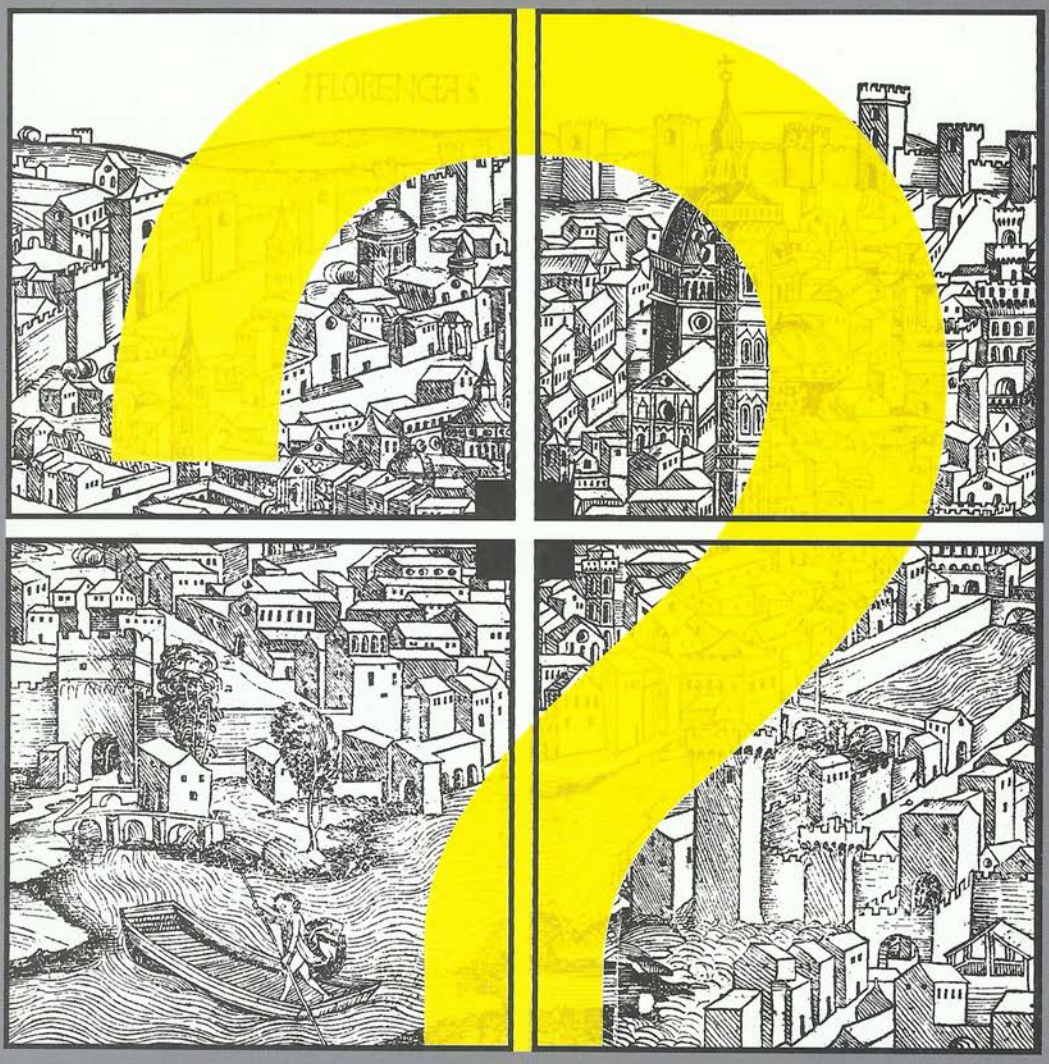
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI FIRENZE
DIPARTIMENTO DI PROGETTAZIONE DELL'ARCHITETTURA
SEZIONE ARCHITETTURA E CONTESTO

TRANSFORMATIONS OF URBAN FORM

FROM INTERPRETATIONS TO METHODOLOGIES IN PRACTICE



ISUF '99

SIXTH INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON URBAN FORM

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Florence, 23 – 26 July 1999

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TRANSFORMATIONS OF URBAN FORM
FROM INTERPRETATIONS TO METHODOLOGIES IN PRACTICE

A cura di Roberto Corona e Gian Luigi Maffei

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MERCANTILE LOGGIAS AND URBAN CENTRES IN MEDICEAN TUSCANY
Castiglion Fiorentino, Lucignano, Barga, Montevettolini: a comparison.

