# Saverio Muratori: towards a morphological school of urban design

#### Marco Maretto

Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, dell'Ambiente, del Territorio e Architettura. Università degli Studi di Parma, Parco Area delle Scienze, 181/A, 43124 Parma, Italy. E-mail: marco.maretto@unipr.it

Revised version received 20 March 2013

Abstract. Muratori's series of urban projects demonstrate both his growing appreciation of the city and his developing perception of its formative logic. Growth and maturation are evident in his work, arguably culminating in his Venetian projects for the Barene di San Giuliano in 1959. A kind of cultural progression is evident in which an awareness of the significance of crises in the way in which ideas and phenomena develop leads to his 'discovery' of morphology. There is also a development from the bringing together of theory and architecture (in which architecture is seen as the science of design) to the conception of morphology as a planning discipline. This paper considers the development of this key aspect of Muratori's thinking between the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1960s – a development in which the basis for a morphological school of urban design can be clearly recognized.

Keywords: urban form, urban design, architecture, planning, Venice.

In recent years urban morphology has been generating renewed interest, especially in the field of urban design. This interest is clearly glimpsed in many of the most significant urban projects realized at the beginning of the new millennium, from Hamburg to Stockholm, and from Abu Dhabi to London. The explanation for this phenomenon is to be found, it would seem, in two aspects at the centre of the contemporary urban debate: the rapid growth of urban populations associated with the process of globalization; and the pursuit of themes relating to sustainability. The first has increased awareness of the problem of population density and has encouraged within contemporary architectural culture a reconsideration of the aggregative forms of the historical city and their mechanisms of transformation and adaptation over time. Since urban morphology can make use of a broad range of critical and practical instruments, it can play a valuable role here, as a disciplinary bridge between history and contemporary urban design. The second is perhaps even more important. For some time

now it has been felt that sustainability cannot be reduced to mere calculations of energy performance, but involves the whole of society. And so we must rethink the modes and spaces of daily life and define new forms of social aggregation and labour organization. The sustainable city is not a 'settlement machine with zero emissions' (Maretto, 2012a, p. 39), but instead is the expression of complex and stratified layers of social, economic, cultural and civic 'fabric'.

Morphology can claim to be the instrument that connects organically sustainable technologies and cultural, social, civic and formal needs. Its criterion of *scale*, both architectural and social, lends itself perfectly to drawing together the various operative levels of sustainable strategies, and indeed can contribute to launching a new urban culture for the twenty-first century. All this is just beginning, however, and the scientific rationale for a 'morphological practice' is still in the making, as are the guide lines for translating the immense potential of urban morphology to the spheres of urban design and

In this context a study of architecture. Muratori's urban projects is especially pertinent. A recent paper deals with these projects largely up to the immediate post-war years (Maretto, 2012b). These early projects offered an opportunity to identify the beginnings of a morphological school of urban These were the years in which Muratori discovered morphology and verified it through an intense activity of urban measurement and design. In combination with his dedicated teaching (Menghini and Palmieri, 2009), this was the period too in which he 'invented' morphology as a planning discipline. These were the years that would see the birth of the Italian school of urban morphology. However, it was between the late-1940s and the end of the 1950s that there was a clear movement towards the development of a morphological school of urban design, and it is to this period that the present paper is devoted.

### Neo-realism and the Ina-Casa 'laboratory' (1948-1952)

The Ina-Casa project was an important programme of urban construction set up in 1949 by the Italian government. It involved the major Italian architects of the time. The theme that would occupy Muratori in the years 1948-52 was the quest for 'the collective spirit of the district, street, square and social context in which people, especially in Italy, still live, more than inside their own home'. It was this research that attempted to measure spaces and apportion buildings and green areas on the basis of local features and practices, and adopt traditional materials and techniques, and modulate façades. The aim was to 'interweave organically the cell with the apartment, the apartment with the building, and the building with the whole: to shape the environment, not only on [the basis of] a theoretical programme, but on a feeling for volumes, forms and concrete materials ... adhering to the ever diverse sentiment of the local environment and popular spirit ... in all its vital and human reality' (Muratori, 1963, p. 95). With these

words Muratori proposed a veritable 'neorealist' manifesto in which the social values of everyday life were to become those of a new architecture of the people, declaredly antifunctionalist and anti-rationalist.

