



# Preserving the past, designing the future: cultural revival through historic shops on Turin's Commercial Heritage

THE CASE OF CAFFE 101 AT VIA PO

MASTER'S THESIS

Master of Science in Architectural Heritage

**Supervisors.** Prof. Francesco Leoni  
Prof.ssa Annalisa Dameri

**Candidate** Juanita Jimenez Cordoba

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## ABSTRACT *it.*

I negozi storici sono esercizi commerciali riconosciuti per il loro valore economico, storico, sociale e architettonico. Questa tipologia, che prosperò nel XIX secolo, introdusse il concetto di "musei dell'ospitalità," in cui l'architettura divenne un mezzo sia per la vendita che per l'esposizione. Nel contesto della Rivoluzione Industriale e dell'espansione delle reti ferroviarie nelle città europee, la crescita economica incoraggiò questi esercizi a mostrare nuovi prodotti in forme architettoniche sempre più elaborate.

Questo studio esamina la tipologia architettonica dei negozi storici nella città di Torino, ponendo l'accento sulle caratteristiche principali delle facciate e delle vetrine che contraddistinguono questo patrimonio. Un quadro storico è stato definito attraverso una revisione della letteratura disponibile, che ha evidenziato la scarsità di studi recenti sull'argomento e la necessità di una rivalutazione contemporanea di questi luoghi storici. Via Po è stata selezionata come area principale di studio per la sua rilevanza storica, la continuità architettonica dei suoi portici e il suo ruolo di lunga data nel paesaggio urbano torinese. Lo studio include un inventario dei negozi lungo questa arteria, identificando quelli che soddisfano i criteri per la classificazione come storici in base alle loro facciate e vetrine.

A seguito di questo rilievo preliminare, è stato selezionato un isolato urbano specifico per un'analisi dettagliata, comprendente la sua composizione architettonica e i negozi storici presenti. Da questa analisi, il Caffè 101, un negozio storico bisognoso di ristrutturazione, è stato scelto come caso studio. Il progetto propone una riprogettazione architettonica e degli interni del Caffè 101, integrandone un utilizzo contemporaneo come negozio di fiori per rafforzarne il valore storico. Questo approccio di riuso adattivo conserva le caratteristiche essenziali della tipologia del negozio storico, integrando al contempo elementi di design moderno, garantendo così la sua rilevanza e continuità nel tessuto urbano di Torino.

## ABSTRACT *en.*

Historic shops are commercial establishments recognized for their economic, historical, social, and architectural value. This typology, which thrived in 19th-century, introduced a concept of "museums of hospitality", where architecture became a medium for both sales and display. Within the context of the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of railway networks across European cities, economic growth encouraged these establishments to showcase new products in increasingly elaborate architectural forms.

This study examines the architectural typology of historic shops in the city of Turin, emphasizing key features of storefronts and display cases that characterize this heritage. A historical framework was established through a review of available literature, which highlighted the scarcity of recent studies on this subject and underscored the need for a contemporary reassessment of these heritage sites. Via Po was selected as the primary study area due to its historical significance, the architectural continuity of its arcades, and its longstanding role in Turin's urban landscape. The study includes an inventory of shops along this axis, identifying those that meet criteria for classification as historic based on their storefronts and display cases.

Following this preliminary survey, a specific urban block was selected for detailed analysis, including its architectural composition and the historic shops within. From this analysis, Caffè 101, a historic shop in need of renovation, was chosen as a case study. The project proposes an architectural and interior redesign of Caffè 101, integrating a contemporary use as a flower shop to reinforce its historic value. This adaptive reuse approach retains essential features of the historic shop typology while incorporating modern design elements, thus maintaining its relevance and continuity within Turin's urban fabric.



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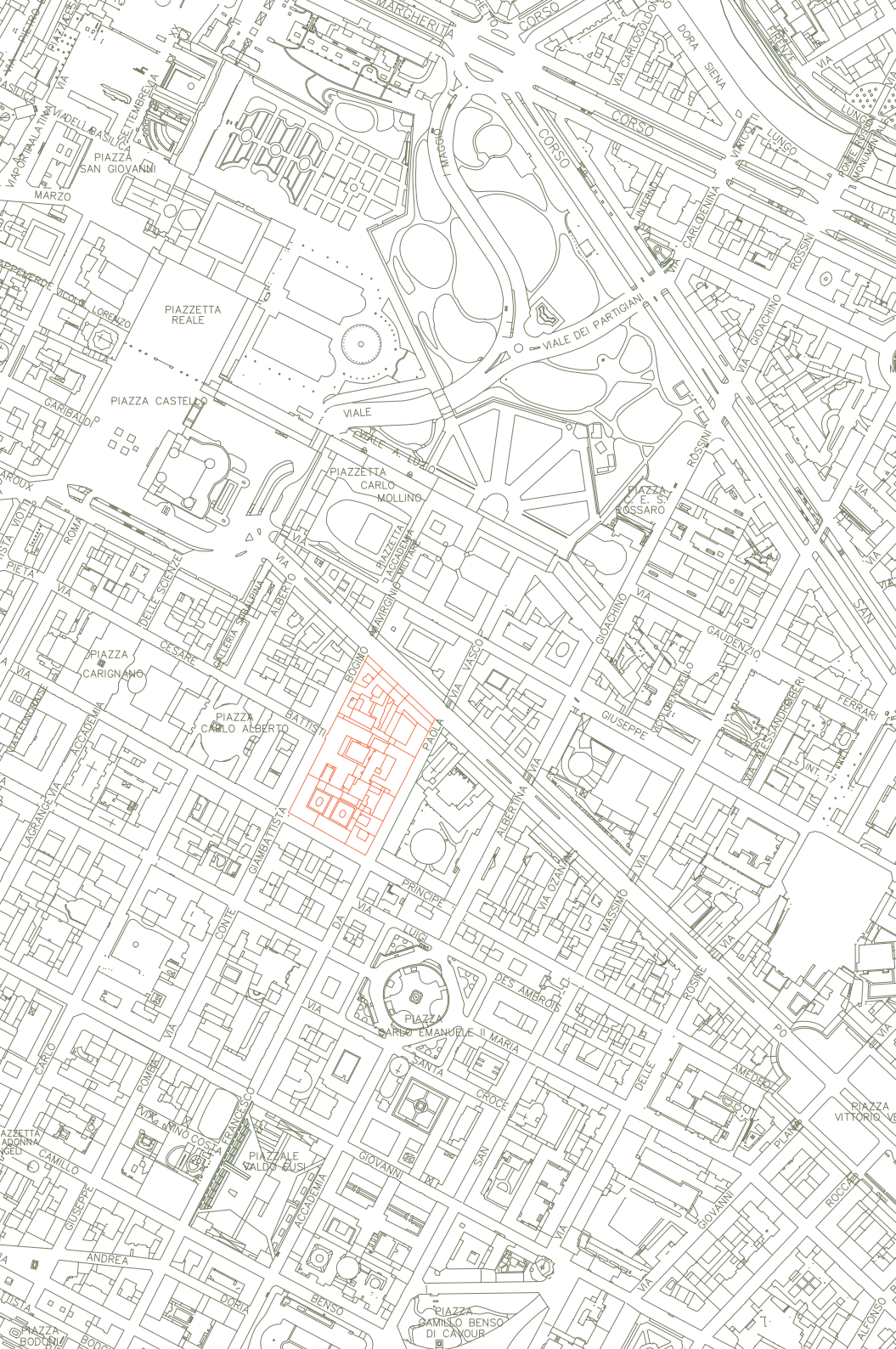
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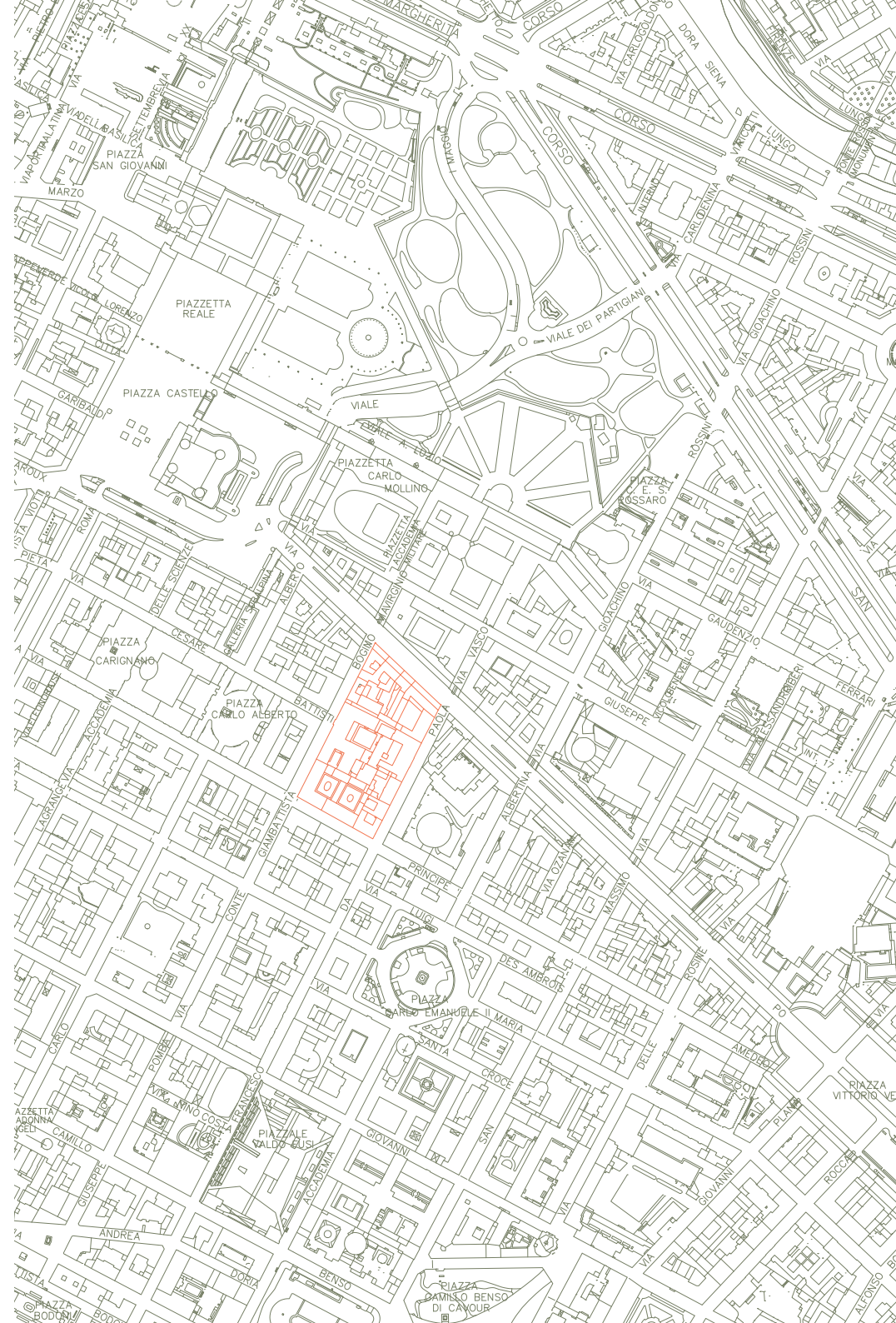
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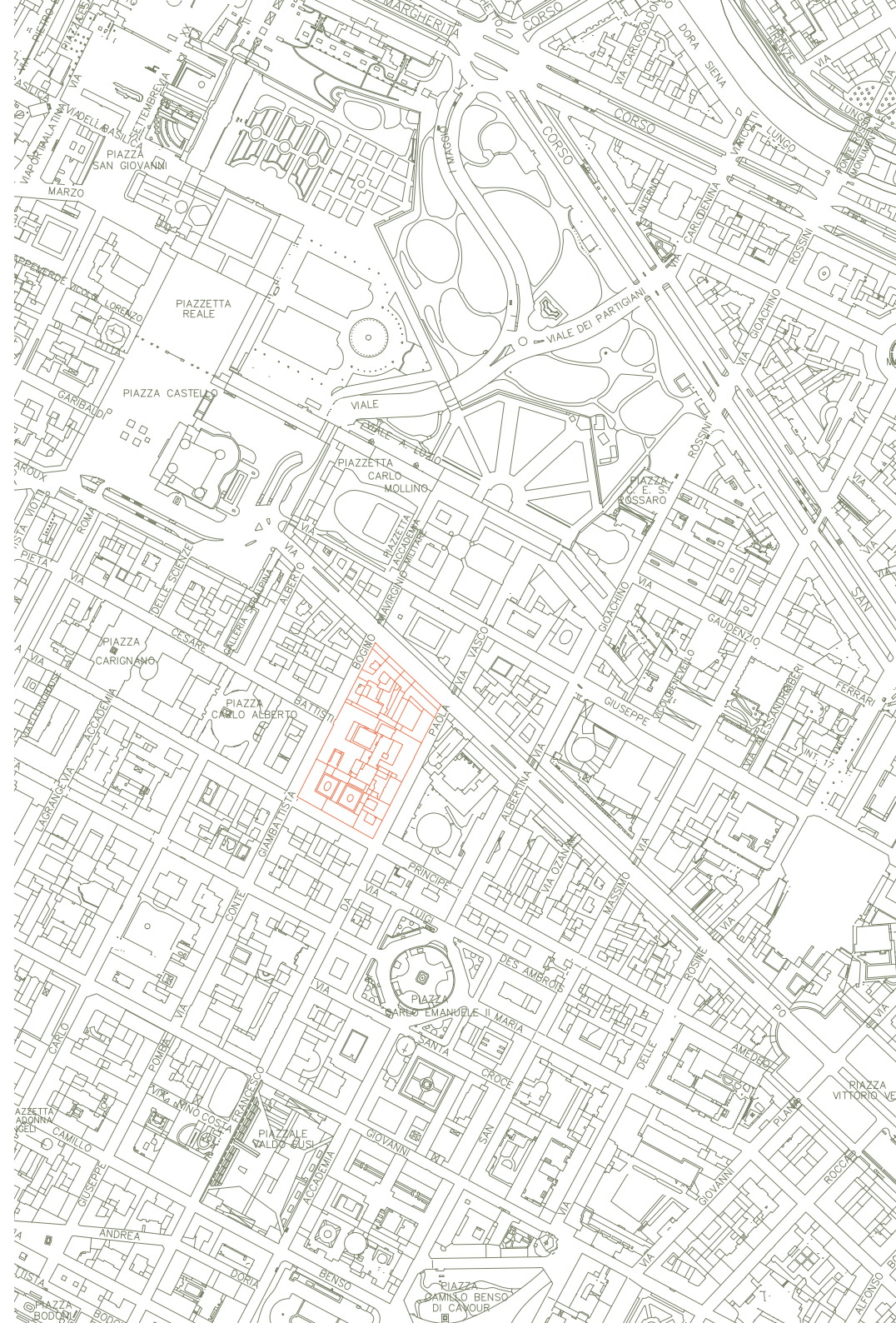
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• 01

## FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

introduction | methodology | justification | glossary

02





# introduction

As Le Corbusier stated in the previous century, the “cities are living organisms”, they are in constant evolution and development; always responding to new social, economic and political phenomena. Heritage on Architecture preserves that memory, that historical image associated to cities, environments, traditions and behaviors, therefore it considers all the evolution processes that happened to this “living organism”. Turin, Italy is an European city distinguished by its deep historical roots, reaching back to its Roman foundation. Therefore is a city rich in history, culture and certainly has had different and characteristic behaviors upon different historical moments.

The subject of this thesis degree is framed under the nineteenth century and aims to look forward to highlighting both the preserved image; and the features that have evolved and changed over speaking of the historic commercial establishments. This period witnessed the “transformation of the commercial distribution network and its formal characteristics” with “interventions of infrastructure and adaptation to new functions of its collective spaces” <sup>[i]</sup>. The historic shops developed during this time not only reflect economic growth but also showcase the convergence of architecture and public space within an evolving urban landscape.

In the early nineteenth century, Turin’s commercial core revolved around Piazza dell’Erbe (today known as Piazza Palazzo di Città), from which commercial axes radiated, forming a network of shops and marketplaces. Amid an industrial boom, Turin’s transportation system also expanded, incorporating railways to facilitate the distribution of goods and people, fueling the diversification of available products. This economic shift spurred the birth of new architectural typologies, while also contributing to the city’s economic growth as diverse, innovative goods entered the marketplace. Driven by urban reform efforts, the city sought to address issues of decorum and hygiene, as commercial hubs located in former economic centers struggled with overcrowding and

poor accessibility. Job (1985) reflects on these former markets, describing them as “synonymous with bustle, dirt, a possible breeding ground for disorder, and at best, a place for the folkloristic observation of the working class” <sup>[ii]</sup>. These conditions underscored the need for new commercial models that could meet the aesthetic, hygienic, and social aspirations of the city’s burgeoning bourgeoisie. Consequently, commerce shifted into new districts and architectural forms, allowing it to flourish within more structured and aesthetically pleasing spaces.

This reorganization in Turin’s commercial landscape encouraged the concentration of specialized and luxury retail, transforming select areas into hubs for high-end commerce. According to Job (1985), “the presence of places for social exchange seems to encourage the process of concentration of specialized and luxury commerce” <sup>[iii]</sup>. The development of these establishments fostered a sophisticated retail environment, where a growing “specialization and diversification of trades” brought with it a “broad and qualified commercial polarization” that contributed to Turin’s social and economic development. This growth in specialized commerce reflects a broader societal trend, as spaces of social exchange became intrinsically tied to the image of the city.

Another defining feature of this period was the growth of artisanal and small-scale industrial activities. There was a “vigorous impulse to artisanal and small-industrial activities, such as to achieve a significant increase in points of sale” <sup>[iiii]</sup>. These historic shops became essential markers of Turin’s urban identity, representing a city where small business and craftsmanship could thrive alongside larger industrial developments. As commercial offerings expanded, Turin’s shops increasingly catered to a range of customer needs, incorporating new goods and segmenting merchandise by category, “increasing the points of sale as well as the diversification due to the introduction of new goods and a greater sectoralization of merchandise” <sup>[iii]</sup>.

One of the most emblematic features of this era was the transformation of storefronts, which became key elements in defining the aesthetic of Turin's urban landscape. These facades often presented "characteristics of superimposition on the architecture of the building" <sup>[iv]</sup>, as the visual language of the commercial spaces was layered over the pre-existing architecture. However, such transformations were not always without conflict or controversy, nowadays some "external elements rarely remain closely related to the furnishings of the public pathway; much more frequent is the case of a radical transformation of the internal environment, which results in a discontinuity between the two elements" <sup>[iv]</sup>. In other words, the rapid evolution of commercial spaces sometimes led to disconnections between the exterior and interior, challenging the cohesive aesthetic of historic streetscapes.

The aesthetics of commercial spaces played a crucial role in representing the status and aspirations of Turin's residents. In these spaces, decorative elements often took on symbolic meaning, with architecture and design evolving from mere functionality to a means of expressing an "acquired status" <sup>[iii]</sup>. This shift reflects the growing importance of visual appeal in defining both personal and public identities.

Despite the cultural and architectural value of Turin's historic shops, not all changes over time have been beneficial. Post-war modernization efforts, for example, led to significant alterations, often resulting in the "systematic destruction of any previous signs of formal characterization of the commercial path" <sup>[iv]</sup>. Dondona (1988) similarly criticizes these transformations, noting that "removals are often unjustifiable, even in light of the demands for 'modernization'" <sup>[v]</sup>. This thesis seeks to address these challenges, proposing a model for preservation that respects the historical integrity of Turin's commercial spaces while allowing for contemporary adaptations.

The presence of these historic shops is vital to Turin's cultural narrative, there can be observed "certain barber shops,

old wine bars, decorated with wood paneling that looks like a pharmacy, and other notable features are still places for conversation and leisure. The patisseries themselves, for which Turin has been famous for over two centuries, also tend to look like pharmacies...in that frame of luxury goods, frail gluttons of foam, cream buns, cups full of whipped cream dusted with cocoa!" <sup>[vi]</sup>. This statement captures the essence of these spaces as more than commercial establishments; they are cultural touchstones that embody Turin's distinctive elegance and history.

The commercial axes and central squares of Turin continue to shape its urban identity, working in tandem with the city's infrastructure, transportation, and tertiary sectors to create what Job (1985) describes as "a strongly centripetal urban structure" <sup>[vii]</sup>. This arrangement emphasizes the importance of these historic commercial spaces as hubs of social, economic, and cultural exchange. However, as transformations in architecture and commerce evolve, preserving these spaces requires a careful balance between modernization and heritage.

In conclusion, the historic shops of Turin provide invaluable insight into the city's development and urban character. This thesis aims to explore these spaces not only as relics of the past but as active participants in Turin's architectural and social fabric. By examining these shops and proposing thoughtful interventions, this research seeks to ensure that Turin's heritage is preserved for future generations, blending historical preservation with the needs of a contemporary city.

- [i] Job, 1985, p.15 [own translation]
- [ii] Job, 1985, p.18 [own translation]
- [iii] Job, 1985, p. 20 [own translation]
- [iv] Job, Laurati, Ronchetta, 1985, p. 71 [own translation]
- [v] Dondona, 1988, p.5 [own translation]
- [vi] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p. 11 [own translation]
- [vii] Job, 1985, p. 20 [own translation]

# methodology

## Research about historic shops

To acquire comprehensive knowledge about the historical consolidation and development of these shops, a historical review will be conducted. This will begin with a contextual analysis, outlining significant historical events related to commerce following the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the railway system. These developments, in essence, accelerated the acquisition and distribution of specialized and industrialized products, which in turn led to notable changes and improvements in the physical landscape of cities, including Turin. This investigation will focus on the enhancement and architectural development of shops and commercial areas within the city, examining how these new commercial typologies emerged and their integration into the urban fabric.

Subsequent sections of the research will be based on an analysis of available information sourced from history books and other publications, accessed through architecture libraries and the Archivio Storico di Torino. Although these resources delve into the topic, the most recent works date back to 2006, indicating a gap in updated content. Nevertheless, using these available sources, the distinctive features of nineteenth-century historic shops will be detailed. This will include aspects such as the typologies of commercial furnishings, architectural styles throughout the city, an inventory of shops documented by authors in the late twentieth century, and proposed tours for visiting these historic sites. Additionally, materials and historical legal regulations will be reviewed.

In the section focusing on the typologies of commercial furnishings, a distinction will be made based on architectural features and commercial use. The first classification will analyze existing commercial furnishings, such as display cases, storefronts, interior fixtures, signage, and other movable

elements that supported production and sales processes. The second category will explore commercial distinctions, emphasizing the characteristic features of various types of shops, including pharmacies, restaurants, bookstores, jewelry stores, and others, which will be described in detail.



## Design process of a case study

After conducting a historical review to better understand what defines historic shops, their architectural elements, their role in shaping the urban image, and their importance within the city's commercial areas, a deeper analysis of a selected area of the city is required to support an architectural project. This analysis will take into account a historical revision considering the design and creation of the selected axis, the historical events that have shaped this area, the changes over time in these regions, and an analysis of the current state. It will also consider opportunities, needs, and, since it is a heritage process, a proposal aimed at preserving the main features and essence of the site.

First of all, a specific street will be selected for further research, with the goal of proposing a restoration project for a historic shop located along this axis. This urban area is selected based on parameters that stood out in the "research about historic shops," in order to obtain a significant sample of a commercial route that has a wide variety of establishments in this category. The investigation will include the history of the street, the motivations behind its construction, significant dates and events, as well as its specific physical and architectural features. It is crucial to select a street that played a significant role in the commercial sector during the nineteenth century, a role that remains influential today. This selection will ensure the street's historical relevance and its potential for preserving or restoring important urban and architectural features.

As part of the investigative process, several key architectural elements have been identified as ideal components of a restoration project aimed at enhancing the architectural integrity of an urban block. The project will focus on preserving the values of the urban axis while emphasizing the importance of conserving, respecting, and recognizing

architectural styles that, although common in the city, may not be as well protected as they should be. Among these valuable elements are arcades, storefronts, monoblocs, display cases, fixtures, signage, and others. For the richness of the investigation and project, it would be ideal to select a street that includes most of these elements.

Once the street has been selected, attention will turn to a specific urban block along this axis, one that contains significant architectural elements such as: a historic shop listed in the "Locali Storici d'Italia"; other commercial establishments recognized as historic by experts; shops that retain some features of historic establishments but have lost many original attributes and are in need of restoration; and a variety of typologies and uses within the same block. A comprehensive bibliographic study will be conducted on this street.

Following the selection of the block for study, an analysis will be undertaken to evaluate the aesthetic, structural, commercial, and functional characteristics of the properties within this area. This study aims to identify areas at risk of losing their historic architectural values due to multiple interventions over time, with the goal of addressing these issues in a specific case study and preventing similar problems in the future. The analysis will focus exclusively on the side of the block that faces the commercial street, referred to as the "strip".

Once the block has been selected, the on-site visit and survey examination will be carried out. These will include photographing, measuring, and physically inspecting the current state of the strip to create detailed drawings, reconstructions, and observations. Additionally, the commercial establishments along the strip will be identified, and bibliographic research will be conducted on the historical uses of these shops. This

will allow for a comparison between their original features and their current state, assessing the degree of preservation or loss of their historical values, and determining whether there is a sense of continuity in the history of these establishments. By using this methodology, conclusions will be drawn to illustrate either the consistency of historical values and the current state or, conversely, the loss of information over time, which may lead to differing interpretations and approaches to the restoration of this urban area.

The next phase involves shifting the focus to a smaller scale, where architectural details will be studied in greater depth. A specific commercial establishment within the selected strip will be chosen for the development of the restoration and renovation project. Relevant legislation will be reviewed, and detailed plans, elevations, and sections will be drawn. A historical assessment will determine which architectural elements should be preserved, enhanced, protected, or considered insignificant and thus removable.

After both the strip and the specific historic shop have been thoroughly studied, a new use for the selected case study will be determined. The requirements for this new use will be listed, and the design process will begin, culminating in a comprehensive architectural and interior design project.

# justification

The historic shops of Turin represent a unique cultural heritage, embodying values, stories, and urban traditions that have evolved over centuries. The city's historic establishments, such as Caffè 101, are not only physical spaces but are also embedded with a rich tapestry of social and economic history that reflects the character of Turin. However, as these spaces are left unattended or repurposed without regard for their heritage, they risk being perceived as “voids” or “residues” within the urban fabric. This perception arises from the lack of care, absence of use, and inability to uphold their values, contributing to the degradation of both their physical and symbolic place in the city.

This thesis seeks to confront this issue by proposing an architectural intervention that revitalizes Caffè 101, restoring its purpose and appeal while preserving its historical essence. By transforming it into a vibrant café dedicated to floriculture services—such as bouquet crafting, the making of graduation crowns, and hydroponic plants—the project emphasizes the potential for historic sites to adapt new, relevant uses while retaining their original charm and authenticity. The project does not only aim to revive the utility and aesthetics of Caffè 101 but also to introduce a fresh concept that integrates both the heritage of Turin and the underexplored potential of floriculture. This approach allows the space to meet contemporary demands while showcasing design solutions for topics that are seldom explored or diversified, such as floriculture.

The project also aims to prevent the loss of knowledge regarding its value, history, and importance, emphasizing the need to maintain public awareness of these spaces and their contributions to Turin's cultural landscape. While the importance of these establishments has been explored in prior studies, the available literature on this topic is significantly outdated, with most books and resources written over 20 years ago. This lack of up-to-date research on Turin's historic shops demonstrates an urgent need for updated perspectives and contemporary

insights. By addressing this gap, this thesis contributes much-needed current information, creating a foundation for further research and for practical heritage interventions that respond to the needs of a modern society. The reinvention of Caffè 101 thus aligns with the broader urban need to guarantee quality spaces that revive the initial values and motivations of these historic shops while meeting contemporary demands.

Furthermore, “the visit to these shops, with the curiosity that derives from the desire to know the activities and productions, allows one to discover the pleasant telling of stories, to rediscover artisanal and entrepreneurial skills and to admire furnishings and decor that represent a piece of the culture and history of the city” <sup>[viii]</sup>. By revitalizing Caffè 101, the project seeks to foster these experiences, inviting both locals and tourists to engage with the stories and skills that define Turin's identity. In doing so, it addresses the need to motivate visits and awareness of this type of establishment through thoughtfully designed interventions.

Finally, historic shop revivals contribute to urban beautification and placemaking efforts. The openings of shops are also beautification operations for the city, highlighting that adaptive reuse of historic spaces enhances not only the physical environment but also the city's image. This thesis argues that reimagining Caffè 101 into a floriculture-focused café represents an opportunity to balance historical preservation with adaptive innovation, ultimately contributing to the cultural vibrancy and urban identity of Turin.

[viii] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p. 11  
[own translation]

# glossary

## french to english

### B

#### BOISERIES *fr.* WOOD PANELING *en.*

1. The facade of a shop
  2. The display, the items exhibited in the storefront
- Le dictionnaire du français. (1989). Zanichelli Hachette.

### D

#### DEVANTURE *fr.* STOREFRONT *en.*

1. Cladding of a wall using carpentry work; the work itself *(page 33)*
- Le dictionnaire du français. (1989). Zanichelli Hachette.

## italian to english

### B

#### BACHECHE *it.* DISPLAY CASES *en.*

1. Cabinet with a glass door used to display precious objects, rare books, and similar items *(page 40)*
- Garzanti. (1967). Dizionario Garzanti italiano - francese francese italiano (ed. minore). Garzanti.

#### BARACCONI *it.* INFILL *en.* STRUCTURES

1. Constructions in between pillars, such as it happens at the arcades of Piazza Castello, where new stores are established. *(page 40)*
- Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.29

#### BOTTEGA *it.* SHOP/WORKSHOP *en.*

1. Ground-floor space, usually open to the street, where various goods are displayed and sold
- Garzanti. (1967). Dizionario Garzanti italiano - francese francese italiano (ed. minore). Garzanti.

### D

#### DROGHERIA *it.* GROCERY STORE *en.*

1. Shop that sells spices, food items, and other household products at retail
- Garzanti. (1967). Dizionario Garzanti italiano - francese francese italiano (ed. minore). Garzanti.

### I

#### ISOLATO *it.* BLOCK *en.*

1. Building or group of buildings entirely surrounded by urban streets
- Garzanti. (1967). Dizionario Garzanti italiano - francese francese italiano (ed. minore). Garzanti.

#### INFISSO *it.* FIXTURE *en.*

1. Structure that is an integral part of a building, though easily detachable *(page 42)*
- Garzanti. (1967). Dizionario Garzanti italiano - francese francese italiano (ed. minore). Garzanti.

## INSEGNA SIGNAGE

*it.*  
*en.*

1. Mark that indicates the quality, rank, or status of a thing or a person <sup>(page 42)</sup>  
Garzanti. (1967). Dizionario Garzanti italiano - francese francese italiano (ed. minore). Garzanti.

## L

### LOCALE STORICO HISTORIC SHOP

*it.*  
*en.*

1. Places that have played a key role in Italy's history through the events they hosted and the notable figures who frequented them. They can be considered "museums of hospitality" for the artifacts, furnishings, and memories they preserve, representing a part of our country's historical heritage and traditions.

Pfatisch. (n.d.). Il locale storico. Pfatisch. Retrieved November 8, 2024, from <https://www.pfatisch.com/il-locale-storico/>

## M

### MONOBLOCCO MONOBLOC

*it.*  
*en.*

1. Additional decorative elements are often assembled over the main structure of the shop <sup>(page 36)</sup>

## O

### OTTOCENTO NINETEENTH CENTURY

*it.*  
*en.*

## P

### PORTICI ARCADES

*it.*  
*en.*

1. Structure open on at least one side, built at ground level and supported by pillars  
Garzanti. (1967). Dizionario Garzanti italiano - francese francese italiano (ed. minore). Garzanti.

## S

### SERRAMENTO IN LUCE RECESSED FRAME

*it.*  
*en.*

1. Structures for the facade that consist solely of a frame that is fitted into the shop openings <sup>(page 38)</sup>

## SERRA CONSERVATORY

*it.*  
*en.*

A decorative curved line in a light red color, starting from the left edge and curving upwards and then downwards. It has three small red dots placed along its path. The numbers 01, 02, and 03 are positioned near these dots respectively.

01

• **02** **HISTORIC REVISION OF HISTORIC SHOPS**

a glimpse of urban progress during the 19<sup>th</sup> century | emergence of the historic shops in italy |  
manifestation of historic shops in turin

03





# 1 a glimpse of urban progress during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

The cities of the nineteenth century in Europe can be described as revolutionary, industrializing hubs, characterized by notable technical advancements driven by the Industrial Revolution. In these cities, the enhancement and improvement of existing architectural typologies were made possible by the introduction of new materials, construction techniques, and, above all, the implementation of railways, which connected cities and facilitated economic expansion.

During the nineteenth century, significant population growth occurred due to these factors, leading to vast improvements in living conditions and the establishment of new architectural principles, parameters, and objectives. Architecture and urbanism underwent a period of development focused on meeting both the qualitative and quantitative needs of growing cities. It was undoubtedly a period of urban expansion, breaking previous barriers—both physical, such as cities with protective military walls, and those of distance—prior to the advent of the railways. Breaking these limits opened the door to international commerce, primarily benefiting cities with train stations or those privileged by the passage of navigable rivers, where merchandise and raw materials could be transported. It was during this time that the term “metropolis” gained prominence <sup>[1]</sup>.

In his book *La Città dell'Ottocento* (2022), G. Zucconi describes cities as organisms in motion—measurable, extendable, and modifiable. As mentioned earlier, these cities evolved through adapting former characteristics to meet the new needs and priorities of the century. These processes were guided by “adaptation programs,” initially influenced by the emergence of railways around 1830 and the establishment of a true railway network, connecting the main and largest urban centers. This required the construction of necessary infrastructure, including railroads, train stations, warehouses, and station districts, which became the driving force of urban dynamism.

Regarding population growth, this was an uneven phenomenon, impacting urban areas more than rural regions. New urban patterns emerged, including industrial centers, port cities, and administrative capitals. The differences between rural and urban areas became more pronounced, with progress occurring much faster in urban environments, leading to a migratory movement, as people left the countryside for the cities. Unfortunately, in some cases, this population increase resulted in undesirable overcrowding. In contrast, during the period of French rule over the city, Turin experienced “a true depopulation, with the inevitable consequent reduction in effective demand; this phenomenon was accompanied by the exile of the Savoy court and much of the minor nobility” <sup>[2]</sup>.

This was not the only significant change of the era. The city's dynamics were profoundly affected by the restoration of taxes on land and buildings and the introduction of new indirect taxes, which aimed to secure funding for social welfare

[1] Zucconi, 2022, p.3 [own translation]  
[2] Bracco, Comba, 2016, p.70 [own translation]

and medical services. However, in practice, these taxes “became the most important source of municipal financial revenue and, naturally, influenced the sale prices of goods themselves, passed on in a cascading process” [2].

These taxes imposed the need for control, directly influencing urban design. During the nineteenth century, city walls and gates were dismantled, highlighting the need for a new type of customs boundary—“certainly lighter than the ancient city walls but just as significant, especially for commerce and consumption, as well as for the residents of the same settlements” [2]. This change implied social differentiation between ordinary citizens and workers. Most notably, it led to differences in the cost of living within the city walls compared to outside areas, where living inside was much more expensive. “Working-class and popular districts on one side, bourgeois and aristocratic enclaves on the other, defined by clear boundaries or almost imperceptible transitions” [3].

This phenomenon encouraged industries to settle outside the urban core, and over time, workers and their urban needs (social relationships, food, education, family life) led to the creation of working-class neighborhoods in these peripheral areas. These zones were “equipped with stores for the sale of widely and generally consumed daily products, which further increased the distance from the city center, whose difference in function was evident even in the external structure” [4].

Returning to the city center, it “not only dignifies the structures of power but also production, particularly in its most public and socially defining aspect—the marketplace. Just as the logic of exchange value became increasingly indifferent to use values (...), the designated spaces for exchange and distribution positioned themselves at the center of the city” [5]. Gradually, “different types of shops emerged depending on the service provided and the quality of the products dealt with (...) the more prestigious shops mixed with those for general consumption, as various social classes continued to live there, expressing a differentiated demand” [2].

This physical division demanded an efficient transportation system, and as was characteristic of the century, the railway fulfilled this need. The railway's impact extended deeply into urban planning, coinciding with the removal of obsolete elements like city walls, large religious buildings, and convents, in favor of urban development and adaptation.

[3] Sica, 1991, p.1021 [own translation]  
[4] Bracco, Comba, 2016, p.73 [own translation]  
[5] Sica, 1991, p.1023 [own translation]

## 2 emergence of the historic shops in Italy

The Industrial Revolution was marked by the mass production of construction materials and modular structures. As mentioned in previous chapters, the Industrial Revolution influenced the development of shops for two key reasons. First, mass production enabled the large-scale manufacturing of building structures and components in factories, featuring standardized designs and measurements. Additionally, in relation to the users, “when the stable clientele of the shop typical of the pre-industrial community is replaced by the heterogeneous and fluctuating ‘public’ of the industrial metropolis, advertising, the surface of display and contact, and the shop window become important” <sup>[6]</sup>. This shift, along with the use of prefabricated construction elements, contributed to the creation of new typologies in the commercial sector, such as historic shops, where showcases and monoblocs emerged.

Secondly, advancements in industrial production across various types of products led to the diversification of goods and their specific characteristics. For example, whereas a shop might have previously sold only five different products, the introduction of industrial processes allowed them to offer 20 different products, each available in five variations with distinct specifications: “a perfect system of choices, options, and possibilities, always available and always elusive” <sup>[6]</sup>. Customers could now choose the products that best met their needs. This diversification was also tied to the improved ability to transport goods from different cities, towns, and even countries, greatly expanding the variety of innovative products available for sale. “The urban center attracts the gravitation of rare products, luxury goods, or offers everyday products in all their gradations and variations produced; the merchandise appropriates the center of the city, permeating it—starting from the ground level, with the presence of the ‘public’—with the elements that make distribution possible” <sup>[5]</sup>.

From a marketing and advertising perspective (though these concepts did not formally exist at the time), shop owners recognized the need to display their products to potential customers passing by. To entice them to enter the shop and make purchases, showcases were introduced, establishing an identity for this new shop typology: the monoblocs. In addition to exhibiting merchandise, the vending process and client engagement positively affected “the characteristics of the street and the environment themselves, which constitute an advertising asset for their business (...). These should be encouraged and strengthened toward restoration. This trend involves not only shops with a great tradition and decorative value but also small ‘storefronts’ whose attractive potential has been recognized” <sup>[7]</sup>.

When examining the behavior of shop owners, several trends can be identified. One notable trend was their preference for selling artisan and locally made products, possibly as a response to the growing dominance of industrialized goods or as a way to showcase unique and innovative products. To achieve this, shop owners hired recognized architects and designers, “such as Giulio Casanova

[6] Sica, 1991, p.1025 [own translation]  
[7] Dondona, 1988, p.5 [own translation]

for Baratti e Milano and Romana-Bass, and Antonio Vandone for Mulassano" [8], to create high-quality designs that promised a relationship between the inside and the outside of the shop, fostering a connection between potential clients (strolling through the commercial axis) and vendors with their captivating products. In this context, glass, a material widely used during this era, allowed passersby to observe the interiors of shops and, most importantly, their showcases. Conversely, in some typologies—such as pharmacies, pastry shops, and restaurants—interior spaces were designed with areas for on-site product creation, where doctors mixed ingredients to create customized remedies for each patient. The purpose of these spaces was quite the opposite: to ensure more privacy and conceal some processes from the client's sight.

Another significant development during this century was the desire for spaces conducive to social gatherings, business meetings, and fostering personal relationships. These new commercial areas transformed into "places of interaction par excellence in the city; it is precisely in the places of commerce that significant processes of redevelopment of the built environment are triggered, whether spontaneous or planned, such as the creation of pedestrian zones" [7]. This new "entertainment" element was incorporated into shop design, with cafes and restaurants offering large, luxurious rooms that fostered an atmosphere of conversation and negotiation.

In conclusion, the nineteenth century provided the necessary conditions for the rapid transformation of cities and the experience of living and walking through them. The use of new materials and design responses to the evolving needs and desires of both shop owners and customers led to the creation of a new typology. This typology emphasized the relationship between exterior and interior spaces, ornamentation, and the overall experience of the purchasing process.

[8] Dondona, 1988, p.16 [own translation]

### 3 manifestation of historic shops in turin

Undoubtedly, Turin is a city that has witnessed many important historical events over the years, and its commercial sector is also part of this rich history. Architecturally, the city's historic shops are evidence of the industrial development of the nineteenth century in terms of materials, products sold, and the ways in which goods were marketed and displayed. Once manufactured goods became plentiful and were no longer exclusively linked to individual custom orders, "it became necessary for the workshops to change form, creating spaces where it was possible to admire and perhaps choose the products on offer" <sup>[9]</sup>. This need for evolution transformed former workshops and storage areas into spaces showcasing items available for purchase, displayed in appealing storefronts. These elements have undeniably become an integral part of Turin's historical identity, serving as an important testimony to a specific period in history.

The establishment of these local (and, in some cases, luxurious) shops across the city was influenced by their proximity to main streets, driven by commercial factors such as increased sales, ease of transporting goods and materials, and greater visibility. Given the rapid development and evolution of the nineteenth century, there was a noticeable impact on "the location and relocation of all activities, particularly commercial ones. Starting from the 1830s, commerce changed its entire distribution structure and underwent a radical transformation. As a result, 'even external signs changed: windows, signs, and showcases became more visible and sought after, a result of vibrant and aggressive competition'" <sup>[10]</sup>. The establishment of these shops in Turin created a new urban image that has been maintained to the present day. These shops are of great importance "in the development of the quality of the built environment and represent one of the most distinctive forms of urban furniture: they have the capacity, through their constant and widespread presence, to significantly alter the image of streets and squares" <sup>[11]</sup>.

These shops were often associated with a unique image or identity, which each business sought to create in order to distinguish itself from others. In some cases, renowned architects were hired to design the storefronts, such as Leone, who "designed the shopfront for Caffè Vassallo, now San Carlo, in 1839, which was later destroyed by bombing during the Second World War" <sup>[12]</sup>. Each shop developed its own identity, often used for commercial purposes, where businesses created advertisements through their storefronts. In fact, "the shop's image was often used for commercial invoices, letterheads, restaurant bills, and menus; these were expressions of graphic art, mainly inspired by French models" <sup>[12]</sup>. However, the best form of advertisement for each shop was undoubtedly its showcases, which displayed the variety and quality of their products.

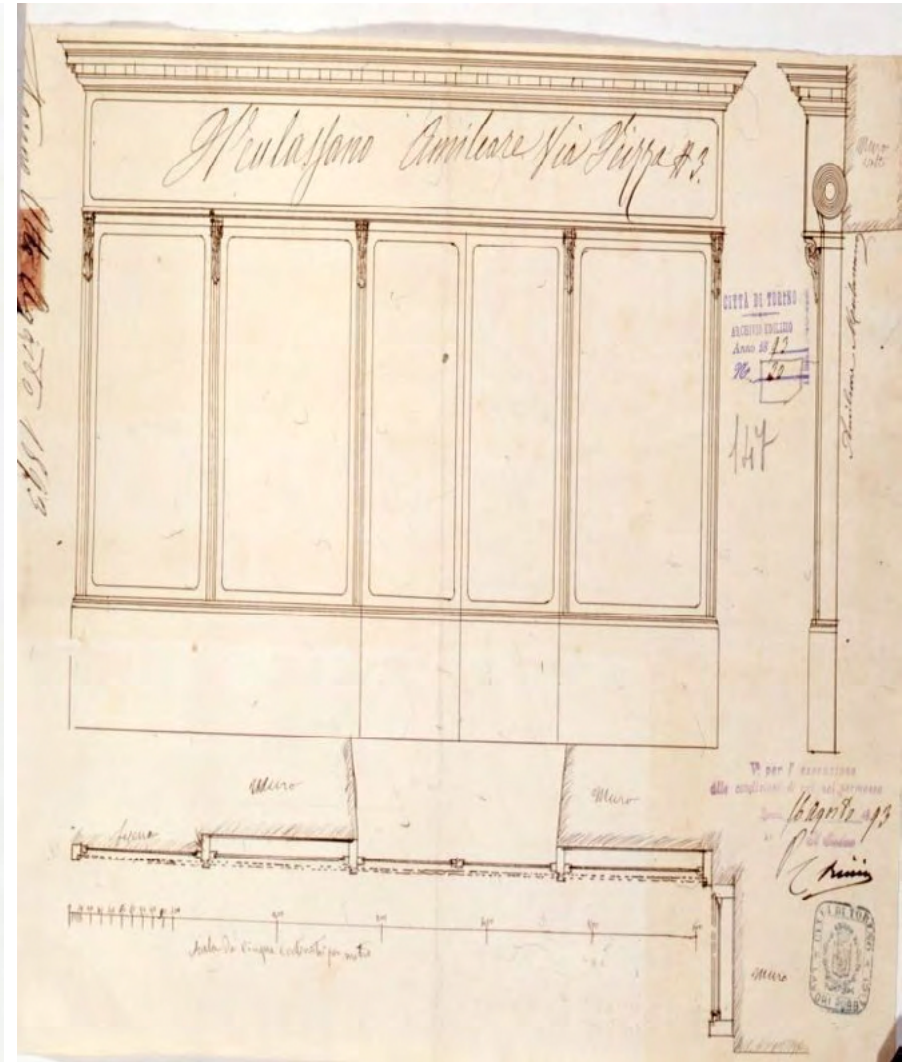
[9] Bracco, Comba, 2016, p.73 [own translation]

[10] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.13 [own translation]

[11] Job, Ronchetta, 1989, p.5 [own translation]

[12] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.15 [own translation]





- image 1 Caffè Mulassano, facciata. Adapted from "Caffè Mulassano," by MuseoTorino, n.d., MuseoTorino, <https://t.ly/zXeb1>
- image 2 Progetto di facciata, 1893. Adapted from "Caffè Mulassano," by MuseoTorino, n.d., MuseoTorino, <https://t.ly/zXeb1>

# manifestation of historic shops in turin

## relationship with the urban fabric

Studying the location of commercial establishments and furnishings in Turin helps “not only to explain the current concentrations of historical furnishings but also to understand the periods of greater or lesser importance of commercial hubs, and thus the dating and qualitative level of individual furnishings still present today” [13] (images 5, 6, 7, 8). Certainly, the distribution and location of historic shops were “motivated by the greater or lesser importance of the various streets in the history of Turin and its development” [14]. This was influenced by new transportation methods and product distribution, which indeed affected the placement (or relocation) of specific types of shops and the products sold in different parts of the city, where the positioning of traditional and upscale shops created the “skeletal framework of the current main commercial routes” [15].

