URBAN CORPORIS

FOUNDATIONS



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ANDREA CALIFANO
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URBAN CORPORIS FOUNDATIONS

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URBAN CORPORIS – FOUNDATIONS

Table of Contents

9 **AB IMIS FUNDAMENTIS: FROM THE DEEPEST FOUNDATIONS**
Mickeal Milocco Borlini

13 **URBAN CORPORIS FOUNDATIONS**
Andrea Califano and Francesca Lembo Fazio

FROM ABOVE

19 **Construction innovations in residential architecture in Rome**
Architectural responses to the role as the new Capital of Italy
Liliana Ninarello

29 **Ur-Sabaudia and Mazzoni's post office building**
Potential relationships
Daniele Carfagna, Fabiana Cesarano

41 **Between Tradition and Autarchy**
Materials and Techniques in the Pontine Foundations
Andrea Califano, Francesca Lembo Fazio

51 **Guidonia: the Flying City**
Myth and Disenchantment of an Architectural Dream
Giuseppe Felici, Antonio Schiavo

65 **New Agricultural Foundations in Italy and Spain (1950-1960)**
Rural Villages and Pueblos de Colonización Between Rediscovery, Knowledge, Protection and Rehabilitation of Modern Built Heritage
Raffaele Pontrandolfi, Francesca Romana Stabile

77 **Refounding**
From CIAM to K. Tange
Claudio Zanirato

89 **Retaining Strangeness**
Collage and the Urban Future
Belinda J. Dunstan

FROM BELOW

97 **Swamp Urbanism: Community-Led Re-establishment in Sydney's Periphery**
Introduction: Swamps as Ruins in Motion
Louisa King, Urtzi Grau Magaña

111 **Caring Foundations**
The methodological project of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Neighborhood in Paris
Kevin Santus, Arianna Scaioli

123 **Given and Taken Space**
Architectural and Urban Form as the Foundation of Informal Spatial Transformations: the Case Study of Quarticciolo, Rome
Francesco Airoldi, Mariasole Dassié

135 **Founding New Identities: Urban Art as a Tool for the Re-Territorialization of the Roman Periphery**
The Case Studies of San Basilio and Tor Marancia as a Response to Urban Marginalization
Claudia Verzari

147 **Decoding Identity**
Cultural Foundation of Bangkok
Adrian Lo, Onnutcha Naknawaphan, Amika Naknawaphan

159 **Urban Antagonisms and (Re)Visions of the City**
Overwriting Unsanctioned Inhabitations
Duncan Cook

169 **The Paper Folder**
Reconnecting the City
Matthew Wayne Thomas

179 **Art as a communication tool to rethink the city of health**
Alberto Cervesato, Christina Conti

IN METHOD

187 **Urban Hierarchies in the Design of Complex Spatial Systems**
An integrated methodological approach for territorial development
Lorenzo Bagnoli

201 **Chinese Urban Models in Transformation**
Entangled Ideologies between Collectivism, Individualism, and Publicness
Yichuan Guo

213 **A Deep Road Map for Bristol**
Jon Pigott

227 **Transplanted: an English market town in the antipodes**
Guildford Western Australia 1829-2025
Simon Kilbane

239 **The Villages (Florida, USA)**
An urban settlement beyond-city within planetary urbanization
Lívia Zanelli

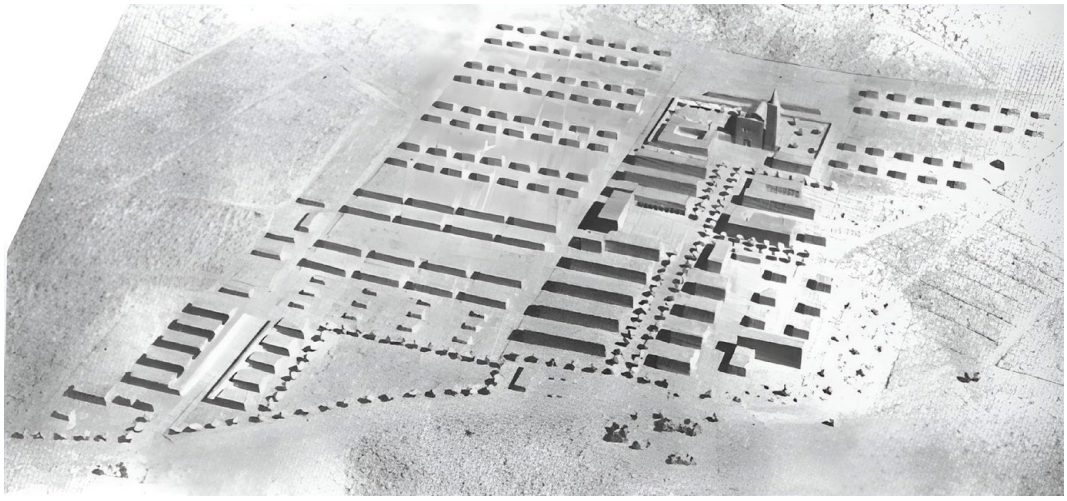
251 **The act of seeing emptiness**
Steps for the reconquest of abandoned places
Elizaveta Proca, Emily Rieppi

