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Reuse and Re-conversion of the Monumental Heritage in Naples

Rosa Maria Giusto

Abstract

The paper deals with the theme of the re-use of the public architectural heritage in reference to three monumental buildings of the city of Naples different by type, of which the conversion is under-way for collective and social purposes. In particular, the cases of the Royal Hospice for the poor (Reale Albergo dei Poveri)—intimately connected with the monumental complex of San Michele a Ripa Grande in Rome—of Palazzo Fondi and of the church of the Saints Cosma e Damiano are examined. These interventions can constitute reference models in terms of reusing public buildings returned to their renewed social and educational function, able to actively promote urban regeneration of the surrounding area.

Keywords: reconversion of historic buildings, urban regeneration, reusing, Reale Albergo dei Poveri, church of Saints Cosma and Damiano, Palazzo Fondi, Naples

“There is an antiquity that is stratified in ourselves and that must be considered as a premise and condition of all our becoming. Now, we can say that our psychological stratification finds its testimony, [...], or its reflection in that of the ancient center. Thus the true and most intimate reason for our love for the testimonies of the past arises precisely from this identification and not from an extrinsic satisfaction towards unrepeatable images. Therefore [...] the city needs to preserve the memory of itself as the individual man needs it” [1].

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical knowledge and future of the city

“The continuity between the old and the new and the capacity of the historic city to go through time to recur with its mutations in the critical present [2]” make it the field of application and privileged verification of the project of integrated conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, both material and immaterial.

The principles of active preservation and participatory management of historic cities that emerged after the Valletta meetings held by the Scientific Committee on Cities and Historic Villages (CIVVIH) of ICOMOS and adopted in the charter (ICOMOS) of November 2011, contain the fundamental guidelines on the development and active conservation of cities and historical areas. The objective is to guarantee the respect of the material and immaterial values of the urban cultural heritage starting from the knowledge of the places and the specificities of the single assets to promote enhancement and revitalization processes that allow their conscious re-entry into the incessant flow of the contemporary city.

In the absence of clear planning and without a long-term systemic design any redevelopment project is destined to fail. In this sense, “valorisation is proposed as a necessary correlative of conservation, as a search for appropriate functions expressing the social need in an active involvement of the subjects in charge of protection” [3]. This involvement must take into account the specificities of the individual asset, promoting “the knowledge, the compatible use proposal, the intervention project” [3].

It is within the design themes that a balanced relationship can be found between preservation and transformation of cities, territory for integrated and coherent interventions aimed at sustainability and regeneration, since each project of re-use and re-functionalisation to be effective it must necessarily be placed in a historical perspective.

“The speed and acceleration of the changes that modernity brings with it threaten to erase the traces of the past and weaken, until it becomes insignificant, the link between past, present and future. Memory and design are elements that imply each other. Memory without project is an operation of pure museum conservation, the project without memory is the pursuit of a goal without knowing the meaning” [4].

From this point of view, the role of the historian or, to put it in the words of Henri-Irénée Marrou, of historical knowledge in the processes of valorisation of the urban, material and immaterial cultural heritage, becomes crucial because it contributes to “unravelling the tangle of stratifications, of meanings, of the design drawings of the past. From this clarification the city is made comprehensible, articulated, available also to non-destructive interventions at different scales. [...] History is fundamental for understanding the existing city, for knowing things from the past but above all for being able to correctly read what still survives. Every theory—and therefore also a theory of reuse—must [...] be based on the knowledge of the object before proposing interventions” [5].

The necessary rethinking of the cultural heritage of historical centres and their conversion of values passes through the reactivation of the primary functions of the spaces of commerce, socialization, culture and art; a reconversion that cannot happen correctly without an adequate historical investigation that rediscovers and makes identity and vocations re-emerge, past functions and future potentials. It becomes imperative, in this framework, the need to start regenerative processes of systemic cultural innovation that reaffirm the identity of places and their collective memory through innovative models aimed at implementing new technologies and systems able to connect “territories, heritage and people in a logic of smart heritage” [6].

To really be able to preserve and promote over time a value development of the asset and of the territory connected to it, the re-use project must intercept and generate new connections, reinvigorating the social fabric around it and stimulating participatory processes aimed at the implementation of innovative and flexible solutions, open and inclusive, able to face the multiple challenges of the globalized society. Managing the complexity of the present, to be understood as a resource rather than a constraint, means encouraging collaboration between transversal, multidisciplinary and cross-media skills, promoting contacts and contaminations to trigger interconnectivity and pluralism.

The recent multiplication of urban laboratories and calls for ideas and projects aimed at creating places for innovation and social inclusion is an indication of the need, felt by many, to envisage development processes focused on the redevelopment of “hybrid spaces to cultural and creative vocation in which [...] it is possible to work, produce, distribute, aggregate” [7]. The ability of those assets to acquire new values is a function of their availability to intercept and welcome active

relational networks becoming “containers of planning that civil society is able to express through organized and stable actions” [7].

“The production and enjoyment of beauty, in the broader sense of sensible experience of cognitive paths that relate the subject to the world,” represents “a central tool in the re-articulation of subsidiary welfare practices, capable of overcoming the social and economic differences present in our contemporary cities. In this sense, culture presents itself as a transversal theme to other social policies, intersecting the themes of health, mobility, living, education and in general access to material and immaterial resources present in the territory” [8].

Already in the Amsterdam Declaration of 1975 the “extensive” nature of conservation no longer confined to the sole protection of buildings of particular architectural and environmental value but aimed at safeguarding historic cities in the more general objective of “reshaping the contemporary city to improve the quality of life” by introducing the definition of active integrated conservation as a “joint action of restoration techniques and the search for appropriate functions.”

The need to envisage interventions aimed, on the one hand, at the recovery of the asset subjected to safeguarding activities, from another, to its functional reuse, leads us to look at the problem of reuse from several points of view; the experiences of urban regeneration can represent in this sense “a genuine lever for the enhancement of the assets of the public heritage” [9] as well as opportunities for the development of cultural sites of degraded cities or left on the margins of redevelopment policies.

