READING AND THE DESIGNING THE URBAN ORGANISM OF SAN VITO ROMANO

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ABSTRACT

Working in a consolidated urban identity involves several considerations and studies regarding the architectural design strategies and the growth behaviour of the urban context itself. Understanding a local urban identity and its built heritage is of great importance for tackling the objectives of proper reading and designing of the area; then a careful historical, territorial and urban analysis set the basis to start a new project. Quality of life, commercial vitality and environmental well-being are strictly linked with the high quality of a specific area's urban character. Considering ourselves as influencers of those transformations, we can observe how urban developments look at directional growing phenomena through the spatial organisation of the parts that form them. A strategy to properly understand a territorial urban identity consist also in understanding its complex coexistence. We need to consider the area as an integrated complex of nodes and networks, places and flows; in which multiple relations, activities and values co-exist, interact, combine. The present and final aspect of an urban area is seen as an organic whole of primary elements: human activities and territorial conformation which tells important information about its evolution. There is a consolidated method of intervention based on the careful reading of the urban fabric to create a final current project; a logical phenomenological analysis is the instrument of understanding the evolution of an area, of its built fabric considering the architectural products of the past so the typological process as the key to use history to create contemporary architectures.

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We consider the shape of ancient cities and the path that generates it, we create an urban vocabulary of paths, edges, nodes, districts, and landmarks which has persisted in use in mapping for planning and design. Similarly we apply this study to the different project scales. An approach that considers every new built architecture as part of a complex and live organism.

Introduction

This is part of my Master thesis "Lettura e progetto dell'organismo urbano di San Vito Romano", Rapporteur G. Strappa, Co-rapporteur A. Camiz, "Sapienza", University of Rome, Faculty of Architecture, 2013-2014 (Reading and Designing the Urban Organism of San Vito Romano). In the Italian territory the preservation of historic city centres represents an important subject to be considered in any architectural speculation. This project strictly relates with this theme and proposes a series of logical and consequential steps to examine when starting a new design proposal. The city is seen as a complex organism: a live and evolving being where its components are a combination of morphological transformation and human activities, specific and recognisable. Human activities and territorial changes are the key to understanding the current aspect of a city centre.
After studying the natural urban growth of the area, the built architectural fabric and its territorial aspects; analysing historical, morphological and urban data we can set the basis for a general recognisable approach to initiate a regeneration project, an appropriate planned intervention that is directed to identify and justify the location and the type of intervention within a consolidate urban identity.

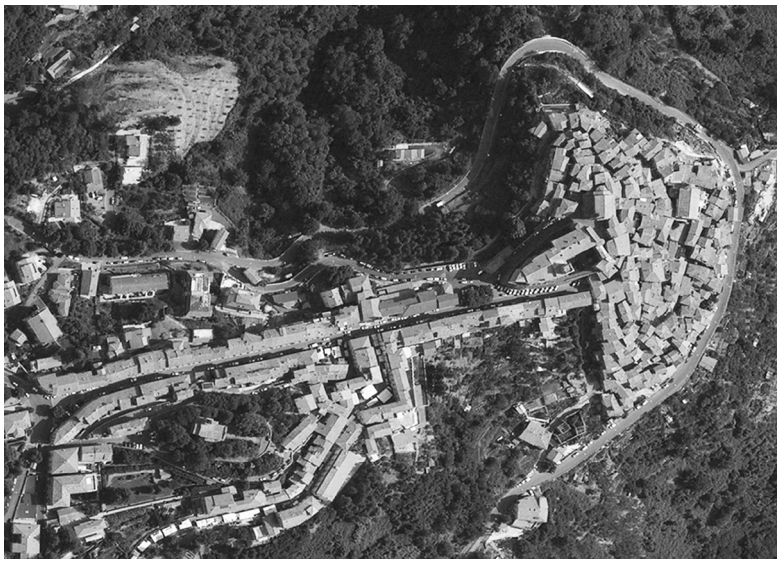


Figure 1. Aerial view of San Vito Romano

Results

With this approach was possible to recognise urban formation phases and to consider their attitude to transformation. Some primary elements were identified to be common to those places: paths, housing, monuments, public spaces, public squares and more, all generated from spontaneous aggregation rules. The place subject of study was analysed at different design representation scales, from the large location map to the detailed architecture of the buildings.The analysis focused on three main tier :

- The Territorial organism
- The Urban Fabric organism
- The Building organism

The Territorial organism

The territory can be considered as the expression of a duality that includes its natural land transformation process and the effect that human activities have on this transformation. Looking at the territorial map we can recognise growing directions and guiding principles for the formations of inhabited places. The land as it is shaped indicates clear paths easily recognisable with the eye, the land conformation depends on its geography of hills and mountains, water sources and complex water system. Inhabited settlements were primarily established where a favourable combination of those elements was identified as well as a favourable temperate climate depending on the places elevations.

