

## THE APPROPRIATE FORM

### The analogy between the architectural and urban scale

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#### ABSTRACT

The contribution aims to offer a point of view, argued in connection with the architectural field, on the concept of multi-scalarity and its operational implications for the architectural project, by trying to undertake an operation of re-memorization in relating the concept to the theme of analogy. Multi-scalarity thus understood is analyzed in-depth at a theoretical level under the lens of ‘positive realism’, focusing in particular on the connections that the theme of ‘scale’, and therefore of measurement, establishes with the analogy, and on the way in which it can enter into a relationship with architecture. The contribution concludes with a reflection conducted on the theoretical assumptions investigated, to verify their general validity, through the analysis of some architectural designs of Aldo Rossi which, concerning the themes of multi-scalarity and analogy, can be considered paradigmatic.

#### KEYWORDS

scale, measurement, realism, analogy, architectural composition

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The contribution aims to offer a point of view, argued in connection with the architectural field, on the concept of multi-scalarity and its operational implications in the architectural project, investigating the full meaning of the term and trying to operate re-memorization concerning the generic and indefinite meaning today commonly attributed to it. If, in the first instance, it is possible to affirm that architecture, since ancient times, has expressed its ‘multi-scalar’ quality, as the well-known definition recalls, according to which the city is like a big house, and the house in turn is a small city (Alberti, 1485). It is also important to note how the evolution of meaning undergone by the Albertian concept over the centuries has led to the expansion, or rather the transcending, of the field of investigation of architecture, traced initially by the treatise writer up to the present day including, within this, not only art made architectural, but in general, every modification realized on earth by man, in view of his needs (Morris, 1963).

The equally well-known slogan ‘from the spoon to the city’ can be understood today as the extreme synthesis of this homologous way of understanding the role of the architect and his or her skills in the field, which, regardless of any size and scale, include as his responsibilities all that surrounds mankind (Bonfanti, 1963). In this sense, today the authentically multiscale attitude of architecture seems to have been lost or at least tarnished. Architecture is understood not only – in its fundamental meaning – as a shelter for man, but also as an element defining the shape of the city, of which the Italian culture of urban studies is a witness, among others. This has significantly contributed – particularly in the second half of the twentieth century – to raising the question of architecture on the city level, and it will be discussed again in the following text.

**New and modern in architecture** | The architectural works of our time are distinguished by the attention paid by designers to the formal and figurative profile. The propensity of architecture to difference, to extravagance, seeking distinction from the context, connotes a certain contemporary architectural production that seems to have set itself the goal of attracting attention. This propensity does not derive from a transformation of the process entirely within the field of architectural and urban design, but rather appears as the effect of an external will which predisposes architecture as a suitable vehicle for the diffusion and circulation of images. There seems to have been no historical period that, like ours, was characterized by a collective desire to communicate and exhibit the construction of society. In this sense, the majority of the architectural production, which represents only one aspect of a more complex reality but which constitutes its ultimate effect (Rossi, 2011), is invested in the present by actions aimed at indicating as its purpose the communication and presentation of itself.

The thesis advanced is not new, as the connection between the ways of production of society and changes in the structure of human settlements has been highlighted for some time. Already Samonà (1978) has pointed out how the transformations of the nineteenth-century city could be judged objectively only by detecting their close con-

nection with the will of the dominant bourgeois class, which, due to the privileged position that they had obtained, was able to differentiate their way of living with characteristics defined from one country to another, and which had the power to translate their ways of life into coherent urban structures. While taking into account the errors of that historical period, it should be noted that the openings in the fabric of the historic city, the geometric scheme of the urban additions, the residential organization with stately homes, the embellishment of the city with large public parks, were authentic manifestations of the constructive power of the bourgeoisie of the time, capable of giving concrete expression to the modern city.

The authenticity of the modern city seems to have been transformed, today, into an accumulation of exhibitions (Debord, 2002), the effect of an immense concentration of capital, so as to ‘become an image’, a show. If displaying capital means making an aspect of our society spectacular, the image becomes the transmissible commodity, materialized in the iconic skylines of contemporary cities. The concept of the icon seems to be the protagonist of the urban landscape of the twenty-first century, transforming a large part of the current architecture from an artefact with a use-value to an object with a novelty value, in which the new – which in the modern era was a coherent expression of shared ideas – in contemporary society describes a marked individuality of the architectural object. The phenomenon of ‘iconic buildings’ is the result of the propensity of capital to invest in commodity-architecture (Biraghi, 2019). These singular landmarks are conceived as celebratory symbols, characterized by the autonomy of their image with respect to any content, such as to release the form from its ‘function’, in other words, they are incapable of representing the theme of architecture.

It is no coincidence that we often resort to terms unrelated to the architectural sphere, performing an operation that we could define as multiscale – although with a completely different meaning than that described above – to focus on the singular iconic forms of these buildings: the ‘shard’ in London of Piano, the ‘cucumber’ designed by Foster in the city centre, the ‘ring’ that the O.M.A. he has built in Beijing as a CCTV site are just a few examples of the same phenomenon. Precisely the O.M.A. studio, in 2006, with the Dubai Renaissance project, reflects on the authenticity of the architecture of our time, expressing the ambition to conclude the ‘age of the icon’, inspired by a new ‘simplicity’, even if the culmination of the project results in a false reaction to architectural idolatry and which is distinguished only by its white appearance and uniform features. While renouncing the expressiveness of forms and the impact of colours, the Dubai Renaissance is animated by the same desire to amaze like other iconic buildings (Biraghi, 2019).

