Chapter 3
A new life for 'repudiate' architecture

Concetta Tavoletta

Introduction

When Bernard Rudofsky in his Architecture without architects describes the strength and power of spontaneous architecture, also deriving from the account in images and text of L'architettura rurale italiana by Giuseppe Pagano and Guarniero Daniel, architectural critics hailed the description of a form of architecture that came from the hands of artisans, inventors of housing actions and design methods that inspired and still inspire architectural design (TAVOLETTA, 2021). The exaltation of architecture derived from necessities such as Capri and Procida appeared necessary and became a model for many authors of the project (GAMBARDELLA, 1995). If during the years of the Ina Casa projects, it was possible to appreciate the possibility of architecture to lead to a cultured and conscious transition of the needs of living, since the 1970s, the virtuous model has been lost and the urban landscape has taken on an image corrupted by the false hope of using a method derived from the Maison Dom-ino model. Over time, the scenario of the self-made dwelling, especially in Southern Italy, described a total paradigm shift where the design space became habituated to the housing needs that demanded a home for all. The contemporary aspect of the city, deriving from the same need to "inhabit" as the spontaneous architecture so beloved of the 1920s, suddenly became apparent again to our eyes only when the space of speculation had by then devoured the land without the necessary planning that zoning had only accentuated. Taking a close look at what has happened in the landscape since the end of the 20th century up to the present time, the problem was not in the large infrastructures but precisely in the many scattered buildings that had taken over (BOERI, 2003). This narrative of the living condition is confronted with the elements of the city, the truest and most sincere ones, even if they are "uncomfortable", what makes up the space of living where the monument is no longer part of the urban narrative. The way of observing the phenomenon of the use of existing resources, understood as a social product, as well described by Michel de Certeau (DE CERTEAU, 2001), has been the forerunner of an innovative system of investigation of what might appear everyday -therefore imbued with habituation in the eyes of the observer - and which can then be reread as an opportunity to discover existing resources. De Certeau observes the hidden possibilities of what appears to be corrupt, relegated to the time of disrepute and failure. It is precisely the "possible occasions" that are the real solution, understanding how tools that appear different, from the theme of maquillage to the emphasising of what has been, can produce second-hand architectures that do not observe the contemporary artefact as a monument but, as architecture has always learnt to do, use the tool of the present as the first clue for an action that can grant a new time to the incomplete space by delivering devices that, on the spoils of the past, contribute to new paradigms of building. It is in this unnerving time, of corrupted and abandoned Maison Dom-ino, that we try to restore power to that powerful and magical accident that is the city, which finds its very representation in the reinterpretation of the error as an ecological and experimental opportunity that does not stop at the observation of the phenomenon but tries to give new solutions of beauty to the changing city.

Without fair. Building on the build

«Fragmentation has accustomed us to observing the city and the territory with the eye of the archaeologist; to understanding that the different historical layers, the ancient centre, the modern city, its suburbs, the fragmentation and dispersion of the contemporary city, have blended together as after a telluric movement: what we find on the surface is not necessarily the most recent layer, what we find after long excavations is not necessarily the oldest layer » (SECCHI, 2000).