When analyzing Turin, its barycentric structure becomes evident, where “a large part of commerce, especially that which is more specialized, is concentrated in the area of the historic center” [16]. These new commercial spaces were strategically positioned along the most important and expansive streets of the early nineteenth century. The following map (image 3) illustrates the distribution of commercial establishments along historic streets. In the early nineteenth century, major commercial centers “gradually moved from the oldest core of the city (around ‘Piazza delle Erbe’, historically the site of the Turin market) to consolidate around three main axes: Via Dora Grossa (now Via Garibaldi, expressly rebuilt to serve commercial purposes), Via Po (the first arcaded street in the city), and Via Nuova” [13]. The importance of Piazza Castello, the center of the historic area outside the Cittadella, should also not be forgotten.

As a result of industrial developments and urban expansion, “the first element of new technologies that invariably comes into contact with the traditional city is the railway, and, by metonymy, the station building” [17]. With the construction of the Porta Nuova train station in 1861, the city center extended southward. “In many cases, the railway triggers a predominant direction of urban growth and organizes the industrial periphery; a polarity is established between the station and the old city center, explicitly emphasized by the creation of a direct connecting axis” [17]. To facilitate this growth, two additional squares—Piazza San Carlo and Piazza Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale—were established at the end of the first section of the former Via Nuova. Via Roma was also extended to reach the new Porta Nuova station, where another important plaza, Piazza Carlo Felice, was created, consolidating a strong economic axis, as shown in (image 4). Another plaza, Vittorio Veneto, was created at the end of Via Po, just before reaching the River Po and the first bridge built across it in Turin.

To this day, the city’s most important shops remain concentrated along these same streets. This continuity is demonstrated by “using the classification of routes based on the regulation for the taxation of public land occupation as a source (...)”

- [13] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.6 [own translation]
- [14] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.14 [own translation]
- [15] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.14 [own translation]
- [16] Job, Ronchetta, 1989, p.5 [own translation]
- [17] Sica, 1991, p.1049 [own translation]



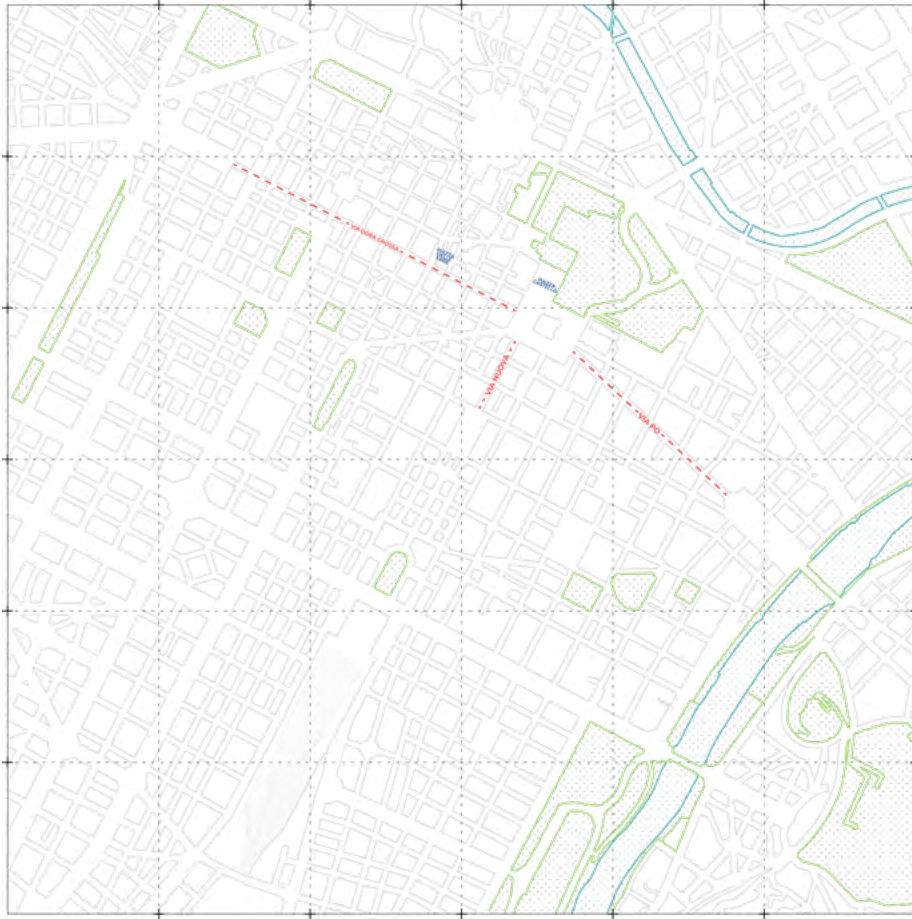


IMAGE 3: Distribution of the commercial establishments among streets and squares in Turin during the early nineteenth century [author's own work]

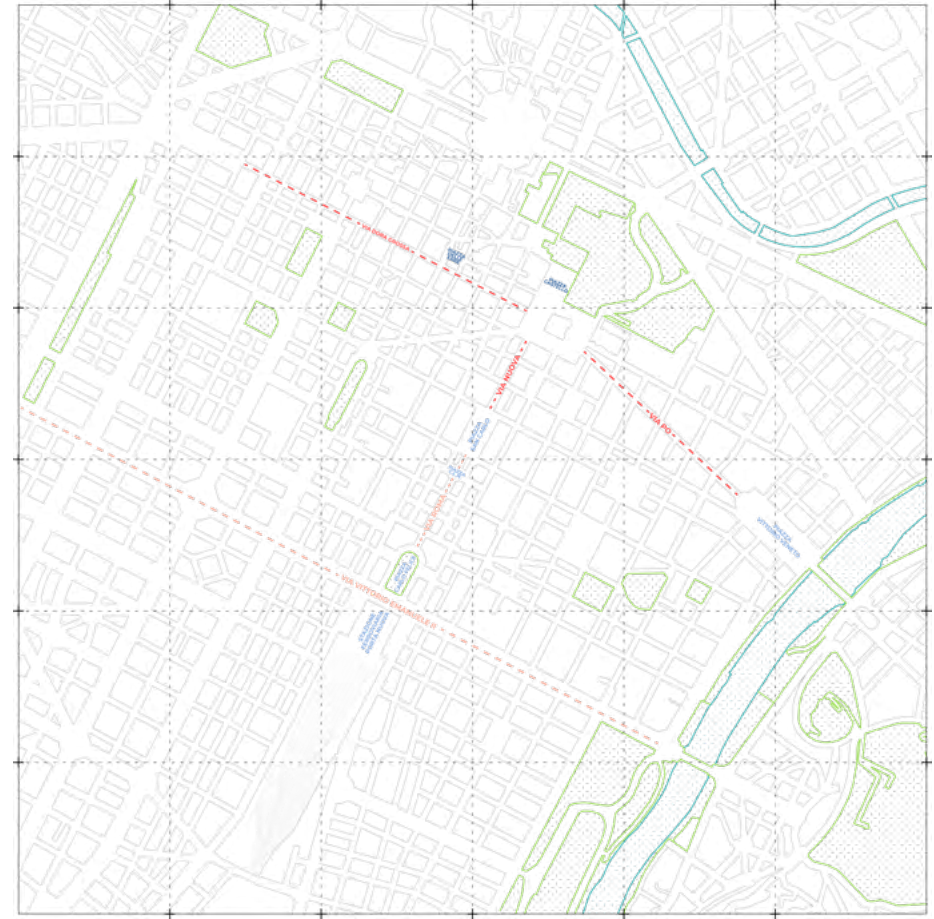


IMAGE 4: Distribution of the commercial establishments among streets and squares in Turin during the second half of the nineteenth century [author's own work]



image 5



Fig. 5 - Densità degli arredi progettati o realizzati lungo i percorsi commerciali.



image 6



Fig. 6 - Densità degli arredi progettati o realizzati lungo i percorsi commerciali.

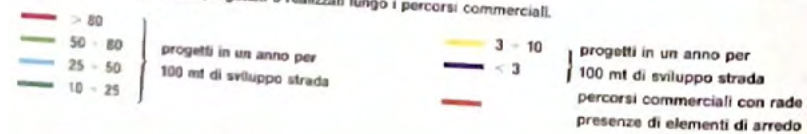




image 7



Fig. 10 - Densità degli arredi progettati o realizzati lungo i percorsi commerciali.

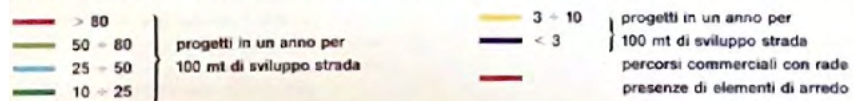
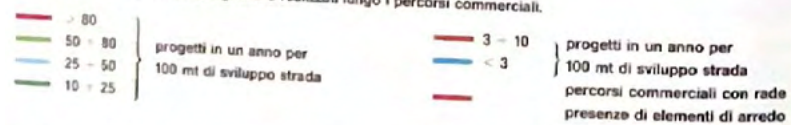


image 8



Fig. 11 - Densità degli arredi progettati o realizzati lungo i percorsi commerciali.



- [18] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.14 [own translation]  
 [19] Job, Ronchetta, 1989, p.6 [own translation]

which shows that "(...) the distribution of commerce on the streets of the historic center in the early years of the twentieth century is entirely comparable to the current one" [18]. However, the historic shops have undoubtedly undergone transformations, particularly along Via Roma, where reconstruction in the 1930s introduced a new architectural style, causing the street to lose much of the architectural and urban value provided by the earlier shops and structures.

Over the years, the behavior and significance of these axes and squares have evolved. This has led to a new characterization and classification system. Currently, a major category named "zona centrale aulica" is recognized, as noted by A. Job & C. Ronchetta (1989) in their publication I Luoghi del Commercio. This zone is characterized by its "high-level commercial concentration, specialized commerce strongly aligned along historical axes and routes, presenting a wide diversity of functions, a dense and distinctive presence of historical commercial furnishings, and the presence of continuous systems of historical furnishings" [19]. This main classification is further divided into four categories, which are explained (table 1) and mapped (image 9) on the following pages.

table 1  
**categories of the "zona centrale aulica" [19]**

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	SQUARES AND STREETS
Main commercial axes of the central commercial concentration	These are the representative commercial routes of the city, recognized for their "significant and emblematic image, rich in visual references and characterized by a strongly marked and recognizable urban and architectural design. Uniformly conceived, sometimes with arcades, forming a unique network of paths that is closely tied to the image of Turin" [8]. Along these sectors one can find the superstructures related to commerce	Streets: Po, Garibaldi, Milano, Pietro Micca and Roma; and the squares Vittorio Veneto, Carlo Felice, della Repubblica and Statuto
Commercial axes of 'reverberation'	These axes are generally of recent significant functional development	Streets: Garibaldi, Maria Vittoria, Santa Teresa, San Francesco d'Assisi
Minor commercial axes	These are characterized by a predominant trade in more common goods linked to the remaining residential areas.	Streets: Barbaroux, San Tommaso and Palazzo di Citta
Arcaded commercial routes on the fringe	They connect Porta Nuova and Porta Susa and offer commercial establishments in predominantly residential areas	Streets: Vinzaglio, Vittorio Emanuele II, Cernaia, San Martino



Contrasting the historical analysis of the representative commercial routes of the city with the contemporary elaboration of these urban axes, it becomes evident that, in the historic center of the city (with Piazza Castello at its core), the growth and ramification of many important urban axes began, attracting significant flows of people and making these areas ideal for establishing commercial nodes. By overlapping both analyses, the most important axes and plazas are: Via Po, Via Roma, Via Garibaldi, Piazza Vittorio Veneto, and Piazza Carlo Felice.

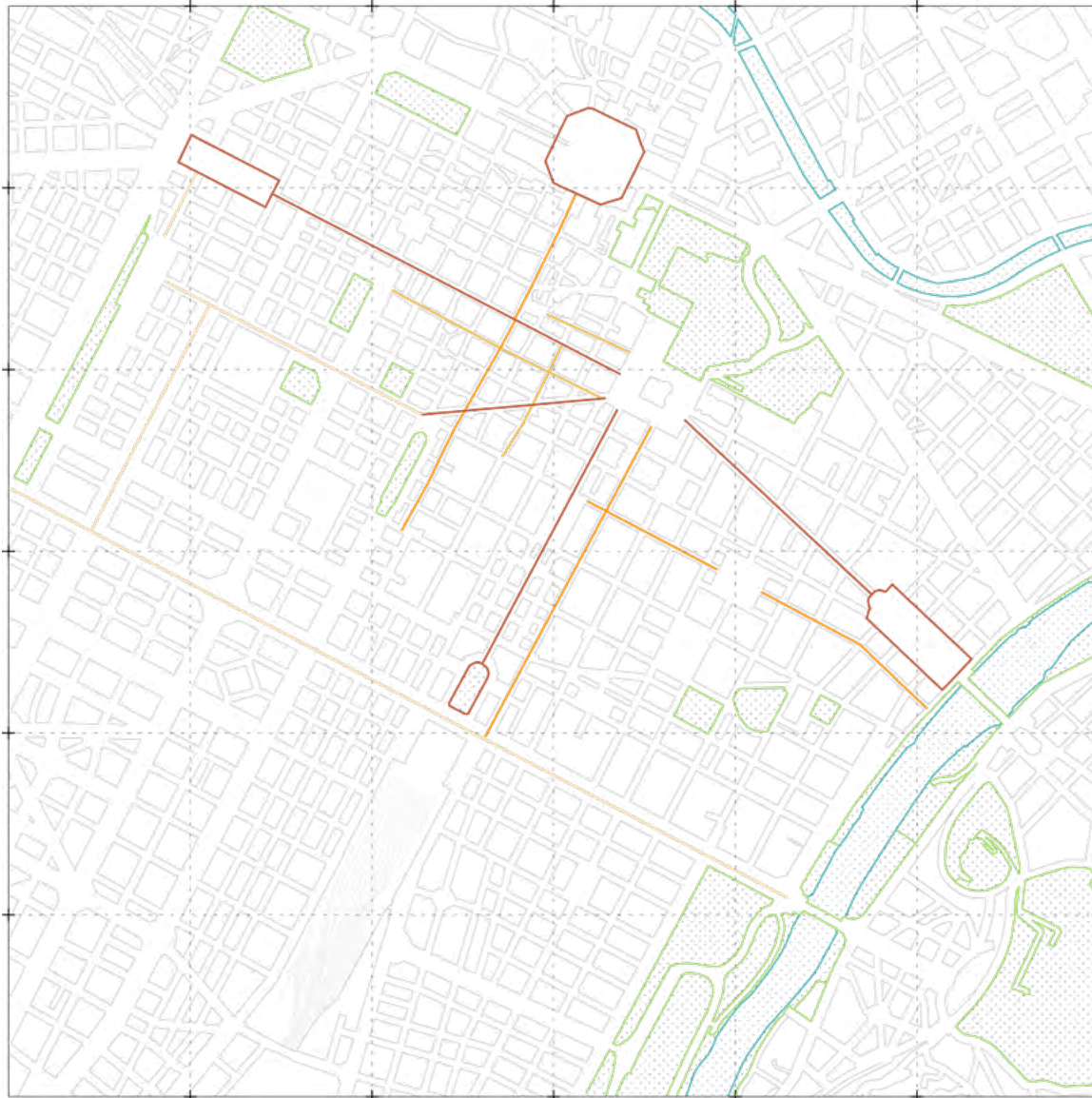


IMAGE 9: Categories of the "zona centrale aulica"  
[author's own work]

- Main commercial axes of the central commercial concentration
- Commercial axes of 'reverberation' of the four main axes
- Minor commercial axes
- Arcaded commercial routes on the fringe





02

• 03

## STUDYING THE MAIN FEATURES OF COMMERCIAL FURNITURE

typologies of commercial furnishings | architectural typologies of historic shops according to the product category - characteristic architectural attributes, objects and interior circulation | late 20th and early 21st century inventory of historic shops | officially proposed sightseeing tours in 1990

04



# 1 typologies of commercial furnishings

Among the historic shops, certain characteristics stand out, allowing for different typologies to be identified and more specific classifications to be created. As noted by A. Job and C. Ronchetta in their publication *L'arredo Commerciale Storico* (1988), this classification process stems from the recurring presence of particular elements related to:

- a. Function of use
- b. Formal and constructive nature
- c. Symbolic and signaling function

These categories will be described and illustrated in the following sections. It is also worth noting that there is often "a close relationship established between the typology of the decorative apparatus and the commercial category" <sup>[20]</sup>.

[20] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.20 [own translation]

## typologies of commercial furnishings

### storefronts

Before the introduction of this new formal composition, the law did not acknowledge or permit the integration of public spaces—such as sidewalks or galleries—into the design of commercial establishments. However, with the emergence of these new architectural forms, the customer experience evolved. The interaction between customer and shop now occurred right at the entrance, effectively blurring the boundary between the shop and the street. “In the shop window, now an indispensable moment between production and consumption, the merchandise advertises itself, permanently occupying the city while continuously substituting and renewing itself (fashion, new gadgets)” [21]. The architecture extended beyond the building itself, emphasizing the connection between interior and exterior spaces, and becoming the central element of the public space.

At this stage, the traditional concepts of the “workshop” and “warehouse” evolved, gaining characteristics that define what we now recognize as historic shops. These storefronts “replaced the external mobile elements and signaled an activity that was no longer so evident. Attention was drawn to the shop’s entrance, displaying it on the street. It is the portal—the architectural sign of this function—which becomes the typology indicating an important transition, recalling an interior space and a commercial activity inside” [22]. The shop had to become visible and attract attention, which motivated builders and decorators to “exploit the power of shop windows as an eye-catching element” [23].

The traditional portals evolved into storefronts, characterized by structural, decorative, and ornamental features. The most common materials used were wood, iron, and the revolutionary material of the time: cast iron. Glass was also essential for these facades, as it allowed visual continuity between the shop’s interior and exterior. In some cases, other materials like marble, stone, and stucco were used, offering varying levels of detail and complexity in the architectural finishes. As a result, “the storefront represents the transition point between public and private space, and a means of communicating the presence of an activity” [24], enhancing both public space and the experience of walking and exploring the streets of Turin.

Among the possible storefront designs, three main types have been identified:

- Portal and the “decorated frame”
- Monoblocs
- Recessed frame

[21] Sica, 1991, p.1025 [own translation]

[22] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.17 [own translation]

[23] Bracco, Comba, 2016, p.73 [own translation]

[24] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.18 [own translation]



# typologies of commercial furnishings

## storefronts

### portal and the “decorated frame”

This typology can be seen as the first step in the development of structural and decorative features designed to highlight the shop entrance. During the first half of the 19th century, “commerce returned to private spaces, and the shop was no longer just a laboratory and warehouse. It became more than an extension of sales conducted through the door; the storefront replaced movable external elements as a sign of the presence of an activity no longer evident” <sup>[25]</sup>. While the portal originally served a purely functional purpose—allowing people into the shop—the improvements in shop design transformed it into an inviting feature. This new emphasis on the entrance attracted attention and invited customers inside, where a noteworthy commercial activity awaited.

In contrast, the “decorated frame” emerged as a feature that embellished the physical characteristics of the portal. Architects enhanced “the representative character of the portal, sometimes exaggerating the formal design, transforming it into true works of sculpture—unique pieces in commercial decoration” <sup>[25]</sup>. These decorated frames often incorporated materials such as stone, marble, stucco, and occasionally wood. The embellishments were linked to a sense of status and privilege, elevating the shop’s visual identity.

Another important characteristic of these shops, highlighted by Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, and Bonafini (2006), is their connection with the building above the commercial establishment. This relationship was often expressed through the extension of the cornice, featuring additional decorative elements, typically crafted from stone, which evoked the Art Nouveau style <sup>[26]</sup>.

[25] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.20 [own translation]

[26] Ronchetta, Cerrato De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.18 [own translation]





image 10 Farmacia Chimica Tullio Bosio, 2024 [taken by the author]



# typologies of commercial furnishings

## storefronts

### monoblocs

Additional decorative elements are often assembled over the main structure of the shop, creating what is known as a "monobloc." This structure is "constructed separately and then subsequently applied to the building's facade. All the functions are combined into a single object, which assumes the formal and constructive character of mobile furnishings" [27]. These elements not only enhance the storefront with added decoration and ornamentation, but they also respond to the new commercial demands of the time—larger display areas, more prominent signage, and a strong visual impact for advertising. The monobloc "allows for a larger display surface, greater visibility, and therefore, immediate advertising appeal: it is a triumph of signage, panels, and writings" [28].

Since these structures are placed over building facades, two possible approaches can occur: either the facade is modified in terms of size, color, or materials, or it remains unchanged but is concealed by the added superstructure.

As mentioned earlier, incorporating industrially manufactured elements brought many advantages in terms of cost, construction, and design. These benefits allowed for quicker and more affordable production, made possible by the off-site mass production of decorative and structural elements, which were then assembled directly onto the building. This system allowed "lower maintenance costs, greater ease of execution, and the possibility of wider continuous display surfaces, derived from the technological characteristics of the material itself" [29].

The two main materials used in constructing these structures were wood and metal. Wood, due to its versatility and malleability, allowed for more detailed finishes. This material was used in designing "elaborate external elements of the shopfront: overhanging signs, 'horizontal and vertical blades' (vertical signs), assembled into a unit that recalls the architecture and furnishings of the shop" [27]. Metal, specifically cast iron, was also widely used, often mimicking the shapes and details of wooden structures. However, iron's properties allowed for new design possibilities, such as creating wider, continuous display surfaces. The result was a new storefront model that became widely reproduced in urban areas, offering both efficiency and aesthetic appeal.

This facade ornamentation was closely tied to the shop's interior furnishings, which were used for displaying merchandise, serving food or beverages, or preparing products. In some cases, the building's facade itself served as the foundation for these furnishings. Despite this, "the internal dimensions of the shop are emphasized by superstructures that cancel the overall architectural design in favor of highlighting the individuality of the commercial establishment" [27].

[27] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.22 [own translation]

[28] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.17 [own translation]

[29] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.18 [own translation]

[30] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.24 [own translation]

Key features of monoblocs include the signage, signage holder, lateral elements, frames, and plinth:



### Signage

Typically features an upper cornice and side friezes, though it later becomes a separate part.

### Signage holder

Contains the closing mechanism

### Lateral elements

These can be "simple uprights (linear, inlaid, columnar, half-column, or pilaster, with bases and capitals or brackets that are more or less elaborate)"<sup>[30]</sup>. They can also serve as lateral sign-holders (opaque panels or screens), containers for sliding or folding door closures, or display cases.

### Frames or fixture

Often made of wood, depending on the size of the openings. These can be combined with fixed or movable display cases, though original frames are often replaced today.

### Plinth

Typically made of marble or stone.

image 11

- image 11 Les Lunettes, ottica, esterno, 2017. Adapted from "Les Lunettes, ottica" by MuseoTorino, n.d., [https://t.ly/w\\_2KM](https://t.ly/w_2KM)
- image 12 Profumeria dell'Università, 2024 [taken by the author]



image 12

# typologies of commercial furnishings

## storefronts

### recessed frames

This third typology offers the most straightforward solution for closing off commercial spaces. Despite its simplicity, it represents the "most advanced expression of cultural refinement, one that best recovers the decor typical of the city and the street as a decor of the commercial function itself" [31]. The structures in this typology consist solely of a frame that is fitted into the shop openings. They blend harmoniously with the building's architectural style, creating a cohesive element with the facade. Even if the frame is constructed in a different period, it complements the design, often created to accommodate the enlargement of wall openings for commercial purposes.

#### Materials

Primarily wood and cast iron

#### Frames or fixture

#### Showcase

Presents a large opening for showing the products



image 13

The design of these large architectural openings, which emerged from the period of eclecticism, reflects careful consideration for commercial needs. At the same time, this design minimizes the use of intrusive superstructures, maintaining aesthetic harmony with the existing architecture.

[31] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.26 [own translation]  
image 13 *Decorated frame at Via San Francesco  
d'Assisi, Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.26*



Turin showcases numerous examples of interior furnishings, though not as many as the decorative exterior projects that adorn the city. The earliest interventions date back to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, primarily focusing on enhancing and completing pharmacies. At that time, pharmacies were among the most prominent architectural typologies that required specific amenities for the entire vending process.

By the 1930s, coffee shops began undergoing significant renovations, but it wasn't until the second half of the century that interior design became more widespread across a growing number of commercial establishments. As noted, "it is from the second half of the century that the interiors are specifically designed for a growing number of commercial activities" [32]. The embellishment of interiors soon extended to liquor stores, perfumeries, jewelry stores, and other specialized food shops. "From the second half of the century, 'designed' interiors spread to most businesses: marble, fine woods, stucco, and gilding gradually spread from cafés to liquor shops, trinket shops, perfumeries, goldsmiths, specialized food stores, and many other categories" [33].

Often, the same materials and design elements used for exterior furnishings were replicated inside, creating a cohesive experience where the shop interior felt like a natural extension of the public commercial space outside.



image 14

## typologies of commercial furnishings

### interior furnishings

→ A notable example of such interior design is Baratti Milano, "designed by Giulio Casanova, with sculptural elements by Edoardo Rubino. The walls are adorned with refined mahogany lambris, and the furniture—tables, chairs, and display cases—are also made of mahogany. The counter, made of Giallo di Siena marble, features bronze reliefs depicting a thematic 'bacchanal,' a work by Rubino" [34]

[32] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.18 [own translation]

[33] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.30 [own translation] Interior view of Caffè Platti in Turin, Italy.

[34] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.31 [own translation] Interior view of Caffè Platti in Turin, Italy. e, n.d., Flawless.life [https://t.ly/\\_8roW](https://t.ly/_8roW)



# typologies of commercial furnishings

## display cases

The urban design of Turin introduced a distinctive feature: display cases, which are widely distributed along certain sections of porticoed streets. Examples of these display cases can be found along the arcades surrounding the former Piazza delle Erbe (now Piazza Palazzo di Città), Piazza Carlo Felice, Piazza Castello, and Via Po, extending into Piazza Vittorio Veneto. These display cases are described as “shops created along the outer edges of the columns from the porticoed streets” [35]. While they follow general design principles, each display case includes unique ornamentation tailored to the merchandise they showcase and the intended relationship with neighboring shops, with typologies varying from street to street.

These structures were specifically designed to accommodate shelves or hangers for showcasing merchandise, their purpose being to capture the attention of pedestrians and potential customers. The size of the exhibition area can vary significantly depending on the design, as some display cases are centered around a single pillar, while others extend between two or more. Even today, these display cases “still host sales activities, and they are nevertheless elements that enliven the commercial path, though they often show significant maintenance shortcomings” [36].

As outlined by A. Job and C. Ronchetta in their publication *L'arredo commerciale storico* (1988), the following typologies of display cases can be found (table 2), and they are visually depicted in (image 15):

table 2

### types of display cases in Turin [36]

#### A Recessed display case

Used for exhibition and publicity, usually in porticoes rebuilt after the second World War

#### B Stand-alone display case

Used for advertisement, is a common typology

#### C Fascia display case

Typical of Via Po, present in entire blocks of the street. It creates one of the few markets that reveal the purpose of the street beyond the portico line

#### D Display case with inter-pillar sign holder

Can be found in Piazza Vittorio Veneto and Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, still it is not a very common type

#### E Display case or kiosk at inter-pillar level

#### F Flush inter-pillar display case or kiosk

These are found in porticoes with paired pillars. Today, they are a defining feature of the long sections of porticoes near Porta Nuova station. In the 19th century was particularly abundant with portico-related furniture structures. Now, they are only partially used as spaces for small artisanal businesses.

#### G Infill structures

At Piazza Castello, these structures constructed in between pillars make a continuous system which sommeliates to the typology of a gallery

[35] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.18 [own translation]

[36] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.28 [own translation]

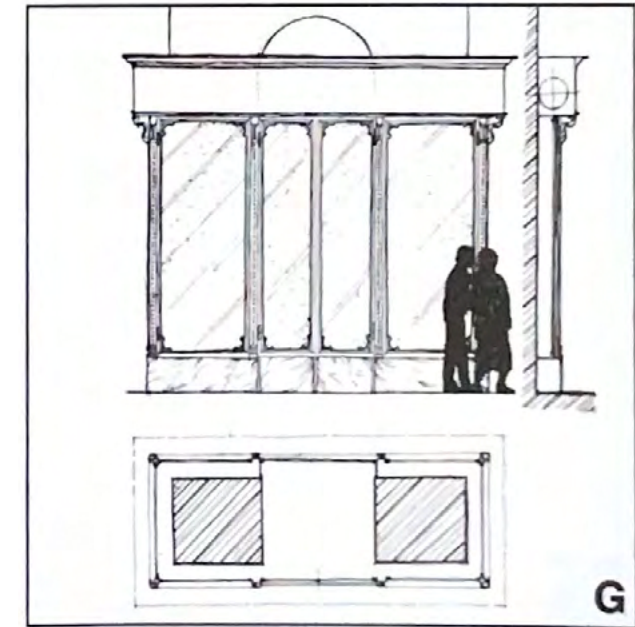
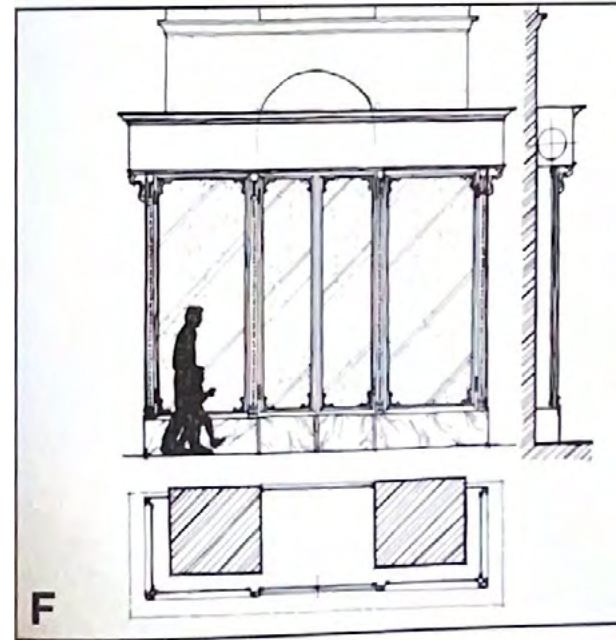
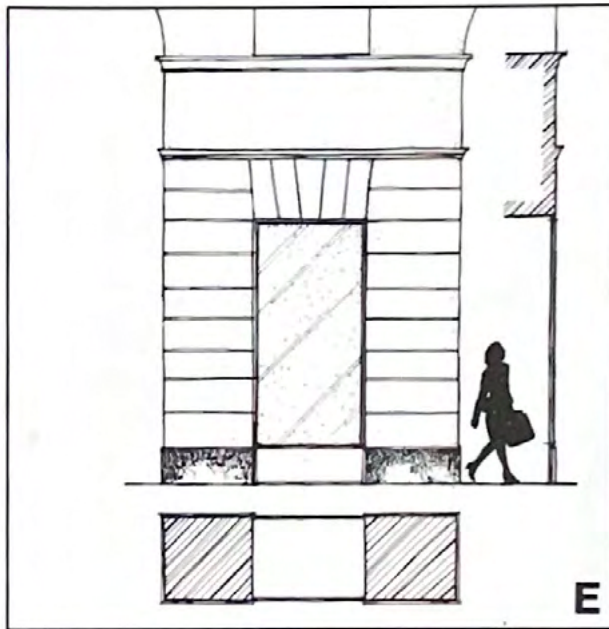
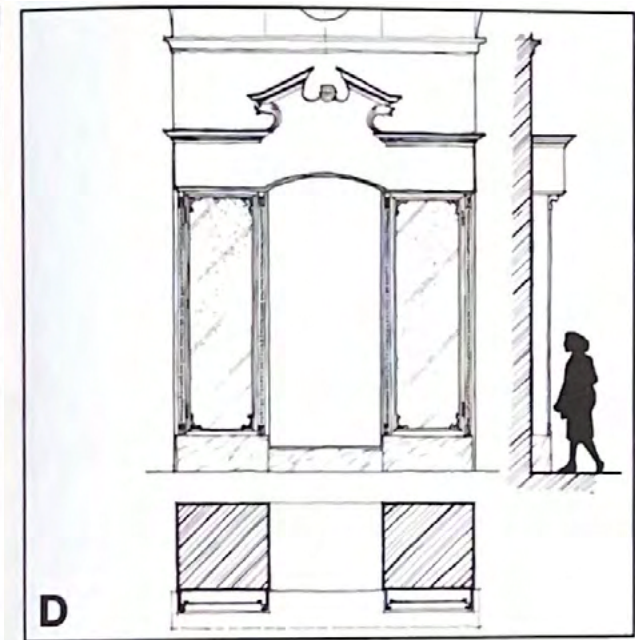
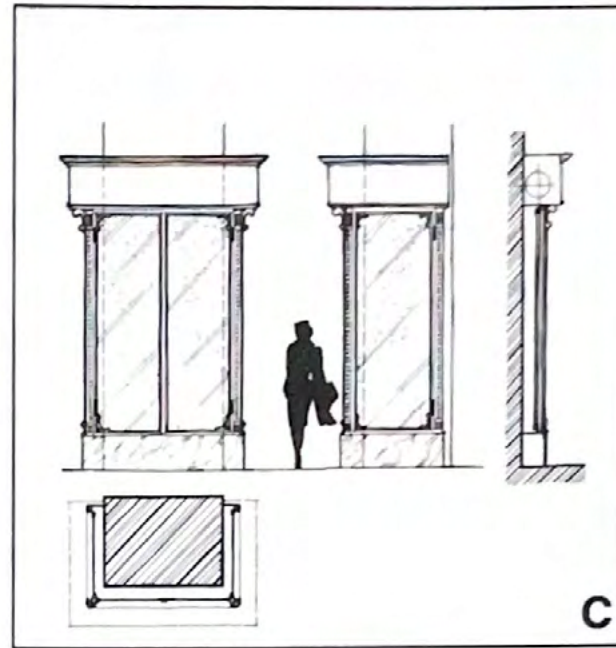
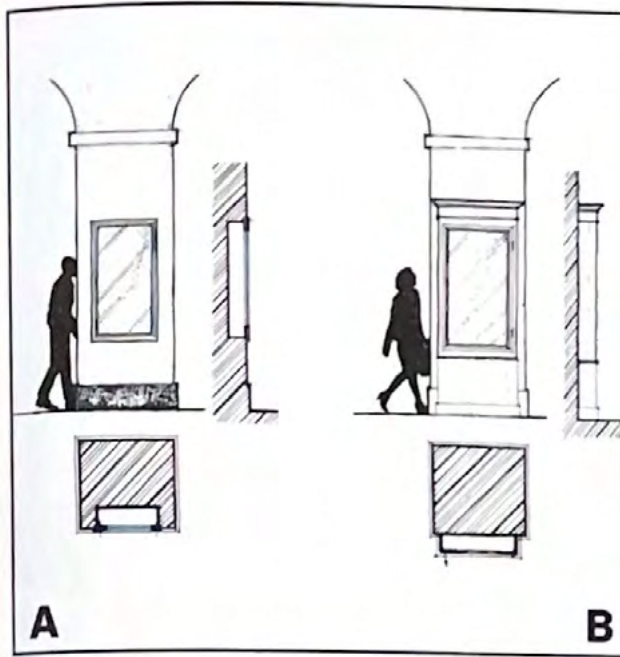


image 15 Types of display cases in turin, Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.29

# typologies of commercial furnishings

## signage and fixture

The establishment of these shops altered the structure of the city significantly, as “the way of conducting business changed radically in the 19th century, with corresponding changes in the external signals of commerce (...) which became increasingly “aggressive” and more refined because of previously unknown competition in the preceding century” [37]. Signage, as a visual form of communication from these shops, is the most direct and spontaneous element of the facade. Each shop designed its own signage to identify and differentiate its establishment from others, drawing “designs and shapes from fashions and customs, while also greatly influencing their evolution” [38]. These visual elements, surpassing strictly commercial interests, have “often been creative; they have conveyed non-dominant and non-conventional messages, promoted literacy, and stimulated progress” [39].

Signage, being the first and most visible element of an architectural project, has developed certain peculiarities over time. It can be either “an integral part of the architecture or added later during a renovation of the building” [40]. Each shop introduced distinctive and iconic features to set itself apart and create a powerful image, both as a form of advertising and as a “formal development in relation to the evolution of urban space” [39].

There are various materials, shapes, and decorations that can be implemented in signage. For instance, there are carved wooden signs, which in the “18th-century style display the skill of established cabinetmakers” [38]. Besides carving, some signs result from painting on wooden boards or pieces of glass or mirrors. Bronze signs, like carved wooden signs, “often stand as a testament to the artisans’ skills and the level of their schools” [38]. On a larger scale, they continue to serve as evidence of “important craftsmanship, which was the driving force behind the major Italian advertising enterprises” [39].

It is important to note that many of these original elements have been lost, and many historic shops no longer retain their original signage. Nevertheless, these “spontaneous rules—graphic and typological—and their proper integration into the built environment, transmitted through centuries of experience, can only be reconstructed through thorough historical research” [39]. Due to this loss, these elements are now often integrated directly into the facade, no longer limited to specific materials such as bronze, glass, or wood, but serving the purpose of transmitting advertising messages. For example, at Pasticceria Tamborini in Via Garibaldi (image 16), glass is not only used to create a display case but also as a new canvas for figurative advertising or as a means to create a unique image for the establishment, helping it stand out among other shops in the area.

Signage is often connected to the sign-holder or fixture, which usually “features an upper cornice and side friezes; subsequently, it becomes a separate part, taking the form of panels made of various materials (glass, iron, cast iron, etc.)” [38]. Like the signage, however, the original fixtures are rarely seen today.

- [37] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.6 [own translation]
- [38] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.27 [own translation]
- [39] Tagliasacchi, 1985, p.78 [own translation]
- [40] Ronchetta, Cerrato, De Luca, Bonafini, 2006, p.15 [own translation]

- image 16 Pasticceria Tamborini [taken by the author]
- image 17 Guido Gobino, Via Lagrange 1 [taken by the author]
- image 18 Regia Farmacia Anglesio [taken by the author]
- image 19 Ristorante del Cambio [taken by the author]
- image 20 Via Lagrange, 1 [taken by the author]





image 16



image 17

An elaborate bronze cartouche illustrating the productions of a stamp-making company, which has undergone a preservation intervention to maintain and protect its original features



image 18

Located at Via Milano, a signage of carved wood, representing the arms of the Dukes of Chablais



image 19

A sign in a lunette painted on glass



image 20

A signage placed at one side of the storefront, an example of a type of a storefront of extreme simplicity

## 2 typologies of historic shops according to the product category:

characteristics, attributes, objects and interior circulation

Based on the constructive and formal characteristics of the historic shops, common features have been grouped, and typologies have been identified. According to Ronchetta and Cerrato (2006), among the constant attributes that allow for classification include:

1. Related to the function of use: display and access
2. Formal and constructive nature: furniture, decor, sculpture
3. Related to the signage and symbolic function

There is also a “close relationship between the typology of decorative apparatus and the category of merchandise”<sup>[41]</sup>. Nevertheless, even the simplest of shops would still have some form of fixture or “framing” for exhibiting and showcasing their products. This pattern is carefully designed in relation to the upper part of the building, considering the creation of a cohesive environment where typologies are consistently followed, contributing to a unified image within the city.

[41] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.15 [own translation]

## clothing and accessories

During this century, the textile industry experienced significant growth, which led to substantial changes in production and commercialization methods. Despite these developments, textile shops continued to exist in their original locations around Via Dora Grossa (now Via Garibaldi). The products sold in these shops were well-suited for the display cases around the pillars of some city galleries, and the interiors of these shops allowed for the effective showcasing of merchandise, featuring wooden shelves and long counters.

Nevertheless, the evolving needs and methods in this commercial sector "gave rise throughout Europe to 'sales houses,' which replaced the old artisan shops with attached workshops" [42]. As a result, tailoring shops began to evolve into ready-to-wear stores, which needed a reduction in shop dimensions since workshop areas were no longer required.

This transformation impacted the clothing sector to such an extent that some tailor shops either closed or became clothing resellers. Meanwhile, prominent tailors "followed the Parisian atelier model of fashion, preferring locations on the first floor with views of the most fashionable streets, such as Via Roma, Piazza Castello, and the Galleria San Federico" [42].



[42] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.20 [own translation]

image 21 Historical storefront of Barbisio under the porticoes in Turin, Italy. Adapted from "Barbisio sotto i portici: L'eleganza in una vetrina," by TorinoStoria, n.d., TorinoStoria <https://t.ly/cTveh>



## typologies of historic shops according to the product category:

characteristics, attributes, objects and interior circulation



## food

Beginning with butcheries, these establishments were divided into two distinct areas: one at the back of the shop, used for preparing cuts and preserving them in iceboxes, and another at the front, visible to the customer, which served as the sales area. In this sales area, products were displayed under hygienic conditions, using easy-to-clean materials such as marble, which was employed for walls, counters, and cabinets.

The interior furnishings often featured a recurring motif: the bovine head. This icon could be found "in the inlays of the floor, the bas-reliefs of the counter, in the handles, on the entrance rail, painted or carved" <sup>[43]</sup>.

Furthermore, marble was also utilized in other gastronomic establishments, such as delis and cured meat shops. In these shops, a variety of products were exhibited, including preserves, mustards, and wines. These establishments typically included a kitchen area for preparation, as well as storage rooms and spaces for curing sausages.

Grocery stores specialized in "spices and drugs for dyers, perfumers, pharmacists, pastry chefs, cooks, delicatessen owners, and housewives" <sup>[43]</sup>. Inside these shops, one could find storage boxes, glass jars, small bottles, tin containers, and a scale at the counter for weighing products. Additionally, these shops often featured a storeroom and a small office.

Finally, herbalists operated smaller shops, designed with just enough space to incorporate "wooden shelves for glass jars, and drawers of various sizes labeled on the counter" <sup>[43]</sup>. These shops included a well-ventilated room for drying herbs and a laboratory for preparing dyes, powders, and extracts.

[43] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.38 [own translation]

image 22 Antica drogheria, interno, 2017, Adapted from "Ceretto" by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/Q3p2N>

## artisans

With the diffusion of industrialized products, the artisan sector experienced a significant impact. Industrial products, now produced in factories, were cheaper, more diverse, and more standardized. However, the preference for artisan products persisted due to their uniqueness, high quality, and the expertise of the artisans involved in their production.

The appeal of high-quality handmade products “favors the recovery of certain traditional crafts such as typography, which, in the age of computers, offset printing, and lasers, continues to use manual typesetting” <sup>[44]</sup>. The added value of these artisanal products could not be replicated using industrial methods. For example, letterhead paper, business cards, invitations, and announcements were produced following traditional methods that could not be achieved with modern industrial machinery.

Another less common shop type was the candlemakers. These artisans produced candles and decorative items using natural waxes, colors, and scents, creating new and original forms. Despite the rise of industrial products, these artisanal shops continued to thrive.

Additionally, passementeries “respond to a renewed demand for trimmings for clothing and furnishings, producing items such as tassels, fringes, and decorated braids made from silk threads, wool, linen, cotton, hemp, and metallic threads with gold and silver laminates” <sup>[44]</sup>. These products, elaborated using traditional artisan techniques, could not be replicated with industrial machinery.



[44] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.50 [own translation]

image 23 Passamanerie Massia Vittorio, sedia, 2017. Adapted from “Ceretto” by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/537fl>

## typologies of historic shops according to the product category: characteristics, attributes, objects and interior circulation

### bookshops and stationery shops

The motivation behind bookselling lies in the manufacture and sale of books. A bookseller must be a "profound connoisseur of bibliography to know how to evaluate good works, obtain good editions, and procure good prices" <sup>[45]</sup>. In the nineteenth century in Turin, many bookstores were opened directly by publishing houses to commercialize publications from their own catalogues. These stores typically comprised two distinct spaces: one for the sales process and another for storage. The storage area featured large wooden shelves that covered the walls of the shop, with glass cases providing additional protection for the publications.

In this typology, the formal architectural language is evident both internally and externally, with wood prominently featured. The facade usually included an iron or cast-iron storefront with large windows designed for book display. The signage, in many cases, was crafted from gold paper on a black surface.