263 **Death and the Open**
Notes for a Cemetery Defoundation
Tommaso Antiga

275 **Disrupting the Architectural Drawing**
The New Agency of the Digital Image
Linda Matthews

283 **THE DOMESTIC DIMENSION OF URBANISM. WALKING IN TOKYO**
Lelio di Loreto

287 **EDITORS BIOGRAPHIES**



01. Model of the first draft of A. Legnani's Reconstruction Plan. Fondo Alberto Legnani (https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/archivio/persone/legnani-alberto).

Refounding
From CIAM to K. Tange

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Keywords: Urban planning, Redevelopment, Urban design, Rethinking, Bologna

Abstract

The founding of new cities is often also a matter of "re-founding" when the reasons for settlement are associated with trauma or momentous changes, and there have always been "reconsiderations".

The history of Pianoro Nuova, in the hills of Bologna, can be summarised in two important recent episodes: the courageous foundation of the city destroyed in the last war (an emblematic case in Italy that rejected reconstruction on site) and the recent rethinking of its "centre", which it was decided to completely rebuild after only fifty years. It was originally a very ambitious project, almost "ideal" in its compositional clarity: it represents the most authentic approach of architect Alberto Legnani (member of CIAM), with his urban planning proposal for a rationalist "sunny" city. In more recent times, there has been a lack of courage to improve on what was done at the time in a situation of extreme emergency, a sign of a lack of concrete ideas about what a new contemporary city could be, even if it is very small.

Between these two episodes, in the 1970s, the city of Bologna embraced an urban expansion programme that also aimed to be a re-founding of the city: Kenzo Tange conceived an ambitious master plan for a "modern district" in the northern suburbs. The project envisaged a linear city organised along a main road axis, connecting the historic centre to the new exhibition centre. The Fiera District is one of the most significant urban and architectural projects carried out in Italy in the 1970s and 1980s. It remained an incomplete project, but in recent years another tower block belonging to the regional government has been added, in keeping with the original spirit, while the rest of this part of the city has grown in a "disorderly" manner.

The history of cities, whether large or small, is often the transposition of an "urban" programme, made up of continuous rethinking, rewriting, interruptions and overwriting.

Introduction

Originally, the term "palimpsest" referred to a reused manuscript, a parchment on which the previous text had been scraped off so that it could be written on again, when writing materials were expensive and rare. Often, the original text was not completely erased and could still be partially legible, creating a document with overlapping layers of writing.

Today, the term is mainly used in radio and television to refer to content programming, a metaphor for the original meaning: programming can also be modified, updated or rewritten. Cities can therefore be seen as *palinsesti*, new visions that replace others, but without erasing them completely, inheriting and coexisting with what has been "written" previously.

Post-war reconstruction

Between 1944 and 1945, at the end of the bombing, Pianoro was 98% destroyed, earning it the nickname 'Cassino del Nord' (Cassino of the North). The entire municipal area, strategically located on the Gothic Line, was 85% devastated, making Pianoro the Italian municipality most damaged by the Second World War. The Reconstruction Plan was entrusted to the Bolognese architect Alberto Legnani, a member of CIAM, together with the municipal engineer Giuseppe Cenacchi. The two quickly drew up two proposals: the reconstruction of the old town on the same site, with adjustments to the state road, and the foundation of a new capital in a different area. The second option was chosen by the provisional council, but not without opposition: the local minority appealed to the Ministry of Public Works, requesting an inspection by the Minister.

