

Turin as Exploratory Field of Migration Flows and Multiethnicity

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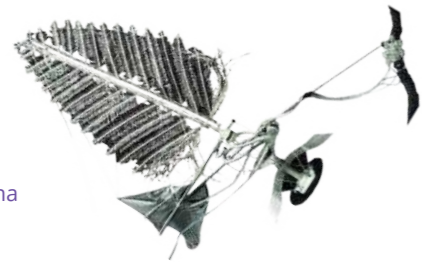
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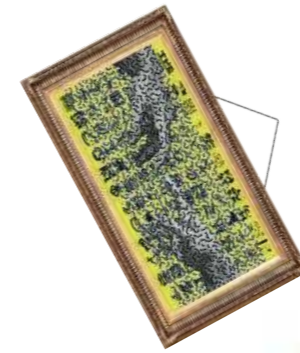
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# Turin as Exploratory Field of Migration flows and Multi-ethnicity.

Urban design case study exploration.

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With migration flows, cities receive an increasing number of newcomers who bring with them different cultures and backgrounds, and who have urgent needs for housing, language training, schooling and jobs as ways of becoming inserted into their new environment. In the case of Turin, migration history is strong and at the present time the number of foreigners living in the city represents 15% of its total inhabitants (Istat, 2017). This paper aims to understand the insertion spaces that newcomers have, within a multi-ethnic area where many foreigners are concentrated. The research combines the physical dimension of the city - its form and materiality - with the social dimension which recognizes the city as a mixture of communities, interactions, places and common

facilities. The study area chosen for this research holds 40% of foreigners as residents and, within it, a problematic site is identified. What type of projects can contribute, fit and help the insertion of foreign newcomers into the city? An urban design exploration is proposed as a response to the site and its inhabitants' needs. For this exploration, concepts of typology and collage technique are developed as tools or ways of approaching a design assignment. The resulting project has the potential to consolidate the area with the generation of new spaces needed for cultural and social exchange.

**Key words:**

**Migration, Multiethnicity, Informal-Spaces, Regeneration.**

# 1. Introduction.

We share spaces in cities with others who in many ways are not like us, and we need to find ways of co-existing in these spaces (Sandercock, 2000). Current and crucial social phenomena like migration, represent a force of social change that cannot be ignored or taken for granted, since it also brings new values and new habits to the city. With inward migration flows, cities receive an increasing number of newcomers that bring with them different backgrounds, and who have urgent needs for housing, language training, schooling and jobs as ways of inserting themselves into their new environment. The study of migration flows is an imperative aspect for understanding the transformations of the physical and social dimensions of cities. In the case of Turin, the city has a long migration history; it has always been a destination city for migratory flows. These flows and reasons for human movements have changed over time and the city has responded in different ways: from the generation of peripheral "borghi" and "borgate"<sup>1</sup> to the building of industrial infrastructure and housing projects, including the current development of regeneration policies that involve re-designating urban areas - "case del quartiere"<sup>2</sup> - and cultural associations that help the city to become a hybrid inclusive place. Even though inclusive areas are available, the demand for welfare spaces is higher than ever.

This demand makes studies relevant that deal with and generate welfare spaces. Spaces that propitiate encounters help make the multi-ethnicity of the city evident and brings opportunities to ease the process of integrating newcomers. For the development of the research presented here, two phases were taken into consideration: the first one dealt with demographic research and mapping, the second one dealt with a design exploration developed in response to the findings of the first phase.

## 2. Migration flows and Multi-ethnic area in Turin.

The city of Turin has always been a destination for migratory flows due to its history, geographical position and economic situation. One of the most important migration flows the city experienced happened after the capital of Italy was moved to Florence in 1864. A few decades after this change, Turin became the leading city in terms of progressive financial and manufacturing systems. These new resources required a very large workforce. Inhabitants of the surrounding valleys started to move into the city's suburbs, gradually changing the appearance and fabric of the urban environment. A second flow of newcomers came after the First World War when industry recovered and workers from the

region of Veneto and other regions in the north-east of the country started to fill the city. The Second World War was followed by another period of economic recovery that brought hundreds of thousands of immigrants, especially from the south of the country. As for the last 25 years, the globalization of population flows has become very common. Large numbers of people are leaving their countries due to war, political unrest, or in seek of brighter futures. In this sense, the city of Turin has been characterized by a profound change in its demographic structure. The first immigrants to arrive to the city from the latest flow were mainly from Africa, China, the Philippines and South America. A second flow brought people from Albania, East Europe, including countries from the former Soviet Empire (*Osservatorio Socioeconomico Torinese*).

