

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
SECOND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture Heritage Preservation and Enhancement
Honors theses

The project VALUE COUNTRY of the Citadel of Alessandria: from the ongoing debate to a strategic enhancement hypothesis

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The Citadel of Alessandria (image 1), in all its complexity, is an interesting insight on the topic of valorisation and management of state property in Italy.



Image 1: Bird's eye view of the Citadel of Alessandria.

Source: <http://www.italiadelcuore.it/wn.content/uploads/2013/05/Cittadella.jpg>.

In 2008, in fact, six state-owned properties in Alessandria have been included in the project VALUE COUNTRY promoted by the State Property Office to define real estate deemed no longer useful for the purpose of defense. Among them was included the Citadel of Alexandria, a military-built complex as a place of defense at the borders of the Kingdom of Savoy from 1728 at the behest of King Vittorio Emanuele II and by the project of the Military Engineer Ignazio Bertola. Its foundation has therefore played a key role in the history of Savoy, but since 2007, the year of its disposal, it has fallen into disuse and is now empty and silent.

In 1949, the writer Giovannino Guareschi¹ noticed the word "Run!" on the wall of a building, together with the dynamic nature of the Citadel: his words resonate today absurd and linked to another time and another place. Today, on the south front of the Powder Magazine St. Thomas, in the only piece of plaster still intact, appears a written quite different, which states: "It's over" (image 2).



Image 2: Written in the south front of the Powder Magazine St. Thomas.

Source: Image done by the candidate the 24th November 2013 with a Nikon camera "Coolpix 5" model.

The management of the complex passed to the City of Alexandria and is now in a state of disrepair, lying unused next to the River Tanaro in an industrialized area. For this reason, in October 2013, the State Property Office ordered the City of Alexandria to draw up an announcement assigning the concession of the fortress to a private source with the task of restoring and appreciating it. Since then we have tried to find a new purpose for the complex, attempting to recover the central role it had in the past and stimulate growth in the city.

My thesis is in continuity with these efforts, in an attempt to clarify what tools can help the Citadel to rise from oblivion.

The first chapters are therefore faces deepening of the regulations in force concerning commonwealth. Through definition of the various public strategies (of which the VALUE COUNTRY project is an important example), the thesis explores a case study through the analysis of its context, from the province and the city of Alexandria, to the focus on the fortress.

¹ Guareschi G., *Diario Clandestino*, Rizzoli, Milano 1949.

The sensitive issues emerging from this study have been the basis for two types of multi-criteria analysis (Analytic Hierarchy Process and Analytic Network Process), with which it has been attempted to determine the best method of management of the fortress at present. The result was the management of public-private partnership. From this preliminary study a plan was developed: parametric analysis of the cost of restoration, new functions, operation, ordinary maintenance, and potential revenues. What became clear was the problem characterizes the majority of commonwealths, which is the great disparity between the cost of development and the limited gains that would result from the new uses. My work is not intended as a point of arrival or to provide a single solution to the complex problem of the valorisation of the Citadel of Alexandria, but constitute a starting point for new ideas to enable the fortress to reclaim its status as a landmark of national importance. This demonstrates that the operation of valorisation should always start from a deep knowledge of the real estate and its environment through the contribution of different disciplines. The proposal for the development of the masterplan (image 3) of Alexandria purposed has to be consider a provocation rather than a feasibility plane, which aims to ensure that the Citadel can return to be as it once was: a city within a city.

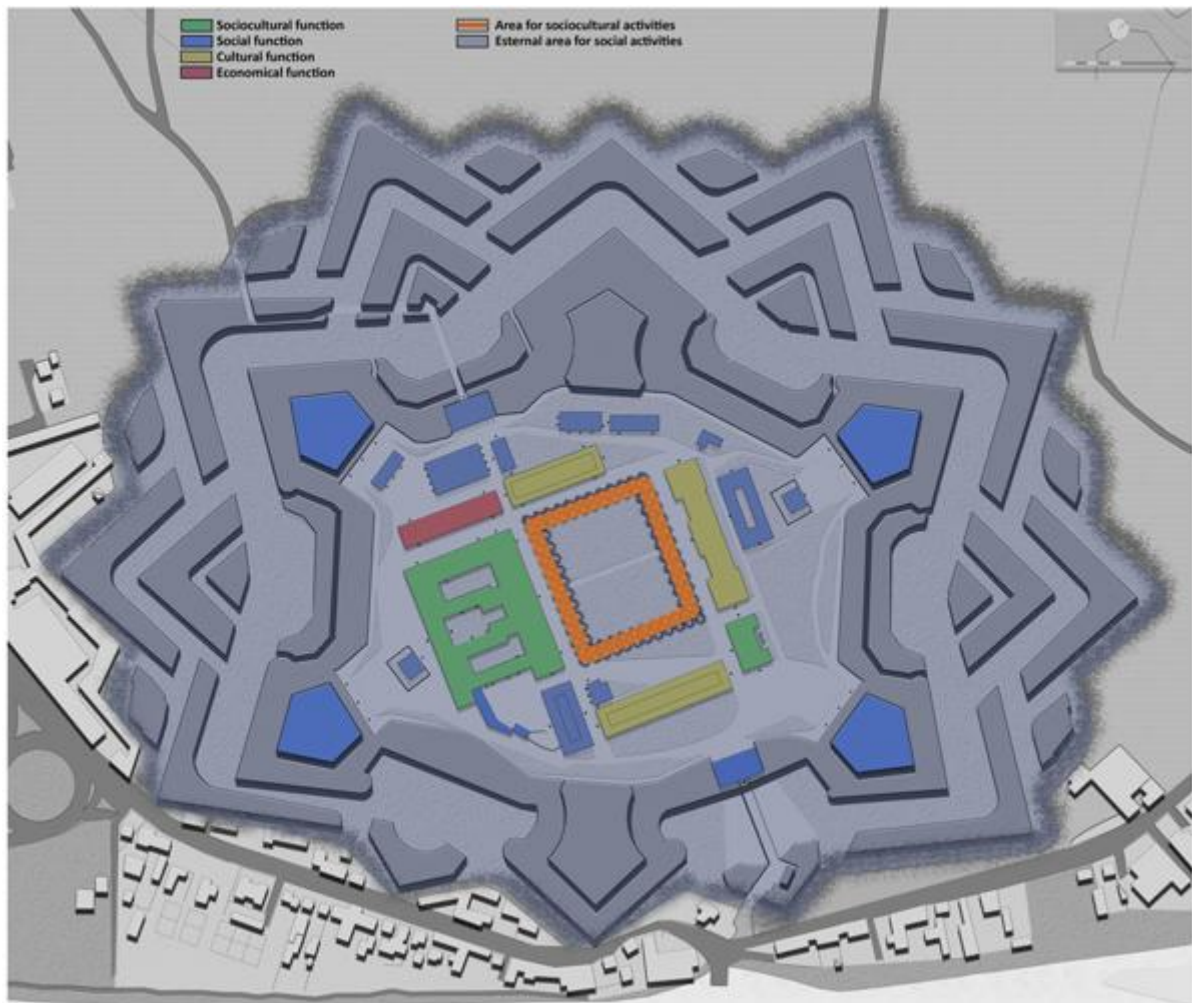


Image 3: Function masterplan.

Source: Graphic processing by the candidate from the map taken by Durbiano G., Reinerio L., *Riabitare la fortezza: idee per la Cittadella di Alessandria*, Allemandi, Milano 2001, pp. 42-43.

Connecting with the writing that stands out on Powder Magazine St. Thomas, I pose a provocative question: is it really over?

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