

**ETHOS VS AESTHETIC
LIVING THE SYMBOLS: SPACE-TIME FRAMEWORK IN “ANALOGUE CITY”**

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Abstract

Urban fragments give a unitary character to the entire city, imagined as a place both physically and mentally. They are symbolic boundaries, monuments in the broad sense, places where the urban experience has obtained the character of matter, or can obtain it through the architectural project.

1 - VIGORELLI VELODROME, Milan: Disused plant at the centre of political controversy and several project competitions. This is a part of the history of the city that could built the future.

2 – THE CAUSEWAY, Genoa: Expressway in the heart of the historical city: the movement as a vital phenomenon, the movement as a stability ruin.

3 - ZAMA / PESTAGALLI / BONFADINI AREA, Milan: Fragmented border in the suburban area: ejection and junction place.

Keywords: Complexity, Fragments, Monuments

“But the question of the fragment in architecture is very important since its possible that only ruins express a fact completely. [...] I am thinking of a unity, or a system, made solely of a reassembled fragments. Perhaps only a great popular movement can give us the sense of an overall design; today we are forced to stop ourselves at certain things. I am convinced, however that architecture is totality, as a comprehensive project, as an overall framework is certainly more important and in the final analysis, more beautiful. But it happens that historical obstacles – in every way parallel to psychological blocks or symptoms – hinder reconstruction. As a result, I believe that there can be no true compensation, and that maybe the only thing possible is the addition that is somewhere between logic and biography.” (Rossi 1999)

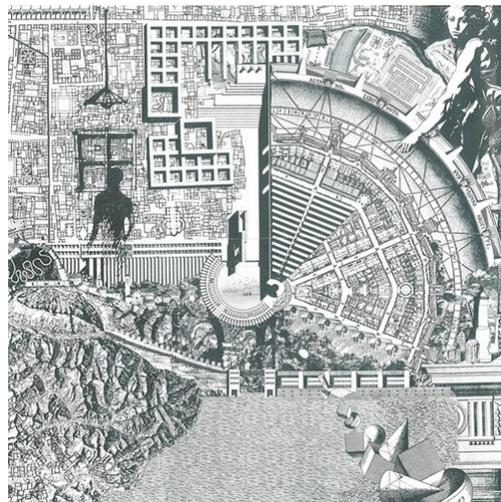


Figure 1. Analogue City

1. THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The aim of our contribution is to show a design approach suitable for critical environments, and in doing so elucidate key aspects of the modern contemporary city, one that is fundamentally embedded within the 30'th century.

As a reference method we assume the path led from the personality, in some ways contradictory of Aldo Rossi, that depart from the studies in the 60's, condensed in "Architecture of the city" (Rossi, 1966) and come until his essay "Scientific Autobiography" (Rossi, 1999). As result this approach outlines a perspective that attempts to understand aspects at the same time objective and subjective, scientific and autobiographical, quantitative and qualitative, that converge together in reading, in the project, in the experience of the city.

The work is set on the composition figure of the collage, meant as instrument of reading for a complex and fragmented reality, that it can track a sense of order at the same time complex but unitary. As we shall see, the definition that we intend as a reference for our interpretation of the urban phenomena is that of Rossi's "Analogue City" (Rossi, 1976). "The concept of city seen similar as compositional process that allows you to bring together, in a synchronic level, objects and figures of conditions and different origins, lacking an apparent logical connection that binds them, but that refer to each other through the imagination and experience of those who evoke autobiographical" (Aris, 2005).

Our contribution wishes to exemplify three readings that hypothesize transformation within three

case studies, currently involved in the architectural debate: two of them are in the cities of Milan and another in Genoa.

The definition of the topic in our approach, explained below, will find correspondence in the following three considered cases .

The complexity is a condition inherent within the urban phenomenon. This complex condition intersects temporality and spatiality without a unitary design or project and is found only through points, fragments, parts, and a partial possibility of defining and understanding. Nevertheless, in a city composed of many different sets and subsets, it is possible to recognize a unitary character.

This character is not given by the addition of its parts but is composed by the relationship, sometimes difficult or distorted, between the qualities of different areas: it is a composition of spaces which can be given a character.

These urban fragments give a unitary character of the entire city that is both a physical and mental place. They are symbolic elements, or monuments in the broad sense, more than places where the urban experience is materialized, or who can acquire it through the architectural design.

The form of the contemporary city collects, although modified, the same myths of the ancient one: mobility, communication/exchange and border. However it lacks a strong definition of the "citizenship's pact", political, religious or civil, and possesses exaggerated dimensions and connections.