The ever-increasing number of disused buildings that time and obsolescence have put into the register of works impossible to recover is such that they have led to tracing real geographies of abandonment where the numerous unused, abandoned or never really used buildings, scattered throughout the national territory, are carefully listed. Poised between memory and obsolescence, these buildings ask to be recovered by giving them back, at least in part, the function they had originally been called upon to satisfy. The intervention methodologies for the correct re-entry of these building complexes in the vital fabric of the cities go in the direction of returning to them a renewed function, as more flexible and homogeneous in terms of type and purpose, providing solutions open to future modifications and evolutions, the only viable way to start active safeguard policies of the historical-artistic heritage. In this perspective, forgotten historic buildings and places return to assume a strategic role within an urban ecosystem increasingly aimed at stimulating contamination between the various sectors of the economy and the urban social sphere and generating new connections.

Starting from the meaning of integrated conservation meant not as a “passive” defence, but as a dynamic protection activity “including the specific profiles of knowledge, restoration, use and enhancement of the same assets” [10] and against an idea of protection meant as a museum of architecture and the city, the building events that have affected the historical-artistic heritage over the centuries testify to the themes of functional and technological innovation, of the expansion and transformation of historical typologies as a necessary consequence of “adaptation” to the needs of society and as a first, “empirical,” response to conservation issues. But what reorganization of existing structures should we imagine in relation to their size, historical typology and location in the territory, also considering the experimentation of new techniques and the pressing demands of inclusiveness and overcoming of architectural barriers?

The paper deals with the theme of the reuse of architectural heritage in Naples in reference to three buildings in the historic centre, different in type and original

functions, but united by conversion projects under-way aimed at cultural and collective re-use: the seventeenth-century church of the Saints Cosma e Damiano, in the ancient heart of the city, part of the Great Project Historic Centre of Naples enhancement of the Unesco site; the Royal Hotel of the poor, from the mid-eighteenth century, used as the seat of the *Young's City* and the Palazzo Fondi on Via Medina, a private building of renaissance origin, the result of various additions and accretions attributable mainly to the eighteenth century, to be used for offices and recreational activities. These interventions can be considered reference models in terms of reusing historical buildings returned to their renewed social and educational function, able to actively promote the regeneration of the surrounding urban area.

2. Reuse and re-conversion of the monumental heritage in Naples

2.1 The great project “historical centre of Naples enhancement of the UNESCO site”

In 1995 part of the historic centre of Naples was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its road layouts, the importance and richness of its historic buildings, its squares and its architecture, were recognized as universal values capable of projecting its own ray of influence *over much of Europe and beyond the borders of it*.

The opportunity offered by this important designation has made it possible to orient the planning of the areas of the historic centre towards initiatives aimed at safeguarding and protecting cultural heritage with particular attention to their enhancement in relation to the environment and active citizenship. The regeneration project of the historic centre, inserted in the broader context of the Integrated Urban Program of Naples, provides for systemic and participatory interventions able to promote the protection and enjoyment of the cultural resources of the historic centre and its ancient productive vocations by renewing the memory of the places in a contemporary key, enhancing the tourist offer and developing the establishment of a truly extended chain of cultural assets played around the themes of reception and inclusiveness. Through territorial policies aimed at encouraging public and private entrepreneurial initiatives, Naples, city of art and culture, is preparing to address the issue of a cultural economy based on production and on the value innovation of the tangible and intangible assets of its historic centre [11].

“While on the one hand it is necessary to protect historical centers as delicate realities within the cultural landscape in which they are inserted, on the other it is finally possible to rethink them in an intelligent way, identifying new possibilities for integrated socio-economic revival and sustainable regeneration” [12].

“The phenomenon of cultural production and innovation has for some years [...] been deeply rooted and inserted in the urban space, so much so that it is often indicated as a key element for the re-urbanization of some parts of the city and the re-functionalisation of abandoned buildings. The spaces of cultural production—open, shared, accessible—represent new areas of relationship with the city and also urban politics identifies the practices associated with them as possible new drivers of local development” [13].

Consistent with what has been outlined so far, the Project for Naples identifies two privileged areas of intervention for the regeneration of the historic city consisting in the reuse of the abandoned building heritage and in the transformation of

the common areas on the ground floor of the recovered buildings to be transformed into “poles of cultural and social animation (also through the inclusion of tertiary activities with a high artistic, cultural or social level) [14].” The aim is to start a redevelopment that, while aiming to protect and enhance the historical-artistic heritage, is not limited to “single-purpose” interventions but acts as a pivot of attractiveness and as a stimulus for the economic and social development of the territory [14].

The introduction of new functions compatible with the nature of the buildings subjected to protection activities and the inclusion of re-creative, exhibition and educational activities on the ground floor of the recovered buildings aims at transferring an “urban value” within a private space belonging to the city. Between the street, the vestibule, the courtyard and the ground floor rooms, the urban system and the building system hybridize, merging into a relationship of reciprocal dynamic relationship to determine the extension of the axis of the road inside the courtyard of the building.

2.2 The church of Saints Cosmas and Damian

The church of Santi Cosma e Damiano on the Largo dei Banchi Nuovi, rises in an area originally close to the Greek walls, in the stretch that delimited the ancient centre of the city towards the sea, in a western direction, along the axis of Via dei Banchi Nuovi has become over time one of the main directions of development of the coastal fabric enriched during the Middle Ages with the growth of villages and neighbourhoods linked to the economy of the Porto Piccolo. A commercial vocation confirmed and consolidated even in the Angevin and then modern times when the area became the privileged site of laboratories and merchant houses, welcoming a large number of lodges for commercial activities. Rua Catalana, Via Scalesia, Rua dei Fiorentini, Via Loggia di Genova, Via Loggia dei Pisani, are just some of the paths that still today meet near the port, testifying to the cosmopolitan and mercantile character of the places.

