

The early contribution of Saverio Muratori: between modernism and classicism

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Abstract. *During the 1930s and 1940s Muratori laid the theoretical and practical foundations for a morphological approach to urban design. The fundamentals of his contribution during these years are considered in this paper, notably the concept of 'crisis', the key role of 'operative history', the integration of theory and practice, and the use of morphology to translate analysis into synthesis and interpretation into design. Several of Muratori's early designs are examined.*

Key Words: urban design, history, architecture, morphology, Italy

Why should we study Saverio Muratori's urban designs? An initial answer lies in the importance of urban design as the link between urban planning and architectural design. Urban design as envisaged by Muratori is the prime tool for tackling, in a single composition, both large-scale problems in urban planning and the more specific problems of architecture. It is a prospectus for the city: a synthesis of the architect's creative talent and the discernments of the urbanist, geographer and historian. It is the potential terrain of experimentation in conceiving and designing the city. For Muratori it provides the critical context within which to found a new architectural discipline. He clearly recognized this when he wrote in 1946 that 'throughout its history, urbanism has always been a perennial and perpetually self-renewing architectural genesis; it is a manifestation of the individual and, at the same time, a collective foundation of architectural creation' (Muratori, 1980a, p. 259). In this view urban design is a broad vision representing one of the major contributions to a renewed urban discipline: it embraces both the *particular* and *universal*.

For Muratori urban design is the tool for

crafting the coherence and accuracy of architectural choices: it is the critical cultural context within which the architectural project must be consciously placed 'in those greater architectural compositions that are our cities' (Muratori, 1980a, p. 258). And so it is also a theoretical and methodological tool of great importance. 'The essential fact of urbanism', writes Muratori, 'is the organism and character of the city, that is, the original sense of the development of its plan over time, of its expression in the landscape, of its urban and building structures, its civic and social life, its moral climate, and its traditions and history' (Muratori, 1980a, p. 47). Everything is here: the concept of organism, the idea of history as a dynamic sequence in a process, the necessity of context, the 'structural' awareness of the city and its fabric, as well as the profound ethico-civic dimension that would underpin Muratori's research. This paper explores this perspective in his early work.

Urban design has long been on the margins of architectural debate in Italy and only recently seems to be playing an important role again. This marginality is attributable in part to the inadequate attention that Muratori's

followers themselves have given to urban design. The study of Muratori's many complex urban projects is therefore needed, not least those undertaken between the mid-1930s and the mid-1940s to which attention is given here. This is not only a historiographic task but also a matter of design research that should be of interest to all concerned with architecture and urban design. It will fill a lacuna in the Muratorian school, which has largely ignored Muratori's important contribution at the city scale and, in line with the development of theoretical debate in Italy, has concentrated on the scales of building typology and architecture.

For Muratori, the city is a dynamic organism, the outcome of a process involving architecture, typology, morphology and history. Its broader setting is the 'territory', to which Muratori dedicated the last years of his life and which will be considered in a subsequent paper.

Muratori's urban projects constitute a learning process about the city and its formative logic: a 'project for life', which was to become a cultural 'programme'. This consisted of three phases, of which the first is considered in this paper. First, he experimented with the themes and languages of European rationalism, within the rich and complex Italian debate of the time. This research would lead him, while still very young, to participate in the competition for the *Piano Regolatore di Aprilia* (with F. Fariello, L. Quaroni, and E. Tedeschi). His project was not one of the winners, though it was highly praised. Two years later it led the 'Roman group' to design the Piazza Imperiale for the Esposizione Universale Roma (EUR). These early experiences imbued Muratori with methodological and planning rigour that remained with him for the rest of his life. The dialogue with history was also formed in these years; initially as a means of reflecting on and deepening modern themes; later as a palimpsest within which to cast critically his project for the city. This phase was a precursor to what might be described as the phase of 'neo-realism and the Ina-Casa 'laboratory'', in which Muratori allowed

earlier experiences to 'settle', in the wake of Scandinavian empiricism and Italian neo-realism. These years were the third, and most important, 'morphological' phase.

From the awareness of crisis to the 'discovery' of morphology

A number of concepts are fundamental to Muratori's early contribution. The first is that of 'crisis', of which he writes:

Crises are not exceptional phenomena in life, indeed they are one of its typical aspects, since life always presents itself centrally as organicity, in which various obstacles, of both an external and internal nature, oppose the acquired equilibrium ... And these moments of transition, these moments of inflexion, in which old laws attempt to transform themselves into broader and more comprehensive ones, represent such crises (Muratori, 1963, p. 15).

The maturation of this awareness seems to have occurred during the Second World War, when Muratori was deepening his theoretical-philosophical studies. The work of Friederich Schiller evidently played an important role. It is in *Briefe ueber die aesthe-tische Erziehung* (Schiller, 1795) and *Ueber naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (Schiller, 1795-6) that the fractured dichotomy on which the crisis of modernity is based finds its most convincing expression, and is closest to Muratori's own theories: humanity 'attempts to achieve through reason that same spontaneous unity which the advent of reason had severed' (Pareyson, 1983, p. 167). This is a humanity whose 'reunification' can be achieved, according to Muratori, only through a radical revision of the assumptions that led to that severance and which signal the experience of modernity. 'The anatomy of an urban organism must be studied and understood through its building traces and fabric, and through their integration in nature and landscape' (Muratori, 1950, p. 45). We must read then, he argues, the 'truth' of historical reality as an elective path in order to

recompose a lost whole out of the fragments of modernity.