The dissociation between urban form and its meaning is translated by the lost relationship between aesthetics and ethics. Ethics is shared aesthetic: not defined in the absolute terms, but negotiated through a communal and proportionate link.

The approach is to treat the urban space as extended and complex architecture; in this sense it is mandatory to choose a progressive look that it can focus at the same time on small parts of the city and predicting the general effects on the entire shape of the city.

Fragmentation, recognition and complexity are considered three phases of the same design process. This comes from the chaos of an exploded structure (fragmentation), proceeds to the recognition of the quality of different parts (recognition), and it is completed in the link between them, namely in the relationship between the parties that leads a structure, even complex, from chaos to order (complexity).

We have selected specific urban phenomena in order to build this approach to reading and design the whole city. They are expressive of three species of spaces: border, communication and mobility.

1 - The marginal areas, scattered and cut between the spatial and temporal logics of the total urban phenomenon.

2 - The monuments are designed as "talking architecture", recognisable architectural facts in their expressiveness in the broadest sense. In relation with the past and the future they are building or landscape with a symbolic meanings, they are metaphors and something wider than their real physicality.

3 - The urban infrastructures, defined as structures with their own logic, emphasize the connection to a large-scale but randomly interfere the urban fabric of the slow city.

We consider these three paradigmatic and synthetic categories part of a larger urban phenomenology that condenses critical and constructive values.

These three categories identify some significant characters that can connote key places for the project of the complex city.

They are defined, at the same time, as sensing and junction elements with respect to the dynamics of transformation from the past through the future. Sensitive, as a phenomena that embedded within a morphological structure, and allows one to read the dynamics that have formed large urban sections. Junctions, as the three categories are arranged historically and spatially in a strategic position between areas that are working by a local operation until a global action.

As declared, we are referring to the Aldo Rossi's studies on urban structure, in particular on the two works *The Architecture of the City* and *Scientific Autobiography* which set the path of his architectural theory. We would like to approach our three categories identified here with both pertaining monuments and primary elements. These are as cornerstones of urban dynamics and, precisely, are playing a crucial role both from a morphological that chronological point of view.

In particular we are interested in making a link between quantitative and qualitative dimensions through his concept of Analogical City: Rossi expresses this urban view as a figuration that composes the urban artefacts through the own autobiographical experience: the link between places and architecture of the city is the subjective thought. The architectural representations (drawings, plans and projects) are explanatory of this conception and for Rossi, are an important tool for reading, reflection and expression of urban values.

In this sense we could be considered also Analogical City other notes and different urban reading experiences. For example the representation of G.B. Piranesi's Campo Marzio (1762), is a surreal metaphor for the incidental historical contradiction. Or the narration in the book *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino, where the urban phenomenon are driven by an autobiographical reflection of the narrator-habitant; or again the representations of *Piazze d'Italia* (1913, 1915) by Giorgio de Chirico and *Paesaggio Urbano* by Mario Sironi (1920, 1922). They are symbolic and metaphorical constructions, suspended in an immobile time of a history continuously in transformation and composed of architectural pieces built in the urban scenery. Further, G.B. Nolli drafted with the collaboration of the same Piranesi a *Map of Rome* (1748) that is a special view of the urban soil in accordance with a specific intention of the author.

Even the images of the city drawn by Le Corbusier symbolize the same theoretical construct and using the technique of urban collage, he formed the *City of three million inhabitants* (1922), the *Plan Voisin* (1925) and the *Radiant City* (1933). Likewise the plans of urban structures analysed by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter for *Collage City* (1978)

The interest in these representations concerns the nature of their critical and profound interpretation of the reality and it is not just a significant invention. The same Rossi declares that during the implementation of the project "any good architect tends to naturalism, ... tends to reproduce the existing." (Rossi, 1985).

Going back to our three categories, we try to recognize other common characters necessary to the composition of the collage that carves out these specific figures who intend to become symbols and instruments for a shape and an overall urban design.

The concept of border expresses both an element of comparison and distinction between areas and a problem of the crisis of the urban form.

Monument implies a comparison with a paralyzed values system that has to deal with the permanence of the figure in relation to the variation or lack of significance of origin (memory).

Infrastructure is a phenomenon at the same time of connection and of laceration of the urban fabric that crosses.

The contemporary urban space is not linear as the measuring rod, but is divided into many connected options, connoted by the travel of time and the mode of spatial experience. Time is the prime measuring element for the connections, being the space interspersed with pauses, suspensions, obstacles, interruptions, loss, detours, delays, accelerations.

These observations link space and time and in fact substantiate the concept of experience.