The general layout of Piazza dei Banchi Nuovi dates back to the period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Due to riots in the city, in fact, around the middle of the sixteenth century the ancient Banco dei mercanti, located in piazza dell’Olmo, was destroyed; in the same period Alfonso Sánchez de Luna, marquis of Grottole, engaged in the construction of his own residence at Largo San Giovanni Maggiore, started the opening of the Largo dei Banchi Nuovi behind the building of which he would have marked the south-eastern margin. The opening of the square was the occasion to start the construction of the Loggia dei Banchi Nuovi on its southern edge, replacing the structures that had previously been destroyed; the construction of Palazzo Orsini, then of the Dukes of Casamassima, located on the south-eastern side of the square, whose renaissance forms—still legible—were transformed by Ferdinando Sanfelice in the eighteenth century. The completion of the Largo occurred during the first half of the seventeenth century with the construction, on the northern side, of Palazzo Vernazza (or Vernasse), transformed into Sanfelice’s forms in the first decades of the following century.

The “vertical” connections between the Largo dei Banchi Nuovi and the lower city were ensured by a network of paths and lanes that still today branch off into the valley, filling the gap between the ancient city centre and the orthogonal plant checker-board, and the maze of alleys and lanes that cross the area near the harbour. The Banchi Nuovi square is in this sense the junction or, even better, the welding point between the centre of Neapolis and the lower city, marked by the convergence of the Via di S. Chiara and by the rise, starting from the early modern age along the extension of its upper limit, of a series of noteworthy buildings: from the renaissance

complex of Santa Maria la Nova (fifteenth to sixteenth century), to the church of Santa Maria dell’Aiuto (seventeenth century), from the Penne palace (fifteenth century), to the new church of Santi Demetrio e Bonifacio (early eighteenth century).

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the abolition of the new lodge decreed for reasons of public order, the area underwent further transformations. The building of the Banchi Nuovi was first purchased by Sánchez and then resold, in 1616, to the Barbieri Congregation which transformed it into a chapel for its own congregation to replace the ancient seat along the Via dei Tribunali, which was sold to allow the construction of the complex of the Gerolamini. In October 1617 the new church was finished in its general form, although work continued inside it.

The church, dedicated to the Saints Cosmas and Damian, fits into the square-shaped structure of the sixteenth-century Loggia composed of nine square spans covered by cross vaults supported by 16 trachyte pillars. The planimetric solution (**Figure 1**) adopted is that of a latin cross-shaped with a single nave, corresponding to the first two central spans of the Loggia, completed by two chapels on each side obtained by inserting walls in about half of the original side bays of the existing structure and ended by a high transept coinciding with the three terminal spans of the sixteenth-century Loggia [15]. “The interruption of the spatial continuity of the cross vaults” visible in the lateral rooms “was cleverly disguised [...] by means of pseudo-arched arches supported by sails” [16]; next to the main body of the church, in the “residual” spaces of the Loggia, the sacristy was obtained, on the left hand, and the room intended for the congregation on the opposite side.

Both on the main façade and on the lateral side of the church, along the Calata of Santi Cosma e Damiano, the triple round arches on trachyte pillars that conformed the once-open arcades of the Loggia dei Banchi Nuovi are still visible. The main façade of the church, concluded at the top by the cornice and the small bell tower surmounted by the cross, presents, above the seventeenth-century trachyte portal, a large late-Baroque window decorated with rocaille stuccoes (**Figure 2**). On the other hand, the oval openings in façade facing the upper rooms that flank the nave, date back to nineteenth century.

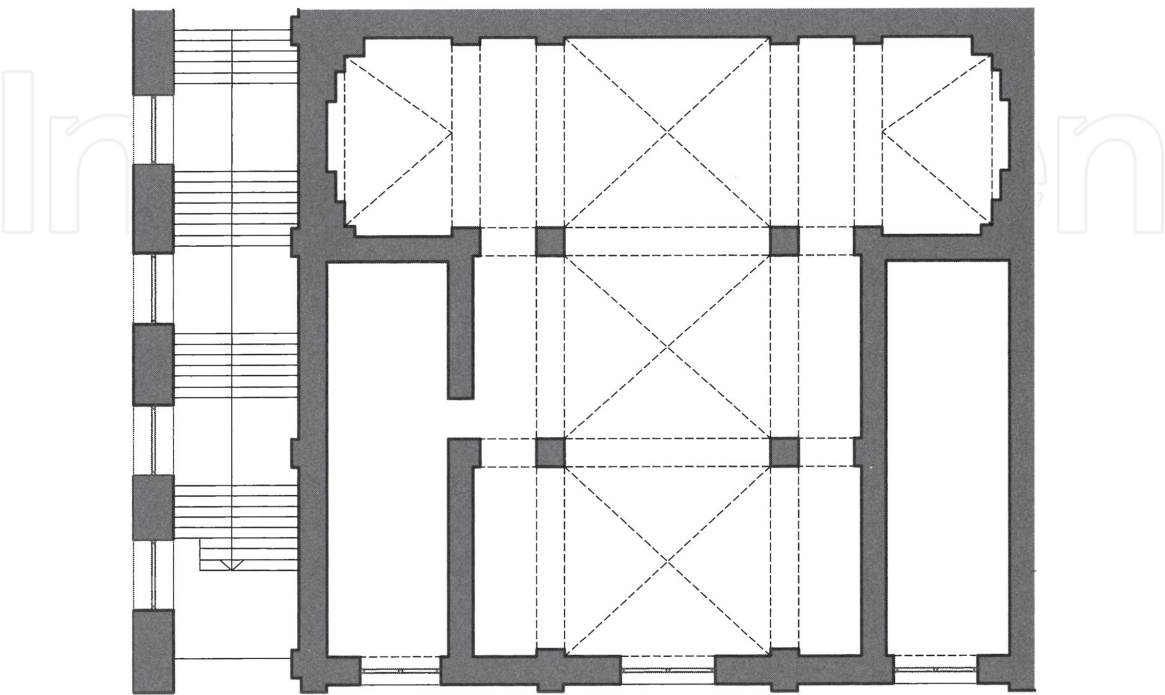


Figure 1.
Naples, church of Saints Cosmas and Damian on the largo Dei Banchi Nuovi, ground floor plan [15].

