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Tesi di Laurea:

## **THE CITY AND THE ROCCA**

PROJECT FOR THE URBAN RENEWAL OF PIAZZA D'ARMI AND THE SITE OF THE ANCIENT ROCCA IN SABBIONETA

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The target of this research and design project is the ideal city of Sabbioneta, built between 1554 and 1590 by the prince Vespasiano from Gonzaga family.

The first issue that has been recognized in the city concerns the site where the ancient Piazza D'Armi rises. This area, overlooked by Palazzo del Giardino and the Corridor Grande, is today "altered in appearance and size". In fact, following the demolition of the fortress that used to stand on its west side in 1794, the square has been deprived of its historic borders. Moreover, the construction of a school building and a new street in the period of fascism has changed this place even more, altering it in continuity and original integrity, due to the inclusion of foreign elements.

The urban issue of Piazza D'Armi could not be solved by a punctual intervention: it was necessary to consider it in a system with the nearer areas, i.e. the site of the ancient Rocca, whose remains are still connected with the ancient fortified walls, and that of the ancient monastery, disappeared as well. The purpose of this design project, therefore, is that of sewing the urban void of the city, giving a new façade for Piazza D'Armi and enhancing the site of the castle.

It has been chosen to not demolish the school building, but to denounce its anomaly in the definition of the square boundary.

Another issue was to rebuild the historical connections that the area use to have with the context, particularly with the walls.

The idea that guided the project was that of creating a system of walls and green platforms connected with the landscape and with the ancient walls, in order to define new boundaries and spaces. The wall, in fact, is a linear element that divides, defines spaces and meanings. The wall can order open spaces defining paths or, on the other hand, it can enclose spaces defining specific areas. Therefore, the theme of the wall is also associated with the theme of the enclosure, "il tema del recinto".



### **Sabbioneta, città ideale di Vespasiano Gonzaga**

Nel 1554 Vespasiano Gonzaga (1531-1591) inizia a trasformare il borgo di Sabbioneta, capitale del feudo pertinente ad un ramo cadetto della famiglia Gonzaga, nella piccola "città ideale" del Rinascimento che oggi ammiriamo. Sotto l'impulso di Vespasiano numerose opere architettoniche e urbanistiche proseguono alacramente, per essere interrotte di colpo alla sua morte.

Lo spazio urbano, diviso in trentaquattro isolati regolari attestati su un asse mediano di attraversamento, viene delimitato tra il 1560 e il 1570 da una cinta muraria stellata, l'elemento che più di altri ha mantenuto una forza evocativa. Il centro politico, religioso e amministrativo del borgo è Piazza Ducale, su cui si affacciano il Palazzo Ducale e la chiesa parrocchiale di Santa Maria Assunta. Poco distante, sulla Piazza d'Armi, vengono eretti il Palazzo del Giardino (1588), la villa del principe, e la Galleria degli Antichi (1583-1584), edificio destinato ad ospitare le collezioni d'arte della famiglia Gonzaga. Questi ultimi edifici fronteggiavano la Rocca, della quale è rimasta traccia solo nelle mappe storiche: la struttura venne atterrata nel 1786 ad opera del proprietario, un bottegaio che l'aveva acquistata dalla Regia Camera Austriaca. Nell'abitato, caratterizzato da vie porticate, si trovano altri famosi monumenti: il Teatro Olimpico, costruito "all'antica" da Vincenzo Scamozzi tra il 1588 e il 1590, e la Chiesa dell'Incoronata, che diverrà il Pantheon del Duca.

### **Piazza D'Armi e il sito della Rocca**

L'oggetto delle riflessioni su cui verte la seguente ricerca progettuale consiste nel luogo su cui sorge l'antica Piazza d'Armi di Sabbioneta. Quest'area, su cui sono prospicienti il Palazzo del Giardino ed il Corridor Grande si trova oggi "alterata nella fisionomia e nelle dimensioni". Infatti, in seguito alla demolizione della Rocca avvenuta nel 1794, la piazza si trova privata degli storici confini. Inoltre, la costruzione di un edificio scolastico e di una nuova via nel periodo del fascismo, non ha fatto che snaturare ancor più questo luogo, che rimane così alterato nella continuità e integrità originale, a causa dell'inserimento di elementi estranei.