San Vito

San Vito rises on a ridge that connects with two other

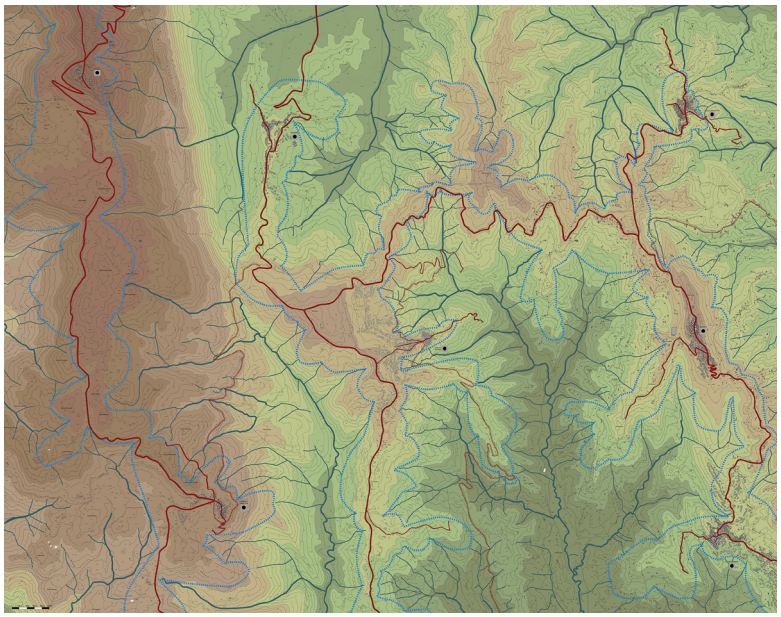


Figure 2. Territorial map indicate main crests between valleys and locations of human settlements.

boroughs, Genazzano and Pisoniano. Along this crest between two valleys most likely on its west side it is said that since the ancient Roman age there was the Via Empolitana, that would connect with the Via Prenestina towards the Imperial Villa of Gennazzano. The cartography and aerial topographical map confirm the hypothesis that determines a clear direction of expansion and similar formation process for San Vito and the surrounding settlements. Some alignments in the maps show how the crest and valleys are dual elements, and indicate secondary paths that branched out of the main. The main crest is identifiable as possibly the most ancient path, the one that originally was walked by man when starting their settlement in the Italian territory and is defined by the geography of the terrain: in this case the Via Empolitana. San Vito Romano is located on the secondary path where the altitude is at a lower elevation and the water source is closer, possibly much better for an urban formation. In fact the water system should definitely be taken into major consideration on the decision of forming a new city and creating a new settlement.

History

San Vito is located between the River Aniene Valley and Via Prenestina, in this area during the years most of the settlement had a military transformation to fortress, San Vito became a castle to protect from barbarian invasions. All the other surrounding settlements had a similar transformation and formation features. Some are located in the place of an old roman villa, others close to religious sites, others were primitive settlements of new foundation, however all of them are connected via a net of primary and secondary paths.

Figure 3. The water system and Formation of San Vito Romano in relation with territorial conformation.

