



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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COURSE OF  
ARCHITECTURE CONSTRUCTION CITY

*Abstract*

**THE WISE CITY**  
**Places of knowledge in the design of a new City Library**  
**in Torino Esposizioni**

*Tutor*  
Francesca De Filippi

*by*  
Chiara Surra

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Entering a library is like moving a curtain in front of a window overlooking a beautiful panorama: let you discover new horizons. Walking through the shelves gives you the chance to discover new texts, to basically get out of ourselves and to get in touch with the world. Curiosity has always led men to move forward, to never be satisfied with their knowledge. The library lavishly feeds this curiosity, stimulates it, and directs it.

This thesis deals with understanding the cultural needs of the city of Turin, Italy, and to give them an answer designing the new Civic Library in the Torino Esposizioni Building, designed by Nervi in the 40s and 50s.

The library, subject of this thesis, is seen as an important engine of knowledge, a major actor on the cultural stage of today's society. As a matter of fact, the book is an instrument charged with potentiality; the library, both as an institution and as a building, must valorize it, favoring a stimulating encounter between the book and the reader.

Looking upon the past, at the roots of the library institution, has proved to be a crucial step in understanding the social role it has nowadays.

The first step to think and design a new Turin Civic Library in Torino Esposizioni was to investigate the functional and performance needs required by a new library in Turin. To achieve this goal, it was essential to know and live the reality of libraries, writing a thesis in their spaces, in essence, to play the role of the user. Since the user's point of view may be incomplete and lacking, it was equally important to listen to the people working in the library system. They know limits and potentials about libraries and represent the nourishment of the system.

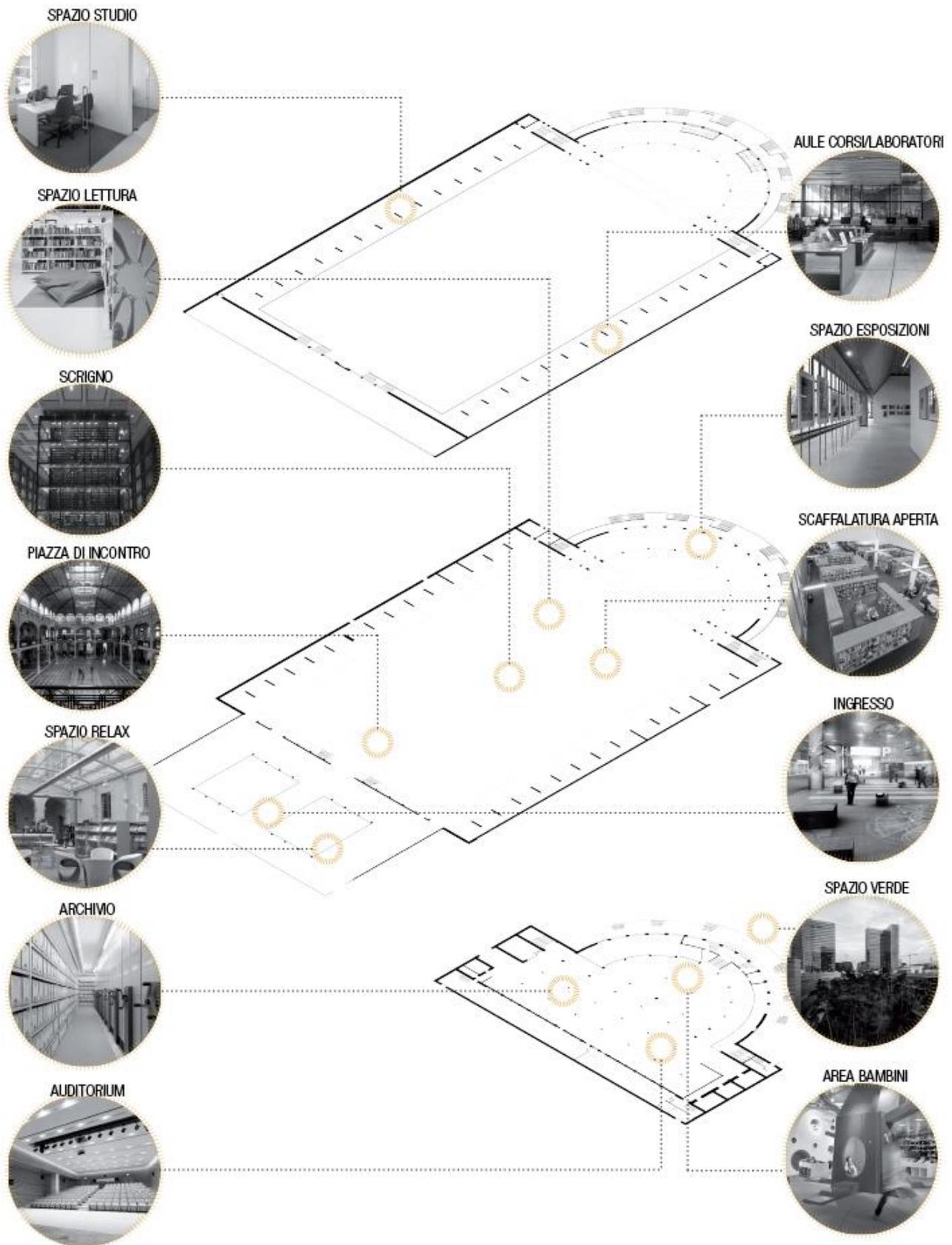
On the other hand, it was essential to discover and to immerse in the cultural context of Turin, so filled of profoundly different libraries, operating in opposite social contexts, some more linked to the past, others already well projected towards the future. In each of them, it was beneficial to spend time and to talk with the staff.



The outcome of this work is also the result of time devoted to living the library, to interpret its role in the city of Turin, in the attempt of developing a project that is as able to look far away as it is well-rooted in the existing context.

The next design phase started from these premises to come to define, later, the spatial organization of the new library. The structure and drawings of Torino Esposizioni bring to mind a pre-Christian Basilica; these peculiarities strongly influenced the project of the library. This has led to the choice not to alter the character of sacredness of this architecture but to try to enhance its fundamental aspects, especially regarding the distribution of spaces and the formal definition of the design.

The idea of a library serving the public, able to read its needs and to guide it, is ultimately the fulcrum around which this thesis revolve. The needs of users can be different, but the design choices follow the will to highlight the two souls of library: the comforting reality of the safe "*harbor*" where it is temporarily possible to forget worries and troubles of the "open sea"; and the insatiable desire of knowledge, that interprets the library as a "*treasure island*" to be explored, able to excite, amaze and engage the user.



For further information please contact:  
 Chiara Surra  
[chiarasurra@gmail.com](mailto:chiarasurra@gmail.com)  
 +39 3294740471