In this period Muratori seemed to forget his earlier experiences, which were left to accumulate like sediment in the shadow of the great truth-seeking laboratory of the Ina-Casa programme. There was no trace of any of the planning tools adopted previously for Aprilia, Cortoghiana or Messina. The 'architectural square' and arcades were foregone as instruments of urban design. Instead attention was focused on the architectonic scale, on the materials and the clarity of the relation between structure and casing, with particular attention to the individuality of the dwelling. Muratori's Ina-Casa neighbourhoods in this period (most of which were in collaboration with Mario De Renzi) all have common features, both in terms of typology and urbanism, from the project for the Stella Polare neighbourhood at the Lido di Ostia (1948-49), to those for Valco San Paolo (1949-50) and Tuscolano (1949-50).

Only a few typological elements contributed to the overall design, which was governed by the forms of the individual dwellings. These elements needed to be skilfully co-ordinated to create a *civitas*. Yet this *civitas* would never become an *urbs*, because it was self-contained and self-sufficient. Astengo wrote of the project for Valco San Paolo (Figure 1), the first of the large Ina-Casa neighbourhoods built in Rome:

its composition is based on the plastic element of the four tall and isolated houses in the shape of a Y and their contrast with the low houses; every building is ... made vibrant by the articulation of the surfaces that delimit it; it is a stereometrically defined solid, an *object*, and remains such in the composition, which gathers together the various elements ... In this formal research there is no interest in characterizing the external spaces ... a precise characterization of social life in the neighbourhood is lacking' (Astengo, 1951, p. 9).

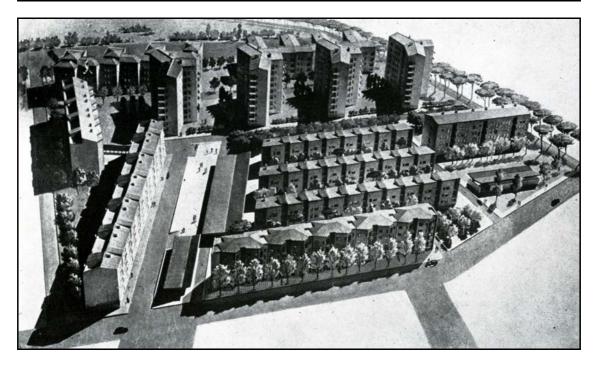


Figure 1. Three-dimensional model of the Ina-Casa neighbourhood of Valco S. Paolo in Rome.

The first of the three projects – the one for the Lido di Ostia – received more favourable comment. *Rassegna Critica di Architettura* wrote:

This small nucleus of dwellings is, in our opinion, one of the more successful ... urban compositions to be planned and built in the last few years ... In a word, the spaces created and the volumes which create them are indissolubly linked by a ... harmony which determines the result and crystallizes it in a definitive form (*Rassegna Critica di Architettura*, 1952, p. 61).

Indeed, it does seem the most calibrated of the three urban projects, even in terms of size. All the planning tools that characterize these neighbourhoods can be found here. In particular, attention is given to the overall form of the lot and the routes around which all the residential buildings are organized, in a play between continuous lines of apartment blocks, linear aggregates of row houses and vertical tower-like elements. The longitudinal element has the task of accompanying the main urban axes and defining the public space, while the towers define the city limits by

marking their presence in the urban fabric.

Tuscolano, Rome (1949-1950)

All this appears with even greater force in the designs for *Tuscolano* (Figure 2). A great backbone of houses, like a boomerang, cuts across the neighbourhood longitudinally, becoming the matrix for the row-house fabric, which is orthogonal to it and so variously rotated on the basis of its location in the overall design. The backbone continues, is interrupted and rotates ideally in correspondence to Largo Spartaco to become a 'theatrical wing' for the new urban square of the market and church. A series of pointed and star-shaped nine-storey dwellings are arranged to form two peripheral chains of towers.

The building volumes dictate the rules of the game. The streets are clearly hierarchical and so do not necessarily follow the contours of the building fabric, while they give 'muted' access to the square from under an archway. These are surely salient features, though they also constitute an implicit limitation: if they



Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the Ina-Casa neighbourhood of Tuscolano, just after it was built. At the bottom is the church still under construction. Note the market square (bottom), the central spine of buildings in the shape of a 'boomerang' and the double system of encircling tower blocks.

are not *objects*, as Astengo claimed, then they are certainly *forms* that are arguably too self-referential to constitute a valid methodological reference; though perhaps this was not their purpose.

