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MUNICIPIO SQUARE - NAPLES: A. SIZA AND E. SOUTO DE MOURA PROJECT

Bruna Di Palma

*Department of Urban Design and Planning, University of Naples "Federico II" (ITALY)
brunadipalma@libero.it*

Abstract

The Neapolitan urban port area interpretation proposed by Alvaro Siza Vieira and Edoardo Souto De Moura in their design for the Municipio station is an interesting point of view for the theoretical discussion about the development of the urban port area and it represents a practical example of working on this ticklish part of the city.

Municipio square has a strategic role in the city of Naples: first for its monumental and representative image, then for urban mobility, actually for what concerns the reconstruction of the urban form evolution and particularly for the city border near the sea, thanks to the new archaeological findings of the ancient port near the Castel Nuovo fosse.

Line 1 and 6 interchanges of the Neapolitan underground will connect Municipio station to the whole city and the port; thanks to its closeness to the Beverello quay, the Angioino quay, and the station of the harbour, it should be renamed Municipio – Porto station. In this work, all the questions are tackled together by a method that could be defined archaeological for its revealing and holding, because it combines stratigrafically different stream of traffic, archaeologies and monuments belonging to various city times, mixed integrated facilities and function with the main goal of a durable public vitality of the city. An idea of infrastructural project as city re-configuration, a really public use of urban history, a reading of the portual area as a part of the city are all together in the general structure of this work.

The city history will be projected towards the future excavating in the urban past; in a general redevelopment area, the design of planes, the excavations and incisions will connect the contemporary port with the ancient rearwarder one, overruling the break that is usually placed between the port area and the city, creating, on the other hand, continuity, both of identity and of landscape.

Keywords: Urban port, infrastructure, archaeology.

INTRODUCTION

Within the international debate on planning and urban redevelopment processes, the theme of the relationship between the seaport space and the urban space gets the point of the contemporary complex necessity to combine the conservation needs with the development ones.

A complex, but practical occasion to explore this question is that one offered by the urban port area of Naples (*Fig. 1*). This part of the town "ha seguito all'unisono l'evolversi del processo di costruzione storica della città, rappresentandone, come in un gioco di reciproci riflessi, l'immagine specchiata nelle acque" [1] (*Fig. 2*). Even now, this role of the area is confirmed and it may be defined as an index of the overall urban transformations. As evidence of this, and to confirm the strategic role of the area there are a lot of recent initiatives and under construction projects that involve the city when it has just stretched out toward the sea.

In particular the monumental area of the Neapolitan port, on which the attention is drawn to as a case study, is returning to participate in the urban transformation,

covering a major role, especially thanks to the Alvaro Siza Vieira and Edoardo Souto De Moura project, under construction, for Municipio square.



Fig. 1 - Overall view of the Neapolitan urban port area



Fig. 2 - Antonio Joll (sec. XVIII), Veduta del porto di Napoli

PORT AND CITY RELATION. EVOLUTION AND INTERPRETATION

Naples has always been a port city, but with the passage of time, its relationship with the sea has been gradually changing according to the economic – expansive nature of the needs that the city has had in its original formation and development between the arc of its gulf on the Mediterranean sea and the arc of its hill territory.

“Per molti secoli il Porto ha rappresentato l’ingresso privilegiato alla città, il luogo d’incontro per eccellenza tra genti, merci e linguaggi diversi. Grande piazza sull’acqua, con i lunghi pontili protesi come braccia di pietra tra le onde, questa parte urbana di “limite” ha dominato l’iconografia storica partenopea. Tant’è che è proprio dal mare che viene raffigurata Napoli nella bellissima Tavola Strozzi (Fig. 3), la prima