After all, the same phenomenon of the ‘iconic buildings’ constitutes only a particular case and perhaps faded today, of a broader discourse, within which a part of today’s architectural culture is seeking a form of autonomy, understood as a critical ‘detachment’ from the present time. A detachment to be understood not as a nostalgic return to an assumed past order, but as a distancing – equivalent to an awareness – of the

present time, and which precisely by virtue of this anachronism allows you to perceive, to ‘see’ (Agamben, 2008), the contemporaneity. On the other hand, it is not possible to judge an attitude aimed at renewing the world from the inside, according to fashion, as contemporary. That is, leaving it as it is (Benjamin, 1979).

**Inside and against the contemporary** | Within this ‘inside and against’ attitude the contemporary can be attributed to the exhibition curated by Èric Lapierre for the V Lisbon Architecture Triennale in 2019, entitled *The Poetics of Reason* (Lapierre et alii, 2019). Lapierre’s research, denouncing the iconic speculation of the last century, tends to reaffirm the autonomy of architecture as a rational discipline. The exhibition, showing a series of selected architectural references and arranged in a timeless sequence, seems to seek the logical and transmissible essence of the architectural discipline, linked to the figure of ‘the architect of reason’.

Lapierre’s intention can be included in that branch of architectural culture which, starting from the path dictated by the masters of reason, defines the exact ‘function’ of the intellectual architect: that of developing a theoretical apparatus that can be used in view of a practical action, not contaminated, however, by a ‘subjective’ vision, but rather shared by the greatest number of people, and therefore socializable. In these intentions, it is possible to perceive a link with a certain architectural culture, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century and can be summarized, in some ways, in the figure of Aldo Rossi. It is no coincidence that within the exhibition curated by Lapierre we find, in sequence, the *Analogous City* by Aldo Rossi and the *Field of Mars* by Piranesi: two works distant in time but united by the demonstrative intent to recognize a transmissible logic, and therefore always actualizable, in the forms of architecture, beyond their historical condition. A logic in which the past has never definitively passed, but rather has been assimilated to a field of forces whose potential can be reactivated and is capable of transforming the present.

On the other hand, the *Project of Autonomy* is also the title of the first book by Pier Vittorio Aureli (2016), an architect who supports the necessary re-proposition of a theory within the architectural debate, to be understood not as a hermetic dialectic but as an operating field, autonomous from reality but precisely for this reason capable – through its detachment – of representing a form of knowledge and understanding of things, which simply means the possibility of changing the space in which we live. In this sense Aureli is convinced of the fact that architecture must return to having a sense and role in the construction of city spaces, a belief that tries to frame the problem not on the figure but on the ‘function’ – not naive – to which architecture must respond.

It seems that, among the many problems deriving from the process of commodification that has assaulted architecture during the last century, one of these is the forgetting of the role of internal space as the protagonist of the architectural fact (Zevi, 2009). Zevi, in wondering how to distinguish architecture from non-architecture, replies that the most precise definition that can be given today of architecture is that

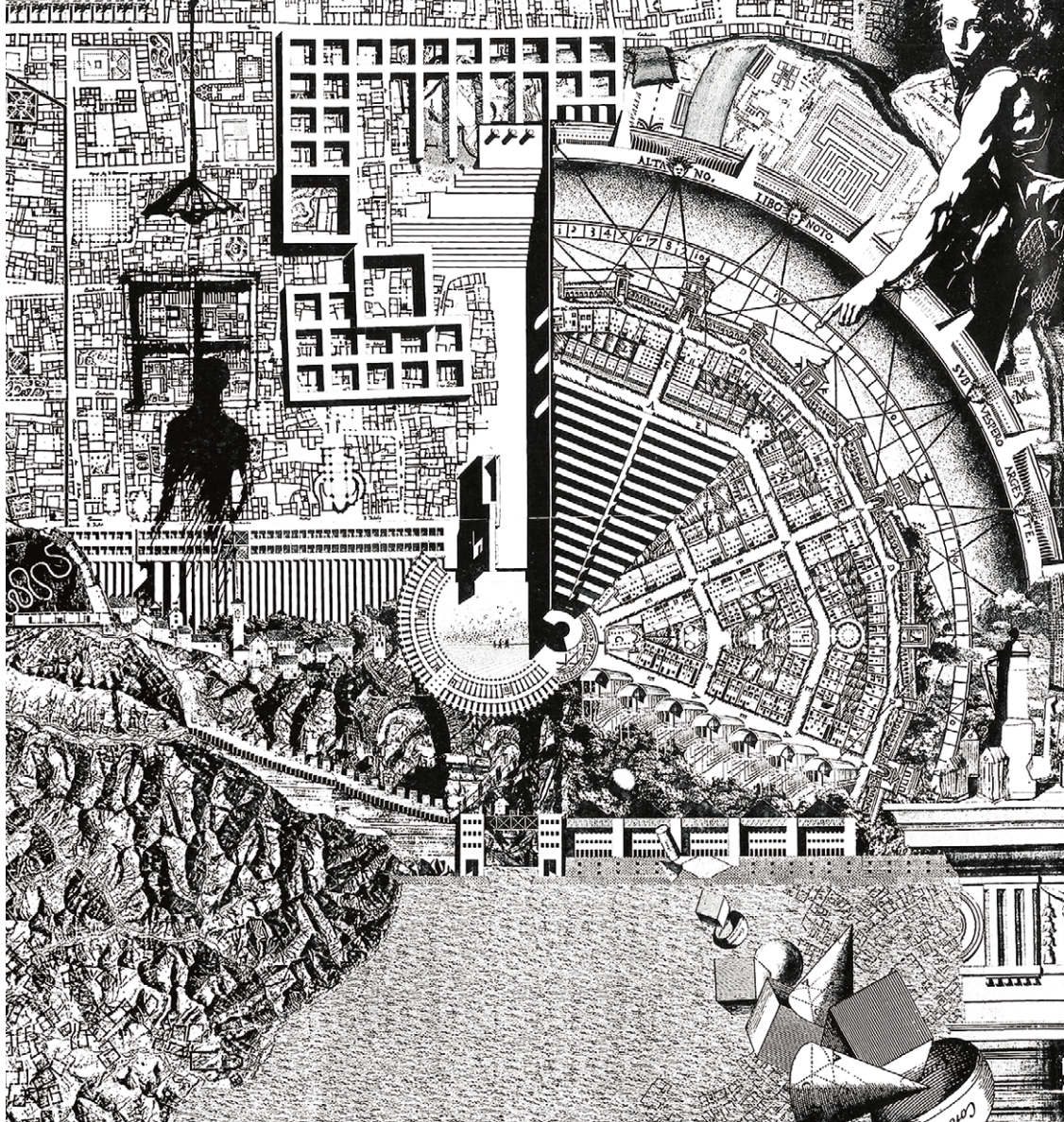
it is that which takes into account internal space (Zevi, 2009), that space that has as its peculiarity the fact of being real, appropriate, which visually evokes appropriacy (Lukács, 1970).