These early Ina-Casa projects seem like a research and verification 'laboratory', a sort of filter for all the preceding experiences, which would then return - purified, lightened, enhanced - in the succeeding morphological phase of Muratori's development. Moreover, it is important to note that in Tuscolano Muratori experiments, for the first time, with a building scale that would have a dominant role in later urban projects. In this case, it is translated into the aggregation of lines of row houses in a series of 'proto-building' neighbourhood units. In the words of Rassegna Critica di Architecttura (1952, p. 43), 'this plan is substantially inferior to that of Valco San Paolo, but all that is lost ... in compositional clarity and perceptive immediacy is undoubtedly gained in the wealth and felicity of details, that is, in communicativeness on a real level'.

## Morphology, history and urban design (1950-1963)

The period from the beginning of the 1950s to the early 1960s is probably the one for which Muratori is best known. It was a period of intense study and survey of the historical fabric of Italian cities. It was characterized by the synthesis of earlier work, ranging from that prior to the Second World War to the Ina-Casa programme. It was critical in the maturation of urban design as a discipline, and had its finest expression in the competition for the Barene di San Giuliano in Venice.

The year 1950 was a crucial one for Muratori. It was the year in which he took up the Chair in Venice and the beginning of what

was to become the Italian school of building typology and urban morphology. Muratori himself was aware of this, as we can read in the inaugural lecture for his course on Caratteri degli edifici ('Building features'), a traditionally positivist-functionalist subject, which he would transform, identifying in the examination of the formative processes of the city and its building organisms a radically innovative field of study. But this was only possible by going back to the 'concreteness of empirical facts' seen in their historical dimension, for which the 'rational' Venetian fabric constituted a unique opportunity. This experience was illuminating for Muratori. It opened the way for a series of methodological developments relating to building and urban structure that were to be decisive (Muratori, 1963, p. 126).

Muratori's work in Venice marked the beginning of a major step in the interpretation of urban phenomena within Italian architecture. His paper entitled 'Vita e storia delle città' (Muratori, 1950) was in some respects a prologue to his later essays on urban historiography. It encapsulated much of his theoretical contribution up to this time, laying the foundations for the succeeding morphological phase of his intellectual development. It spells out that urbanism must be approached with a historical, universal perspective, dealing with cities not as inert things but as organisms that are in continuous evolution and can be understood only as totalities (Muratori, 1950, p. 8). The main purpose of the studies carried out by Muratori from 1950 to 1955 was to identify the 'structural nexus' on which the concrete existence of a city, in its gradual temporal development, is based. This is an extremely important nexus, since the material whole of urban structures is the bearer, over time, of many social, economic and cultural structures; it is the meeting point between history and the here and now of interpretation and design.

From this perspective Muratori would adopt a method of enquiry in which urban neighbourhoods were surveyed house by house and phase by phase; for only then did he consider it possible to grasp the indissoluble nexus that ties the individual to society, and ties the individual world to the language, technology and economy of the age (Muratori, 1959, p. 97).

So the different types of urban fabric are viewed as the result of many different types of economic, social, cultural and political fabric. From these forms one can 'read' and 'write' the history of a human environment, at all its scales. The total value of an urban organism is only grasped in its historical dimension (Muratori, 1959, p. 209).

In this period Muratori planned his last two neighbourhoods for Ina-Casa: La Loggetta in Naples (1953), and the sizeable neighbourhood of Magliana in Rome (1956-57).

#### La Loggetta, Rome (1953)

This project (Figures 3 and 4) is important, both in terms of landscape and because many of the fundamental concepts of Muratori's urban planning resurface here but within a substantially new intellectual framework. There is a hierarchical route system on two levels. A primary system follows the natural form of the terrain, with a parallel sequence of high and low altitude routes along the ridge, hillside and valley in an east-west direction: this intersects with the north-south axis that penetrates the urban fabric. A secondary system is characterized by radial pedestrian routes along the slopes. Again there is the distinction between internal polarities of a civic nature and peripheral polarities of a specialized nature. So the church is situated in a prominent position in order to 'place' the settlement within its territory and act as an important reference point in the landscape for the whole Fuorigrotta plain.