attendibile rappresentazione della struttura urbana” [2]. The prevailing longitudinal urban development, east – west, along the coastal arch, represented in the 1465 view of Naples, known just as the Tavola Strozzi, is accompanied by the strong transversal penetration of the “molo che, dall’interno della costruzione della città s’inoltra nell’acqua, [...] secondo una “misura” che proviene dal vuoto su cui si fronteggiano città murata, colle e Castel Nuovo” [3]. A transversality characterized by the vitality of the so called via del molo (*Fig. 4*). From the farthest point of the dock, this via del molo leads directly and in a decided way to the heart of the city itself, offering a fascinating view to the castle on the hill, Castel Sant’Elmo, bounded on the west side by the huge Castel Nuovo and on the east side by the historical city, but, above all, it had a fundamental role as public space with a strong identity within the city. In this area along the via del molo, in the stretched out empty space between architecture representative of the history of this part of the city, today we recognize the original layout of Piazza Municipio. With the passage of the time, however, the place of the relationship between the city and the sea, the interface between the urban space and port space, loses more and more the natural permeability. The separation takes place simultaneously with the specialization of the port functions and the general sectorial characterization of the various part of the city so that they lose cohesion and unity. The construction of the arteries and east – west coastal infrastructure (via Cristoforo Colombo and via Nuova Marina) conclusively put an end to any kind of hope about the recovery of relationship between the city and the sea (*Fig. 5*). Carlos Martí Aris states that “il ponte, o per estensione, le opere infrastrutturali, si converte in elemento fondamentale della struttura del territorio, poiché garantisce la mobilità delle persone e delle merci, e la connessione tra le parti. Questo fatto si scontra, tuttavia, con la tendenza delle infrastrutture a trasformarsi in un sistema indipendente, dotato di una logica e un funzionamento autonomi, che fanno di esse un oggetto isolato e incapace di stabilire un dialogo efficace con il territorio in cui sono inserite” [4]. This trend was decisive for the decline of the relationship between Naples and its sea, but it has been further strengthened by the subsequent disuse of certain port facilities located along the coast. This creates a long strip of territory, a terrain vague at the foot of a hard – built curtain that separates the city from the sea making it all the more legitimate the metaphor of Anna Maria Ortese for which *Il mare non bagna Napoli*.

The great need for action on this Neapolitan urban fringe emerges repeatedly in studies and researches on the design opportunities offered by the Neapolitan territory. In 1987, in the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Faculty of Architecture, some projects were drawn in Naples by architects such as Alvaro Siza, Aldo Rossi, Carlo Aymonino (*Fig. 6*), Vittorio Gregotti and others; various projects have been collected in the book *Progetti per Napoli* edited by G. Alisio, A. Izzo and R. Amirante. Also in 1991, on the occasion of the Venice Biennale, Salvatore Bisogni (*Fig. 7*) and Gianugo Polesello developed their project on the urban port of Naples. In both these cases, the connection port – city is summarized in the transverse connection between the angioino dock, Piazza Municipio with its Castel Nuovo and the hill with its Castel Sant’Elmo.



Fig. 3 – Unknown (1465), La flotta aragonese ritorna dalla battaglia di Ischia il 6 luglio 1465 (the so called Tavola Strozzi), Capodimonte Museum, Naples



Fig.4 - Antonio Joll (XVIII sec.), Napoli dal molo, (particular),



Fig. 5 - View of the urban port area after the construction of the east – west coastal infrastructure.