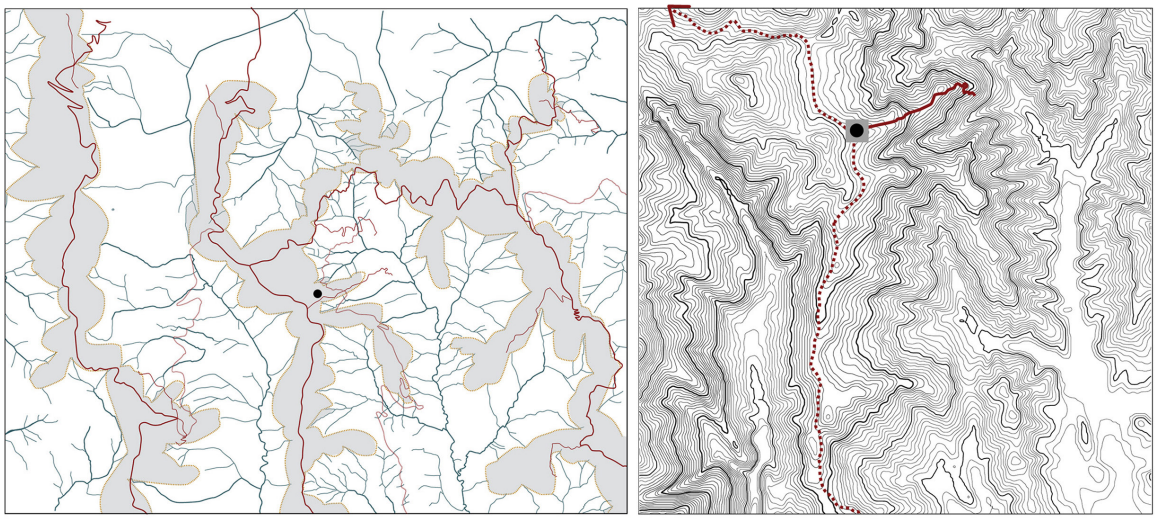


Figure 4. Catasto Alessandrino 1660-1661.

The Urban Fabric organism

To understand the logic that gives form to the modern San Vito and its borough, we can use the same method that considers the possible spontaneous aggregation along the main matrix pathways for the large territorial scale. Where in the land its marks and conformation become evident direction of new settlements, in the smaller urban scale the paths and roads influence the urban fabric formation.

Methods

To read the Urban fabric of San Vito I overlapped the single ground floor architectural plans with their title plans. This process allows to locate main directional vectors and urban housing units orientation, fundamental elements to read how the city grew. Housing cell is what we call a basic urban unit, the aggregation of single basic units forms an urban agglomerate; the direction of the structure of those 'cells' follows the direction of a recognisable path, the matrix pathway. The urban formation follows primary routes that we call matrix and develops following those alignment, in the city evolution process are also very important the human activities. It is possible to identify for the city of San Vito 5 recognisable main phases of growth, where a new directional matrix path leads the formation of the urban organism.

Phase 1

The first map shows the original road to the Castle, or rather the secondary crest path that branched from the Via Empolitana and where the first group of inhabitants created their homes. Around the Castle is where the original core of basic units start to aggregate along the road that links the church of Santa Maria in Arce to the north where is one of the access portals to the town.

Figure 5. Catasto from 1859 describes the boroughs and urban fabric configuration.

Phase 2
The second phase highlights the growth of the ancient settlement towards a route that from the Castle departs to the south. This is the return way from the water fountain source to another portal to the city Porta del Ponte.

Phase 3
The third phase shows the spontaneous growth of the first ring of new buildings that surrounds the main core of the town following the winding course of the hills. When the process of populating a town takes place consequently some of its fabric begins to specialise. The presence of the church of San Biagio and the axes that connect to the church of St. Maria in Arce leads the urban fabric to a specialisation process in their function and form. Is evident the presence of a large stairway that links two different levels of the borough, the buildings complete their forms, change their directions, and close into courts.

Phase 4
The fourth phase considers the direction of another portion of the urban fabric and shows a strong directional axis that

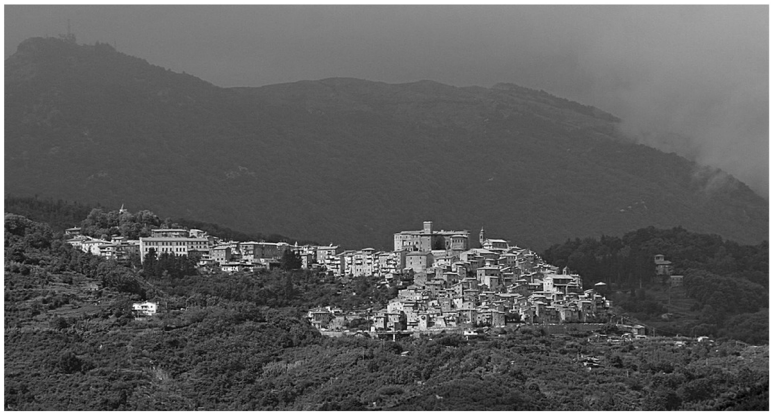


Figure 6. San Vito Romano aerial views.

goes from the south through San Biagio Church towards a third portal to access the city Porta dell'Ospedale.

