

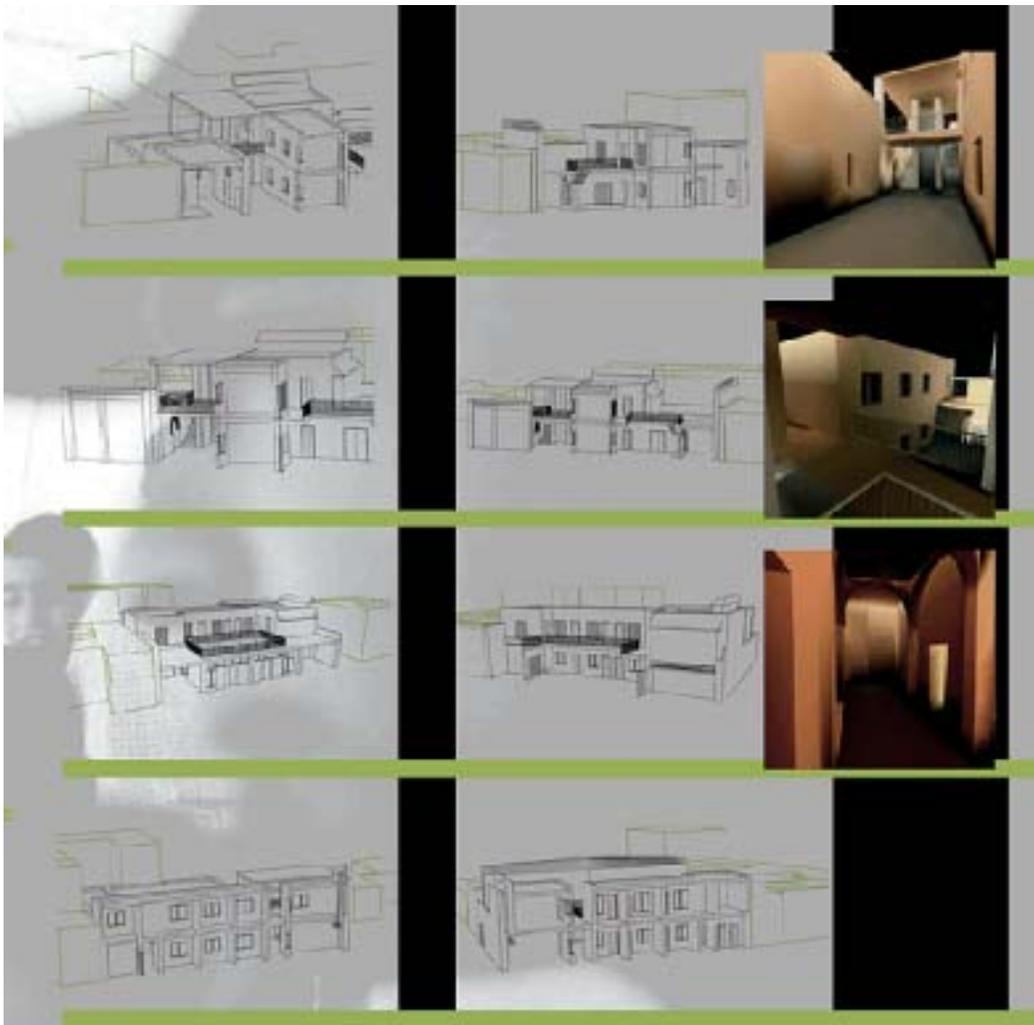
The new urban qualification and building rescue in the *medina* of Gafsa in Tunisia

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Our thesis is connected to a trend of studies and researches on the *medina* of Gafsa in Tunisia, which have been started since 1997 within the MED URBS project and with the collaboration of the Institute for Cooperation and Development of the city of Alessandria (Italy).



The scope of this thesis, together with the analysis of the urban and building morphology, was the definition of a concrete strategy for the rescue and new qualification of the *medina*, a process that has already been started by other European projects.

The relations with the local reality has been very intense during the development of this work, both through the constant cooperation of UNOPS (the “*Association pour la Sauvegarde de la Medina*”) and through our presence there in two different occasions for some months.