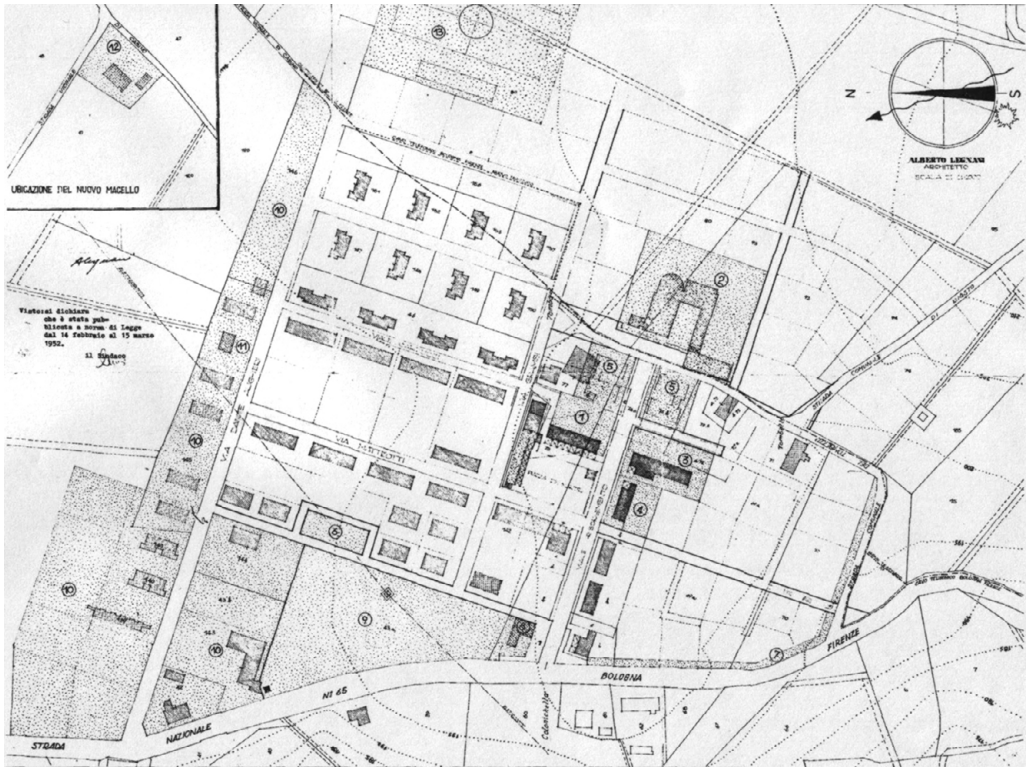
On 27 June 1945, the council officially approved the construction of the new capital about two kilometres downstream from the destroyed town: an almost unique case in terms of size and importance in post-war Italy. The chosen area had several advantages: gentle slopes, good sun exposure, ventilation, safety from the Savena floods, easy access from the main road, land suitable for building foundations and proximity to the railway station. Furthermore, the location was more central to the entire municipal area.

However, the approved plan had to be scaled back twice, mainly for economic reasons: the monumental avenue was shortened and the obligation to transfer reconstruction rights linked to war damage to the new area was not imposed. For this reason, some inhabitants simultaneously began the rebirth of the old town as well.