Phase 5
The last directional vector proves very clear. This is the road that moves from the Castle to the west towards the via Empolitana. This is the 17th century route properly planned to create a perspective optical axis towards 'Borgo Mario': the 'Via del Borgo'. The urban fabric has the recognisable form of the 17th century city. Perfectly perpendicular to the matrix path.

The Building organism
In the same way as for the old city core, also the modern city follows logical aggregation rules. The area where the project is located is part of the last developing phase of the old town: the 17th century axis to Borgo Mario. This area is particularly challenging for its different elevations, its interrupted and stepped paths and the uneven terrain configuration that we knew from history has been levelled by humans afterwards. The project aims to support a regeneration program through an urban and residential redevelopment of vacant and redundant buildings and the construction of a new focal building to support the growth of a small town and boost the tourism in the area as well as the economy.

Masterplan
To begin the regeneration project I developed a master plan programme divided in simple steps.Three main poles were identified as part of the transformation programme:
- Castle Theodoli
- Borgo Mario Theodoli, The urban square 'piazza' in front of SS Sebastiano e Rocco church
- Crossroads access point to Via del Borgo, called Piazza Roma

From those poles were considered the connections between them, the journeys that linked them and their possible improvement, so the plan of a:
- Redevelopment of the main road using a new designed pavement and the possibility to be converted in a pedestrian area.
- Redevelopment of a second parallel path to the main road and rebuild where disconnected due to the different elevations through stairways, lifts or bridges.

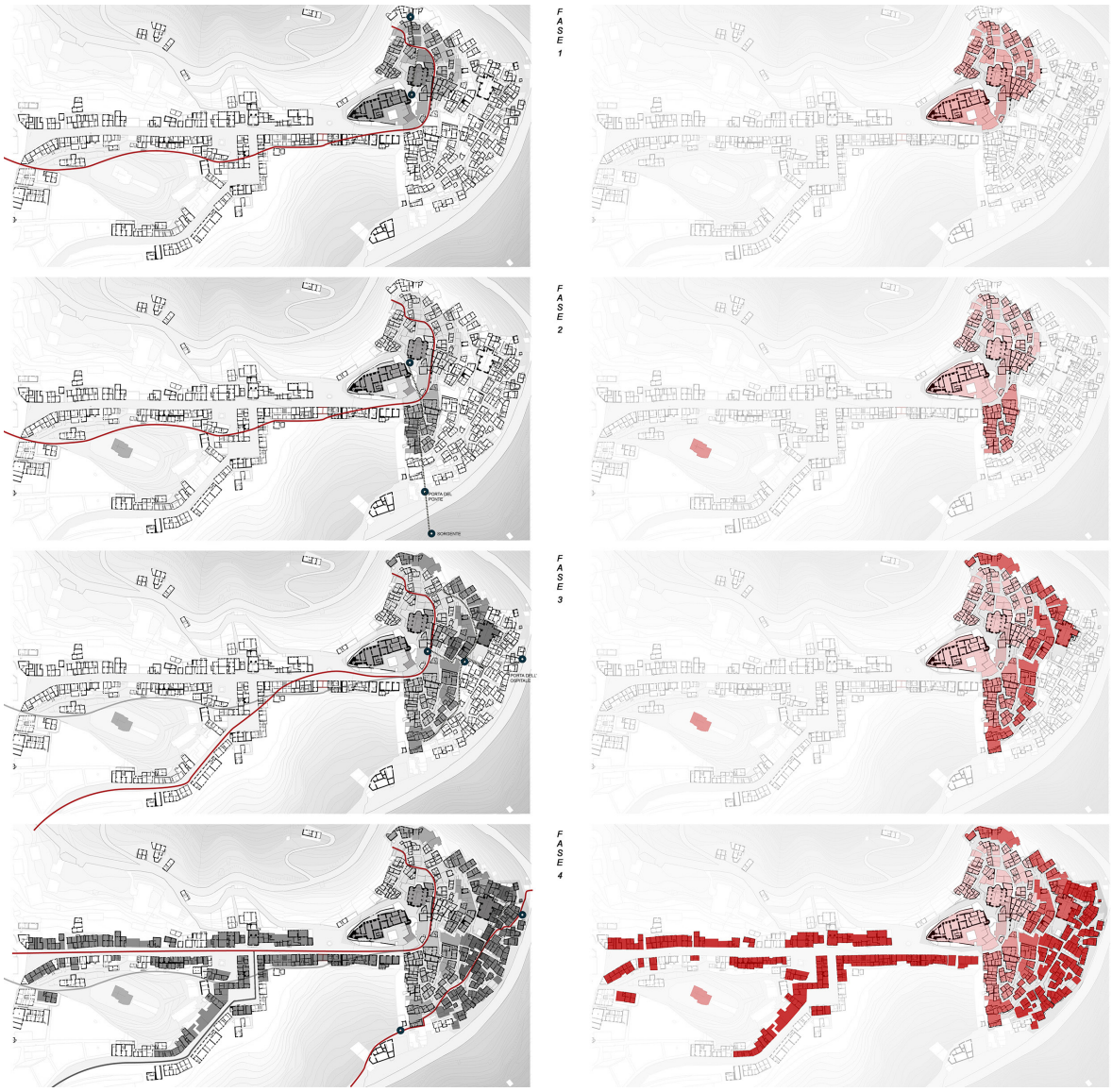
Where the poles and the paths meet they generate important aggregation nodes for activities this is why in those places is proposed the creation of Public Squares or 'Piazza':