At the present time, the number of foreigners living in Turin makes up 15% of its population (Istat, 2017). Within the 92 administrative zones of the city, the areas with the highest number of foreign inhabitants are Borgo Dora, Borgata Aurora and Monterosa, with more than 5,000 inhabitants per area, representing 40% of their respective residents (Fig.1) (Comune di Torino, 2017). The research presented in this paper, analyses an enclave defined by the three administrative zones aforementioned. This analysis aims to understand an area of the city that has an apparent complex morphology and that has received an

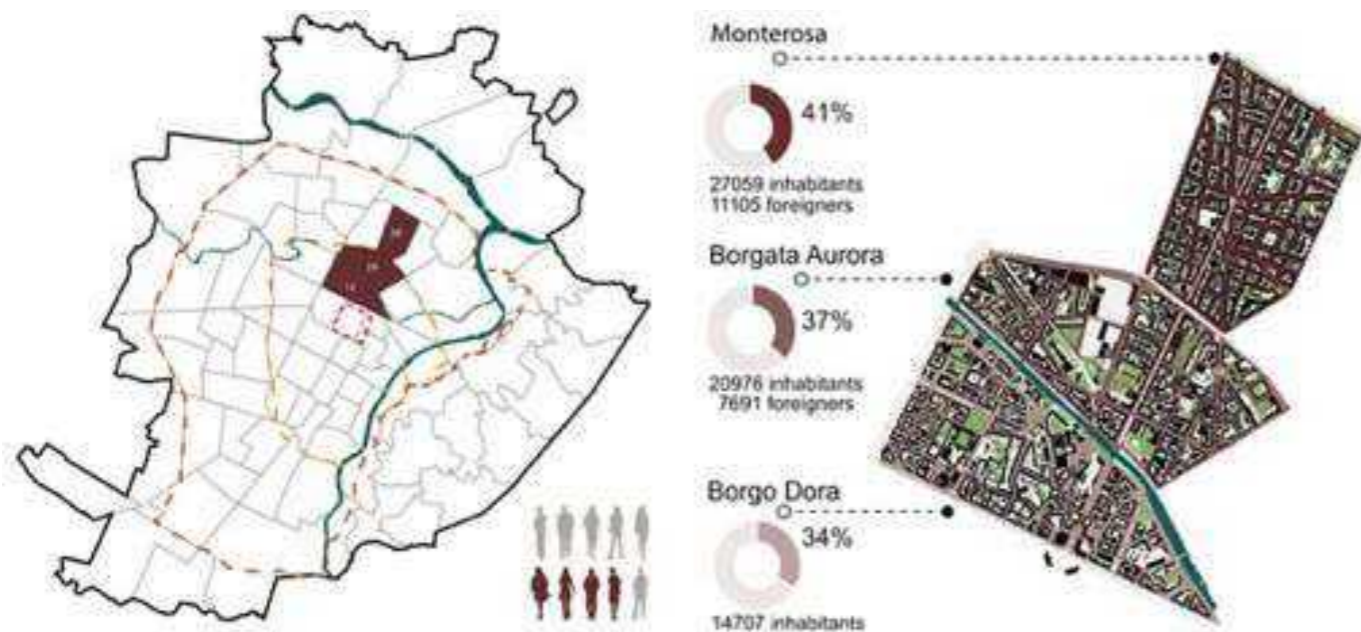


Fig.1. Areas with the highest number of foreign inhabitants in Turin.



Fig.2. Religious and cult spaces in study area.



Fig.3. Cultural associations spaces in study area.