Around the church was designed the main square: a large terrace open to the south. The town hall and schools are arranged horizontally, overlooking a second terrace with trees in order to enhance the vertical emphasis of the church and bell tower. At the other end, at the junction of the vertical urban axis and the valley route to Naples is a specialized square. This is a double square: commercial

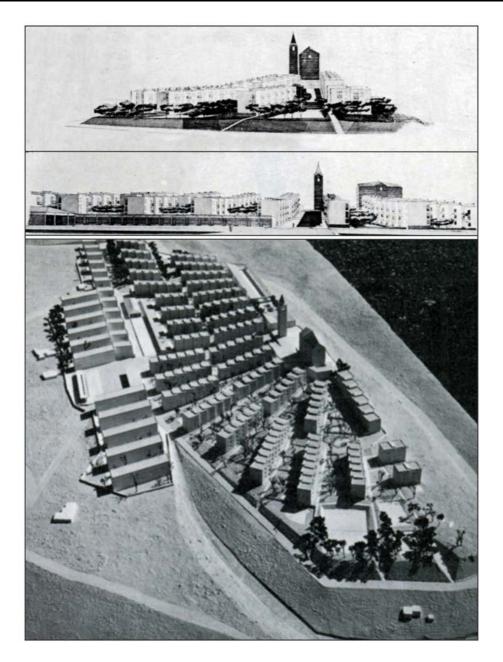


Figure 3. The Ina-Casa neighbourhood of La Loggetta, Napoli. The views at the top are from the east and from the lower square (south), and the main picture is of a three dimensional model.

and recreational on the south side towards the settlement, and for exchange on the north side towards the covered market and bus station. The streets follow a hierarchical order, intersecting natural and built structures within a common urban design. Particular care was given to the system of green and open spaces.

The plan was to conserve the slight terracing in the existing orchards by the creation of public gardens on successive levels. These were to be small playgrounds near the single units, and as far as possible existing trees were to be conserved. Panoramic terraces were to be created on the south-east border as a

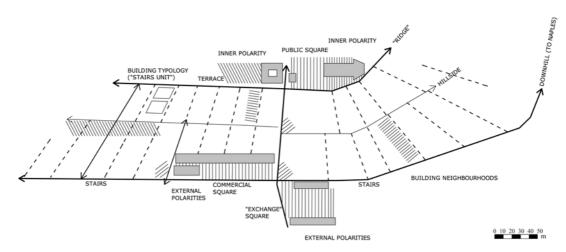


Figure 4. The Ina-Casa neighbourhood of La Loggetta, Napoli.

Analytical scheme by Marco Maretto.

recreational area for the elderly, and areas not suitable for building near the cemetery to the west were to be used for sports facilities. Finally, tree-lined zones were planned at the points of access to and from the surrounding area and along routes penetrating the urban fabric.

The residential construction programme envisaged variations in essentially one basic building type: a three-storey masonry structure with a roof terrace. Buildings were aggregated in pairs, diversified by staggering, in terms of both height and plan, according to the land gradient and the progressive rotation of the rows; that is, the type was varied on the basis of the natural form of the terrain. Every unit had a garden and terraces for hanging out the washing, linked by stairs and walkways to the route system.

A complex and hierarchical system was produced in La Loggetta. It reveals for the first time – in the union of natural elements and urban fabric, and in polarities, functional and landscape aspects – the instruments for a future morphological design of the city.

#### *Magliana I and II, Rome (1956-1957)*

In 1954 Muratori returned to Rome and began his study of the fabric of that city. He

undertook a number of planning experiments, notably in four projects for Magliana (Figures 5 and 6). Whereas Naples had been the starting point for his new morphological design research, Magliana was its fine tuning. Here themes were maturing that would soon come to fruition in the Venetian competition. Though the projects in Rome did not proceed beyond a preliminary stage, the instruments used earlier can be clearly recognized, but at a more advanced level. There are the same dialectics of polarities, fabric, routes and topography as in La Loggetta. The result is a strongly integrated urban organism. example, the valley settlement, even in the simplicity of a plaster model, has the dialectic of internal and external polarities. 'architectural square' is much more articulated and complex than in the past. together all the urban polarities (which are either central or peripheral in relation to the spatial axis of the square) and is the commercial, cultural, administrative and religious centre of the settlement. The route system is on three hierarchical levels: the valley route, flanking the street-square; the radial penetrating routes, open towards the square and identifying the four urban zones; and the transverse elevated routes on the building scale. The urban fabric is organized in four units. At the centre is a small neigh-