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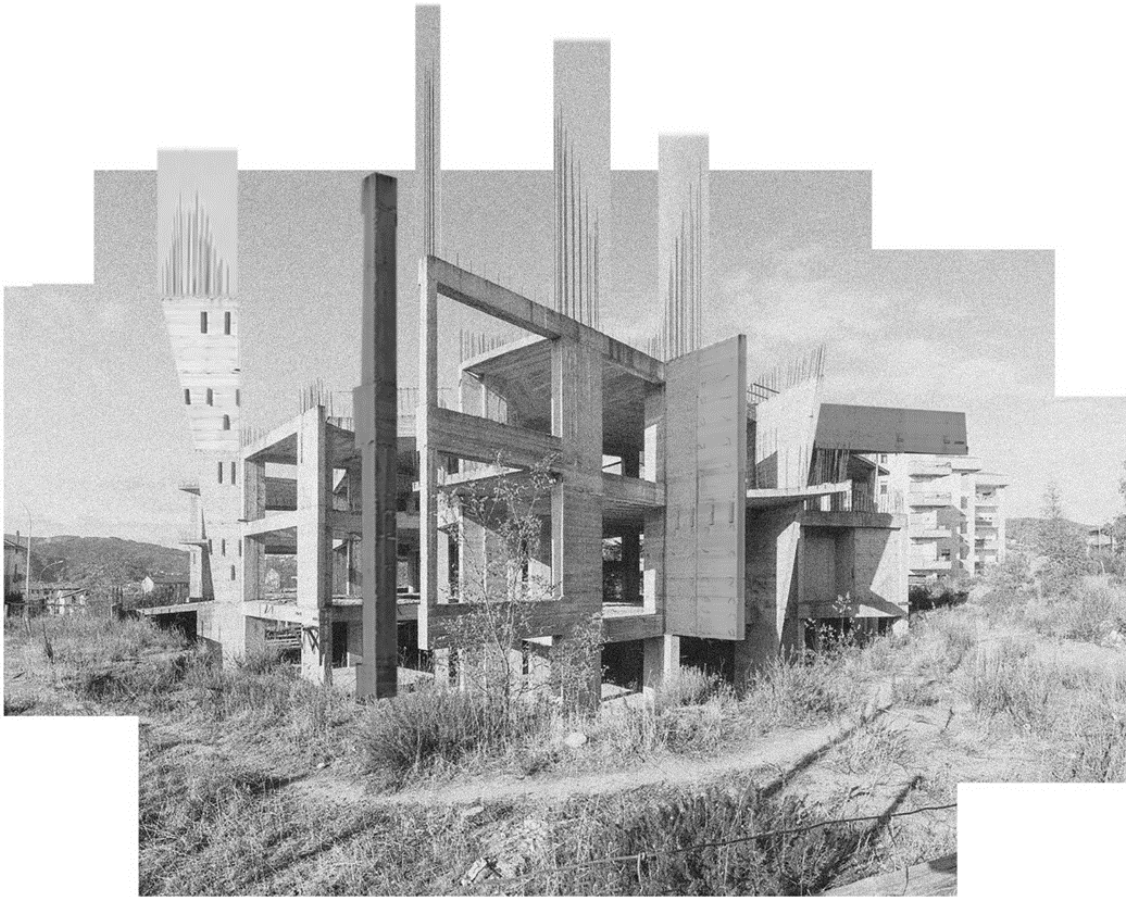e-mail: concetta.tavoletta@unicampania.it

Figure 1: More and more, Digital Collage, Concetta Tavoletta, 2023

« Tales of places are *bricolage*. They are made from the remains of the world» (DE CERTEAU 2001), is how de Certeau defines the composite space of the contemporary, fragments that coexist between beauty and a sense of disorientation. Places whose nature we do not recognize and others that beautifully remind us that the power of architecture can sometimes change the sense of space.

There are good practices, ways of working with the project – interrupted, abandoned – that mark the interpretation of reality and that vigorously attempt to escape the idea of the irreparable. As previously described, the focus on upcycling and the idea of giving a second life to incomplete and forgotten architecture has attracted the attention of many scholars and artists. «Anthropologists», Marc Augè wrote in 2004, «are today faced with the vast untilled soil that extends to the entire planet, they feel that the inventory of ruins is not an end and that what really counts is invention, even if it is subjected to enormous pressures and effects of domination that threaten its existence. Humanity is not in ruins, it is in the making. It still belongs to history. A history that is often tragic, always unequal, but irredeemably common » (AUGÉ, 2004). In his text, the anthropologist leads us into an observation of the world linked to the action of the artefact and the rubble (war or post-civil revolutions) where we find his 1994 theory of "non-places". What, however, is fascinating about his examination of the present, which is steeped in nostalgia, is that there is a confidence in the contemporary as in his analysis of building sites, which «possibly at the cost of an illusion, are poetic spaces in the etymological sense of the word: something can be done there; their incompleteness contains a promise» (AUGÉ, 2004). I believe that the idea of a "promise" is the action of the project, which is different from the idea of "prophecy" in that promising considers the possibility of trying to adhere to reality. The promise of a second chance to those architectures that symbolise the decay of society is a loss of values as well as a powerful poem that we have the task of dedicating to the city.