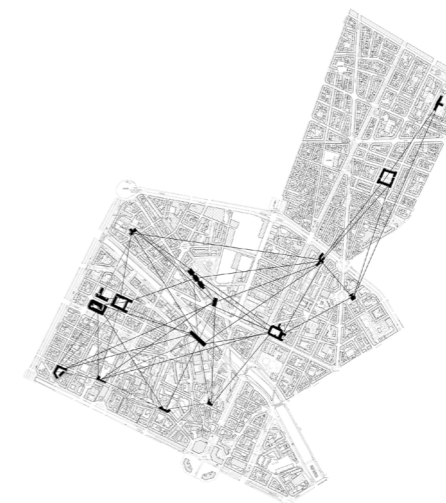


Fig.4. Educational spaces in study area.

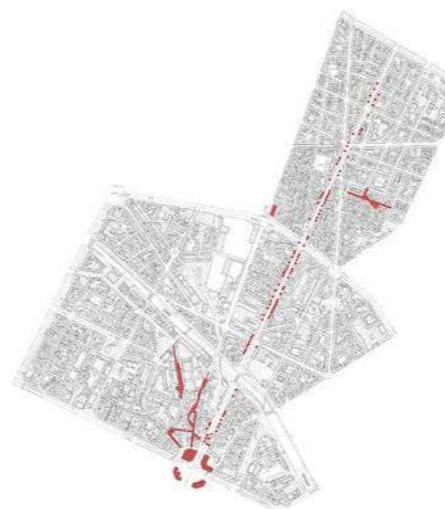


Fig.5. Markets and small ethnic businesses in main commercial axis.

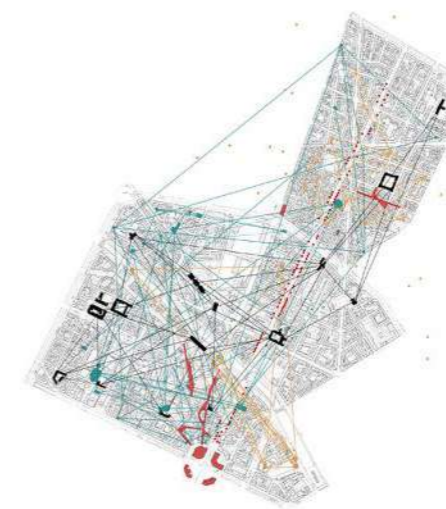


Fig.6. Spaces used as ways of insertion in the study area and recognition of intervention site.

increasing number of newcomers that now generate the social phenomenon of multi-ethnicity. The study uses maps to clarify, or dissect, the general physical characteristics of the area and links them to the activities that serve as ways of inserting migrants into the city. (Fig.2 and 5) The most recognizable ways found of insertion are: use of common open spaces; participation in cultural and religious events; enrolment in educative institutions; opening of local businesses; and use of welfare spaces. The use of open mapping sources for the analysis was crucial.<sup>3</sup> The decomposition of this piece of the city takes into account the fact that every form (of the territory, of the city) is the result of a process of progressive association of parts, and that it makes sense to break it down and investigate its components, but only if its substantial unity and indivisibility is taken into account (Conzen, 1988). The analysis of field data recollected and synthesized with the maps, gives a starting point for the development of the second phase of the research, the urban and architectural design exploration that addresses the problematic situation recognized in the area. (Fig.6)

## 3. Urban Design exploration.

The second phase of the study involved identifying a problematic site within the analysed area. This site represents a void in the context and in the social history of the neighbourhood. It presents many challenges related to its morphology, social history and use, since it has been abandoned for more than 20 years. Even though it has been used informally as a common space, the current spatial condition has made the place used by people dealing with drug trafficking, insecurity, homeless occupation, delinquency and a perception of insecurity. Since the site lacks a defined use, the area is considered an informal space (Fig.7). Informal spaces are seen as empty and meaningless due to their temporary absence of an attributed function. The current physical conditions of the site are the result of various events that changed its morphology in time (Fabbian, 2015). The reconstruction of



Fig.7. Current situation of intervention site.