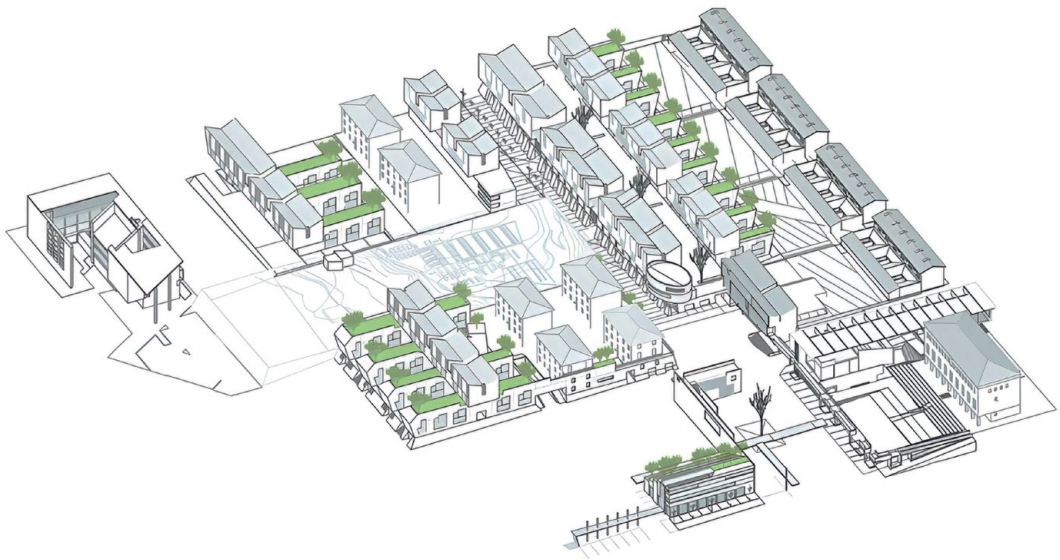
All that remains of Legnani's initial proposal today is a photograph of the model: the vision was that of a tidy citadel, structured around a monumental tree-lined axis leading to the church and flanked by the most imposing buildings. Small houses with courtyards were placed on either side to give the new settlement a "rural" character. It was an ambitious and almost idealistic project, oversized in relation to immediate needs but an authentic expression of the architect's "sunny" rationalist vision.

The second proposal, on the other hand, significantly reduced the size of the project while maintaining its compositional themes: the avenue was shorter and lacked the complex backdrop of buildings; the church had almost no churchyard; the number of single-family housing developments was reduced; the urban design appeared more compact and less extensive in morphologically difficult areas. The third proposal, which was approved and implemented, was a further simplification: an even shorter central avenue, a sparse building grid and plenty of space left for future spontaneous subdivisions. The three successive versions, therefore, significantly weakened the conceptual clarity of the initial idea.

In the final configuration, Legnani designed an orderly agglomeration of houses oriented along the heliothermal axis to ensure the best possible sunlight exposure. The two- or three-storey



02. Floor plan of the Reconstruction Plan by A. Legnani, approved and implemented. Fondo Alberto Legnani (https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/archivio/persone/legnani-alberto).



03. Urban Redevelopment Programme for the centre of Pianoro Nuova approved in 2002. ZaniratoStudio.

buildings were mostly terraced or detached, designed to offer families a small vegetable garden or garden with the associated health and economic benefits. From a stylistic point of view, there is a noticeable blend of the Modern Movement and local tradition: simple volumes and rationalist façades, but pitched roofs.
The civic center arose on the flattest part of the site and was connected to the state road by a 357-meter-long boulevard, Viale Risorgimento, the fulcrum of the entire urban system. Aligned with it were the church and rectory, whose façade provided a scenographic closure to the avenue. The rectangular municipal square was conceived with its southern side open toward the upper Savena Valley and enclosed by porticoed wings intended to confer monumentality upon the public space.
To the right of the square, the elementary schools were built, equipped with a garden and areas intended for agricultural instruction. The plan further envisaged a Carabinieri barracks, a cinema-theatre, craft workshops, an abattoir near the fairground meadow, a sports field behind the church, a public garden along the state road, and even a small hotel-restaurant.
Ten years after reconstruction, Pianoro Nuovo housed around one thousand inhabitants, almost all of them farmers; indeed, pigsties and chicken coops were still present within the settlement. The urban layout clearly reflected rationalist principles: some buildings were oriented to the south, others to the east facing the valley, oscillating between climatic requirements and the desire for panoramic views.
According to the original plan, the new municipal center was meant to remain an agricultural village. However, beginning in 1957, the population – and above all artisans and small industrialists from Bologna – began exerting significant development pressure. In just three years, sixty permits were issued for industrial and craft enterprises, along with numerous new dwellings, significantly altering the appearance of the town compared with its initial intentions.
The Reconstruction Plan remained in force until the first General Town Plan (PRG) of 1968 and was almost entirely implemented. The first expansions followed: new residential subdivisions to the south, toward the rebuilt Pianoro Vecchio, and to the east, toward Riosto; the state road also became an axis of building activity, especially on its western side.
In the mid-1970s, as the first postwar buildings along Via Matteotti were being demolished and the amphitheater of Piazza dei Martiri was being constructed, the town began its true expansion northward, toward Bologna, eventually connecting with the industrial area of Musiano. Here, a large, extensive, and introverted residential settlement emerged, equipped with its own road system connected to the state highway. This gave Pianoro the appearance of a suburban district of the city and contributed to transforming its social composition.
The last General Town Plan of the century defined the RU5 boundary for an Urban Renewal Plan that encompassed much of the original 1950s core: the town hall, the main square, the public garden (formerly the livestock market), the market-square/parking area, the post office, decommissioned production buildings, an entire block containing an abandoned cinema and cooperative store, as well as numerous public housing blocks. Although the area still represented the heart of the "core city," the condition of its buildings and the vitality of its public spaces appeared compromised, due to social changes and the declining effectiveness of the original relational system.