The thesis that we intend to support is that, starting from a precise angle of view that defines architecture as a discipline linked inescapably to the design of space (Schröder, 2015), there exists a multi-scalarity of architecture to be understood not only, in a static way, as a relationship of homology at different scales, between the ways of composing the building and the ways of composing the city (Visconti, 2016), but also as an analogy intimately connected to the formal world of architecture, which, in the passage between scales, becomes a dynamic concept capable of 'requalifying' architectures distant in time and space, ready to emerge formal equipment, a mnemonic heritage, for new dispositions, adapted to the themes assumed for the architecture of the city (Capozzi, 2017).

**Analogy and the architectural project** | The figure of Aldo Rossi can be taken as a paradigm of this way of understanding the architecture of the city, so much so that in the following text we aim to investigate this particular 'multi-scale' quality within the design activity and how it can still contribute, in an original way, to tracing possible future lines of research in the field of architectural composition and urban studies. We can begin by pointing out that Rossi's intellectual activity, both at a design level and in the form of writings, can be understood as a procedure that starts from a systematic knowledge of the city and on this knowledge is grafted a thought made of memories, associations and analogies (Monestiroli, 2018), analogies of thought, more or less rational, which manage, in a synchronic reading of his work, to formally match elements of the city of history with new buildings and, in turn, new buildings with individual design objects<sup>1</sup>, in a continuous flow of references and associations where 'naive functionalism' (Rossi, 2011) gives way to the analogical method, all understood as the search for 'responsive forms' (Monestiroli, 2018).

Tracing, within Rossi's work, a precise dividing line between 'logical' and 'analogical' thinking (Rossi, 1975) – both present, to varying degrees depending on the years of activity of the architect – is not a simple operation at all, even if the question has, in the end, relatively secondary importance in the reflections developed within this text. We can certainly refer, as a starting point, to Rossi's article published in edition 13 of *Lotus* in 1976, entitled *The Analogous City: Board* (Fig. 1). The article is the response to the architect's invitation to discuss the similarly titled table exhibited that same year at the Venice Biennale: 'a collective work' completed with his friends Eraldo Consolascio, Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart, a text accompanied by an image, a «[...] relatively arbitrary editing» (Rossi, 1976, p. 7) which still today has a strength, in the opinion of the writer, consisting in its succinct capability to bring together in a single drawing, in a figurative form, the answers that Rossi had given to the questions – emerging in those years but rightly





**Fig. 1** | Aldo Rossi, Eraldo Consolascio, Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart, ‘La Città Analoga’ – Board, 1976 (source: [www.monoskop.org](http://www.monoskop.org), 2020).

still present today – not only around the heartbeat of the city but above all on the question of ‘how to make the city’ and therefore architecture.

The theme of ‘scale’, from mega to nano – ‘mega’ understood as referring to the city and ‘nano’ to the single architectural object – can be identified in the mesh of the Analogous City and therefore in the discourse on architecture and the city, assuming, with the concept of ‘scale’, not so much the instrumental knowledge of reality at the various scales, but rather the concrete action of ‘reverberation’ that some architectural artefacts possess due to their shape and morphology: this notion is intended to add depth to the implications focusing precisely on the concept of analogy.

**The concept of scale between the ‘natural’ world and the ‘social’ world** | It is important, for our discussion, to dwell on the connections that the theme of the ‘scale’, and therefore of measurement, establishes with analogy and how it can enter into a relationship with architecture. In the first instance, it is possible to affirm that the act of measuring – therefore of putting two objects in relation – can be understood both as a quantitative relationship, in the sense that it is possible to know one object, taking as founding data those provided by perception, and as a qualitative relationship, in which we no longer refer to the means of perception, but this time to an intellectual relationship.

To deepen the question it is useful to introduce briefly the distinction proposed by Maurizio Ferraris (2014) between ‘natural objects’ and ‘social objects’, meaning, with the former, objects that exist in space and time independently of subjects, and with the latter, objects that exist in space and time depending on subjects. Concerning the former, epistemology performs a purely reconstructive function, limited to taking note of something that exists independently of knowledge. Concerning social objects, on the other hand, epistemology has a constitutive value (Ferraris, 2014). This distinction introduces a practice of ‘social objects’ – among which, in a ‘problematic’ way<sup>2</sup>, we also place the architectural project – within a new season of thought that places the concept of reality at the centre of its reasoning.

