Honors thesis

Master of Science in Architecture Construction City

Abstract

THE NEXT MALL:
PHENOMENON OF "DEMALLING" AS A MOTOR FOR URBAN REQUALIFICATION
Case study performed around the area of the Venaria shopping center with the BTWS methodology.

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by

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The shopping center, originally born in the United States, occupies its suburbs in the 1960s and 70s, eased by the phenomenon of urban sprawl. Since a few decades this growth has created new aggregation centers in the huge American steppes, but it has also generated an unexpected crisis phenomenon, causing numerous cases of closing and abandonment. These instances lead to substancial negative consequences, because of the impact that a shopping center has on the territory and on society around it in the outskirts.

Research has shown how the urban object's crisis phenomenon is not only taking place in the United States, but it is also happening in a generalized way in Europe, with the necessary differences generated by the historical and urban context. Currently our territory suffers because of many commercial structures being phased out, without having learned any lessons from what happened, with a foreseeable advance, in the USA. Italy is not exempt from this phenomenon, there are indeed numerous abandoned commercial facilities without any vision for the future.
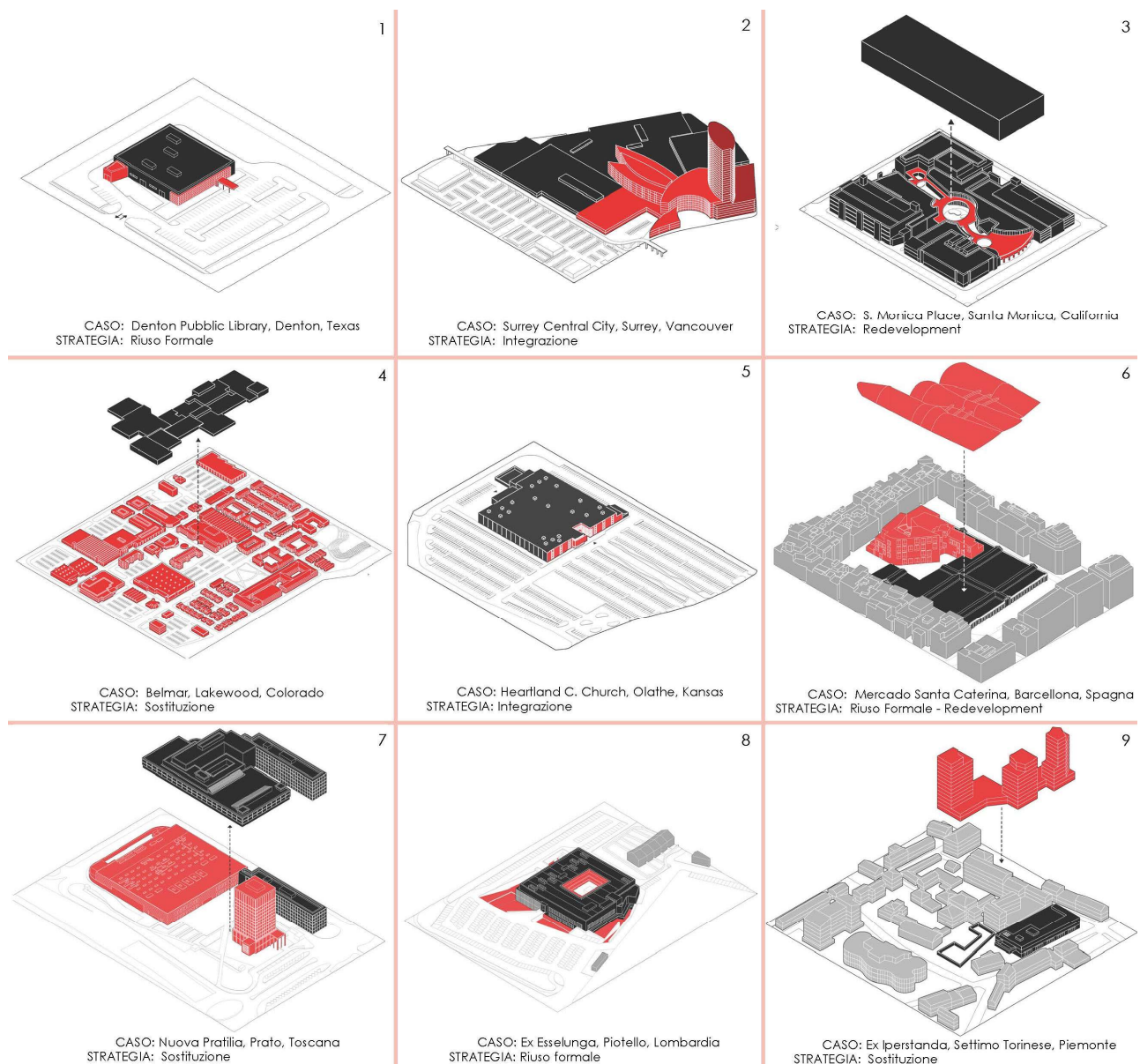