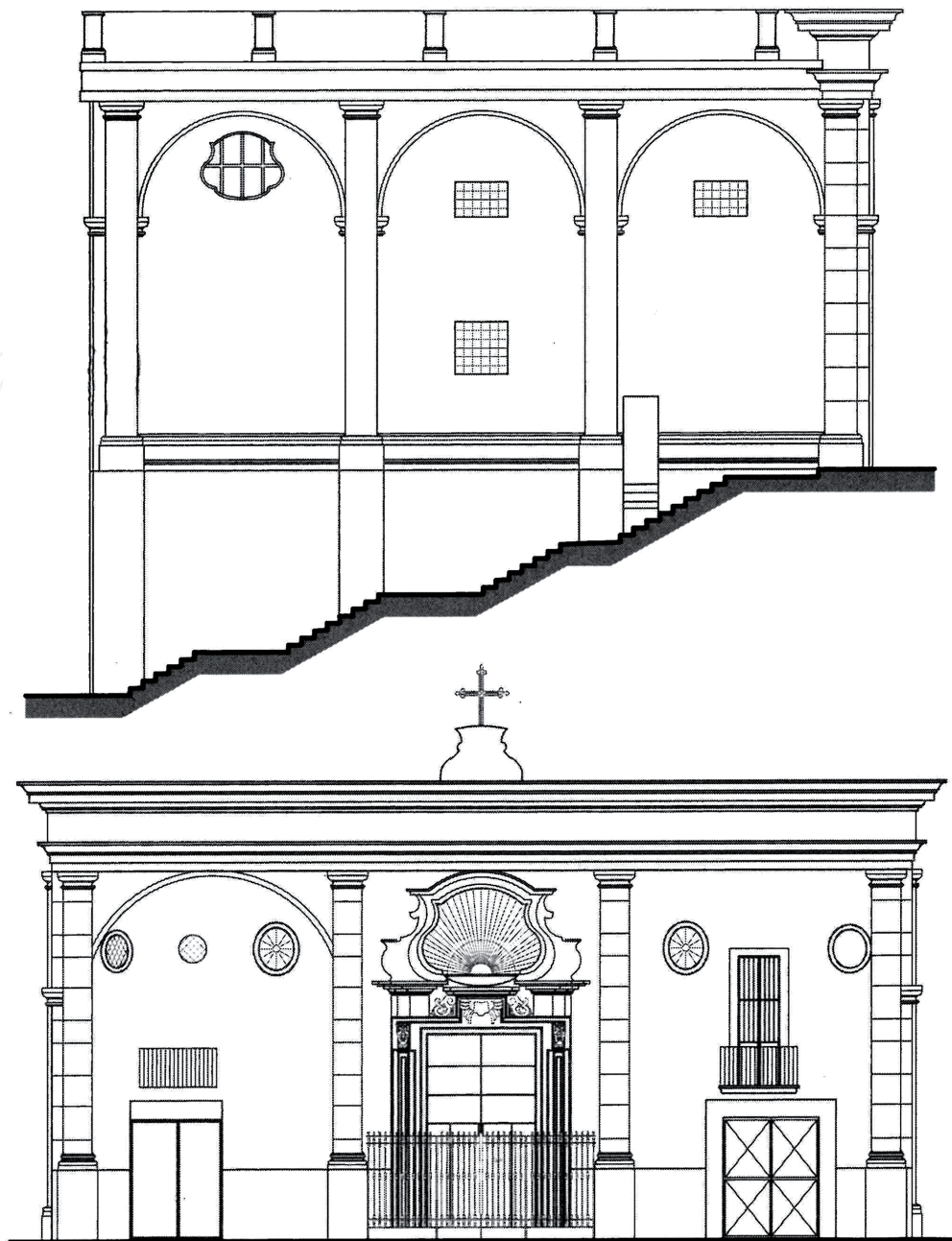


Figure 2.
 Naples, church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, relief drawing of the main and lateral façade [15].

The church, abandoned since the eighties of the twentieth century and subject to continuous theft and vandalism, is the object of the interventions of recovery and functional enhancement conducted by the Municipality also because of the crucial role played by Largo dei Barchi Nuovi compared to the surrounding territory (**Figure 3**). Precious open space in a maze of streets and buildings mainly for residential use, it is in fact a strategic gathering and meeting place for young people, as well as being used for multiple vocations.

Specifically, the intervention in progress concerns the redevelopment and re-functionalisation of the church of Saints Cosma and Damiano, whose re-use is aimed at creating multi-purpose and flexible spaces to be used for cultural activities, with particular reference to exhibition purposes, music, conferences and training. The building, in fact, rises in the centre of a nucleus that condenses strong identity values around itself: from the music pole, which has a privileged reference point in the nearby Conservatory of San Pietro a Majella and in the adjacent street of musical instruments; at the pole of culture and knowledge constituted by L'Orientale



Figure 3.
Naples, church of Saints Cosmas and Damian and the largo Dei Banchi Nuovi.

University of Naples, from the twentieth century owner of the ancient Sánchez palace, and from the Federico II University, whose headquarters is located along the Via di Mezzocannone on which the extension of Via dei Banchi Nuovi converges.

The presence of important tourist flows due to the proximity to the art itineraries of the ancient centre has determined the demand for spaces and services for culture, leisure and hospitality. The current project includes, among its main objectives, the enhancement of the local artistic and artisan fabric; improving services to citizens with the consequent increase in safety and legality; the promotion of initiatives aimed at rediscovering craft and creative vocations through an integrated approach that affects the environmental, social and economic degradation of the neighbourhood by activating participatory processes of systemic cultural enhancement and development and modernization policies.