The second fundamental concept is the convergence of theory and practice: architecture is an instrument of knowledge, and vice versa. This is especially true for urban design, in which the cognitive and ethical components merge, finding in architecture, according to Muratori, a synthesis of fundamental importance. The theme, once again, is not so much the proposing of new values as understanding the logic that has led to the formation of certain values over time. These are not values from the past that must be retrieved, but rather values from the present, from contemporary life, that are to be rediscovered. In essence, it is not a matter of proposing new research tools to study the formation of an urban fabric. It is a matter of reinstating a 'collaborative' relation with history. We are a part of the process of history, and the structural 'truth' of the historical fabric constitutes the proof of this: we move from an awareness of crisis to the 'discovery' of morphology.

Between modernism and classicism

The cultural context to which Muratori looked in the 1930s was international rationalism as well as the rich, stimulating debate in Italy. Speaking of Italian architecture in this period, Francesco Dal Co wrote that 'there has never been a livelier moment in the Italian architectural debate' (Dal Co, 1978, p. 95). Indeed there is an absolute coincidence between the 'revolutionary' expressions of the new rationalist architecture and those of the regime that 'dreams of realizing the *zeitgeist* of contemporary life ... and sees in modern architecture its own modern architecture, the art of the state' (Pigafetta, 1990, p. 33). This dream would soon be dashed, however, by the advent of National Socialism. 'The artistic dimension which National Socialism imposes on German intellectuals is not *historical* but *supra-historical*; National Socialism does not have its roots in the *epoch*, but in the race and the land' (Pigafetta, 1990, p. 33). German art

thus went beyond the dialectic between ancient and modern, and revealed itself as ontologically (and tragically) more 'solid' than the Fascist 'revolution': it was the true interpreter of the 'spirit of the age' – that *esprit moderne* invoked by Le Corbusier a few years earlier.

A way out was to distinguish between a 'northern' (*anticlassical*) and 'Mediterranean' (*classical*) rationalism, thus setting up the two main directions in which the history of architecture would develop from then onward. The complexity of the second, its openness, albeit superficial, to history, tradition and place, would characterize much of Italian architectural culture in those years, perhaps for the first time fostering an 'Italian' identity in contemporary architecture. It certainly influenced the young Muratori's perspective:

the predominance of the Romantic principle has collapsed; a slow but steady revaluation of human activity, and of the whole personality of man, has produced what today seems like an almost miraculous upheaval ... If this were the case, the grand movement of the new architecture, which has mainly arisen in anticlassical countries, would end in the triumph of the classical principle and would sound like a restoration of architecture in its constructive and human sense of action and sentiment merging in a single creative act (Muratori, 1980b, p. 185).

At the end of the 1930s Muratori's interest became more oriented towards Scandinavian modernism and the figure of Erik Gunnar Asplund, in whom he saw the co-existence of a 'rarefied Romantic emotionality' in the great masonry masses, the materials and architectonic volumes, with an ultra refined, stylized, 'authentic' classicism: 'picturesque disorder is substituted by an organic order, emotional anxiety is accompanied by that of achieving a coherence and clear intuitiveness in the plan' (Muratori, 1938, p. 97).

For Muratori, it is in the co-presence of 'classical form' and 'functional form' that the importance and truth of these experiences resides. Moreover, it is in this co-presence that perhaps the modern identity of Italian architectural culture resides too: where the

