is the ancient cloister of Monteoliveto, with its space on the front and the small and wonderful loggia saved during the construction of the building, are in an alarming state of decay and abandonment. The theme is the development of a design strategy that gives this monumental space back to the city, the cloister, even in the general redevelopment of public spaces in this urban sector. Today these areas undergo consistent transformations especially due to the new subway stations, which are undoubtedly a strong relationship between the ancient and the contemporary city. "Emerged spaces" in which the research can define the size and levels of public space. The issue of public space raises the need to construct an argument that keeps existing architectures as general guidance and reference point. The idea is not to "create", but to understand which unexplained possibilities are conveyed by this idea, to allow the progress of knowledge leading to new knowledge within existing systems.

The story of an urban project contended between the architecture of the city and new strategies for regeneration
by Giovanni Muntari

The architecture of the city, even with a distance of a many a years, comes back as a contemporary and interesting topic of research and teaching "in all the cities of Europe there are large buildings, building complexes, or aggregates that constitute real parts of the city and whose function is unlikely to be the original. [...] When you visit a monument of this kind you will be surprised by a number of issues that are intimately linked to it. [...] one is struck by the number of functions that a building of this type can hold and how these functions are, in fact, entirely independent from its form, however, and that it is this form that remains imprinted, that we live and walk and that structures the city. (Rossi 1966). Starting from these considerations, the construction of the Rione Carrisi, "new centre" of the city, demolished and then rebuilt during the Fascist era, where the extraordinary Regio Poste e Telegrafi building by Giuseppe Vaccaro is located, is an extremely layered urban artifact that even today univocally defines the relationships that contributed to re-build the Italian cities in those two decades.
In architecture the idea is therefore the theme of the research that points in a direction, a scientific and collective process that belongs to a cultural community and that is explicit and recognizable. Each project is itself developed according to an idea, but the combination of reflections, of the variations of the identity, starting from type, are actually the system of knowledge, in architecture: the cluster constitutes an architectural idea based on the construction of an arcade system that encompasses and defines a space, regular in shape. The arcade marks the relationship of a series of bodies of different compartments, providing them with an upper unit, so that the body as a whole tends to intraversion, and all its parts recreate the integrity of the inner core in which the building is split up and records the passing of everyday life [Arata 1990].

The knowledge process is a cumulative and collective construction that explores places to define the limits and the invariants of change, defines the boundaries to describe the regenerations strategy of such a structured context. In this sense, the idea of working on the cluster of Montecelio is recognized the centrality of the historic and layered building and suggests the design of a crossing that reveals the structure of the convent, torn between the old monastic complex and the extraordinary Poste e Telegrafi building. This research focuses on the design of new layers capable of interacting with the monument and with a more general strategy of intervention, turning it into a public space and a place to discover and rediscover. An architectural proposal that gives the monument back to the city keeping its historical and permanent characteristics and projects it into the present day as the central place of social and cultural identity of the community it represents.
of a general plan that will be defined by different architectures, some of which selected through a competition. (Cislaghi 1998)10. In the specific nature of the new/old relationship, the Neapolitan plan investigates two typical issues of Italian architecture in the Fascist era, although not very frequent: the creation of small and fascinating areas dedicated to pedestrians, as it happens for example with the Dante Memorial area in Ravenna; the potential of the cloister arcade as a filter and as an element of an open and viable architectural promenade, e.g. the Ricci Oldi Museum in Piacenza by Giulio Arata (Margone 1993)11.

It is a starting point for the 1926 competition for the new Poste e Telegrafi building, completed in two stages: most competitors - Aschieri & Giobbe, Canino, Titta & Capezzuoli, Vaccaro - filled up the area of intervention, combining new offices to the cloister which becomes in some measure the rear façade. Only Alessandro Limongelli, in his entry for the second stage, imagined the arcades as a transparent frame for the new apsis of his Poste e Telegrafi building. When it's up to Vaccaro to actually design and build the new Poste e Telegrafi building, he had to review his competition proposals in terms of more modern lines: in this phase the representation of the cloister was more of an obligation than a creative idea. However, with his acknowledged mastery (Caraghi 2006)12, Vaccaro was able to seamlessly integrate it into his antique/new dialogue, which also includes the relocation of the loggia, in the fascinating modern version of the theme of diazium/dauzium, in the careful study of heights and footpaths.