3. The project of urban regeneration and temporary reuse of Palazzo Fondi

The Sangro di Fondi palace rises on the eastern side of Via Medina in an area characterized by imposing architectural works dating back to the Angevin and Aragonese periods when, the identification of Castel Nuovo as the residence and political and administrative centre of the city, determined the coagulation of houses and aristocratic residences linked to the presence of the palace. The original structure of the palace can be traced back to the first half of the sixteenth century when Michele Giovanni Gomez, president of the Royal Chamber of the Sommaria, bought a series of neighbouring houses to build his own family palace [17]. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the first changes were registered in the planimetric distribution of the building, organized around a main rectangular block along the Via Medina and with three other smaller volumes behind which the rectangular courtyard will take shape. The main body of the nucleus along Via Medina has a base plan marked by a trabeated portal that leads into the large internal vaulted atrium, and from the entablature on which the windows of the noble floor are set, followed by the mezzanine floor concluded at the top by the cornice and the double-pitched roof. In 1698 the palace was sold by Gomez to the Marquis of Genzano, Stefano de Marinis, who entrusted the transformation work to Giovan

Battista Manni, active in the construction site in the years between 1704 and 1714. The intervention carried out mainly concerned the construction of the portico on the counter-façade with the arrangement of the large courtyard and the apartments on the noble floor. In 1709 the monumental staircase to the right of the entrance hall was redone and the following year the serliana (**Figure 4**) was built on the bottom of the courtyard—concluded by a terrace delimited by a loggia composed of three arches at full centre on columns with trachyte bases—which symmetrically incorporates the analogous solution present in the counter-façade (**Figure 5**). In 1712 the entrance portal was modified, enriching it with two powerful marble columns and the overlying central balcony, corresponding to the ballroom on the main floor, decorated with frescoes by Giacomo del Po'. The first arrangement of the main facade dates back to this period, with the regularization of the openings and the realization of the elegant facade stuccoes documented in the engraving by Carlo Petrini of 1718. Between 1720 and 1760 the works continued under the direction of Gaetano Di Tommaso who completed the decorations on the first floor, transforming the party room and the private chapel. The very presence of the engineer Di Tommaso, a collaborator of Luigi Vanvitelli in the works of Palazzo Berio on Via Toledo and in the properties of the Casacalenda family, led to the attribution of the building—not supported by documents—to Vanvitelli, as reported by Francesco Milizia and as reported also by Chiarini in his edition of Celano, where we read: “the

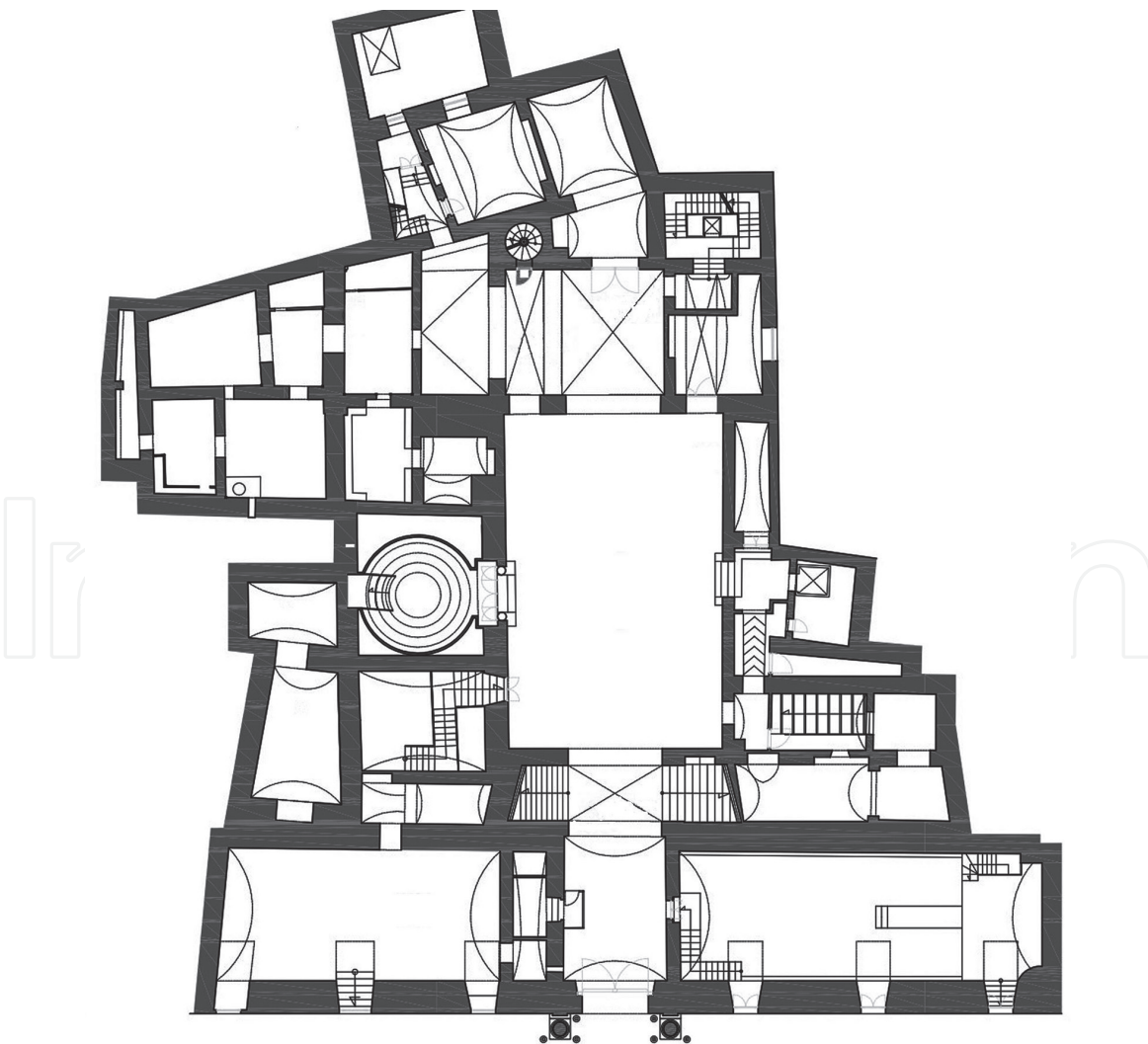


Figure 4.
Naples, Fondi palace on Via Medina, ground floor plan. Available from: http://www.provveditorato-ooppcampaniamolise.it/uffici_dirigenziali.php.



Figure 5.