[45] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.58 [own translation]  
image 24 La Casa del Libro, vista esterna, 2017. Adapted from "La Casa del Libro" by MuseoTorino, n.d., [https://t.ly/Qjbk\\_](https://t.ly/Qjbk_)

## cafes and restaurants

This existing typology experienced significant development, diffusion, and transformation during the nineteenth century. The dynamics and phenomena of the period led to the production of more specialized and specific products, which needed accurate infrastructure to accommodate these new products. One example of this is the vermouth bars, which “were usually smaller in size and had more modest finishes than the coffee shops; the coffee shops were often comprised of multiple venues with elegant furniture, resembling an elegant lounge” [46]. Additionally, each type of establishment required separate spaces to accommodate various activities within them, or to expand their popularity among different types of users. These establishments often included reading rooms, game rooms, smoking areas, ladies’ lounges, and more.

All of these spaces, which served as places for social gathering and interaction, were more luxurious and well-decorated than other types of venues, as they offered services for leisure and entertainment rather than fulfilling basic needs. These places were adorned with “attractive walls covered with wood paneling, lined with wainscoting, velvet armchairs, and sofas with brocade upholstery, crystal chandeliers, and painted and decorated ceilings” [46]. Elegance was a key feature of these shops; among the most frequently used materials were marble, used to adorn the wooden counters; mirrors, which reflected the bottles on the shelves and made the space feel larger; and aluminum and tin.

This elegant style extended to the exterior, with storefronts becoming even more luxurious and sophisticated, incorporating the same materials and forms used inside. The distinction between interior and exterior began to blur as these elements were harmoniously articulated and mimicked in the design.

The diversification of products also varied according to the location of the establishment, where a commercial analysis was often implicitly conducted to identify the type of users frequenting each area. These shops were designed specifically to meet the needs of their respective regions. The most common locations were “inns situated on accessible main roads, currency exchange points, and stables, serving as economic stops for travelers during the period of economic transformation in the territory” [46]. Other innovations included distilleries, breweries, ice factories, and “Cambini.”

[46] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p. 68 [own translation]





image 25



image 26

- [47] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p. 13 [own translation]
- image 25 Caffè Elena, interno, 1998. Adapted from "Caffè Elena" by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/g4OG6>
- image 26 Caffè Elena, interno, 2016. Adapted from "Caffè Elena" by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/g4OG6>

Caffè Elena at Piazza Vittorio Veneto, where between 1899 and 1902 Giuseppe Carpano offered his vermouth to customers [47]. In establishments where the vermouth was sold, specific needs were addressed, such as the tall and imposing counters where vermouth was served. The shelves were well-lit and filled with vermouth bottles, and the spaces were decorated with friezes and ornaments that evoked images of grape bunches, aromatic herbs (such as Artemisia), and botanical symbols. [48]





image 27

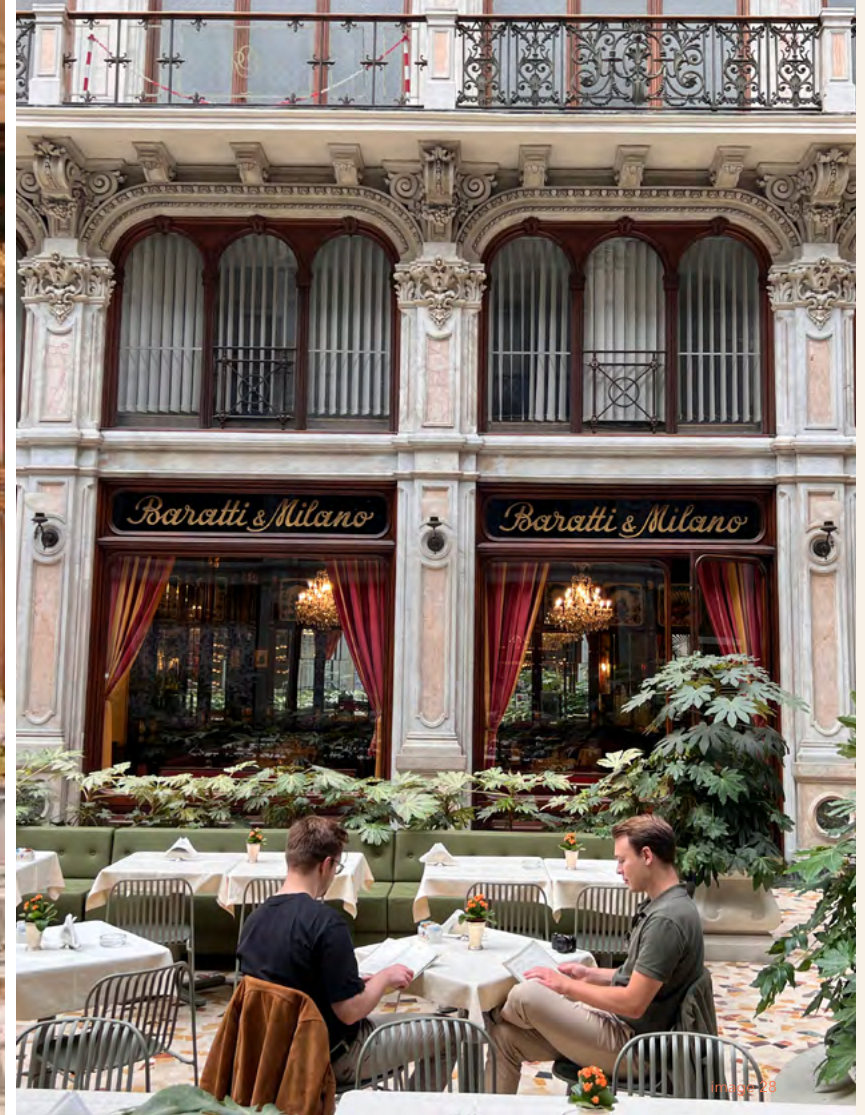


image 28

Often, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the same materials and designs for both interior and exterior furnishings were reused: Baratti & Milano in Piazza Castello

- [48] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p. 18 [own translation]  
 image 27 Interior view of Caffè Baratti & Milano, Turin. Adapted from "Caffè Baratti & Milano, confetti e pasticcini dal 1875," by Locali Storici, n.d., <https://t.ly/uUU1C>  
 image 28 Exterior view of Caffè Baratti & Milano, Turin. [taken by the author]

## typologies of historic shops according to the product category: characteristics, attributes, objects and interior circulation

### confectioneries and pastry shops

Alongside the prestigious shops were the confectioners, who “have practiced the art for several centuries and who, thanks to relations with neighboring France, have been able to create products that, over time, have become typically associated with Turin” [49]. The nineteenth century saw the rise of industrialized merchandise and the transportation of products from other factories and industries to cities where these items were not produced. This led to a greater diversity of products, but it also highlighted the uniqueness of “typical” and “handmade” products due to their artisanal quality. A prime example of this is the Turin and Piedmontese specialties such as cricri, gianduiotti, and other sweets that still represent that heritage today.

Some other confections gained fame across Italy, such as sugared almonds, candied fruits, and chocolates. These sweets were often produced in the back of the shops or in the basement, where a workshop or studio was located. For instance, at Pfatisch, which today remains a “small working museum, preserving machinery and equipment, as well as a rich collection of invoices, recipes, and advertisements” [49]. Consequently, these shops featured large lounges for the consumption of sweets, which were finely decorated and furnished with elegant materials. In the center, they had elegant counters where numerous products were displayed to delight customers. The shops were adorned with large mirrors that made the space feel even more expansive and allowed light to flow freely throughout the area. Additionally, pleasant details such as floral decorations, gilded frames, and beautiful friezes contributed to making the shop feel warm and welcoming.

Every detail was carefully considered, from the delicate yet stunning packaging of the chocolates to the formal customer service, with waiters and waitresses in elegant uniforms, where hospitality and courtesy were essential to creating a refined environment. The many fragrances that could be detected just by entering the shop were an integral part of the sensory experience.

[49] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p. 102 [own translation]





image 29

Interior of Pfatisch, a historic pastry shop in Turin, Italy. Adapted from "Pfatisch in Torino," by Guida Torino, n.d., <https://t.ly/MyuY8>

## typologies of historic shops according to the product category: characteristics, attributes, objects and interior circulation

### pharmacies

Craftsmen and experts played pivotal roles during this century, both in the production and vending processes of products at historic shops, as well as in the design of various establishments by architects. In this context, the professional figure of the pharmacist greatly benefited from advancements in research and knowledge related to the health sector. Indeed, starting from the eighteenth century, the “College of Physicians and Pharmacists exercised strict control over herbalists and only authorized pharmacies to prepare and sell proper medicines”<sup>[50]</sup>. This also involved the implementation of legislative measures aimed at focusing on public health protection.

These establishments were carefully structured and organized according to specific needs, typically featuring two main areas: one for sales and another for the preparation of galenicals. The sales area generally had all its walls covered with cabinetry—closed at the bottom and with shelves at the top—always labeled to facilitate the retrieval of products or components. In the preparation area, “plates, stoves, distillers, alembics, bells, cucurbits, mortars, pestles, spoons, vessels, and other useful tools were located” <sup>[51]</sup>. A significant and iconic element of these shops was the Tericas, ancient jars used for storing components.

The shop’s decor was carefully designed at the professional’s eye level, with shelves in porcelain or mosaic often adorned with a frieze of pharmaceutical symbols to enhance the shop’s aesthetic. At the entrance, there were glass showcases and large corner shelves, while at the center of the sales area stood the wooden counter.

Notably, this prestigious typology is the one that has been best preserved over time. In Turin, these shops boasted the highest quality architectural and decorative furnishings. Today, the ways in which medicines are sold and produced have transformed the use of space, requiring new containers and displays, which has rendered shelves, jars, drug jars, and even laboratories partially obsolete <sup>[50]</sup>.

- [50] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p. 13 [own translation]
- [51] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p. 118 [own translation]





image 30



image 31

Many pharmacies have retained their prestigious furnishings and equipment intact. Drugstores and herbal shops like Abello and Rosa Serafino still sell drugs, spices, herbs, and essences kept in glass jars and containers that make up the main furnishings and decorations of their shelves. [50]

image 30

Rosa Serafino, interno. Adapted from "Ditta Rosa Serafino Erboristeria" by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/l2gU9>

image 31

Rosa Serafino, scaffalatura. Adapted from "Ditta Rosa Serafino Erboristeria" by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/l2gU9>



## typologies of historic shops according to the product category: characteristics, attributes, objects and interior circulation

### jewelries and goldsmiths

These shops sold refined and expensive products, which is why their architecture was luxurious, featuring high-end materials and more private spaces. The sales rooms were meticulously designed, "catering to a demanding and refined clientele: elegant furniture, refined furnishings, separate and welcoming areas where models could be selected in privacy" [51]. Every aspect of these shops was crafted by skilled artisans, starting with the furnishings, which included tables, armchairs, and shelves; counters adorned with elegant fabrics or leather; strongboxes for securing the merchandise; and well-lit workshops for jewelers, often located on the upper floors and furnished with precious materials. The most striking feature was the entrance, which reflected the shop's prestige with its signs and plaques for the jewels, where names were displayed alongside the title of supplier to the Royal House, once the license had been obtained.



- [51] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.132 [own translation]  
image 32 Musy Torino, particolare dell'interno, 2017.  
Adapted from "Musy Torino, già Musy padre e figli, gioielleria"

## hairdressers and perfumers

Regarding the perfumers, during the eighteenth century, they “purchased semi-processed products from specialized centers, such as Grasse in Provence, and prepared them in their own workshops into perfumed extracts, makeup, eau de Cologne, lavender water, balm, and toothpaste” [52]. These workshops often included multiple rooms, many of which were adjacent to spaces dedicated to massages and baths, offering additional services to their refined clientele within the same establishment.

The interiors were adorned with large shelves, drawers for small items, and a sales counter, similar to those found in other types of shops. The materials and structures within the interior seamlessly blended with elements of the facade, emphasizing continuity rather than a division of spaces.

As for barbers and hairdressers, it is important to note that these two professions remained segregated by gender until the twentieth century. However, the barber shops of the nineteenth century typically consisted of a single room “equipped with large shelves in front of the washing area, seats, stools, and small chairs for children” [52]. Over time, some tools, such as combs, razors, and hair curling irons, have been preserved and are still kept in some of these shops.

## other activities

Nonetheless, there are other types of shops that do not easily fit into a single category. Some are unique in Turin, while others originally sold a specific type of product and had a related furnace but later changed their use, leaving the interior filled with previous objects, making it difficult to categorize these shops. However, these instances represent “intelligent reuse that manages to preserve the memory of previous activities, using it as a factor to attract new clientele” [53].

[52] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.142 [own translation]

[53] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.150 [own translation]



### 3 late 21<sup>st</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century inventory of historic shops

Undoubtedly, Turin is home to many historic shops, which contribute significantly to the city's unique character. Nevertheless, due to the passage of time, the physical evolution of the city and the change of owners or use of some shops, a completely accurate inventory cannot be made. In fact, "some restorations have made it possible to rediscover precious commercial furnishings; others have unfortunately been lost, replaced by new creations that are sometimes incompatible with the architecture that houses them" [54]. Fortunately (for architectural heritage's sake), Turin is a city characterized by its slow renewal, making possible the adaptation of the shops to their context in constant change and evolution –a context shaped by new production methods and evolving commercial criteria.

Certainly, these shops are integral to the city's identity, so much that they can be considered part of the city's urban fabric as well as being understood and read as part of the city's furniture. For that reason, a map was created for illustrating the distribution of these shops across Turin, highlighting the different typologies that can be found. This visual representation was made possible through a compilation of establishments recognized as historic shops, drawing from several key publications, including:

- \* Job, A., Laureati, M. L., & Ronchetta, C. (1985). *Botteghe e negozi: Torino 1815-1925*. Allemandi.
- \* Ronchetta, C. (2005). *Guide to historic shops in Turin*. Camera di Commercio Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura.
- \* Ronchetta, C. (Ed.). (2008). *Le botteghe a Torino: Esterni e interni tra 1750 e 1930*. Centro Studi Piemontesi.
- \* Ronchetta, C., & Cerrato, A. (Eds.). (2006). *Negozi e locali storici di Torino*. Archivio Storico della città di Torino.

[54] Ronchetta, Cerrato, 2006, p.11 [own translation]

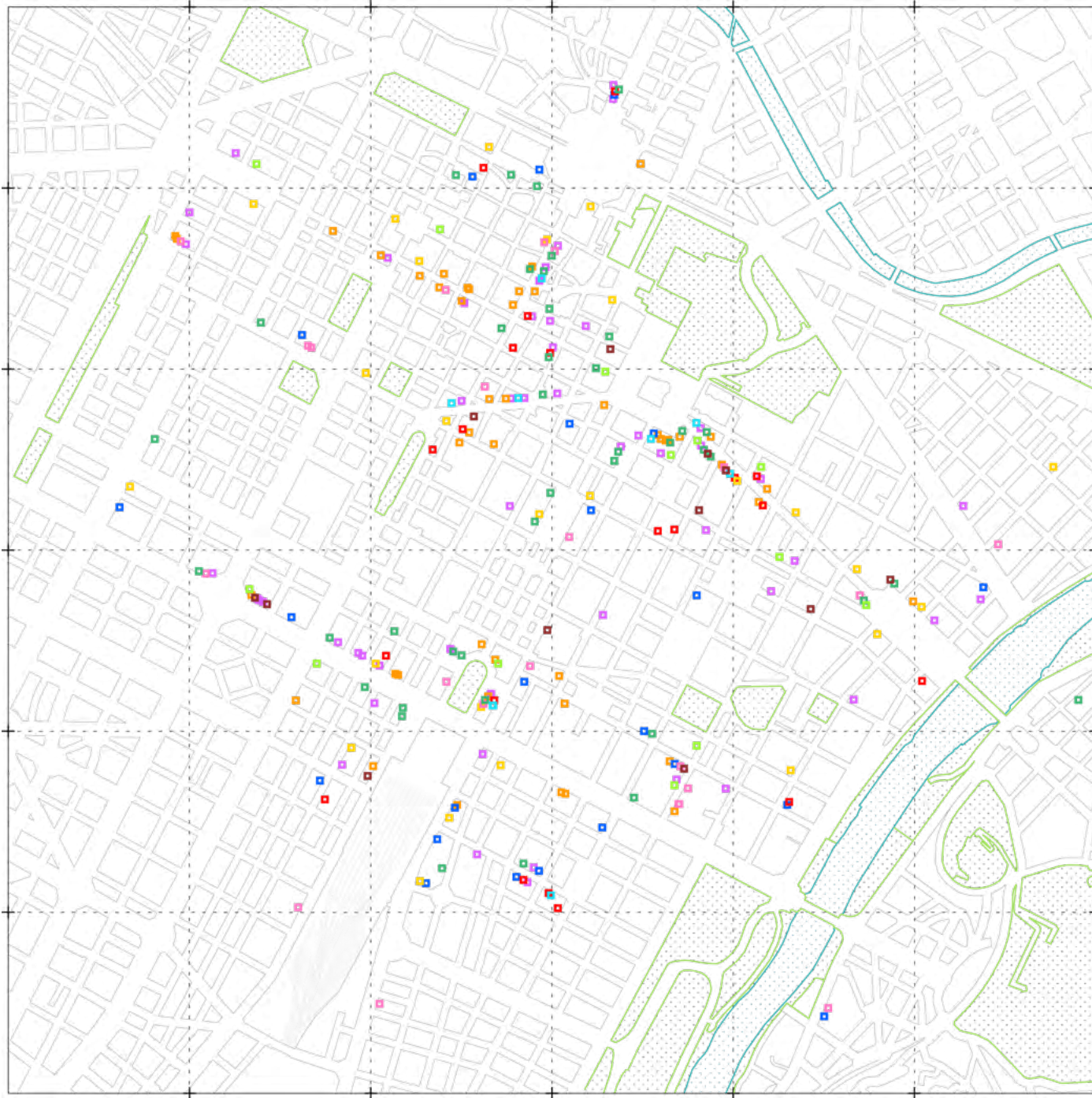


IMAGE 33: *inventory of historic shops in turin [author's own work]*

- Clothing and accessories
- Food
- Artisans
- Bookshops and stationery shops
- Cafes and restaurants
- Confectioneries and pastry shops
- Pharmacies
- Jewelries and goldsmiths
- Hairdressers and perfumers
- Other activities

## 4 officially proposed sightseeing tours in 1990

Based on the publication of C. Ronchetta and A. Job in their book *Guide to Historic shops* (1990), the historic shops are "important representation of the culture of a city, and their decoration, furnishing, signs and advertising make a substantial contribution to the character of the environment" <sup>[55]</sup>, reason enough for getting to know and explore them, involve them into the experience of living and getting to know the essence of the City of Turin, and most important of all: growing awareness towards the importance of protecting and conserving this type of architecture.

For this reason, the authors have proposed some sightseeing tours for getting to explore and observe many of the historic shops in Turin, which are across the most important streets, squares and areas. This initiative has also been supported by the local authorities, cultural associations and the Chamber of Commerce, which made possible the creation of a complete register of the existing shops in Turin for then identifying their main features and have a record or trace of them.

In this publication, five itineraries have been proposed, beginning at Piazza Vittorio Veneto, going in direction to the east until Piazza Castello through Via Po, making a simple tour through via Roma, Piazza San Carlo, via Pietro Micca, Piazza delle Erbe, via Milano, via della Consolata, a short tour through the Quadrilatero area, arriving to Piazza Statuto, going toward the south until via Vittorio Emanuele II, taking a look at Piazza Carlo Felice and then going through the streets to go back up again to Piazza Castello. The complete itineraries are illustrated on the following pages.

[55] Ronchetta, Job, 1990, p.5 [own translation]



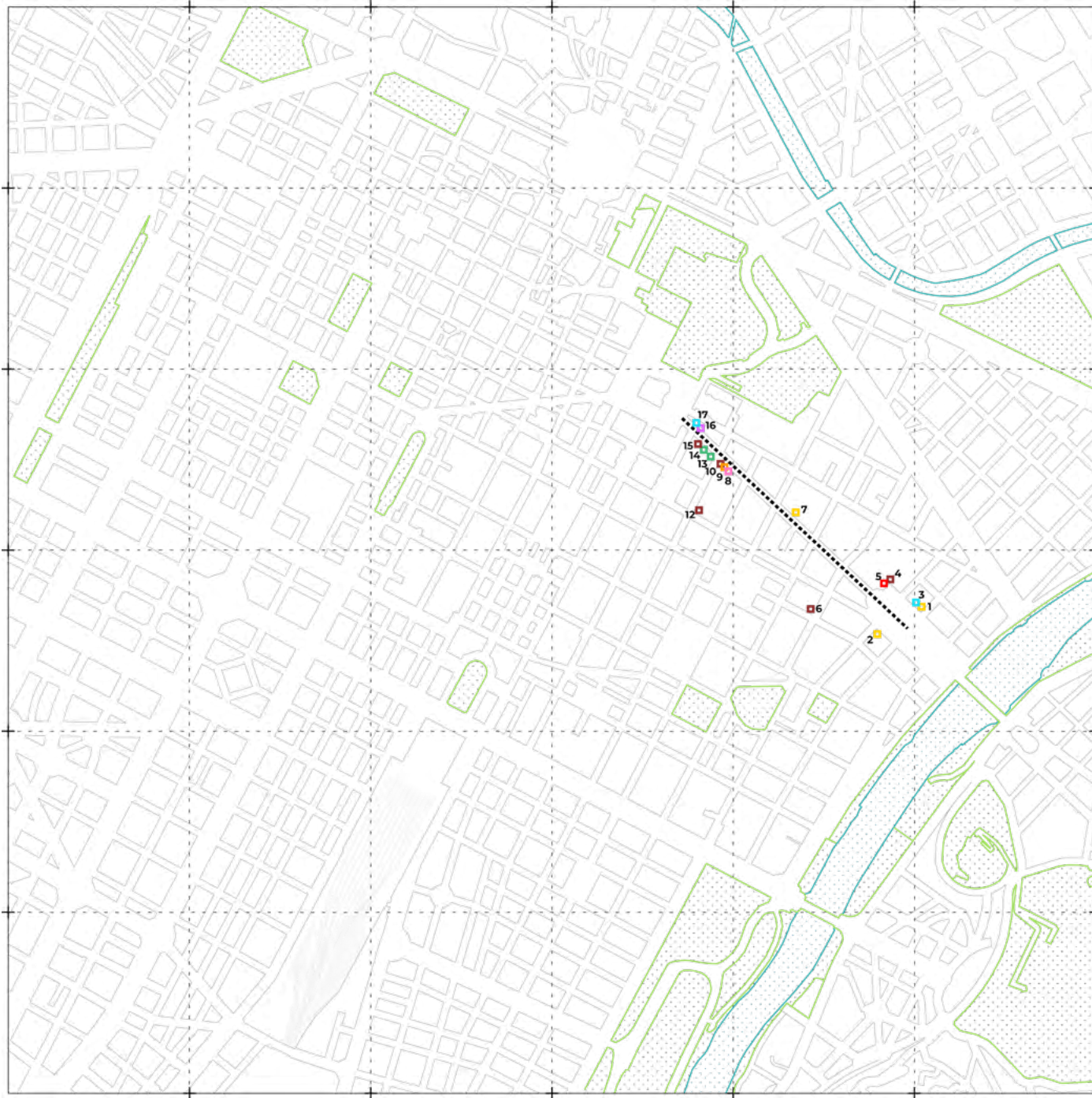


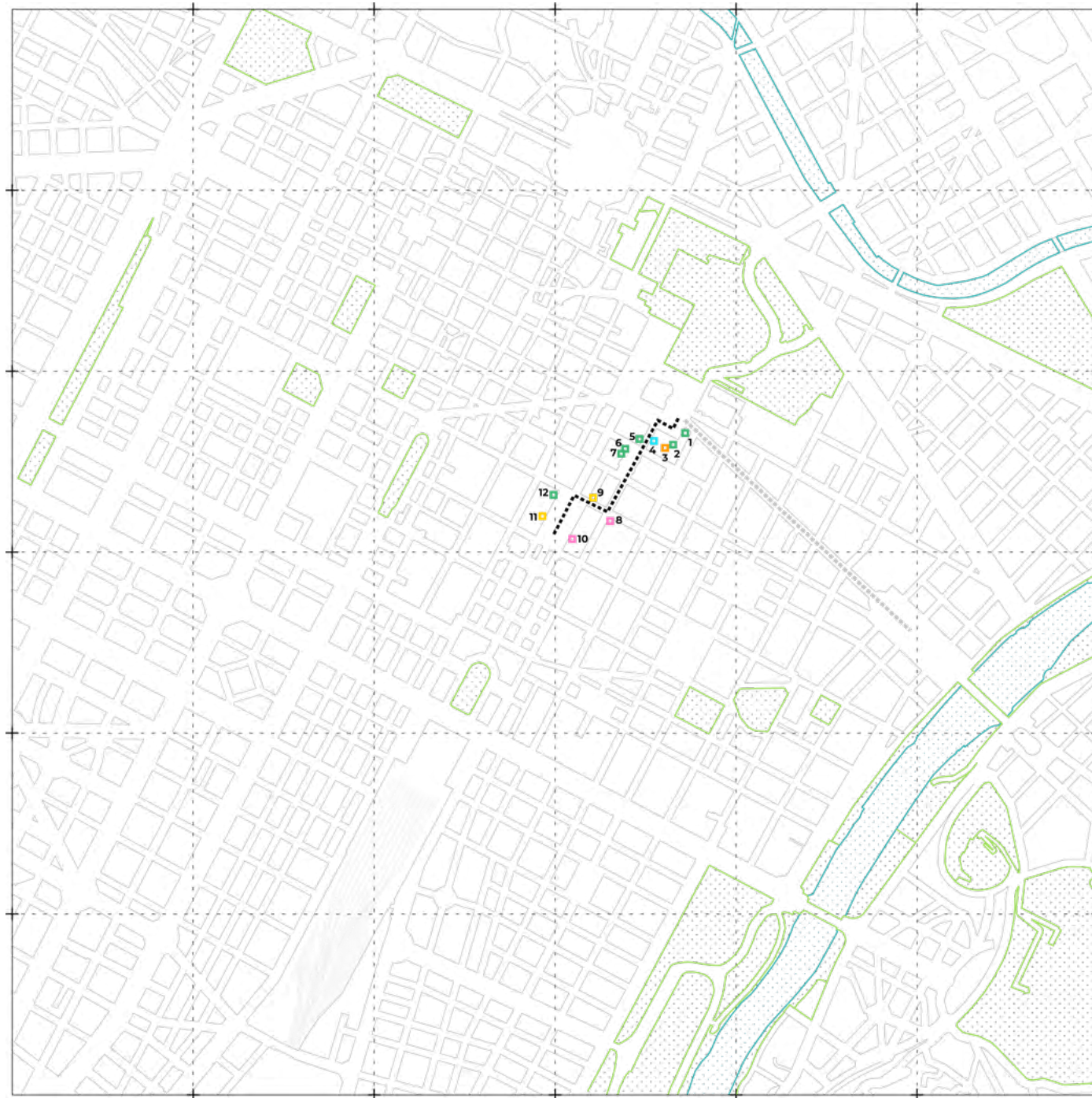
IMAGE 34: *itinerary 1: Piazza Vittorio Veneto and Via Po [author's own work]*

- Clothing and accessories
- Artisans
- Cafes and restaurants
- Confectioneries and pastry shops
- Pharmacies
- Jewelries and goldsmiths
- Hairdressers and perfumers
- Other activities



IMAGE35: *itinerary 2: from Piazza Castello to Piazza San Carlo [author's own work]*

- Clothing and accessories
- Cafes and restaurants
- Confectioneries and pastry shops
- Pharmacies
- Jewelries and goldsmiths



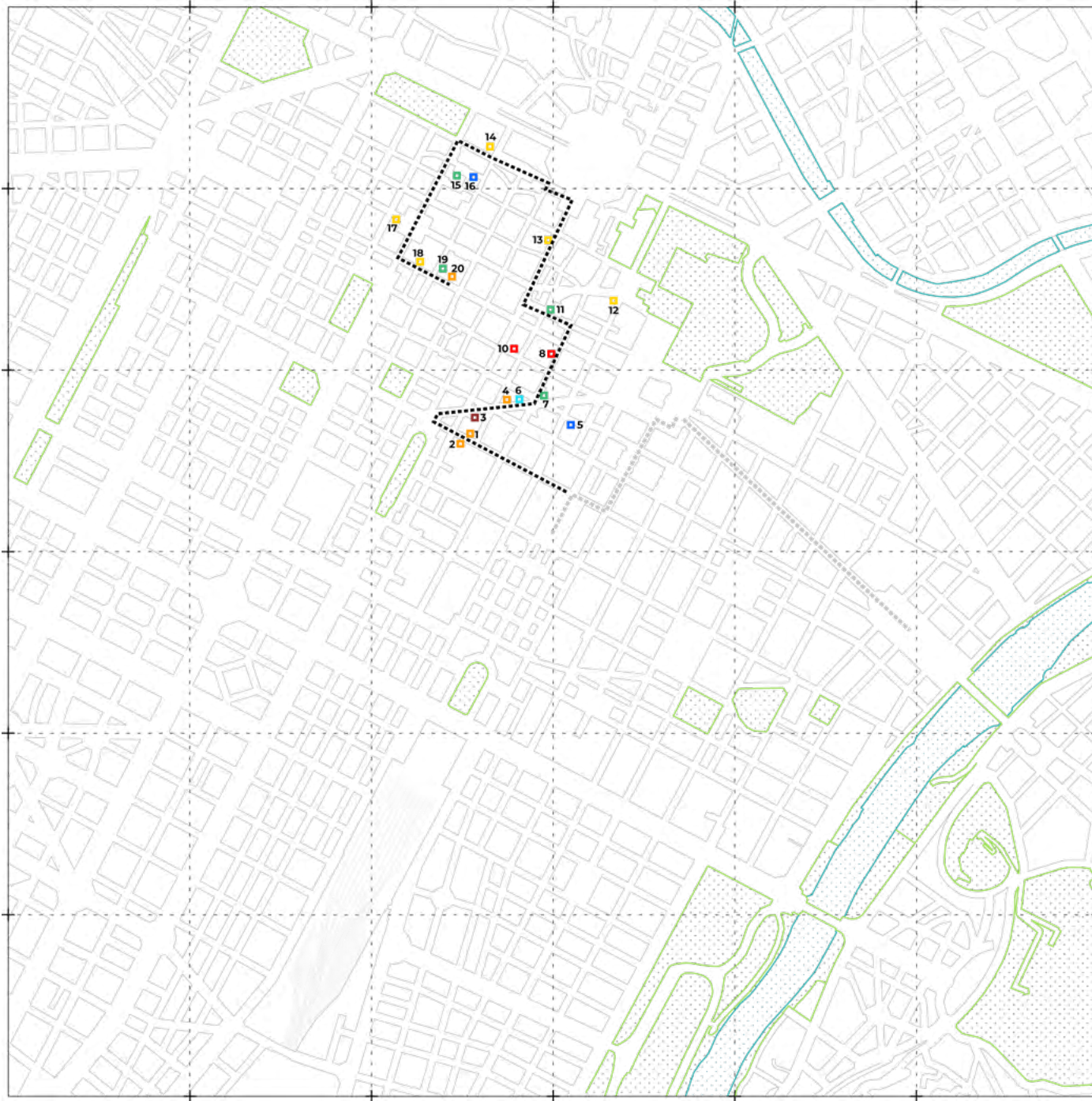


IMAGE 36: *itinerary 3: from Via Santa Teresa to Via Garibaldi [author's own work]*

- Clothing and accessories
- Food
- Artisans
- Cafes and restaurants
- Pharmacies
- Jewelries and goldsmiths
- Hairdressers and perfumers



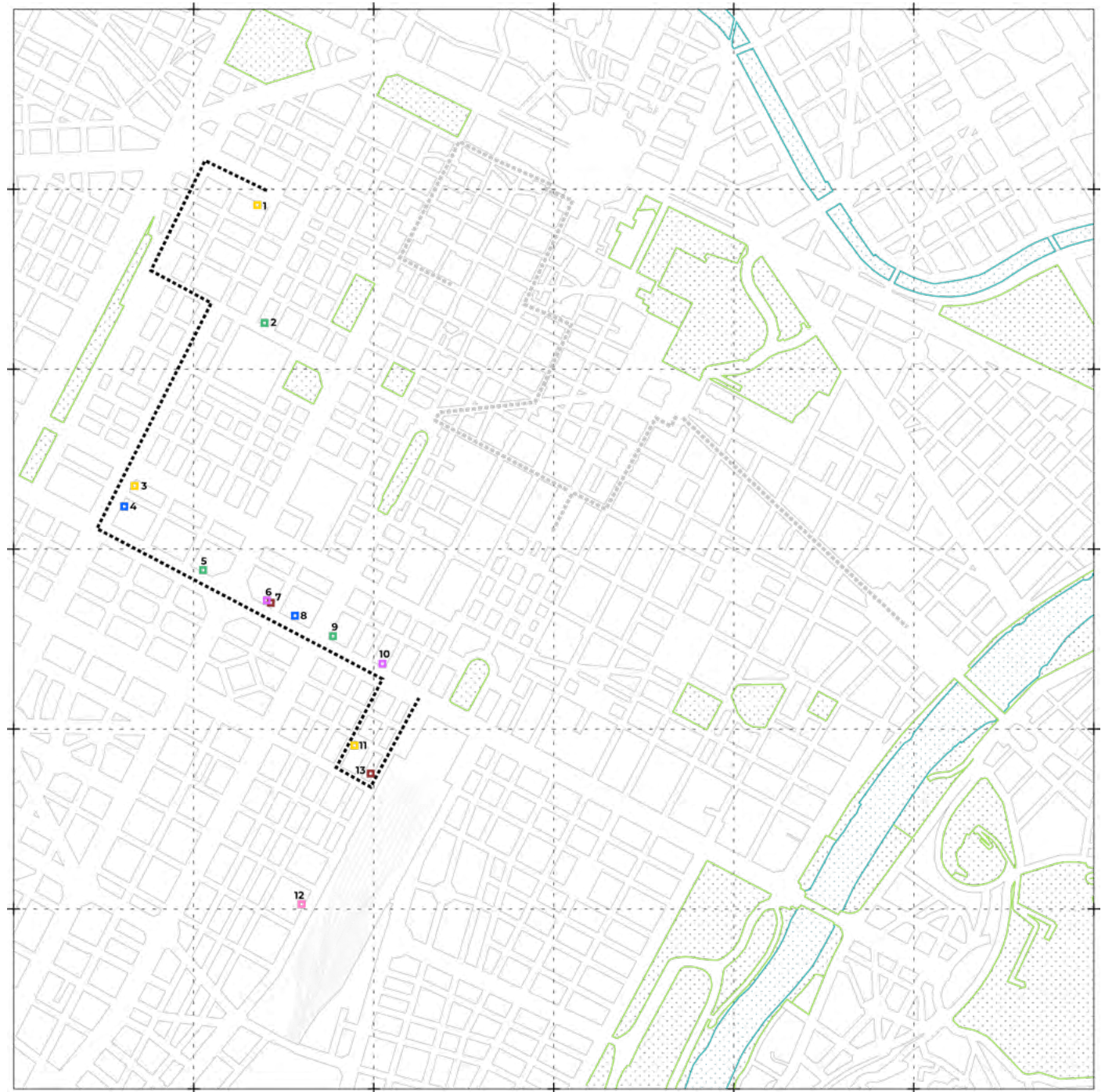


IMAGE 37: *itinerary 4: from Piazza Statuto to Porta Nuova [author's own work]*

- Food
- Cafes and restaurants
- Confectioneries and pastry shops
- Pharmacies
- Hairdressers and perfumers
- Other activities



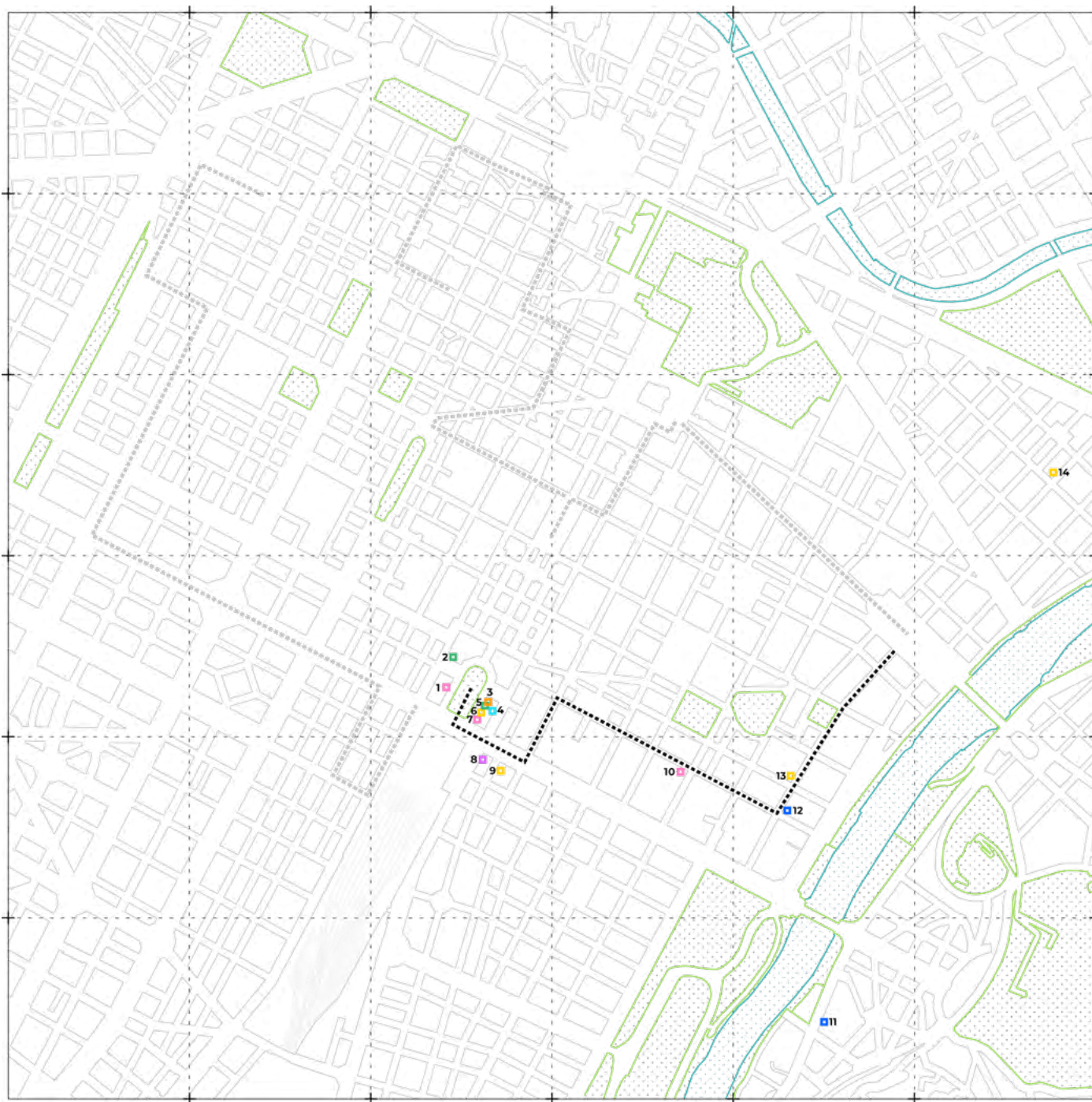


IMAGE 38: *itinerary 5: from Piazza Carlo Felice to Borgonuovo [author's own work]*

- Clothing and accessories
- Food
- Cafes and restaurants
- Confectioneries and pastry shops
- Pharmacies
- Jewelries and goldsmiths
- Other activities

03

• 04 **CASE STUDY**

justification | selection of a study area | historical account of via po | present-day situation of via po |  
urban block n°9

05

Proposing a restoration and renovation project for a historic shop on a significant commercial axis of Turin involves more than just a commitment to architectural preservation; it calls for the safeguarding of the city's cultural and architectural heritage by respecting and highlighting the intrinsic values of these establishments. These shops are not merely commercial spaces; they are living testimonies of Turin's rich artisanal and entrepreneurial history. Experiencing these spaces allows visitors to witness how commercial activities were conducted in the past, understand the production methods of the time, and appreciate the elaborate and detailed furnishings that have significantly contributed to the city's unique image. This project seeks to both safeguard and celebrate these historical elements.

Intervening on one of Turin's most significant streets, such as Via Po, offers an opportunity to preserve its architectural harmony and cultural significance. This thesis will explore new approaches to intervening in historic buildings, striving to balance preservation with innovation. Traditional restoration methods often prioritize strict adherence to historical accuracy, sometimes at the expense of functionality or the broader "preservation of urban unity," which is not always successfully achieved. By proposing thoughtful yet creative alternatives, this architectural project aims to demonstrate that it is possible to incorporate contemporary elements without compromising the integrity of historic structures. This approach challenges existing regulatory frameworks, which often prohibit certain types of interventions, by providing evidence that carefully considered renovations can enhance, rather than diminish, the value of these spaces.

Another crucial aspect of this thesis is to draw attention to the importance of historic shops. The widespread invasion of contemporary commercial architecture, driven by global brands, threatens to erase the unique character of historic urban centers. Therefore, this project will place significant emphasis on recognizing, protecting, and ultimately enhancing and highlighting the invaluable cultural and historical assets represented by these shops. The main objective of this research will be to explore how to effectively preserve the image of the city, propose innovative intervention strategies, challenge existing laws, and rekindle interest in an often overlooked aspect of architectural heritage. By addressing these points, this project aims to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue about the future of urban preservation and the crucial role that historic shops play within it.



## 2 selection of a study area

For the further investigation and project development, it was crucial to select a specific area that represents the historical, architectural, and cultural essence of Turin. Via Po stands out due to its unique historical significance, strategic urban positioning, and distinctive architectural features. This street not only highlights Turin's past as a center of cultural and political influence but also demonstrates how historic urban planning can impact the city's identity today.

### 1. a symbol of Turin's planned growth and vision

Via Po was developed as part of Turin's urban expansion strategy, establishing a connection between two of the city's most iconic public spaces: Piazza Castello at the city's center and Piazza Vittorio Veneto at the banks of the Po River. This layout reflects a vision of planned growth, as Via Po serves as a direct axis connecting the heart of Turin to its natural landscape: the river and the eastern hills. This strategic alignment certainly functional, facilitated movement and commerce in the city. Studying Via Po allows for a deeper understanding of Turin's historical urban planning and the role of architecture in symbolizing the city's evolution.

### 2. The arcades

One of the most distinctive elements of Via Po—and Turin more broadly—is its arcaded sidewalks. These arcades extend along both sides of the street, creating a continuous sheltered walkway that enhances the pedestrian experience and contributes to Turin's unique architectural identity. These arcades provide protection from the elements, encourage pedestrian traffic, and enhance commercial activity, embodying a fusion of practicality and aesthetic coherence. As for the commercial furnishing, the presence of arcades also boosted the appearance of different typologies of display cases, which do not exist on all historical streets in the city.

### 3. Unique commercial furnishings and storefronts

This axis is enriched by its distinctive commercial furnishings, including beautifully preserved storefronts and display cases. Many of these storefronts retain original features like woodwork, ornate signage, and distinctive window displays, which are less common on other historic streets in Turin. These commercial elements serve as a visual record of Turin's retail history and contribute to the street's identity. By choosing Via Po for this study, one gains the opportunity to analyze how heritage commercial architecture balances preservation with contemporary functionality, providing a sense of historical continuity in a modern setting.

Overall, Via Po has architectural heritage, urban planning, and socio-cultural evolution. Its historical significance as an urban artery, iconic arcades, preserved commercial elements, and connection to the Po River make it an ideal focus for understanding how Turin's heritage has been preserved and adapted over time.







### 3 historical account of via po

Historical revision: creation of this urban axis and description of its v

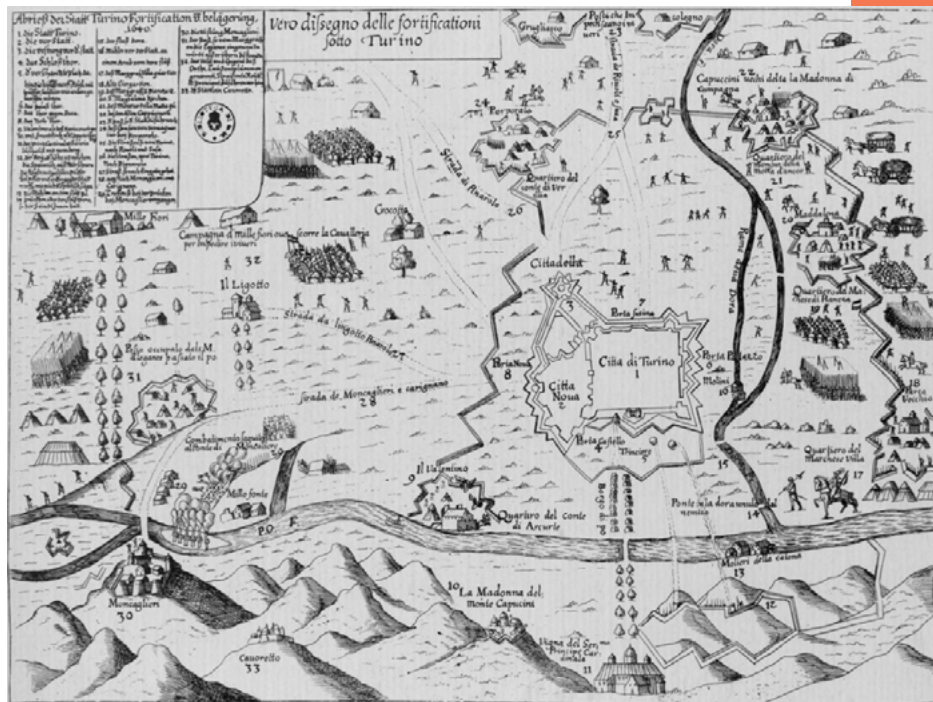


image 39

image 39 *Vero disegno delle fortificationi sotto Turino.*  
Adapted from "Assedio di Torino del 1640"  
by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/3m272>  
[56] Comoli, roccia, 2001, p.15 [own translation]

## 1564-1566

Construction of the pentagonal cittadella within the perimeter of the Roman colonia, along the primary diagonal of the city. This locational choice "would allow for the expansion of the city in a north-south orientation (...) adhering to the 16th-century conception of the city from 1584, Ascanio Vitozzi; from 1615, Carlo di Castellamonte" [56]

## 1610-1620

The first phase of the expansion project, where this "new" city adheres to the "old" city through the southern old vertex of the city. As a result of this urban addition, there is Piazza San Carlo, which helped with the consolidation of an axis in the city which goes from north to south. "The two-pole scenography, between city gates and the 'command zone,' will also define the urban landscape of the eighteenth century." [56] (image 39)

\*Timelines about main events related to  
Via Po before its consolidation



Via Po essentially connects Piazza Castello to what was once the unurbanized area known as “the other side of the Po.” Today, it links Piazza Castello <sup>(image 40)</sup> and Borgo Dora, passing through significant landmarks such as Piazza Vittorio Veneto, the Vittorio Emanuele I Bridge, and the Gran Madre di Dio Church <sup>(image 41)</sup>, offering impressive views at both ends of this urban axis.