The quality of the space is not determined by absolute unit but relative and depends on the experience of space: big, small, thick, thin, isolated, high, low, close, far away, remembered, forgotten, removed.

The geometry of the urban space, as indicated by the representation of the "Analogical City", is a topological type and is modified according to the kind of experience and who are the actors of the urban scene.

The terms of fixing the judgment guideline for places knowledge are the distinction, the temporality, the proportioning. By their nature "space-time", borders, monuments and infrastructure are phenomena that lead experience and size value to the project plan that is foundational to the knowledge and qualitative condition of the place. Time and space are terms by which it is possible to establish an order of magnitude to measure parts of the city and constitute the roots for defining categories of judgment about the quality of the places. The measures are, in fact, the essence of the connections, the connections are necessary to establish comparisons between the phenomena and then to compose spatial and architectural relationships.

Composed this problematic background we move on to outline the three experiences of reading and interpretation conducted from three real cases before mentioned, leading to the three identified categories of Monuments (Vigorelli Velodrome - Milano), Infrastructures (Sopraelevata - Genova), Borders (Area Zama, Pestagalli, Bonfadini - Milan)

2. CASES STUDIES

2.1. Monument - Vigorelli Velodrome – Milano



Figure 2. Vigorelli Velodrome

From the last years the Velodrome in Milan came back to talk to him. It is dedicated to a passionate and enterprising councillor-cyclist Giuseppe Vigorelli, who was apart of the Milan city council during the 30's and to Antonio Maspes, the most important kerin champion from Milan. Four times the Vigorelli Velodrome was a chosen venue for the Track Cycling World Championships. Antonio Maspes won here the World Championships of '55: it was the first of his seven qualification. After his death, in 2000, the Velodrome changed his name in Maspes-Vigorelli. Here were achieved 10 record time and for a long time, it ended the races Giro d'Italia and the Giro di Lombardia.

The Vigorelli, for its history and for its fast wood track, is known and appreciate worldwide. Equally it is known the great waste for years and its inaccessibility to bicycles.

The debate, in fact, has carried on for a long time. Alterations, collapses, destructions, renovations, incorrect uses, started and disrupted activities, epic concerts (Beatles, 1965) or tragic (Led Zeppelin, which lasted only 20 minutes) demolition projects or reconstruction made the Vigorelli as 'temple of cycling' as well as arena of clashes between several factions. That even before his birth in 1935, namely from the Velodrome Sempione destruction at the end of the 20's.

Milan is an industrious city: the middle class city express her soul in the business initiative and in the modernity, which has meant and means still today constant "renewal". Sometimes real renewal; in other cases fewer, but accompanied by regret, nostalgia or late repairs.

The bicycle is an object that synthetically combines everyday life, athletic phenomenology and modern mythology, and was an early symbol for Milan as an active, hard-working, economical and innovative city.

From this notion the persistent imagine of the Velodrome was built: a proper place deeply rooted in the middle of several transformations, however it seems to represent a will aimed at preserving folk and civic roots, that come from the athletic mythology in general and from the cycling in particular. The love for cycling, for spectators and athletes, is materialized in its elliptical structure: a kind of allegorical theatre, even when turned off, continues to celebrate the rite of an era and an essential lifestyle.

Today being interested in the Maspes-Vigorelli Velodrome becomes a meaning that transcends the ancient architectural structure and the history of the track cycling. Even though its value is found within the architectural quality and its specific use, the most important way is to join a project of urban transformation.

In fact, the urgency of the transformation implies the use of the city. Indeed it implies a proper way of thinking about the city: a way of thinking about a public city.

The Velodrome becomes a symbol of a thought, and consequently of a more public use for spaces, soils, streets and architecture of the city.

Inside the elliptical structure, positioned so unsure in the surrounding space, is revealed suddenly an extraordinary internal public space. A symbol, figurative and synthetic image of a collective city composed of large public interiors.

It is a monument for bicycles: the paradox between the two terms reveals at the same time its monumental character and its simple use. More precisely it is an object that accommodates history and memory.

It is necessary to deal with the contemporary behaviour: the unconditional use of the private car is incompatible with the structure of European city centres. So how were incompatible, for own costs and the costs imposed on their community, the major industrial areas gradually incorporated into the Italian urban fabric.

The possibility of the movement in urban areas is not only an aspect of the use of the city. It is the main aspect. The movement is perhaps the only activity that unites all of us in absolute. The move across the city is the first way of living common, the first necessary and inevitable sharing of the spaces and of the body physicality. It is the measurement of distances from one another, it is sharing of time, looks, contact, difficulty, beauty or ugliness of the place.

