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# The right to the city to contrast the decay of urban spaces. The architectural upgrade of Corso Garibaldi railway station, in Naples

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## Abstract

Deep changes in urban frameworks, challenge contemporary cities, where often, common spaces formerly central, risk an indissoluble physical degradation, due to processes of social marginalization. Architects are asked to face the developmental dynamics for spaces of anonymity, every day more numerous, working on previous attitudes as aggregation and relation junctions. Moving from the description of the design criteria that inform the rehabilitation for the ancient area of Corso Garibaldi in Naples, the paper introduces a critical thinking about the links between space' performances and attitudes towards inclusivity. Urban and architectural solutions are privileged means in order to return to citizenship the right to public space, reaffirming the concept of common space as dwelling, residence of the community, with the creation of new social ties and the growth of local shared identities.

## Introduction

In 2005, the Autonomous Volturno Inc. (EAV) commissioned to the *Dipartimento di Configurazione e Attuazione dell'Architettura* of the University of Naples Federico II, a feasibility study for the rehabilitation of the Corso Garibaldi railway station. Located in the East area of Naples, this terminal is a crucial crossroad in the regional transport system: here, pedestrian mobility intersects with surface and underground mass

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transport, with private transport and parking. The feasibility study focuses on the implementation of built spaces' quality, promoting unused functional and perceptual features in a city area burdened with problems of living and social security. The proposal returns a vision of this neighborhood as a place central to the urban transport interchange, «gateway» to the city, hub for travel, that complements the service to citizens, tourism and modern facilities for trade and service sectors in a perspective of transformation. The final work focuses on the upgrading of the rail traffic by increasing the number of tracks, it creates also, new spaces for the *Circumvesuviana* and its users.

The Corso Garibaldi rehabilitation is part of the Campania Region policy aimed at the railway's service widening. Since 1994, the Municipality started working for an integrated management of town planning, transports and mobility, assumed as the new engines for regional economy (AA.VV., 2006). Urban and architectural upgrading are essential consequences of the outlining process aimed to reorganize public spaces, assuming them as incentives for local economy. Municipal actions were oriented not only to improve transport links between regional areas, but to promote an integrated development, based on environmental, economic and social issues.

The design hypotheses respond to the intent of improving the service rail, both in terms of capacity of the station and in terms of service offered to users, with the aim to mend the road network. The proposal provides the coverage of the rail yard in order to create new spaces useful for the rationalization of the road, but also to repair the road system now interrupted by the railway cutting and reduce the environmental impact of the railroad over this neighborhood.

### **Methodology**

A deep conflict seems to sign today contemporary cities' inhabitants affected by a continuous residence search and an unusual vocation towards places' destruction, calling into question past and present relations between space and identity, at a single and collective level. While built environments are interested by increasing vertiginous flows, relations between people become poorer and connective spaces lose their attitudes in sociality generation. Moving through spaces has slowly subdued to living them, deeply changing cities' images and performances. Several architectural experiences all over the world, confirm today that performances' approach to design, can strictly help in creating fair and cohesive societies, where spaces satisfy users' needs, affecting the extent to which people feel alienated from or included in local life. In Corso Garibaldi station, designers face the *place-non-place challenges* (Augé M. 1993) that affect the