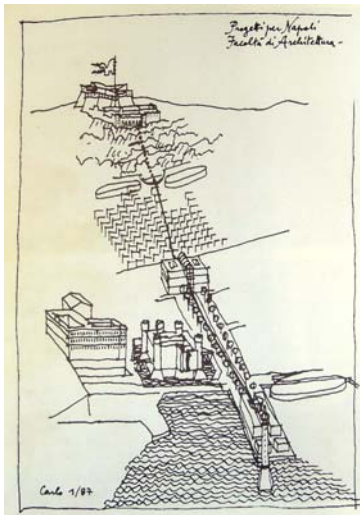


Fig. 6 - Carlo Aymonino (1987), working sketch “ Da S. Martino al mare”, Naples

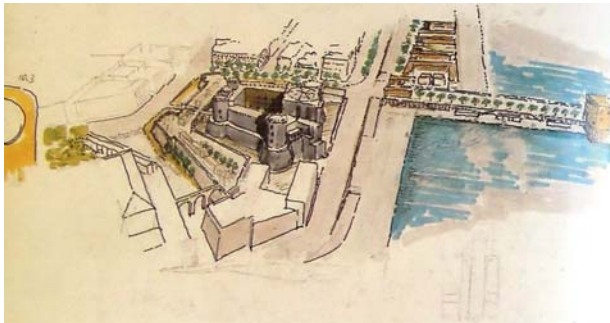


Fig. 7 – Salvatore Bisogni (1991), working sketch, Venice Biennale

RENEWAL STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

About ten years ago the refurbishment of the port returned to the center of the debate on urban planning in Naples. In particular, since 2004, when the Company Nausicaa was formed, composed by the Port Authority of Naples, the Municipality of Naples and the Campania Region. This company had to overcome the port functional specificity to drive the integrated development of the port area of the city and the first action taken was to hold an international design competition with the aim of upgrading the monumental area of the Neapolitan port. The center of the request of the two – stage competition was the theme of the necessary coexistence, along this longitudinal strip, between the working harbor and the city; the competition was won by the group led by the French Michel Euvé. “Abbiamo approfondito questo tema concentrando l' intervento sulla linea di confine fra porto e città. [...] Esserci collocati sulla linea di confine era un modo per consentire al porto di continuare a essere operativo. [...] Il nostro progetto ha trasformato la linea di separazione fra città e porto in una zona filtro, in una "filtering line" (Fig. 8). [...] Sulla sua copertura, quasi in continuità con la via Nuova Marina, è stata progettata una lunga passeggiata aperta sul porto e interconnessa con la galleria che collega la stazione marittima con la stazione della metropolitana di piazza del Municipio di Alvaro Siza ed Eduardo Souto de Mura” [5] (Fig. 9). Therefore a project aware of the difficulties arising from the coexistence of different functions and participation of many and various institutions involved, respectful of initiatives with which it is connected, but also a project that is still having a complicated process of development, so that nothing concrete has yet been undertaken. The desired result from the competition was to provide a

development mainly longitudinal of the project masterplan, running parallel to the arc of the Gulf. The project, which instead is now in progress at a single point along the whole arc of the port area offers a transversal interpretation of the connection between the port and the city. This is the Municipio station, interchange station between line 1 and 6 of the Naples metro. Although it is aimed for a punctual connection, its cross-cutting strategy, intended as an initiative on this delicate urban part, to be repeated in several places along its length to reconnect various urban parts of the city, is an alternative mode to intervention. The development of the port of Naples was still at the center of the Municipality strategies, when it was decided, between 2009 and 2011, to participate as subject leader to territorial cooperation program URBACT II, in which the thematic network CTUR (Cruise Traffic and Urban Regeneration) has seen Naples and its port Authority in comparison with other European and Extraeuropean cities and port authorities (Alicante, Dublin, Helsinki, Matosinhos, Rhodes, Rostock, Trieste, Varna, Douro and Leixoes Port Authority, Istanbul). In the cruise activity, the program saw an opportunity to the development of the waterfront, to the resolution of the tensions that exist between the urban and the port functions, but also to respond to the expectation of people about quality life and satisfaction proposal in terms of public spaces. “Il progetto CTUR fa riferimento allo sviluppo crocieristico come opportunità per il recupero del patrimonio architettonico - urbano/portuale e lo sviluppo economico e sociale delle città di mare, in coerenza con una corretta “rigenerazione urbana” nell’approccio integrato” [6]. Participation in this program, in addition to having stimulated, by comparison, a creative debate giving rise to new ideas on the development of these areas, has also allowed the definition of Local Action Plans (LAP): “progetti strutturati, integrati, caratterizzati da una elevata flessibilità [...] un coerente mix di operazioni già attivate e di ipotesi di nuovi interventi” [7].