Alessandro Merlo

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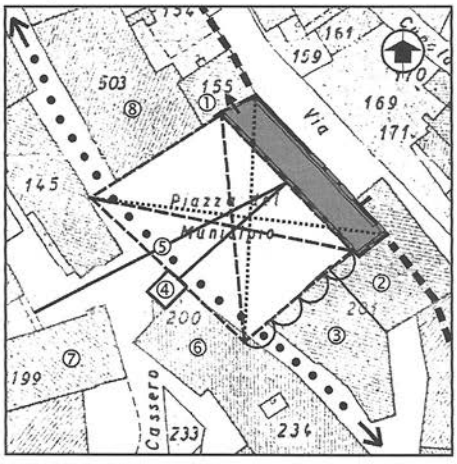
Mercantile loggias are typical 16th- 17th century structure which were built by the Medici in urban centres with a strategic political-economical valence. So far 25 centres have been studied; fourteen of them are hilltop settlements and are connected to the main commercial ways at a regional, national, and international level. The political-administrative system of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany under Cosimo I preserved the division into *Capitanati*, *Vicariati* and *Podesterie* inherited from the Florentine Republic. The Loggias were normally built in the *Capitanati* but also in those *Vicariati* and *Podesterie* that were particularly rich and powerful. The Grand Dukes founded markets with special edicts, then the communities asked for the authorization to build the Loggias and were obliged to pay 50% of the sum necessary to complete the works, the rest was provided by the Grand Duke; if the request of authorization came from a private citizen they were to pay for the construction themselves. Many of the medieval centres underwent a number of architectural interventions and a process of reorganization of the urban plan in order to qualify the polar and/or nodal spaces of the urban centre, and Loggias were also built as part of the renewal. The Loggias were mostly located on the main square together with the buildings which represented the political and religious powers, or in other cases the structure was placed on the commercial axis in the immediate proximity of the administrative centre or other market areas. In order to understand the reasons behind their positions within the urban centres, an analysis of the different developing stages appears necessary. I will now introduce four examples that will show the type of analysis conducted.



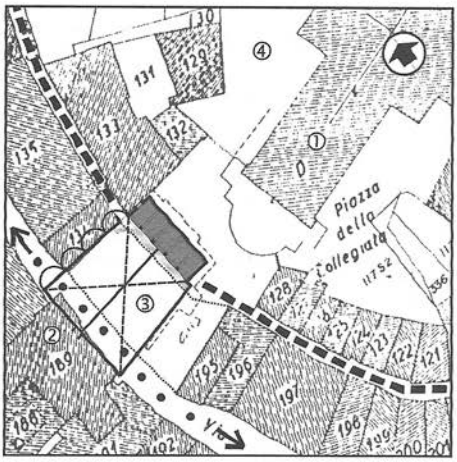
CASTIGLION FIORENTINO
① Chiesa di S. Sebastiano
② Palazzo Dragomanni
③ Palazzo Serrati
④ Torre dell'orologio
⑤ Fonte
⑥ Palazzo comunale
⑦ Pieve di S. Angelo
⑧ Palazzo Paglicci
Mura del XIII sec.
Via Clodia

Castiglion Fiorentino (*Podesteria*). During the 16th century the *Piazza del Municipio* underwent some building interventions which made it the administrative, political and commercial node of the town:

- The market Loggia was built in 1513 on the western side of the square;
- The *Palazzo Comunale* together with the clock tower (1529) and the fountain, which was built where a well was dug in 1368, stand opposite to the Loggia;
- On the two sides of the square some of the medieval buildings were united to realize *Palazzo Paglicci* (north) and *Palazzo Dragomanni*, *Palazzo Serrati* (south);
- The entrance to the church of *San Sebastiano* was moved underneath the Loggia;
- The square was repaved.