Figure 2: Mistery of the skeleton, Digital Collage, Concetta Tavoletta, 2023

Projects in an unfinished area

The projects that follow are some of the works that were carried out during the Final Synthesis Workshop that I held. On this occasion, I would like to thank the students who, with great passion, tackled the theme of building on the built. The projects are in an area of Villa Literno, in the province of Caserta, where there is a lot that had been structured with the intention of building low-energy housing and collective spaces. As is often the case, unfortunately, the company that had won the contract for the work went bankrupt and today what remains of that project are the skeletons of the structures, unusable and crystallised places when the site was abandoned. The aim of the research carried out during the workshop was to propose a series of solutions that differ according to the methods used to renovate the unfinished buildings. In some cases, the space emphasises the structure as a compositional element, in others a double ventilated façade is used, and in others, through minimal demolition, the spaces were transformed into useful places for the third sector.

Title: Second skin for a second life – Building A
Tutor: Concetta Tavoletta
Student: Luca Romano

The project considers the framework of the building as a body on which to wrap a new life. Block A was imagined as a system of residences, and it was decided to leave the previously defined but unfinished destination. Small compositional actions were taken to enhance the existing building through the insertion of a light double façade that ends with a total white press-folded sheet metal panel that builds a system of light holes that subtract volume from the object. The roof is composed of a set of objet trouvés imagined making the open-air space a place of sociality.

Title: Not (only) a skeleton – Building A
Tutor: Concetta Tavoletta
Student: Lucia Tartaglione

The design composition focuses on the pre-existing structure considering it a palimpsest to be enhanced where pillars and beams are valuable design elements. A mesh of pillars and beams is added to the main building, enveloping the structure, and giving rhythm to the elevation through different materials and colours. The crowning is stated through projecting elements that give momentum to the structure, while the zero height accommodates collective spaces.

The roof, again, takes on the task of a social space that can be used by residents. Not (only) a skeleton emphasises the strength of the unfinished by enhancing the existing by adding expressive and functional elements to the residential block.

Figure 3: Zenith view of the state of the intervention area.

Figure 4 - 5: Second skin for a second life - Not (only) a skeleton

Another case: Confiscated property

Part of this research then delved into the theme of Second-hand architecture: a new life for confiscated property which if starts from different conditions, confronts us with the same situation as the unfinished architectures that remain there waiting for a second chance. The research, winner of the University of Campania tender, involves disciplinary scientific sectors which, through different points of view, analyse the pre-existing conditions of the buildings and their potential.

Legambiente of 2021 published its review relating to the problems relating to the abusive structures not demolished in the Italian context. The research reveals the problem that at the date of the report, "according to the numbers provided by the technical offices of the Municipalities, from 2004 to 2020 only 32.9% of the buildings affected by an administrative measure were demolished, with profound and evident differences, precisely, between Lombardy, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Piedmont and regions such as Campania, Sicily, Puglia and Calabria, those most marked by the mafia presence and where it is no coincidence that 43.4% of the crimes are concentrated in the cycle of cement registered in Italy in 2019. In these four regions, 14,485 demolition orders were issued (with Campania leading the national ranking with 6,996 abatement orders) and just 2,517 were carried out, equal to 17.4%. In other words, five times out of six the abuser has the almost mathematical certainty of getting away with it. It could go even better for him if the property was built along the coast: if we consider only the coastal municipalities, in fact, the national percentage of abatement drops to 24.3%".) Considering the numerous implications that arise when we talk about demolition, the problem relating to buildings left in ruins that have not completed their building process both in terms of building permits and agility, are the ghosts of building speculation which has led many Italian landscapes to be disfigured and grafting processes that are difficult to recover. The cases that we intend to examine, the objective is not only to work imagining zero demolition but trying to give new life to the symbol of the most important economic and building disaster, such as the assets confiscated from the mafias which stand as a symbol of the decay not only of the landscape but above all of the economic and financial asset of the urban system. The research unit, made up of professors belonging to numerous disciplinary scientific sectors intends to build multidisciplinary research with the aim of carrying out both structural-seismic and economic and design analyses on the confiscated artifacts to the mafias to date or which are in the process of being acquired by the Municipalities.

The main purpose will be to demonstrate the possibility of giving new life and new functions to the structures starting from the hypothesis of zero demolition and following the circular economy spread precisely by the CWD 2018 European Guidelines. The need to fight against the consumption of new soil is the basis starting point for research that tries to demonstrate how eco-sustainability can start from the pre-existing one, transforming it with minimal economic impact but also founding the principles of the project on strong design experimentation. One of the most virtuous examples about zero demolition is precisely the project of the New Rectorate of the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" which, thanks to the remodeling of the pre-existing structures, has allowed the rebirth of a place which today, thanks to the readjustment of the structural system, it has not produced waste materials and has a recognizable and, above all, eco-compatible look.