Fig. 8 – Michel Euvè (2005), overall view of the filtering line

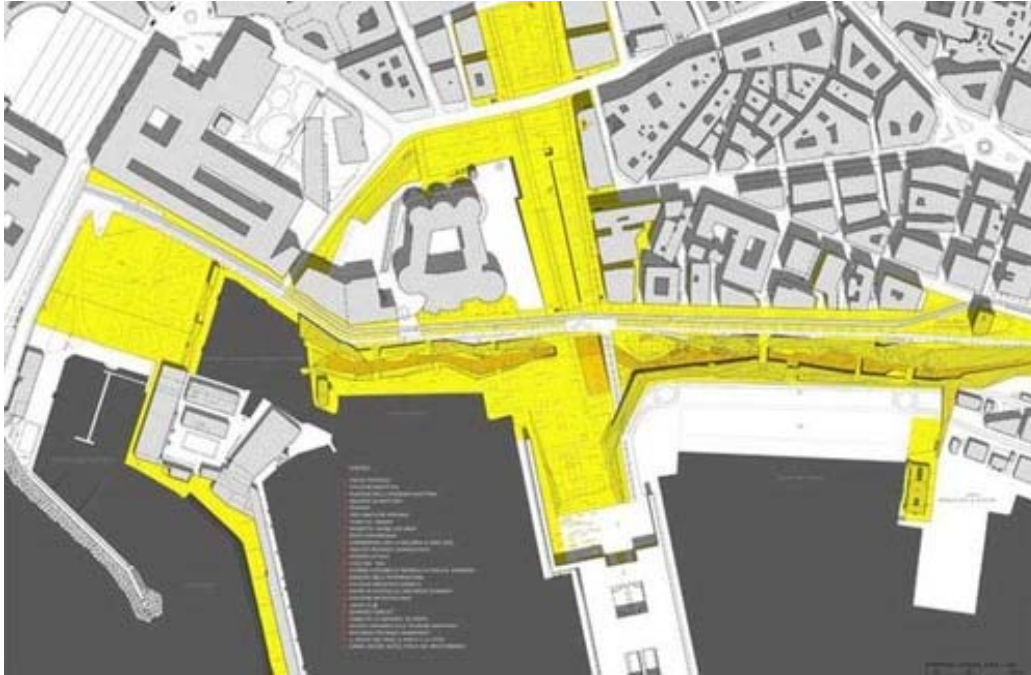


Fig. 9 – Michel Euvè (2005), site plan of the Neapolitan urban port area redevelopment project

INFRASTRUCTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RELATION

One of the strategies to renew the connection of the city with its port is the improvement and increase of physical connections and of transports; within the range of more or less recent actions regarding the area of the Neapolitan urban port, the project for the Municipio square, with all the implications that has had in its implementation phase, is the one on which focus the attention because of it is a particularly interesting case. From the nineties onwards, through the definition of the One Hundred Station Plan (1994), the Municipality has focused on the underground network construction and on the new station realization in strategic points of the city to address the general development of the city. An urban development in line with the objectives and guidelines of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD), a term introduced by Peter Calthorpe to indicate the transit oriented urban development that aims to create, in the station areas of influence, the conditions for a high functional mix, with high values of use intensity, and characteristics of good urban quality and liveability. “L’innovazione più significativa della metropolitana è di carattere sociale, dal momento che ha attuato un rapido collegamento tra le parti urbane, innescando una proficua simbiosi tra le aree di più antica stratificazione storica con le aree di più recente edificazione, ancora prive di identità monumentale” [8]. The Municipio station design, behind the Angioino dock and lateral to the Castel Nuovo, is part of the plan for the nodes of the urban metro network provided by the municipality intent. Together with the surfacing space settlement, the project takes form as an opportunity to solve a series of critical points of this central part of the city: the gradual public space erasure in the square and the creation of a space – junction for cars and public transport; the loss of the possibility of pedestrian crossing space, starting from the pier to get to the Palazzo San Giacomo, on the opposite side and Municipality seat, non providing a direct link between urban public space and port; the loss of benefits enjoyment of the moat empty near the Castel Nuovo, used for a long time with features that are not compatible with the historic value of the