Standing at Via Po, the two visible ends of the street are Palazzo Madama, located in Piazza Castello, “a clear symbolic reference to the urban structure of the Baroque city, centered around places of command” <sup>[57]</sup>; and at the other end, there was “originally made up of the closed perspective of the Guarini-inspired “Porta di Po” which “introduced,” almost like a royal arch of triumph starting from the exedra, to the official monumental architecture of the two rows of buildings on Via Po” <sup>[57]</sup>. After the demolition of the walls and the consolidation of the bridge that crossed over the Po River, this prevailing character of the street has not been lost. What is now visible and iconic at this end of the urban axis is the Church of Gran Madre di Dio. Therefore, the axis from west to east begins with a Baroque character, established at Piazza Castello, and extending up to the area of the arcades along Via Po. When it reaches Piazza Vittorio Veneto, the style becomes neoclassical.

Via Po is characterized by the continuity and unity of its elements. The project for a unified architectural design, featuring porticoes on both sides of the street, was entrusted to Amadeo di Castellamonte in 1673, as part of an urban expansion plan for the capital’s fortification. This urban project aimed to create a unique identity for the city while maintaining cohesion and consistency among its elements, “offering the concept of its long palisades with a rigid and uniform skyline, and establishing a capital characterized by the innovative features of functional hierarchy, regularity, and continuous building facades” <sup>[58]</sup>.

However, it did not fully adhere to the previous orthogonal grid concept, which had been implemented in the city’s southern expansion areas. Instead, the design of Via Po introduced a slanting path due to preexisting territorial conditions that influenced the new architectural development, including the “only bridge crossing the river, connected by the oblique layout of the ancient “Strada della Calce” road (now Via Po), which, having crossed the existing suburban village, joins the road leading to Casale and Piacenza” <sup>[59]</sup>.

As mentioned previously, before the official consolidation of this axis, there was already an extra-urban road with some buildings along it—this was the Strada della Calce, which led to a minor productive port on the river. This was the point where lime, used as the main material for building the city, arrived from Casale, along with wood from the Po Valley. There was a small bridge for crossing the river, making this one of the few places where it was possible to traverse the water. Strada della Calce was a crucial economic connection with the rest of the region and served as an important cultural, social, and political axis leading into the city center.

- [57] De Ferrari, Job, Ronchetta, 1990, p.42 [own translation]
- [58] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.97 [own translation]
- [59] Merlotti, 2014, p.16 [own translation]





image 40



image 41



This urban project included the consolidation of 13 blocks (6 on the northern side and 7 on the southern, as in (image 42)), none of which are identical. In fact, each block was designed by a different architect, who faced the challenge of making functional and structural modifications to achieve a cohesive image of the street. Nevertheless, the “indispensable and generalized principle of uniformity and regularity of architecture is reiterated (...) through the conformity of the buildings (...) and the consequent recurrence of the skyline of the blocks, ensuring the unitary profile of the alignment of the new city streets, with attention to the visual perspectives determined by continuous building facades” [60]. Along this axis, the buildings respected certain parameters of standardization, such as color, shapes, and architectural styles, with the most visible element at first sight being their height.

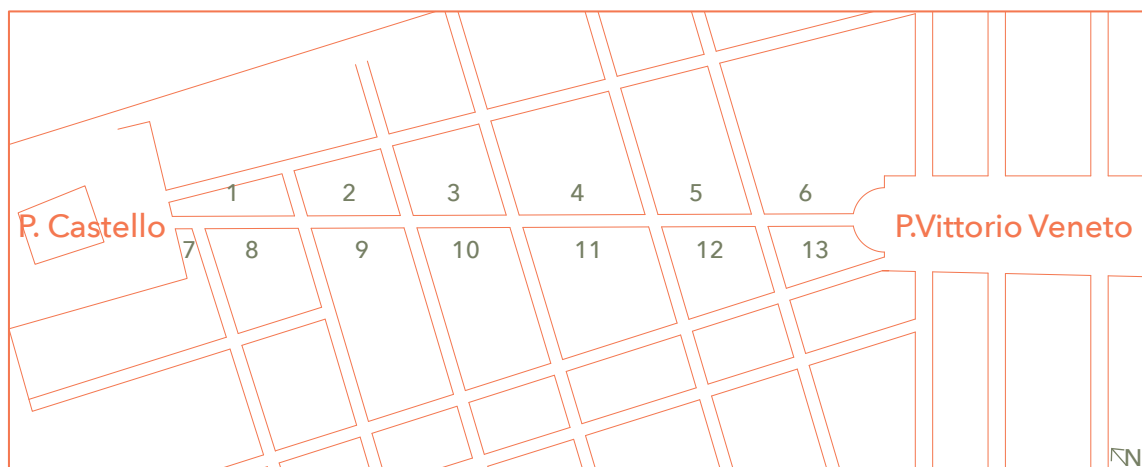


image 42

Castellamonte considered the proportions along the street. This axis has a total length of about 700 meters from Piazza Castello to Piazza Vittorio Veneto and a width of “eighteen meters, equal to the height of the buildings facing it” [60], allowing for the drawing of a square section of the road profile. Additionally, along the axis, all the buildings have just four floors, where the “piano nobile” (first floor) has a height of four meters, and from the facade is easily distinguishable from the other two above, due to the “larger size of the windows and the prominence of the cornices topped by pediments and moldings in accordance with the seventeenth-century lexicon” [60]. In fact, Via Po emphasizes the length of the axis rather than the height of the buildings along it. This objective of achieving noticeable horizontality is also reflected in the facades, where above the windows of the noble floor, there are two horizontal guidelines or bands, with triangular and curved cornices in between.

Taking into account that Via Po was consolidated by incorporating existing buildings, another method was used to emphasize a unified visual identity along the

image 40 View from Via Po towards Piazza Castello (building at the end: Palazzo Madama [taken by the author])

image 41 View from Via Po towards River Po (building at the end: Church Madre di Dio [taken by the author])

image 42 Urban distribution of the squares among Via Po [production of the author]

[60] Merlotti, 2014, p.17 [own translation]



axis. To achieve this, an additional restoration project was initiated on October 26, 1673, focusing on the creation of arcades on both sides of the street. Castellamonte envisioned this project as a “scenic backdrop capable of composing in a single vision even the heterogeneous facades of the pre-existing buildings, among which are the churches of San Francesco da Paola and Sant’Antonio Abate” <sup>[60]</sup>. This intervention guaranteed a pedestrian pathway enriched by new uses, enhancing the experience of walking through the city. Standing in Piazza Castello and looking toward the Po River, the establishments on the left arcade were more focused on “cultural, intellectual, and educational sectors, with the presence of the University and the Charity Hospice (where the RAI is located today)” <sup>[61]</sup>, while those on the right side were more commercial. This intervention maintained the primary goals of alignment, symmetry, and rhythm in its architectural elements.

Both sides of the street featured arcades with mezzanine service rooms and accommodation along the length of Via Po. However, there were “interruptions” in this continuity for religious buildings, including the San Francesco di Paola convent, the former church of Sant’Antonio, and the church of the Annunciata. The San Francesco di Paola convent underwent “an accurate structural remodeling intervention to allow its insertion” <sup>[61]</sup> between the other buildings in the block. However, this church did not undergo further restoration to incorporate the arcades into its facade, thus interrupting the continuity of the passage. The church of Sant’Antonio no longer exists, and the church of the Annunciata, constructed in a neo-Baroque style, proposes a solution for having a historic building facade with a covered, porticoed pedestrian passage, blending into the context without imposing a dominant role.

Likewise, among the features that contributed to the overall image of a harmonious and homogeneous street is the color palette, which was selected in the nineteenth century for this street. It is in concordance with the other tonalities seen in the historic city center. For Via Po, this coloring model “makes the facades more vibrant by differentiating reliefs and backgrounds, highlighting cornices and various materials” <sup>[62]</sup>. This chromatic selection, in addition to the volumes for ornamentation, the arches, the windows, and other representative architectural elements, creates a “game” between light and shadows, making a stroll down the urban axis an interesting and playful experience. Another aspect is the lighting, which serves as a premeditated ornamentation that spreads throughout the city center. The lanterns over the porticoes produce an “effect somewhat fascinating in the architectural sequences, dark except for the bases of the columns where light filters following the rhythm dictated by the pillars” <sup>[62]</sup>. Besides the urban lighting, the shop windows under the arcades are decorated with lights, both on the facade and inside the establishments, contributing to the generation of more colors, lights, and shadows that interact with the architecture while walking down the street.

[61] Davico, Coppo, 2001, p.86 [own translation]

[62] De Ferrari, Job, Ronchetta, 1990, p.42 [own translation]

The nineteenth century was marked by significant urban projects, including the dismantling of city walls to allow the physical expansion of many European cities. Turin was no exception. In fact, "throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Turin was strongly influenced by military defense works, which affected the very urban layout of the settlement" <sup>[63]</sup>, and due to its infrastructure, it faced numerous challenges in achieving this goal, which would fundamentally change the experience of city life and the perception of its spatiality.

In the 1800s, the dismantling of the fortifications (except for the citadel) began as part of the Napoleonic Wars. During this time, Turin was no longer the capital of Italy but was under the control of the French state, ruled by Napoleon Bonaparte. The tearing down of the walls now enabled the possibility of urban expansion in all directions. "On June 23, 1800, eleven days after the Battle of Marengo, Napoleon, from Milan, ordered the dismantling of the main Piedmontese fortresses in the valleys and plains, in such a way that it would no longer be possible to restore them, in order to definitively demilitarize the territory that had just been reoccupied." <sup>[64]</sup>. From an architectural and urbanistic point of view, many interventions and projects took place during this period. In 1802, "the French government launched a first competition for the reorganization of the city: all architects and designers were invited to "submit projects for the construction of a new boundary wall, to protect tax rights"" <sup>[65]</sup>. Although a winning design was selected, during this Napoleonic period, the Council of Builders supported ideas of public green spaces and a new road network to support the city's expansion. "The French planning designed the grandes places outside the city gates, connecting them through straight and flat ring-road promenades, which allowed for the integration of the city, with the new bridges" <sup>[66]</sup>.

The old concept of a closed city was replaced by a new image of Turin that incorporated elements like nature, the river, and the hills—features that had long been rejected or separated from the urban fabric. On December 27, 1807, Napoleon "decreed the construction of new masonry bridges over the Po and the Dora (...) for the project of the bridge over the Po, Joseph La Ramee Pertinchamp was appointed" <sup>[64]</sup>. With the construction of this bridge, "The river assumed a new meaning for the city: from being a physical barrier to being a natural connection between the urban pattern and the hilly landscape" <sup>[67]</sup>. The expansion of the urban area towards the Po River on the east side of the former fortified city included the construction of the Gran Madre di Dio church, Vittorio Veneto Square, the Vittorio Emanuele I bridge, and other structures designed to manage the river's water. "The construction of the stone bridge over the Po began on November 22, 1810" <sup>[68]</sup>.

In 1808, Napoleon ordered all cities annexed to the empire and departmental capitals to "develop an urban planning scheme within two years (...) consequently, in Turin, the Conseil des Ediles established a commission tasked with complying

[63] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.159 [own translation]

[64] Scarzella, 1995, p.406 [own translation]

[65] Dameri, Pozzati, 2016, p.2 [own translation]

[66] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.15 [own translation]

[67] Dameri, Pozzati, 2016, p.1 [own translation]

[68] Scarzella, 1995, p.407 [own translation]

with the imperial directives: on April 30, 1809, the commission, which included F. Bonsignore, L. Lombardi, C. Randoni, G. Cardone, and J. Pertinchamp, completed a general plan for the embellishment of the city of Turin" [64].

In 1814, after the Italians defeated the French and Vittorio Emanuele I took the crown, the new king crossed over the bridge and decided to keep it as a symbol of the Italian victory over the French. Additionally, the Municipality decided to "celebrate the return of the House of Savoy to Turin's soil by announcing a competition for the construction of a temple to be dedicated to the Virgin Mary, precisely at the spot where the king had crossed the Po River on the day of his return to the city" [69]. The construction of this temple in gratitude for the return of the king also involved the design of a "new square to be opened in the village 'beyond the Po,' aligned with the new bridge" [70]. In 1817, the official announcement was made by the Municipality, which stated "two separate competitions for the design of the church and the square in front of it" [71]. The winning proposal was by Ferdinando Bonsignore, "featuring a circular shape resembling the existing rotunda in Rome" [72]. In July of the same year, the first stone of the temple was laid, but "due to the severe financial difficulties of the city, construction work for the commemorative temple marking the return of the House of Savoy, eventually dedicated to the Gran Madre di Dio, did not begin until 1827, and the inauguration took place only in May 1831, in the presence of the new sovereign, Carlo Alberto" [71].

Urbanistically, the river and hills were now integral to the conception of the urban area. "The creation of the *grandes places* was the result of a by now irreversibly consolidated urban cultural policy, constituting the matrix for the development of the subsequent period" [73]. In 1817, the king "ordered the city to adopt an urban planning scheme that included the construction of a customs wall" [74]. This year marked the beginning of the project for a grand square outside the Porta di Po, under King Vittorio Emanuele I's directive to reconsider the "urban layout of his capital, redesigning its entrances and once again enclosing the tree-lined area within a continuous wall, with functions as a customs barrier and for public order control" [75].

Also in 1817, the king demanded urban plans for the new public square to be placed before the beginning of the bridge. "The design had to meet two main objectives: to connect the ring roads, built on the site of the ancient fortification, with the consolidated urban fabric, and to foresee an expansion of the southeastern sector of the city, dictated by the construction of the temple to be erected on the eastern bank of the Po" [71]. Several proposals were presented; for instance, Gaetano Lombardi suggested a Piazza d'Armi following the geometry proposed by Castellamonte: semicircle. According to the architect, this square "formed by semi-circular avenues lined with trees, produces a truly theatrical effect" [76].

[69] Dameri, Pozzati, 2016, p.4 [own translation]

[70] Scarzella, Coppo, Bellino, 1994, p.31 [own translation]

[71] Dameri, Pozzati, 2016, p.5 [own translation]

[72] Scarzella, 1955, p.409 [own translation]

[73] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.204 [own translation]

[74] Scarzella, 1995, p.408 [own translation]

[75] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.217 [own translation]

[76] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.218 [own translation]



Piano regolare della Città di Torino, e Sobborghi  
 pell'ingrandimento, regolarizzazione, D'abbellimento della medesima, che l'Ingegnere Lombardi Figlio propone, ed  
 opsequia all'Illustri<sup>ss</sup> ed Eccellentiss<sup>ss</sup> Civica Amministrazione della predelta Città.

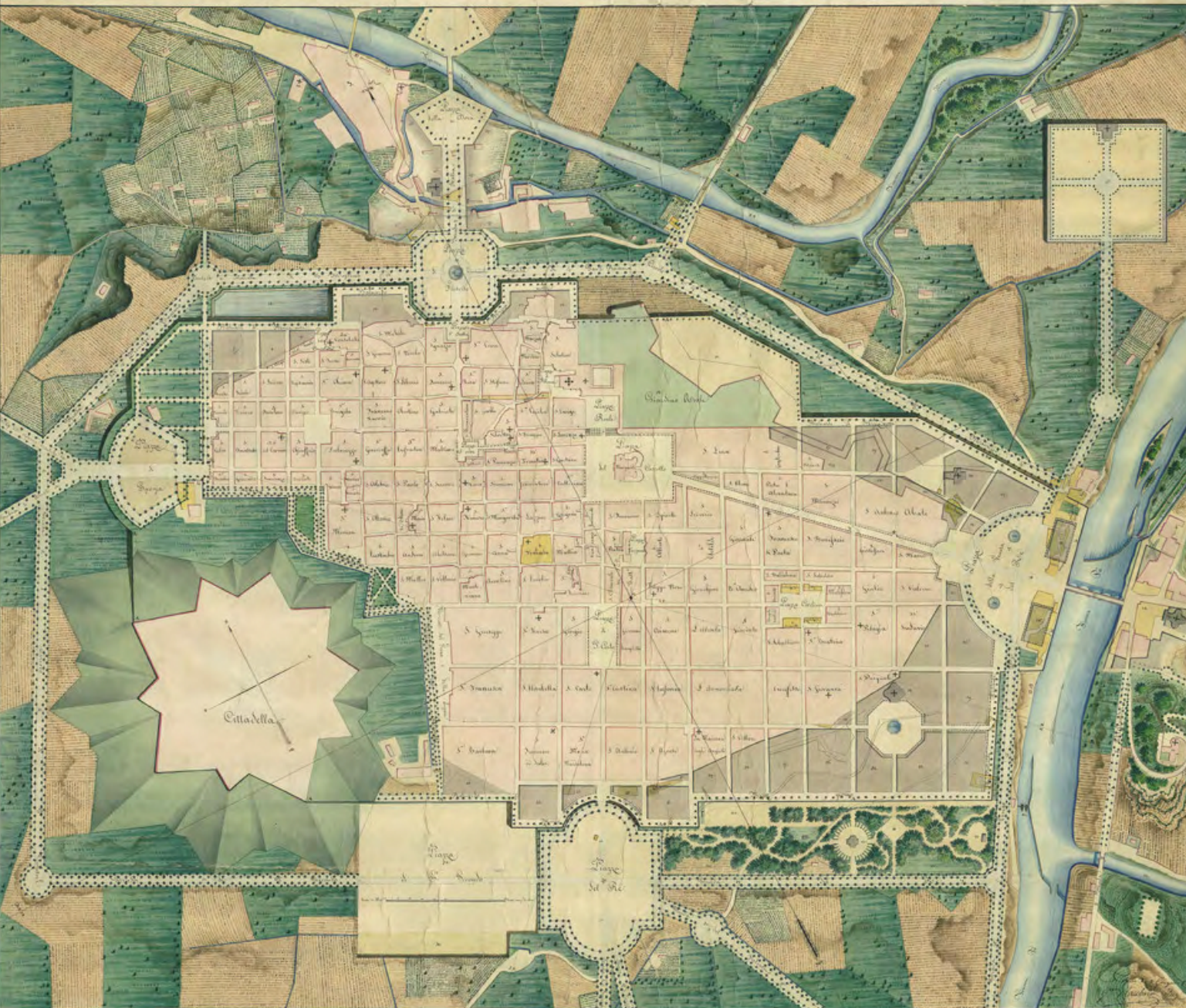


image 43 Piano regolatore della città di Torino, e sobborghi pell'ingrandimento, regolarizzazione e abbellimento della medesima. Adapted from "Piano Regolatore 1817" by MuseoTorino, n.d., <https://t.ly/0WH1n>



A second proposal was made in 1817 by Ernest Melano, who projected a gigantic porticoed square placed transversally to Via Po, with a capacity to host up to 300,000 people. In his design, he included a gate for accessing the bridge, and “the views towards the Po are limited to narrow, almost tunnel-like, perspective views, formed by four short streets facing the river” [77]. This proposal clearly did not follow the same ideals that characterized the Napoleonic period, where there was clear integration between the city and the expansion areas beyond the former walls.

Another proposal was made by Gaetano Lombardi (image 44), incorporating ideas from the former Piano Regolatore; however, this proposal was not considered. He included a design that “reiterated the idea of placing significant urban focal points in key areas of the city: instead of the large city gates, there were the large squares, for which the hypothesis of a double square straddling the Po River is of particular interest” [77]. This proposal established a strong relationship between the main points in the square and the new urban consolidations outside the gates, following the paths of the historic Baroque routes.

In July 1818, a proposal was approved, the design being a revised version by architect E. Melano, in which he emphasized the relationships and connections with the road network and the surrounding context. He “proposed the interruption of the customs wall at the bridge, as well as the connection, through a transverse median axis, with the tree-lined avenue leading to Valentino” [78]. In the square, he continued with the implementation of the Castellamontian design in the buildings, proposing four-floor arcaded facades. Nonetheless, in 1825, “the vicar decided on drafting a new project, once again entrusted to the architects Bonsignore, Brunati, Lorenzo Lombardi, Michelotti, and Randoni” [78]. Since Melano’s design focused more on representativeness and urban control than on functionality, a new proposal

However, new challenges arose. One of the most significant issues affecting the design of Piazza della Venuta del Re (now Piazza Vittorio Veneto) was the steep incline of the terrain. After reviewing documents from the Consiglio degli Edili, Frizzi understood the concerns about “the steepness of the land (-7 m) towards the Esedra di Via Po and the entrance of the bridge” [79]. In 1825, he proposed a solution that avoided the use of stairs to prevent an unpleasant visual effect and “resolved the complex set of problems through several original measures: increasing the number of blocks, adopting sloping arcades, introducing blocks with varying eave heights, and masking the discontinuities between the eave lines of consecutive blocks” [80]. Frizzi’s solution included two pavilions between the three blocks on each side of the square (north and south), each with two thick columns instead of the usual pilasters, creating an optical illusion to mitigate the slope. Frizzi’s arcades were designed to “concentrate and greatly favor commerce in the shops of the new blocks” [79] and provided a pleasant environment for walking through the city, even on rainy or winter days. “Piazza Vittorio Veneto, for example, was an excellent formal result that attracted investment and complementary projects to that part of the town” [81]

[77] Dameri, Pozzati, 2016, p.5 [own translation]

[78] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.219 [own translation]

[79] Davico, Coppo, 2001, p.25 [own translation]

[80] Scarzella, 1995, p.413 [own translation]

[81] Comoli, Roccia, 2001, p.204 [own translation]



PO RIVER ←

→ PIAZZA CASTELLO

Solution adopted by Frizzi in Piazza Vittorio to address the change in elevation in the square (a difference of about 7 meters between the eastern and western ends; negative slope towards the river). The use of the pavilion with two columns was employed to visually minimize the slope.

image 44 Piazza Vittorio Veneto facing southwards.  
[image taken by the author]



\*Timelines about overall main events  
related Via Po and its consolidation

**1755**

Edict for avoiding non authorized  
modifications of the facades

**1799**

Became allowed the creation of the  
dormers and another floor on the roof  
of the buildings. The first planimetry for  
colors of the urban area was published

**JUNE 23, 1800**

Napoleon's order to dismantle the walls

**MARCH 23, 1806**

Concession to the city of the fortification  
lands in exchange for reimbursement of  
demolition costs

**DECEMBER 27, 1807**

Start of the new bridge design on the Po  
by architect Joseph La Ramée

**JULY 4, 1808**

Drafting of the Plan Général  
d'embellissement pour la ville de Turin

**1813**

Construction of the Bridge over the Po River, over the former wooden structure

**JUNE 14, 1817**

Approval of G. Lombardi's plan, Piano Regolatore della città di Torino e sobborghi

**JULY 26, 1817**

Approval of the variant plan for the porticoed piazza outside Porta Po attributed to the architect Melano

**AUGUST 19, 1818**

Announcement of the competition for the porticoed piazza to be formed in front of the new Gran Madre di Dio temple, architect Ferdinando Bonsignore

**1820**

The construction of the road overpasses in between buildings over the arcades of the left side proposed by Lombardi, using pillars in stone of Malanaggio, to give continuity to the "king's promenade"

**APRIL 4, 1823**

Approval of the urban plan for the district "on this side of the Po" (al di la del Po)

## FEBRUARY 10, 1825

Presentation of a new project for the plan of the district of Po "on this side of the bridge" drafted by the commission of the Consiglio degli Edili (Brunati, Bonsignore, Lombardi, Miglioretti, Randoni);

## MARCH 8, 1825

Approval of the project by the commission of the Consiglio degli Edili with "free concession of the lands and fifteen-year exemption from taxation"

## MARCH 21, 1825

Decree by the king for the realization of the square according to a project presented by the draftsman of the Consiglio degli Edili, Giuseppe Frizzi, having elaborated it in execution of the orders received directly from the vicar

## 1825

Private subscriptions began for the free grants of plots of land to be built on the square of Piazza Vittorio Veneto

Construction of Piazza Vittorio Veneto

## 1850

Construction of Murazzi del Po

THE OTHER MAJOR INTERVENTIONS ON VIA PO TOOK PLACE AFTER WORLD WAR II, WHEN THE LAST TWO BLOCKS ON THE RIGHT SIDE, ADJACENT TO PIAZZA VITTORIO VENETO, WERE RECONSTRUCTED.



By the end of the twentieth century, Via Po was still characterized by the high presence of commercial institutions, distinguished by their traditional identity and high specialization in products and design. As mentioned in previous sections, Turin is a city that has experienced a slow renovation process, leading to the preservation of three main aspects: "of a broad range of merchandise categories; of traditional forms of management, with relatively small unitary surfaces within the central area (approximately 60 square meters per shop, which is around the city average); and of continuous systems of historical urban furnishings, with the frequent retention of elements tied to the typology of arcades (either historical or recently replaced)" [82]. This axis's economic essence is still represented by a high density of commercial furnishings and signage inside the arcades, which help identify the wide variety of commerce, with a marked tendency toward artisan products.

[82] Job, Ronchetta, 1989, p.19 [own translation]

## main features

### arcades

In the period of the popularization and diversification of commercial establishments, urbanism provided answers to this growing phenomenon. This “internal inflation of the commercial structure, which tends to evolve distinctly toward different forms of contact with the public, takes place in the same years through the creation of the first Parisian passages and the English arcades. These consist of sequences of covered shops (...) and bring together merchants who are associated with each other according to an internal usage agreement” <sup>[83]</sup>. Turin also experienced the consolidation of these pedestrian spaces designed for the flow of people, the establishment of social interactions, and the exchange of commercial products.

Via Po is known for being a “lively, welcoming, curious, and dynamic street that engages through a straight path, evoking and uncovering multiple sensations and emotions. Among the elements that most contribute to creating these vivid sensations, the continuous movement—both vehicular and pedestrian—predominates, contrasting with and simultaneously integrating, in an almost ironic game of hide and seek, the static and solid image defined by the rigid rhythm of its facades” <sup>[84]</sup>. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the physical state of Via Po today is the result of various adaptations and transformations carried out to meet the requirements of the model proposed by Castellamonte.

In Castellamonte’s project, the compositional intention for the arcades was to “restore the facade’s sense of harmony through the repetition of a compositional module, imposed on the regularity of the openings and fronts” <sup>[85]</sup>. In an urban area, the creation of the arcades looked forward to the establishment of a “coveted meeting place for bourgeois society, a pedestrian area enclosed and open to the constant presence of the public, rich in qualified commercial offerings and various services” <sup>[86]</sup>. With the consolidation of the arcades of Via Po, looking from the facade of the building, the arcades are integrated into the ground floors of the buildings, designed with a consistent rhythm of arched apertures, followed by windows crowned by tympanums on the upper floors. From the perspective of the corridor, “the portico is the relational space par excellence within the city. A protected space, exclusively pedestrian, continuous, at a human scale, it becomes lively especially when commerce decorates and equips its premises” <sup>[87]</sup>. The design of the inner part of these porticated sidewalks consists of a rhythm of columns that present rounded arches on their tops, which are also visible from the facade of the ground floor. These same arches also exist towards the side of the shops on this same level, although they are enclosed and may have windows or balconies. Above the corridor, cross vaults further reinforce the intended symmetry. This homogeneity was sought through vertical and horizontal guidelines, which are successfully expressed in the facades but are lost within the interiors of the establishments, where the continuity of these patterns is not maintained.

- [83] Sica, 1991, p.1026 [own translation]
- [84] Davico, Coppo, 2001, p.94 [own translation]
- [85] Davico, Coppo, 2001, p.96 [own translation]
- [86] Sica, 1991, p.1027 [own translation]
- [87] De Ferrari, Job, Ronchetta, 1990, p.45 [own translation]
- [88] Merlotti, 2014, p.17 [own translation]
- [89] De Ferrari, Job, Ronchetta, 1990, p.44 [own translation]

Strolling down this street, the senses are highly involved in achieving this perception of homogeneity. For example, there is the interplay between light and shadow, which is most visible at the arcades on the left side of the street, where the sun hits directly. "The sense of perspective and visual vanishing point is accentuated by the striking presence of the shadows corresponding to the porticoed arches that sequentially outline the base of the blocks" [88]. Even when walking in the arcades, the shadows projected on the floor and walls respect this order and help to perceive this rhythm even in the interior part of the structure.

When analyzing the arcades, it becomes evident that the overall image is the result of numerous interventions layered over the original design, creating "dissonances with each other and with the regular spatial context, defining a whole in which compositional incoherence dominates" [84]. While this significant urban axis has tried to maintain a common architectural language, closer inspection reveals sections of the street that are in dissonance. For example, there is the paving of the entire pedestrian passage. For starters, Via Po is "among the first streets in the city to be paved, making it a finished, livable environment; similarly to interior furnishings, the quality, design, and color of the pavement significantly help define the overall image, and even the perceptible continuity of the route" [89]. Originally, the material used for these finishings was gneiss slabs, but nowadays this continuity is fragmented, and the use of other materials is evident, threatening once more the unity of the whole axis.

However, despite these areas where the original values have been altered, Via Po remains a welcoming street, offering comfortable dimensions that allow for pleasant strolling. Visitors are captivated by the play of lights and colors from the shop windows and by the changing experience created by these elements in conjunction with the continuous columnar curtain along the axis. Among the porticated passage, it can be felt the "protection from the elements, the possibility of making the best use of artificial lighting (...) during nighttime hours contribute to the success of this new commercial typology, which is rich in variations" [83]. This arrangement unifies the various blocks and buildings, providing an immersive experience of voids and fills, and contrasts of light and shadow.

Regarding the aforementioned irregularities, it is important to note that they are the result of a design created not on a tabula rasa, but through the intervention and refinement of an existing axis with few significant prior urban projects. The design embraced these pre-existing elements, embellishing them while providing functional upgrades. Moreover, over time and due to major historical events—such as wars, demonstrations, and public events—this urban corridor's physical characteristics have been threatened. Restoration projects have been undertaken, further altering the original design and, in some cases, introducing additional dissonances. These incongruences are evident in the misalignment between the

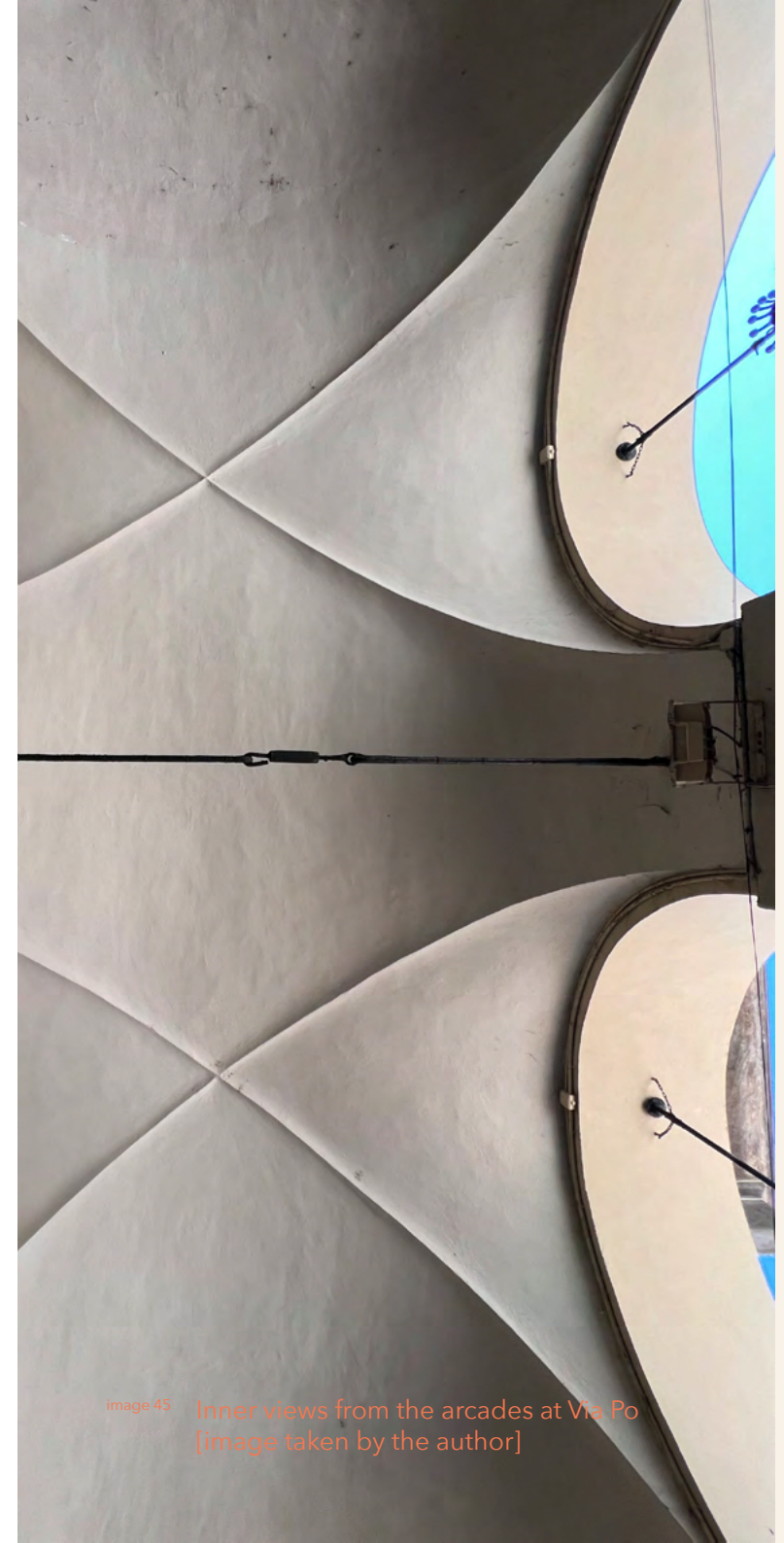


image 45

Inner views from the arcades at Via Po  
[image taken by the author]



carefully designed sequence of cross vaults and the “irregular openings of the inner front (...), the noticeable misalignment between the spatial and formal order of the openings” [90]. Nevertheless, these dissonances interact with the lights and colors from the shop windows, contributing to the vibrant and dynamic atmosphere that characterizes this urban corridor.

The pedestrian walkway along this axis is now entirely covered on the left side by roofs. This side, receiving direct sunlight and connected to the Palazzo Reale, was designed to offer a comfortable promenade for the king (image 46). These roofs were created by designing bridges that connected the first floors of two buildings from adjacent blocks. On the opposite side of the axis, the walkable gallery exists within the blocks, but there is no covered passage between them at the six streets intersecting Via Po. Apart from these six interruptions, there is another void in the urban corridor—the one formed by the Church of San Francesco di Paola. As mentioned earlier, this church existed before the street’s consolidation and was integrated into the urban plan. For this reason, a small plaza was created in front of the church, although it is not as large or hierarchical as other squares in the city.

Undoubtedly, these arcades have a marked character and use. They were born with the “specific purpose of being a commercial space; Via Po boasts the porticoes that have been “equipped” for the longest time in the city: commerce is dense and continuous, interrupted only by churches and the University building” [91]. Among the elements of commerce along this street are the storefronts, the display cases, the signage of the artisan shops, and the commercial furniture. Beginning with the storefronts, these have reconfigured the physical features and design of the portico to fulfill the needs of the commercial establishments; the building structure has been “reshaped, expanded, covered, and hidden. The interiors often continue the figurative characteristics of the shop window, formalizing the continuity, both in form and use, between the public space of the portico and the commercial space” [92]. The vivid commercial vibe of the street is also expressed through the display cases located on some of the columns under the arcade. In certain instances, these elements are made with the same materials and geometries as the storefronts or monoblocs of the main establishment that owns them, creating a space in which “the furnishing of the surrounding commerce encloses its public space” [93].

[90] Davico, Coppo, 2001, p.96 [own translation]

[91] Merlotti, 2014, p.17 [own translation]

[92] De Ferrari, Job, Ronchetta, 1990, p.45 [own translation]

[93] De Ferrari, Job, Ronchetta, 1990, p.47 [own translation]





image 46

Via Po facing to the north, showing the continuous King's promenade in between blocks. [image taken by the author]



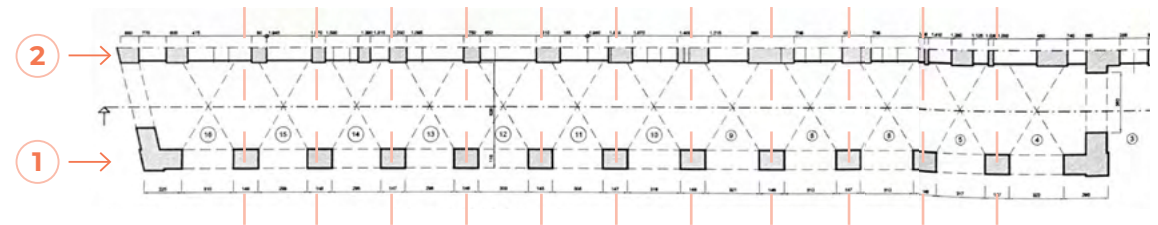
## main features

### overall design: an example of the design intentions

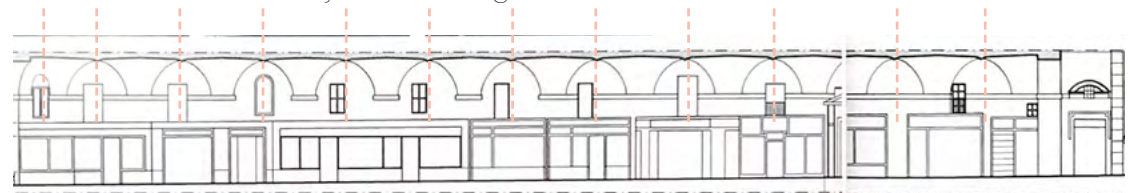
In the publication *Il disegno dei portici a Torino. Architettura e immagine urbana dei percorsi coperti da Vitozzi a Piacentini* by Davico, P. and Coppo, S. (2001), a thorough analysis of Via Po is presented, with a particular block studied to demonstrate the key features and original intentions of the design of the arcades. The block selected for this case study is the *Isolato di San Francesco da Paola*, located on the right side of the street, where the presence of the church interrupts the continuity and modularity of the arcades.

Based on the drawings published in this research <sup>[94]</sup>, several conclusions have been drawn:

- As observed in the ground floor plan, there are two types of columns: the pillars located on the outer side of the block (1), facing the street and supporting the façade, and the columns embedded within the inner façade of the arcades (2), situated inside the shops. Ideally, these two types of structural elements should be aligned, but in fact, they are not. At first glance, when walking through the arcade, there appears to be symmetry between both sides of the pedestrian walkway. This effect is created by the continuity of the cross vaults, but in reality, the columns are misaligned and are concealed or camouflaged by the furnishings inside the shops.

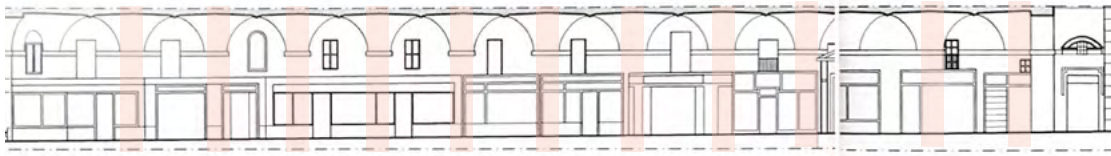


- On the interior façade, rounded arches are formed by the cross vaults. These arches always feature windows, but many of them are not centered, and they vary in style and typology. Some windows have balconies, some have two glass panels, while others have up to six; some are wooden, and others are metallic. There is no consistency in the design of these windows.

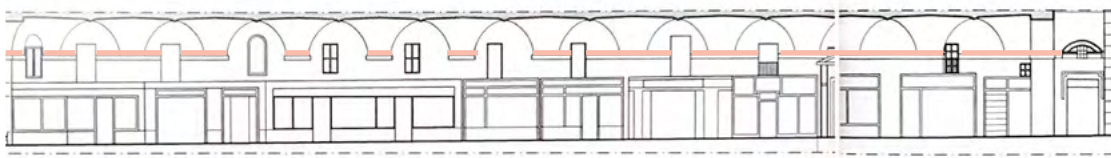


- The symmetry created by the cross vaults does not align with the horizontal beginning and ending of the storefronts. In some cases, these shops end in the middle of the central axis of the vaults, in others at one corner, and in some cases, there is no alignment at all.





- Beneath the cross vaults on both sides of the passage, a horizontal plaster line creates a visual division of spaces. However, this line has been removed in some sections of the facade and, in other areas, it is interrupted by the aforementioned windows.



- On a positive note, the storefronts in this block all maintain the same height, providing a sense of unity and continuity.
- As noted in the floor plan, the design more or less maintains consistent dimensions between the pillars and the spaces between them. Achieving this was not easy, given that the design had to accommodate pre-existing structures.

Based on the observations made, the buildings display a precise symmetry in their design: the facade features rhythmic dimensions and consistent spacing between architectural elements. The three floors above the arcades share the same distribution of components and proportional relationships. Vertically, the openings are aligned with the center of the arches, creating a coherent and readable facade.

In contrast, inside the arcade, there is a connection to the façade, but this link only extends up to the cross vaults and the perimeter of the arches above the shop windows. While the commercial establishments maintain vertical alignment, the connection and symmetry are lost in relation to the cross vaults, and therefore, to the facade of the building.

Overall, when strolling through the arcades, these asymmetries are not noticeable unless one pays close attention to the details. The consistent language in terms of materials, styles, colors, and general features provides a pleasant experience. The arcades are designed to convey majesty and grandeur, while at the same time maintaining a sense of dynamism and vibrancy, which is ever-present in this urban project.

## historical events

### after the war: bombing and fires

Some dimensions of the arcades changed after the Second World War. This change is evident in the two blocks south of Piazza Vittorio Veneto, where, before the war, the arcaded corridors featured cross-vaults supported by arches. However, following the bombings and fires, the reconstruction of these blocks incorporated a flat ceiling with exposed beams and joists, creating a space that was “extremely rigid due to the simplicity of those forms, where the sequence of arched openings on the facade remains conspicuously unintegrated with the rest, almost resulting in a scenographic type of interruption” [95]. As a result of this new design, the welcoming and warm atmosphere of the arcades was lost in this section of the street, leading to compositional incoherence and inconsistency.

