

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 1
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Honors theses

The Architecture in multicultural cities. Planning hypothesis to upgrade the lot in piazza Don Paolo Albera, Porta Palazzo, Turin, Italy

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The hypothesis of the project analyzed in this thesis is to be seen as a part of the area of Porta Palazzo transformation occurring in these years.

This is the second thesis of a co-ordinate cycle that deepens the analysis of few zones of the quarter.

The choice of the quarter of Porta Palazzo considers the extraordinary possibilities often hidden in a chaotic and multicultural heterogeneity like this. The equilibrium sense that resists a disarticulated and complex structure (nearly an Escherian paradox), strengthens the hypothesis of being able to make hinge on this aspect, the heterogeneity. It is not difficult to be persuaded by the "sense of the other" in such a multiform urban space and to be dragged into the flood, to be integrated harmoniously with the place. With this project we felt challenged to accept diversity and try to create an architecture made of heterogenic signs, able to stir themselves with the context and to find correspondence in an exchange of differences and innovation.

After a careful analysis of the spatial dynamics of the area and the inhabitants' way of using the places of the quarter, our attention was focused on three areas in particular:

1. The "anonymous" public square situated in the crossing of the streets B. Lanino, San G. B. Cottolengo and G. Cagliari;
2. Piazza Don P. Albera and the block marked by the ways C. Priocca and C. Noè, where the "Refrigerator" is located (proto-industrial testimony used for the conservation of the market goods).
3. The crossing of the streets G. Cagliari and Regina Margherita and the adjacent block.

The three zones are characterized by a fragmented identity, produced by incoherent and accidental logistics transformations and by a lively ferment of strongly diversified activities. These places often have a double existence. During the day they are points of aggregation, exchange zones or extensions of the market of Piazza della Repubblica. At night they become the mirror of the uneasiness of Porta Palazzo, forgotten and abandoned like the people you can meet there. Very often these neglected places are marked by the petty-crime phenomena.

The urban space is characterized by a blend of styles where, next to historically valuable traditional buildings, you may find recent housing or buildings damaged by inadequate restoration, by the construction of additional storeys and extensions that have progressively compromised the integrity of the urban tissue.

From an architectonic point of view it is obvious how these architectures constitute a morphologic anomaly within the nineteenth-century block of the adjacent old city centre. The reasons for this anomaly are to be searched in the history of the area since 1800.

Nothing would be more mistaken than giving a place a different sense from what it has already matured spontaneously or to expect it to conform to a model that is different for intrinsic nature. The social context of the area is multiethnic, multicultural and would probably be able to absorb any change. Like in an ancient mosaic lacking some tiles, wearied away by time, it is necessary to compensate these "gaps". The project therefore aims to replace the parts nearly cancelled from the general morphology, without altering the characters of the space and the contradictions contained in it.

The project presented in this thesis focuses on the re-qualification of *via Priocca* - the main axis of the project area, the building of *Piazza della Repubblica n° 14* with the relative court - *Piazza Don Albera*, and the "refrigerator".

The project suggests the restoration of the building of *Piazza della Repubblica n°14* (the first block of *via Priocca*) and of the one-storey factory building that defines the block's ancient court (partly demolished at 1911), inserting new activities such as complementary services for the commercial activities (space for offices), information (info-point and library) and "live and work" residence that offers restoration services.

A light structure in steel, equipped with an elevator, a panoramic staircase and terraces, covered with mobile glass panels, supports the "Mirador", a "panoramic box" offering a unusual and evocative point of view of part the market on one side and of *Porta Palazzo*, *Piazza della Repubblica*, *Piazza Don Albera* and the "refrigerator" on the other. The structure, connected to the balconies, equips the house with an elevator, an emergency staircase and new distributive spaces.



This part of the project was designed with the respect to the historical characters of the building of Piazza della Repubblica. In fact, while analysing the actual form of the building we came across a series of structural and decorative elements, that were later used as restraints and at same time as an inspiration for detail design.

The design of Piazza Don Albera sets to compromise between the requirements of a public square and the characteristic courtyard-like form of the piazza. The project takes advantage of the remarkable level difference of the piazza to create an equipped pedestrian top level, and a lower one functioning as the entrance to the underground one-storey parking garage. The jagged front of the parking garage was designed as a green curtain that follows the trace of the old aqueduct (today buried).



The third part of the project regards the industrial building of via Priocca (the “Refrigerator”) and consists in an architectonic and functional transformation set to create a polyvalent structure intended to host an International School of Kitchen and an enogastronomic trade centre, that wind liberally among the rigid mesh of pillars and beams of the building. The top floor hosts several “duplex” residences served by distributive elements formally inspired by the pre-existent attic’s dormer windows.



We tried to imagine a new pole of attraction, that would be able to take advantage of the amazing numbers of visitors (approximately 40,000) that every day floods the market of Piazza della Repubblica. An architecture ready to give a strong urban identity to an area that has long lost its own, but despite this remains one of the most fascinating places of the city of Turin thanks to its history and its human and cultural wealth. The eno-gastronomic tradition and its consequences in terms of economic, strategic and cultural interest, could find some fertile exchange channels with the rich environment of the greatest open market of Europe and stimulate private enterprise, economic activities and cultural dialog.

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