monument, but as car parking. Then, in general, the continuity of space and identity that had characterized this area during its construction years has been slowly lost. As was the case for other projects of the subway station in Naples, also in the Municipio square, to the difficulty of having to connect to an horizontal complexity, corresponding to the area on the surface, is added the difficulty of having to insinuate between the history layers and therefore having to compare also with a vertical complexity of the stratification given by the archaeological finds discovery unearthed during the preliminary excavations (*Fig.10*). These excavations have allowed to find the greek-roman dock and three boats (*Fig.11*) dating to the first century AD and in excellent condition, thereby filling some gaps in knowledge on the city evolution and in particular, on the progress of the coastline and areas immediately behind it. In a different phase of the project, the location of the station in this particular point of the city and the metro line passage in this area, would have to take into account, the fact that an high archaeological potential may be present in the subsurface. Instead, the work continued with progressive reconsideration of the basic design set by Siza and Souto De Moura (*Fig 12*), in order to update it each time when the subsurface of Naples, more than ten meters deep, restored treasures, problems or obstacles to get around. About the Municipio square works, Francesco Venezia put forward very categorically: “è questo il momento drammatico: quando si crea la “separazione” che io definisco “fatale” tra il mondo del costruire e il mondo delle rovine che hanno sempre nutrito la costruzione, divenendo così l’archeologia nemica dell’architettura e della città, insidia inarginabile per l’architettura” [9]. However, the complexity of this type of design challenges should be approached with a different basic theory and the archaeologist Daniele Manacorda states equally convinced: “la ricerca archeologica può convivere con l’uso degli spazi urbani, senza che la città debba bloccarsi” [10]. Although the discovery of archaeological remains has not helped to speed up the implementation, and to improve the intervention sustainability both in economic field and in terms of good quality life, but it has been very important in the reconstruction of the urban form evolution of this part of the city. In addition to the greek – roman ships, the crenellated wall that surrounded the Castel Nuovo (shown in the table Strozzi, but the existence of which had never been verified), the base of the circular Incoronata tower, another piece of the ancient fortification of the castle and even many remains of houses with fine wall painting were founded. “Ciò che ci colpisce non è tanto la “quantità di tempo” trascorso dalla sua fondazione, quanto piuttosto il fatto che percepiamo, quasi fisicamente, la complessità del suo tempo interno: ovvero la molteplicità di quei tempi differenti che i resti materiali, intrecciati fra di loro descrivono, richiamano, testimoniano” [11].

To anyone who points out the problems and controversies that are accompanied the works, Siza says “tutto ciò che ha a che fare con l’archeologia non è un progetto terminato”. Certainly the complexity to which the project has been submitted is leading to the creation of a new part of the city, which enter as profound teaching in the design of the link between the new and the old, the infrastructural and the archaeological. It is an example of designing building for contemporary life in accord to a public use of history in historical context. Inevitably, “qualsiasi progetto d’intervento su un sito archeologico nel centro di una città è un potenziale progetto archeologico, e qualsiasi campagna archeologica è un progetto urbano” [12]: the words of the Greek architect Yannis Tsiomis find a further confirmation in the proposed layout of the square and in the construction of the new station. Through the “uso della memoria come strumento, come materiale del progetto” [13], the project is designed and it develops by successive layers and spatial use, revealing

archaeological practice at the base of the design process. This practice does not occur through the work of uncovering the archaeologies, but through their integration with the new architecture, the surrounding city and landscape, the infrastructural needs. The final harmony of the project will be in the contaminated balance reached and not in the original. The Portuguese architects give back the unitary characteristic of transversal axis that connects the city to the sea, to the empty space of Municipio square, in perspective with the hill. The spatial continuity of the new Municipio square is also guaranteed thanks to the traffic flows reorganization, to the expansion and the new fluidity of the pedestrian area (*Fig. 13*). The project synthesizes some horizontal connections through few and clear planimetric signs: two extended plans mark the main historical elevations through which this urban part was formed, and also the flow system, which always characterizes the project of a station, as well as that of a square, accompanied by the overlapping plans. Using the height difference between the existing square and that of the moat around the castle, the project redefines the monumental public space on the surface, at the nineteenth century city level, through a wide tree-lined street between Palazzo San Giacomo and via Marina. As a terrace, this continuous plan stops itself longitudinally near the Castel Nuovo moat and through the creation of an overlooking to the archaeological floor below it. The entrance to the station is located in the low archaeological floor and through an excavation, it goes under the square surface, identifying another level, the atrium-mezzanine. At that level passengers arrive from the underground metro lines 1 and 6. Restaurants, shops and exhibition spaces for the ancient boat and the archaeological ruins are put together, but above all, here there is the direct connection with the Molo Angioino and the Maritime Station. This level is also the protagonist of the connection between the new project and the archeological findings: they can be seen through the glass gallery, parallel to the Caste Nuovo fortification, which is directly connected with the archaeological area. In this way, everyone, in the station or in the square, is directly involved in the view of the surrounding monuments. The projected connection between the maritime station and the subway station (*Fig. 14*) allows to create the link between the space of the port and the space of the city and also the boundary between this two spaces will be not more well identified, but rather, topped with strength and simplicity at the same time, becoming the space of permeability and crossing (*Fig. 15-16*). In the Municipio Square, the new infrastructural project allows, certainly, to connect different point in the city space, but the particular feature of this case is also to create a temporal connection between the different times of the urban port. So, in the lower level, the Greek-roman port is connected to the contemporary one, while, in the surface, the new Municipio square refers to what it was several years ago, when the ancient "via del molo," full of people and fascinating representative space of the city, was described as magical by travelers like Goethe and Dumas. "Pensare un'architettura nel tempo, nella lunga durata, è in realtà una condizione indispensabile per offrire un'effettiva sostenibilità dell'architettura: non a caso, i francesi parlano a questo proposito di "development durable", sviluppo durevole, legando il concetto di sostenibilità a quello di durata temporale" [14].