1
CASO: Denton Pubblic Library, Denton, Texas
STRATEGIA: Riuso Formale

2
CASO: Surrey Central City, Surrey, Vancouver
STRATEGIA: Integrazione

3
CASO: S. Monica Place, Santa Monica, California
STRATEGIA: Redevelopment

4
CASO: Belmar, Lakewood, Colorado
STRATEGIA: Sostituzione

5
CASO: Heartland C. Church, Olathe, Kansas
STRATEGIA: Integrazione

6
CASO: Mercado Santa Caterina, Barcellona, Spagna
STRATEGIA: Riuso Formale - Redevelopment

7
CASO: Nuova Pratilia, Prato, Toscana
STRATEGIA: Sostituzione

8
CASO: Ex Esselunga, Piotello, Lombardia
STRATEGIA: Riuso formale

9
CASO: Ex Iperstanda, Settimo Torinese, Piemonte
STRATEGIA: Sostituzione

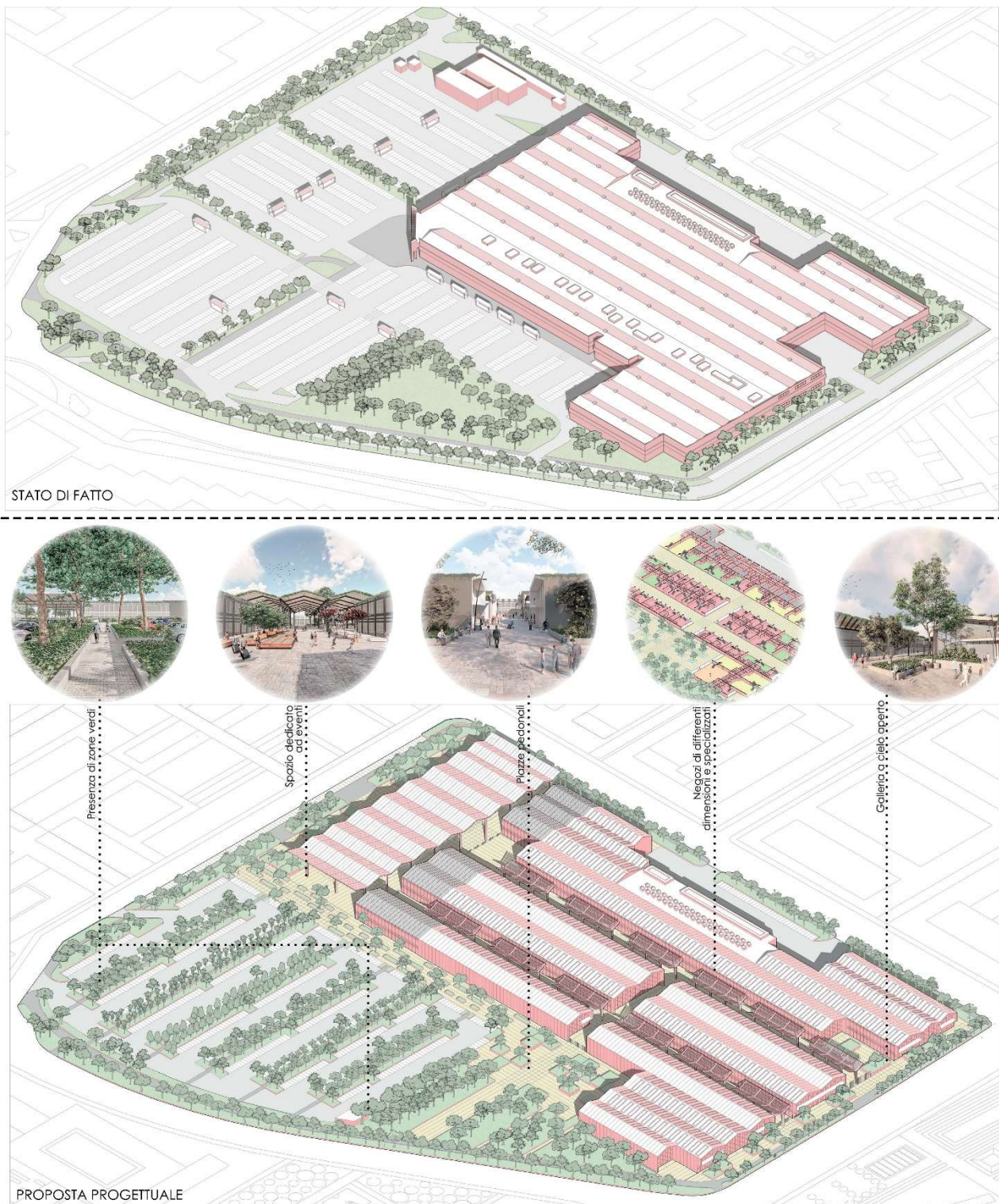*Figure 1 Examples of "deadmall" and subsequent "demalling"*