A re-foundation

In 2001, following the guidelines set out in the Plan, the municipal administration launched a design competition for the redevelopment of Pianoro's town center. The competition was won



04. Traduzione del Piano Particolareggiato di riqualificazione del Centro di Pianoro realizzato dalla STU. Centro Cooperativo di Progettazione, (https://www.ccdprog.com/j3/index.php/it/architettura/edifici-residenziali/165-pru-pianoro-nuovo-bo).



05. Masterplan "Bologna 1984" presented by K. Tange, (https://www.tangeweb.com/works/works_no-42/).

by Zanirato Studio, which was also entrusted with drafting the Urban Renewal Plan (PRU). Rethinking Pianoro meant reconsidering its founding and developmental history, with the aim of enhancing its positive aspects and correcting past mistakes. Legnani's design process, evident in the three versions of the original plan, in fact revealed a settlement pattern that appeared open but was actually closed and not conducive to future evolution. As a consequence, when the town was forced to grow, it did so in a sporadic and incoherent manner, and primarily toward the north, through successive "leapfrog" expansions.

The priority of the new plan was therefore the redevelopment of the historic – by then only "original" – center as an act of urban recomposition and identity regeneration. The goal was not to invent a new identity, but rather to bring to light what already existed in latent form. From this perspective, the central area acquired a connective role within the re-envisioned urban system, giving the project a clear sense of direction: the north-south axis restored dynamism to the lost centrality and broke the isolation of the founding nucleus.

The modernist city designed by Legnani was based on an orthogonal grid and on structuring pathways characteristic of the "linear city." Hence the recurring presence in his projects of a generating axis closed in its development. The new project instead chose to invert that original direction, once again concentrating along it the main sites of civic identity. The idea was not to introduce a new axiality, but to reinterpret the crossing in accordance with the town's actual longitudinal development. This was achieved through three strategies: redesigning the urban ground; redefining views and relationships with the landscape; and reconfiguring building alignments.

The intervention on the ground aimed to re-signify the central area by proposing new visual perspectives and recovering rural references, calling upon the landscape to collaborate with architecture. The planimetric variations represented a kind of "virtual archaeology" of a city that never came to be, superimposing a new evolutionary interpretation onto the existing structure. The buildings intended to redefine the urban scene were arranged upon this reshaped "terrain," forming a layered fabric that reinterpreted the original spirit of the low houses immersed in greenery. This alliance with the landscape resulted in the creation of an "internal landscape," based on a close relationship between the built environment and private green areas. At the same time, it was necessary to increase the density of the settlement, since the area had by then become central and required a structure more consistent with that of a consolidated urban fabric.

According to this logic, the "new city" was organized into overlapping layers, with different architectures, materials, and functions, and a gradual thinning toward the top. The design drew upon the morphologies of Legnani's early projects, ideally reconstructing what had been demolished and following a kind of philological reconstruction of the original layout.

The Urban Renewal Plan (PRU) approved in 2002 was incorporated through an urban planning amendment and transformed in 2003 into a Detailed Development Plan, later managed by an Urban Transformation Company established in 2004. Over the course of approximately twelve years, through interventions by various designers, the plan was fully implemented.

This process may be regarded as the second major founding moment of the city: a conscious and meaningful attempt to rethink itself beginning from its own center, marking a new stage in its urban development.