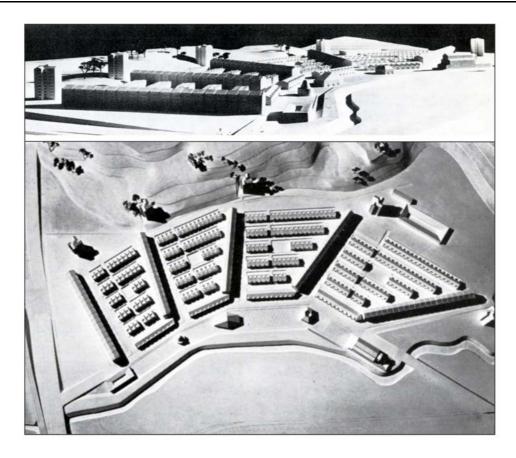


Figure 5. Project model of the Ina-Casa neighbourhood of Magliana I. Note the four 'urban units' (each with its own square, specialized building, tower and line of apartment blocks) and the relationship between the polarities and landmarks of the square and the visual lines of the apartment blocks and peripheral towers.

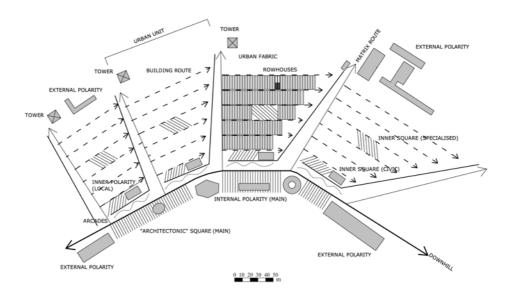


Figure 6. Analytical scheme by Marco Maretto of the Ina-Casa neighbourhood Magliana I.

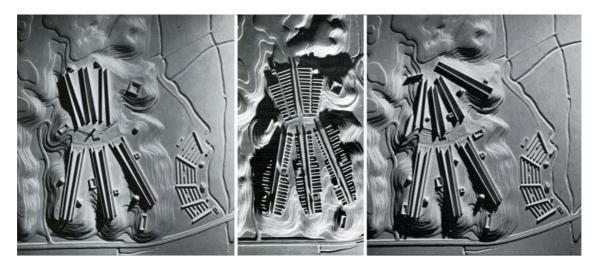


Figure 7. Models of some of the planning solutions of the Ina-Casa neighbourhood Magliana II.

bourhood square with essential services.

The architectural programme follows meticulously the urban design choices: the buildings facing the square are all arcaded, as are the specialized buildings internal to the square. Buildings are placed in direct visual correspondence to the five axes penetrating the urban fabric. The tall residential towers complete the view.

The designs for the settlement along the ridge (Figure 7) are less detailed, but it is not difficult to recognize a clear continuity of instruments. This allows us to assess the potential of Muratori's urban research, to recognize its limitations, but above all to perceive its future possibilities.

## The competition for the Barene di San Giuliano in Venice (1959)

The publication of *Studi per una operante* storia urbana di Venezia (Muratori, 1959) provided the foundation for Muratori's last and most advanced urban project: the three designs for the Barene di San Giuliano in Venice. The competition envisaged the planning of a settlement for about 40 000 inhabitants near San Giuliano, between the lagoon and mainland settlements. The new settlement, inhabited predominantly by Venetians, was to

have the functions characteristic of a modern city, many of which were difficult to locate within the historical centre of Venice. So a sort of contemporary Venice with a key role for the future of the entire lagoon enclave was envisaged.

Muratori's interest in the comprehension and interpretation of the historical process as a whole and its application as the critical foundation of contemporary urban design emerges with great clarity in the Venetian projects. He identifies three typical systems of texture that have characterized the Venetian urban fabric over time.