The Loggia together with the *Cassero* extend along the right side of the square and function as a filter between the urban space and the *Val di Chio*. Moreover, the land register maps made it possible to recognize relations which probably constituted the guide lines followed by those who designed the square:

- The central bay of the Loggia, characterized by a tympanum and the medicean coat of arms, is on the same axis with the entrance of the Clock Tower;
- The same bay is also in line with the ancient decumanus that relates it to the entrance of the *Cassero*, at least visually;
- This last main line ends into a visual cone that opens onto the valley through three arcades;
- The external side of the Loggia stands directly on the old walls built in the first half of the 13th century which enclosed the first urban expansion outside the *Cassero*;
- The square can be divided longitudinally into four equal sections each 11 Florentine arms long, which correspond to the depth of the Loggia.
- The market Loggia is in a central position if related with the urban centre, and is adjacent to the original nucleus to which it is connected through the axis (see above).



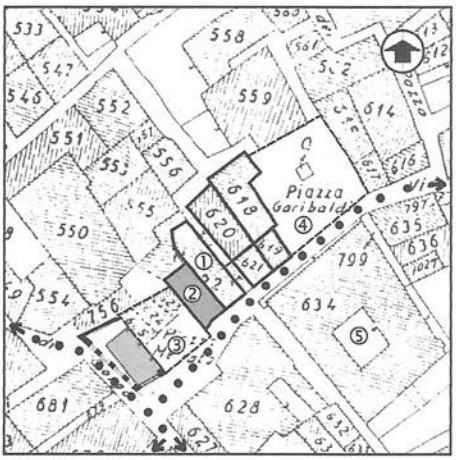
LUCIGNANO
① Collegiata di Sant'Angelo
② Cassero senese
③ Piazza dei Caduti della Liberta'
④ Piazza del Tribunale
Castrum ovoidale
Via povera

Lucignano (*Vicariato*). The urban development of the centre can be divided in four stages:

- Tracing of the *castrum sillano*, a 300-roman-foot square whose centre coincides with the actual centre of the cloister of *San Francesco* (including the lots located between *Via della Misericordia*, in the south, and its parallel street, in the north);
- At the end of the Middle Ages the settlement assumed an ovoid shape (80x120m ovoid *castrum*) and was rotated 10° clockwise with respect to the *castrum* in order to adjust it to the ground pattern. The castle and the church of *S. Angelo* were also built in this period;
- Since the beginning of the 13th century the new buildings were distributed following a characteristic pattern made of concentric rings. Firstly, the south-eastern part was built, then, at the end of the 14th century construction was extended to the north-western area. The walls were completed by adding the *Porta Murata* and the *Cassero senese* in the second half of the 14th century;
- Since 1325, when the archbishop Tarlati conquered the castle, the population abandoned the *catsrum* nucleus permanently and occupied the ring-like areas.

At this stage of the development the highest part of town was also representative of its political and religious power. After Lucignano became Florentine in 1553, the new organization of the centre was completed by the dislocation of the representative centre of the town from *Piazza del Tribunale* to *Piazza dei caduti della Libertà* and the introduction of new architectonic structures: the *Loggia del Grano* (second half of the 16th century) la *Collegiata di Sant'Angelo* (1592-1621), and the ovoid staircase (1717), which connects the *Collegiata* to the Loggia's square and to the *Cassero senese* (1390). Due to the building of the

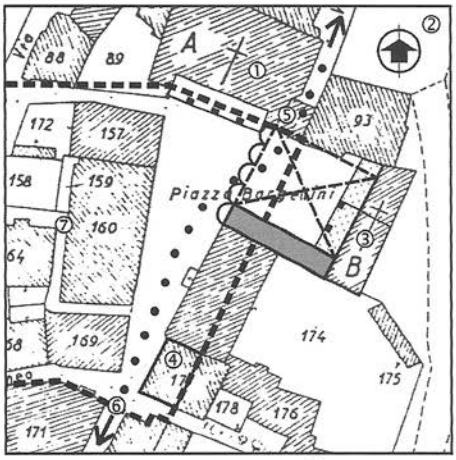
new medicean fortress outside the walls the *Cassero senese* lost its defensive function and probably became the residence of the *Vicario* of the *Val di Chianna*. The *Loggia del Grano* stands opposite to the *Cassero* and the central bay of the first is in line with the entrance of the second. The square between the two buildings can be divided in four parts each 9 florentine arms long, which is the depth of the Loggia itself.