Other stories

The case of Pianoro is particularly structured and urbanistically significant, with a clear uniqueness of its own; nevertheless, it can be compared with other Italian examples, albeit less defined and characterized by different dynamics. In several cases, in fact, wartime destruction or cata-

strophic events led to the relocation of settlements or to the creation of new towns elsewhere.
Cassino, almost completely razed to the ground during the battles for Montecassino, was largely rebuilt near its original site, although some neighborhoods and rural hamlets were relocated further down the valley, in more accessible areas. Sant'Anna di Stazzema, the site of one of the most tragic Nazi massacres, was not rebuilt as an inhabited center: the village became a memorial, and residents moved to nearby places such as Stazzema and Pietrasanta. A similar case is San Pietro Infine, in the province of Caserta: after total destruction during the fighting, the new settlement was built further down the slope, while the ancient hilltop village now stands as a ruined memorial.
In Gessopalena, in Abruzzo, the historic center was devastated by the Nazis in 1943 and never rebuilt: the population relocated to the nearby Terranova district, and the ruins have become a site of memory. A comparable situation exists in Rocchetta Alta, in Molise: the medieval village, destroyed during the war, was never reinhabited, and a new Rocchetta a Volturno was built in the valley floor. Castelnuovo dei Sabbioni, in Tuscany, similarly struck by Nazi destruction in 1944, was rebuilt elsewhere, giving rise to the new settlement of Nuovo Castelnuovo. In Cerreto Alpi, in the Reggio Emilia Apennines, part of the village was rebuilt, but many services and modern houses developed further down the slope, leaving the original hamlet as a historic center with a tourism-oriented vocation.
Several analogous cases do not stem from wartime events but from natural disasters. Poggioreale, Salaparuta, and Gibellina in Sicily were destroyed by the 1968 Belice earthquake: their new centers were built in different locations, abandoning the old towns. Gairo Vecchio, in Sardinia, devastated by a flood in the 1950s, gave rise to three new settlements: Gairo Sant'Elena, Taquisara, and Cardedu. Craco, in Basilicata, was abandoned in the 1960s due to landslides, while the new settlement was built elsewhere; the old village is now an evocative "ghost town." Finally, in the 1950s the relocation of residents from the Sassi of Matera to the new settlement of La Martella represents another example of planned urban refoundation, motivated more by sanitary concerns than by physical destruction.
In all these cases, common elements emerge: abandonment or destruction of the original village, relocation of the population, and sometimes planned reconstruction in new areas – though with less organic coherence than in Pianoro. Pianoro stands as a paradigmatic model of Italian urban refoundation, distinguished by its completeness, design coherence, and its ability to combine historical memory with modern urban planning.

Kenzo Tange's project for Bologna: Fiera District

Returning to Bologna, in 1967, the City Council commissioned K. Tange to draw up an urban plan for the development of the northern suburbs, with the aim of mitigating urban pressure on the medieval historic centre, based on demographic forecasts from 1962.
In 1970, the Japanese architect presented the "Bologna 1984" project to the City Council, designed around a U-shape ("Circus") that crosses the railway and the ring road, connecting the new district to the city centre via a north-south road axis and a rapid transit system.
The project envisaged, in the northern plain, a residential–administrative center with a strong iconographic presence, extending beyond the ring road–motorway system then nearing completion and intended to encircle the outskirts. It proposed an urban scheme resembling an enclosed "walled" city, with new "gates" and strong architectural connections to the existing urban fabric (Gresleri, 1999).
The plan was incorporated into the 1973 amendment of the Master Plan, but ultimately only the Fiera business district was actually built, and only beginning in 1979.