Naples, Fondi palace on Via Medina, inner courtyard and particular of the Serliana (photo of the author).

building [...] belonged to the old Marquis of Genzano, but afterwards by hereditary right [...] it passed into the domain of the Prince of Fondi. The building was built after the middle of the last century with a drawing by Cav. Luigi Vanvitelli. The door is all in marble, decorated with two columns of Ionic order, and the windows of the noble floor are formed in tabernacles with pillars of the same order. The details do not have the merit of the others operated by the distinguished architect; but the set of architectural lines is grandiose, the distribution of the space is regular, the appearance is imposing. The discovered court is beautifully decorated; and a superimposition of delightful terraces very elegantly designed, adds to it beauty and nobility. The scale treated in the upper landings is also of great value with the convenience and grandeur that Vanvitelli was able to find in all his works” [18].

From the mid-eighteenth century there were further transformations and growths due to the purchase of adjacent real estate units until, in 1798, the main façade was rebuilt, with the complete elimination of the stucco decorations documented by Petrini, and the elevation of a second noble floor (**Figure 6**).

The configuration reached at the end of the nineteenth century does not present significant transformations until the early twentieth century when the building, which became the seat of the Fascist provincial federation and Casa del Fascio, underwent massive transformations that changed its appearance. The transformation of the roof into the terrace dates back to this period—it was accessed from a new floor created above the second noble floor and set back from it—and the addition of a central turret eliminated after the second World War when the building was the seat of the Communist Federation.



Figure 6.
Naples, Fondi palace on Via Medina, detail of the other Serliana on the counter-façade in the courtyard (photo of the author).

The redevelopment project started in 2014 by the State Property Agency, owner of the property, and coordinated and developed by Ninetynine Urban Value with the collaboration of the Municipality of Naples and various institutions such as the Federico II University and the Fine Arts Academy of Naples, aims to restore a historic building to the city for some time unused through a diversified and temporary conversion program of the building that favours its enhancement also in terms of knowledge and functional innovation, minimizing the risks deriving from its prolonged inactivity and encouraging the availability of creative incubators to be allocated to students and young entrepreneurs. The building—with a total surface area of 4432 square meters—hosts multi-functional spaces for art, culture, experimentation, events, places of comparison and coagulation, itinerant exhibitions and conferences open to the city and the network of public and private stakeholders interested in collaborating with institutions to initiate participatory processes for the enhancement and integrated use of the tangible and intangible cultural assets of the historic city (**Figure 7**). The objective is to create a contemporary place where art, culture, experimentation and multidisciplinary can give rise to new initiatives, promoting collaboration and contact between companies, the world of education and culture, institutions and civil society [19].

“They are physical places, very often inserted in urban contexts that need public dimension and sharing, which try to have an impact on the city through the continuous offer of diversified services. Places that hybridize functions related to leisure, recreational and cultural consumption with issues related to the social and political dimension and which, in this sense, confer different values and meanings to innovation itself. This last aspect, more than others, finds its humus in the city, because institutions, people and initiatives are concentrated in the urban context, knowledge and cultures are spread, social and cultural capital is developed, more than elsewhere” [13].

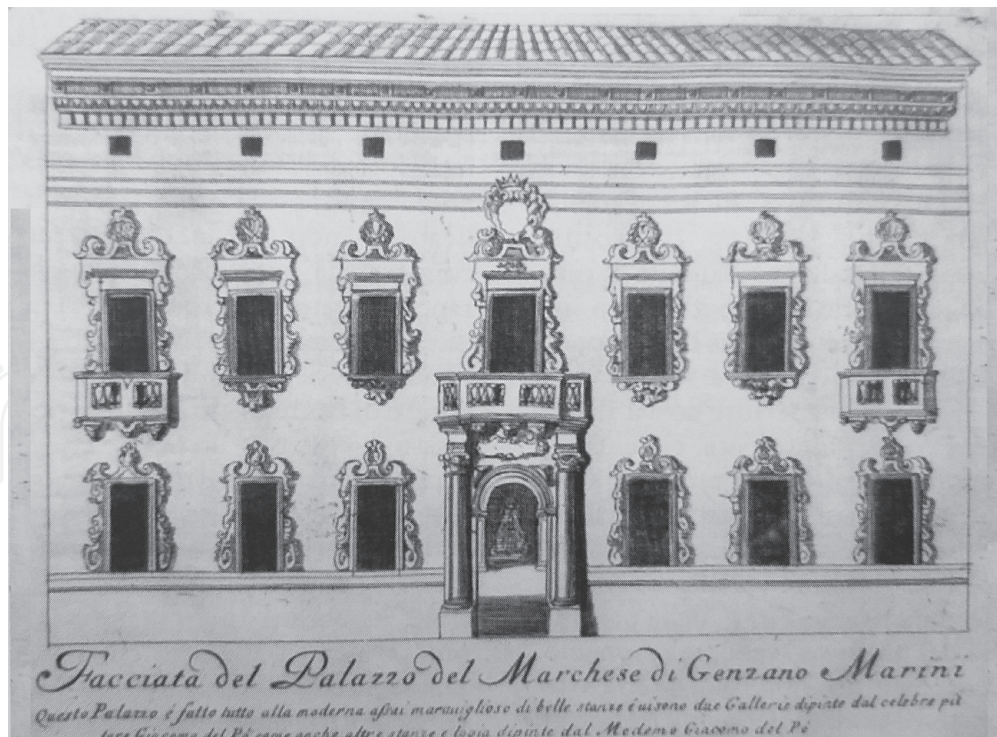


Figure 7.
Naples, facade of the palace de Marinis di Sangro, then Fondi, engraving by P. Petrini, 1718 (National Library of Naples).

4. The real hospice for the poor and the recovery project

It was to fulfil social stability problems that Charles III of Bourbon commissioned Ferdinand Fuga in 1749—returning from the Roman shipyards of San Michele in Ripa Grande and the extension of the Santo Spirito in Sassia Hospital (1742–44)—to build in Naples the largest Hospice in Europe, capable of accommodating eight thousand marginalized, providing them with adequate living and working conditions [20]. “It was destined for eight thousand poor, to be divided into four classes, that is, of men, women, boys, and girls, without any communication between them. Annexed to the aforementioned Hospice he designed a vast public church, to be visited separately by the four aforementioned classes. There were great conveniences such as laboratories, refectories, courtyards, arcades, workshops, and servants’ and executives’ quarters” [21].