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Fig. 10 – Aerial view of excavation



Fig. 11 – Aerial view of three boats and wooden stakes of the pier

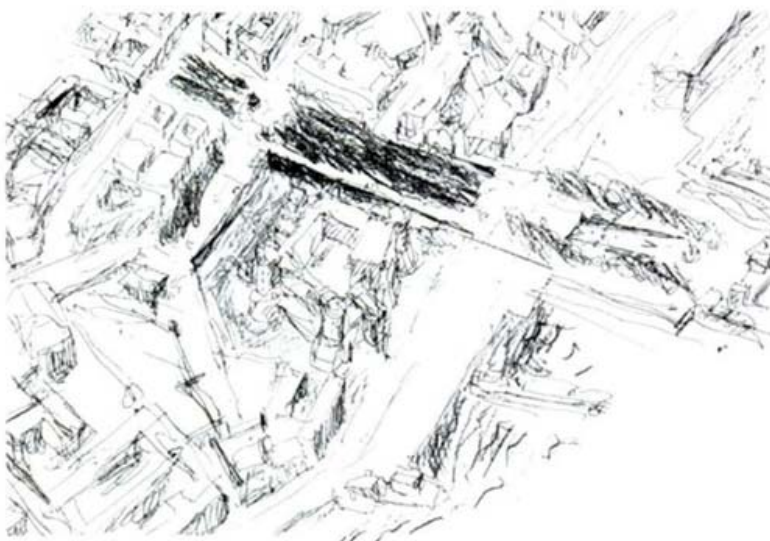


Fig. 12 – A. Siza and E. Souto De Moura, working sketch

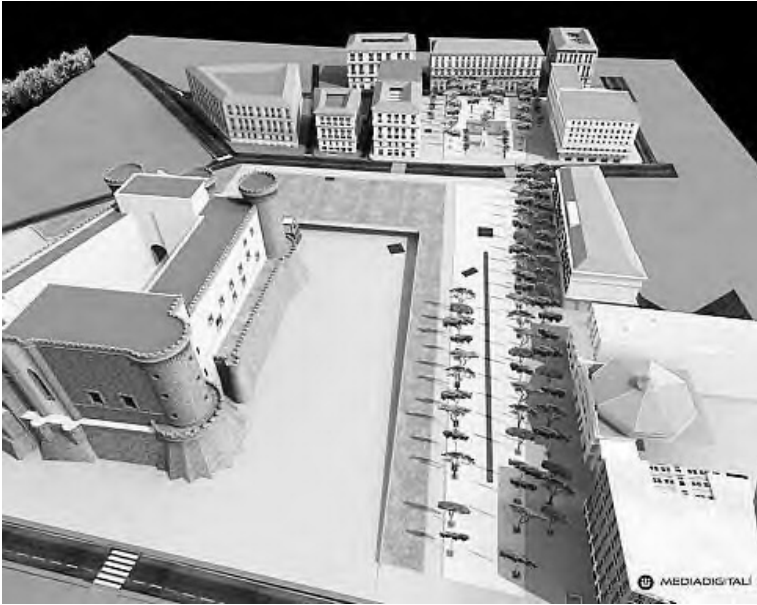


Fig. 13 – Overall view of the model