06. Construction of the last tower in the Fiera District in 2011. Claudio Zanirato.



07. Construction sites for the creation of the DUC Fiera to replace the Tange Plan. Claudio Zanirato.

The project materialized as a group of imposing white towers, approximately 80 meters tall, which reinterpret characteristic forms of Bolognese architecture – such as porticoes and towers – in a modern idiom. The first tower was inaugurated in 1983 and the last completed in 2011. At the center of the complex, a pedestrian plaza was created in collaboration with the Japanese sculptor Isamu Noguchi, serving as the spatial and visual focal point of the district.
The project represents a modern landmark within a city known for its historical and medieval character, embodying an encounter between architectural innovation and urban tradition.
Although the broader ambitions for future development – such as a more extensive residential and urban district to the north –remained unfinished, the Fiera District has reshaped Bologna's contemporary urban identity and continues to serve as an architectural point of reference, an unmistakable landmark in the city's skyline. Immediately placed at the center of controversies that shaped its fate, it stands as the only postwar attempt in Bologna to confer architectural dignity upon the periphery.
The area hosts the Bologna Exhibition Center, along with offices of the Regional Government, the Executive Council, and various other institutions, integrating public and professional functions.
In seeking a balance between the built environment and its context, the towers were designed to blend into the urban landscape, not as arbitrary elements, but as landmarks – symbols of modernity and urban vitality.
Kenzo Tange's plan/master plan represented a futuristic vision of urban development, but in the urban landscape of Bologna, it was quickly supplemented and then replaced by increasingly complex and calibrated tools. After Tange's plan was abandoned, subsequent urban planning decisions took different directions: specifically, part of the area was affected by the 1985 PRG (General Urban Development Plan) with the master plan for Comparto R51, then DUC Fiera in 1991. The resulting *Disegno Urbano Concertato* (Agreed Urban Design), the fruit of municipal "coordination" of a pool of 25 external architects with very different orientations and cultural antagonisms, was inevitably confused and senseless, thus definitively burying Tange's far-sighted ambitions.
In summary, although Tange's master plan was not implemented in its entirety, the Fiera District area has undergone an evolution that has retained some of the principles of the original project, adapting them to contemporary urban and infrastructural needs.

Plans
In Italy, there are several cases in which postwar urban planning was successfully carried forward and led to the complete – or nearly complete – realization of the original project, largely respecting its initial intentions. These examples often concern new towns, newly designed districts, or well-planned expansion areas where there was strong coordination among designers, public authorities, and investors.
Rome's EUR District, originally conceived in the 1930s and 1940s as an exhibition quarter for the planned Universal Exposition, was transformed in the postwar period into a modern administrative and business hub. It was only partially realized in relation to the original ambitions, with numerous adaptations during the 1960s and 1970s.
The Direzionale Center of Naples (San Giovanni a Teduccio and Fuorigrotta) was a project launched in the 1960s and 1970s to create a modern business district. It saw numerous urban interventions and the construction of high-rise buildings and infrastructures. As in Bologna, it represented an attempt to decongest the historic center, and here too the implementation was partial, with interventions occurring over time and often lacking full coordination.

The new Fair District of Padua, developed in the postwar decades and expanded in the 1970s and 1980s, was part of a modern urban expansion plan that integrated exhibition, administrative, and commercial functions. Similar to Bologna, it evolved through successive additions, not always in keeping with the original plan.
In summary, these Italian examples highlight a common trend: ambitious urban plans aimed at modernising and decongesting historic centres, often partially implemented, but with lasting effects on urban development. Tange's plan stands out for its conceptual coherence, overall scale and ability to serve as a guide for subsequent interventions, while sharing with other cases the need for progressive adaptations and phased implementation, and fitting into a broader panorama of Italian experiences of modern and progressive design. Although not fully implemented, it has significantly influenced the development of the city and serves as a reference for other similar Italian interventions.

Conclusions

The history of Pianoro Nuova, due to its recent formation and the condensed timescale of its evolution, has an emblematic power. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the concrete role of urban design, on the objective capacity to direct the creation of a pluralistic entity governed by latent forces.
Intentions and identity are often prey to interests and practices, so the histories of cities, and Pianoro Nuova is no exception, are often the result of missed opportunities and broken promises. Once again, design ideals have been bent to "mannerist" desires, and the results obtained misrepresent the initial intentions, leading to a renewed image of the city centre with a dubious style: no longer modernist or even contemporary, but somewhat out of time. But there will certainly be other rewritings.
Tange's plan for Bologna was probably destined from the outset never to be realised, almost a utopia, but it was so powerful that even the little that remains is a treasure.
The post-war real estate and commercial initiatives, such as Milano2, Lignano Sabbiadoro and Milano Marittima, seem to have had more success, but we know that in these cases there are other values at stake.
The comparison between the reconstruction of Pianoro Nuova and the large structuralist expansion plan developed by Kenzo Tange for Bologna opens a rich interpretive perspective, as it links two scales, two periods, and two conceptions of the city-as-palimpsest that are profoundly different yet united by the intention to rewrite the urban organism through a foundational gesture. This idea of the city as an overwritten text recalls Corboz's (1983) theories of the "territory as palimpsest" and, more broadly, interpretations of the city as a process of continuous stratification (Choay, 1965; Rossi, 1966).
In both cases, the challenge is the same: rethinking the city through a new order in which modernity becomes an identity-forming device. In Pianoro, reconstruction stems from the urgency to restore physical form and identity to a community destroyed by the war, following CIAM rationalist principles in which urban form acts as both a technical and social device (Mumford, 2000; Giedion, 1941). Tange's plan operates instead at a metropolitan scale and embodies an advanced version of structuralist and metabolist thinking, aligned with the postwar critical revision of CIAM (Banham, 1976; Frampton, 1992).
In both contexts, the intention to impose a new order through a generative axis emerges – a modernist principle already present in Le Corbusier's analyses of the directional form of the contemporary city. The comparison reveals overlapping dynamics of rewriting, legible through the lens of the "urban palimpsest" (Corboz, 1983). Pianoro undergoes three rewritings: the original plan by Legnani, then episodic growth, and finally a contemporary re-foundation attempting

