

A Role for the University in the Prospects of Evolution of the Contemporary Cities

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The University has its roots in the city and in the territory, catches their aspirations and expresses the features and aptitudes of its own territorial sphere.

In a moment of great transformation and organisational re-arrangement of the academic system, with the accelerated dynamic of re-articulation in new seats and urban facilities, we question the opportunity of revising the categories of the planning approach so far characterizing the pre-figuration of places and spaces destined to the University.

The relation with the city and the cultural and social exchange of the urban tissue, and of the productive one, are springs of careful reflection both on the educational level and with regard to the construction of new buildings, through an even stronger necessity of integration of urban places and spaces.

On the one hand, the evolutionary dynamics typical of the academic system, characterized by ongoing transformations, and, on the other hand, the building logics of the urban reality, much slower and often not so consistent with those dynamics, become the starting points for the quest of a new equilibrium and of an answer to the emergence of new issues meant to overcome the actual condition of stagnation and inertia.

Through three emblematic examples we recall this walk of difficulties but also of hope for the future developments of our cities.

The academic settlement in Como.

The urban campus of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Trento.

The urban campus of Lecco.

The planning idea of the new library of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Trento is closely correlated with the elements of the historical city.

The new building stands as the latest urban element before the break of the river. It is assumed as final element of an ideal link with the city centre, giving the back to the river and turning towards the dome and the other institutions.

The hypothesis of intervention is building a sort of open corner over the city, so that the city might physically have a direct vision of the library, establishing a semantic dialogue with the new structure, beyond the symbolic one.

Behind the glass front it will be possible to see in the vertical direction a sequence of reading spaces and shelves of volumes orderly placed behind, so that it will look like an open chest: an extraordinary space for scholars and for the users of the structure.

The front will be erected on a new, lowered public square strictly connected to the system of walking paths that through the existing bicycle and pedestrian tunnel along Verdi street and the new possible underground passage beyond the Mulino Vittoria will be meant to physically connect the existing academic structures, already standing along this path in the direction of the dome and of the town centre.

The new square is intended to give a concrete answer to the expectation of an identification of the new library with a urban door. It will be used as meeting place, but also as entry to the academic cultural system in its territorial articulations. The new dimension of the relations will be able to enrich the academic life itself.

The library project is consequently enriched by this system of relations and the organisational pattern of the new building is structured with reference to the needs of the city itself.