areas around the first railway station realized in 1839 from Naples to Portici, taking into account the impact on social induced by spaces shaping, morphology design, construction. Assuming outdoor areas as the framework among individuals, groups and communities, the project builds on the possibility of conveying messages of coexistence and dialogue with the support technical solutions. The cross-cutting aim is the preservation of instances of inclusivity, conceived as built environment design attitude in overpassing social, cultural and economic inequalities, providing all users, especially future generations, with a high quality of life and fair chances. In the Circumvesuviana station, the design has to cope with a general decay due to changes in use, with functions' overlaps and traffic congestion. The design approach is based on the differentiation of the area into four sectors, because of the connotations and specific vocations: for each of them, the design team proposes specific objectives and articulation. The historical relevance of the site is the starting point for a discussion on the design unexpressed potentialities and constraints (Jébrak Y., Julien B., 2008). Referring to urban evolutions, the design team proposes the creation, around the station, of a sort of spatial vacuum with problems in terms of safety, environmental and perceptive impacts. On a transport point of view, the team involves delegates in the railway efficiency analysis, taking into account information about the trains' movement arriving and/or departing (on average every three minutes), the average frequency of trains (23 minutes, with an average commercial speed of 38 km/h); the number of tracks that end at the station. Primarily, the design responds to the need for accessibility, granting dignified, affordable, safe and secure uses. Design answers questions about users and their tasks and goals. Design solutions directly affect people acceptance and satisfaction towards common spaces and influence economic advantages. Technical elements and devices take into account people with specific mobility, dexterity, sensory, and communication impairments, learning disabilities, continence needs and people whose mental well-being should be supported by a thoughtfully crafted and managed environment. Overall, the solutions meet the following main objectives:

- accessibility in terms of enclosed and comfortable spaces that stimulate the use of public areas making sure they can provide shadow, light, sun and shelter from wind and rain, green spaces and meeting places that promote inter-generational contact, accessible public transport, appropriately located bus stops,
- security in terms of appropriate and well-designed paving and sidewalks, and access to public amenities,
- integrability and usability, in terms of equipment, services, lighting, information and advice.

<i>A. Corso Garibaldi Circumvesuviana Train Terminal</i>	<i>Enlargement of the rail yard</i>
	<i>Reorganization of pedestrian mobility through the creation of green areas for tourists and travelers</i>
	<i>Redevelopment of the station forecourt</i>

<i>B. Area of the rail yard, which connects the existing terminals with the central station of the Circumvesuviana</i>	<i>Coverage of the rail yard</i>
	<i>Reorganization of public and private vehicular mobility</i>
	<i>New buildings for the Circumvesuviana</i>

<i>C. Landlocked areas of mobility (via Ricciardi, by Agresti ...)</i>	<i>Reorganization of the public and private vehicular mobility</i>
	<i>Reorganization of pedestrian mobility through the creation of green areas for tourists and travelers</i>

<i>D. Areas of building and urban decay</i>	<i>Reorganization of public and private vehicular mobility</i>
	<i>Reorganization of pedestrian mobility through the creation of green areas for tourists and travelers</i>
	<i>Creating new volumes for the Circumvesuviana</i>
	<i>Demolition of the building located in Corso Garibaldi 390</i>
	<i>Rehabilitation of former industrial buildings</i>

**Discussion: design solutions**

**Reorganization of pedestrian mobility through the creation of green areas for tourists and travelers**

Walking is an integral part of European cultural tradition; the spaces of the city for many centuries were shaped especially for this purpose and then allowed social relations; the modern city was instead designed primarily to meet the needs of vehicular mobility and the existing urban structure has so far been adapted for the same purpose; social relations are reduced, and pedestrian mobility in constrained spaces

was reportedly designed to provide very limited, and not responding to user requests to try to solve problems related to mobility urban, the only viable solution is to reduce the amount of traffic individually, and inducing the citizen, through communication systems-education, to choose public transport. The experience already made in other European cities, shows that the noise and the danger arising from road traffic are the major psychological barriers that prevent the successful use of the pedestrian city. Once removed these obstacles, with the elimination of private traffic by at least some areas of the city, will increase the pedestrian walking or cycling, both in number and as long. So the citizen, starting to communicate with the environment, gradually regains the city as a «place» and begins to rethink the ways of use. It is evident that this type of urban renewal can reignite the process of identification for citizen with the environment, indirectly improving the quality of life.

The project involves the articulation of a public pedestrian space by insertion of green areas; rest areas equipped kiosks. The area is designed as a place of transit for daily users of public transport for local residents, tourists, in a state of security against car traffic, a sort of protected pedestrian route which could then branch out to the rest the neighborhood. A system of shelters in steel and wood is proposed for this purpose, to create a condition of visual protection from the noise produced by vehicle traffic.