The expected result of the research intends to put the theme of zero soil consumption back at the center by trying to describe a new possibility of redemption of an image of the Campania territories which, over time, have been ardently fighting to regain the centrality of Campania Felix.

The SHArch - Second-hand architecture: a new life for confiscated property project aims to demonstrate how the use of pre-existing structures can be a resource that is not only economic but also a design one without creating a negative impact on the environment and to build a virtuous model in which can be reflected, a real rebirth of a territory with a lot of potential. The Municipality of Villa Literno has been fighting for many years to bring out the potential of a territory with a productive and tourist vocation which, through this research work, will be able to find the right representation of how, even from the most degraded conditions, realities can arise entrepreneurial and sustainable.

Case studies related to the area of the EX-Sugar factory.

The project area chosen for the research is in Italy, precisely in Campania in the city of Villa Literno, in the Province of Caserta. The territory has always been known as an area with an agricultural vocation but which, over time, it has diversified its economy mainly on the production and sale of products deriving from crops. As in many cases in Italy, even in the small town of Villa Literno, crime has affected the productive fabric and an area has been confiscated by the state. Inside the area there is a former sugar factory, agricultural land, and some apartments.

Figure 6: Project Area
1, 4, 6, 7, agricultural land – 5 civil building - 2 sugar factory – 3 area surrounding the former sugar factory

Figure 7: Ex Sugar Farmer

The project idea is based on the need to recompose the space trying to give back to the community what crime had stolen. Analyzing the aspect of the structures of the building with a productive vocation, it was highlighted

that the structural elements were still intact and that, for this reason, it was possible to act avoiding demolition and imagining a new life for the area itself that would give the territory a real second chance.

Architecture, as described above, has always taken parts of the past and transformed them, making them part of something new and, sometimes, spectacular. In fact, there are numerous cases of industrial spaces which, once their process has been completed, have been transformed into a completely different place. One case study is the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, France. The old Gare d'Orsay railway station designed by Victor Laloux for the 1900 Universal Exhibition has completely changed its function into a museum thanks to the 1980 project by architect Gae Aulenti. The design of the interior spaces has been designed to precisely enhance the pre-existing elements where the central nave - the place where the tracks ran - becomes the promenade of the works on display. A further example of industrial spaces transformed in their function is the building that housed the Società Italiana Spiriti-SIS in Milan, today the headquarters of the Prada Foundation whose project is signed by OMA-Rem Koolhaas. Also in this case, the previous space has been preserved and the addition of new structures, necessary to make the system work better. A further example can be found in the former Banksid Thermal Power Station in London which is now the home of the Tate Modern by Herzog & de Meuron. As the architects themselves describe in their interviews, the possibility of working with an existing building has given them the impetus to try to enhance the existing one, however intervening with Potenza in the interiors, such as for the entrance with the large ramp, an element unforgettable for anyone visiting the museum.