From here, a project for the journey really common, not abusive, not preferential. From here it starts the first step to the public space. Being interested in the Maspes-Vigorelli Velodrome means to start from a particular project towards a universal problem. Deep knowledge and use of available resources, regeneration of spaces for the upgrade of their uses, low cost intervention, enhancement of the symbolic character inherent in the place and specific use. This is the strategic plan for each project of architecture and urban design.

This work is part of the research in the editorial magazine of the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano (Territorio 69, 2014). Therefore we have tried to read the complex reality embedded in this simple object, reading the centenary history incorporated in that sophisticated work of the track, composed of millions of tiny pieces of wood.

2.2. Infrastructure – Sopraelevata, Genova



Figure 3. Sopraelevata, Genova

The infrastructure is architecture of mobility, of growth, of connection: founding myth of the city. Considering the role of roads or aqueducts in the definition of the relationship between Rome and its vast territory. The city is a social space for connections from outside and inside.

Modernity is most evident in the new spaces of the connection, transported by carriers, fast trains, planes and automobiles. In the contemporary myth of mobility and connection is magnified to such an extent as to lead to the collapse of the same places that produce it, leading to contradictory reports and uninhabitable spaces between urban structures and connective infrastructure.

The move, well summarized by F. Choay (2003), "from the space of contact to that of the movement to that of the free," poses a problem when you highlight the fact that the transition has not occurred for whole: that is, the change from one state to another in the system has not been completed for there certainly remains, with great presence, inherent characteristics from previous systems.

"The metropolitan space transcends all the old boundaries, rushing along the lines of its movement. But then behold, the contradiction! On the one hand the essence of the metropolis is extended in a space as a prior form; on the other hand, this is constantly contradicted by the gravity of the bodies" (Cacciari, 2002).

Some of these facilities are located to surround the central spaces of the historic city, as in the case of Genoa, where the large artery that connects the east and west have on the sea-front by dropping their junctions in the fabric of the town, however, congested city.

In the specific case of Genoa there is a direct interference with its monumental historic spaces (which moreover coincide with its liminal places), creating a tension at the same time critical and highly transformative potential.

Currently the Municipality of Genoa is contemplating whether to dismantle the "great contradiction" that oversees the sea front from the 60's, in favour of an underwater fitting alternative. Part of the city has expressed a desire to demonstrate the beauty that can be found within its potential of this place. It is so important (in a better or worse way) for the identification of a urban character, opposing to the demolition project. Our research group, as part of the Doctoral Program in Architecture and Urban Design, has pursued this idea and tried the content that would make the structure of the Causeway "Aldo Moro" the seat of a new, regenerated public space voted for collective use and the slow mobility

The contemporary city found in this architecture-witness is a way of being, a modern city monument, perhaps it could be better stated as an "anti-monument", stripped of every celebratory rhetoric which has led to a testimony as strong as it is random.

Because of its location and its role in transforming from a necessary element to an urban and mobile obstacle for the development of areas with greater public value (and tourism) in the city by the sea, the long and complicated structure of this urban highway is as true and analysis tool for the city. In addition to being potentially a new extraordinary public space, the "Sopraelevata" is a device that dissects the entire urban body. Crosscut it detects the special relationship between the opposing sides of the seascape and the mountainous and longitudinally intersects and activates a relationship between the historical stages of the city, witnessed the uses that have settled: the ancient monumental seafront, the ancient port area and more recent tourist, the popular residential areas, industrial areas, commercial ones, those tourist - cultural.

The highway became synthesised and is then able to compose different realities and inconsistencies within a single living area, also open by means of a sustainable mobility and integrated within the public space and coastline found below.

2.3. Border - Area Zama, Pestagalli, Bonfadini, Milano



Figure 4. Area Zama, Pestagalli, Bonfadini, Milano

The proposed framework is part of an extensive research project marked by several stages of discussion and openness to citizenship: "Re-forming Milan. Design experiments for neglected and decaying spaces and buildings". It is a didactic and research initiative promoted by the School of Architecture and Society of the Polytechnic of Milan in cooperation with the Department of Urban Planning, Private Construction and Agriculture of the Municipality of Milan.

In the eastern suburbs of Milan and the disposal of industrial properties in the tertiary sector has prompted the formation of informal settlements and squatters, resulting in the creation of socially critical cores. Emergency situations and physical space in the fabric of the city, but also situations of social emergency and settlement areas and tissues that invest in a timely manner but reverberates its negative effects in significant urban sectors. The urgent need for care becomes one of the places of abandonment and decay, to the soil and the many buildings discarded, abandoned or underutilized.