to restore coherence. Bologna Nord, with Tange, shows what happens when rewriting remains incomplete: a partial intervention that becomes a fragment rather than a system, as often occurs in modernist plans that were never fully realized (Rowe and Koetter, 1978).

Pianoro's modernity is social and hygienic, consistent with the CIAM tradition combining functionalism with attention to everyday well-being (Giedion, 1941; Mumford, 2000). Tange instead proposes an iconic and infrastructural modernity, aligned with late international modernism and the metabolist vision of the city as an evolving organism (Tange, 1966; Lin, 2010). Juxtaposed, the two cases reveal the coexistence in Italy of a pragmatic, community-driven modernity and a visionary, metropolitan one.

Incompleteness becomes a central theme: Pianoro grows incoherently in relation to its original structure; Tange's plan materializes only in fragments, losing its conceptual force. In both cases, incompleteness generates new layers of stratification, confirming the idea of the city as an open construction. Pianoro builds a direct relationship with the Apennine landscape, consistent with theories that interpret territory as an integral component of urban morphology (Secchi, 1986). Tange instead imagines an artificial, infrastructural landscape shaped by the logic of the megastructure (Banham, 1976).

The superimposition of layers confirms Corboz's (1983) reading: territory is a palimpsest constantly updated. Pianoro represents a rare case of completed postwar urban re-foundation, able to be "refounded" without betraying its original structure. Tange's plan, by contrast, is a failed foundation, echoing Tafuri's (1976) reflections on the collapse of the grand ideological apparatuses of modernity.

The comparison demonstrates that Italian cities evolve through accumulation rather than replacement; that urban quality depends on the coherence of successive rewritings more than on the clarity of the initial plan; and that small, community-based interventions are more feasible than large metropolitan schemes. In this sense, scale becomes destiny. As Rowe and Koetter (1978) argue, modern urbanism inevitably produces fragments that must be reinterpreted over time.

It is the quality of stratification – more than adherence to the initial project – that determines the vitality of contemporary urban form.

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A BOOK ON *A*RCHITECTURE, *A*RT, PHILOSOPHY *A*ND URB*A*N STUDIES TO NOURISH THE URB*A*N BODY.

The contemporary city retains its past not through explicit narratives, but by silently inscribing it within its material structures: in urban layouts, construction details, surfaces, and the techniques that have shaped its form. The twentieth century, marked by profound social, ideological, and technological transformations, produced a new urban body in which visions of the future and historical stratifications coexist in an often fragile balance.

This volume of *Urban Corporis – Foundations* examines the relationship between ideology, planning, and architectural design, analysing the transition from the historic city to the contemporary city through the study of new towns and planned urban fabrics. Starting with the Second Industrial Revolution and the emergence of reinforced concrete as the predominant construction method, architecture and urban planning became central tools for shaping new forms of habitation and collective aspirations.

From an international perspective, the volume compares experiences of new towns and planned cities, highlighting analogies, divergences, and contradictions among different urban models, cultures, and identities. The material traces of the last century – situated between utopian ambitions and enduring legacies of the past – thus become the subject of critical analysis, engaging with issues of conservation, abandonment, and contemporary reappropriation.

Through contributions addressing both planned outcomes and organic developments, this collection examines the role of planned cities in the present and future, offering a nuanced interpretation of the twentieth century as an ongoing urban laboratory.