Barga (*Podesteria*). The castle of Barga and its territory passed under Florence in the first half of the 14th century, and it was the oldest northern enclave of the state. The geographical position of this settlement resulted crucial to control one of the connecting ways from the *Lunigiana* to the *Val Padana*. Such a collocation together with the privileges given to the inhabitants transformed Barga into an important centre for trade and commerce. These facts justify the existence of two market places: *Piazza delle Erbe* and *Piazza del Mercato* (formerly *Piazza del Leone*) where the Loggia was built in 1545. Both the squares are situated on the axis that connects two of the gates of the town: *Porta reale* and *Porta Macchiaia*. The square on which the Loggia was built coincides with the point where two axis meet: the one mentioned above and the one that connects the third gate (*Porta del Borgo*) with the religious-administrative centre: the *Cassero*, in which we find the *Palazzo del Podestà*, the *Arringo*, and the *Duomo*. The market square, which in this case is far from the *Cassero*, constitutes the fulcrum of the town's expansion, and among this area the new bourgeois build their palaces. In 1545 Ser Martino Pancrazi, a rich landowner, decided to built his palace where the ancient *Loggia dei Mercanti*. He obtained permission to demolish the structure in exchange of a certain amount of money that was to be invested in the construction of a new loggia and in the paving of the square. The new Loggia was built on the opposite side of the square, adjacent to the *Via di Borgo*, which is part of the commercial way that connects *Porta Reale* to *Piazza delle Erbe*, and with its principal front (emphasized by the presence of a tympanum) looking towards the *Cassero*.

Montevettolini (*Comunità*). The urban development of Montevettolini can be outlined in three main stages:

- The first nucleus, called the "*isola*", consisted of a square-shaped settlement divided by a secondary road system whose interaxis measured 50x44 roman feet;
- In the 13th century the first walls were built. They enclosed the *isola*, the *Palzzo del Comune*, and the *Piazza Bargellini* (formerly *platea comunitatis*) with its original funnel shape. In this context the parish of *San Michele* and the *Rocca* remained tangent to the walls, and yet in a dominant position with respect to the surrounding territory;
- In 1366 the second walls were built in order to be suitable to enclose the castle in the north and the *borgo* of the craftsmen in the south.



MONTEVETTOLINI
① Pieve di San Michele
② Villa Medicea e Rocca
③ Oratorio del Corpus Domini
④ Palazzo del Comune
⑤ Porta del Cantone
⑥ Porta
⑦ Isola
Mura del XIII sec.
Via del sale

The formation and the growth of the settlement was influenced by the crest pattern (*Via del Sale* that connected Pistoia with the *padule* of Fucecchio, and intersected the *Via Francesca* in Uggia) which crosses it north to south and is the matrix pattern of the settlement itself. During the 16th century the image of the town was modified when many of its medieval towers were transformed into palaces used as holiday homes. Such interventions are part of the Medici's plan to improve the *Val di Nievole*, which was an important economic-productive area in the Grand Duchy. Yet the definite change for Montevettolini came in 1597 when Ferdinando I decided to build there his hunting lodge. The villa was built in the vicinity of the ancient *Rocca* which was surrounded by walls thus becoming part of the new structure and connected with the town walls. *Piazza Bargellini* was enlarged eastward and a quadrangular area was destined to trading activities. In 1604 the construction of the Loggia began and was directed by the architects Menichini and Marcacci. The structure occupied an antipolar position relatively to the town plan, but a central position for the town public life since the square was the point where the *Via del Sale* meets the *Via della Costa* which connects the market place to the craftsmen *borgo*. The Loggia was adjacent to the residence of Ludovico da Ripa (at present, *Palazzo Tonini*) and to the oratory of the *Corpus Domini*. In the surrounding area we find the parish of *San Michele* (religious power), the *Palazzo Comunale* (political power), various palaces, the public cistern and the bell tower with the gate *Porta del Cantone*. As to the proportional and dimensional relations the Loggia could simply be the result of a roto-translation of the planimetric project of the arcade of *San Michele*.

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