Project strategies

The ideas which are developed by the research group and during the Living Space Design Laboratory, are mainly concentrated on giving a basic idea to the intervention, a vocation that could be expressed in different actions within the space of project. Main hypothesis is based on the use of the former sugar factory as a market area which has the central market of Florence as a case study. The design objective is to include a Catering Hub and a cooking school in addition to the covered market, to deliver a useful element for the community to the area. The facing agricultural areas are also in this case intended for agricultural production which will find the conclusion of its production cycle in the former sugar factory. Design choices have been made that intend to give the territories back to the community by leveraging the strengths of the area through hybrid spaces, involving the primary sector and the third sector. Only the agricultural area near the industrial block is proposed as a social garden, a place entirely dedicated to citizens, and which will make the area active throughout the year.
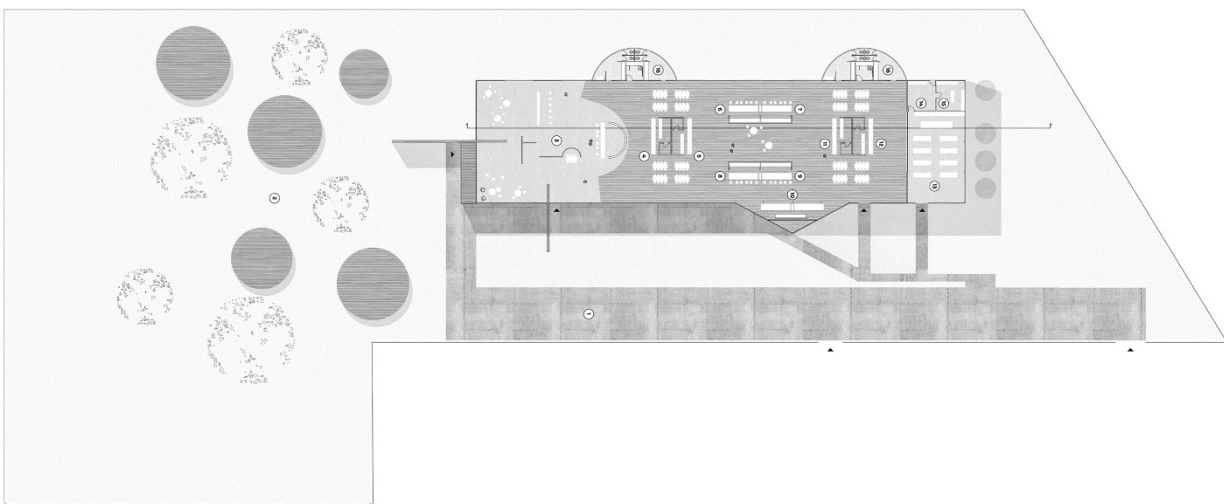

Figure 8: Taste plan project- students: Giovanni Loffredo, Sabato Malangone and Mariapia Verde
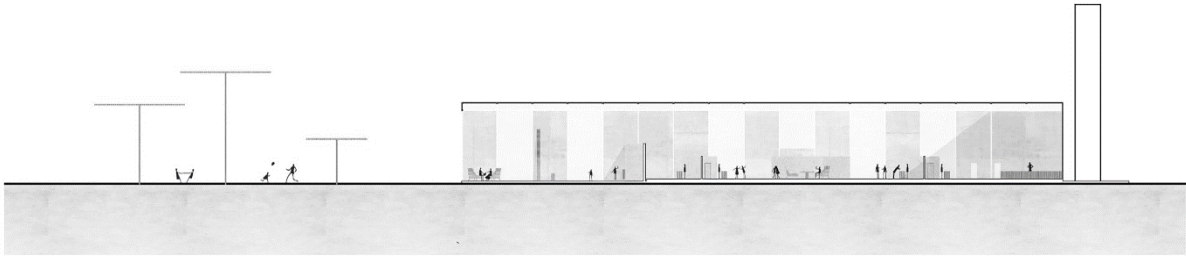
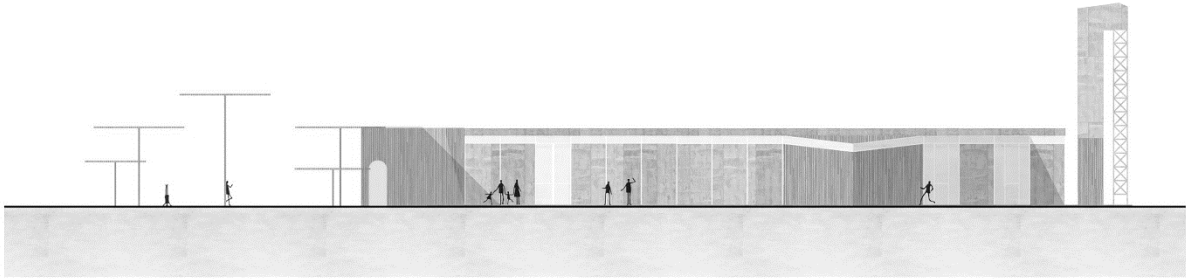**Figure 9:** Taste project- Section - students: Giovanni Loffredo, Sabato Malangone and Mariapia Verde