For the areas of emergency social, spatial, ecological between barriers, barricades and rubble are, in some cases, even a high degree of landscape sensitivity: fragments of soil and agricultural residue open landscape, important resources to reactivate the transformation processes. Fragmented edges in suburban areas where the local public administration has put 'a red-light alarm' as an object of activities which have worrying implications both in the urban space, and in the physical body of the city, as well as in its social dimension: occupations by social or collective centre in search of spaces, places of squatter settlements, places of irregular employment by immigrants, are just some of the situations that live and find their temporary home in properties in terms of dangerous uninhabitable,

unsafe structures in and falling, or in buildings unhealthy for the presence of harmful materials.

The state of emergency physical and social space that shows this area of the city is transformed from a phenomenon critical and destructive to constructive scenery full of potential thanks to the design. The look of the project and its projective voltage that amended are necessarily based on the critical conditions of the *status quo*, on the crisis, conflicts, instability that each portion of the ground or abandoned building manifests. "Associate destruction and project suggests a state of radical ambivalence marked by the loss of place and sense" (Emery, 2011).

The design explorations and reflections related to urban policies that address the need to upgrade and renovate the existing assets, through a case of re-use of areas and artefacts present in the fabric of the city, historically built on themselves. The landscapes are those involved with neglect, renunciation, the absence of rules, compromised landscapes, both polluted and corrupted. The proposed reconfiguration, through the selection of the computed values may fluctuate and move within the dialectic substitution / transformation, including assessment of appropriate solutions and strategies between *tabula-rasa* and re-composition of the parties, or between cancellation and qualification of the differences.

The thematic context lies, in this case, in the transition from the processes of expansion, urbanization and growth of large cities, which have been characterized by the modern era defined within *The Atlas of Shrinking Cities* (Oswalt 2006) which maintains that today's tangible decreased door is exactly as the last century of growth, with fundamental character transformations that correspond to changes in principles , actions , practices and design strategies .

The scope that is called to attention is the portion of the soil from the eastern suburbs of Milan, between the node of Ovid's Square to the north, via Maecenas north-east, the railway line to the west along Via Zama, via Bonfadini , via Dei Pestagalli, which is an area that has several critical parts and sequences that characterize it.

The sequence of places and the absence of expectation can be described as:

- 1) The council house neighbourhood Case Bianche, built by Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari in the early 1970's: it presents several problems related to architectural and technical obsolescence of the facilities, the adjustment to technological and plant engineering, reclamation of asbestos and harmful materials as well as an enhancement of the overall design of the system of public open space around it;
- 2) Within the southern quarter of the Case Bianche along Zama, lies an abandoned school building in the state of severe degradation and important hygienic problems of squatting and public order;
- 3) Rail along the edge, around the store and waste collection center ANSA, emerge several ruins, skeletons structures, frames of buildings in disuse, including barriers, barricades and rubble;
- 4) Beyond the railroad, on the western side, the Ortomercato Via Lombroso but above the adjacent area of the abandoned former butchery of meat, constitute major infrastructure / fences in disrepair
- 5) Bonfadini along the way, in the section delimited by the rails of the rail junction, the consolidated Roma camp is made from a dense agglomeration of volumes DIY, some masonry and other wood, from mobile homes and caravans;
- 6) Crossing the railroad, between Via and Via Dei Bonfadini Pestagalli , the imposing structures of the cement into disuse, with the ruined building corner offices help build sequences of a bleak landscape in waiting .

To complete the picture of this large portion of the urban road infrastructure should be considered as estimates of the New Pausanese and road projects only partially made of the areas ex - Montedison and former Redaelli Rogoredo , leaving open areas and interstitial interrupted designs , manufactures emptied obsolescent and some fragments of the agricultural landscape.

“When the user leaves ... any building, degradation begins its inexorable course , but the suspension of time and neglect have resulted also to place the unused places in a special state . In the condition of stasis, some values are preserved almost intact , others show potential not discounted”. (Ferlenga 2014)

3. CONCLUSION

Complexity is an inherent condition within the urban phenomenon. This complex situation intersects time and space without any uniform design or project. In this way, there unearths a partial possibility of defining and understanding the urban spaces, even though only through points, fragments and parts. Nevertheless the city, observed as composed of many different sets and subsets, can have a unitary character. This character comes not from the total of its parts, but it is made up of connections, sometimes distorted or abstracted between qualities of different spheres. Even though the cities are a composition of spaces, it is possible to ascribe a character to it. Therefore, we find ourselves linking relational quality with spatial identity: ethics and aesthetics, truth and beauty, sharing ability and project for public space.

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