‘Positive realism’ puts in comparison two spheres: on the one hand, a ‘natural’ world outside the conceptual frameworks, in which man’s only possible action is a ‘critically’<sup>3</sup> cognitive action towards something that exists independently of itself and is implemented through the specific forms of the senses and the intellect, and, on the other, a ‘social’ world where new objects are produced with an operation that is performative and not purely constative, as occurs in reference to natural objects (Ferraris, 2014). In this perspective, the concepts of scale and measurement relate in a problematic manner to the binomial ‘natural world’ and ‘social world’, as there is a fundamental distinction in the way in which these concepts are expressed in the natural sphere and the social sphere.

It is reasonable to state that ‘measurement’ in the natural sphere means knowing an object specifically in its dimensional attributes. It is the relationship that mathematically establishes a measurement relationship between two objects, in the sense that the relationship between two homogeneous quantities provides the measurement of the first quantity with respect to the second, taken as a measuring unit. Now, this way of understanding measuring certainly belongs to the sphere of the natural, since it provides a datum, the dimension of an object, which it is reasonable to assume as unamendable, that is, invariant with respect to conceptual schemes. The discipline of the architectural survey, for example, bases its foundations on the scientific method, observing and restoring a knowledge of the material object which is based solely on the constitutive data ascertaining the measurement thus understood. But entering the ‘social’ field, the concept of measurement can also take on the meaning of analogy, understood as the equality of two relationships, that is, the association of two different



objects that possess something common. It is the subject component that must be linked to the concept of analogy that introduces the latter in full right into the ‘social’ world, since it does not rely only on logic, but is also associated with memory.

If investigating the form is the only objective of the architectural project, then the analogy is that of the ‘compositional-memorial technique’<sup>4</sup> which allows the discovery, through the appropriate forms, of a formal response to the themes of architecture. On the other hand, as Roberto Masiero<sup>5</sup> said, not only the architectural project but also designing in general means ‘measuring oneself’, it means opening up possibilities, tracing paths, identifying a way of life, a way of being. This is not typical only of the architect, but I think it is part of what we call ‘human nature’.

**Architecture is the buildings** | The observations conducted so far on the concept of scale are based on the premise, that was intentionally assumed, that the relationship between analogy and architectural design is possible only to the extent that the project is considered primarily as a collective fact, that is, the work of human construction, which, however – precisely insofar as it is social interaction – does not constitute a purely subjective production (Ferraris, 2014) but contains an idea of architecture that is a collective heritage, an asset that is not inseparable from the culture of the time otherwise it is a refusal of our work, a general indifference to it» (Monestiroli, 2002).

It is logical, from such a discourse, to discern that architecture, precisely by virtue of its ‘sociality’, is invested with conceptual schemes, that is, it resolves into a science understood as the construction of paradigms (Ferraris, 2014). On the other hand, such a thesis has already been proposed by Rossi himself when he highlights the need to distinguish ‘the architecture of the city’ from ‘architecture itself’ (Rossi, 2012). In the first case, it is a collective process, slow and detectable over a long time, in which the whole city participates. An evolution, therefore, that underlies a ‘detection’ and understanding of the processes of modifications and permanence. In the second case, on the other hand, we mean architecture that develops principles, that is transmitted according to certain rules which make it autonomous (Rossi, 2012). If the theoretical relationship is that in which we understand things in their generality (Hegel, 2017), then architecture, understood at this point as ‘art in and for itself’, lies in the means, in the sense that it has as its object sensitivity, but establishes a theoretical relationship with this sensitivity, taking an interest not so much in the matter as in its sensitive manifestation, that is, in its form, in its figure. Departing from an image of naturalistic imitation, it is placed within a historical vision, since the idea in its being for itself, the idea as ‘conscia sui’ produces itself in the creation of second nature (Hegel, 2017).

In addressing the object of its study only to itself, architecture identifies itself as an autonomous discipline, which looks for its forms starting from the reality of its time, placing itself critically towards this. Taking reality as a knowledge base of oneself means placing oneself in a condition of knowledge not only of the space around us but also of history, in the aesthetic sense of it as ‘realization of the idea of freedom’



(Hegel, 2017). In this sense, a synchronic attitude towards the works of the past is typical of architectural design theory, from whose study it is possible to obtain, in a logic of immutability of the principles and logical statements that underlie their design, an ever-current lesson. For this reason, the thesis according to which ‘architecture is the buildings’ (Grassi, 2003) is considered correct and the study of the past is important.

However, if architecture can and must be understood as a science, its conclusive moment is also based on subjective elements. Although I consider all architecture to be a positive fact, a concrete topic, I think that in the end, we clash against something that cannot be fully rationalized, this something is a largely subjective element (Rossi, 2012). On the other hand, the first principle of theory, following the rossian interpretation, would consist precisely in the personal obstinacy that every designer should have on some themes, that is, identify a theme to develop make a choice within architecture and always try to solve that problem (Rossi, 2012). Now it can be said that the intrusion of this subjective datum into a logical discourse on architecture is not necessarily to be understood as an exception, but rather it is the essential link that allows us to legitimize the analogy as a compositional technique of the architecture. The analogy, appealing to memory, allows the convocation of known forms, with which look for an order with whom objects are together.

**Some considerations about the architecture of Aldo Rossi** | In conclusion, as an example of these arguments, an analysis is proposed about some of Rossi’s architectural projects, that can be considered paradigmatic of a possible relation between multi-scalarity and analogy. The analysis has been performed through drawing, intended as a unique instrument to understand architecture, both in the meaning of re-design as a cognitive approach to the project and as analytical de-sign intended as a project sign.