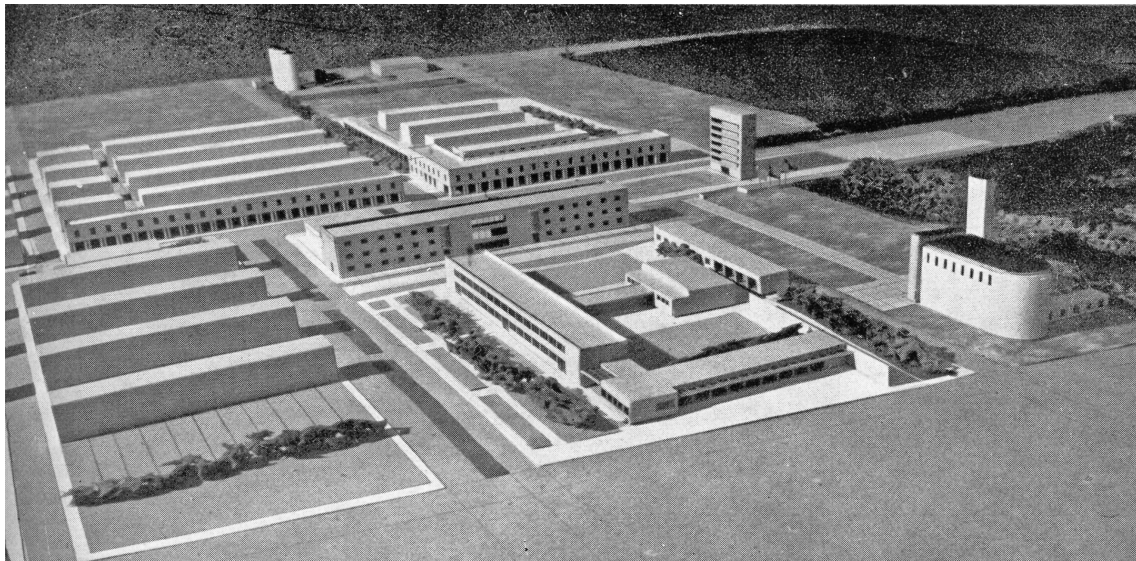


Figure 1. Project model of Aprilia (1936). The church, *Littoria* tower and arcaded façade are located along the ‘street-square’ (the main urban axis).

concept of *function* never coincides with the antithetical one of *functionalism*, but rather with that of ‘instrumental’ form in achieving civic goals. So two approaches to architecture can be envisaged. The first is ‘everyday’ and functional, using modern materials. The second is ‘absolute and sublime’, allowing ‘the ancient forms and materials to express what is co-extensive in our soul with the permanent stability of the cardinal principles of our ethical and heroic world’ (Piacentini, 1930, p. 114). This is a classicism that is modern, organic and metaphysical; and the goal of which, for Muratori, is to retrieve ‘that unity between the practical and ideal world, the integral and whole vigour of life, which the modern age seems to have lost in the great crisis afflicting Western civilization’ (Muratori, 1938, p. 122). This is the research that would guide Muratori for some 20 years and which we find reflected in his urban designs from 1936 to 1947.

The *Piano Regolatore di Aprilia*

Muratori’s early research for a project for the *Piano Regolatore di Aprilia* (Figure 1) was an

entry for a competition in 1936 announced by the Opera Nazionale Combattenti for an urban design that would form part of a reclamation programme for the Pontina marshes. The new city was to rise at the intersection of the new Via Mediana and Via Nettunense (flanked by the railway), and so would have a direct link to Littoria (and other new cities of the Pontina marshes), the lower Tiber valley and Via Aurelia. A free zone to the east of Via Nettunense and the south of Via Mediana was planned to allow for the Nettuno rifle range. Aprilia was to be a rural municipality with 3000 inhabitants in its urban centre and about 9000 in the hamlets of the surrounding countryside. All the facilities of a modern city were planned, including a town hall (with a tower), Casa del Fascio, a church, schools and other services, as well as a main square and a ‘specialized’ square for rallies, which could hold up to 12 000 people.

A specific request was made in the competition guidelines for preference being given to the use of local materials and attention being paid to the prevailing wind, the Scirocco. The plan develops in a north-south, direction parallel to Via Nettunense, along an extensive green axis within which are located

buildings designed for leisure and entertainment (for example, cinemas and theatres). Parallel to this, to the east and west, are the row houses, which are 'staggered' to interrupt the transverse view from one side to the other of the main axis, thereby maintaining a perception of unity. Given its large size, it was of the utmost importance to maintain the maximum continuity in the walls of the buildings.

The unity of the great public space was guaranteed by the presence of continuous arcades along the whole axis, according to a compositional model which would later become typical of Muratori's urban designs and which had its forerunner in Aprilia. The Casa del Fascio was designed within the system of arcades, located hierarchically at the intersection of the counter-axis leading to the railway station and the specialized area of the settlement (bus station, grain silos and other agricultural storage units). Arcaded elements were also proposed in other zones of this agricultural town (schools, Carabinieri Reali barracks, Opera Balilla and railway stations) according to a logic that was in this case typically functional. At the intersection, to the north, between the main urban axis and the axis of the railway station, were located all the most important public buildings, from the town hall to the schools, with the church slightly off-centre towards the east (yet an integral part of the system) and the great *Littoria* tower as an off-centre backdrop to the main axis, dominating with its height all the urban and surrounding rural territory. Behind it, in the shadow of its mass, was the great square for rallies.

The accuracy of the urban design is counterbalanced by detailed attention to the architecture. Of especial note are the plan of the non-residential buildings, with the town hall giving identity and continuity to the secondary axis of the railway station; the design of the façade of the *Littoria* tower, which is asymmetrical with regard to the orientation of the main route, yet symmetrical with regard to the axis of the public buildings along it; and the horizontal slashes of the apertures, which asymmetrically 'overlook'

the main route.

The project for Aprilia was highly regarded. It was exhibited at the Sixth Triennale in Milan as an example of rationalist urban planning in Italy, while both Marcello Piacentini and the authoritative journal *Quadrante* praised its modernity and completeness. Two years after the urban plan of Aprilia came the resounding victory for the execution of Piazza Imperiale in the EUR district of Rome, which signalled the beginning of Muratori's independent career as an urban designer, leading him to the competition for the design of the Città Penitenziaria (prison complex) in Rome and the piano regolatore (master plan) for Fiume, including the layout of the city centre and the construction of a new town hall (which was never executed).