### **Reorganization of the public and private vehicular mobility**

The project aims to improve connections for municipal area, through a re-stitching the urban fabric and the revitalization of existing streets. The cover of the tracks allows the realization of a square in which are concentrated several commercial activities. This area can accommodate the stop buses and taxi.

From the functional point of view, the implementation of proposed interventions can reorganize the movement. In particular, the new location of bus stops and the proposed circulation pattern, will ensure accessibility to this area for all vehicles and for means of public input to the network in two different directions: via S. Cosmo Out Porta Nolana to reach Corso Garibaldi and the new road, superimposed to the tracks, to reach the course Lucci.

While the first road network will be dedicated to public mobility, accepting the buses and taxis to the Circumvesuviana bus service area, the second main road, much smaller, will be exclusively devoted to private roads, to disperse the traffic stresses along the Course Lucci and promotes access to new volumes in the service of Circumvesuviana.

### **Rehabilitation of former industrial buildings**

The project provides the partial recovery of the industrial building located along the perimeter of the south-east of the tracks near the station terminal. The proposed solution is the outcome of mediations between instances of preservation, and needs related with expanding the rail yard. The operation is focused on:

- the organization of functions, distinguishing tracks, destined to shelter and train maintenance Circumvesuviana, from the square, intended for use by passengers, tourists, citizens with the inclusion of features shopping and dining;
- the articulation of a system of internal routes equipped (with escalators and moving walkways) from street level to guide the user towards the square.

### **Redevelopment of the station forecourt**

The main objective of the project is the re-proposition of urban quality in terms of livability, accessibility and usability of existing pedestrian areas of the city. In particular, the square in front of the Circumvesuviana Terminal acquires a priority, both for the mending of the east area, both for creating new avenues of enjoyment of the urban areas of transportation with the integration of a system of equipment and furnishings. Moving the bus stop behind the present entrance to the Circumvesuviana station is proposed to redevelop the forecourt area of Corso Garibaldi for pedestrian use only, through the integration of green areas and a canopy shielding. The design scenario that is emerging, is based strictly on morphological preservation of the identity of the station, designed by De Luca.

### **New buildings for the Circumvesuviana**

A new volume, perpendicular to the train terminal, is located in continuity with the restored building. The volume grows by just five meters above the plaza level (one floor), with a total cubic volume of 1860mc, and is characterized in terms of material and construction for the use of mixed structural systems in steel and glass.

### **Conclusions**

The cultural assumptions behind the outlined choices are that design may create a precondition for the right to the city. In Corso Garibaldi, spaces devoted to accommodate functions of transport and mobility, turned into places of poverty, affected by

rising immigration processes; their poor design and careless maintenance contributed to create social separation, undermining community cohesion, encouraging crime, deterring investments, spoiling the environment. Urban and architectural upgrading are assumed as incentives to contrast the general decay of the area due to changes in use, with function's overlaps and traffic congestion, with the aim to promote local economy. Taking into account the historical relevance of the site, the design proposal focuses on the process of continuous sedimentation that characterizes this area. Rehabilitation, socializing and integrations are three imperatives, marking the design scenarios: with different spatial options, designers try to give answers to the contemporary challenge of finding ways in which built environment can alleviate diversities, going over environmental, social and economic inequalities. Built and in built spaces with their natural and artificial qualities, are gradually asked to take into account for their attitudes in carrying important meanings from one generation to the next, and their contributes in serving as archives of cultural meanings. Thus, the abandoned areas of Corso Garibaldi, can become shared frameworks among individuals, groups and communities: promoting mobility improves new feelings of security, stretching boundaries. In a diachronic vision, the collective spaces inside and around the station, due to their shape, dimensions, finishes, are progressively recognised as to be able to directly influence the quality of people's lives, supporting social dynamics, granting dignified, accessible, affordable, safe performances. Mediating between past features and present requirements, the rehabilitative actions contribute towards the harmonization among settled communities, balancing between their perception as a draw for people delight and as a barrier. Forcing the conversion of workspaces into meeting, attraction and amusement areas, the station areas become dynamic spaces, opened to the community needs, and able to follow any change in local shared identities, over time.

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