Analogy, as a relationship that the intellect captures between two objects with common features, connects the concept of multi-scalarity with compositional practice. In other words, we can speak of multi-scalarity as that intimate property of artefacts, that permits an association of some type between them. This movement of reflection and propagation of a unique content that permits the association of multiple containers could be summarized, in a specifically architectural context, as the aspiration to ‘type’, that is as recognition in every kind of building of its own identity represented with fixed and repeated elements, precisely with typical elements (Monestiroli, 2002). Multiscalarity thus understood is investigated not only in its purpose cognitive of reality, of which it becomes an objective tool capable of grasping the relationships be-

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**Fig. 2** | David Griffin and Hans Kollhoff, ‘City of Composite Presence’, 1978 (source: Koetter and Rowe, 1979).

**Fig. 3** | Giovan Battista Nolli, ‘Nuova Pianta di Roma’: detail of the Flavian Amphitheater and San Giovanni in Laterano, 1748 (source: wikipedia.it, 2020).

tween things but also as a connection between phenomena and concepts, between idea and forms, interested in recognizing in these the persistence of present value. It has been said that multiscalarity is connected to the compositional practice of the architectural project, and this occurs in general when the subjective datum enters the compositional exercise, that is when, in the presence of a given problem, appealing to memory, those forms, in the past deemed adequate in solving this problem, are summoned.

It is right to emphasize the importance given to form and its autonomy in the design project. In this regard, the exercise that Hans Kollhoff experimented for the City of Composite Presence (Koetter and Rowe, 1979; Fig. 2), the representative icon of Collage City, the ideological and intellectual work of Colin Rowe on the city is important, both selecting fragments of shapes which, due to their appropriateness, manage in a graphic representation to construct what can be defined as the plan of a similar city. In the drawing we find the shapes, sectioned as in a typological relief, of the most disparate architectures different in space and time, juxtaposed by reason of a refined balance, abstracting them from their spatial and historical context. It should also be noted, for the purposes of our presentation, that if on the one hand, Kollhoff will summon certain architectures almost as tributes to the teachings received from his masters Ungers and Rowe – as noted in a recent essay (Braghieri, 2019) – on the other hand, the work of the City of Composite Presence is the result of an empirical approach.

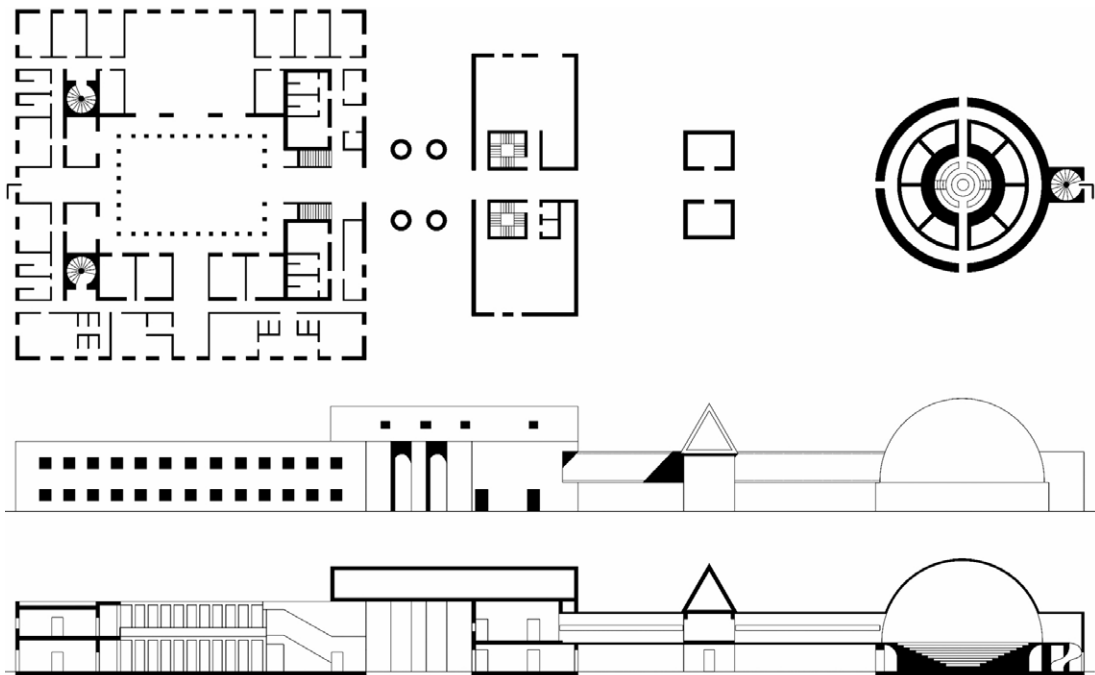
Just like the Analogous City of Rossi – a composition in which each form appears to have a suitable location – in Kollhoff's work the Via Nuova of Genoa, for example, is perfectly matched with a gap between the arches of the Lucca Amphitheatre, thus managing, despite empiricism, to summarize a formal structure that is not unusual between the shapes of the circle and the line. If you examine the plan by Nolli specifically for the area of the Colosseum (Fig. 3) you will notice that the relationship that existed in 1748 between the Flavian Amphitheatre and the opposite 'happy road', which connected the Amphitheatre with S. Giovanni in Laterano, is completely 'analogous' to the composition of Kollhoff. It should be added that the reference does not seem random, given that Giovanni Battista Nolli's New Topography of Rome, designed for Benedict XIV and completed after a major campaign of architectural design, is a con-



stant presence precisely among Colin Rowe's work tools, which focused exactly on the sector around the Colosseum during the 'analogy' works carried out in Rome (Carl et alii, 1979) in the same year as the publication of the *Collage City*.

