

Built landscapes. Along the Ghemme-Romagnano road

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This study analyses the territory of Ghemme and Romagnano Sesia's towns, situated in Novara's district. Upon examining the problems of this area we see that the uncontrolled development of trade and industry along the road linking these two towns, and the subsequent chaotic increase in road traffic, are causing a loss of accessibility to and visibility of the surrounding hilly and fluvial landscape. Indeed, their true identity as well as the survival of important, historic local heritage is at stake.

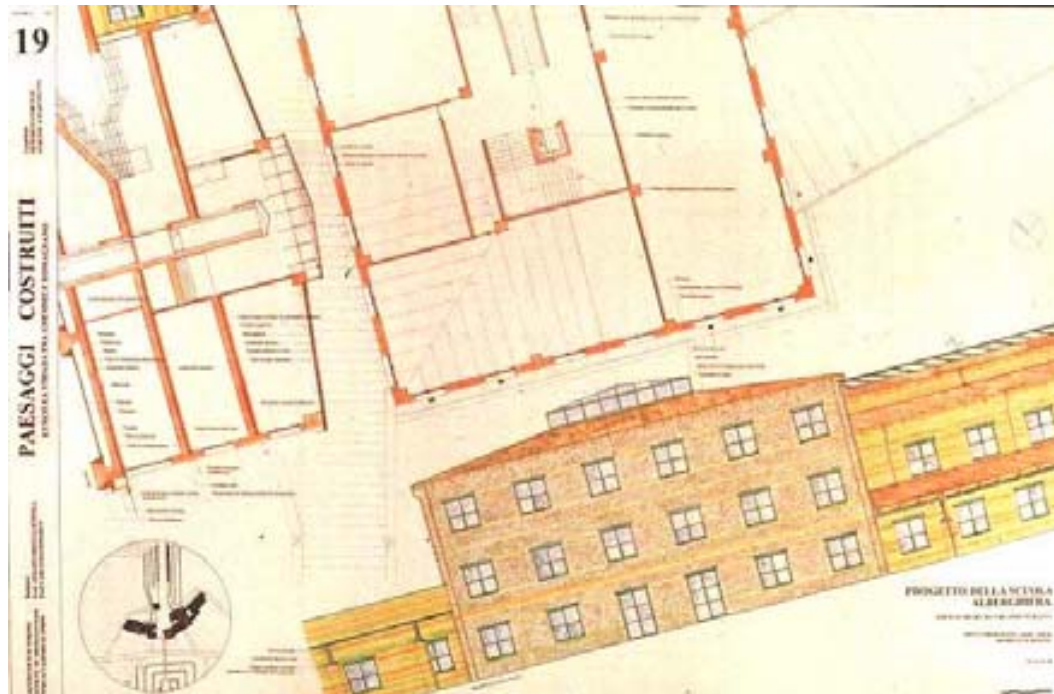


The plan stemming from this analysis entails the creation of a park around Ghemme, provided with three connection zones allowing the direct passage from the hill to the river. In one of these zones, given its high accessibility and visibility from the road, some public services described here below have been located, thus becoming the very heart of the park. They are all linked by a pedestrian overhead crossing that projects over existing infrastructures in order to nullify their obstructing presence.



The walkway becomes the core of the whole plan, and the several activities that gather along its course create wider areas and public squares. The plan metaphorically recalls the comb structure of medieval "new villages", very common in this district, while every single building is shaped on the type of the closed courtyard, typical of the battlements period.

A hotel training school, a restaurant and a wine shop are situated at the foot of the hill, planted with celebrated vineyards. The walkway crosses this group of activities and reaches a big "zigurat" shaped parking, whose inner distribution road connects it to the lower street level through a very soft slope.



Then, the same overhead walkway crosses the road and penetrates like a drawbridge into a commercial centre, almost crushing its facade made in structural sloping glass. The spot is the most advanced part of a second group of buildings for recreational activities such as a cinema, a disco, several night clubs and a historic-ethnographic museum. An irrigation ditch surrounds it like a boundary canal. The museum looks like a long corridor surrounding the site of the archaeological excavations behind S. Martino church. Before passing through the Sesia river, towards Gattinara, the walkway meets the "sports centre" with swimming pools and playgrounds, a wide and long groove along the Sesia riverside.

The external surface of the courts, and in particular the sides facing the road, features an irregular building thread of stones, joined with regular series of concrete blocks. These sides have a massive look, whereas the inner surfaces of the courts are made of coloured concrete blocks, giving in this way a house character. The union of such different materials has been inspired by the local historic buildings, whose masonry has complex, heterogeneous textures.

Every building presents a regular structure of squared meshes, and a subsequent regular course of windows in the outlooks, such as the many local industrial architectures of the beginning of the 20th century. The roofing of the school and the upper part of the commercial centre, with a preferential background over the hills and the vineyards, are made of copper, whereas the rest of the buildings' roofing, generally closer to the river and its pebble bed, are made of zinc

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