Piazza D'Armi nacque come spazio dai margini irregolari, dove la discontinuità tra le facciate degli edifici che si affacciavano su di essa ne costituiva il pregio. L'imperfezione del disegno della piazza e le dimensioni di questa erano elementi di unicità e, soprattutto, ne caratterizzavano l'immagine in opposizione alla regolarità rinascimentale di Piazza Ducale.

L'edificio scolastico sorge sull'ipotetico margine est delle antiche mura del castello, andando a ricalcare la giacitura. La sua posizione, però, non è conforme all'originale struttura della piazza, in cui il limite ovest era da individuarsi non nel muro del castello ma nel margine irregolare del fossato che lo circondava.

L'edificio, in questo modo, non solo va a mutare gli originali rapporti dimensionali della piazza,

prolungandone un lato di più di venti metri, ma ne muta anche il carattere, andando a costruire un rettilineo margine, la cui facciata fa eco a quella della Galleria.

Tuttavia, ciò che vi è di più critico in questo luogo è indubbiamente la presenza di una strada carrabile, via Giulia Gonzaga, anch'essa costruita nella prima metà del Novecento, che taglia l'area della piazza in due parti. La costruzione di questa via è contemporanea all'apertura di due varchi, uno a nord ed uno a sud, nelle mura di Sabbioneta. Tale atto, che al tempo venne giustificato alla luce delle moderne esigenze di circolazione di aria e veicoli, al giorno d'oggi appare come un vero e proprio abominio nei confronti della storia. I veicoli, attualmente, entrano a Sabbioneta dal varco sud e la piazza ha assunto la funzione di parcheggio. Inoltre, la strada divide Piazza D'Armi in due differenti aree su cui sono stati evidenziati assi di simmetria non coincidenti: l'area che su cui si affaccia la Galleria è caratterizzata da un giardino all'italiana che ne enfatizza l'asse centrale (rimarcato ulteriormente dal posizionamento della Colonna di Pallade al centro di questo); l'area su cui si affaccia la scuola presenta anch'essa un giardino, il cui asse non corrisponde a quello della Galleria. Ciò che ne risulta è uno spazio confuso, amorfo, che ha perso il carattere monumentali che aveva in passato.

Le incongruenze causate dagli eventi che hanno trasformato Piazza D'Armi non riguardano solo la perdita fisica degli elementi storici sopra

citati, ma anche la perdita della percezione della dimensione urbana. Il sistema stradale costruito attorno alla strada sud-ovest ha trasformato la vecchia piazza del castello in una nuova porta della città, trasformando le due porte del XVI secolo in "monumenti" passivi. Il visitatore, giunto a Sabbioneta, si trova in uno spazio amorfo e, spaesato, non comprende di essere già nel cuore della città.

I piani urbanistici adottati dagli anni settanta del secolo scorso, tra cui il tanto atteso piano dettagliato per il centro storico, hanno ignorato questo tema, concentrandosi principalmente sulla gestione degli edifici con la classificazione e l'identificazione degli interventi consentiti. Così facendo, hanno rinunciato a restituire alla città la sua identità urbana. Il compito della pianificazione dovrebbe essere quello di affrontare questo problema, nel rispetto dei cambiamenti nella viabilità e nell'urbanizzazione. L'attuale PGT di Sabbioneta è più attento da questo punto di vista. Infatti, il problema urbano delle aree in continuità con le mura, il sito del castello e Piazza D'Armi sono unanimemente riconosciuti. Per quanto riguarda le mura e la loro valorizzazione, il comune sta progettando di trasformare le aree verdi più vicine in un parco lineare. Inoltre, si prevede di rimuovere i parcheggi da Piazza D'Armi e di localizzarli nei pressi di Porta Vittoria, in modo da spostare nuovamente l'accesso turistico alla città.

Tuttavia, il PGT comunale manca di un piano

vero e proprio che contempra da una parte la riqualificazione di Piazza D'Armi e dall'altra la valorizzazione del sito storico della Rocca.

## **Il progetto**

Il compito che ci si prefigge è quello di riportare Piazza d'Armi alla sua originale importanza, lavorando sulla forma della piazza e sulla valorizzazione del sedimento dell'antica Rocca, andando a bilanciare nuovamente la composizione. La domanda che ci si pone è se sia possibile intervenire in un simile contesto e con quali mezzi poter affrontare la questione.