This different type of ceiling also impacted the inner façades. With cross vaults, an arch forms beneath the vault, and in this space, rectangular vertical windows are placed. However, with flat ceilings, these arches do not exist, leaving a flat, uninterrupted longitudinal wall. The openings in these walls are simple rectangles, lacking the arched symmetries seen in other sections.

image 47



[95] Davico & Coppo, 2001, p. 95 [own translation]

image 47 Bombe e mezzi incendiari lanciati. Consulted at Archivio Storico di Torino

image 48 Interior view of the southern arcade, where a restoration project was held after the Second World War [image taken by the author]





image 42



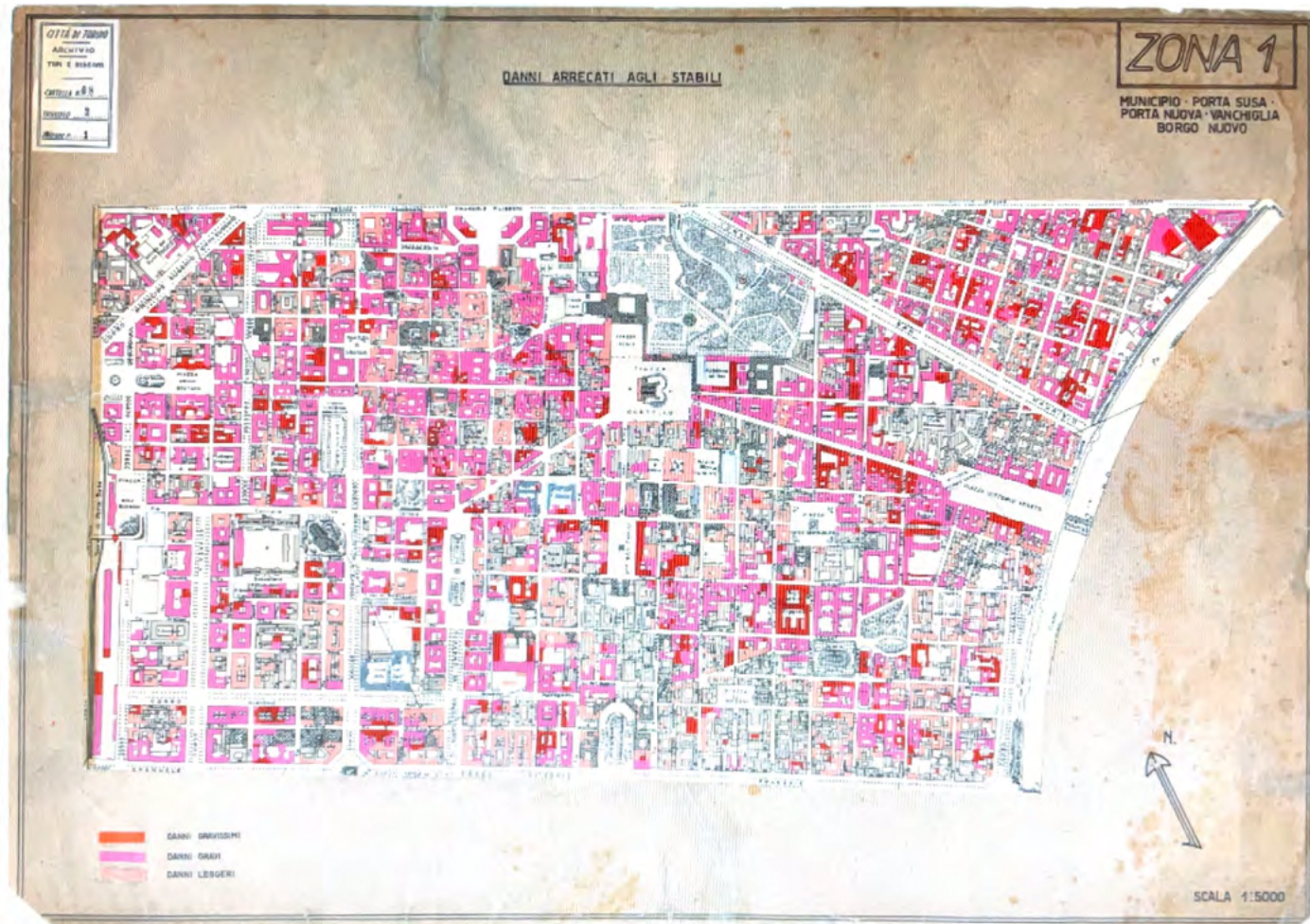


image 49 Danni arrecati agli stabili. Consulted at Archivio Storico di Torino

image 50 Davico, P., & Coppo, S. (2001). Portici di Via Po [Image]. In *Il disegno dei portici a Torino. Architettura e immagine urbana dei percorsi coperti* da Vitozzi a Piacentini (p.95, 96)

As shown in (image 47) and (image 49), blocks 12 and 13 were the most affected by World War II. Both suffered severe and extremely severe damage. Block 12 was struck by two bombs, which exploded, while block 13 experienced the explosion of three bombs. In block 13, the bombs impacted the north-western side, a detail still visible today, as shown in (image 48), where half of the arcade retains cross vaults, and the other half features flat ceilings with beams and joists.

Along the facades of Via Po, a total of eight bombs exploded, all on the right side of the street. As shown on the maps, several fires broke out, but there is no evidence of unexploded bombs.



Arcades with cross vaults



Arcades with flat ceilings with beams and joists



# 4 present-day situation of via po

## evaluation of the arcades

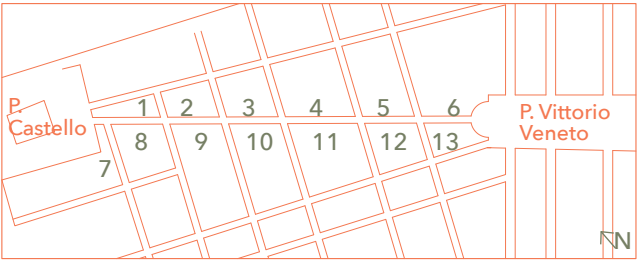


image 51

Among the 13 blocks along Via Po, an inventory of the main features of this axis, studied in the previous section was mapped (image 51).

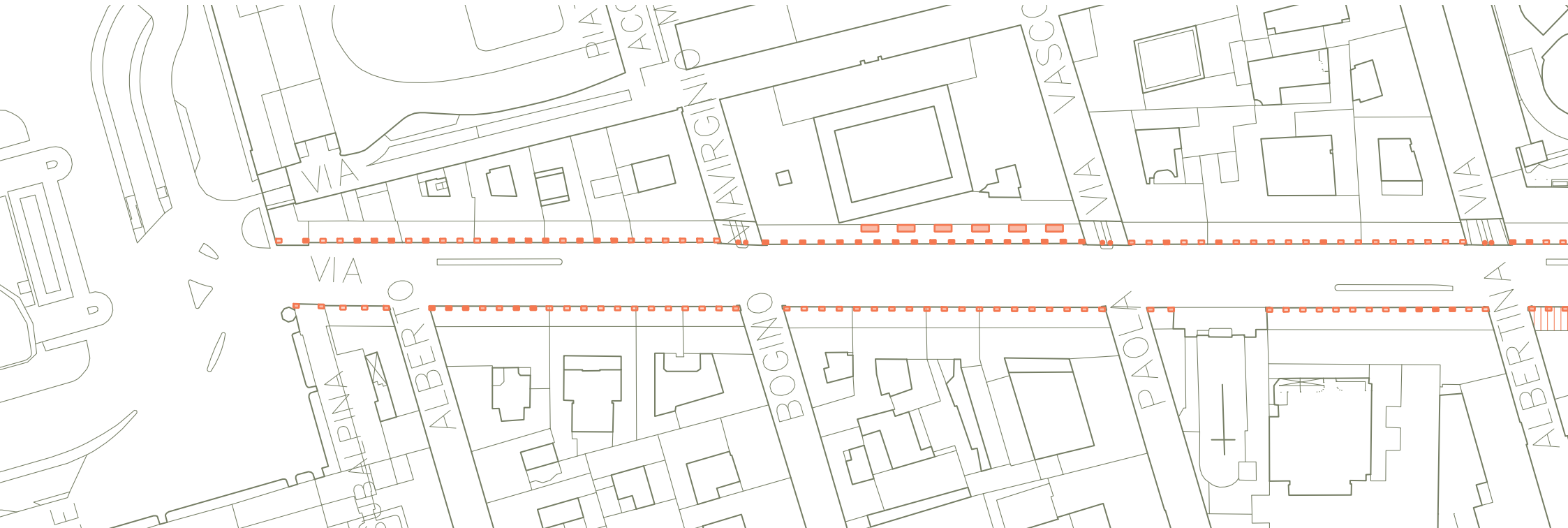
Firstly, the existing pillars that form both the facade of the street and the interior support of the arcades were identified. A total of 262 pillars are present along the axis, excluding those in Piazza Vittorio Veneto. Additionally, considering that the north arcade of Via Po is fully covered by bridges over the streets, there are 10 additional structural elements on this axis. However, these columns were not included in the count or analysis, as they exhibit different characteristics.

The pillar count per block is as follows:

table 3  
pillars by block on via po

	BLOCK #												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
AMOUNT	26	18	20	28	22	20	5	19	19	16	28	21	20

image 52





Continuing with the analysis, the arcades were classified according to the presence (or absence) of display cases, kiosks, and other elements that have emerged over time, such as payphones, post boxes, and "fototessera" cabins. Another layer was added to this exploration: the introduction of mobile elements within the commercial environment of the arcades. Among these mobile objects are tables and stand-alone kiosks.

In [image 53](#) the classification of elements is presented, following the categories studied in [page 40](#) but using only the first three types of display cases. These are the ones that exist on Via Po and are characterized by being placed over an individual pillar rather than between two structural elements. On the following pages, a more detailed explanation of the categorization is provided.

- image 51 Urban distribution of the squares among Via Po [production of the author]
- image 52 Distribution of the pillars among Via Po [production of the author]



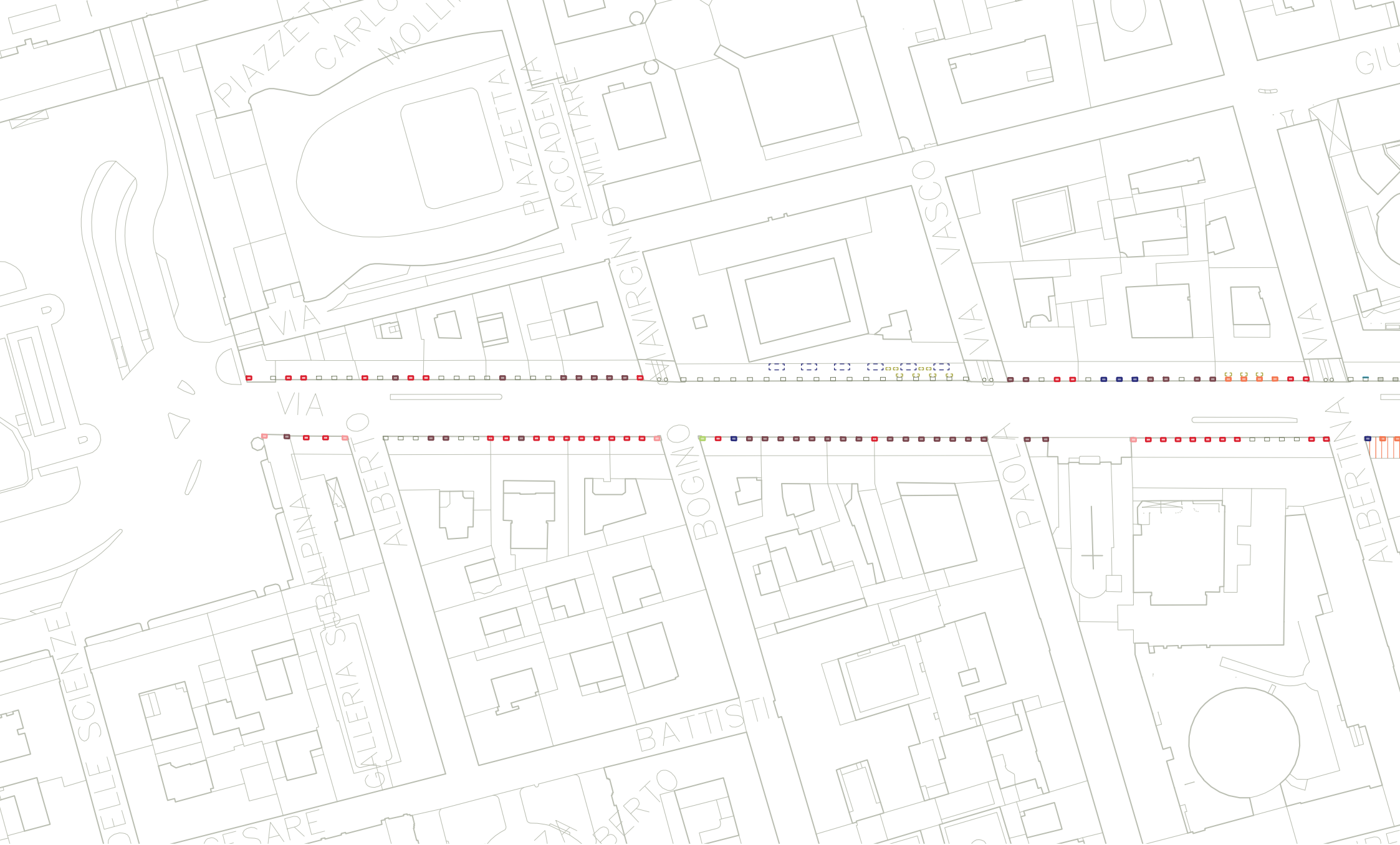
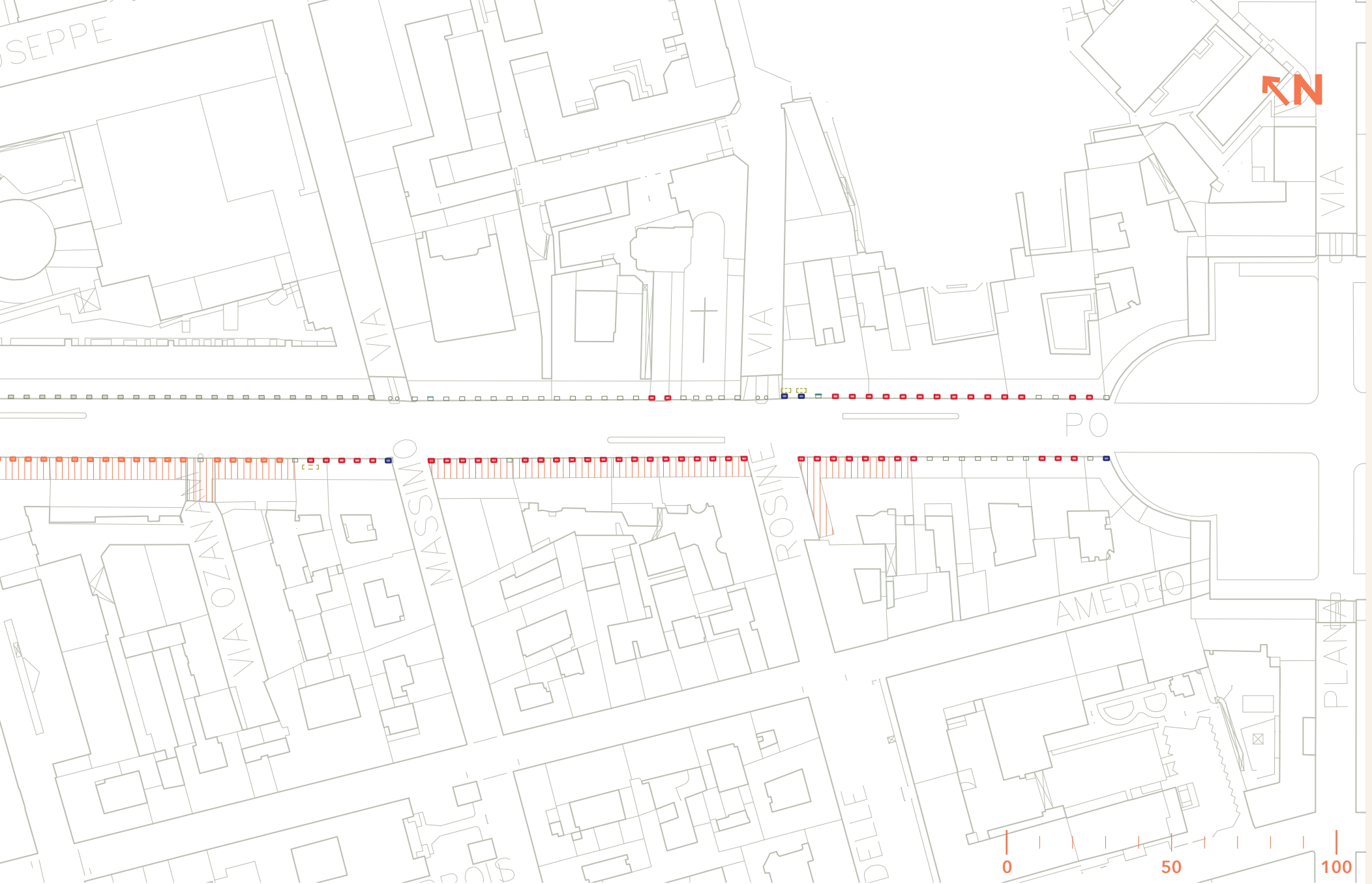


IMAGE 53: Architectural typologies found among the pillars of Via Po [author's own work]



- |                        |  |                       |                          |                                    |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| No additional elements | No additional elements and low state of preservation | Recessed display case | Stand-alone display case | Fascia display case                |
| Other                  | Kiosk  | Stand-alone kiosk     | Payphone                 | Additional selling tables          |
|                        |  | Post box              | "Fototessera" cabin      | Flat ceiling with beams and joists |



# present-day situation of via po

## evaluation of the arcades

As classified in [image 53](#), the following typologies are based on the study conducted in previous sections and have these characteristics:

### Recessed display case (image 54)

This type involves creating a recess within the pillar to form the display space, rather than adding additional mass.

### Stand-alone display case (image 55)

The pillar's structure remains unaffected, with the display case simply positioned along the sides. This type has a small exhibition volume, and the decorative structure is modest, with no tall cornice.

### Fascia display case (image 56)

A larger version of the stand-alone display case, featuring a prominent cornice and plinth.

### Other (image 57)

These are primarily adaptations made to fit into corner spaces at block vertices, where pillars lack a rectangular base.

### Kiosk (image 58)

Architecturally similar to the fascia display case, these kiosks include movable, openable elements to create additional display space, such as extendable drawers and shelves.

image 54



image 55



image 56



image 57



image 58



On pillars without display cases, additional elements are present:

**Payphone** (image 59)

**Post box** (image 60)

**Poor state of preservation** (image 61)

Graffiti covering the walls and damaging the historic appearance of the axis.

**"Fototessera" cabin** (image 62)

Although this structure is freestanding and not attached to the pillar, it is incompatible with the historic character of the street.

The final noteworthy observation is that on the blocks without display cases (Blocks 2 and 4), each pillar bears a sign stating: "Divieto d'affissione. Art. 663 C.P." (image 63), indicating that posting advertisements on these elements is prohibited. This regulation aims to preserve the original function of the pillars, which is to maintain public unity and order.

image 59



image 60



image 61



image 62



image 63





# present-day situation of via po

## evaluation of the arcades

Additional mobile elements can also be found within the arcades, such as:

**Sales tables** (image 64)

**Stand-alone kiosk** (image 65)

These are placed directly on the pedestrian area, reducing the width of the circulation path rather than being positioned on or between pillars to form infill structures.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that near the "Santissima Annunziata" Church, the display cases do not serve commercial purposes; instead, they display "avvisi sacri."

image 64

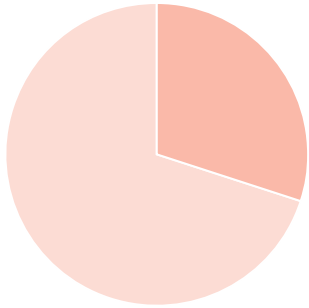


image 65





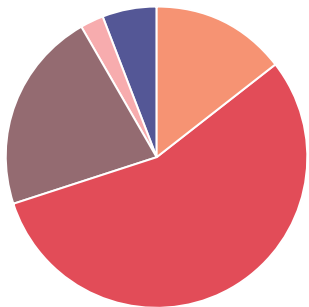
Lastly, the generated map contributed to the creation of numerical data, which, along with the map itself, helps to identify placement trends and their associated qualities, such as:



### *pillars with display case vs. empty pillars*

With a total of 262 pillars along the axis, the majority (183 pillars) support a display case, indicating that 70% of the pillars accommodate commercial architecture.

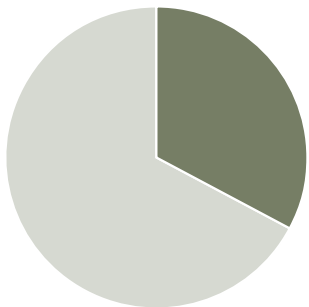
- Pillars with display cases
- Pillars with no display cases



### *typologies of display cases*

Among the 183 pillars with commercial elements, the following typologies were identified: stand-alone display case (87 units), fascia display case (34 units), recessed display case (23 units), kiosks (9 units), and other (4 units). The graph shows that 47.5% of the display cases on Via Po are stand-alone, while the second most common typology is fascia, with an 18.5% presence.

- Recessed display case
- Stand-alone display case
- Fascia display case
- Others
- Kiosk



### *empty pillars vs. empty pillars with low state of preservation*

Unfortunately, of the 79 empty pillars, 26 were identified as having low preservation levels, mainly due to graffiti, indicating that 33% of these pillars' architectural integrity is compromised.

- Empty pillars
- Empty pillars with low state of preservation



image 66

4

present-day situation of  
via po

evaluation of the shops along the  
axis

An inventory was conducted for the 13 blocks along Via Po, cataloging the various elements (entrances and establishments) within the porticoed pathway. This inventory highlights the facade typologies and other distinguishing features that characterize the use of these properties. The resulting analysis is illustrated in the following plan (image 67).

As discussed in previous chapters, Via Po is a street defined by its commercial nature. The ground floors predominantly house commercial establishments, with exceptions for entrances to residential buildings (both for pedestrians and vehicles, courtyards, the University of Turin campus, and two churches (Santissima Annunziata and San Francesco di Paola). Overall, 12 of the 13 urban blocks host commercial activities, amounting to a total of 134 establishments as of the current date. Nonetheless, just 9 blocks have historic shops. The distribution of shops by block is as follows:

table 4  
commercial establishments by block on via po

	BLOCK #												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
COMMERCIAL	13	0	15	10	9	9	3	10	14	11	18	13	9
HISTORIC SHOPS	6	0	4	4	4	8	0	4	6	4	0	0	2

image 68



image 69



image 70





As studied on [page 34](#), historic shops are classified into three main categories: the decorated frame, the monobloc (using various materials such as wood, metal, and stone), and the recessed frame. These are characterized as follows:

### Decorated frame (image 68)

An embellished structure, often leading to an exaggerated formal design and the development of sculptural shapes through the use of malleable or carvable materials.

### Monobloc (image 69)

Structures resulting from the assembly and overlaying of prefabricated, standardized elements on a facade.

### Recessed frame (image 70)

The simplest solution, which incorporates the typical decor of the building in which it is set.

However, over time, some establishments have lost their original features, leading to the compromise or loss of the historic values associated with the urban axis. Property owners have proposed changes in use and modifications to the physical conditions of their shops. While some interventions have been executed with the aim of preserving architectural heritage, others have introduced new architectural solutions that diverge from historical aesthetics. This has led to the following classification:

### Contemporary design

Shops that have lost their original historic value and, as of today, do not adhere to the design parameters of a historic shop.

Additional interesting features include the appearance of display cases on the side of shop facades, rather than on the pillars of the arcades. These display cases are present only on the northern side of the arcade, specifically in blocks 1 and 3, positioned between the openings of the showcases, as shown in [\(image 71\)](#).

Another notable observation is that, despite the diminished richness and architectural value of some facades—which no longer align with the “historic shop” classification—certain aspects of contemporary design still respect elements such as height and the distribution of facade components (including the plinth, windows, signage holder, and cornice). [\(image 72\)](#)

image 71



image 72





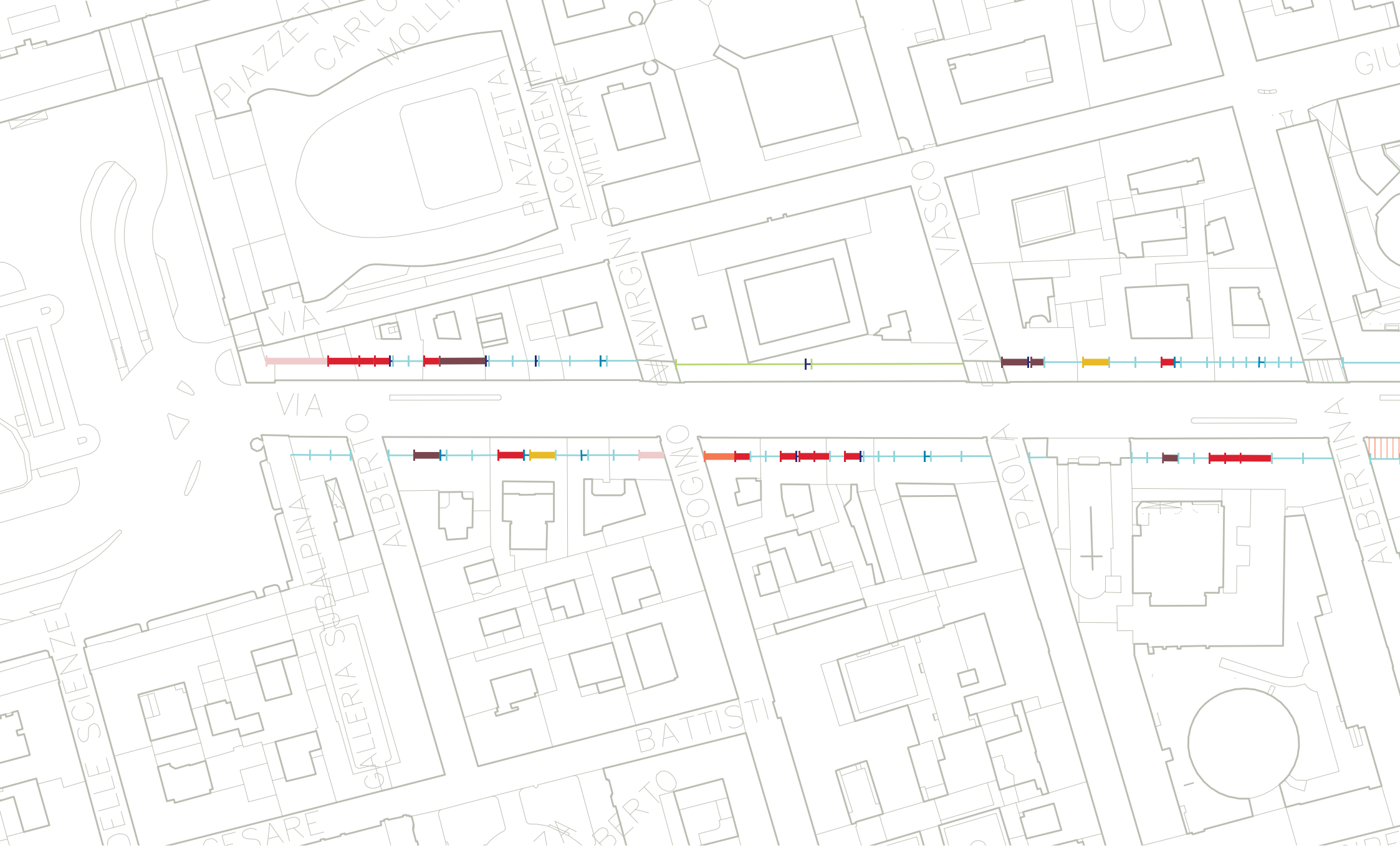


IMAGE 67: Architectural typologies found among the facades of the commercial establishments in the ground floor of Via Po [author's own work]



- |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Decorated frame        | <span style="color: red;">■</span> Monobloc in wood     | <span style="color: darkred;">■</span> Monobloc in metal                           | <span style="color: gold;">■</span> Monobloc in stone | <span style="color: pink;">■</span> Recessed frame | <span style="color: darkblue;">■</span> Pedestrian access | <span style="color: teal;">■</span> Vehicular access |
| <span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> Contemporary design | <span style="color: green;">■</span> Not commercial use | <span style="border: 1px solid black;">□</span> Flat ceiling with beams and joists |   |  |   |  |

## present-day situation of via po

### evaluation of the shops along the axis

The final conclusion drawn is the impact of the Second World War. In the blocks affected by bombings and fires, there are no remaining historic shops; all existing establishments adhere to a contemporary design.

To present the current status of the commercial establishments that can still be classified as "historic shops," [table 5](#) provides an inventory detailing their current use, type of storefront, material, and the block in which they are located.

table 5

#### *inventory of historic shops in via po on the current date*

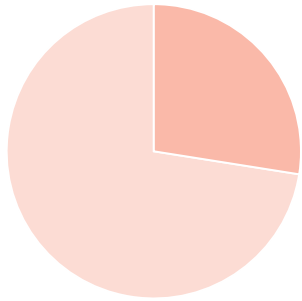
NAME OF THE SHOP	URBAN BLOCK	TYPE OF STOREFRONT	MATERIAL	CATEGORY
Frav	1	Recessed frame	Plaster	Clothing
Gioielleria Musy Padre e Figlio	1	Monobloc	Wood	Jewelry
Caffè Regio	1	Monobloc	Wood	Coffee shop
Antica Torroneria Piemontese	1	Monobloc	Wood	Confectionery
Caffè Roberto	1	Monobloc	Wood	Coffee shop
Ne Quitte Pas	1	Monobloc	Metal	Clothing
Bistrot Turin	3	Monobloc	Metal	Food
Dirty Monkey	3	Monobloc	Metal	Clothing
Dmail	3	Monobloc	Stone	Other
Altitude	3	Monobloc	Metal	Clothing
Farmacia degli Stemmi	4	Decorated frame	Stone	Pharmacy



NAME OF THE SHOP	URBAN BLOCK	TYPE OF STOREFRONT	MATERIAL	CATEGORY
Mondocover	5	Monobloc	Metal	Other
Agrisalumeria Luiset	5	Monobloc	Wood	Food
Occhiali 24.it	5	Monobloc	Metal	Clothing
The Royal Princess	5	Monobloc	Wood	Restaurant
Parafarmacia degli Stemmi	6	Monobloc	Wood	Pharmacy
(empty establishment)	6	Monobloc	Metal	No current use
Capatoast	6	Monobloc	Wood	Food
Museo di Arti decorative - Fondazione Accorsi Ometto	6	Monobloc	Wood	Other
Rizzi	6	Monobloc	Wood	Other
Kryolan	6	Monobloc	Wood	Other
Brow Bar	6	Monobloc	Wood	Other
Cappelli	6	Monobloc	Wood	Clothing
Bubble Lab	8	Monobloc	Metal	Restaurant
Farmacia Università	8	Monobloc	Wood	Pharmacy
Caffè Università	8	Monobloc	Stone	Coffee Shop
Fiorio	8	Recessed frame	Stone	Restaurant

NAME OF THE SHOP	URBAN BLOCK	TYPE OF STOREFRONT	MATERIAL	CATEGORY
TIM	9	Decorated frame	Plaster	Other
Caffè 101	9	Monobloc	Wood	Coffee shop
Focacceria Terre Liguri	9	Monobloc	Wood	Restaurant
L'erbolario	9	Monobloc	Wood	Other
Pasticceria Abrate	9	Monobloc	Wood	Pastry shop
Pcali	10	Monobloc	Metal	Clothing
Ditta Sciunnache - Cartoleria Economica	10	Monobloc	Wood	Stationery shop
Gelateria degli Alpi	10	Monobloc	Wood	Restaurant
Ghigo	13	Monobloc	Wood	Pastry shop
Caffè Vittorio	13	Recessed frame	Metal	Coffee shop

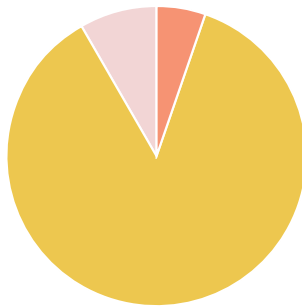
This inventory and study of the commercial establishments of Via Po enables the following analyses concerning the facades inside the arcades:



### **commercial establishments vs. historic shops**

Of the 134 commercial establishments along Via Po, only 27.6% display the facade characteristics of historic shops.

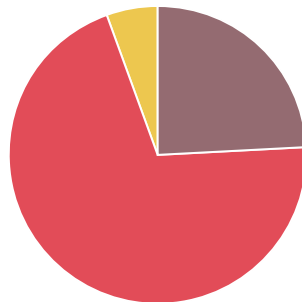
- Historic shops
- Other Commercial establishments



### **typologies of storefronts**

Among these historic shops, 5.4% feature a Decorated Frame, 8.1% have a Recessed Frame, and the remaining 85.5% are classified as Monobloc.

- Decorated frame
- Recessed frame
- Monobloc



### **materiality of the monoblocs**

The majority of the monoblocs are made in wood (70.3%), followed by the ones in metal (24.3%), and lastly, the ones in stone (5.4%)

- Stone
- Metal
- Wood



## present-day situation of via po

### evaluation of the shops along the axis

## shops that take part on the list “locali storici d’italia”

The Locali Storici d’Italia (Historic Places of Italy) is a prestigious list established to recognize and preserve Italy’s most historically significant commercial establishments. Founded in 1976, the list aims to protect businesses that have not only maintained their historical essence but have also contributed to the cultural, social, and economic fabric of their respective cities. These establishments, ranging from cafés and restaurants to pharmacies and hotels, are often renowned for their rich history, architectural value, and long-standing traditions. The initiative celebrates Italian heritage by highlighting businesses that have been in operation for decades, or even centuries, offering visitors a glimpse into Italy’s past through their preserved interiors and enduring customs.

The main goal of the Locali Storici d’Italia is to safeguard these historic businesses by promoting their cultural significance and ensuring their continued existence. The list encourages both public and private efforts to conserve and restore these establishments while raising awareness about their importance to the local community and the nation. Each year, the organization hosts the “Giornata Nazionale dei Locali Storici d’Italia” (National Historic Shops Day), typically celebrated in October. This annual event aims to draw attention to the role these historic shops play in preserving Italian heritage, providing a unique opportunity for the public to visit and appreciate the historical, architectural, and cultural value of these institutions.

In the city of Turin, fewer than 15 establishments are listed on the Locali Storici d’Italia. These select shops, each with its unique historical significance, contribute to Turin’s rich cultural tapestry. By maintaining their traditional operations and architectural integrity, these establishments offer a living connection to the past and help to keep the city’s historical character alive for future generations.

A map of the city has been created, highlighting the establishments listed on the Locali Storici d’Italia. This map not only marks the locations of these historic shops but also categorizes them by their type or use. By visually representing these businesses, the map aids in identifying clusters of historic establishments and underscores their significance within the broader context of the city’s historical and cultural landscape.

Among Via Po, there are just one shops mentioned: Pasticceria Abrate

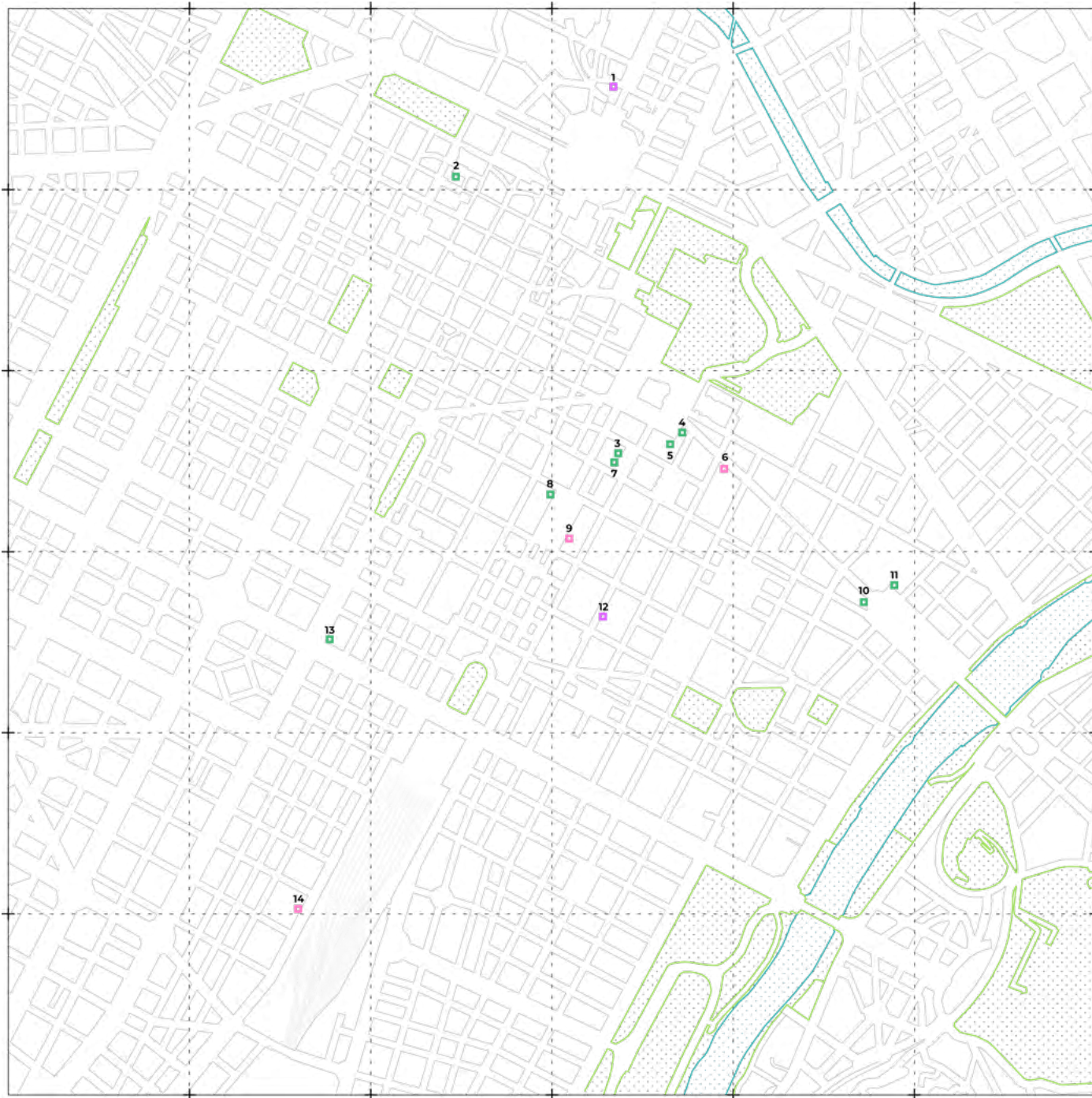


image 71

**turin's map with shops from the list  
"locali storici d'italia" [author's own  
work]**

- Cafes and restaurants
- Confectioneries and pastry shops
- Other activities

## 5 urban block n°9

### selecting a block - representative sample

For the purposes of this research, a specific block along Via Po was carefully selected. The selection criteria aimed to identify a block that could serve as a representative sample, demonstrating both diversity and the preservation of its commercial character. The selection process was based on the following parameters:

- \* The block includes historic shops listed in the Locali Storici d'Italia, emphasizing that their significance is not solely derived from the facade features but also from the richness of their interiors.
- \* Certain shops within the block have been studied and recognized as historic by experts in the field.
- \* The presence of other establishments that, while not officially recognized as historic, exhibit characteristics typical of such shops, suggesting potential for historical classification.
- \* The inclusion of commercial establishments that may have been, or still are, considered historic but have undergone significant alterations.
- \* The block features a number of critical cases where the original values of these establishments have been compromised or lost, alongside a variety of architectural styles.

This diversity of styles, levels of preservation or degradation, and historical richness was essential for conducting a comprehensive analysis and evaluating the architectural characteristics of the area. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding and appreciation of the block's unique features and how they integrate with the surrounding urban context.

Additionally, to gain a complete perspective on historic shops, it was important to select a block that also exhibits variety in its arcades and includes different types of display cases.

The selected block is number 9, which features are expressed in the plan:

image 72

### urban block n°9: main elements of commercial furnishings

#### Facades

- Decorated frame
- Monobloc in wood
- Pedestrian access
- Vehicular access
- Contemporary design

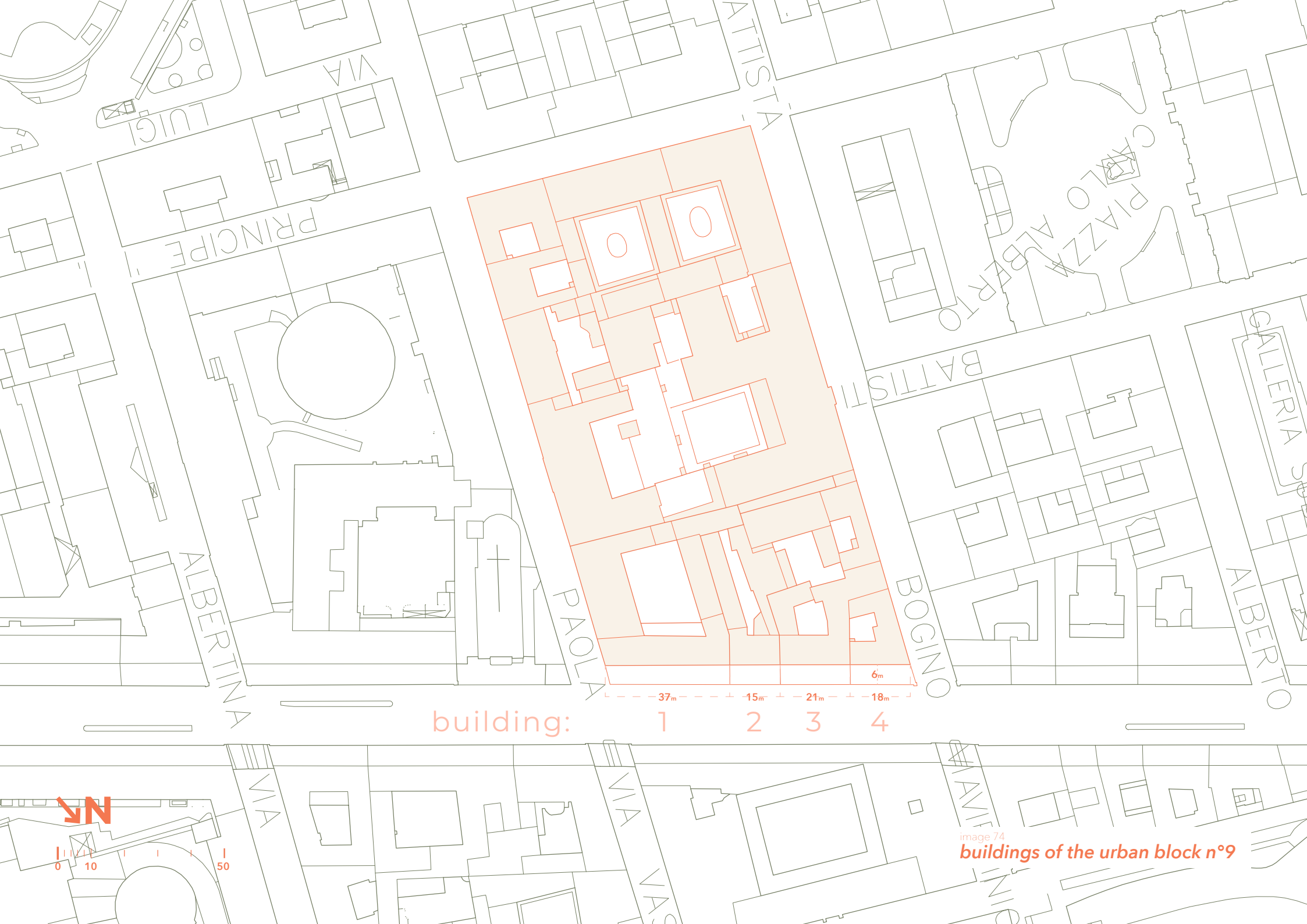
#### Display cases

- "Fototessera" cabin
- Stand-alone display case
- Kiosk
- Fascia display case









building:

1

2

3

4

37m

15m

21m

18m

6m

image 74

buildings of the urban block n°9

In block n° 9, on the side facing Via Po, there are four buildings with arcades housing commercial establishments on the ground floor, with four floors of residential units above. These four buildings can be seen in the image on the left, where the varying lengths of the buildings are evident, as well as the presence of an internal courtyard for each one. However, only the first three buildings (from left to right) have doors providing access to the courtyards—of these, only the first building has both a vehicle and pedestrian entrance. In contrast, the fourth building's courtyards are accessed through service doors located within the commercial establishments.

When observing the arcade as a whole, there are nineteen structural pillars along the exterior side, connected by rounded arches, as shown in (image 75). Perpendicular to this, as depicted in the transversal section of Via Po (image 76), these rounded arches intersect to form cross vaults, as indicated in the floor plan.

In total, the arcade consists of nineteen structural pillars, creating eighteen "in-between spaces" between them. There are three entrances to the courtyards, twelve different commercial establishments, and twenty-one openings in the walls providing access to both commercial and residential properties.

image 75

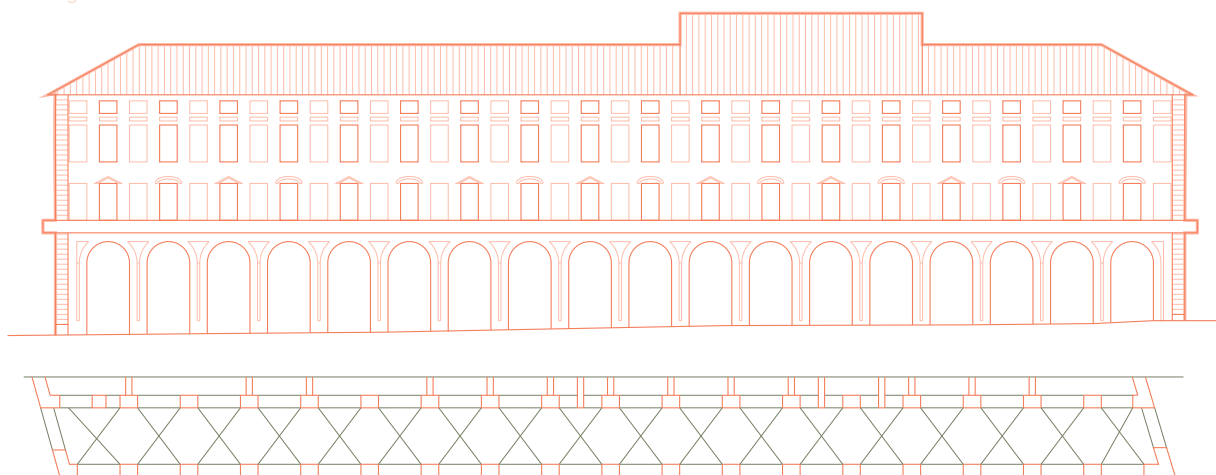


image 76

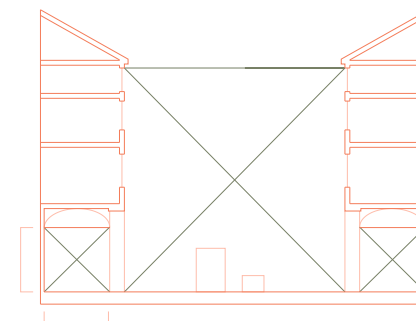


image 75 Elevation and floor plan of the ground floor of urban block n°9 at Via Po. [produced by the author]

image 76 Transversal section of Via Po through the urban block n°9 looking towards the east. [produced by the author]



# urban block n°9

## current situation of the storefronts and display cases

To begin, as shown in [image 77](#), Urban Block No. 9 consists of four buildings that share the same arcaded path. Below, there are two observational strips positioned through the center of the covered sidewalk: one oriented southward toward the facades of the commercial establishments, and the other facing north to showcase the display cases.