After very interesting experiences of use of this urban space - including the outdoor cinema from decades ago - the cloister is now driven back into decay, and reduced to a shabby parking by those who had to free it from degradation. But nowadays the theme is not only a mere preservation of the fragment, as re-use, new functions and new meaning - even with contemporary gestures - of an area with a lot of potential. Under the wise guidance of Giovanni Muniti, the young students were able to take up the challenge: the theme of the cloister has become that of the relationship among new, ancient and contemporary.

**CRITICAL READING**

by Andreas Paity

Contrast is the force that shapes the majority of Naples, it can be found in the city in different scales and at different levels of perception. The different layers of the city (intended both as a physical artifact and as a system of social and economic structures) embody a unique situation in the whole world, expressed through the coexistence of buildings of different ages - and every single monument is exceptional for some reason - with public spaces, with monastic cloisters and courtyards that are followed by a sequence that never fails to surprise. Naples is indeed a compendium of different lifestyles, social classes and their architectural forms that blend so naturally it is impossible to focus on a single and isolated historical artifact, since it is a sum of perfectly equal parts. The museum quality of Naples' historic buildings is nearly always secondary to their primary use, which ruthlessly integrates them into the city's everyday life.

What therefore characterizes the city is a specific type of polarity and heterogeneity deriving from the various organized structures of social and economic functionality; while having an impressive historic presence, Naples does not conceive of itself as a museum. The classical monument is not a valid concept in Naples; the mere notion is alien to her. In its place are the complex processes that transform difference and contrast into the visible vitality that has come to characterize the city's tradition and history.

The historical dimension of this development is best described by quoting from Adorno's essay "On Tradition": "Against the verdict of obsolescence stand the awareness of the substance of that which: it is present to the historical consciousness of the present". (Adorno 1958)13. Hence what we are talking about is a permanent process, which has formed the Neapolitan cityscape essentially and very visibly, and continues to do so today. The city's foundational urban fabric remained intact, although every era left his mark on it. Within this urban fabric the roads define the road sections with spatial arrangements focused on the sequence of places. A character of identity that persists and characterizes the different urban parts of the city, also in relation to the different ideas of the city which shaped them in time. This is what happened to the Rione Carita, a civic centre built in the 30's on the edge of the ancient city, where the uniformity of the streets is opposed to a varied sequence of spaces, where often, as in the case of the cloister of Montesilvano, narrow passageways open the vision of extraordinary public spaces.

Walking through the streets around the great project by Giuseppe Vaccaro, the eyes catch these narrow and high glimpsers of light guiding the views towards extraordinary openings: a cloister as a place of great architectural beauty, art, landscape.

The Neapolitan cloisters are the witness of the centrality of religious life from the 13th century to the modern age. Since the 16th century they became much larger than in other urban contexts, with dimensions that relate more to proper public spaces than to private places. The cloister of Santa Chiara for example, is almost as large as the Plaza Mayor in Madrid. In this sense, although the artifacts may change during the course of the story, both themselves and the meaning they had in the past are part of the present and aspire to a conscious contemporary.
In urban and architectural terms, this may result in the inevitable transformations of the city, a place of spatial and functional relationships within which the various elements can maintain their identity on condition to update roles and functions. This is right, the main topic for the analysis and renovation projects of Montesolvi Main Cloister. Here, the specific issue is the rehabilitation of the covered walk in a context marked by a new idea of the city that in the early 30s led to a radical urban renewal with the creation of some of the most important works of those years, recently enhanced by the Toledo Metro station. The cloister renovation required to combine the centrality of a space that acts as a bridge between the Montesolviinsula and the Poste e Telegrafici by Giuseppe Vaccaro and Gino Franzoi to a crosswalk that would connect via Montesolvi to via Cesare Battisti; moreover, the functional, spatial, and relational renewal of the basement level is a topic in the topic. Among the proposed solutions, some clearly have an impact on the cloister space and its historical features, with vertical connection ramps or new volumes that inevitably fragment the rectangular space, upsetting its natural symmetry; other solutions manage to retain an idea of centrality, making the space crossable and, at the same time, making this connection visible from outside the cloister. All solutions show how a problem set at the urban scale inevitably has consequences at the architectural scale, how one of the most important aspects in a project is the dimension of the intervention together with the concatenation of the hierarchical relationships between the components of such a layered urban fabric.