And yet, in a general 'multiscalar' exercise of formal references, it turns out that this way of composing is also similar to certain architectures of Rossi which, by assembling the shapes of the circle and the line, derive their typological structure defined as 'a skewer' (Bonfanti, 2001). One example is the 1968 project for the Scandicci Town Hall (Figg. 4, 5) – significantly before the Kollhoff experiments – where various elements of the architecture are connected by a sky-bridge (the line) ending in a dome (the circle). Rossi himself, regarding the Scandicci project, declared his explicit formal affinity with the project for a country house at Charlottenhof by Schinkel (Ferlenga, 1999; Fig. 6), in which we find the analogous alignment of the elements of the house and the surrounding wood. Rossi defined the Scandicci 'line' as an 'urban gallery', in which – together with the central courtyard plan of the administrative offices and the dome of the board room – we can see the hypotactic<sup>6</sup> role concerning the other elements of the composition.

On the other hand, Rossi, using the central plan type and the corridor as solutions to the problem of the Town Hall as a public building par excellence never clearly separated

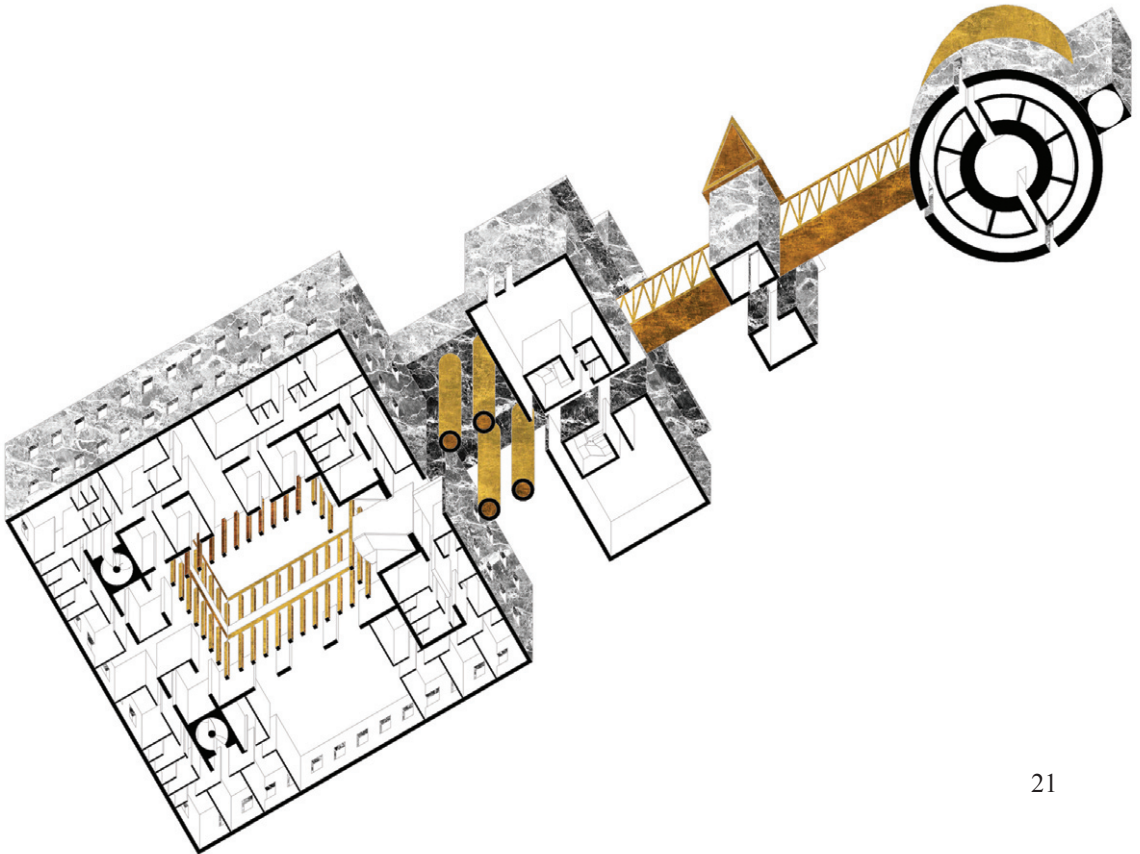


**Figg. 4, 5** | Aldo Rossi, Massimo Fortis and Massimo Scolari, Project of Scandicci City Hall, 1968 (drawings by the author, 2019).

from the external spaces [which] can be passed through by a visitor freely without hindering the work that takes place there (Furlong, 1999), indirectly testified how the analogous procedure, in its resemblance to the composition of Kollhoff of the Via Nuova of Genoa and the Amphitheatre of Lucca, does not only address the formal problem but also the thematic value guarded by such forms and their reconciliation with types.

These arguments are supported by the constant use of the central plan type – single or double in the shapes of the square and the circle – and the corridor-gallery, which frequently return to Rossi's work on the public and collective building (Visconti and Capozzi, 2019; Fig. 7) and can be defined in all examples as the 'primary elements' of the composition, those that remain in the forms and in the sense to which the secondary elements are aligned in a hypotactical type scheme (Fig. 8). An example is the project for the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin (Fig. 9), where the two main elements are significantly the circular foyer and the long central corridor, which 'rises' in importance compared to the surrounding environments orthogonal to it thanks to a considerable difference in height, in a dimensional relationship in which a similar reference to the large spaces of the Gothic cathedrals can also be found (Fig. 10).