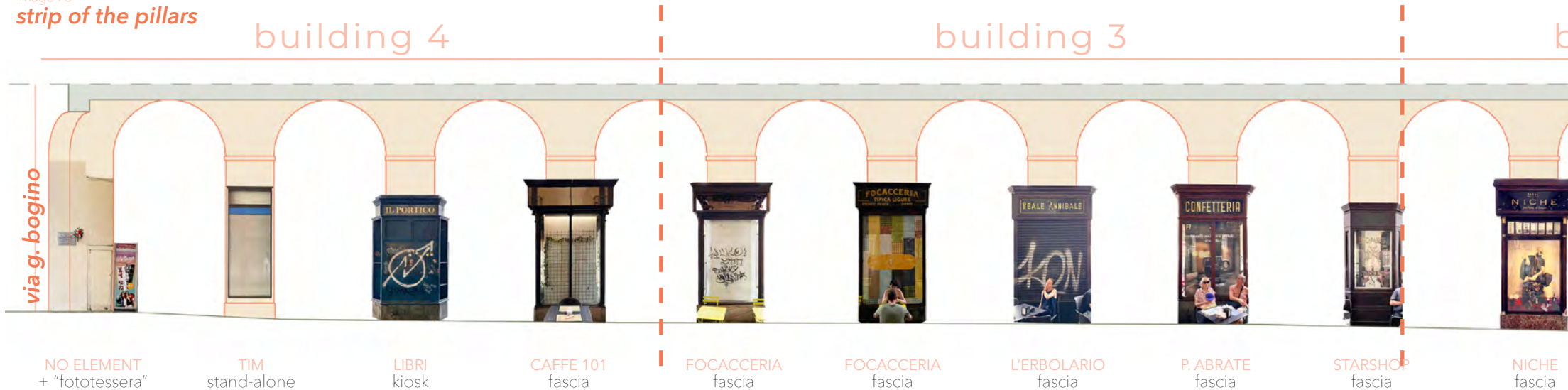
image 77

### strip of the establishments



image 78

### strip of the pillars



In *image 77*, there are a total of 21 wall openings, which accommodate 15 commercial establishments and 3 access doors. In *image 78*, there are 19 pillars, 18 of which feature display cases owned by the same proprietors as the commercial establishments in this urban block.





## urban block n°9

### current situation of the storefronts and display cases

### evaluating the facades: relationship with the projected regions from the cross-vaults

The arcades are undoubtedly the first element perceived when analyzing the block along Via Po. In this case, the cross-vault arcades leave an impression on the inner walls of the promenade. Due to the geometry of the arches and the pauses in the upper part of the strips, vertical wall sections can be identified in certain areas. Occasionally, these sections are interrupted by other architectural elements, disrupting the rhythm established by the arcades above.

In *image 79*, the projections of these vertical regions, created by the pauses in the

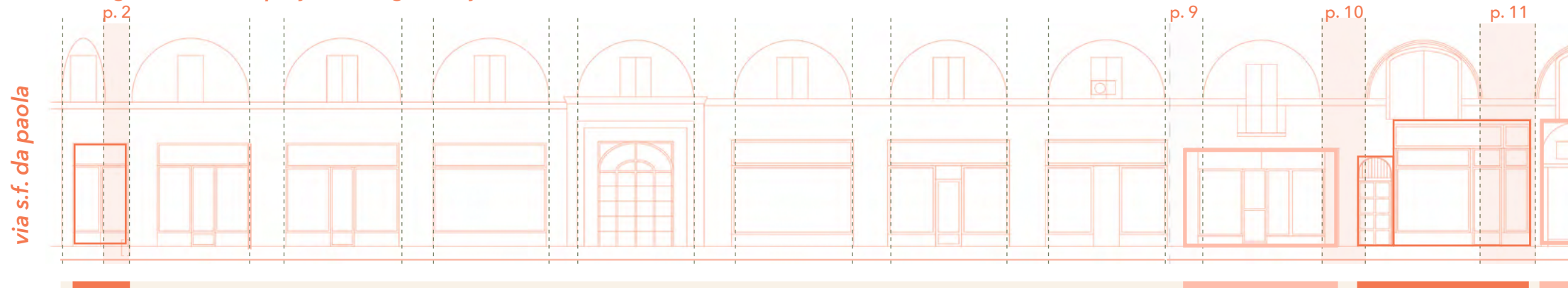
image 79

#### *evaluating the facades: projected regions by images*



image 80

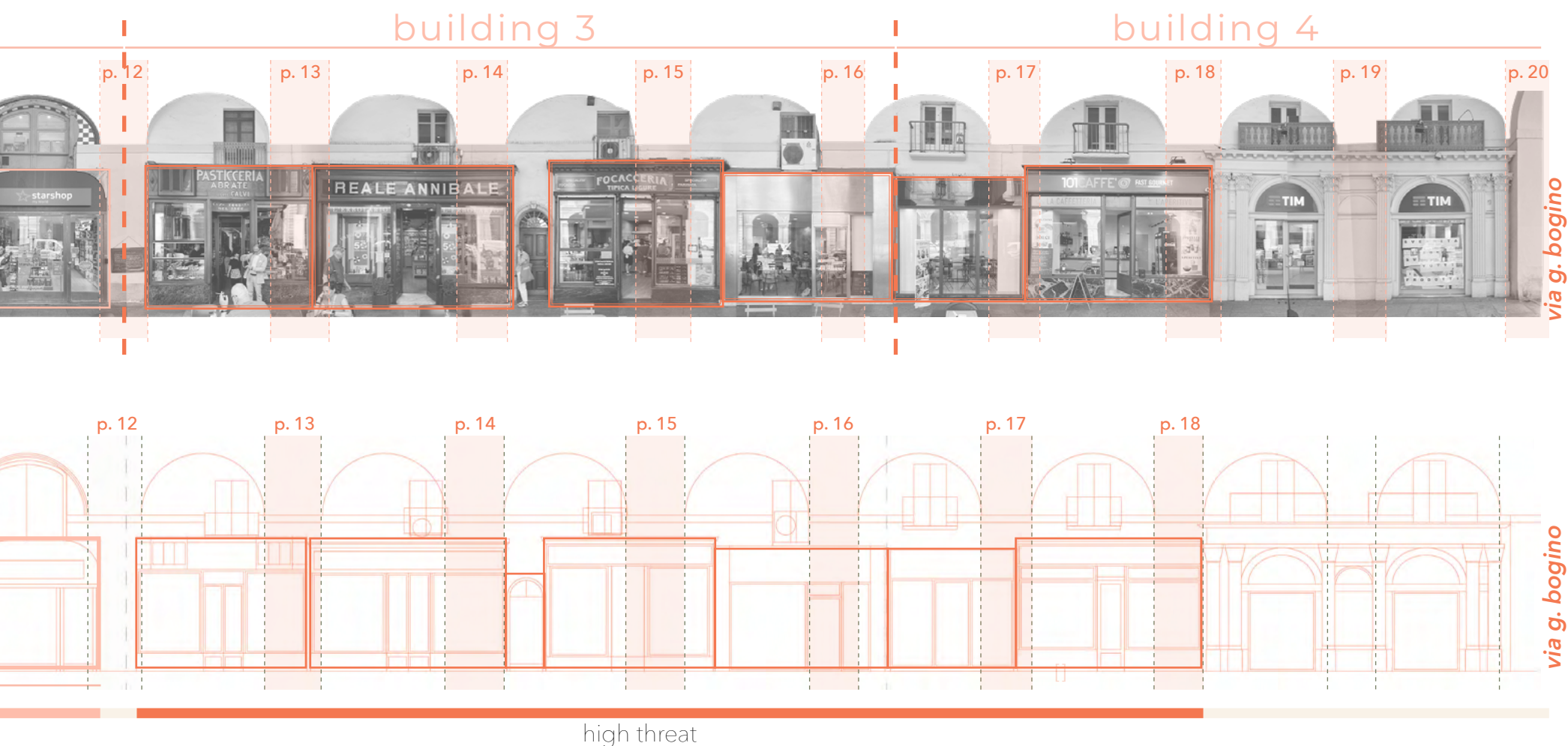
#### *evaluating the facades: projected regions by silhouettes*





rhythm of the arches, are highlighted in pink between the cross-vaults. On the left side of the strip, only one interruption of these “pause regions” occurs in Building One. However, moving towards the right, these interruptions become more frequent. As shown in [image 80](#), the disrupted projected regions include: p.2, p.9, p.10, p.11, p.12, p.13, p.14, p.15, p.16, p.17, and p.18. Some of these interruptions are partial, with only a small portion of the facade element extending into the projected region, while in complete interruptions, these projections are fully crossed by secondary elements.

The area where this phenomenon is most pronounced is labeled as a “high threat area,” as it significantly affects the rhythm of the entire strip.



## urban block n° 9

### relationship with the porticos

#### evaluation

## evaluating the facades: relationship with the parallel and perpendicular symmetry axes from the arches of the cross vault

From the arches formed by the cross-vaults, axes were traced through the center of each arch (19 arches in total). Additionally, a horizontal axis was identified below the arches, physically marked by a plaster band approximately 15 centimeters high. This band separates the ground floor within the arcades from the first floor, which is also part of the porticoed path.

Each arched section includes an opening, serving as the window for the property on the first floor. In the first seven sections, these axes remain intact (both

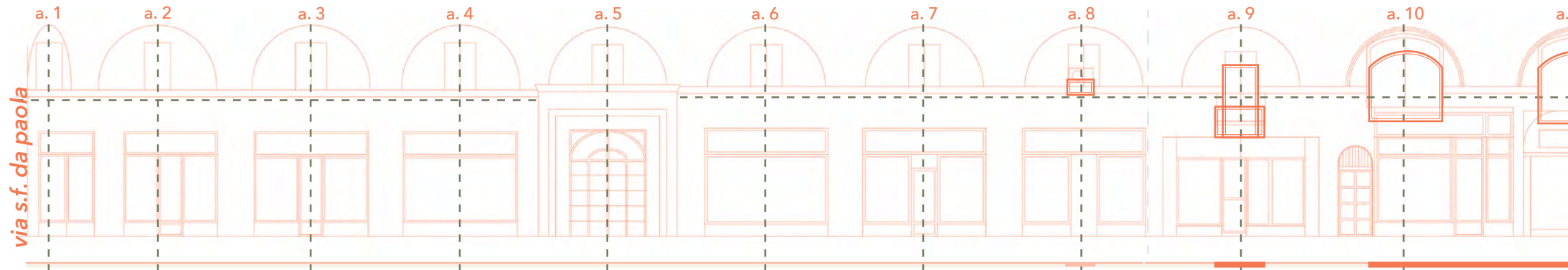
image 81

*evaluating the facades: axes by images*

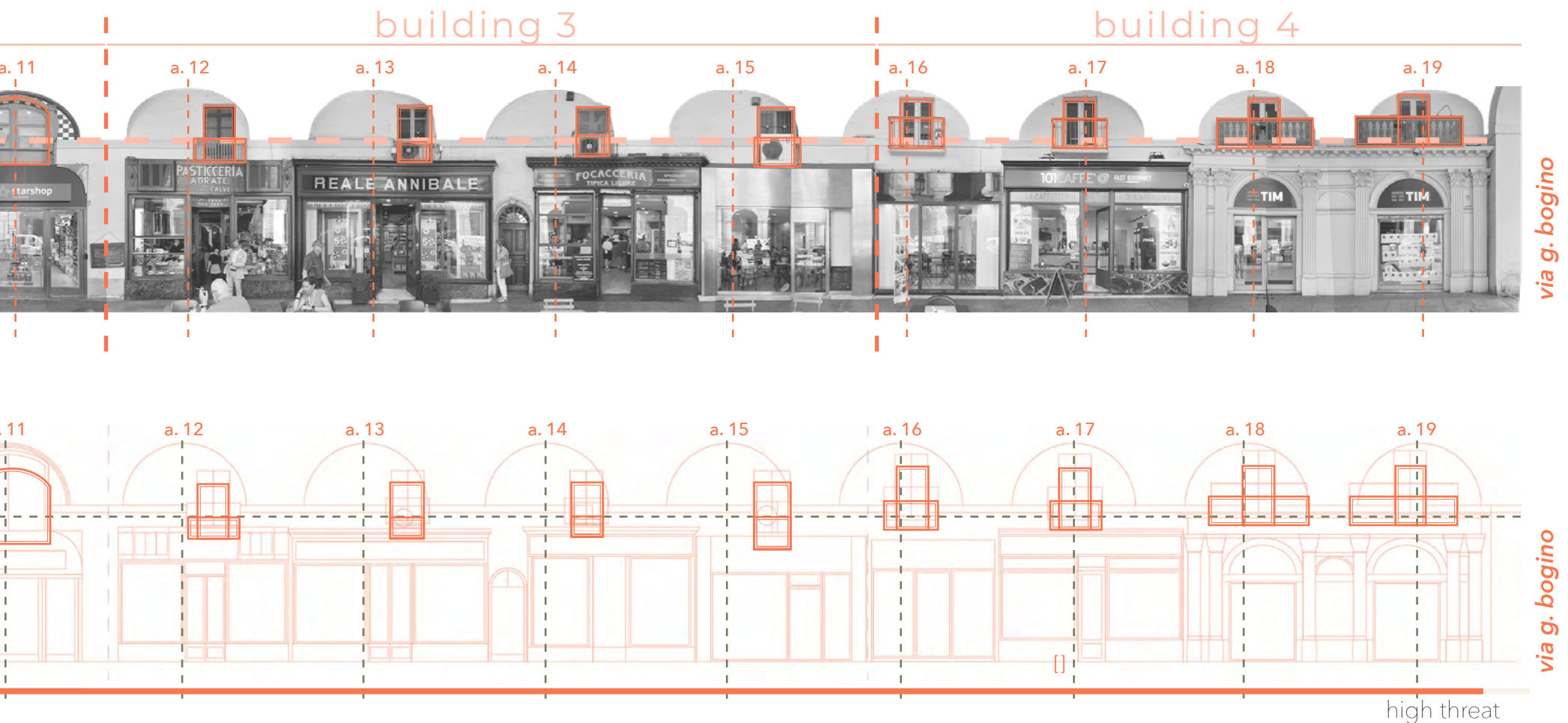


image 82

*evaluating the facades: axes by silhouettes*



the horizontal and vertical axes), but in the remaining 12 sections, symmetry in both directions is disrupted. These interruptions are caused by the presence of windows, balconies, and air conditioning units. The addition of these elements signifies changes to the original design of the openings, which were initially intended solely as windows with glass panes, not as balconies or supports for additional equipment. Another observation is seen in a.10 and a.11, where the window shapes are no longer simple rectangles; the lower part is orthogonal, while the upper part follows the arch's curve, maintaining the symmetry of the arcade. Around these windows, decorative paintings and additional embellishments have been applied, further disrupting the uniform materiality of the strip.





## urban block n° 9

relationship with the porticos  
evaluation

## evaluating the facades: relationship between horizontal design elements

Observing the horizontal axes in this strip, there are three different possible heights for the commercial establishments. Two of these heights are consistent across more than seven consecutive elements, while the third height is present in only one shop. Despite the presence of both historic facades and contemporary designs, there is a sense of coherence and integration among the architectural features.

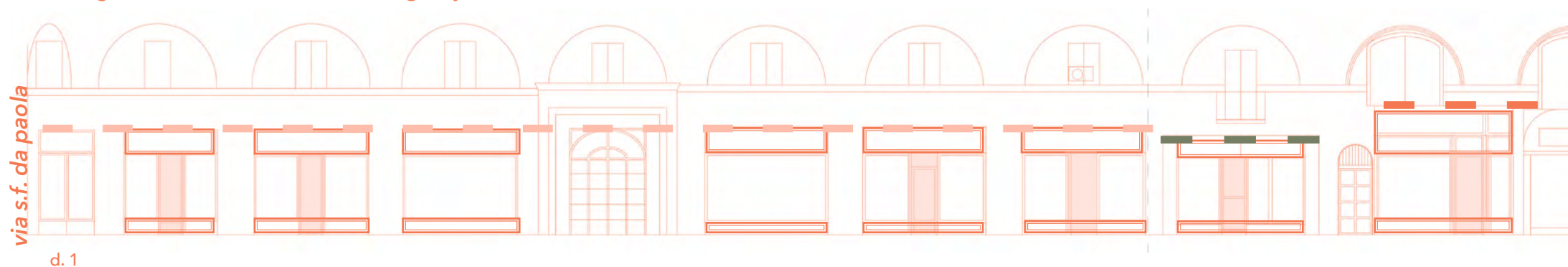
image 83

*evaluating the facades: horizontal design by images*



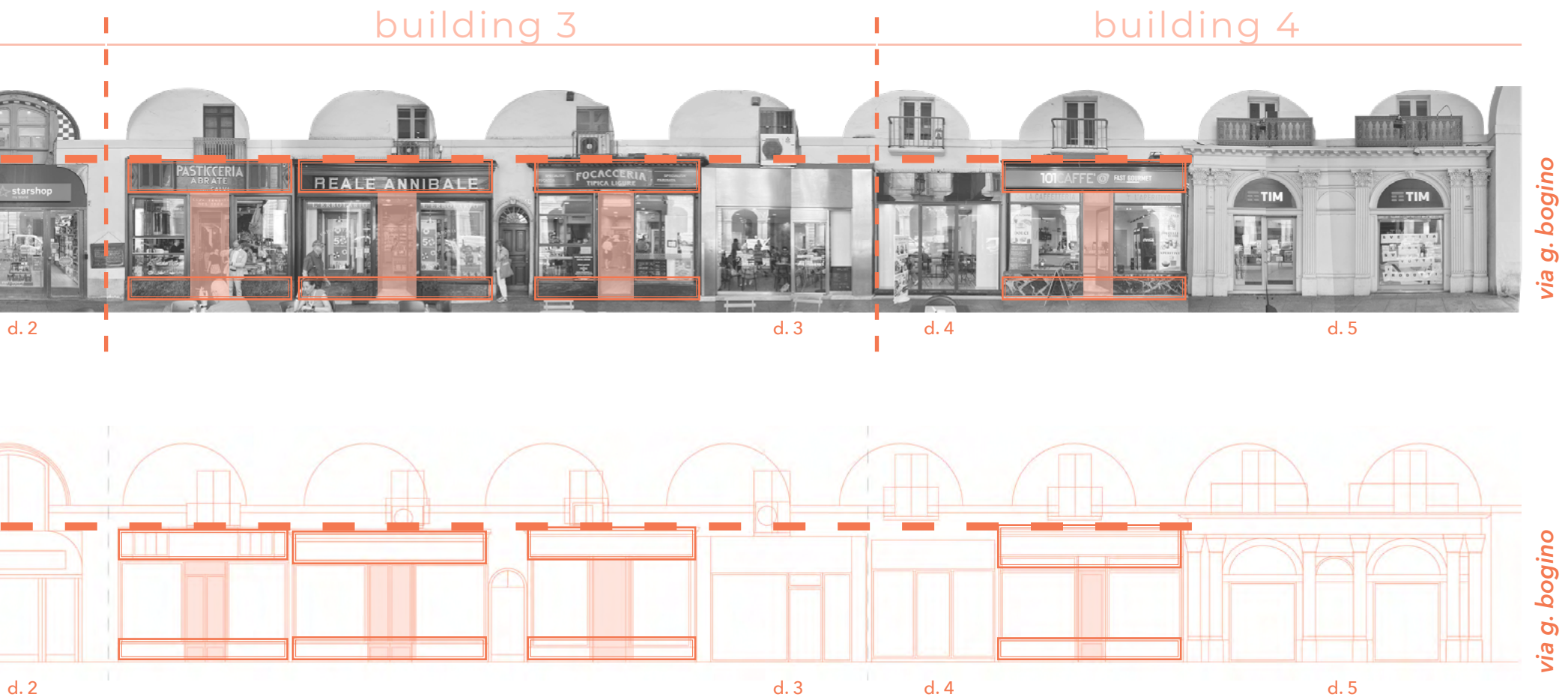
image 84

*evaluating the facades: horizontal design by silhouettes*



Examining the elements that make up the facades of the establishments, there is a strong tendency to preserve the main components: the signage holder (at the top), the plinth (at the bottom), and the showcase (in between). Additionally, in the majority of shops, the entrance is centrally located between two showcases.

It is important to note that only three openings in the strip deviate from these standards: d.1, d.2, d.3, d.4, and d.5. However, it is also worth mentioning that d.5 does not conform to these geometries and distributions because it does not follow the monobloc typology but is instead a decorated frame.



## urban block n°9

### current situation of the storefronts and display cases

## evaluating the facades: dissonances between elements

By observing the shop showcases, structural pillars are visible behind them. The initial hypothesis suggests that since the facades do not align with the porticoes and their arches, this misalignment would extend to the pillars as well. This assumption considers that the ends of each cross vault transfer their loads to the ground through these pillars. It would also be expected that the spacing between these structural pillars would match the uniform dimension of the arcade arches. Therefore, a rhythm as observed in these elements would ideally influence other architectural components (openings, decorations, utilities), ensuring that these elements respect the hierarchy and follow the same rhythmic pattern. If any element crosses between the pillars, the structure would be exposed and visible, as is the case here.

However, upon closer examination of both the structural elements and the arcades, it becomes evident that the initial hypothesis is not valid. The positions of the pillars do not match the projected regions shown in [page 119](#). This indicates that the facade pillars of the building are not aligned with the pillars on the shop side, and the cross vaults within the gallery do not transfer their loads to four pillars arranged in an orthogonal grid. Instead, the loads are supported differently, as there are no pillars beneath the bases of the vaults on the shop side.

This misalignment is highlighted in [image 58](#) and [image 59](#), where the dashed lines indicate where the pillar should align with the vault, while the continuous pink area shows the actual position of the pillar.

These misalignments may be attributed to the different epochs and phases of construction and completion of the urban project of Via Po's porticoed path.

image 85

### evaluating the facades: dissonances by images

building 2

building 3

building 4









## urban block n°9

### current situation of the storefronts and display cases

### evaluating the pillars: display cases

Observing the display cases on Urban Block No. 9, there are 19 pillars, 18 of which feature a display case. These structures can be categorized into three different typologies, all of which are present within this urban block. The remaining pillar hosts a "fototessera" photo booth.

To analyze the overall design of these elements, two main observations were made. The first relates to the height of the display cases. Six different heights were identified (with 6 being the tallest), as shown in [image 88](#). While these categories do not correspond to specific numerical values, they are useful for assessing continuity

image 88

#### strip of the pillars: heights

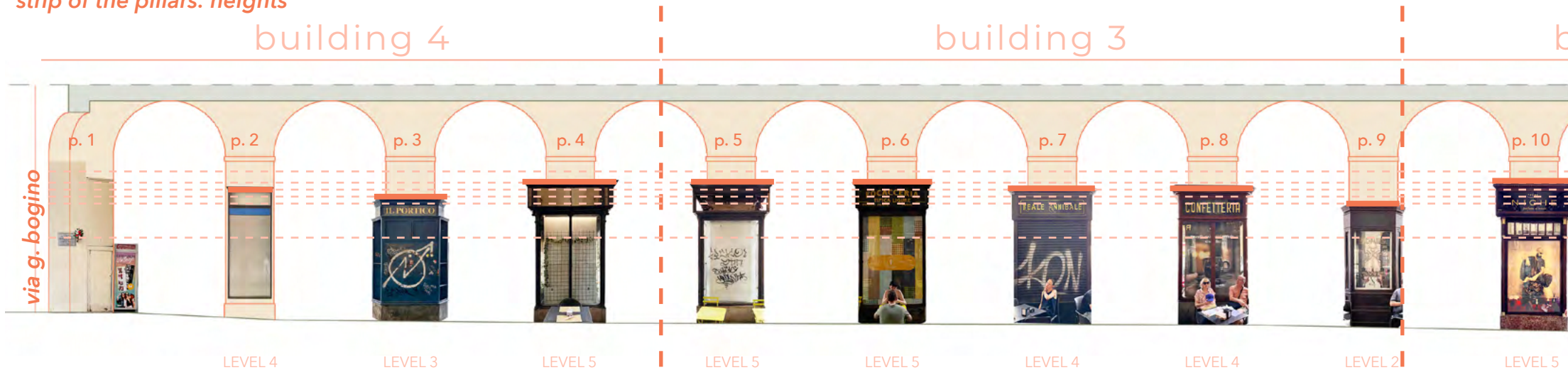
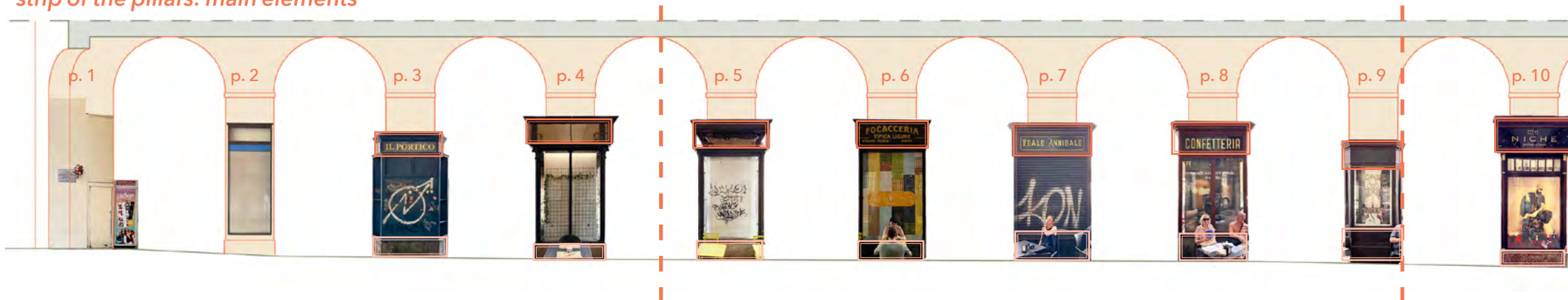


image 89

#### strip of the pillars: main elements



## case study

Lastly, another notable finding is that out of the 19 display cases, only 4 actually display objects for public viewing. The remaining 15 feature advertisements or items related to branding strategies.





## shops along the axis

### CROCCA

Crocca's pizzerias are designed to blend modern minimalism with a warm, inviting atmosphere, creating a unique dining experience that reflects both tradition and contemporary sensibilities. The interiors use natural materials like wood and stone, paired with a neutral color palette, to evoke a sense of comfort and familiarity. The open kitchen concept is central to the design, allowing customers to observe the pizza-making process, emphasizing transparency and craftsmanship. This is complemented by a mix of industrial elements, such as metal fixtures and exposed brick, which contrast with the organic warmth of the wooden furnishings.

The spatial layout of Crocca's shops is thoughtfully organized to maximize comfort and accessibility, with varied seating options catering to different dining preferences. The exterior design is equally intentional, featuring large windows that invite natural light and offer a glimpse of the welcoming interior. Overall, Crocca's architectural approach skillfully balances tradition with modernity, creating spaces that are both sophisticated and comfortable, enhancing the overall dining experience.

There are no visual signs of the use of this establishment as a

historic shop, neither in the outside nor inside.

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design









## shops along the axis

### CASCIOLA

The Casciola jewelry store clearly has a modern and refined design, distinct from the historic characteristics commonly found in the area. Unlike many of the other shops on the same block, this store does not feature the typical elements of historic shops, such as a storefront from the 19th century, a monobloc facade, signage nor other traditional architectural details. Instead, the interior showcases a blend of contemporary and luxurious materials, including

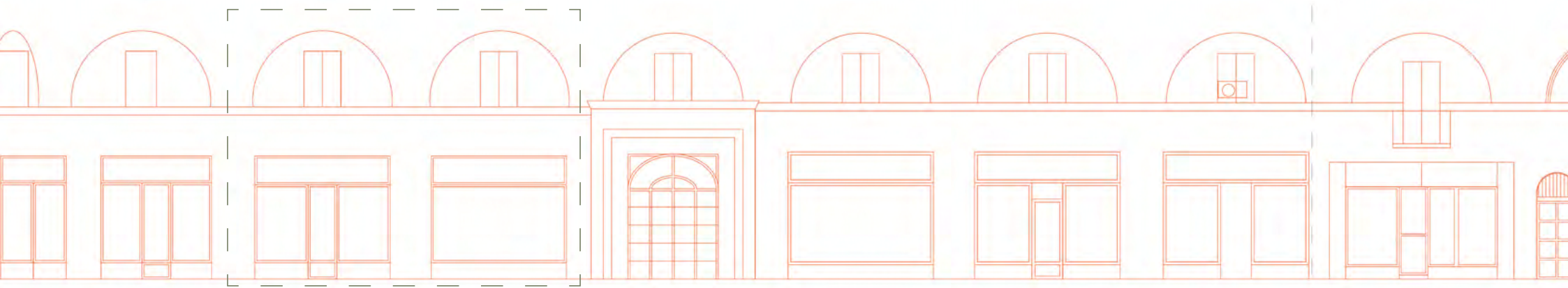
polished wood, marble, and glass, creating an exclusive and elegant shopping environment.

The store's layout emphasizes comfort and elegance, with carefully arranged display cases and soft lighting that highlight the jewelry. Although the exterior design harmonizes with the surrounding historical context, it lacks the historic architectural features that characterize many neighboring buildings.

There are no visual signs of the use of this establishment as a historic shop, neither on the outside nor inside.

**The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage**

**Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design**









## shops along the axis

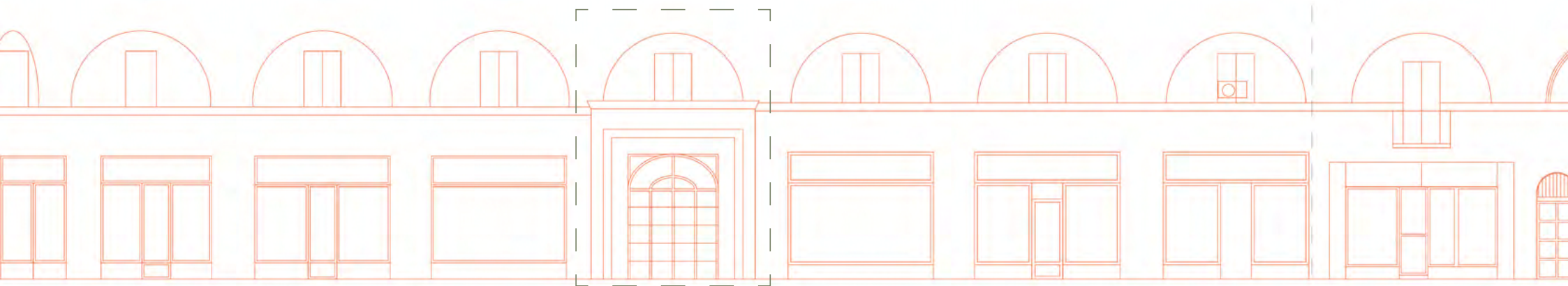
### GATE

This gate serves as the entrance to the courtyard of one of the four buildings on the block, both for vehicular and pedestrian access. It is an example of the blend of historical elements with refined materials. The structure is framed by a robust stone facade, characterized using polished, dark marble with intricate natural veining that adds a sense of depth and texture to the overall design. The marble frame contrasts subtly

with the lighter stone surrounding it, creating a visually appealing and stately entrance.

The wooden doors themselves are rich in detail, featuring large glass panels arranged in a grid pattern, allowing natural light to filter through and providing a glimpse into the courtyard beyond. The arch above the doors is accentuated by the curvature of the glass panels, enhancing the

entrance. The combination of these materials and design elements evokes a sense of grandeur while maintaining a connection to the historical and architectural context of Via Po.







## shops along the axis

### FARMACIA DELL'UNIVERSITÀ

This pharmacy established in the 19th century, is a historic shop, originally positioned across from the University, which inspired its name. The pharmacy is renowned for its period furnishings and their wooden panels that adorn the interior. These wooden panels are further enriched by stained-glass windows crafted by the master glassmaker Carlo Joergher, adding a touch of historical elegance to the space. These elements contribute to the pharmacy's distinctive character, blending functionality with a deep

respect for its historical roots.

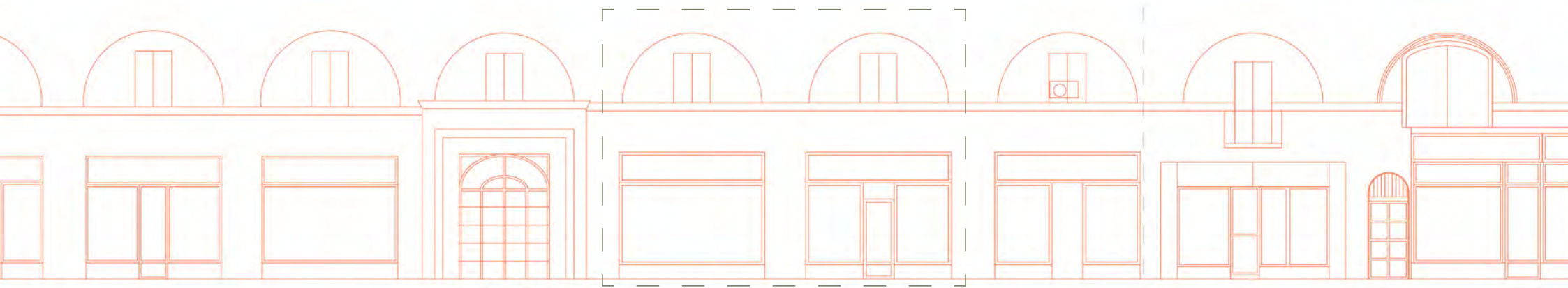
Despite its richness of its furniture inside, the pharmacy does not feature the architectural characteristics typical of other historic shops in the exterior. The storefront focuses on modern accessibility and functionality rather than the ornate decorative elements often found in neighboring historic buildings.

The pharmacy is operated by its owner, Dr. Tiziana, along with

a team of specialized professionals and collaborators.

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design









## shops along the axis

### VENEZIA A TORINO

Venezia a Torino is a historic shop located at Via Po 14 in the heart of Turin, with a legacy that spans over a century. The store was established in 1916 by Giovanni Zane, a Venetian glass merchant who relocated from Piazza San Marco in Venice to Turin after falling in love with the city. Originally specializing in Murano glass, the store has maintained its focus on this Venetian art, preserving the essence of its origin. Over the years, Venezia a Torino gained a reputation for its exquisite selection of glass, porcelain, gold, and silver, catering to an elite clientele and even serving as a supplier to the Royal House. The store has been passed down through four generations, with

the current owner continuing the family tradition that began more than 100 years ago.

Architecturally, Venezia a Torino retains several features characteristic of historic shops within the same block. The store's façade and interior once featured the typical monobloc design with wooden decorations that were prominent in the early 20th century. However, over time, particularly after 1918, the shop underwent changes that led to the loss of some of its original wooden decor and certain historical values. Despite these alterations, Venezia a Torino still holds its place as a historic shop in Turin. Its architectural

elements, while modified, continue to echo its rich past, contributing to the historic atmosphere of Via Po. The shop's enduring presence in the city serves as a testament to its historical significance and the Zane family's dedication to preserving their Venetian heritage in Turin.

**The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage**

**Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design**

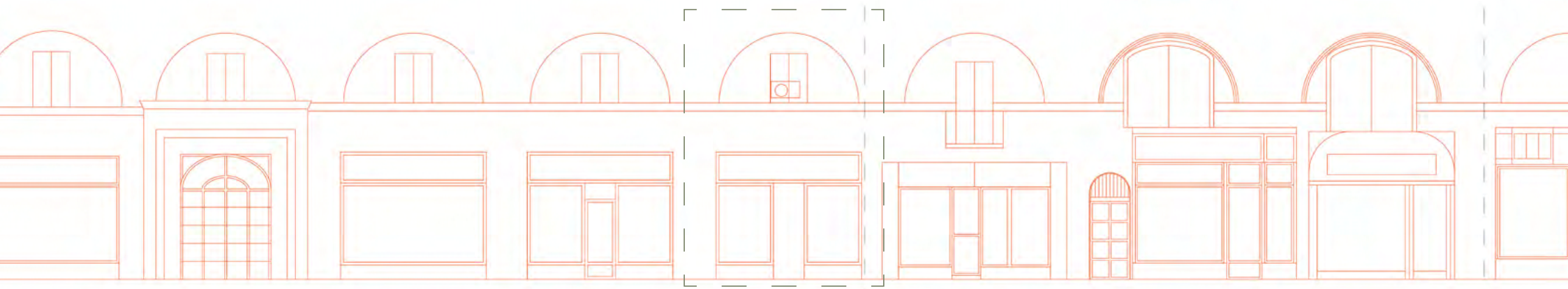






image Venezia Torino. (2020). Shop [Photograph]. Venezia Torino. <https://www.veneziatorino.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/shop.jpg>





## shops

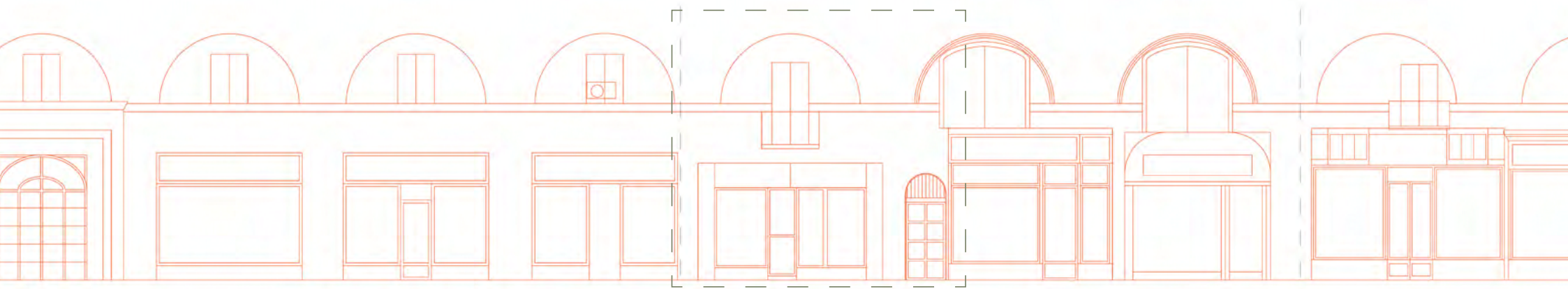
### EMPTY SHOP

This shop is currently closed and appears to be unused, with no visible signage indicating its purpose or function. The central portion features a wooden frame and a metal security gate, contributing to its rigid and utilitarian appearance. While the façade maintains the overall structural alignment with the surrounding arcade, the absence of decorative elements or references to its former or intended use further diminishes its connection to the historical and architectural values of the arcade. This disconnection contrasts with the traditional design details typically present in similar structures.



The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design



## ENTRANCE

The metallic door, located beneath an arched colonnade, serves as the pedestrian entrance to the courtyard of a building. The door is framed by dark wood paneling, is symmetrical and functional.





# shops

## NICHE

Historic shop characterized by its architectural richness in its interior furnishings, the storefront, and its display case. A clear example of uniformity and detailed commercial furnishings.

This shop has had three major interventions, in 1920's when its use changed from perfume shop to optic; in 1989 when it was restored; and the last one in 2005.

### 1. mira perfumery

This historic shop was created in the 1920's, under the name of Mira, a perfume shop which was an annex of the nearby University perfumery. Both were founded by the Barzizza sisters.

This shop was a small salon "where ladies gathered to bathe in the tubs located at the back of the shop or to undergo cosmetic treatments" [96]

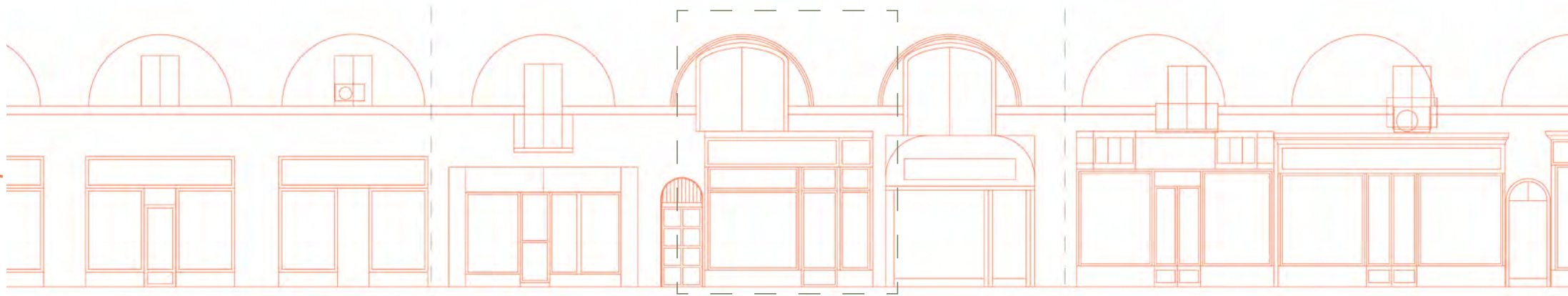
### 2. ottica bonino

In 1949 the Bonino family decided to open a second "Ottica Bonino" but this time at Via Po, where they could continue their family business which had been established in 1915.

These new owners decided to renovate the interior of the property, which unfortunately resulted in a loss of the original values and characteristics of the shop, as they decided to remove the original coffered ceiling.

In 1990, Chiara and Ronchetta described the main features of this shop at that time. They mentioned this store emphasized "the articulation of the elements of its furnishing: the external facade is complemented by a show-case of the same design applied to the nearby column of the portico". Overall, this shop's decorative style is Art Deco (from the original design and composition of the shop), and has a few touches of Art Nouveau (Liberty), the facade stands out due to its rich elements. Among them there are:

- \* Signage in plaster with gilded bas-relief.
- \* Stylized column bases and capitals that complete the shop-window and suggest the hand of Antonio Vandone, designer



- \* of Caffè Mulassano  
Shelves and sales counters with Art Deco motifs

### 3. niche

In 2005, the shop was restored to its original function as a perfumery. According to the Fondazione Torino Musei (n.d.), the facade is crafted from a single block of walnut wood, featuring a display window on the left side and a door nestled within a small, inviting vestibule adorned with elegant beveled glass. The structure rests on a brecciated limestone base with white calcite veins, supported by four carved semi-columns with brass bases, collars, and capitals.

At the top, the frames are highlighted by a continuous band of beveled glass, reminiscent of the design seen at Caffè Mulassano in Piazza Castello. The storefront is further enhanced by a similarly designed display case affixed to the portico pillar at the entrance.

Regarding the interior, the shop comprises a front sales room that retains the original cherry wood furnishings, reflecting an almost Art Deco style, along with two rear rooms. The furniture, entirely French and dating back to the early 20th century, features continuous cherry wood wall shelving with mahogany and glass panels, echoing the design motifs of

the counter. The sales area originally had a painted stucco coffered ceiling, which was unfortunately removed during a renovation that also replaced the elegant bowl chandelier with modern lighting.

[96] Fondazione Torino Musei, n.d.).

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Is an historic shop, under the classification of monobloc in wood.







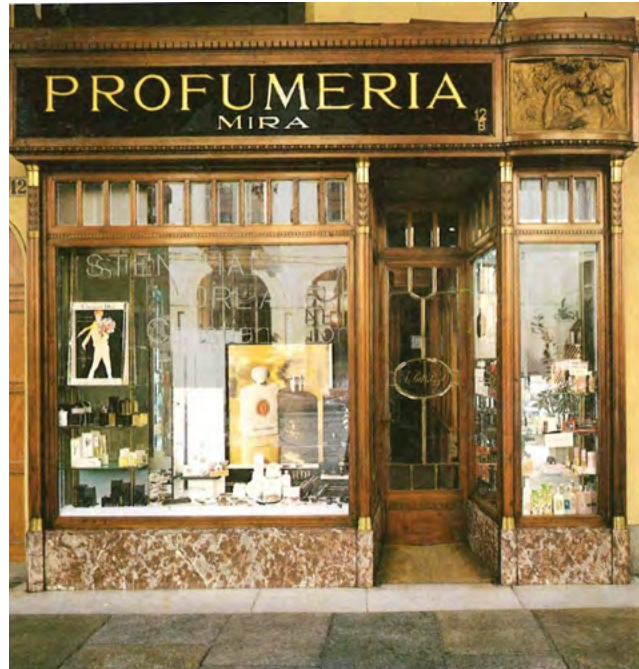


## mira perfumery

*"Wooden creations: a rich walnut 'shopfront' in Art Deco style from the 1920s, featuring a gilded plaster bas-relief" [97]*

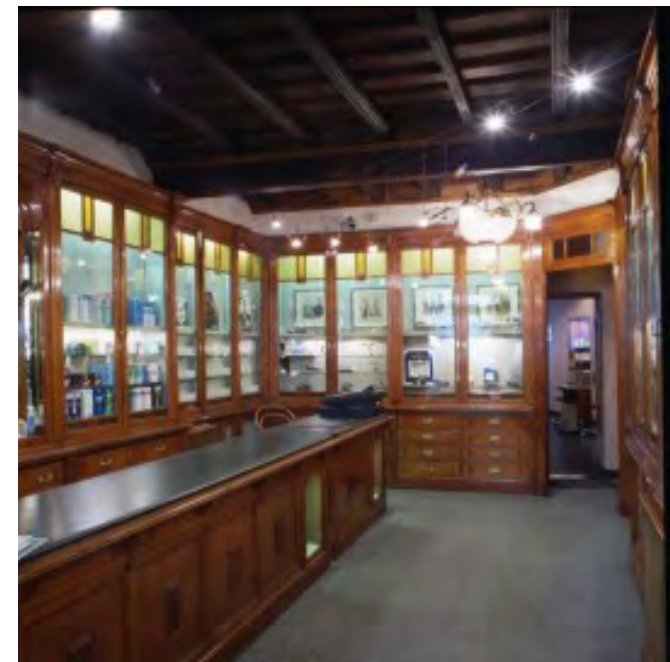
[97] Davico & Coppo, 2001, p. 95 [own translation]

images MuseoTorino. (n.d.). Niche, profumeria, interno, 2017. Archivio Storico della Città di Torino [Photograph]. MuseoTorino.