![Image of the Poste e Telegrafici building and the Montesolvi complex, general plan.](image1)

![Image of the Poste e Telegrafici building and the Montesolvi complex, cross section.](image2)
Going back to take care of the historic city and plan its regeneration lets us deal with an immense richness of experience and knowledge collected during centuries of civilization. This collection reflects architecture's capacity to act in continuity and in accordance with the place and with the habits and aspirations of those who inhabit it. It thus gives us the opportunity to reconsider the ancient task of architecture: to organize and orchestrate the space of the public image in a culturally significant way. Planning in the historic city and for its perpetuation means, in the first place, to identify its characters and its basic elements, the related usage issues and practices, the ways in which its built tissue and its spaces have compiled in time while continuing to be an expression and representation of his community. The aim is to track down that hidden substrate and to absorb it, adapt it and regenerate it, to layer it with new materials, customs, rituals and forms in a continuous exchange of quality and dimension between worlds and eras, transforming events, potentials and opportunities in a great treasure for the city and for contemporary architecture. The cloister of Monteoliveto, situated between the Regio Poste e Telegrafia Building and Giuseppe Vaccaro and the ancient Convnet Complex, opens interesting visions for our times, based on a comparison with the values, ideas and memories that its places and its architecture represent. This search for values and quality in architecture led to a deep and true immersion in the architectural reality of the neighborhood rebuilt during the Fascist era, the Rione Carità of Naples. It offered an intense contemplation of architecture and the city, of those reciprocal and vital relationships with the life of a community. At the same time, it highlighted the need to "open" and "to redive" this particular space in order, firstly, to provide continuity and value to the public space. The subject of public space is, in the city of Naples, an exemplary extraordinary evidence of how the beauty of nature, the stratification of places and the richness of the culture have always had to deal with the contradictions and conflicts, more or less violent, of our society.

The "re-discovery" of the cloister of Monteoliveto proves to be a resource for the contemporary, preserving wealth and identity of this place through a possible continuation of that troubled but wonderful transformation process which has ensured its vitality over time.

Bearing in mind, through the great power of the words by Ernesto Nathan Rogers, that "the ancient works have meaning today until they are able to resonate through our voice: so, outside from history and from a no less abstract idealism, broken the conventional boundaries, we examine the architectural phenomenon in its being: in its historical connection" Rogers 1994\textsuperscript{20}. The understanding of the structure of this place has been achieved through a diversified approach which required not only the reasoning but also intuition and sensitivity. It is based on research and design and on the available projects and studies from the '30s made for the competition won by Vaccaro, which allowed the construction of the beautiful Poste e Telegrafia building.

The physical structure of the Cloister proved to be full of strongly topical conditions and meanings. The built environment establishes the aesthetics and the idea of a city in a specific historical moment, presenting its own specific authenticity in giving a part of the city a particular value by recognizing those signs, actions and thoughts of a continuous modernity. The urban structure and the strong physical presence of the architecture of the fascist era who built the Rione Carità, civic centre of the city between the two World Wars, are such that it always required to seek an equilibrium between the single architectures and the whole urban body, assuming a form of dependence between the physical and cultural aspects of the city.

An old building as the Cloister, preserved in the modern heart of Naples, is so tied to its context and the urban system in which it is inserted to make the issues of its centrality and its crossing - which give relevance to its typology and its urban form - immediately clear. The measures and constitutive proportions of the Cloister govern the relationships of the different parts in each other and in relation to the whole, and have never been fully obliterated by the acts which has impaired its fruition in the last years. A project which starting from its principles and reasons needs to become a malus opusculum that is more than necessary to avoid sterile, inconsistent, artificial inventions, no longer made by men for the man. The Cloister shows us with an evidence of his own the importance of the dialectic between continuity and transformation: to renew starting from what's left.