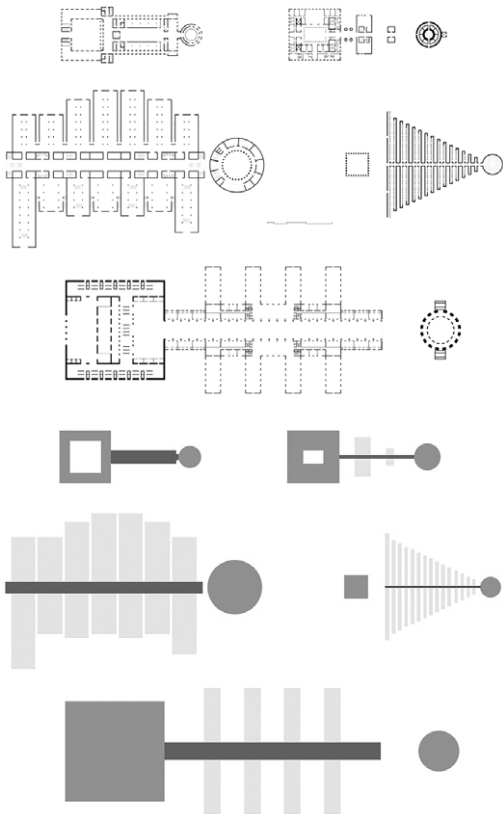
In the project for the new Congress Palace in Milan, the reiteration of the design is made even more explicit by the radical disproportion of the primary elements com-







**Fig. 6 |** Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Project of a Country House in Charlottenhof, 1758. The linear organization of the system is highlighted (drawing by the author, 2019).



**Figg. 7, 8 |** Skewer buildings, dimensional comparison and syntax of figures: Civic Library in Seregno; Scandicci City Hall; Cemetery of San Cataldo; Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin; Congress Palace in Milan (drawings by the author, 2019).

pared to the secondary ones, where the long internal gallery, connecting with the square conference room, relates, this time only at a distance, with a conical tower, recalling with its forms an analogous Milan united by the great Gallery (Ferlenga, 1999). The Civic Library in Seregno is an exception, where the role of the gallery is this time translated into the large reading room of the library, with explicit analogous references to the National Library Hall designed by Boullée (Fig. 11) in which, in turn, Raffaello's vision of the School of Athens is famously proposed (Fig. 12). But it is significantly in Rossi's most famous project that the 'skewer' design achieves its clearest essence. In the Cemetery of San Cataldo, two elements with a defined shape are identified: a cube and a cone. These two monumental elements, naked and impoverished of any particularism, are symmetrically aligned by a void, a central spine that crosses the whole cemetery and which is defined only through the relationship that is established between the two elements. In addressing the cemetery architecture project as an interpretation of the residential project, Rossi expressed the compositional reasons of the city in the elements of the cemetery – intended as the 'city of the dead' – indirectly verifying the possible expression of multiscalar relationships intimate with the doing of architecture, as Alberti remembered centuries before.

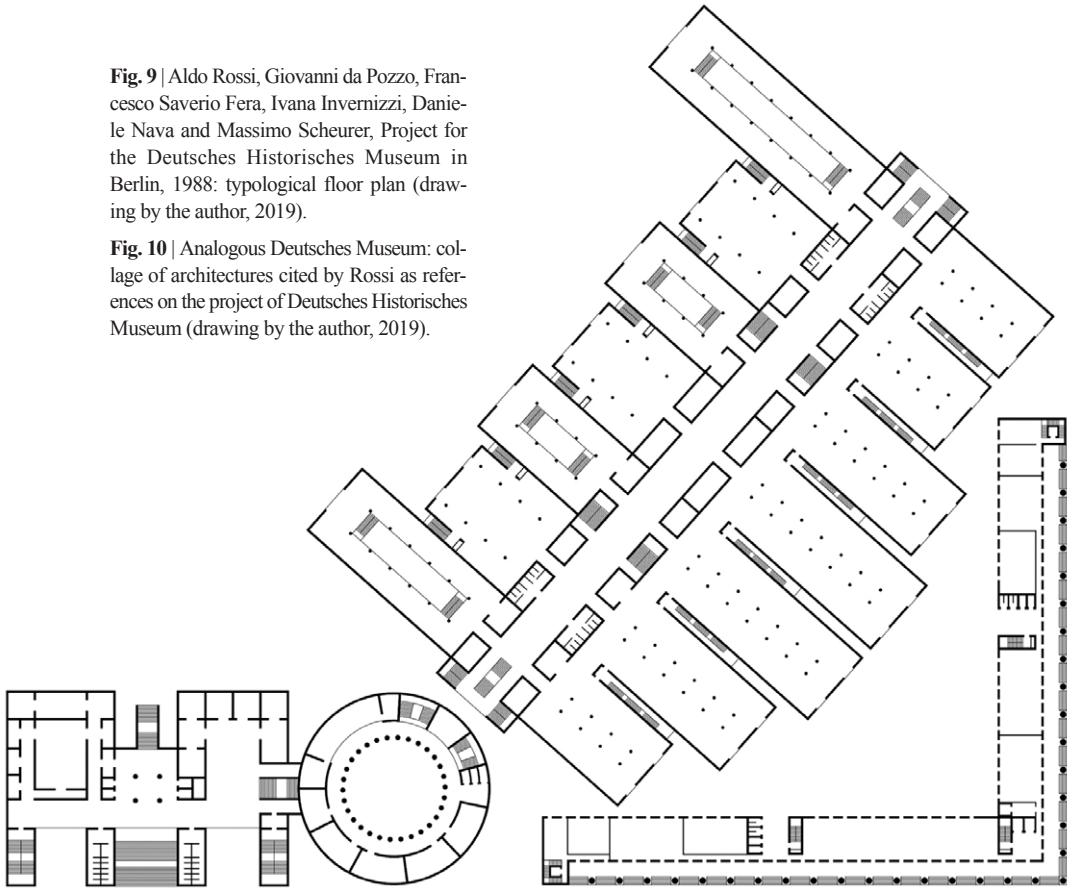
**Conclusions** | An attempt has been made to demonstrate how the concept of analogy can play an important role in architectural design studies, as a procedure that allows the project to resolve the themes of our time, investigating the solutions that history has offered for those themes, and updating them with respect to our historical moment. This special relationship with the past allows architecture not to adhere perfectly with its own time, but to place itself, with respect to it, in a detached position – further away – but precisely for this reason in a critical, anachronistic, in a word contemporary, way (Agamben, 2008).