Fig. 14 – Overall view of the model, from the port to the hill

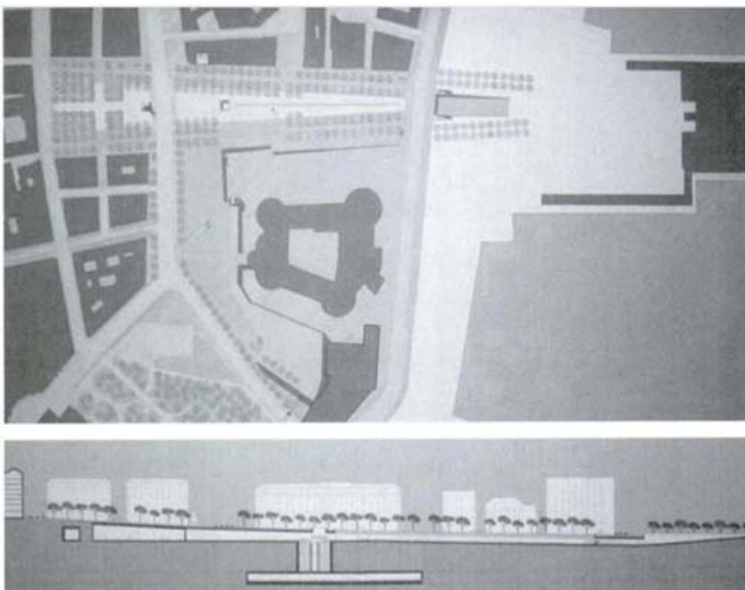


Fig. 15 – Plan at the Municipio square level and longitudinal section

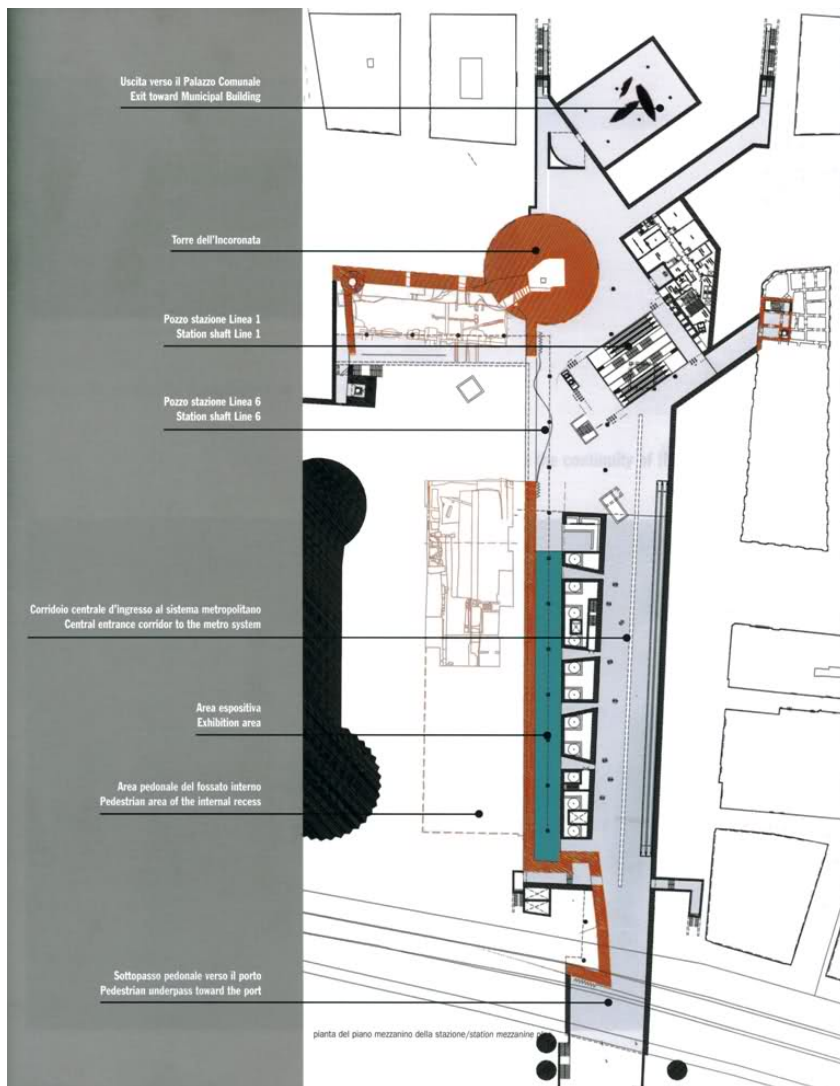


Fig. 16 – Municipio station, mezzanine level plan

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