**The Role of Economics in the Designing Process**

Francesca Ferretti

The economic feasibility of a new building project is mainly represented by its construction and maintenance costs. The project of a new building arises from a market (or social) demand; therefore the designing process starts with a set of constraints regarding morphology, social and natural or built environment, financial budget and use design. Each project can be modified, but they are established ex-ante, and oriente the project choices, being some of them the "reason" of the transformation. The role of economic evaluation in the design process is quite different when the question to be faced, the need to satisfy, is the re-use of an ancient building, especially if in historic context. In fact, the incentive to intervention is represented by the social and cultural demand not to let degrade a piece of our cultural heritage. But, most of the time, its use is not evident (Lichfield 1996). The architect has more freedom, in a certain way, because from the economic point of view he can manage both demand and supply. He can concentrate his efforts on the characteristics to be enhanced, facing with which use could be destined only during the designing process. The risk is that, once the planning idea has been defined, the economic aspects are neglected, and the choice of the use ends up by being stereotyped. The vast spaces, that cannot be easily partitioned coherently with the historic and architectural elements preservation, suggest public or semi-public uses (i.e., exhibition halls, meeting rooms, etc.) already widely satisfied, and not remunerative, so far as not to cover maintenance and running costs.

Therefore, the challenge for the planning team is not only to enhance and enrich the architectural and spatial potential of the cultural heritage in question, but also to identify new uses that can arise from the composition choices of the project. (Geoffie 2002). In the same way in which new technological solutions can derive from the need to reduce costs, so new uses can come from a more up-to-date vision of architecture, because architecture has already reflected society and therefore its economies and hidden potential. (Augé 2014). In the case of Monteoliveto Cloister, the openness of the crossing and the "piazzas" are at the bottom of the original choices that take into account a public/private mixed use capable of auto-financing the activities and places dedicated to public fruition, satisfying also neighbouring needs. In some cases, underground car parks were the income source to allow a mostly public use of the above spaces. Other times, common spaces mingled with private spaces were preferred, implemented in this way the notion of piazza as the place of (market, social and cultural) exchange, and avoiding a commercial enclave doomed to failure. From the urban economics point of view, the projects that match tourism with the knowledge of the urban and regional space are the most interesting: an "invitation" to visit the Archeological Museum by means of a sampling of its collection, music or performing theatre, or (more foregore) the show of the food typical products of the region. In conclusion, to satisfy or even create a demand, based on social, economic and cultural exchange can promote project solutions, through an iterative process, with numerous feedbacks, that tries to match creative project with economic feasibility.

**Conclusions**

The study of the cloister of Monteoliveto gave evidence to the ways of formation and transformation of the city. Its identity is embodied in these invariants that are strongly tied to history and reality, expressing the permanence of its essential aspects that act as fixed elements in the evolution of architecture (Candri 1999). All the contributors to the research pointed out different aspects of the issue, bringing to light a necessary and useful comparison among different levels of investigation and intervention: Fabio Mangone, who framed the issue of the urban palimpsest; the critical reading by Andris Palītis; who suggested and the ideas that have animated the entire process of reflection; the story of Ugo Carughi who testified the quality of architecture with his volume, the extraordinary accomplishment of the construction of the Regio Poste e Telegrafia building in Naples; the scrupulous and careful intervention by Ferruccio Lizzo that made clear that the aspects that link the old and new determine the extent of each intervention; the view that this process is an actual economic process, which defines the strategies and structures the program, expressed in the constant work of Francesca Ferretti. Building such a body of knowledge is therefore a collective and cumulative process, involves different subjects, endorses an open exchange of ideas that belongs to the concept that a study must be of systemic and public, that a study must be considered scientifically valid. This journey, that expresses the value of the architectural project as research and analysis, would not have been possible without the committed support of the students from the Urban Design Course held by Professor Giovanni Maffei.
SELECTED PROJECTS FROM THE URBAN DESIGN COURSE

MAPA Degree Course. Academic year 2013-14 / II semester - Held by Giovanni Multari.
Fig.13-20

Fig.13

Fig.14

Fig.15

Fig.16

Fig.17