## ottica bonino

images MuseoTorino. (n.d.). Niche, profumeria, interno, 2017. Archivio Storico della Città di Torino [Photograph]. MuseoTorino.



## shops

### STARSHOP

Star Shop on Via Po in Turin is a modern retail space that specializes in comics, manga, action figures, and other pop culture collectibles. Unlike the historic shops in the same block, Star Shop's architecture reflects a contemporary, functional design focused on accessibility and efficient use of space. The shop is designed to cater to a younger, tech-savvy audience, featuring bright, open interiors with shelves and displays that emphasize the visual appeal of the products. The focus is on creating an engaging shopping experience, with

a layout that allows for easy browsing and interaction with the merchandise.

Architecturally, Star Shop does not possess the historic or architectural features typical of other establishments in the Via Po area, such as monobloc facades, wooden decorations, or historic interiors. Its design is more utilitarian, lacking the ornate details and historical significance found in neighboring buildings. This modern approach, while effective for its target market, differentiates it from the traditional

aesthetic that characterizes much of the surrounding block, emphasizing its role as a contemporary commercial space in a historically rich area

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design









## shops

### PASTICCERIA ABRATE

This pastry shop was founded in 1866, featuring a narrow sales area at the front and spacious rooms at the back for producing sweets and pastries, complete with ovens and machinery. In front of the shop, there is a display case under the portico, which dates from the same period as the shop.

In the 1920s-1930s, as the business shifted from a bakery to a pastry and confectionery shop, initially under Calvi and later Abrate, the existing wooden storefront with a modernist design was introduced, which remains in place today; during

this period, the sales area was also enlarged.

At that time, "due to its exquisite pastry tradition, Abrate was the official supplier of breakfasts for the Princess trained at the "Royal Cavalry School," served on a silver tray" [98].

The authors, Job and Ronchetta (1990), explained that this pastry shop, features a storefront from the 1930s, which is marked by a distinctly Rationalist style. In this period it was installed the walnut storefront on a green marble base

from the Roja Valler (which remains today). The Rationalist style is present in the "two symmetrical display windows that frame the recessed entrance with splayed sides" [98].

The storefront has a characteristic element: the signage, which is made with "gilded wooden letters reading "PASTICCERIA ABRATE SUCC. CALVI" and a concave panel above the vestibule stating "CASA FONDATA NEL 1866" (House Founded in 1866) [98]. On both sides of the signage, there is space for three vertical rectangles of glass. The main intention was to show the Italian



tricolor, but nowadays there are blue glasses. The signange is capped at the ends with a carved rhombus.

Job and Ronchetta (1990) described the interior decoration, which dates back to an earlier period, with counters adorned with cut glass and mirrors, and topped with Carrara marble. The bar counter reflects the typical design of the 1920s, this area's walls are decorated using 19th-century wooden furnishings of "refined design and craftsmanship accentuated by slender mahogany columns with gilded acanthus capitals and mirrored backs. Original

glass jars for confectionery are neatly arranged on the shelves, opposite the liquor display" [98]. In the back of the room, near to the shelves, a round spring clock can be founded on the decorative cornice at the top.

The bar counters, cash register, and pastry counters dating back to the 1920s exhibit a minimalist design, constructed from walnut wood. The vertical supports are adorned with faux gilded shelf decorations, resting on a dual-layer base and finished with a fascia cornice and a Carrara marble top. Additionally, from the same period, two portable display cabinets

designed for product presentation, embellished with chromed brass castings of whimsical putti, were documented until 2008.

Remarkably, some original equipment has been preserved, including a mortar for grinding almonds and various utensils used for making sweets. However, the overall ambiance of the shop would benefit from refurbishment to restore the original atmosphere.

An unique and interesting feature of this shop is the "eye" hatch in the ceiling of the former workshop



room, said to “have been used by the owners to monitor the employees from their apartment above” [98]. On the left wall, a niche that originally housed an old bread oven is now concealed behind a fireplace frame. Four underground rooms once held large cement tanks that were used for egg storage.

A significant renovation took place in 2002, following the closure of the Abrate pastry shop and the establishment of a café-bistro, which later changed ownership in 2008. This renovation proposed an enlargement of the sales area (now functioning as a café) through the incorporation of the workshop and repositioning of the back wall paneling, which now separates the space from a modern kitchen used for small-scale catering at the rear of the room.

Fortunately, the café retains its historic furnishings, with the counters and paneling simply relocated within the space. The flooring was stripped of its multiple layers and returned to its original 18th-century look from Via Po. The mix of Lucerne stone and terracotta tiles, the square brick tiles at the entrance, and the brick flooring in the main area, along with the inclined section made from reclaimed stone from dismantled floors, produces an attractive color scheme. Also, a second, smaller room was created in the 18th-century section that once housed a blacksmith’s workshop.

[98] MuseoTorino, n.d. [own translation]

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Is an historic shop, under the classification of monobloc in wood.







## shops along the axis

### REALE ANNIBALE

Reale Annibale, has a rich history rooted in Italian craftsmanship. Originally established in 1890, the shop initially gained fame as a manufacturer of diatonic accordions, or "organetti," known for their fine wood craftsmanship and unique design. The shop was known as "Reale Annibale Armonichista," producing high-quality accordions that were popular among local musicians until it ceased production in 1935. These instruments were notable for their intricate woodwork, mother-of-pearl

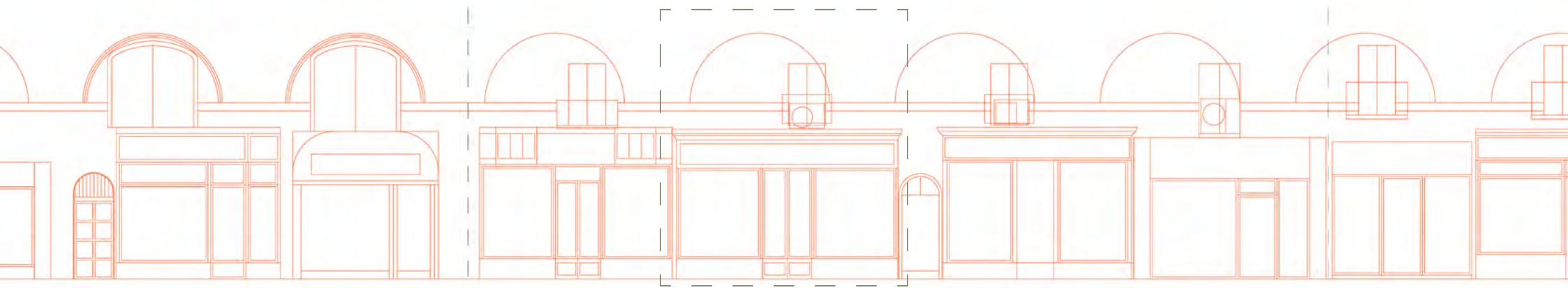
buttons, and brass reeds, with some pieces still preserved in museums today.

Although the store's original purpose as an instrument maker has evolved, it remains an iconic part of Turin's heritage, now housing a branch of L'Erbolario, an Italian herbal cosmetics brand. Its preserved wooden monobloc facade reflects its historic features, retaining the charm of early 20th-century Italian shopfronts and serving as a reminder of its

legacy in Turin's cultural landscape. This distinct monobloc wooden facade adds to the city's architectural heritage and showcases Turin's tradition of artisanal excellence.

**The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage**

**Is an historic shop, under the classification of monobloc in wood.**







## shops along the axis

### FOCACERIA LIGURE

Monobloc of the beginning of the 19th century

#### 1. reale ombrelleria artigiana

Storefront constructed in 1897. The storefront is significant essentially for its contribution to the context: even the minor examples of historic shop design impose a distinctive character on the commercial streets. In this section of via Po, these storefronts still densely line the facades, which underlines the lively role once played by the street in city trading

#### 2. gioielleria la conterja

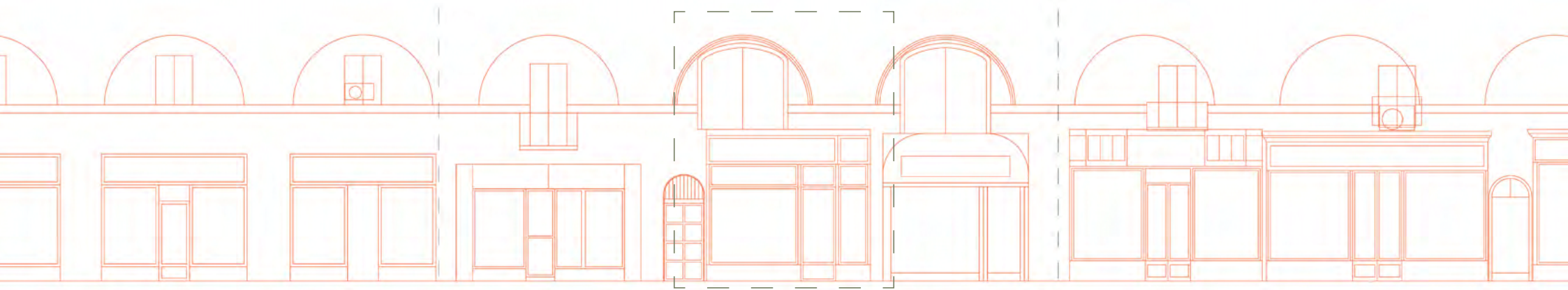
#### 3. focacceria tipica ligure

The only evidence of the original furnishings is the small wooden monobloc devanture from 1897, with a strictly symmetrical design, with a door in the center and windows on the sides, revamped by a careful restoration carried out in the early 2000s. The plinth, in green marble from Val Roj, forms a small base from which the wooden uprights start and end with two reduced shelves on which rests a tall sign holder with a modern glass panel and a projecting upper frame supported by small shelves. All the elements are completed by turned wooden decorations carved

with ovules, volutes, frames and dentils. The devanture is completed by the cast iron and serpentine pillar noticeboard and the three windows are concluded by a modern sign.

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Is an historic shop, under the classification of monobloc in wood.









## shops along the axis

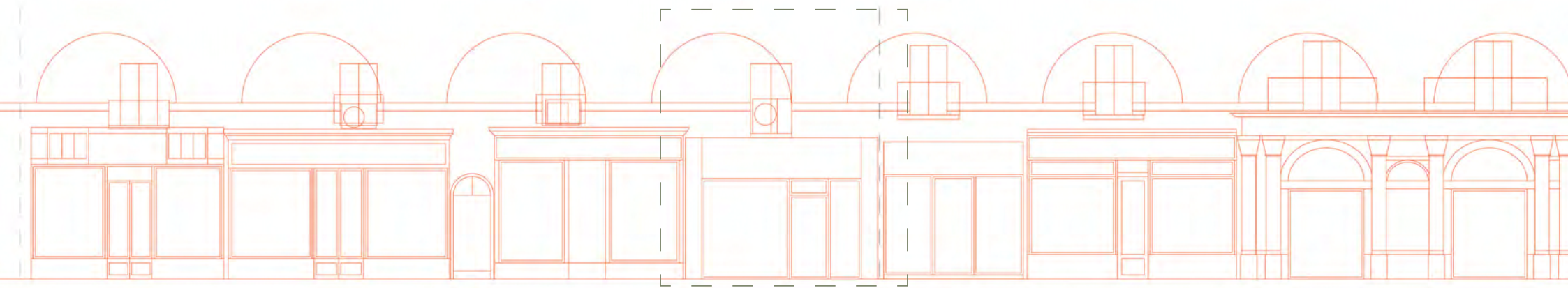
### FOCACERIA (SECOND ENTRANCE)

This facade consists primarily of metal cladding, which contrasts sharply with the traditional storefronts of the surrounding arcade. The design is minimal and fails to harmonize with its architectural context. The absence of stylistic details or references to the arcade's architectural elements creates a visual disruption in the rhythm established by the arches. Furthermore, there is no available information about the space's previous use, and the original

architectural values seem to have been lost or significantly altered due to this modern intervention. Currently, this establishment serves as an auxiliary area for the adjacent Focacceria, with a starkly white and plain interior, furnished only with simple chairs and tables for customers.

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design







## shops along the axis

### CAFFE 101 (SECOND ENTRANCE)

This storefront features large glass panels framed by black metal, creating a stark contrast with the traditional architecture of the surrounding arcade. The reflective glass surface, devoid of any decorative elements, disrupts the visual harmony of the arcade. This modern intervention diminishes the arcade's original architectural identity, contributing to the erosion of its historical character. Furthermore,

there is no available information about the previous use of this space, and the current façade design has further contributed to the loss of the site's historical and architectural value. Today, this space functions as a secondary area for Caffè 101. Inside, it features an interesting brick-vaulted ceiling, with the only furnishings being simple chairs and tables for customers.

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Not a historic shop, it has a contemporary design









## shops along the axis

### CAFFÈ 101

Caffè 101 in Via Po, Turin, is a coffee shop that blends modern functionality with the historic charm characteristic of the area. The architectural design of the shop integrates seamlessly with the surrounding historic structures, maintaining a traditional façade that respects the architectural continuity of Via Po. Inside, the space is thoughtfully arranged to balance contemporary elements with classic details, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that reflects the heritage of Turin's coffee culture. The shop's interior features a

combination of elegant materials and vintage-inspired decor, enhancing the historic ambiance while offering a comfortable setting for its customers.

Architecturally, Caffè 101 respects the historical context of its location by retaining features typical of the historic shops on Via Po. The storefront aligns with the architectural rhythm of the block, contributing to the cohesive aesthetic that characterizes this historic street. This balance between old and new not only preserves the charm of the

area but also reinforces the shop's connection to the longstanding tradition of cafés in Turin, making it a distinguished part of the city's architectural and cultural landscape.

**The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage**

**Is an historic shop, under the classification of monobloc in wood.**







101CAFFE'  FAST GOURMET

 L'APERITIVO

COLAZIONI  
DOLCI  
PANINI

GLI SPECIALI  
GU SPECIALI FREDDI  
Coca-Cola  
APERITIVI

 TIM



# shops along the axis

## TIM

### 1. Caffè Gianduia

This caffè, although radically transformed within, retains an interesting facade in plaster and cement from the end of the 19th century. Clearly derived from architectural precedents, the cornice recalls in its mouldings, capitals and arch-key decorations, the late neo-classical design of many buildings of the Carlo Alberto Period. The use of cement decoration is however more typical of the turn of the century, when it was particularly widespread in buildings and street furniture. [99]

### 1. Tim

Clearly derived from architectural models, the devanture with fluted pilasters, Corinthian capitals and decorations of the keys of the arches, placed to the side of the two arched showcase entrances and the smaller showcase in the centre, paired at the end of the facade, finds correspondence in the classical design of many buildings from the Carlo-Albertine period. The use of cement in decoration, however, is typical of interventions between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

years in which it was particularly widespread in decorations and street furniture.

[99] Job, Ronchetta, 2006, p.21 [own translation]

The facade preserves the proportions of the following elements: plinth - display window (with access in the center) - signage

Is an historic shop, under the classification of a decorated frame









04

• 05

## HISTORIC SHOP REFURBISHMENT

selecting an historic shop for intervention | current state - planimetry and photographic record | new use proposal | architectural proposal - planimetry and renders | conclusions

06





# 1 selecting an historic shop for intervention

caffe 101

By analyzing the commercial establishments along the urban block, the study revealed a significant disruption in the characteristics that unify and homogenize the overall urban image of the block within a specific sector of the strip. This misalignment with the primary organizing features begins at the empty shop and extends to Caffè 101. Despite the presence of historic shops featuring characteristic wooden monoblocs in this area, the historic urban image is disrupted by three shops with contemporary designs that deviate from the design logic of the entire block: Starshop, the secondary establishment of Focacceria, and the secondary establishment of Caffè 101.

Although the strip begins with three establishments featuring contemporary facades, these adhere to parameters that maintain some visual coherence, such as uniform height, large showcases, and a division of elements into plinth, exhibition area, and cornice bearing the shop name. In contrast, the three disruptive shops fail to align with the heights of the previously designed establishments and lack key elements that contribute to the overall image of the strip. Specifically, they lack plinths, and in two out of three cases, signage is absent.



CAFFE 101  
fascia

FOCACCERIA  
fascia

FOCACCERIA  
fascia

STARSHOP  
fascia



Consequently, the right half of the strip emerges as the most compromised area, necessitating an intervention to restore and enhance the historic features of the strip while fostering a sense of unity among its elements—and even within individual establishments. A critical characteristic of historic shops is the continuity and connection between interior and exterior, a feature that should guide the intervention.

For this project, one of the two consecutive shops with minimal alignment to the block's overall character was selected for improvement. The goal is to adjust its features to harmonize with the rest of the strip and with the other monobloc of the same establishment, which retains historic facade furnishings. The selected shop for intervention is Caffè 101, which features a wooden monobloc, a display case, and an alternate entrance with a contemporary design.



STARSHOP  
emp. design

FOCACCERIA  
monobloc in wood

FOCACCERIA  
contemp. design

CAFFE 101  
contemp.  
design

CAFFE 101  
monobloc in wood

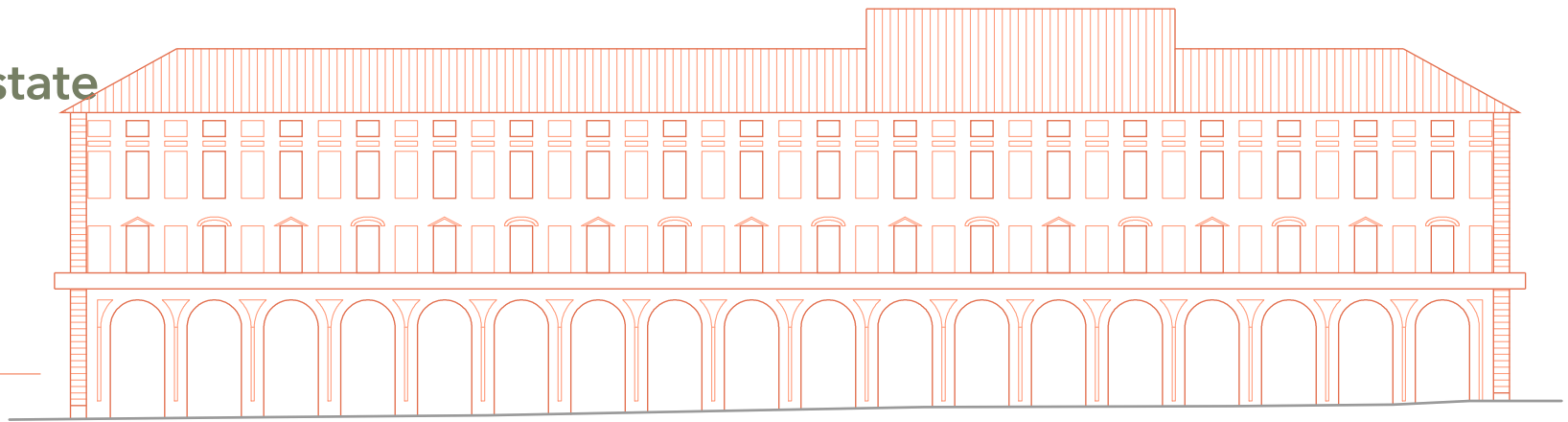


## 2 current state

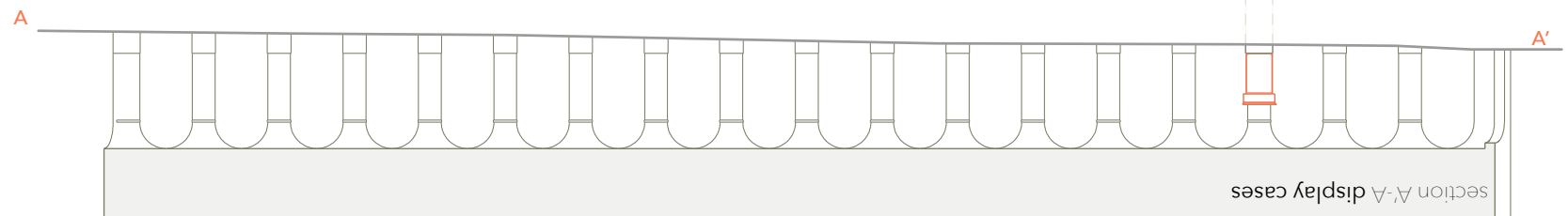
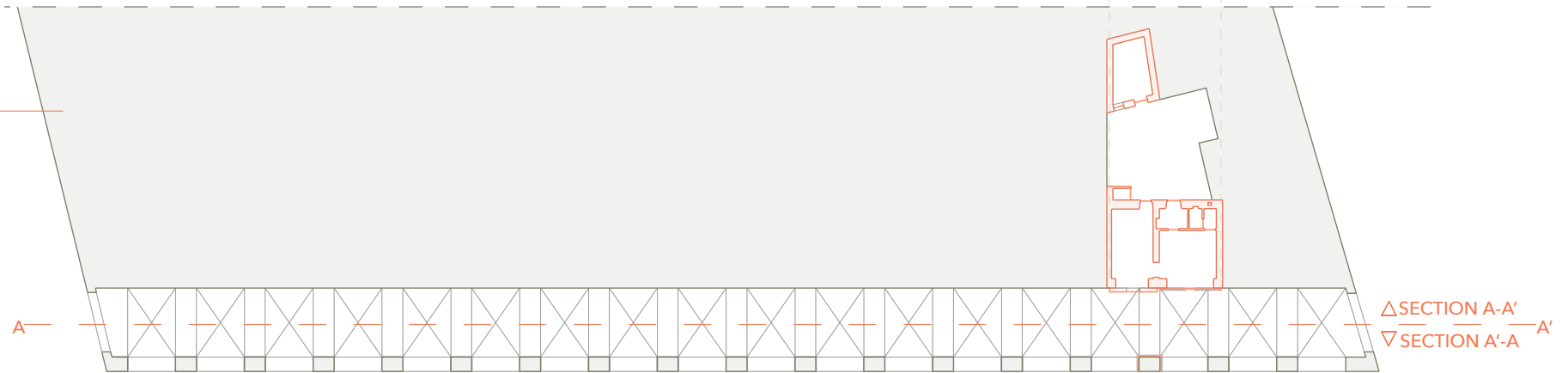
### planimetry

scale 1:500

building's elevation



ground floor plan







DISPLAY CASE

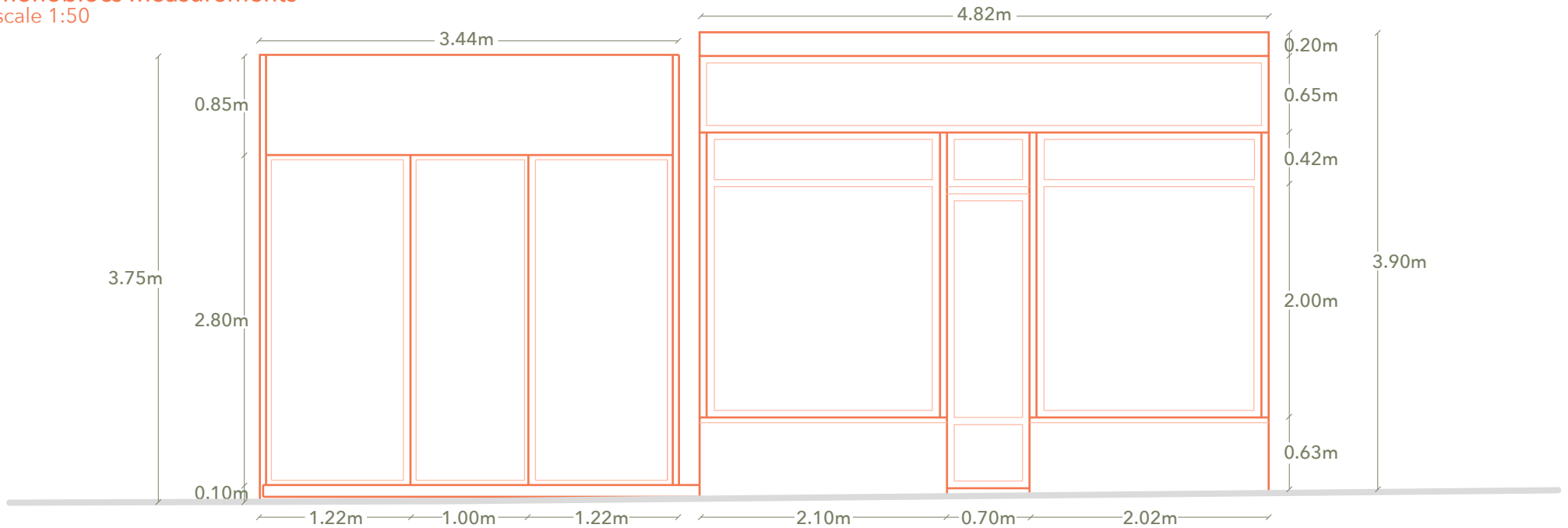
MONOBLOC



## current state

caffe 101 - section through the arcades: storefronts

monoblocs measurements  
scale 1:50



storefronts strip





contemporary design monobloc + historic monobloc  
scale 1:50



## current state

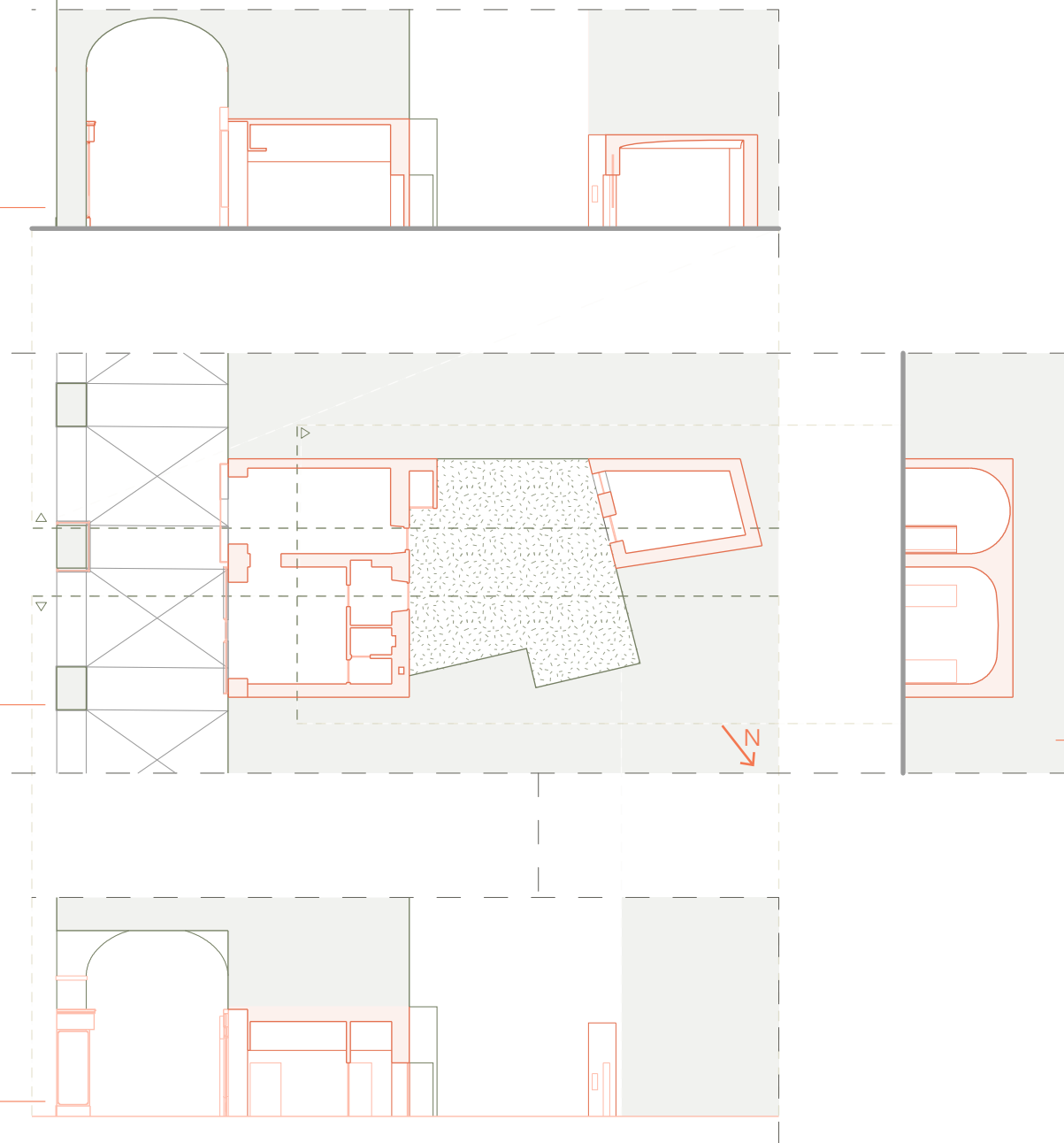
caffe 101 - floor plans and sections scale 1:250

longitudinal section

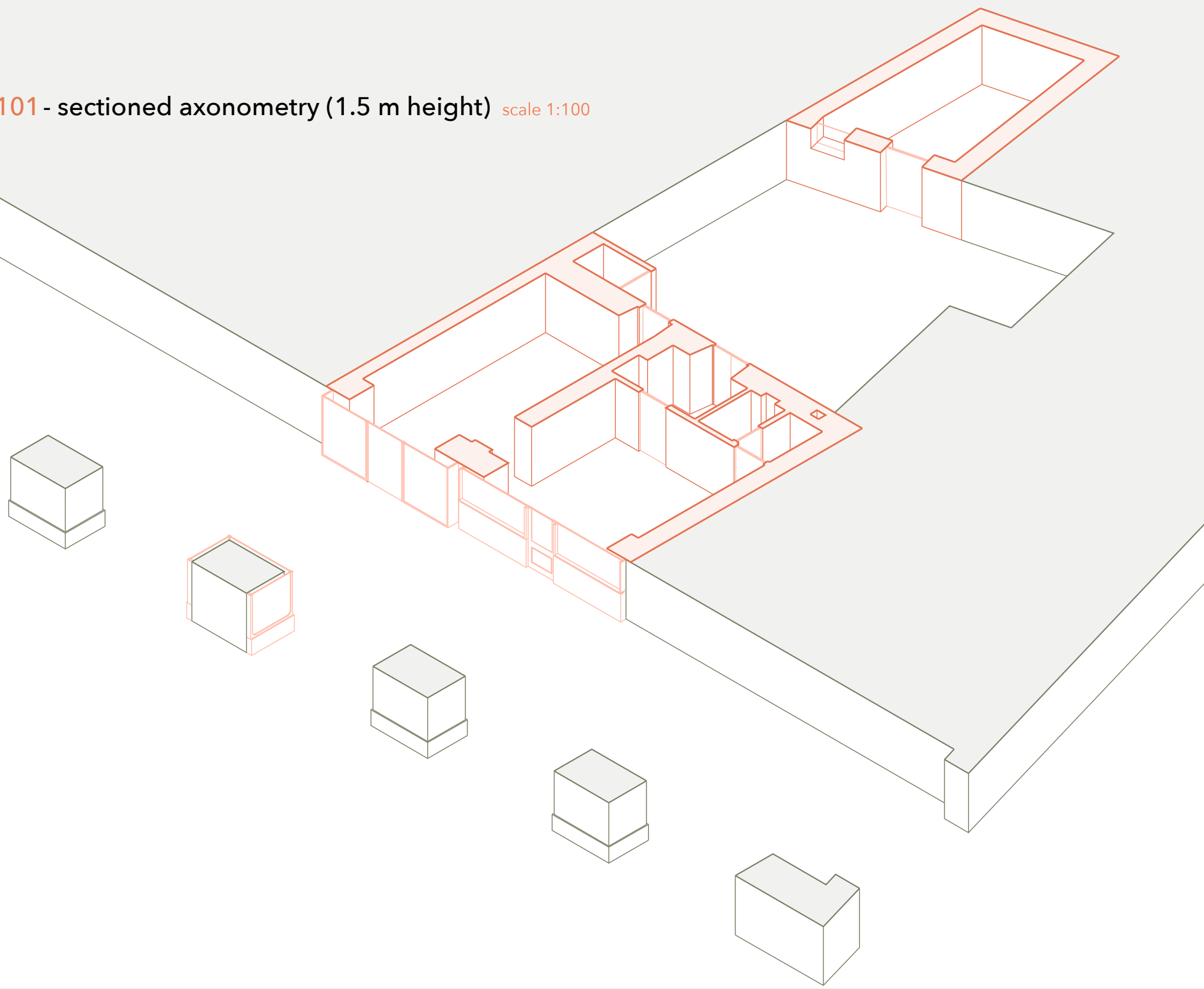
ground floor plan

longitudinal section

transversal section



caffè 101 - sectioned axonometry (1.5 m height) scale 1:100





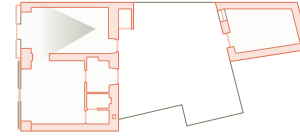
## current state

### caffe 101 - photographic record

shop 1  
interior view facing  
the courtyard



shop 1  
interior view facing  
the arcades

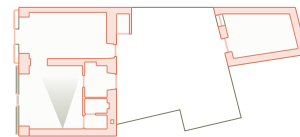




shop 2  
interior view facing  
the arcades



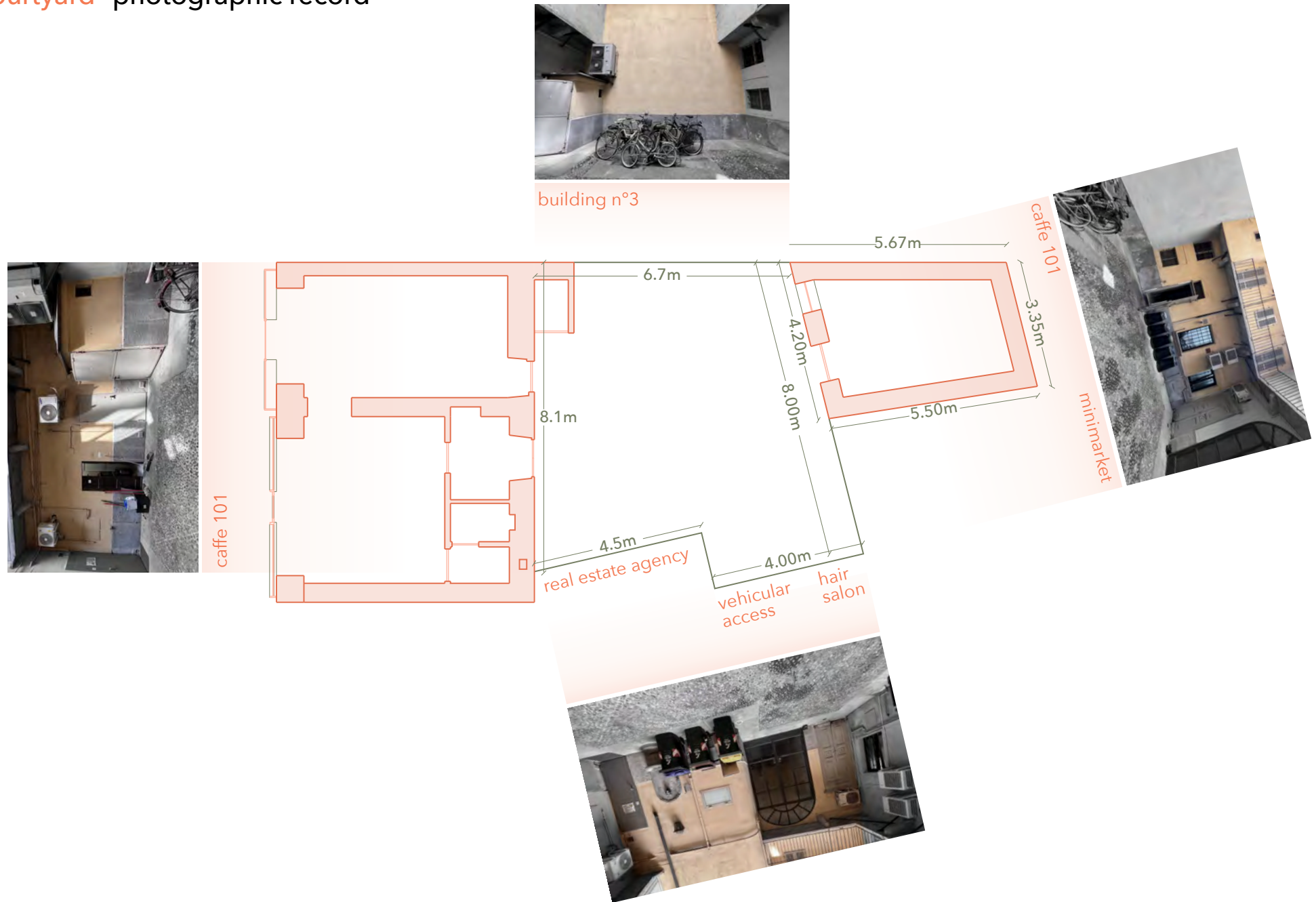
shop 2  
interior view facing  
shop 1



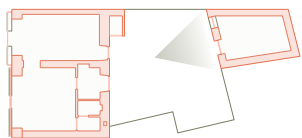


## current state

courtyard- photographic record



**deposit**  
view fom the courtyards  
facing the entrance of  
the deposit



**deposit**  
interior view facing  
the courtyard



## current state

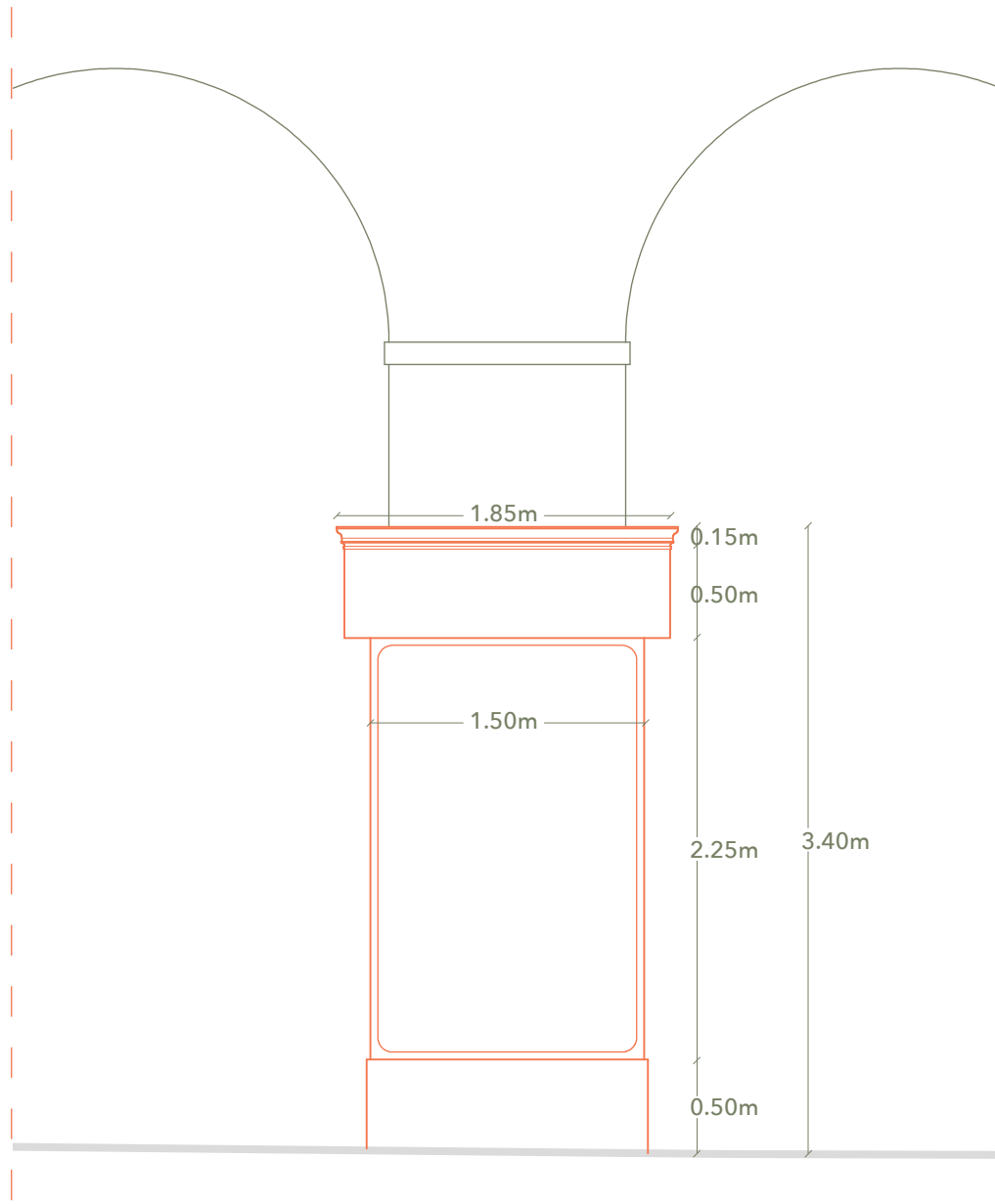
### display case - photographic record

Currently, Caffè 101 owns a display case, which is a fascia display case, characterized by its prominent cornice and plinth, and obviously, the space for displaying the products (even though nowadays this space is not being used). It is located around the fourth pillar from the arcade, completely covering 3 out of the 4 faces of the structural element.

It is a structure made alpi green marble on the plinth, wooden structure for the display area, and wood structure for the cornice but decorated with a golden mirror.







# 3 new use proposal

## caffè + flower shop

Transforming the historic Caffè 101 on Via Po into a combined coffee and flower shop is a unique opportunity to breathe new life into a beloved space, honoring its heritage while bringing fresh purpose and vibrancy to the location. This renovation reinterprets the historic character of Caffè 101, where artisans once showcased their craft, making the process of creation as significant as the final product itself. In this reimagined setting, the flower shop becomes a modern continuation of that tradition, with a focus on florals—a dynamic, living medium that symbolizes growth, renewal, and beauty.

### CAFFIORE

coffee shop that combines the art of floristry with the inviting atmosphere of a café. Caffiore explores the beauty and craft of flowers. Guests can enjoy:

- \* Flower arrangement workshops
- \* Creation of graduation crowns
- \* Flower care and maintenance lessons
- \* Eco-friendly floristry lessons
- \* Themed floral events (for holidays or special occasions)



## FLOWERS AS LIVING, EVER-CHANGING ELEMENTS

Flowers, by their nature, embody life and change. They are dynamic, living things that evolve over time, resonating with the themes of transformation and vitality. This makes them a fitting element for an interactive social space, where patrons can experience and appreciate the evolving beauty of nature. Through seasonal blooms and floral arrangements, visitors will experience the rhythm of nature within an urban context, bringing a piece of the natural world into their daily lives.

## FLORAL HUB THAT MARRIES HISTORY AND NATURE

A Floral Hub that Marries History and Nature. The new concept for Caffè 101 will establish a "floral hub" where nature meets history, creating a setting for people to come together, celebrate, and explore the art of floristry in a cultural and historic context. Flowers also carry deep symbolic weight, representing growth, resilience, and connection—qualities that align with the communal spirit we wish to foster. The shop will be a welcoming space for the Torinese community, offering workshops on floral design, bouquet making, and crafting graduation crowns, as well as opportunities for social gatherings over coffee and aperitivo, enveloped by the rich scent and vibrant colors of fresh flowers.





## EMPHASIS ON TORINESE ARTISANSHIP

In keeping with local tradition, this venue will prioritize products sourced from Torino and the surrounding region. From locally-grown flowers to artisanal goods available at the café, each element will celebrate the richness of Piedmont's culture. This commitment to local products will also extend to the coffee offerings, showcasing the best of Torino's coffee culture alongside the new floral component, creating a cohesive experience that feels distinctively rooted in Torinese identity.



## A MODERN APPROACH TO VISUAL IDENTITY

Historically, shop windows (vitrine) were used to showcase products to draw customers in, but today, they serve a broader purpose. Windows have become a way for brands to communicate their identity and values, inviting passersby to experience the interior. In this renovation, the vitrine will offer a transparent view into the creative, collaborative, and artistic nature of the shop, framing the activities and ambiance inside, and inviting the community to explore a space where tradition and innovation harmoniously coexist.



