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Designing the border: the museum of the New Gorizia

by Davide Pallaro

Tutor: Pierre-Alain Croset

Co-tutor: Michele Bonino

The thesis takes origin from the international competition “Call for ideas: Youth Area at the Border”, concerning the redevelopment of the former hospital of Gorizia, next to the boundary between Italy and Slovenia.

The interest for this topic comes from the story of the border that has divided the Italian city from Nova Gorica for almost fifty years and which has been removed in 2004, after Slovenia joined the European Community. As a consequence of this event, many areas along the border are now free but without a precise use destination: at the moment, they represent the principal element of division between the two cities.

On one hand, this empty space reflects the difficulty to start a collaboration between the two communities (the border has never been constituted by an impassable wall: the strongest and the hardest limit to remove has always been the mutual distrust), on the other, it gives the possibility to restore the union between the two city centres, realizing in this way the “New Gorizia”, the big conurbation constituted by Gorizia and Nova Gorica as two linguistic districts.

Resuming some studies made in the Nineties (especially by Antonio Angelillo's group) we have reflected about how the reunification must start from the reinterpretation of the elements that characterize this territory in his complexity. So the research has started from the analysis of the plans that have driven the development of the city, exploiting its natural elements until the creation of the division. The morphological elements identified in this way (urban hierarchy, green zones, border crossing axis) have then been reinterpreted in the area of project, to obtain a convenient solution for the surrounding context.



Plan of the area

The aim of the project is to increase the continuity between the two cities by the creation of a new axis, which represents and overtakes the border at the same time. Furthermore, the axis has been enlarged to create the central square, stretched between the three cities that surround the area (Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter). This square is four metres under the level of the park to create an internal hierarchy in the area, in which the most important points are the three biggest buildings. This hierarchy reminds the visual relationship at the urban scale between the three hills of Castello, Seminario and Castagnevizza. The park, which occupies the biggest part of the area and is developed in continuity to the green zones of Gorizia, is the best way to connect the two different cities. To be integrated in the park, the new functions are hosted in the nine half-buried buildings, characterized by a sod roof.



View of the museum in relation with the main square

Trough the project experience we have tried to recognize a possible general approach to the transformation of the border strip, with the realization of a linear park in which some meeting points are placed as a service for both the citizenships. The museum of the “New Gorizia”, described in the last chapter, is one of these meeting points. It is formed by three separated volumes (oriented towards the three surrounding centres) that are unified to form an unique element. The purpose of the building is to offer a place in which the population can know the story of this territory, find out the common cultural roots and discuss about the transformation projects of the two cities. Because of the complexity of the issues that concerns the past and the future of this border, the museum is organized in four sections. All of them have different expositive typologies, organised in the same exhibition, whose main parts are underlined by double height, by the light from the skylights or by the views on the surrounding landscape, framed by the building.



Cross-section of the museum

For further information, e-mail:
Davide Pallaro: davidepallaro@yahoo.it