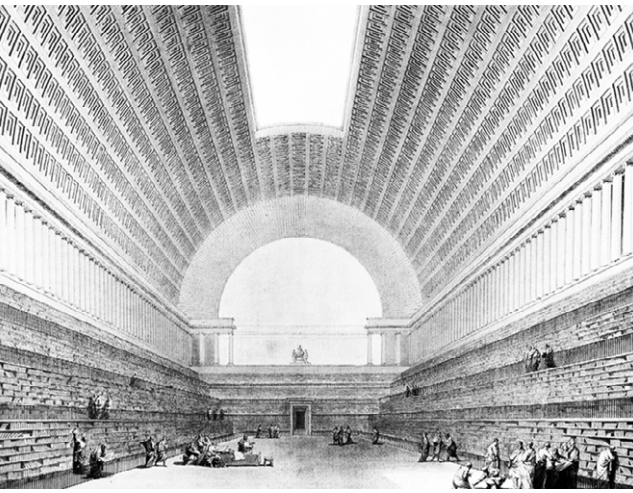
In this sense, the example study of some rossian public architectures, in which it is possible to trace the constant use of the central plan and corridor type, allows us to outline the two essential functions of the space, that is, being and crossing. If, in fact, at the scale of the house, the function of staying has been identifiable since ancient times as the space with the hearth – that is to say the nucleus of the ancient house –, thus associating the function of crossing to those connection spaces such as corridors and porticos, at the urban scale the functions of staying and crossing are translated respectively into the construction principles of the city: the square and the street. The public building is that type of architecture that stands at an intermediate scale between the nano of the single house and the mega of the city, allowing a multiscale connection between the architectural interior and the urban interior. Through this multi-scale feature, of which the public building becomes the example, the places manage to retain – despite the continuous change of scale – the intrinsic reason for their spaces.

This way of looking at the spaces of architecture and of the city can open up further insights for studies on the contemporary city, especially in a historical moment in

**Fig. 9** | Aldo Rossi, Giovanni da Pozzo, Francesco Saverio Fera, Ivana Invernizzi, Daniele Nava and Massimo Scheurer, Project for the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, 1988: typological floor plan (drawing by the author, 2019).

**Fig. 10** | Analogous Deutsches Museum: collage of architectures cited by Rossi as references on the project of Deutsches Historisches Museum (drawing by the author, 2019).





**Fig. 11** | Étienne-Louis Boullée, Project of the Hall for the extension of the National Library, 1785: perspective view of the second variant (source: [www.gallica.bnf.fr](http://www.gallica.bnf.fr), 2020).



**Fig. 12** | Raffaello Sanzio, 'Scuola di Atene', 1511 (source: [www.wikipedia.it](http://www.wikipedia.it), 2020).

which the ancient socio-cultural role of public places in the city seems to be increasingly replaced by a form of virtual sociality, distinguished by its characteristic changeability, relativity and temporary nature. It, therefore, seems important to try to develop an idea which, in returning to reasoning on the principles of the architectural space, reaffirms the real problems of our time; in particular, the current situation linked to the health and safety of the urban space requires today's society to reflect critically on the places and spaces of the city. Rethinking the role of urban space today, with its conditions of crossing and being, cannot ignore profound research on the current meaning of these spaces, on their ability to still be representative of the spirit of the time or, to put it à la Rossi, 'the fixed scene of human affairs'.

## Notes

1) Think of the Ca' del Duca of Venice and that column of Filarete encased at an angle that repeated almost obsessively in Rossi's projects. One example for all is the residential unit in Friedrichstadt in Berlin in 1981. It is not by chance that the cylindrical element is repeated on a smaller scale, later also in the Conica of Alessi, which in turn contains an explicit reference to the project for the Theatre of World.

2) Architecture – as an allusive artefact to natural objects, but by no means a work that derives from an intentional transformative process by man –moving from principles and norms (ideal objects) slowly sedimented, is an agitated activity par excellence that in its 'affirmative' it produces concrete and immanent objects (physical objects) which however want to represent meanings and values (social objects) (Capozzi, 2013).



3) The 'positive' or 'modest' realism is to be understood as a proportional mean between the 'naive realism', of those who in ascertaining an ontological foundation of reality passively accept some kind of natural law, and the 'post-modernism' of those who intend the supremacy of the concept over reality. Positive realism instead conceives the real as a critical constraint, a resistance against any falsification produced by man.

4) The definition is attributed to Prof. Renato Capozzi.

5) The text is taken from the speech by Roberto Masiero entitled What Architecture Is held at the Palamostre Theatre in Udine on October 16, 2014, during the first edition of the Mimesis Festival.

6) By hypotaxis, it is meant the importance that Rossi seems to attribute – to be verified whether this is concerning an autobiographical reason or not – to the decisive elements of his architecture compared to others. The hypotaxis thus understood is effective in placing the projects that work with these elements in synchronic succession, tracking the almost constant permanence, in the positions and relationships, of the 'prime' shapes of the circle and the line concerning the 'submissive' rectangles. Bonfanti's analysis in describing the rectilinear succession of the rossian projects is, in this sense, confirmed, but a possible different reading has been found compared to that made by Bonfanti when he indicates the additive and paratactic procedure as the compositional technique of rossian architecture.

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