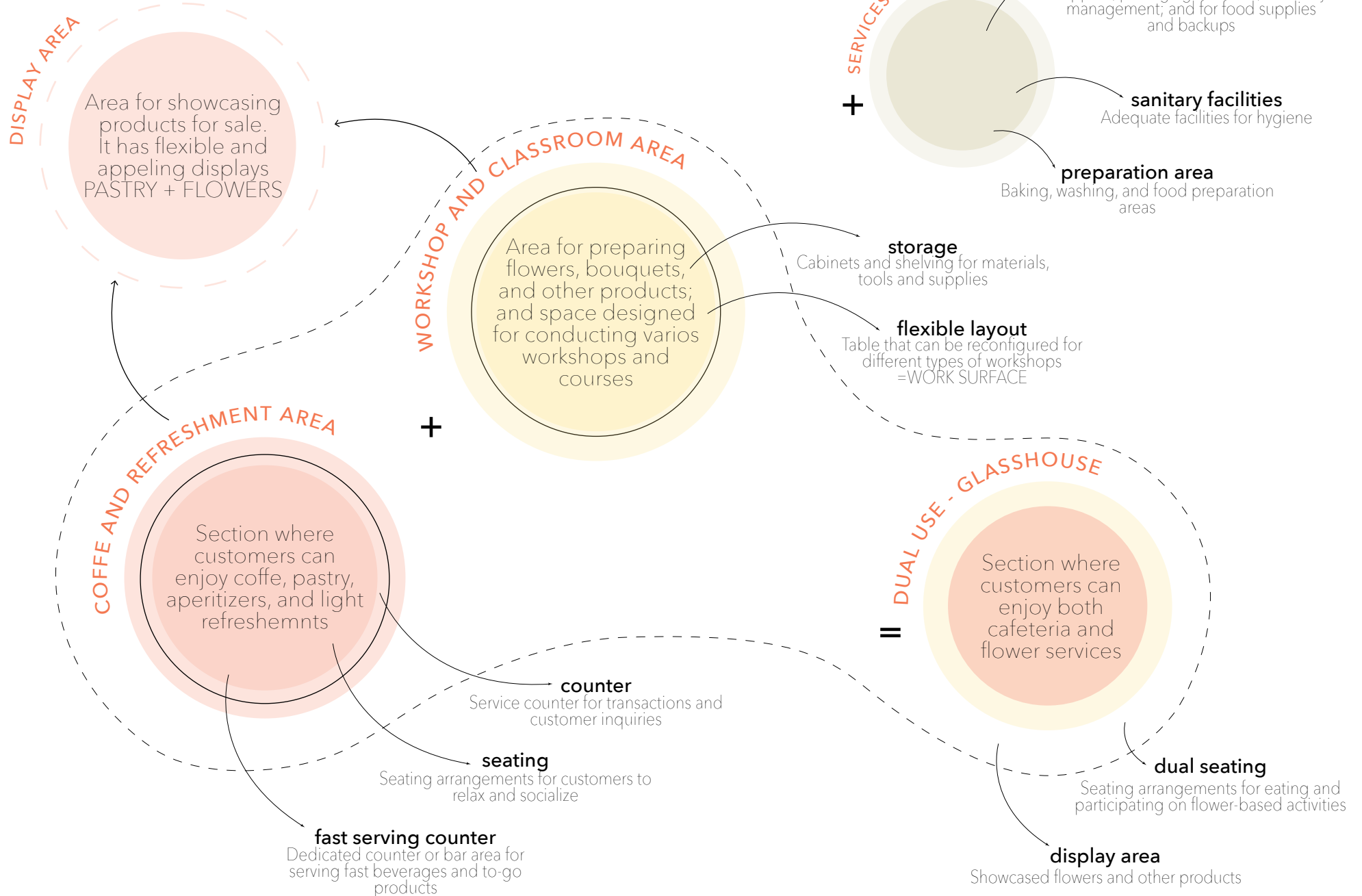
## THE PROCESS AS PART OF THE EXPERIENCE

One of the defining characteristics of historic shops like Caffè 101 was the visibility of the creation process, where visitors could witness firsthand the crafting of goods. By integrating live demonstrations and workshops, this new space will bring the public into the creative process, allowing them to see, learn, and engage with the making of floral bouquets and crowns. This interaction between process and product preserves the spirit of Caffè 101, where the craft is a spectacle and integral part of the experience, fostering a deeper connection between the visitor and the floral art.

This blend of café, floral boutique, and workshop will establish a vibrant spot that respects the past while cultivating a new vision for Via Po, making the shop not only a destination but also a living, ever-changing part of the urban landscape.

# new use proposal

## architectural needs





## new use proposal

architectural needs

# REVITALIZING ROOTS: A BIOPHILIC BLOSSOM

re-birth through nature

## REVITALIZING ROOTS

"embodies a profound architectural transformation that redefines Caffè 101 into a **vibrant flower shop** while **honoring and enhancing its historical essence**. This concept of revitalization encompasses renovation, transformation, and restoration of the establishment's most valuable features, aiming to restore its vitality and relevance within its historical and cultural context"

metamorphical growth of the city's roots:  
the project that reconnects with its past  
and blossom in the present

### ROOTS      deep connection with history

serve as a foundation for the intervention, linking the design to the shop's historical identity. Just as flowers draw nourishment from their roots, this project draws inspiration from the building's history, manifesting through craftsmanship, materials, and cultural traditions.

### REVITALIZATION      preserving the charm and character of the shop

This process submits the space to a transformative journey that respects its origins while infusing it with new vitality.

symbolizing photosynthesis

## BIOPHILIC DESIGN

### BIOPHILIA      human innate connection with nature

aim to create a sensory, immersive experience that fosters a deep emotional and psychological connection between the users and their surrounding, echoing the calming and revitalizing qualities of nature

### PHOTOSYNTHESIS      boosting creativity, innovation and mental growth

the shop, much like a plant, will be a place where energy is generated and nurtured

## rebirth

evolution of the space

## regeneration

reviving the historical essence while aligning with contemporary needs

## new use proposal

### courtyard incorporation

Caffè 101 is located in building no. 4 of urban block no. 9. This position grants it access to the private courtyard of the block. As noted on [page 115](#), out of the four buildings in the block, building no. 4 is the only one without a direct access door (neither for pedestrians nor for vehicles) on Via Po. Instead, access to the courtyard is through Via Gianbattista Bogino 1, a perpendicular street to Via Po. This entrance serves as a vehicular access point ([image 90](#)) and also functions as the main entry for the residential units located above Caffè 101.

This courtyard is enclosed and has historically been “treated, depending on its historical origin and the degree of representativeness of the building, as a residual part of the built area or, more often, as a designed space” [\[100\]](#). These private courtyards, typically closed off by gates or doors, often lose their urban connections, resulting in spaces that are neglected and underutilized. This isolation breaks any potential relationships or connections between public and private urban spaces.

Over time, restoration processes have further demonstrated that “any relationship between public and private spaces is completely negated (...) however, some courtyards, recently restored, demonstrate the recoverability of these private spaces, also for collective uses. In particular, the courtyards of public and religious buildings show a strong vocation for more articulated public use” [\[100\]](#). However, in the case of the courtyard in question, it has become a residual private space used solely as a passageway for circulation within this pair of buildings.

As shown in ([image 91](#)), some courtyards in blocks near Via Po have undergone interventions that introduced new uses to their interior spaces. For instance, in urban block no. 2, where the University of Turin is located, the courtyard has been repurposed for educational and cultural activities ([image 92](#)). Similarly, in urban block no. 6, courtyards have been transformed into commercial spaces, with gates left open to welcome the public. For example, along Via Po, pedestrians can enter the courtyard to explore shops and other activities ([image 93](#)). In some cases, entire blocks feature permeable layouts where the buildings do not occupy the entire perimeter, allowing for fully walkable public pathways while maintaining the urban rhythm and structure.

Given this context, the proposed intervention seeks to leverage the corner location of the building. With Caffè 101’s entrance on Via Po and the vehicular access on Via Gianbattista Bogino leading towards Piazza Carlo Alberto—home to Turin’s National University Library, the Museo Nazionale del Risorgimento Italiano, Palazzo Carignano, and Galleria Subalpina—the project aims to revitalize the interior courtyard by offering additional access points and enhancing urban connectivity. Along Via Po, “systems of communicating courtyards often reappear, divided into interior aisles. In some cases, it is possible to recover a system of interior pathways. Artisans have long utilized these connections, suggesting the organization of



IMAGE 90

[\[100\]](#) De Ferrari, Job, Ronchetta, 1990, p.46 [own translation]





IMAGE 91:

-  Courtyard Caffè 101
-  Courtyards of public use
-  Via Po
-  Via Gianbattista Bogino
-  Possible flows from V. G. Bogino
-  1 Biblioteca Nazionale
-  2 Piazza Carlo Alberto
-  3 Pzzo Carignano / M. Risorgimento
-  4 Galleria Subalpina
-  5 Via Roma
-  6 Piazza Castello





IMAGE 92:



IMAGE 93:



systems of artisan and commercial courtyards, for pedestrian use, as alternative and complementary paths to the perimeter streets" [100]

Overall, the objectives of the courtyard intervention are:

### Enhancing connectivity and urban flow

The courtyard is strategically located at the intersection of significant urban pathways. Transforming it into a dynamic, functional space can help create a seamless flow that encourages pedestrian movement and connectivity in an area surrounded by key historical landmarks.

### Requalifying underutilized space

The intervention aims to breathe new life into areas currently underused, proposing a multifunctional environment that aligns with the building's prominent corner location while integrating into Turin's historic urban fabric.

### Signifying urban identity and cultural significance

The project seeks to enhance Turin's architectural and cultural heritage by referencing historical typologies that define the city, such as commercial establishments, arcades, and conservatories. The intervention respects existing architectural elements while addressing contemporary needs, reinforcing Turin's urban identity.

### Encouraging Social Interaction and multifunctional use

By activating spaces with the potential to host social and community activities, the intervention transforms the courtyard into a vibrant focal point where people can gather, interact, and engage with the dynamic environment.

## new use proposal

### integration of a type of building from the nineteenth century: the conservatories

In designing an intervention for the courtyard that promotes social gatherings and the revitalization of underutilized spaces, it was essential to select a typology that aligns with both the objectives of the overall project and the physical characteristics of the courtyard itself.

The project as a whole takes into account the historical features of the existing architecture, enhancing them to recall the original urban image while introducing a modern touch. The primary typology is undoubtedly that of the commercial arcades from the nineteenth century, focusing particularly on the historic shops. However, in the context of the post-industrial revolution period—marked by economic and technological growth—other typologies also became prominent in Turin. These typologies remain iconic in the city today. Among them are the conservatories or glass-vaulted arcades, which emerged due to the new materials available at the time, such as cast iron and glass. These materials were used both structurally and decoratively, enhancing load-bearing capacities and facilitating advancements in mass production, transportation, assembly, and maintenance.

In Turin's city center, this typology can be found in several locations (IMAGE XXX), creating covered passageways between buildings that attract attention and foster areas for commercial and social exchange. Notable examples include the Galleria Subalpina, Galleria Umberto I, Galleria San Federico, and the Antica Tettoia dell'Orologio, which now serves as a city market.

Thus, to establish a commercial area and recover unused urban spaces, the project will introduce an open-air structure that follows the typological characteristics of nineteenth-century arcades and the logic of these iconic city landmarks





IMAGE 91:

- Courtyard Caffè 101
- 1 Antica Tettoia dell'Orologio
- 2 Galleria Umberto I
- 3 Galleria San Federico
- 4 Galleria Subalpina



## new use proposal

### display case and an ever-changing proposal: an hydroponic garden

Following the theme of the flower shop and its sales process of natural flowers and plants, as well as offering masterclasses and lessons on plant-related topics, and considering the limited space of the display case, the proposed decoration will feature a small-scale hydroponic garden. This design aligns with the goal of showcasing fresh, natural flowers and plants in an engaging way within the confined space.

Hydroponics is "a type of soilless gardening that can be done either indoors or outdoors. It's a great option for people with little or no gardening space and uses less water than traditional gardening. With artificial lighting, hydroponics allows for year-round cultivation" (University of Minnesota Extension, n.d.). This system allows for the planting of different species multiple times a year, contributing to an ever-evolving design that adapts with the seasons, showcasing changing colors, species, and activities.

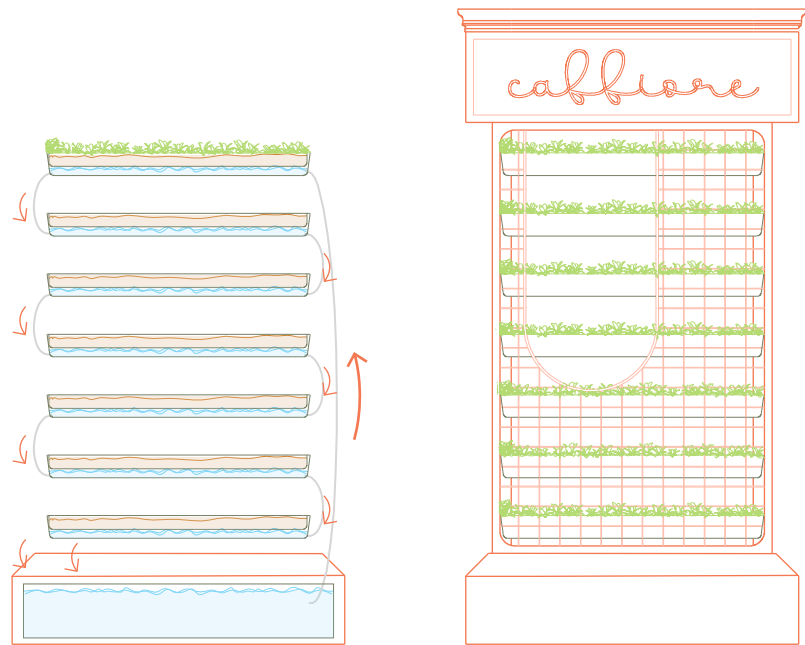
The design of the hydroponic system involves establishing a water reservoir at the base of the structure, which will supply water to the entire garden. The base of the display case has been enlarged to accommodate this water reservoir. A submersible pump moves the water from the reservoir to the top row of plants, after which the water flows downward to the lower rows through a hose, ensuring a continuous circulation of water and nutrients throughout the system.

For plant cultivation, seeds are first germinated in absorbent plant plugs, which provide a stable environment for the young roots to develop. Once the seeds have germinated, the seedlings are transferred to the hydroponic garden, which consists of a plant pot with two chambers stacked vertically. The upper chamber holds the plants, surrounded by small, inert rocks (such as hydroton or expanded clay pellets). These rocks serve as a medium for capillary action, allowing the water to move upward and provide moisture to the plant roots as needed. However, the upper chamber is not completely submerged in water to prevent the roots from sitting in water, which could cause root rot.

The lower chamber, located beneath the upper one, is where the water and nutrients are constantly circulated. The water flows from the bottom chamber to the top chamber, ensuring that the upper chamber receives the necessary water while avoiding excess moisture. This continuous circulation helps to maintain the optimal moisture level for the plants.

Lighting is crucial for the success of this hydroponic system, especially since the plants are grown indoors or in spaces with limited natural light. LED grow lights are placed beneath each plant pot, positioned to point upward at the plants and roots above. These lights support photosynthesis, ensuring healthy plant growth and providing the energy needed for optimal development.

It is important to note that these display cases are designed to be opened, allowing access to the products inside. This display case is no exception; its design includes a mechanism that facilitates easy maintenance, harvesting, and planting. This feature not only enhances the functionality of the space but also creates an interactive environment where customers can engage with the plants and learn more about hydroponics.

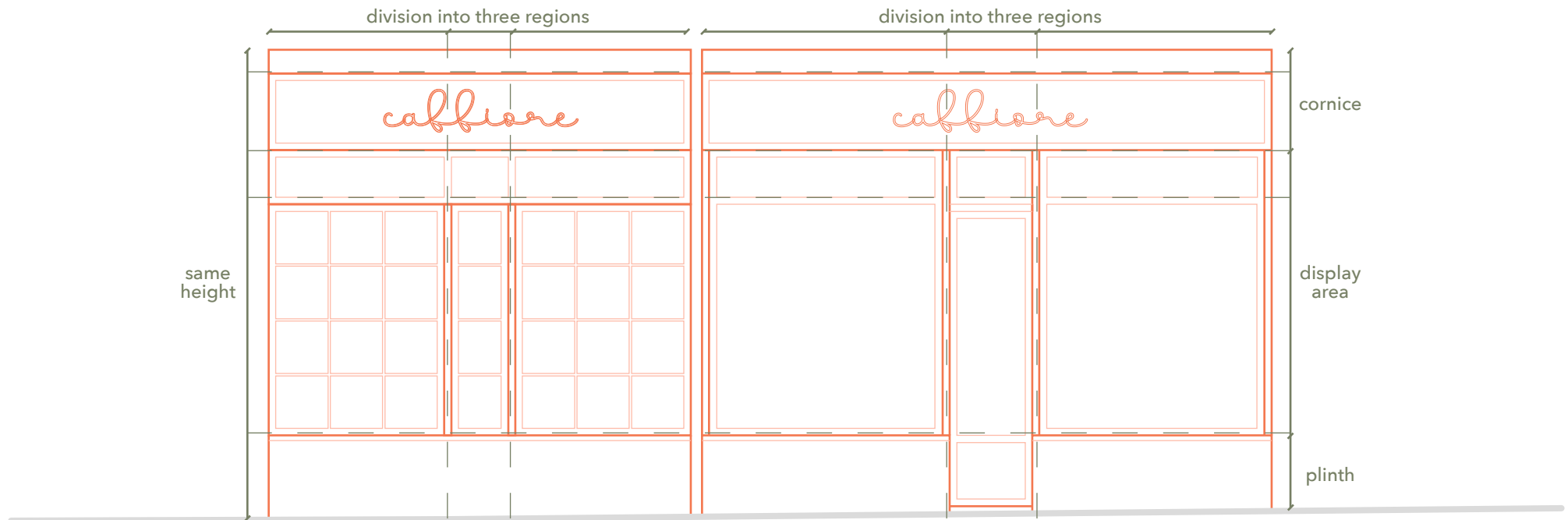


scale 1:50



# 4 architectural proposal

*cabfiore* - image section through the facade: design of the monoblocs in relationship to the context  
scale 1:50



# architectural proposal

*caffiore* - section through the facade: design of the monoblocs  
scale 1:50





# architectural proposal

*cabfiore* - monobloc

scale 1:50





# architectural proposal

*cabfiore* - display case  
scale 1:50

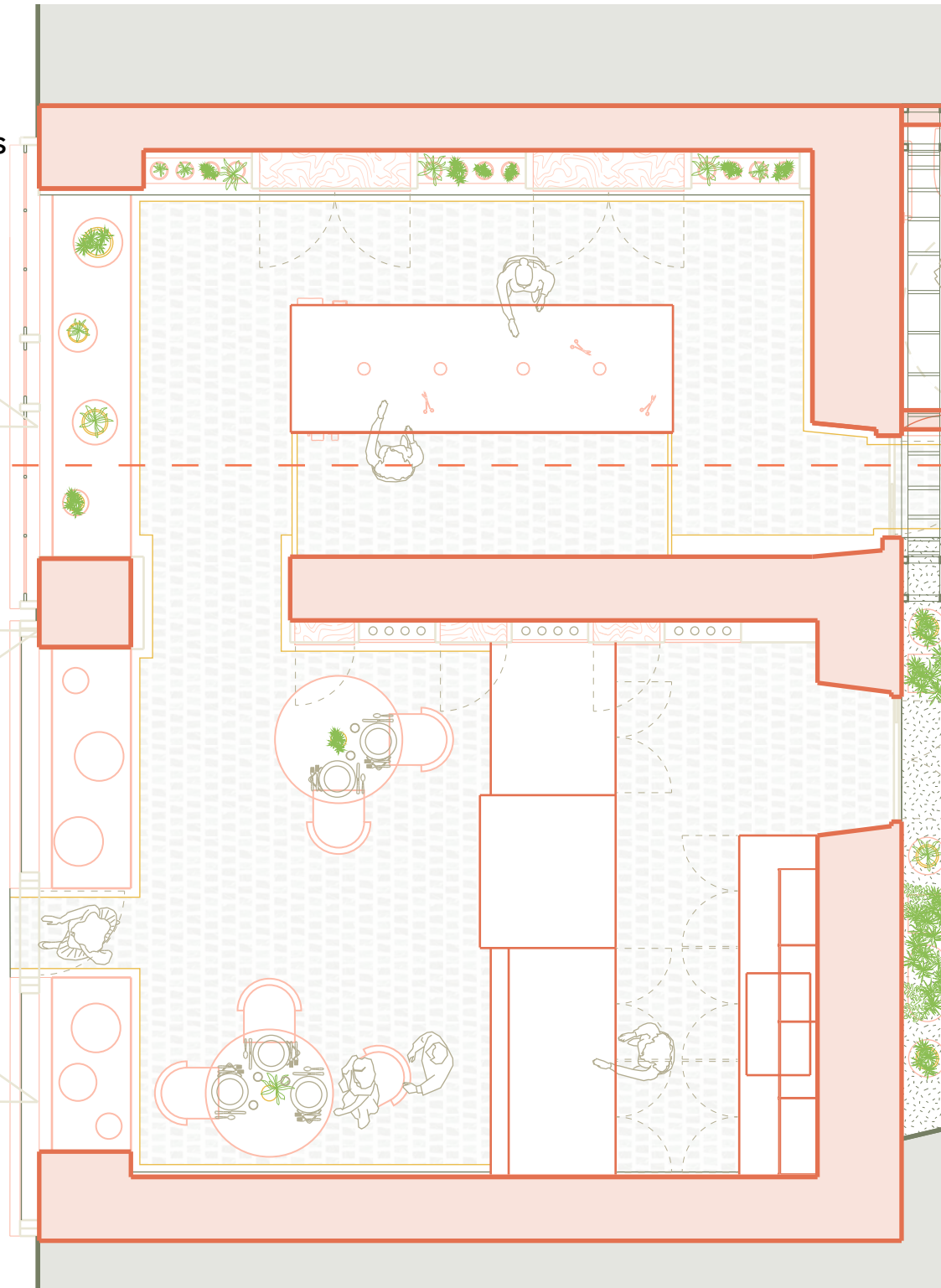
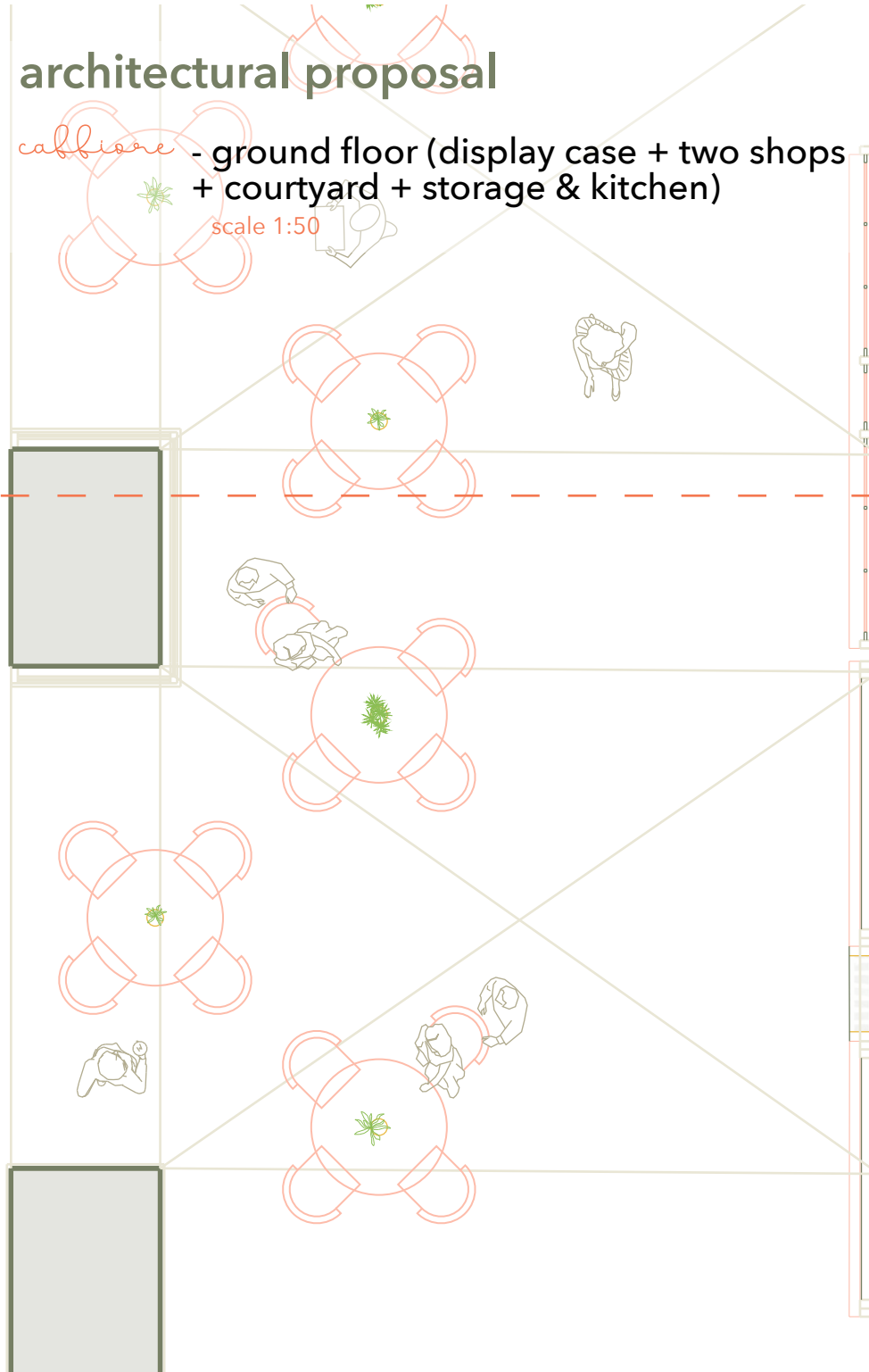


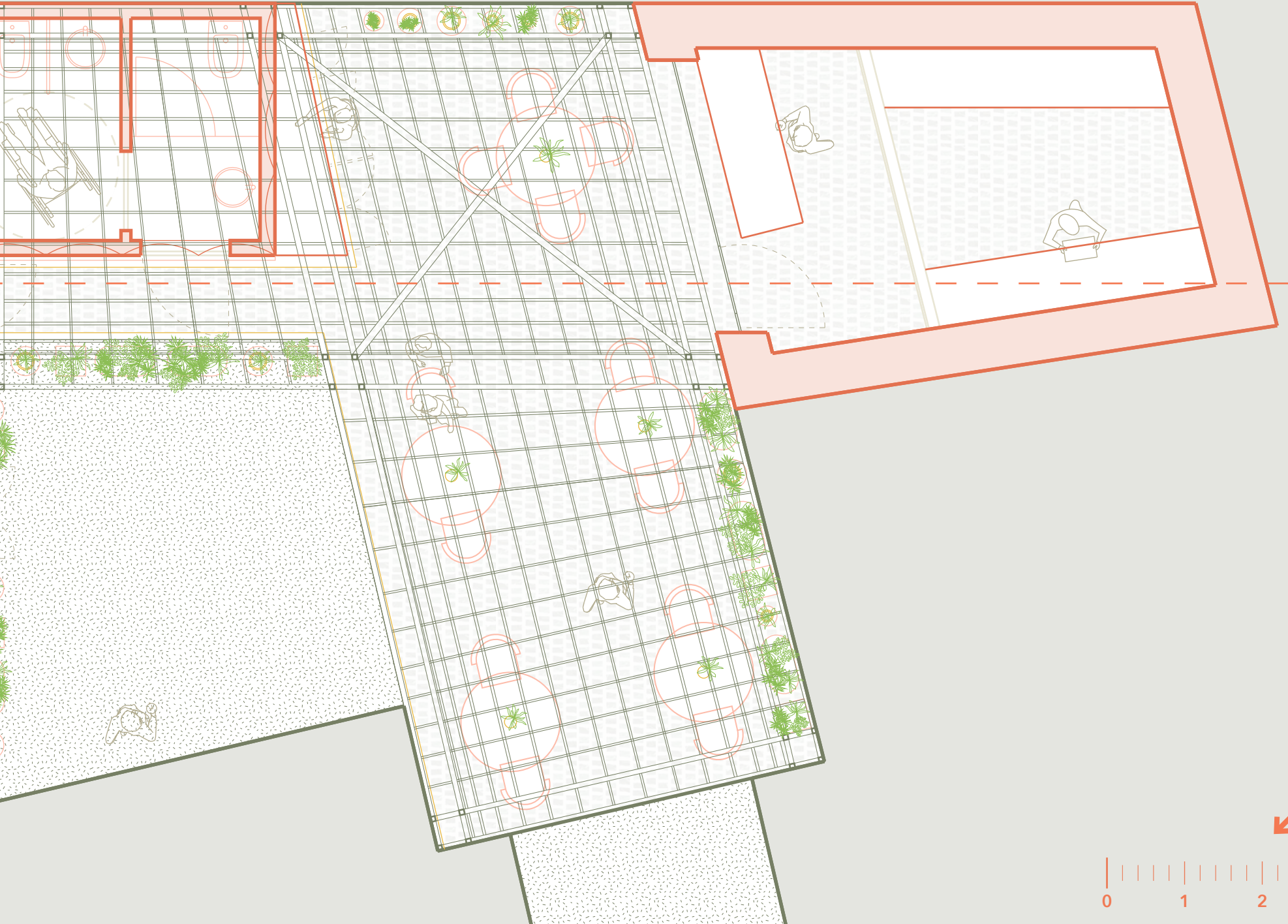


# architectural proposal

*caffè* - ground floor (display case + two shops  
+ courtyard + storage & kitchen)

scale 1:50





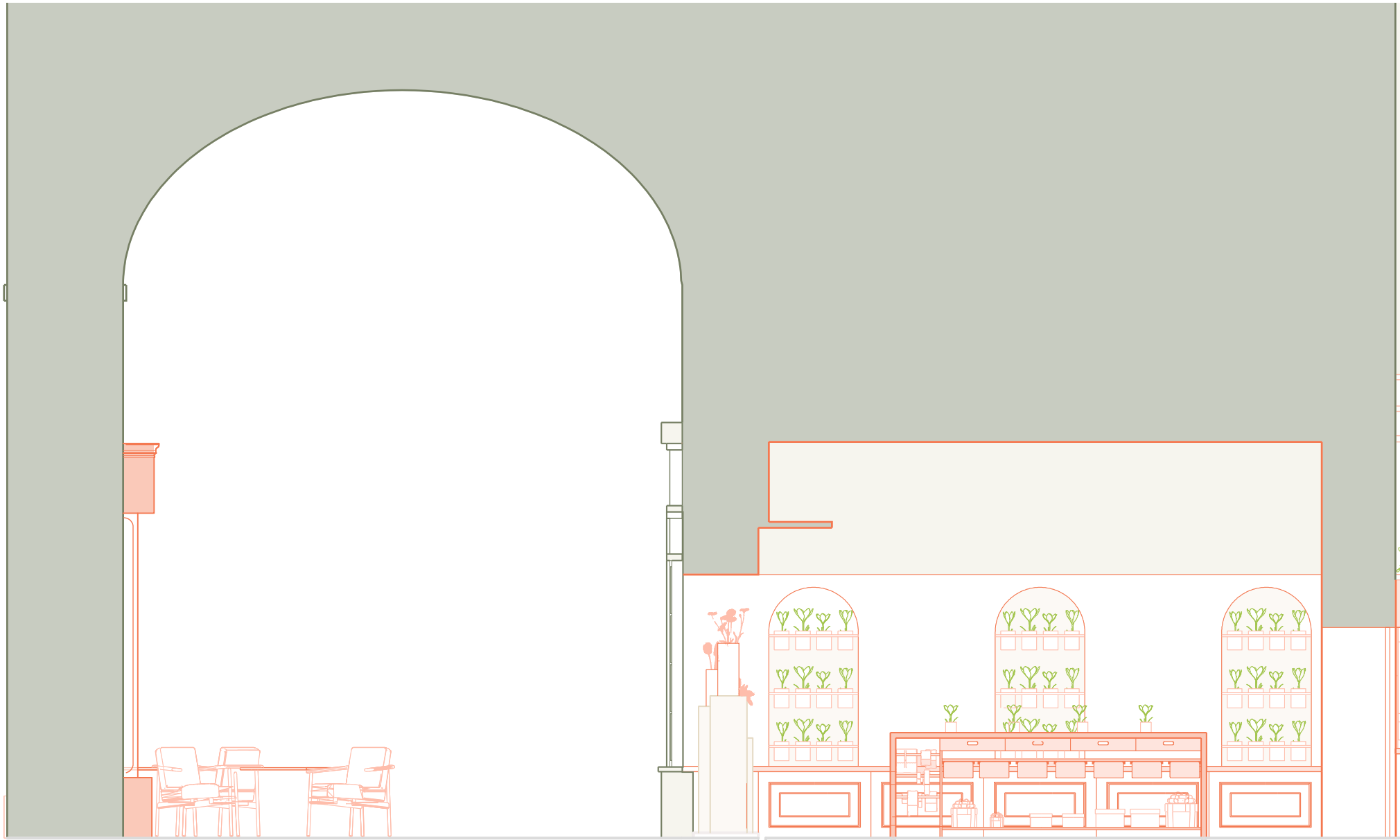
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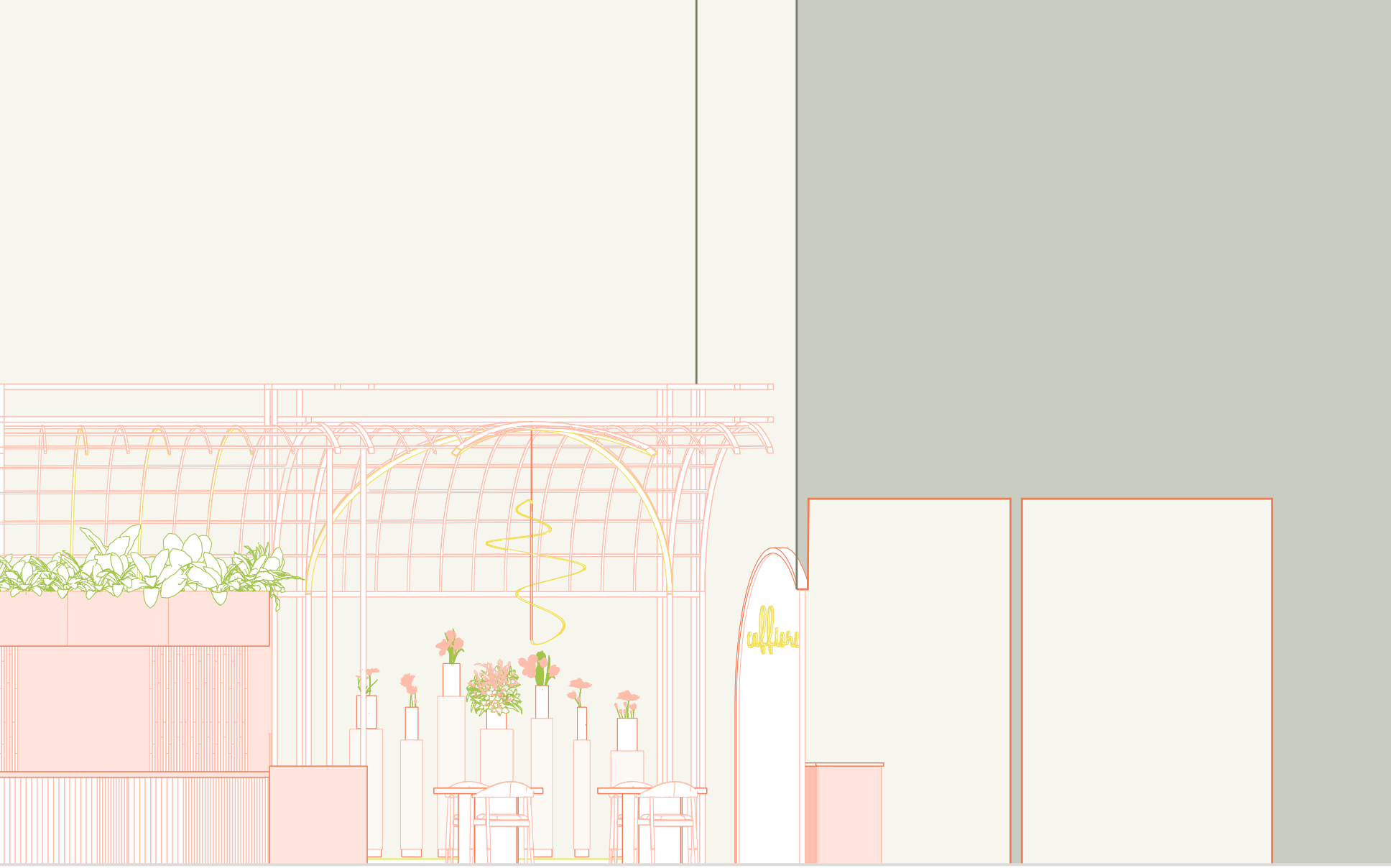




# architectural proposal

*caffiore* - general section (display case + two shops + courtyard + storage & kitchen)  
scale 1:50







# architectural proposal

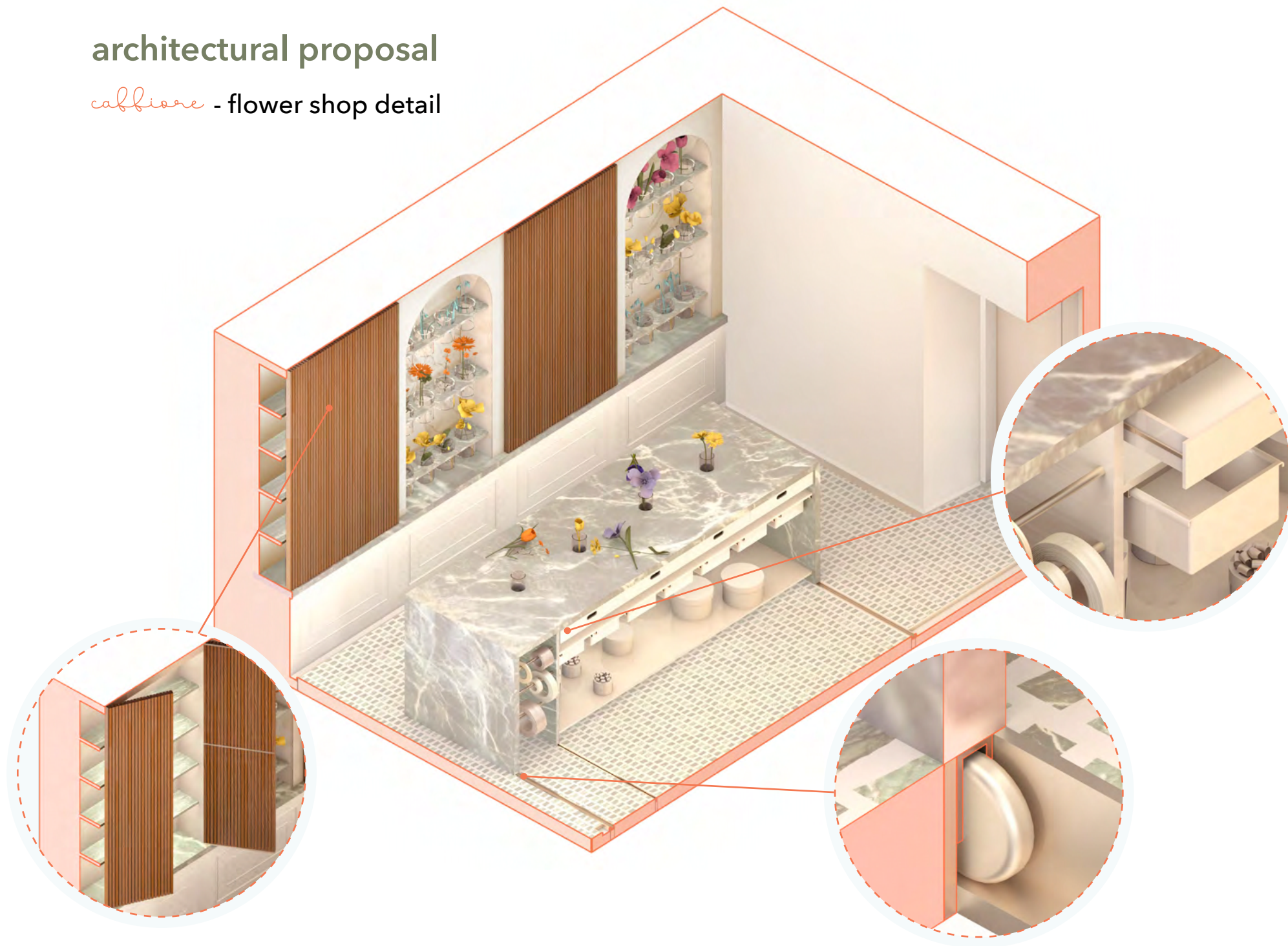
*caffiore* - flower shop





# architectural proposal

*cabfiore* - flower shop detail





# architectural proposal

*caffiore* - coffee area





# architectural proposal

*caffioro* - conservatory at the courtyard





# 5 conclusions

## final evaluation

There is no doubt that historic commercial furnishings characterize Turin with their unique structures, the commercial environment they created, iconic materials, and expansive showcases designed to exhibit products. This thesis illustrates a revitalization process for a historic shop in Turin, located on one of the city's most important and iconic streets, Via Po. Situated at the heart of the city, this axis connects its historical legacy with its natural surroundings.

Through the intervention at Caffè 101, a blend of ideas and solutions was achieved, preserving and respecting historic functions and logic while implementing a contemporary design that meets current needs. This intervention reimagines Caffè 101 as a dynamic floral café, exemplifying the value of intertwining history, culture, and modernity to breathe new life into the urban environment. After a historical review of these typologies and an assessment of the current state—including its most significant features, dimensions, rhythms, and materials—it became evident that the city is “not a homogeneous ‘continuum,’ but rather a collection of neighborhoods, architectural complexes, and buildings, each with very different historical origins and environmental definitions. The commercial furnishings must interact with these elements, sometimes yielding to them, while at other times becoming driving forces for a new image” <sup>[101]</sup>. This principle informed the new design, incorporating other nineteenth-century typologies, such as conservatories, and capitalizing on underutilized spaces to enhance urban connectivity.

Furthermore, Job and Ronchetta’s research emphasizes the importance of identifying and enhancing key commercial areas within the city. Their objective to “identify commercial areas and, within these, the axes and poles of commerce that are representative of recurring situations in the characteristics of commerce, the environment, and commercial furnishings” <sup>[102]</sup> aligns with the focus of this thesis on Via Po as a significant commercial axis. The revitalization of Caffè 101 as a floral café integrates contemporary commercial needs within this historic corridor, contributing to both the preservation and dynamic renewal of this urban space.

From an urban perspective, this intervention highlights the importance of protecting the range of commercial functions in key areas of the city, which are integral to the character of Turin’s streets. Additionally, it proposes sites for social interaction, aiming to create community-centered spaces that enhance the historical identity of the street. Ultimately, it also addresses the reuse of courtyards, recognizing that these “highly scenic spaces are potentially relational spaces” <sup>[103]</sup>. However, as Job and Ronchetta note, the rigidity of building structures “often does not allow for

[101] Dondona, 1988, p.5 [own translation]

[102] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.5 [own translation]

[103] Job, Ronchetta, 1988, p.19 [own translation]

increases in the surface area of commercial units without sensitive—and dangerous—alterations to the building structure and its typified characteristics” [103]. In this regard, Caffè 101 respects the architectural integrity of the space while exploring the potential to introduce new elements that support the building’s original function, while also implementing virtual routes within isolated urban blocks.

The arcades are another key feature that cannot be overlooked, as they serve as the protective envelope for the pedestrian zone, promoting continuous flow and offering opportunities to admire both the architecture and the commercial activity. The proposal calls for “strict control over commercial furnishings beyond the line of the arcade to ensure architectural unity and consistency with external visual references” [103]. This balance between history and contemporary design is achieved by creating a project where the traditional dimensions, shapes, and functions serve as the foundation, while the interior fosters a contemporary environment for interaction. The gradation between past and present is both visual and functional. The outer elements (such as display cases, arcades, and monobloc) set the scale for the project, reflecting historic materials and shapes that can be echoed in the interior. As one moves into the establishment, new elements, materials, and functions emerge, creating a dynamic blend of traditional (in the arcades) and contemporary (in the courtyard) elements, with both clearly present throughout the intervention.

Ultimately, the revitalization of Caffè 101 serves as a model for how Turin’s historic shops can be preserved and adapted to meet modern needs. By integrating the tradition of the city’s commercial heritage with new functions, the project demonstrates that commercial spaces can do more than simply sell products—they can also showcase the production processes themselves, becoming a stage that captivates users just as they did in the nineteenth century. In this case, through floriculture, the project contributes to urban renewal and cultural preservation while reinforcing the core functions of historic commercial establishments: sales areas, production areas, and storage areas, each with different levels of privacy and distinct activities. The design not only respects the past but also envisions a vibrant future in which historic spaces continue to play an integral role in the city’s identity and social fabric. By adopting this approach, Caffè 101 demonstrates that preserving the past is not about stasis but about creating dynamic spaces that resonate with both the history and the future of the city.



05

# • 06 REFERENCES

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