Through a bibliographic research of the American and European literature, the causes and effects of these events in the different territorial contexts were underlined. The strategies and projects that have emerged, in response to the phenomenon, have the common goal of creating a long-term plan that is based on the needs of different backgrounds. Observing the copious examples, we recognized a series of practical strategies which can be grouped into 4 "demalling" models, that are, procedures used to respond to the phenomenon of abandonment. These interventions seek to modify only the internal functions of the plants, such as with reuse or integration, or implement interventions aimed at a more radical formal and architectural intervention, such as with redevelopment or radical replacement. The solutions are not to be considered repeatable models with the same details but are to be related to the conditions of each context. The first part of the study therefore offers a real and concrete vision that goes beyond historical theories, deepening practical developments.

Figure 2 Masterplan Project

Precisely on the basis of this research on the "deadmall" phenomenon (the crisis of shopping centers) and on the examples of "demalling", the useful baselines to redefine the urban and social role of the Venaria Shopping Center, which has entered during the latest years an important phase of crisis, were born. The research offers a vision not only limited to the area of the center, but sees it inserted within a broader urban regeneration project, rethinking an urban area that has now reached the end of its production cycles. The center is part of this masterplan as a junction for regeneration, precisely because of its commercial and aggregative role. The new vision is based on the concept of "intervention priority", defining a ranking of the various operations on the basis of the central position with respect to the mixed use project objectives and on the new role of urban green.

STATO DI FATTO

Presenza di zone verdi

Spazio dedicato ad eventi

Piazze pedonali

Negozi di differenti dimensioni e specializzati

Galleria a cielo aperto

PROPOSTA PROGETTUALE

Figure 3 Project proposal Center for Commerce

The project retraces the initial studies of the "demalling" phenomenon, reconfiguring the mall as the engine for urban rihabilitation, transforming itself into a new, more attractive business. The design support offered by the BWTS evaluation methodology and the results of the questionnaire on preferences that supported the design outcomes was fundamental. Through this method it was possible to define the new commercial profile that the current citizen needs: experiential, green, open, flexible in the functions and less fixed on the concept of "Big Box" where I can find everything, but without specialization.