Type 1 is a square centrally located within a group of islands. Around it are the parochial church, the houses of the founding families, courtyards for the general populace, workshops and boatyards, each with its own landing. This exemplifies Venice in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is the archipelago city organized in island parishes, with a clear predominance of waterways over land routes. Type 2 has a comb-shaped plan, with the main land-water routes on parallel axes, separated by secondary structures interposed orthogonally: lanes, public courtyards, large family houses. This is Gothic Venice with a balance between water and land routes. Type 3 has foundations flanked by canals, with houses aligned along the foundations or

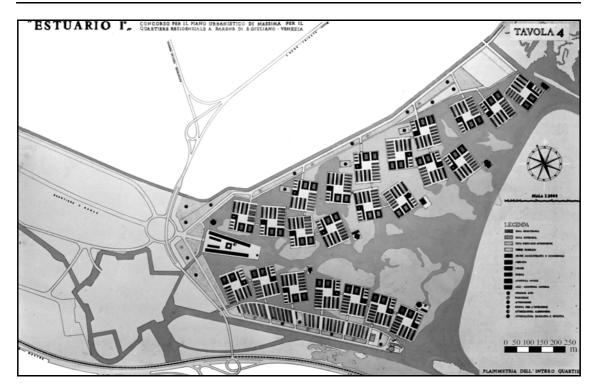


Figure 8. The Barene di San Giuliano in Venice: Project Estuary I.

around courtyards and lanes orthogonal to them. This is the typology of Renaissance and modern Venice, characterized by the increasing predominance of land routes over waterways.

Muratori's three projects for the Barene di San Giuliano were based on these three urban designs corresponding to three crucial moments in the development of the city, interpreted in terms of their economic, social, cultural, and not just architectural, components. Muratori's main aim was not just to develop the project theme in the best possible way, but above all to establish, in the reality of the designs, the theses and research on the city conducted up to that point. With the aim of laying the foundations for a methodology of contemporary urban design, Muratori drafted three designs.

#### Estuary I

The first design was for an estuarine city with neighbourhoods comprised of islands linked to one another and to the mainland by bridges, and constituting self-sufficient units laid out along both banks of the San Giuliano estuary (Figure 8). Each island nucleus was a residential unit, the design of which was based on the traditional tenth-to-eleventh century Venetian island parishes, with an area of about 33 000 m<sup>2</sup>. Three main building types were envisaged, each one located around a neighbourhood space: four-storey residential apartment blocks, plus a ground floor for workshops, arranged around two public courtyards opening on to the lagoon through archways, with two apartments on each storey and a living room running the whole length of the building from front to back (as in the Venetian tradition); four-storey residential apartment blocks arranged around two open courtyards with trees; and two-storey row The three types of fabric were grouped around a central quadrangular square, with each side measuring 60 m, on which were located the public buildings and access to the social service buildings (nursery school, medical clinic and centre for elderly people).



Figure 9. The Barene di San Giuliano in Venice: Project Estuary II.

The islands were thus arranged in units of 3, 4 or 5 elements, each unit having its own public services. The sports and recreational facilities were located in the green belt of the neighbourhood, facing the mainland. This marginal strip was envisaged as having all the technical service areas (sewers, aqueduct, electricity etc.), as well as the routes for vehicles (normally excluded from the islands), and was flanked by a strip for parking, garages, and related services. Finally, a green zone for agriculture was proposed along both banks of the lagoon as a natural frame for both city and country. A city centre, with commercial, administrative and hotel facilities, was planned near the principal node linking Venice and Mestre. This island was conceived as a large elongated square, with moorings and quays for public transportation towards the lagoon, and a bus station and parking towards the mainland. Along the sides were two wings of four-storey commercial buildings, with arcades and private moorings on the lateral canals, linking to the internal canal network. In the centre was the public square. Here we

clearly see the architectural square reappear, together with the dialectic of the continuous arcaded element, defining the public space, and the specialized vertical element pinpointing the square.

#### Estuary II

An estuarine city with self-sufficient neighbourhoods comprised of peninsulas was the second design. The vehicular axes were laid out in parallel and were separated by canals in a comb-shaped route system (Figure 9). The peninsulas were laid out around the lagoon basin with their axes converging. This is a clear interpretation of Gothic Venice, with a plan consisting of building units with courtyards orthogonal to their peninsula axes. A single residential building type was envisaged. This had three storeys and an arcaded ground floor, with a passageway, workshops and storage areas. There were two apartments on each floor, with living rooms overlooking both courtyard and lane. Each

