



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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ARCHITECTURE FOR HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND  
ENHANCEMENT

*Abstract*

**Walking on the walls. Valorization project of Cartagena  
de Indias fortifications**

*Tutor*  
Silvia Gron

*by*  
Paolo Mondino

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The historical and cultural process that leads to the definition of the concept of value as a form of protection of cultural heritage is still not fully implemented and in continuous transformation. In particular for the fortified cities, which are a large part of the vast national and international cultural heritage, the development of active actions that go beyond the physical conservation of the object is particularly critical.

The protection of material good is a useful means for the preservation of local cultural expressions, but, through its recovery, it is also necessary to consider that every social and cultural context, especially in the contemporary world, is subject to changes .

Therefore it is not enough to go to the simple restoration, but it is also right to look at a dynamic process of transformation that can also involve the context in which the good is located and the community present.

Despite the proliferation in Europe of examples of military architecture, the Colombian case study of Cartagena de Indias was chosen for this thesis, after the Spanish Crown during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gave it the largest and most imposing system of defensive fortifications of the cities of South America. They are different, not only for the constructive and defensive method, but above all for the cultural difference between the two worlds, which leads to perceiving the walls in an unusual way. This is reflected in the proposed enhancement project, which has the objective to take into account arithmetic, urban and social dynamics according to a different method and approach than what we are used to seeing in Italy and, more generally, in Europe. The city walls can play a role of primary importance on the theme of the relationship between memory and future perspective. However, the events of contemporaneity lead to having to undertake a challenge to avert the risk that the historic walls become an icon of exclusion and deterioration.

The way to go in order to reverse this trend is that of reuse. The search for new functions serves to redefine the sense of the walls as a place of social inclusion and new centrality. The various military structures, in fact, are significant nodes of the city and connecting its whole in order to create a linear park is the desired goal of the inhabitants and visitors. Through this thesis we try to find a proposal for the design of architectural elements that allow the pedestrian movement between the ramparts and the walls, incorporating the sectors that served as urban connections during the colonial period, and the re-recognition of the disappeared walls in the time, usually belonging to isolated septums or relegated to secondary levels, so as to create spaces for the community and the neighborhood of context, with a twofold purpose: to save these places from deterioration and maintain the traditional social dynamics present.

Going through the fortifications means to immerse yourself in history, reliving episodes heroics, which evoke past times of wealth and power. No visitor or resident is indifferent, but traveling across the ramparts and the curtains is a walking that currently takes place amid various obstacles. The connected spaces of the past are now subject to disconnection due to the disappearance of sectors, irregular circumstances or simply the difficulty of access. They are split, which makes complete reading and full enjoyment of their structures impossible. For this reason, in this thesis there is the objective of providing the city with comfortable and safe spaces that simultaneously entertain and promote processes of cultural identity, knowledge of the history of the country and pride of the city. This project contributes to better appreciate the entire defensive complex and to integrate it perfectly around, respecting its tradition, so as to increase its understanding and appropriation.



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For further information please contact:  
Paolo Mondino, [paolomondino92@gmail.com](mailto:paolomondino92@gmail.com)