

This project of urban rehabilitation has been studied for one of the central parts of Milan; inside the ring of the now covered canals that were the mediaeval boundary of the city; in fact the sector South-West of Piazza del Duomo.

We have chosen it because in spite of the levelling process of recent urban development it is still recognizable as a unit, it is well defined by the roads around it, it is of a convenient size (about 10.000 inhabitants) for the reorganization of its community life; and has maintained a prevailing residential use.

In this search for the existing neighbourhood, however embryonic, in the apparently undifferentiated body of the big city, and in devising the means by which it can be brought to live its full life without renouncing its inherited structure and the values that may go with it, lies, we think, the general interest of this work <sup>as</sup> ~~and~~ many of the suggestions made are only applicable to the particular area we have examined.

Its street pattern, based on the original Roman layout, is typically mediaeval and its residential character was defined between the XVIII and the early XIX century.

This determined a certain uniformity of architectural characters: the mediaeval monuments were assimilated and the result was harmonious in spite of the differences between the single elements.

At the beginning of this century the building of Banks, Stock Exchange, Post Office and several office buildings has radically altered the aspect and function of the North-East end of this area: the incongruity is more obvious when the street layout has been changed.

In the 1934 Plan a wide by-pass cutting right through this area was designed, in the illusion that it might relieve the traffic congestion in the centre. The 1948 Plan maintained this project in spite of its obvious inconsistency with one of the plan's main aims: the decentralization of all new business activities towards the new "Centro Direzionale" planned near the Central Station.

This by-pass, not only would have meant the destruction of a valuable historical environment, but also would have encouraged the construction of new high density office blocks all along it, and, therefore immediately attracted far more traffic than it could carry.

Luckily the committee appointed in 1959 to revise the 1948 plan recognized this danger and suggested that the by-pass should go under ground: it is on this assumption that we have developed our project.

We are convinced that residence must be maintained in the old central areas of the big cities: in this specific instance our conviction is strengthened by the need for preservation of monuments and environment, for a better distribution of functions within the whole city; and by the concrete possibility of reorganizing a residential community.

We were then faced by three main problems:

- establishing adequate residential standards both in the homes and ~~th~~ in the neighbourhood as a whole by clearing, restoring and equipping the buildings.
- giving back as much as possible the streets to pedestrian circulation and consequently creating a network of service roads, parking facilities etc.
- reorganizing the functions of the neighbourhood by replanning the services of a community deeply integrated in the city.

Acceptable or even high residential standards had been preserved in the area around S. Ambrogio and Via Cappuccio where the old houses are often still inhabited by the families of the original owners.

They have retained their pleasant gardens and have been kept in good repair. Between this area and the Banks the old urban structure of house on the courtyard between street and garden has been considerably altered in time. New buildings have filled up the inner areas of the blocks which were orchards or gardens and more storeys were added around the existing courtyards whose proportions were radically worsened. Population and density ~~w~~ increased and small artisan and commercial activities took over the lower floors.

This set in motion a mechanism of decay and depreciation that can only be stopped or reversed by a careful plan of demolition aimed at the establishment of satisfactory hygienic conditions.

The new spaces thus obtained will also allow the reorganization of the economic activities that can remain there.

These spaces, though, must be specially designed for their new purposes with different levels and pavings, with suitable planting, benches, lighting etc. <sup>to</sup> determine the areas for the different functions, reserving adequate areas for childrens' play.

The restaured courtyard will contribute to the appreciation of a right urban residential scale.

The reorganization of circulation is based essentially on the reestablished residential character of the area and is not only aimed at solving traffic problems but also wants to provide the spaces necessary for the out-of-doors life of the community as well as <sup>the</sup> environment capable of <sup>en</sup>hancing the architectural quality of the buildings.

For this reason most of the streets are closed to car traffic and their pavements and furniture is redesigned for this new condition.

All major traffic is kept out of the neighbourhood either going along its perimeter or using the under-ground by-pass; two service motor roads only cross it, running mainly inside the <sup>the</sup> blocks; they are entirely new roads with no pedestrians, designed for a slow motor traffic, servicing all the parking and delivery spaces necessary to the life of the community.

These roads will be designed in detail with <sup>the</sup> greatest attention and respect for existing architecture, they will find their way through the denser <sup>the</sup> blocks without damage to valuable urban structures, they will go in and out of existing gateways or dip under ground or sink beside the gardens deep enough to hide the <sup>the</sup> silhouettes of moving cars.

All the <sup>the</sup> blocks will be connected to these motor roads; new parking space will be provided inside the blocks and private garages will be ~~located~~ located in the ground floors.

Two large public garages are also provided; one multistorey part in and part out of the ground and only linked to the underground by-pass on the lot between Via Valpetroda and Via Zecca Vecchia; the other all under ground corresponding

to the paved area of Piazza S. Ambrogio.

But mainly if the residential destination of the area is maintained we shall not be faced such an alarming increase in the number of cars as we have witnessed so far.

The theme of reorganization of services requires at this stage further factual research. We can now only indicate a few major points.

- The presence of great office buildings, banks; post office, Stock-exchange, etc. must be realistically accepted, they tend anyhow to gravitate outside of this area.

- The group of streets between Via Orefici, Via Spadari and Via Armorari has a definite shopping centre character of metropolitan rather than local interest. This must be appreciated and encouraged by opening the inside of the blocks to the shopping crowds, making it into a "bazaar".

- The reorganization of the educational services, apart from the Catholic University for which the removal of traffic going between its buildings will promote the formation of a sort of "campus", is basically envisaged along these lines:

1) four kindergartens (3 to 6 year old) are located in the areas of Piazza Mentana, Via Lanzone, Via Gorani and Piazza S. Sepolcro.

They may use the ground floors at existing buildings that are suitable to achieve a continuity of environment with the home.

We have outlined the possibilities offered by a building in Piazza S. Sepolcro where the Piazza itself offers a wonderful setting for an open-air play-space; in the middle of the city and yet separated from it by a change of level.

2) Two elementary schools (6 to 14) to be built in the areas of Piazza Mentana and Via Gorani.

3) All higher schools from Technical to Liceo (14 to 16 or 18) can be grouped in the neo-classic barracks of Piazza S. Ambrogio with the exception of Liceo Carducci that can remain where it is.

This adaption of barracks into schools will present some difficulties, but we

consider it necessary as it will provide a reason to preserve this Milanese landmark and on the other hand it can offer with its parade courtyards large open spaces otherwise impossible to find in central Milan.

- All other social and technical community services will have to be revised to be consistent with the new character of the neighbourhood.