The master plan of Cortoghiana

This new career would begin to bear scientific and cultural fruit with the projects for Carbonia, Iglesias and especially Cortoghiana, which together with the almost contemporaneous project for the Opera Nazionale per i Figli degli Aviatori would occupy Muratori up to the end of the war.

The master plan of Cortoghiana in 1940 (Figures 2 and 3) was a particularly clear pointer to the direction that Muratori's work was taking. It was a project for a mining town of 3000 inhabitants, lying on a slight slope, open to the south, and with a main route following an east-west direction. Themes that were to characterize Muratori's work in the coming years were evident. For example, there was a mono-directional residential layout that reveals a clear typological hierarchy in the location of building types within the settlement: taller (up to three storeys) near the major public spaces (urban axis and main square), and gradually diminishing away from the city centre, thereby emphasizing the sloping terrain; arcaded apartment blocks with shops on the ground floor and a flat roof, along the main axis; and then around these are one- or two-storey row houses with pitched roofs.

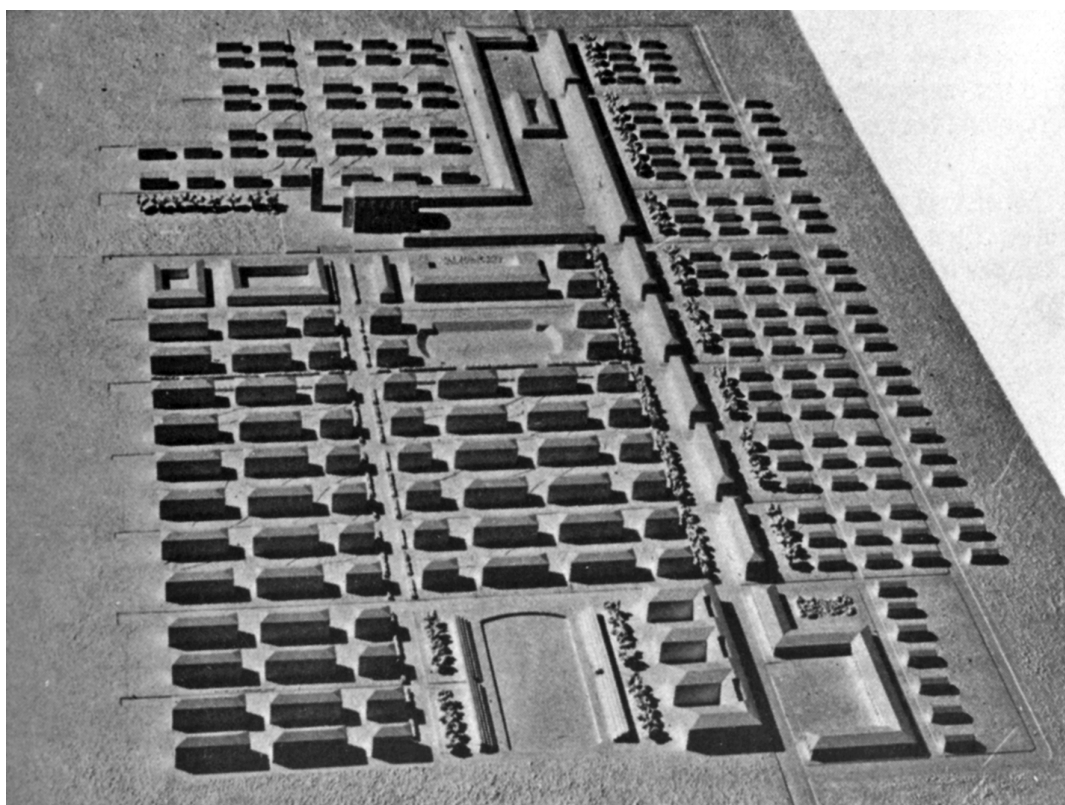


Figure 2. Cortoghiana (1940). Bird's-eye view of the model, showing the transverse main urban axis and the two squares.