Nella definizione del concept di progetto, si è voluto sottolineare in primo luogo l'anomalia dell'edificio scolastico nella definizione del confine della Piazza. In secondo luogo, si è cercato di ricostruire le connessioni che l'area storicamente aveva con il contesto, in particolare con le antiche mura.

Fondamentale è stata la ricostruzione ideale della Rocca scomparsa, in modo da comprenderne la misura nella composizione generale. Senza il castello, l'intero sito, da Piazza D'Armi fino all'area del vecchio monastero, perde il suo significato. L'edificio scolastico, infatti, ha lasciato dietro di sé un vuoto: il suo scopo era quello di creare una nuova facciata per la piazza senza considerare le aree verdi sul retro che oggi sono inaccessibili. Disegnando il castello nella sua posizione originaria, il sito inizia ad acquisire un significato,

un nuovo equilibrio tra il denso agglomerato della città e la massa della Rocca, connessa con le mura. Tuttavia, il problema urbano non si risolve con la ricostruzione della Rocca: il vecchio monastero che un tempo fiancheggiava il castello a ovest è completamente scomparso, lasciando un grande vuoto nella città. Pertanto, il progetto deve contemplare anche il potenziamento di questa area, creando una nuova soluzione in grado di risolvere da una parte il problema del confine della piazza e, dall'altra, il problema del paesaggio e del vuoto urbano.

Nel contesto cittadino si sono cercati nuovi allineamenti in grado di ristabilire un ordine tra la città vecchia e il nuovo intervento.

In seguito si è dato a queste linee un significato, un tema. L'idea è quella di creare un sistema di muri e piattaforme erbose integrate nel paesaggio ed un nuovo percorso alto lungo le mura storiche. Questa idea è coerente con il piano di valorizzazione delle pareti e delle aree verdi che il comune di Sabbioneta ha programmato.

Il tema del muro è stato scelto per due motivi. In primo luogo si è cercato un elemento capace di integrarsi col sistema delle mura storiche della città. La seconda ragione è legata alla problematica fondamentale del sito: l'assenza di confini e definizione degli spazi. Il muro, infatti, è un elemento lineare che divide, definisce spazi e significati. Il muro può marcare spazi aperti disegnando percorsi o, al contrario, può racchiudere spazi e definire aree specifiche.

Pertanto, il tema del muro è anche associato al tema del recinto.

I temi che sono stati introdotti nella definizione del concept plan sono stati sviluppati nel Masterplan di progetto. Gli elementi hanno acquisito una caratterizzazione dimensionale e materiale. Gli elementi lineari nei disegni precedenti sono diventati muri di mattoni di 50 e 20 cm. I muri più spessi definiscono l'area del castello e il confine di Piazza D'Armi, mentre le pareti sottili definiscono percorsi e connessioni con il paesaggio. La logica del muro e piattaforma caratterizza il disegno del paesaggio nell'area dell'antico monastero, poi, sul sito del castello, le mura definiscono il recinto dell'antica Rocca dove ora si trova un volume semi-ipogeo. Questo volume ha un cortile interno che ricorda le forme del castello, il "recinto fortificato" dove i volumi sono costruiti per aggregazione attorno ad un recinto e formano uno o più cortili nel mezzo. Inoltre, le scomparse torri del castello sono ricordate, in forma semplificata, da due nuovi volumi contenenti la distribuzione verticale.

L'edificio ipogeo è collegato al percorso alto che corre lungo le mura antiche e, nel sottosuolo, con il volume scolastico. Il progetto prevede la costruzione di due volumi a ponte. Il primo collega la torre più alta al percorso delle mura; il secondo collega il percorso delle mura al Corridor Piccolo, al fine di ristabilire l'antica connessione tra il volume della Rocca e tutti gli edifici che si affacciano su Piazza D'Armi. Questi due ponti sono rivestiti in legno, per ricordare i vecchi passaggi alti che