- New public square in front of the crossway called Piazza Roma that is also going to be the location of the new proposed building.
- New public square in front of the Church SS Sebastiano e Rocco

Where the new public square are created, the function of the buildings varies new activities enrich the places, the scope of the project is proposing a specialisation of those poles:

- Change of use of buildings belonging to the church into new Expositions spaces and conference rooms.
- Creation of a tourism centre building with conference areas, cultural exposition community centre, auditorium, hotel rooms and restaurant.
- Creation of a new built square on the parallel secondary path as part of the new built complex reconnected with the main road.

Figure 7. Development phases and direction of growth of the old town of San Vito.



The touristic centre

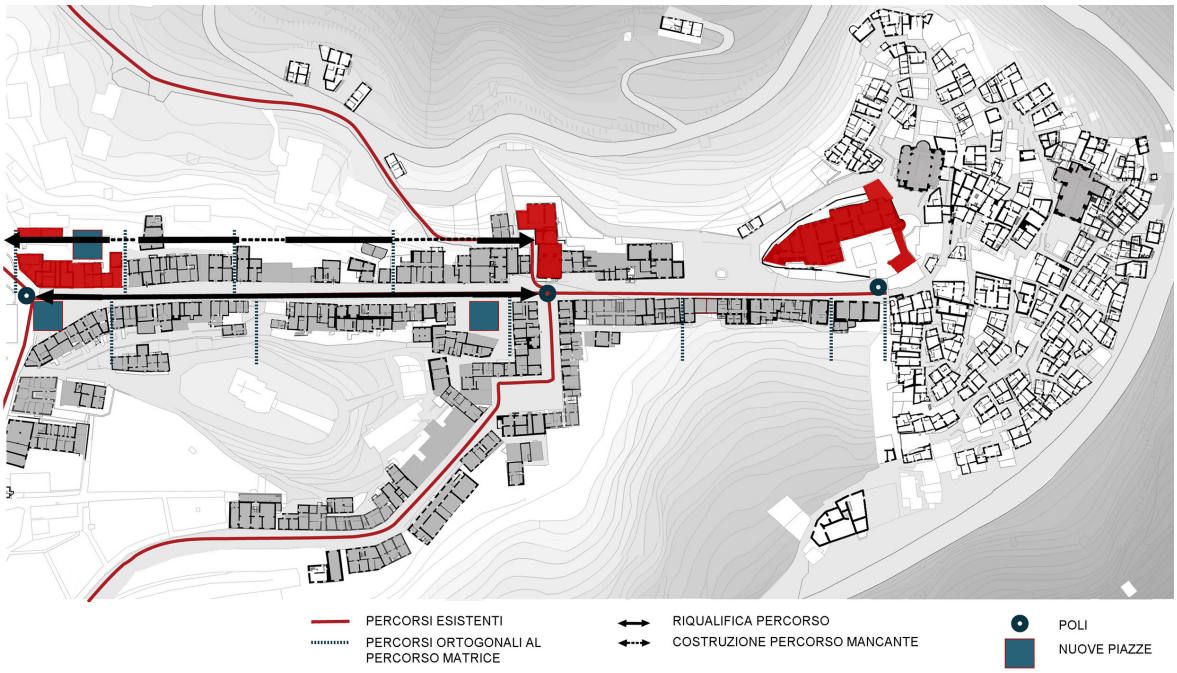
The building itself will be identifiable as the new pole of the city. This area is a clear focal point for its location comparable to the ones where the access portals to the old city are. Is in the way that connects Borgo Mario to the Castle to the old borough of San Vito.The proposal is for a touristic centre that attracts and offers activities to the people of San Vito and to the visitors that will see it on entering the town. The project is located at the beginning of the 17th century road, it is composed of two parts one of new construction and one part is the existing renaissance fabric, recognisable for its high historical quality and in need of requalification. The two parts will function as public building and private accommodations. The project involves the existing buildings regeneration:

- Redesign of the existing houses into mini apartments for the user of the new town congress building and possible tourists.
- Connection and integration of the existing buildings with the new built through restoration of the façade elevations and interior redesign.

New build project development:

- The new built part of the project involves the demolition of a building of low historical quality and of more recent construction and consequently the indication of site location and definition of the matrix path. Basic units 'cells' relative to the generative structural direction start shaping the new front along the principal matrix path.
- Secondary parallel path is introduced to overturn the units directions, it is located at a lower elevation and meets the main

Figure 8. Masterplan



road level at one point along Via del Borgo, connections are designed through an existing arched tunnel to one side and through a new stairway to the other. An existing large street generates a design cut feature out of the building façade. Implantation of new units on the side path is introduced for the specialisation of the building fabric, connection and junction into a semi court building. Creation of a new public square 'Piazza'. The final objective of this project is to create a focus on an entryway piece to the city of San Vito that is able to deal with complex relationships in an existing consolidated identity. Major attention is given to the relationship with the Castle, the new built will be a respectful presence as well as a new identity point a recognisable new portal for the city.

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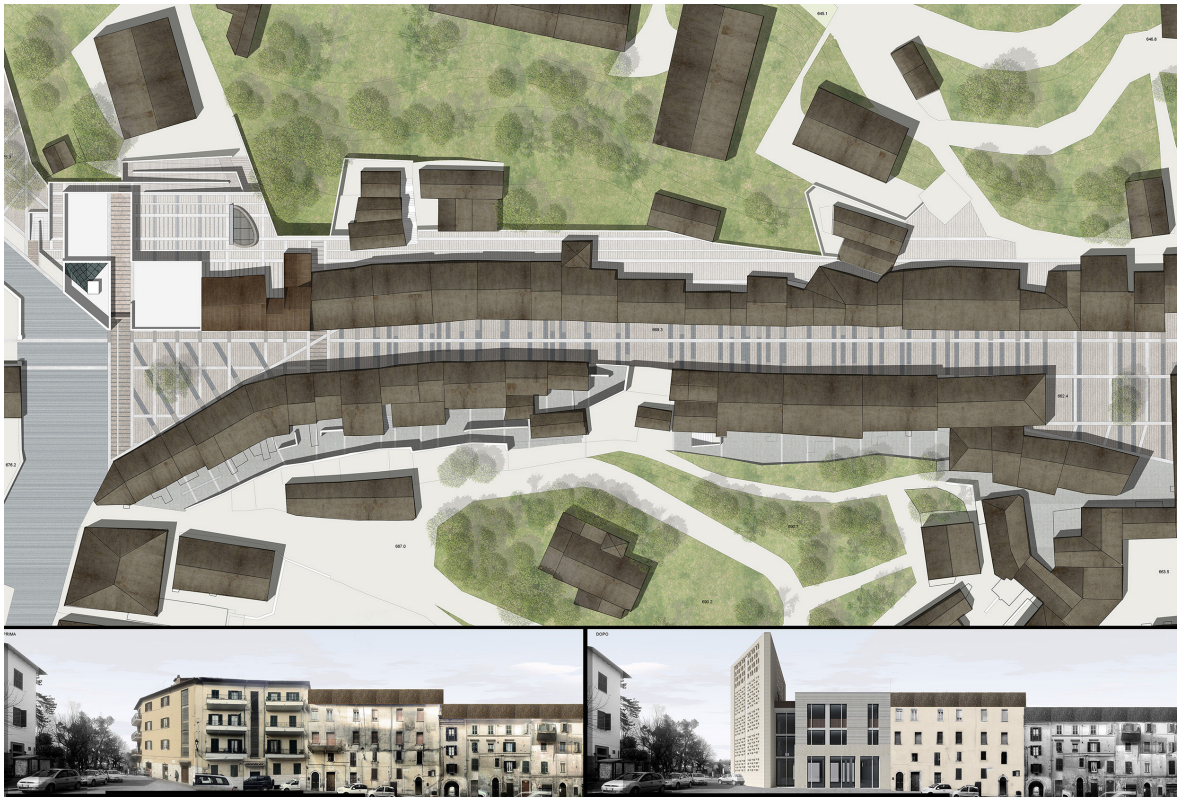
Figure 9. Site Plan