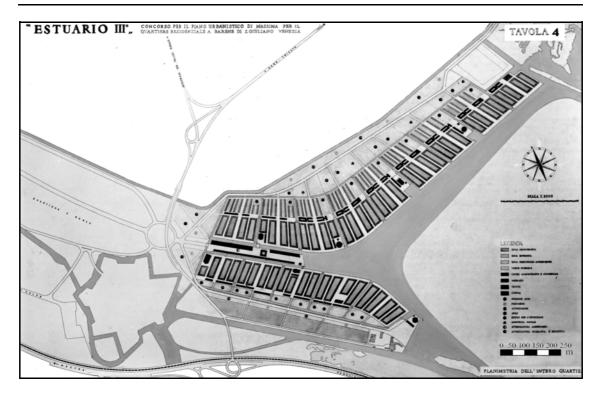


Figure 10. The Barene di San Giuliano in Venice: Project Estuary III.

peninsula constituted a self-sufficient urban unit for about 10 000 inhabitants, and was provided with public services, including church, school, two nursery schools, social centre and two markets. Except for the schools, the services were around the squares. The peninsula axes, a transverse walkway and the canal comprised the main network of urban routes. The sports and recreational facilities, technical service areas, main vehicle routes. and parking and related services were all located in the marginal green belt. A green zone for agriculture was situated along the Osellino canal, acting as a natural frame for both city and country. The city centre had features similar to those in the first project, except that it was partially hierarchical so as to form a system with the large southern peninsula, which had both residential and specialized features. The latter had a layout that was in part comb like and in part consisted of housing along the banks of the main canal and lagoon basin. Again, the surrounding arcades and prominent vertical features were the basis of the organization of all the

specialized small squares on each peninsula. In this case, there was not a main architectural square, but many smaller local squares that combined to add to the unity of the entire scheme.

#### Estuary III

The third design was for an estuarine city with neighbourhoods laid out along two strips on the foundations of the two opposite branches of the estuary, gradually opening toward the lagoon, with a view of Venice (Figure 10). A double pattern of canals (longitudinal and transverse) formed two series of flanking islands, which linked the features of the two preceding designs: the island system and the peninsular system. In addition, the presence of effective longitudinal links (median and marginal) aided unity and continuity. From the great route node, on the Venice-Mestre axis, near where the city centre was located, two route 'dorsals' (with parking, garages and related services) stretched from the mainland.

Next to them were two strips containing the technical service areas (notably sewers, aqueduct and electricity). From here two series of routes branched off, each one forming the axis of a single urban unit, thereby creating a double comb-shaped system: one for land routes and services; the other for water. Each neighbourhood was thus bordered and defined by two canals and by an axis penetrating the urban fabric, and was linked to the other units by pedestrian bridges. There were two types of urban unit: one consisting of row houses, towards the land, facing the park on the perimeter; the other comprising apartment blocks, towards the lagoon, with a view of Venice. Between these two units were the commercial services for each neighbourhood, aligned with the commercial strips of the other units to form a continuous line of public amenities converging on the city centre. Each neighbourhood was provided with a church in a dominant position on the lagoon or square, a market, cinema, social centre, nursery school, school and a nucleus of shops with apartments above. The route system was aligned along the land-water axis, and so was orthogonal to the strip of public service areas. At intervals there were large units consisting of courtyards open at both ends towards the park and commercial zone.

As in the first and second designs, the strip nearest the mainland was planned as a large public park, containing all the sports and recreational facilities. A green zone for agriculture acted as a natural frame for city and country. The urban centre was designed as a long street-square (as in Chioggia) stretching between two opposing poles, that of the mainland and that of the lagoon. Two wings of arcaded public and commercial buildings provided a new vision of the architectural square, within which was the isolated structure of the town hall. There was a hierarchy of complementary scales - from the house to the collective courtyard and so on, up to the urban unit. The corresponding social scale is from the family unit to the neighbourhood, and ultimately to the urban community and then the entire civitas. There is variation and differentiation, yet strong

unity: a unity that has its counterpart in social, economic and cultural ties and complementarity.