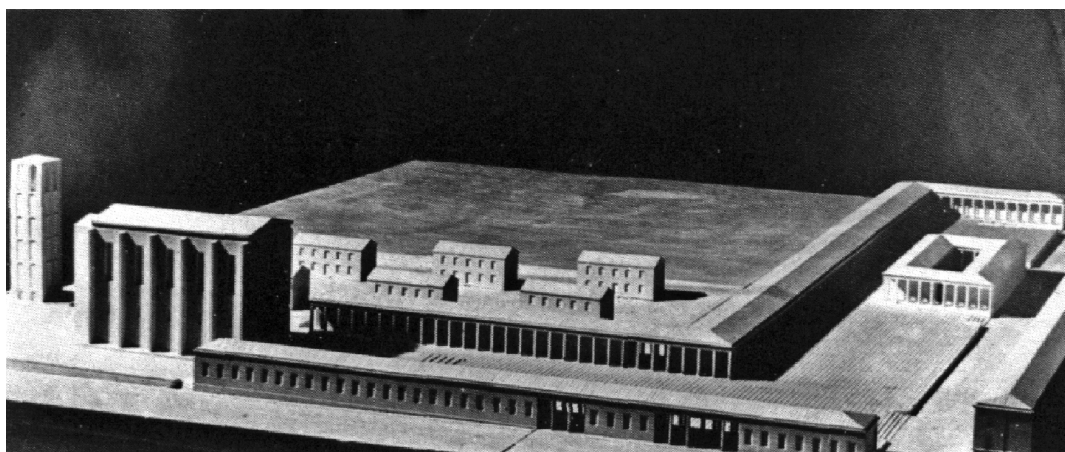


Figure 3. Cortoghiana (1940). Model of the double system of squares (civic and religious).

The route system is variously intersected, though strongly hierarchical, with a north-south counter axis flanking the church square.

Yet surely the most important element is the 'architectural square'. It becomes Muratori's signature in Piazza Imperiale in the EUR of

1938, in which he 'discovers' the arcade as a fundamental tool of urban design, and never again abandons it; in the 'Asplundian' square of the Città Penitenziaria in Rome (1939); in the beautiful project for the Istituto per i Figli degli Aviatori in 1941 and to the layout of

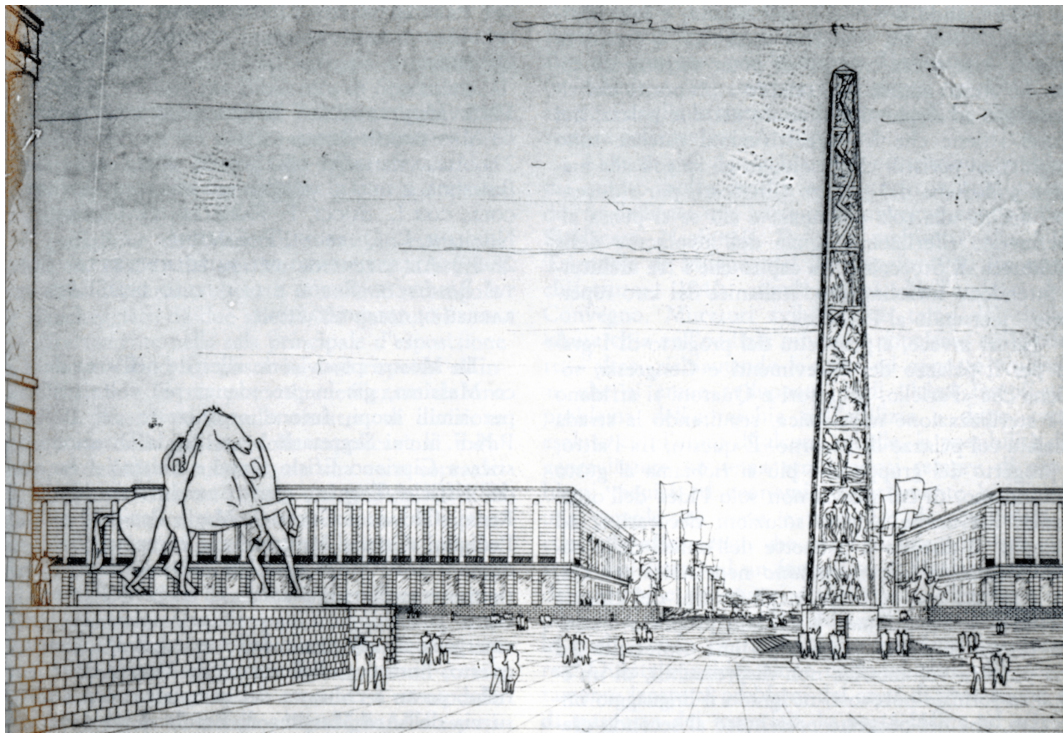


Figure 4. Piazza Imperiale, Rome, EUR (1938): the main axis linking to the city centre.

Piazza Cairoli in Messina (1945); and in the plans for the reconstruction of Amaseno (1946) and Cecina (1947). It is based on a dialectic, at once simple and complex, between the long, enclosing, serialized walls defining the public space and the polarizing specialized buildings located around it. The walls of the buildings also have the task of connecting the great public space with the urban fabric, and in this dual function – of closing the square and opening up the city – a fundamental role is clearly played by the arcades.

If Muratori ‘discovered’ the urban role of arcaded walls in the design for Piazza Imperiale (Figure 4), he uses them for the first time in Cortoghiana as the tool for defining the enclosing and intersecting ‘theatrical wings’ that accompany the entire urban axis and define the main squares. A doubling of the arcades of these wings signals the arrival of the secondary routes in the square, which are interrupted by the main routes, in a hierarchical relation between square and city recurrent in almost all of Muratori’s urban projects, with

the arcades acting as a perspective ‘measure’ unifying the urban and architectural scales, and heralding important later developments.