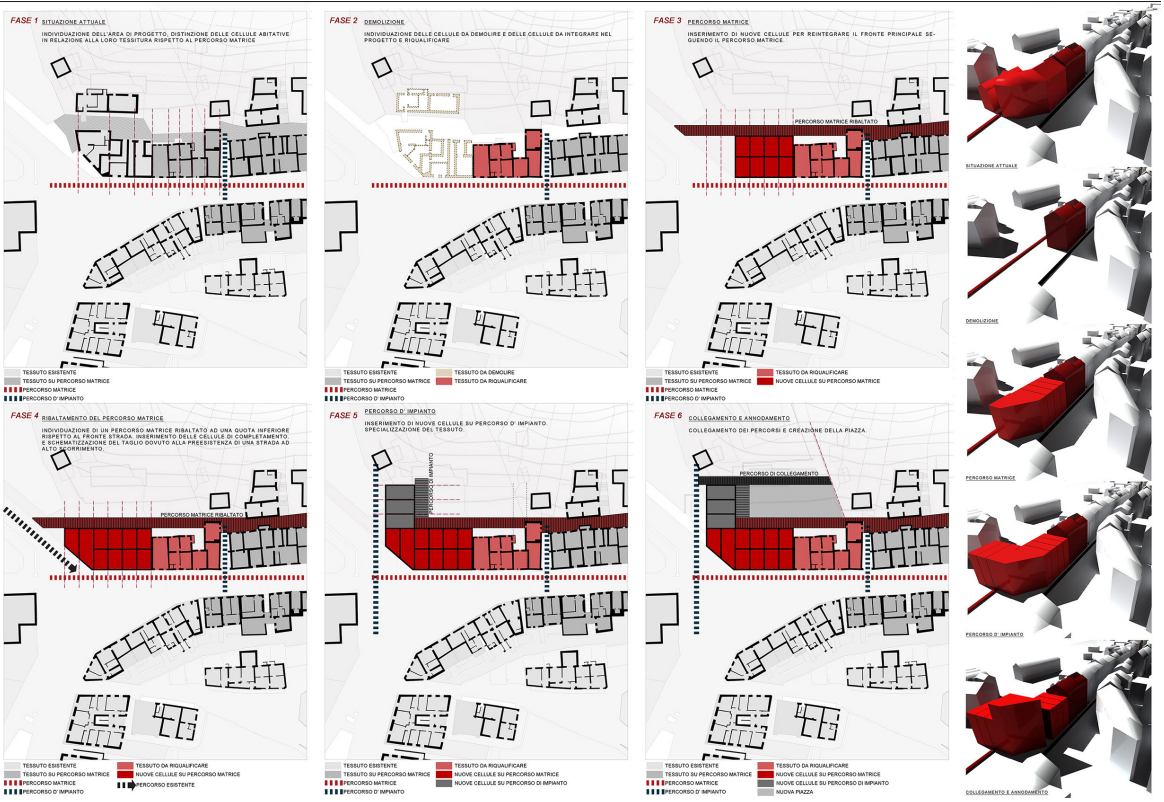


Figure 10. New built and existing requalification project development into phases.

Figure 11. New built plans, elevations and views.