



**Politecnico  
di Torino**

## **Honors Thesis**

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**Master's degree Science in Architecture Construction City**

### **Abstract**

*The urban regeneration of Ghent's old port began with the competition launched in 2004 for the new masterplan of the "Oude Dokken" area in Ghent, Belgium. The transformation process, based on an incremental and cost-effective approach, has been subject to repeated changes, delays and suspensions. The stakeholders involved – the City of Ghent, public-private partnerships and property investors – have made a 'tabula rasa' approach to the existing industrial heritage their primary development strategy. At the same time, over the years, instances of the temporary reuse of derelict areas have multiplied. This thesis investigates and proposes, through architectural and design scenarios, alternative practices to total demolition, utilising an adaptive, diachronic and open-ended process capable of accommodating unforeseen future developments*

**Tabula Rasa vs Redemption:  
possible design scenarios for urban regeneration. The case study of  
the Oude Dokken area in Ghent, Belgium.**

**Tutor/Correlator**

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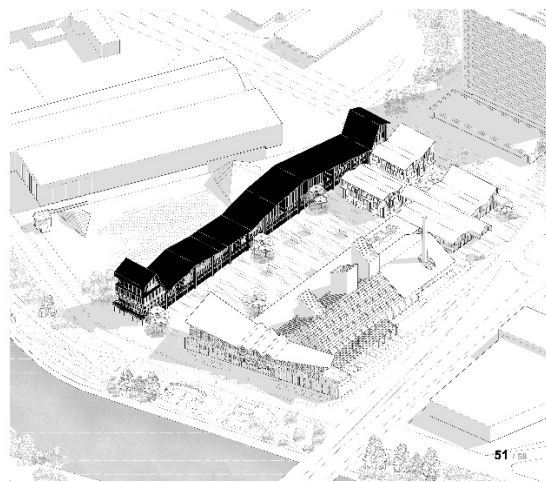
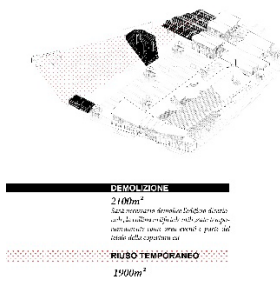
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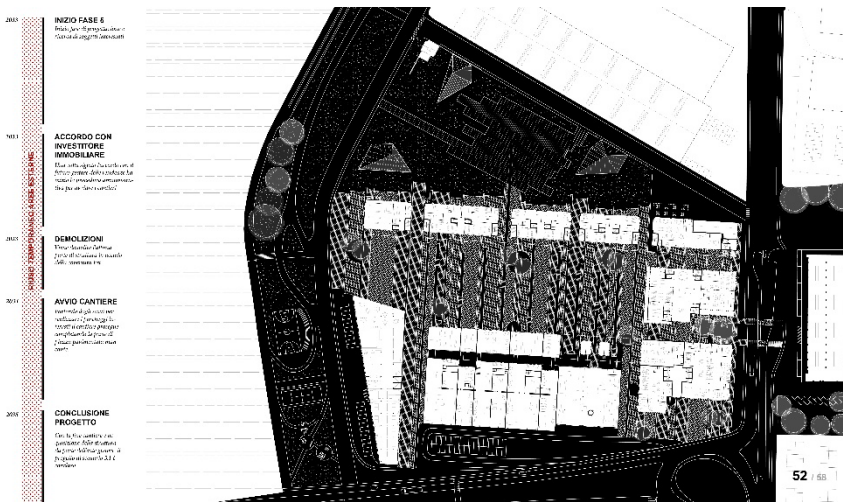
**February 2026**

This thesis explores the possibility of using demolition as a design tool, constructing a transformative scenario structured in phases, and proposing an open, adaptive and diachronic process capable of responding to the myriad factors and unforeseen events that could influence or significantly alter the final outcome. Such unforeseen events have already impacted the current incremental economic process driving the urban regeneration launched in 2004 on several occasions, following the competition won by the Dutch firm OMA for the Masterplan of the old port of the Flemish city. Today, the transformation process is affecting the other half of the area covered by the plan: the Afrikalaan district. The first site to be developed will be that of the former Triferto fertiliser factory, the oldest surviving industrial building in the entire port area, dating back to 1892, whose history is extensively documented in a report by the Flemish Institute for Industrial Heritage. The current development plan is led by a public-private partnership formed by the City of Ghent and a private investor. The investors' proposal is to start with a clean slate, clearing the existing structures, and proceed with a construction phase lasting at least four years to complete the works. This thesis aims to explore an alternative approach, outlining a possible future for the former Triferto site that differs from the one that appears to have already been decided upon—which currently involves its complete demolition. The proposal structures the regeneration process of the area into five phases: from initial remediation to the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, whilst respecting the building density ratios established by the City of Ghent and working in parallel on two fronts: on the one hand, the design of the spaces required for the mixité outlined in the masterplan; on the other, the reactivation of areas not affected by the current phase, integrating them into temporary reuse programmes. This dual approach becomes the defining feature of the entire process: on the one hand, the construction site that advances and transforms the existing fabric, and on the other, reuse initiatives that experiment with new possible scenarios for the transformation of existing structures and adjacent spaces. The process thus becomes an open-ended practice, ready to adapt, viewing the factor of time as an opportunity—a resource capable of progressively consolidating the project: on the one hand, it allows for temporary reuse despite the construction site, and on the other, it enables the enhancement of the existing industrial heritage. Public space and voids thus become key elements in establishing a potential relationship, which the RUP (the development plan for the entire district) aims to achieve, focusing on the integration of domestic and working life. Public spaces and voids thus emerge as key elements in establishing the kind of relationship envisaged by the RUP (the development plan for the entire district), which focuses on the integration of domestic and working life, encompassing both permanent and temporary aspects, synchronic and diachronic dimensions, and the interplay between preservation and a clean slate.

**FASE 5.1**  
**Scenario 2**



**FIG 1 / Project axonometric drawing, Phase 5.1**



**FIG 2 / Map of Ghent showing the artificial canal**

**FASE 5.1**  
**Scenario 2**



**FIG 3 / View of the residential block in phase 5.1**

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