Another significant element is the dialectic between ‘internal’ polarities of a civic nature (church and town hall) and ‘peripheral’ polarities of a specialized nature (refectory and workers’ lodgings), each with its own arcaded public space. In the latter case, the entire northern elevation of the building has arcades and loggias, terminating the south face of the specialized square and facilitating its integration with the main urban axis. The final element is the layout of the specialized buildings, in a typical arrangement of public buildings (for example, town hall and theatre) within the ‘architectural square’, the basic formal, structural and material features of which are normally repeated, while the church is in an anti-polar position, though always ‘central’ in its role defining the urban organism in its territory. Indeed, this is eminently a landscaping role, in which landscape is above all a ‘semantic image of the

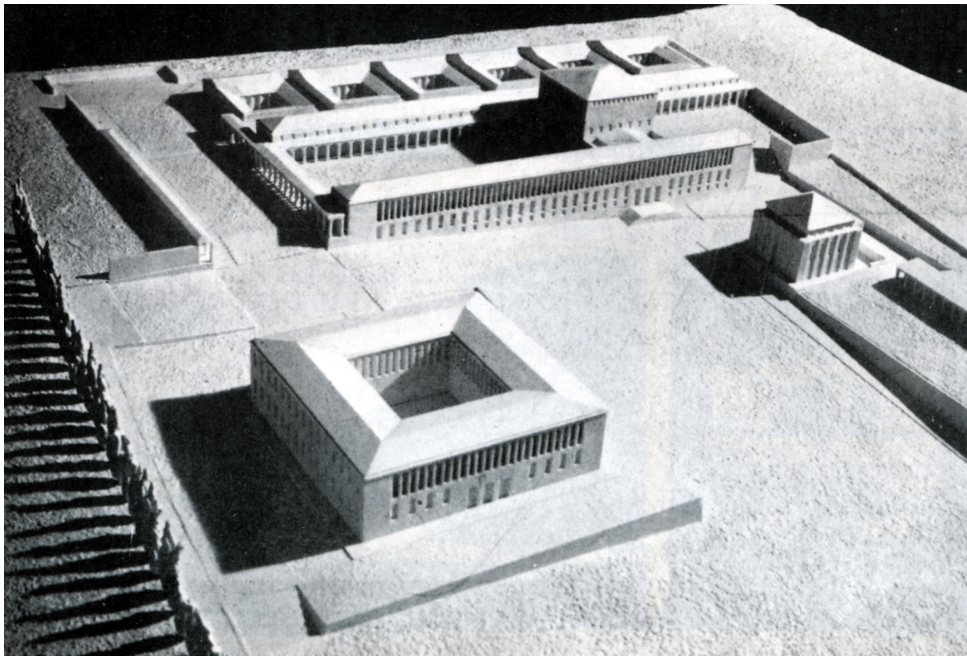


Figure 5. Istituto Figli degli Aviatori, Rome (1941): project model. Note the Main Hall with the two arcaded walls, the students' courtyards, the chapel (right) and the school (left).

territory' (Maretto, 2008, p. 177), even though Muratori would never explicitly elaborate on this at a theoretical level. Moreover, with the design of the church at Cortoghiana, he seems to find the definitive direction for his architectural research, which would accompany him to his final works.

The whole project is thus characterized by a remarkable unity, both volumetric and architectural, thanks to the consistent size of the lots, arcades, and unifying materials (cut stone and plaster), together with an extremely measured compositional language. This unity is articulated, in its turn, by variants due to the form of the terrain and the urban hierarchies – above all, the isolated body of the church with the bell tower rising scenically behind it. So in Cortoghiana many of the main themes of Muratori's urban designs are heralded.

The early 'codification' of Muratori's architectural language

A year later, in 1941, Muratori designed the

Nuovo Istituto dell'Opera Nazionale per i Figli degli Aviatori in Rome (Figure 5). This was a large architectural complex rather than an urban project strictly speaking, though perhaps for this very reason it was an appropriate occasion to refine some 'linguistic' aspects in relation to their urban role, and these signal the maturation of his architectural vocabulary. The assignment required the planning of a complex for over 200 residents, including children, female students, teachers, lay staff and female ex-cadets to be accommodated during their university studies. Spaces for the management, bursary, reception areas, lodgings, a refectory, together with all the spaces and services needed for the school and pre-school were to be planned.

The site was the beautiful hill of Monte Mario in Rome, and part of the park of Villa Stuart (the cypress-lined entrance to which would be on the north side). Given its problems, size and location, the project would actually constitute a small settlement and would be dealt with as such by Muratori. So it is comprised of several different architectural



Figure 6. Piazza Cairoli, Messina (1945). The theatre is on the left.

bodies, linked by avenues and ramps. Dominating the hill are the reception buildings, with the Main Hall in a prominent position, at the back of which are the six courtyards of the lodgings for the cadets, which recall typical English college accommodation. This is clearly a lay version of the medieval cloister, to which the project alludes by giving the houses 'a vaguely mystical and church-like expression' (Piacentini, 1943, p. 35). Two long parallel, arcaded buildings (for the reception rooms and the teachers' and clerics' accommodation) are unified, albeit asymmetrically, by the large volume of the Main Hall, in a dialectic, already experimented with at Cortoghiana, between the serial arcaded element, delimiting the space, and the polar-prominent element within it.