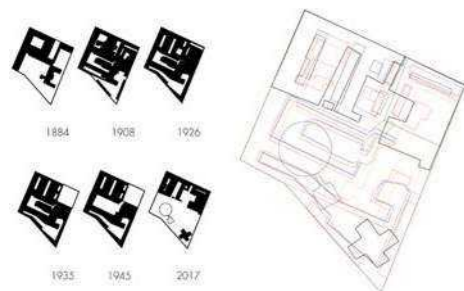


Fig.8. Site's morphological transformation and superposition.

these changes is evident when historical maps are compared. The temporal scan of the development of buildings on the site shows how the number of constructions, their form, their uses and their responses to the context changed in the last 130 years. The diagrammatic superposition of the compared morphologies (Fig.8) helps to understand what morphological elements have been constant during these years and what elements have suffered greatest changes. In general, the constant elements that appear are: the composition of the site's border and the consolidation of the northern corner of the site with volumes that respond to the city's typological development. Moreover, the superposition of two elements stand out for its contrasting characteristics of form: the circular concrete area in the western side of the lot; and the cruciform building at the south. Both elements appeared in the latest development periods and represent the current and pre-existing condition that have been taken into consideration for the development of the project in the next stages of this study.

The dissection of this piece of city and gaining an understanding of its immediate context, helped the development of ideas that would unify the elements of the site while respecting the identity of what was generated over time. With its physical and social needs, the site offers

the opportunity to generate spaces that allow social interactions. A project on the site adding needed spaces, can work as a way to generate a sense of belonging. Interventions in this type of spaces need to be a two-way process in which spaces are created and modified as they are lived in and used.

Ways of approaching an architectural design assignment are infinite. For this study, and taking into consideration the contextual analysis explored in the first phase of the research, the design strategy dealt with building typologies and the technique of collage. This strategy involved the recognition of how far functional types correspond to morphological types. This exploration worked as an attempt to use form, not as a fixed representation, but rather as a field of possibilities where internal forces of chosen morphological types meet with exterior constraints of the context. The result of the study materializes into a complex building project that responds to morphological, functional and social needs. The project foresees public open spaces and a community garden, residential buildings, media library and classrooms, a headquarters for cultural associations and an auditorium. The complex has the potential to develop over time into an inclusive space for existing citizens and new comers. (Fig.9 and 10)

To sum up, in order for a city to

evolve, differences in its demography need to be incorporated, accepted and enhanced. Multi-ethnicity should be addressed and the generation of projects that establish a dialogue with the needs of new-comers as well as those already living in the area, serving as a platform of insertion into the city. The current conditions of the area studied are the result of various events that changed it over time. The reconstruction of these changes becomes evident when maps and demographic data are analysed. The findings of the study show how the spaces are currently being used in the area and how newcomers introduce themselves into the city through common activities. The understanding of the site's conditions as a sequence of events makes the proposed solution specific for this particular case. The response to the site's conditions needed to be a sensible one. Sensible to the local differences found in its demography, while maintaining an overall stability with the context where it was proposed (Allen, 2009). In this sense, the site offers, with its physical and social requirements, the opportunity to generate spaces that would allow changing experiences and interactions between the different groups living within its surrounding context. The project presented has the potential to consolidate the area with the generation of new and necessary spaces for cultural and social exchange.



Fig.9. Rendering of the proposal.



Fig.10. Rendering of the proposal.

## Notes

1. Borghi and borgate refer to the terms "borough" and "township", usually used as synonyms to describe peripheral areas of a city. In the case of Turin though, Borghi refer to ancient settlements formed in a rural context and borgate originated after the placement of the toll fence of the city. (Davico, 2014).
2. Turin has invested in the generation of projects that could make the city an inclusive environment. The "case del quartiere" are examples of this urban regeneration efforts. These projects develop in diverse social contexts and offer services destined for specific citizens that live in the surroundings. (Devoti, 2015).
3. GEO portale of Comune di Torino, Google Earth open source and site visits were used to map the spaces.

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## Biography

**Ana Ricciardi.** Architect born in Ecuador in 1991. Has carried out professional and training activities in Ecuador and Italy. Teacher at Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) from 2014-2016. MSc. Graduate and current PhD candidate at Politecnico di Torino. Research interests include urban morphology, urban and social sciences, landscape and urban regeneration and comparative studies. Her work shows strong commitment to proving that the integration of social, historical and cultural perspectives into design helps to produce the most suitable development of a project. Interested in the development of studies and projects that generate an interface between the physical and the social dimensions of cities.