Characterizing sign of such institutes it was precisely to place oneself as a poles of development and social cohesion with respect to the territory, creating the conditions so that artisan activities and trades could arise around them able to revive the urban economy in crisis, determining opportunities for work and development for an ever increasing number of inhabitants.

The theme of assistance to the poor was certainly not new in the mid-seventeenth century and was part of that program of raising awareness of the social recovery of entire groups of needy and abandoned people who, from France to the rest of Europe, would have spread rapidly, identifying in the Hospices and in the Internment Houses the solutions adopted to limit and correct the damages deriving from begging and poverty. Precisely the number of such institutions can be considered an effective parameter of evaluation to understand the importance assumed by a city centre compared to the others: the more they were productive and economically independent, the greater was the number of welfare structures built within them to stem the security and social problems. The awareness of the need to identify in the work a more effective rehabilitation function than mere isolation, led to

the “ethical condemnation of idleness” [22]. It was no longer a question of “locking up the unemployed, but of giving work to those who had been locked up, making them participants in common prosperity” [22]. The significance of this operation was more economic than ethical and consisted in supplying low-cost labour during periods of full operation, and in forming and keeping prisoners engaged in times of crisis [22].

Precisely “the capacity of such structures [...] to adapt to the rapidly changing new socio-economic scenarios will mark their destiny: the decline, when their function will be reduced to an amorphous commitment to care, or an active role, when they succeed in integrate into the industrial processes already in place since the second half of the eighteenth century, and recover a more articulated relationship with civil society outside the walls” [23]. The idea of making the Hotel of the poor a town-building, conceived as a self-sufficient community body, reflected on the very nature of the proposed projects. Whether you look at the first project, based on a square plant internally divided into four courts, to be erected in the village of Loreto, in the eastern area of Naples; whether the definitive project is observed, organized on the succession of five majestic courtyards-squares, to be built in the village of Sant’ Antonio Abate, in a crucial area for connections with Rome and city traffic, one cannot but consider the importance that the new factory was called to cover the intentions of the sovereign. Located at the foot of the Capodimonte hill, along the extension of the avenue that led to the sumptuous villa of Poggioreale (**Figure 8**) [24], one of the most elegant and celebrated dwellings of the early Neapolitan renaissance, the building, of which only the three central courtyards were built, competed for dimensions (600 m/140) and architectural language with the royal residence of Caserta, the last “anachronistic” example of capital-city of monarchical absolutism (**Figure 9**).

The construction of the Hospice for the poor unfolds over a period of time ranging from the death of Ferdinando Fuga (1782), to Mario Gioffredo, to the



Figure 8.
Scenic view to the west of the city of Naples in the Campagna Felice, detail of the map of the Duke of Noja, Naples 1775 with in evidence of the Hotel of the poor (Albergo Dei Poveri) in the original project articulated around five courtyards [24].

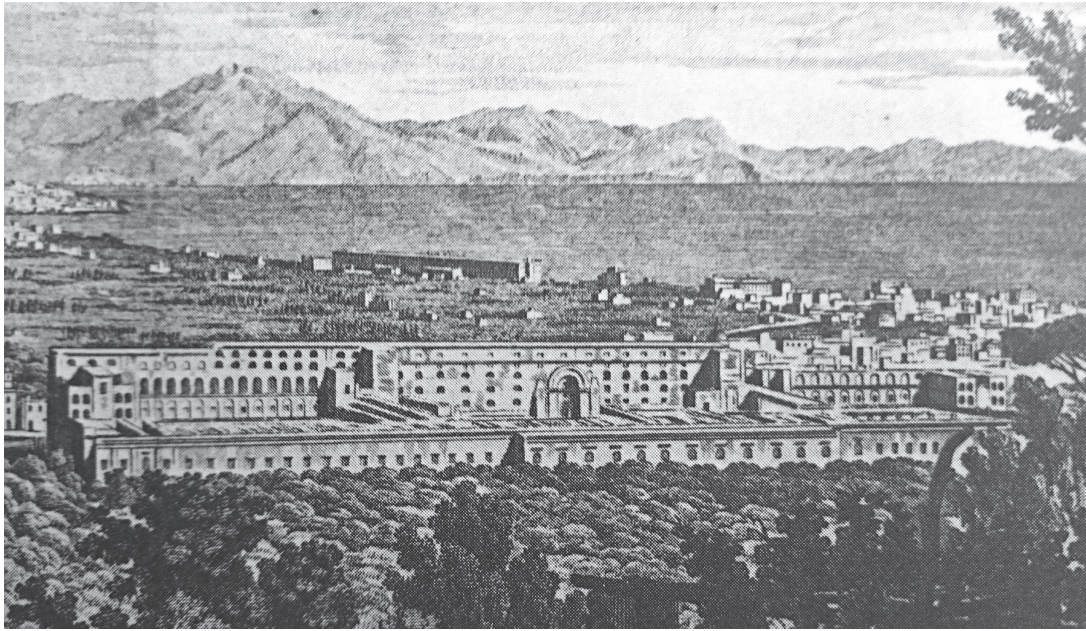


Figure 9.

Late eighteenth-century engraving depicting the two large factories built by Ferdinando Fuga in Naples in the second half of the eighteenth century: The Hotel of the poor in the project actually built with only three central courtyards; and the massive block of the granary factory [24].

intervention of Carlo Vanvitelli (1785–1799) and from these to Francesco Maresca (1802), author of the definitive reorganization of the Fuga's project.