Lower down, on the progressive terracing towards Via Trionfale, is the building complex of the chapel, pre-school and bursary. The pre-school is composed of a building with several storeys for the dormitories and a parallel building, of just one storey, for the study halls, common room and refectory. A system of stairs, ramps, and terraces connects the various buildings. Higher up, on the opposite side, facing the slope reserved for the playing fields, is the school. 'At the back, the axis of this building is prolonged by the grassy avenue, flanked by arcades, which leads to the terraces laid out on the top of the hill, where one can enjoy the panorama ... of Villa Madama, the Foro Mussolini and the Tiber

valley up to the hills of Villa Glori' (Piacentini, 1943, p. 43).

Finally, giving a functional and perceptive order to the whole complex is the wide, ascending entrance avenue. In an eccentric position with regard to the large lot, it is nevertheless perfectly in axis with the main entrance (in the valley) and the tall Main Hall (on the hill). The cypress avenue acts as a natural 'wing', together with the architectural wings of the bursary and reception hall, in which the prominent chapel indicates the point of arrival, at the top of the hill, of the long, ascending avenue.

If Cortoghiana is the starting point for a methodology of urban planning and the Nuovo Istituto dell'Opera Nazionale per i Figli degli Aviatori represents an initial fine-tuning of Muratori's architectural language expressing this methodology, then it is in the competition for the Sistemazione di Piazza Cairoli in Messina (1945) (Figure 6) that many of these elements find their effective 'codification'. In a sense Messina concludes the first 'modern' phase of Muratori's urban research. The theme of the competition was the design of a square within an existing fabric severely damaged in the war and, at the same time, the urban and architectural layout of the new linking axis for the nearby railway station.

Piazza Cairoli is a primary polarity within the city, situated at the confluence of a series of great urban axes, including Viale San Martino, the eighteenth-century axis leading

directly to the port; Via Garibaldi (formerly Via Ferdinanda), the ancient route linking the historical centre to the north; and Via Cannizzaro, the axis penetrating the hinterland, which the competition planned to extend to the railway station. Piazza Cairoli is thus an exemplary architectural square, consolidating the urban fabric and, at the same time, making it an architectural showcase. So the now familiar 'wings' redraw the public space by reinforcing the existing alignments, by framing the arrival from the south of the great axis, and by acting as a backdrop to Via Garibaldi; while an isolated and arcaded building, planned as a theatre, marks the intersection between Viale San Martino and the new route to the station.

Once again the serial walls have the task of defining the public space and integrating it with the urban fabric, using a module that closely recalls the Procuratie of Piazza San Marco in Venice. The architectonic repetition of the bay type is composed, in this case, of a depressed arch on pillars forming a continuous 'chain', another Muratorian 'trademark', which appears here for the first time. On the two upper storeys there are two apertures (also with depressed arches) for each bay. Access to the square is marked by a recurrent interruption of the blocks at ground level and a doubling of the arcades. Corresponding to the sole counter-axis across the square (Via Fabrizi), Muratori inserts, for the first time, a tower with four sloping roofs and a small central lantern, which becomes the point of reference for the entire composition, marking the square within the urban fabric.

The numerous perspective drawings attached to the project – aimed at studying and calibrating in detail the relation between city and square, through the main access routes – show Muratori's awareness in facing and resolving the difficult theme of the project. From Viale San Martino, the two uniform wings lead the gaze along the square or towards the theatre, depending on whether access is from the south-west or north-east. From Via Garibaldi, the small arcaded square is individualized by a statue and perhaps a small median garden between the three route axes intersecting there. From Via Cannizzaro,

the protruding form of the theatre leads the gaze to another vista and entrance to the arcaded square. There are also numerous 'filtered' accesses from the arcades, the seriality of which renders the urban fabric permeable.

The reconstruction plans

With Piazza Cairoli a cycle is completed. Much has changed since 1936: the world has changed and a new threshold in urban research has been reached. At the end of this cycle, the reconstruction plans for Amaseno (1946), Ceccano (1947) and Cecina (1947) are important not just for the novelty of their theme, but more especially for the fact that they were all completed within a couple of years. The Amaseno project is perhaps the most interesting. Amaseno is an ancient settlement on a low promontory near Frosinone in the province of Latina, developed around the two poles of the castle and church. The theme was the relation of the project to the historical centre. Muratori envisaged the conservation of the historical centre and the complete elimination of traffic from it, reserving the functions of a contemporary city for the *città nuova* (new town). The core of the project is the 'lower square', with the town hall, war memorial, main shops and, as a backdrop, in a raised position, the side of the cathedral with the bell tower and city gates. The latter has the dual role of 'identifying' the new expansion and acting as a 'hinge' between the two urban zones. The fabric is still rationally organized as a regular grid within which are three-storey apartment blocks with arcades and shops on the ground floor, and wholly residential, two-storey row houses, with stables and agricultural storage units in the external areas. The houses defining the square are all arcaded (except for the row houses) with the usual depressed arches and a continuous concrete 'chain'. The town hall, in a nodal position overlooking the square, is inserted in the residential rows, emerging slightly in terms of height and with a larger arcade. The arcade is repeated in the form of

a platband, or 'sign', together with a sort of closed loggia above, at the precise point of conjunction between the town hall and the houses. Next, in a nodal position with regard to the whole urban organism, is the war memorial. In the form of a baptistery and in a raised position (though lower than the cathedral), it has the role of cultural link between the old and the new: a material link, with its stone revetment, as in the cathedral, city gates and pillars of the arcades in the new square; and an architectonic link, with its hexagonal form and direct reference to Italian religious architecture.