Figure 10: Taste project- Main façade - students: Giovanni Loffredo, Sabato Malangone and Mariapia Verde
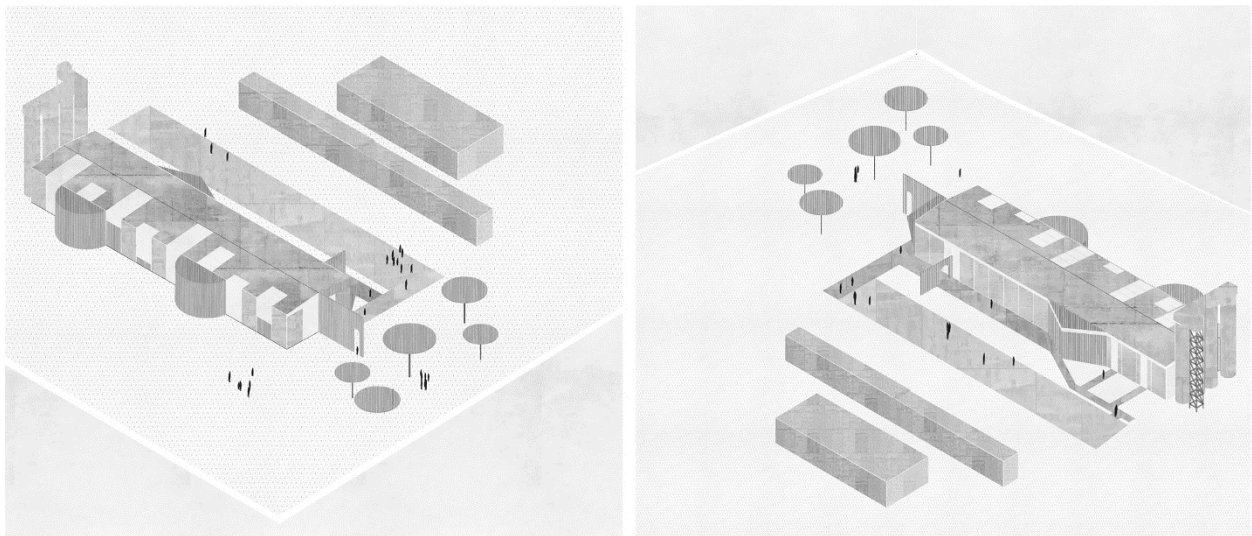

Figure 11: Taste project- Axonometric views - students: Giovanni Loffredo, Sabato Malangone and Mariapia Verde
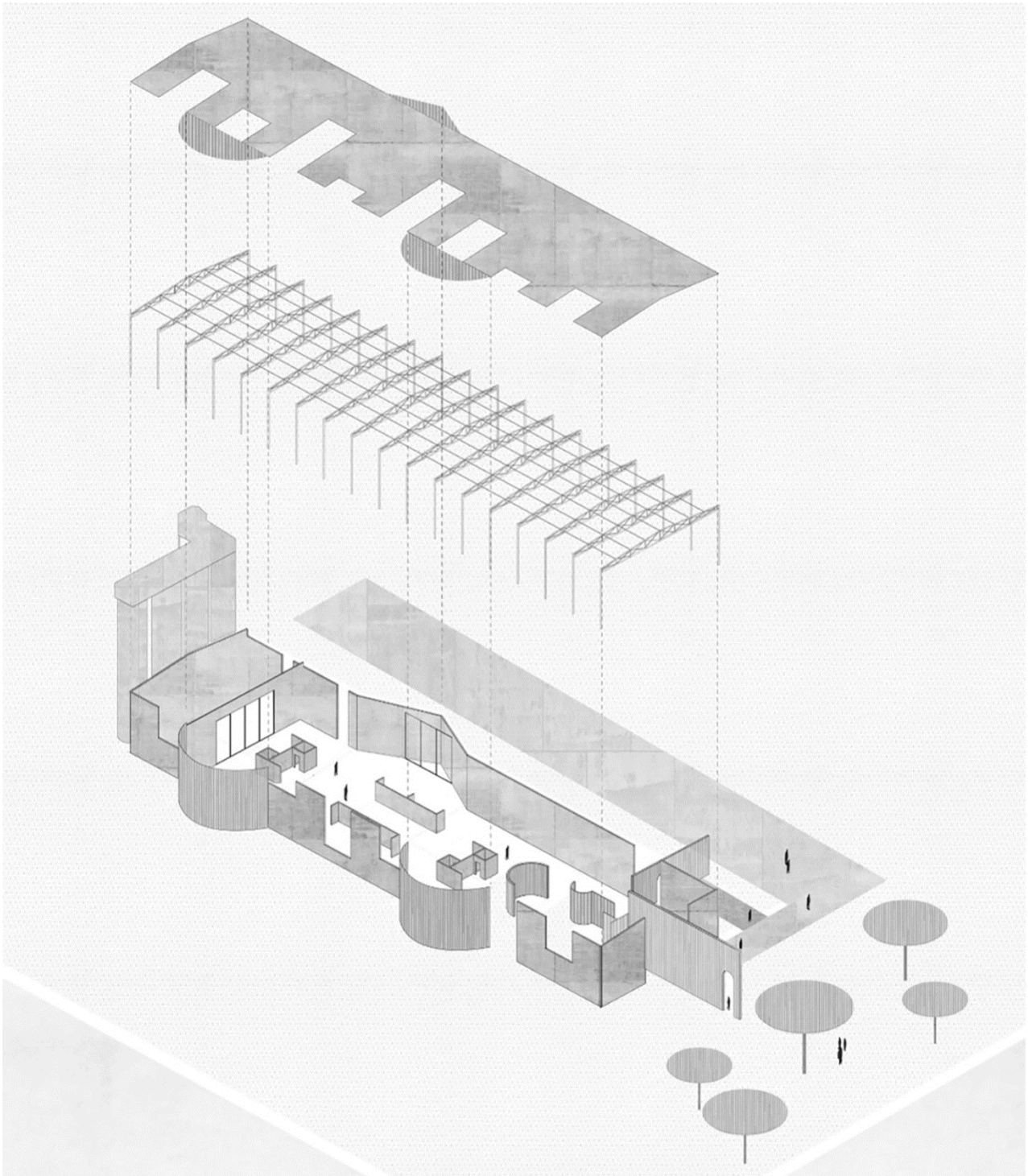
Figure 11: Taste project- Axonometric exploded view- students: Giovanni Loffredo, Sabato Malangone and Mariapia Verde