#### Conclusion

The Venice competition had several effects. First, it established some basic principles in the field of urban design, freeing it from a series of misapprehensions that had characterized many previous urban endeavours; above all the mannerist tendency to transfer tout court experiences that had arisen and matured in cultural and material contexts distant in both time and space. Secondly, it advanced the idea of neighbourhood as a quantitative unit, emphasizing the intermediate levels of complexity that characterize a city and should not be ignored. Thirdly, the Venetian projects helped to supersede the replace the idea of urban space as a terrain vague. Instead they concentrated on the design of both voids and solids, treating these as complimentary and inseparable realities. Urban space became recognized as the place where the life and history of a city unfolds - an intrinsic component of the built structure, with a range of attributes, such as squares, streets, courtyards and appurtenances that are spatially and socially differentiated. Muratori's designs for the Barene di San Giuliano provided bases for a sustainable contemporary city, if the right instruments were applied. Herein lies the methodological value of Muratori's urban research and a way forward for a morphological approach to urban design.

For Muratori, a city can be considered unified in its conception, yet infinitely plural in its phenomenological manifestations. Its histories and identities are continuous with the territorial interpretations carried out by different civilizations. The traces of these histories and identities constitute the latent substrata of every urban enterprise. They tell us of the societies that created them, their settlement culture and their territory. The traces are laden with semantic value and hence are fascinating vehicles for understanding the man-made landscape. They are fascinating

because they are devoid of formal conditioning, but instead point to the structural substance of places and societies (Malfroy, 2011): they are attentive to the logic of formation and transformation of a territory. If we know how to read and interpret them, they translate into a conscious basis for contemporary urban design. Morphology is the discipline concerned with the interpretation of these traces. Such an interpretation can identify the structural nexus on which the concrete existence of a city is founded in its gradual temporal development. This is a most important nexus because it combines analysis with synthesis, and interpretation with design. The structures of a city are the bearers over time of many social, economic and cultural Understanding their formative structures. logic means participating in a dynamic process of transformation. It means planning their future in the structural consciousness of their past. Thus the different types of urban fabric are the result of as many different types of economic, social, cultural and political fabric. These find in the urban fabric concrete expression. This is a semantic form, from the study of which we can 'read' and 'write' the history of a city at all its scales. Hence urban morphology, as the essential expression of associated life, of continuous cross-referencing between the particular and the universal, the individual and the civitas, can represent, as Muratori tells us, a valid instrument on which to found a morphological school of urban design for the twenty-first century.

#### Acknowledgement

This paper was translated from Italian into English by Lisa Adams.

#### References

Astengo, G. (1951) 'Nuovi quartieri in Italia', *Urbanistica* 7, 9.

Malfroy, S. (2011) 'Structure and development process of the city: the morphogenetic approach of Saverio Muratori', in Varena, T. (ed.) Structuralism reloaded: rule based design in architecture and urbanism (Axel Menges, Stuttgart) 327-35.

Maretto, M. (2012a) *Ecocities. Il progetto urbano tra morfologia e sostenibilità* (Franco Angeli, Rome).

Maretto, M. (2012b) 'The early contribution of Saverio Muratori: between modernism and classicism', *Urban Morphology* 16, 121-32.

Menghini, A. and Palmieri, V. (2009) Saverio Muratori. Didattica della Composizione architettonica nella Facoltà di architettura di Roma 1954 - 1973 (Poliba, Bari).

Muratori, S. (1950) 'Vita e storia delle città', *Rassegna critica di architettura* 11/12, 3-52.

Muratori, S. (1959) *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Venezia* (Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Rome).

Muratori, S. (1963) *Architettura e civiltà in crisi* (CSSU, Rome).

Rassegna Critica di Architettura (ed.) (1952) 'Gestione Ina-Casa. Quartiere Stella Polare ad Ostia', 26-7, 61-2.

### **Sixteenth International Planning History Society Conference**

The College of Design, Construction and Planning, University of Florida, USA is hosting the 2014 IPHS Conference from 20 to 23 July 2014. The conference theme is 'Past as guide to sustainable futures'. Single paper proposals, pre-organized sessions, discussion-focused roundtables, and other modes of presentation are invited. Proposals should be prepared in the form of an abstract of no more than 500 words exclusive of references. Links between the paper and proposed conference sub-theme(s) should be indicated if

possible. A short cv should be submitted with the abstract, including full contact information (address, e-mail, telephone and fax). Abstracts and cvs may be submitted as a PDF. Papers submitted for consideration in the refereed proceedings will need to be in Word or a software that allows editing. Proposals should be sent to iphs2014@dcp.ufl.edu. All accepted abstracts and those full papers that go through a refereeing process will be included in the conference proceedings (available on DVD).