

# This is still a mall

Analyzing Varese, we identified some problematics: the excess of cars in the city centre, the state of semi-abandonment of the main square, and the neglected underground car park and mall. The idea is REMALLING these structures, integrating the surrounding functions to satisfy the needs of the city.

Varese is almost exclusively car-oriented with 2569 parking spots only in the city center, that steal 43000 m2 of possible public space. In Piazza della Repubblica a multistorey parking and a mall were built in 1997, transforming the existing square into a megastructure, completely out of balance in the context of Varese. Today the five underground floors of the parking are almost completely empty and the mall appears in a state of advanced decay. Le Corti is a dying mall, and as shopping is changing fast, these types of structures no longer meet the market needs.

As an approach to address this topic the recent phenomenon called 'demalling' is becoming more and more frequent. Demalling is a term which refers to the transformation of declined or declining shopping centres into something else. Our intention was to trigger the process of demalling Le Corti and to integrate the surroundings functions of: the Archivio del Moderno, the University of Insubria and the soon-to-be-demolished theatre into the program for a new vision of the piazza.

At -5 the garages are transformed into the Collezione Panza Archive, isolated with the "box in a box" concept. Art invades the parking and is exhibited on the ramp, which transforms into a gallery. Garages can be used as atelier, where artists can experiment bringing all they need directly with their car. Bigger events can be held in the new triple-height space, active all day long, with exhibitions, concerts, events and drive in cinema. The same scheme is applied to the -4 and -3. At -2, eliminating the division between the mall and the parking, the space becomes a wide platform where an innovative shopping experience is possible in glazed showrooms around which cars, bikes, pedestrians can freely move and look at other people experiencing different products. Furthermore the University of Insubria can expand its campus: with a system of movable partitions the anonymous space of the shopping mall can be arranged in different ways to create adaptable rooms. On the ground level the entrances of the Piazza are re-thought and the vertical circulation is organised on two double spiral ramps where cars and bikes move on parallel wings. The traces of the market on the piazza are highlighted with colors and drawings suggesting an urban playground when the market is not happening and on the ground level of Le Corti the whole perimetral spaces is organized with covered market food stalls. The upper floors of the mall are rearranged in order to be livable spaces and host student housing.

Nowadays architects have to be aware of their social role more than they ever had. They must be responsive to the plurality of inputs of every urban context, they must produce complex systems with mixité of use, and manage networked relationships in order to productively engage economic, cultural, and social conditions. We, as young architects believe in the motto of professor Muck Petzet: "reduce, reuse, recycle". Reduce: is it really necessary to always build something new? Reuse: we are overwhelmed by structures that, if not yet demolished have been neglected for decades. Recycle: couldn't they become something else? The aim of the project has sought the RRR approach on the city of Varese, using demalling as a strategy to re-program the problematic complex of Le Corti shopping mall and its multistory parking.