



**Politecnico
di Torino**

Honors Thesis

Master's degree Architecture for Heritage

Abstract

**Spatio-temporal analysis and functional topographic approaches for the
conservation and enhancement of monastic architecture and art:
the case studies of Port-Royal in Paris and San Nicolò del Boschetto in Genoa**

Tutor/Correlator

**Monica Naretto
Laura de Fuccia Lederer
Gianmario Guidarelli**

Candidate

**Costanza Serra
Martina Zambardi**

December 2025

This thesis investigates, from a spatio-temporal perspective and through functional topography, the intrinsic dynamics that shaped religious architecture in two distinct palimpsests: Port-Royal in Paris and San Nicolò del Boschetto in Genoa. Through international collaboration and the joint supervision of the Institut Catholique de Paris and the University of Padua within the Coenobium project, the research situates the two monasteries in a comparative framework based on their differences, drawing on fieldwork and interdisciplinary inquiry across ecclesiastical, architectural, and artistic domains.

For both case studies, the analysis focuses on periods of historical-religious and political intensity that prompted significant definitions and redefinitions within the monastic complexes. Strict ecclesiastical regulations governed the stratification, spatial organization, and artistic expression of these sites. These rules framed architectural development within predetermined, codified limits and principles. To deepen understanding and to compensate for the fragmentation of documentary sources, a systematic reconstruction was undertaken on two levels: the model of monastic life and the architectural transformations it generated. Thus, while the historical trajectories of the two complexes are examined, a functional archetype is also delineated, mapping each moment of the monastic day to a specific spatial context. This approach enables an analysis that is not only interdisciplinary but also multi-dimensional, revealing the interwoven relationships between time, function, and space.

The dynamics and spatial flows revealed by the analysis of the two complexes demonstrate that the Monastic Rules were not abstract prescriptions but concrete instruments that actively and continuously shaped the daily lives of the religious communities and, consequently, the configuration and physical structure of the buildings.

The creation of specific analytical elaborations—designed to delineate spatial flows and modes of perceiving and inhabiting the environments—formed the basis for the subsequent reconstruction. This process was crucial in determining precisely how, to what extent, and at what moments the individual spaces were actually experienced by their occupants. Moreover, it enabled an understanding of the social interactions with external entities (such as ecclesiastical authorities, benefactors, and lay communities) and the mapping of the often strictly regulated movements of these individuals within the monastic spaces. The investigations carried out and the analyses produced establish a common thread that interlaces a network of critical observations. The applied methodology made it possible to draw a direct comparison between two case studies that, although distant in space and in the periods of their greatest development and transformation, nonetheless exhibit notable similarities in the logic of adaptation and resilience embedded in their structures. The resulting interpretation not only contributes to the history of architecture and monastic life but also lays the groundwork for defining a dynamic system of knowledge. Such a framework is essential for cultivating a more conscious heritage awareness—one that supports conservation as well as the restoration,

reuse, and valorisation of religious heritage in response to evolving social and economic conditions in contemporary contexts.

For info:

serra.costanza2001@gmail.com

marty.zambardi@gmail.com