The *medina* of Gafsa is characterised by a non homogeneous building morphology, where usually neglected traditional Arabian buildings of high historical and artistic value live together with buildings compromised by inadequate operations



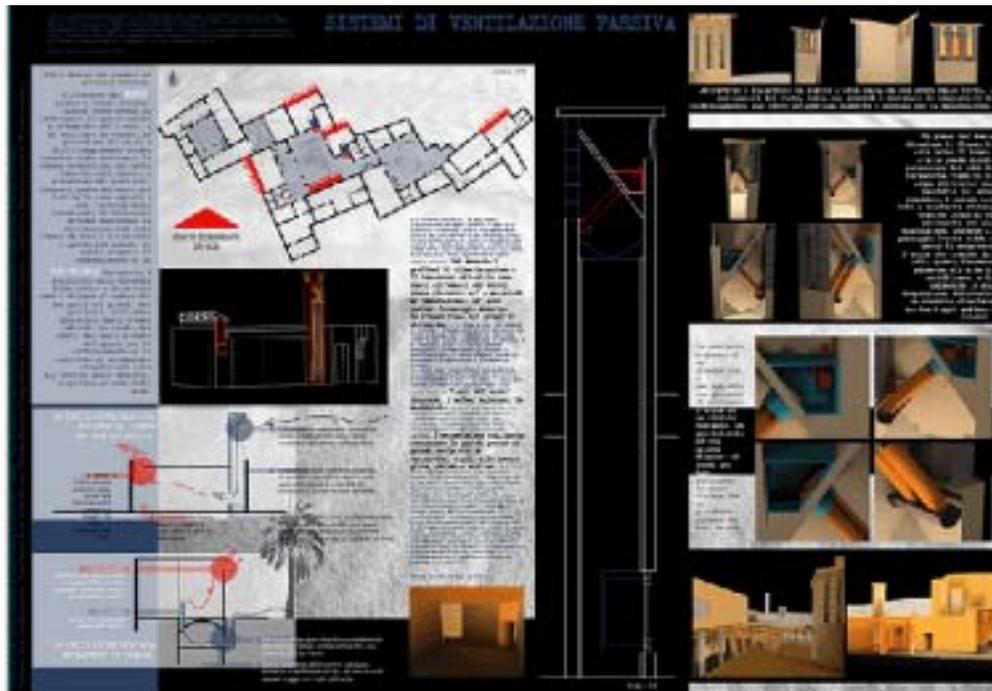
The most evident problems we met were:

- abandonment, decline, lack or difficulty in building maintenance and, consequently, the loss of integrity of the historical heritage,
- the trend to move from the *medina* to new settlements characterized by “occidental” typology of buildings, believed to be more suitable for the “modern” requirements.

Two phases characterize our work:

- a survey of the complex structure of the district not only from the architectural and town planning point of view, but considering also sociological and economic aspect;
- the research and practical formulation of an hypothesis of intervention.

This analytical phase has been the necessary introduction for the definition of an hypothesis of development of the district through the project of a “social-economic driving force”, based on the principal local resources: craftsmanship, artistic and architectural property, human resources and tourist capacity. A force which is believed to be able to face most of the problems that torment Gafsa: unemployment, social abandonment and decline of the buildings.



If we now consider the aspects of restoration and architectural design aimed to the general rehabilitation of the *medina*, our thesis indicates some lines of possible intervention in the following fields:

- strengthening of the buildings,
- environmental improvement in what concerns e.g. natural lighting and ventilation, in order to achieve adequate levels of reliability and comfort while respecting the local traditions and resources,
- reorganisation and amelioration of the spatial characteristics of the buildings

Our study focused the attention on three residences of Gafsa in order to turn them into the following: a school of craftsmanship with adjoining exposition, a house/workshop and a multi-purpose centre for the Unesco Club

The scope of our work was to set up a research and a project, and above all a methodology, that could be used by public and private local authorities in connection with the programs of co-operation between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries.

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