So, in this case, the Muratorian theme of the arcaded square loses its unity, fragmenting hierarchically in order to give priority to the vistas of access to the square looking toward the historical centre. Everything is conceived in relation to the historical centre, even the building fabric, the general abstraction of which seems not to want to distract attention from the context and the means of comparison between the two cities, modern and historical, with the latter conserving its role as repository of the civic and urban identity of the place.

With the urban plan for Cecina we return to the urban scale and the 'architectural square', which is extended to constitute, in this case, a veritable whole, able to draw together the entire urban fabric and thus become a renovated city centre set at the convergence of the two pivotal urban routes of Viale Manzoni and Viale di Marina, and left open to the south for eventual future developments. The new offices of the Pretura, the buildings of the Ufficio Tecnico Erariale, Catasto e Registro and the Corpo delle Foreste grouped around the new Town Hall, 'are differentiated in structure, isolated in volume and dominate in height all the surrounding buildings' (Muratori, 1947, p. 10). This is a mature Muratori, able to manage confidently even diversified themes and experiences.

Conclusion

These years would see also Muratori's winning of the competition for the *Piano Regolatore*

della Borgata San Basilio in Rome (1947), the competition for the *Sistemazione urbanistica di un quartiere fieristico a Rome* (1948-49) and the Level I and II competition for the *Sistemazione del Quartiere Parioli-Flaminio* and the access to Rome from the north (1947-49) in collaboration with Luigi Vagnetti. With these designs the first phase of Muratori's urban research drew to a close. It would remain hidden, apparently forgotten, for almost 7 years. These were very important years, since they would act as a preparatory filter for the later 'morphological' phase.

During the period up to the late 1940s Muratori had laid the theoretical and instrumental bases for his future research. In his engagement with some of the central themes of modernity, he not only identified limits and doubts, but also potentials and opportunities, and learnt to measure himself against history, with a commitment that was unlike both late-nineteenth century academic historicizing and early-twentieth century Modernist extremism. History would be at the core of all his work after the war. However, he would interpret it, not in historiographic terms, but as structure and process, in its operative, rather than analytical, value and potential. Hence the concept, which he coined, of *storia operante* (operative history). As an architect, and not just a scholar and academic, Muratori was not so interested in 'recounting' history as in 'reading' it through its concrete facts (architecture) in order to 'write' it through 'the project'. To do so, however, he needed a 'nexus', a logical instrument of connection that could translate analysis into synthesis, and interpretation into design. This 'nexus' was 'morphology'.

Muratori had gained experience in the modern, refined and innovative design practice that characterized Italy in the 1930s and 1940s and was expressed by a whole generation of architects, from Adalberto Libera to Luigi Moretti, Mario Ridolfi and Pier Luigi Nervi. These architects had an indelible impact on twentieth-century Italian architecture. After the war Muratori went on to translate this experience into a sound and versatile design tool, thus laying the foundations for the future

Italian school of building typology and urban morphology.

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Julienne Hanson: a production of many dimensions

The latest issue of the *Journal of Space Syntax* (Volume 3, Number 1) is dedicated to the work of Julienne Hanson, a much valued member of the Editorial Board of *Urban Morphology*, 2004-2010. Edited by Sophia Psarra, it contains responses to five articles from Hanson's record of nearly 100 publications, and a new article by her on Charles Dickens and Peter Ackroyd's London.

The principal contents of the issue are:

- J. Hanson, 'Urban transformations: a history of design ideas'
- L. Marcus, 'Balancing quantitative analysis and social concern'
- S. Psarra, 'Spatial morphology, urban history and design in Julienne Hanson's 'Urban transformations: a history of design ideas''
- J. Hanson, 'Time and space in two nineteenth century novels'
- S. Griffiths, 'Networks, narratives and literary representation: reflections on Julienne Hanson's 'Time and space in two nineteenth century novels''
- J. Hanson, 'Order and structure in urban design: the plans for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666'
- K. Karimi, 'A reflection on 'Order and structure in urban design''
- J. Hanson, 'The architecture of justice: iconography and space configuration in the English law court building'
- J. Zhu, 'Seeing versus moving: a review of Julienne Hanson's 'The architecture of justice''
- J. Hanson, 'The anatomy of privacy in architects' London houses'
- S. Bafna, 'Rethinking genotype: comments on the sources of type in architecture'
- J. Hanson, 'Presentment, contrast and ambiguity in fictional space: the London novels of Charles Dickens and Peter Ackroyd'