The architectural language adopted by the florentine architect suggests a double interpretative key: on one side the late baroque vein, which can be found in the unfinished Panoptikon church located in the middle of the intermediate courtyard; from another the classicist vein with which the development of the whole building is solved, like the Granili (550 m) played on the poetics of the large dimension and on the landscape scale of the intervention. The plan of the church, in the first solution envisaged for the village of Loreto, presented a series of internal open galleries on the aisles according to an organization experimented by Fontana in the church of San Michele a Ripa, from which the subdivision by classes of the interior spaces was taken. In the transition to the final site, the church's design is also considerably complicated with the position of the dome that has been moved back compared to the more soaring and looming initial solution.

The dimensions of the building, as partially realized, have a width of façade equal to 360 m length for 140 m of width; with an area of 100,000 m² and a volume of 830,000 m³.

With its 430 rooms and 20,000 m² of outdoor spaces, the colossal structure, far more imposing than the Roman factory, has always been considered a “false step” in the Bourbon government policies. “Who knows when it will end? And it is almost thirty years that this work is being done. With less expense, and in a shorter time, it would have removed all poverty from the abundant Kingdom of Naples. But this is not the business of the architect, but of good government” [25].

Yet, seen from the ring road, the Hospice for the poor clearly conveys the meaning of its construction. The proportion it establishes with the metropolis that grew up around it tells with unparalleled efficacy the significance of the strategic operation conducted at the time by the Bourbons: it was a city in the city that was intended to be built, the “city of services,” placed at the entrance to the capital of the kingdom (**Figure 10**). More than the constructive aspects of the Hospice for the poor, it is interesting to underline the propelling role that it was called to play over the surrounding territory when, in the wake of the industrial revolution and the new modes of production, it became an “incubator” of companies and trades .



Figure 10.
Naples, aerial view of the Hotel of the poor.

Already Ferdinand IV of Bourbon had created the premises so that an industrialization process would be started up within it, aimed at identifying in the two poles of vocational training and education the cornerstones around which to rotate, for productive purposes, the functional reuse of the building. The advent of the French and the return of the Bourbons marked the years of greater productivity and “flexibility of use” of the Hospice for the poor. The building became the centre of a strategy aimed “at constituting an effective place of intersection between the programmatic function of public interest and [...] the executive role of private individuals” [26]. Not only was it the site of various production activities, but it became a production centre connected to other important institutions located throughout the territory thanks to a series of contracts and activities that regulated the relationships: a sort of clusters that worked in synergy with the head office. This is the case of the coral factory, started in Torre del Greco but established with its own independent workshop also in the Hospice for the poor, or of the nautical school which, started by the marquis Tanucci, saw its flowering in 1816 thanks to its collaboration with the youth of the hotel.

On the other hand it was during the Bourbon period that the idea of establishing a “widespread cultural chain” in the kingdom of Naples was affirming itself. From publishing, to local production systems, from silk factories to laboratories in the Hospice for the poor, a fine-tuning of a formidable production system spread over the territory, which identified the levers for future development and growth, is outlined. The silk factories of San Luccio, the farm of Carditello, the corals and ceramics factories, the tapestry makers, the factories for the production and spinning of wool, the printing press, the metal laboratories are another way to read in watermark the history of Neapolitan architectural culture at the turn of the nineteenth century, within which a fundamental role was played precisely by the Hospice for the poor, a true breeding ground for arts and crafts, a production center embedded in the ancient heart of the city.

The theme, nowadays very current, of the cultural industry as an element capable of introducing, in the wider economic system, a market of beauty and culture was started already by the Bourbons not only as an *instrumentum regni*, but as a project capable of triggering productive processes able to feed innovation, research and creativity within a “knowledge pole” supported by the policies of the kingdom. The rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum and the resulting archaeological excavation campaign, with the consequent relief, design and publication of

the exhibited antiquities of Herculaneum, gave rise to studies and research in the most diverse fields of knowledge and artistic production, donating new life and inspiration to painters, sculptors, academies and to the textile sector itself whose reproduction of fabrics, prints and decorative motifs was inspired by that formidable repertoire of cultural forms and traditions that emerged from the excavations, giving impetus to the economy and to artisan production.

Called the Grand Emporium of the most varied Arts and Manufactures, the Hospice for the poor played an important role in the economic and commercial development of the capital. In the mid-nineteenth century, “it swarmed with activity: [...] from the large [...] spaces destined to the remittances for the train of the Royal artillery, to the spaces for [...] the foundry, the engraving, [...] the glass-works, [...] the dyeing of wools, [...] the hall of mergers, [...], the school of Fine Arts” [27], showing its multi-functional nature, a consequence of the modular structure of the building.

After various vicissitudes and various restorations, the last of which is still in progress, the Municipality of Naples—which acquired since 1981 the building in its own patrimony—has since 1999 prepared the “Real Hospice for the poor Recovery Project” coming to identify in the *Youth City* (2004–2006) the final goal of the project. Around large courts it will be possible to attend university study courses, make use of assistance services for study and work, promote collaboration between young people from different countries, favouring spaces that are as versatile and multi-purpose as possible.

The rationalization of internal routes, consisting of nine kilo-meters of corridors; the clear distribution of the environments; the articulation of the buildings around the three large courts; the “serial” repetition of the facade modules, allow a functional restructuring of the building that respects the construction characteristics, keeping the type unaltered.

Prison, laboratory, factory, school, the Hospice for the poor can guarantee a flexible and plural use of its interior spaces, combining some of the great themes around which revolves public buildings to be used as spaces for the community and taking into account of a new, “ancient” social emergency that the chronicles of our days dramatically tell: that of acceptance and inclusiveness.

5. Conclusions

The projects of reuse and conversion of the three analysed Neapolitan buildings, characterized by different types, will allow to preserve their historical memory by activating regenerative urban processes aimed at the promotion and development of activities and services for the community. These interventions present aspects that may lead us to consider them as possible reference models in terms of reusing historic buildings that have been restored over time to their renewed collective function, able to actively promote the development of the surrounding urban area in a logic of smart heritage.

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Author details

Rosa Maria Giusto^{1,2}

¹ University of Florence, Italy

² National Research Council Italy (CNR), Institute for Research on Innovation and Services for Development (IRISS), Napoli, Italy

*Address all correspondence to: rosamaria.giusto@unifi.it and r.giusto@iriss.cnr.it

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