Discussion and Conclusion

Rejected architecture is made up of everything that, for various reasons, loses its role or fails to complete its life. They are magical places, ready to be re-read as poetic opportunities for "new lands" to explore (MARINI, 2010). This work brings together two researches that arise from the same need: to give a second chance to what has been repudiated because it was not considered worthy and therefore forgotten in the territory or because it reminds us of how crime has damaged the economic fabric. Giving a second chance means highlighting the potential of a place and trying to give a new boost to the strength of forgotten architecture. The practice of reuse has been around for thousands of years. It has allowed for a consumption of raw materials that seemed manageable and, we can say, even sustainable, but the real leap in scale, what has contributed significantly to the loss of management of the phenomenon, has been population growth. Millions of people have migrated to all parts of the world and each geography has responded differently to this phenomenon. What has resulted is a veritable intoxication of the housing patrimony that has delivered endless toxins into our hands in the built environment. If the Modern has given us the possibility of rapidly building new housing also with an interesting economic return, the ruin of the Modern itself has produced so many concrete works that inevitably lead to energy and environmental problems. This work has tried to tell of happy ways of reusing the unfinished by trying to give a second life to architecture that had lost all hope. The examples allow for a reading as a phenomenon that is not limited to a cataloguing of possibilities, but to a proactive approach that, aiming at zero demolition, tries to read what really contains the possibility of being re-read as a space with a new possibility. The paradigm of the function of architecture is changing, and the project must be in dialogue with respect to the possibility of an architecture to be many more things than what it was imagined to be. We are faced with numerous layers of time to be reworked, to be given a new meaning, just as Gio Ponti (PONTI, 1957)had us imagine when describing the architectural skeleton as a hypothesis of a possible beauty, a puzzle to be reconstructed and reinterpreted through numerous actions that will depend on the author'' sensitivity and on how the author himself is inclined to a utopian outlook. All this does not place the architect as a dreamer but as one who can deliver a changeable vision that does not only find its identity in authorship but precisely in making the work itself changeable again, as the past has taught us. Entering the pre-existence, appropriating parts, rising above it, enveloping it is an action of renewal that can save what appears to be an emergency, give it new life and gently accompany the remains and parts towards a new history. It is important to consider that the changes in our society will not stop with today, in time new needs will arise and an elastic architecture, ready to be reshaped with small actions is a possibility that architecture cannot decide to lose. "Here and now" is no longer an expression of our time but "it is already tomorrow" is what architecture must aim for, to be something else at the very moment it is imagined, seeking a new form of eternity that we do not find in the "firmitas" (PURINI, 2015) understood with the traditional exception of the term but in the very evolution of form and function, without fear.

Acknowledgement

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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