caratterizzavano Sabbioneta in passato, i percorsi del principe. Mentre il primo collegamento a ponte è un passaggio scoperto, il secondo ponte è un volume più ampio, coperto da un tetto a falde, in modo da integrarsi meglio con l'edificio adiacente. La funzione di quest'ultimo volume è anche quella di chiudere il lato sud della piazza e divenirne una quinta. Come accennato prima, il nuovo parcheggio che verrà costruito vicino a Porta Vittoria, cambierà l'accesso turistico della città. In questo modo, Piazza D'Armi non sarà più il primo luogo che incontriamo entrando a Sabbioneta, ma, come era nel passato, diventerà di nuovo un luogo che deve essere scoperto avventurarsi nelle strette vie della città. Il sistema di muri e piattaforme che organizza il progetto arriva fino al confine di Piazza D'Armi. Di fronte alla scuola ora c'è un'area verde il cui livello è stato alzato per poter godere della vista della piazza e della Galleria e, in secondo luogo, per consentire l'ingresso nell'edificio alle persone disabili. L'accesso principale a questo giardino è situato nei pressi dell'antico ponte levatoio del castello e, inoltre, è in corrispondenza l'asse della via che si trova dall'altra parte della piazza. Infine, il progetto contempla un ulteriore intervento di ricucitura urbana con la costruzione di un edificio a chiusura del vuoto adiacente a Casa Agosta Sabbioni, parte del complesso del vecchio monastero.



# PART 1

## SABBIONETA, HISTORY AND URBAN FEATURES





On the left

**Fig 1:** the ideal city,  
unknown author,  
1480 - 1490,  
National Gallery of  
the Marche, Urbino

**Fig 2:** the ideal city,  
unknown author,  
XV century,  
Walters Art  
Museum, Baltimore

Sabbioneta is one of the few ideal cities that survives nowadays almost intact in his structure. The city is a "unicum" in the context of the Italian "Cinquecento", a city built "ex novo" by the ambitious prince Vespasiano Gonzaga .

To understand the process that led to the construction of this city it is important to understand what is an ideal city and in which context it was built.

An ideal city is a place or an organic concept for a city plan that has been conceived in accordance with the dictates of some rational, moral and utopic objective. The ideal nature of such a city may encompass the harmony of its forms and its regular urban structure as well as the moral, juridical, spiritual qualities that reflect its society. In the concept of an ideal city, architecture, philosophy, urbanism and art coexist in the same object.

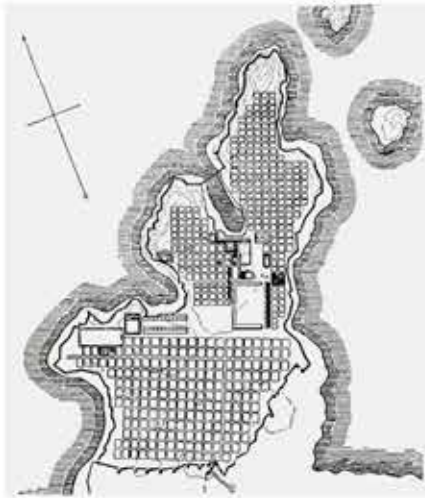
The urban structure of an ideal city is characterized by a balance between natural elements and artifices, civic and religious architectures, public and private buildings disposed following a regular and organic drawing. People living there are free, honest and happy human beings. Therefore, the ideal city represents the ambition to join a principle of social organization to an idea of space.

Although this attempt of description, a precise definition of what an ideal city is cannot be given. In fact, during the history, many different interpretations of this concept have been produced, so that it is impossible to catch its

constant features and a proper definition. The ambiguity start from the substance of the ideal city itself: should it be a real city or a projection, an image, a dream? Sometimes the ideal city have managed to find its ground and become a real city, but the most of the times, it has remained just a dream.

The theme of the ideal city has always been linked to the history of the man witnessing the evolution of the culture and the needs of the society, from the ancient plan of Mileto by Ippodamo (Fig 3), to the contemporary solution of postmodern architects. In fact, it is important to remind that the roots of all the theories about ideal cities are very ancient, coming from the inner ancestral nature of the man, with his ambition of power and social control, or his utopic ideas of equality and moral regeneration. The architecture of the ideal city has been expressed in unconscious ways before becoming a theme of debate. Both Plato and Aristotle (Fig 4 and 5) developed a political project about their idea of city.

However, it is during the Renaissance, in particular during the Italian Quattrocento, that the most interesting and complex theories were conceived. The debate around the city form, in fact, is one of the most important themes in the culture of Humanism during the Renaissance. In this period, the educated people from upper classes started discussing about the man, its nature, its mind. The discoveries of the classic and ancient ruins opened up new questions about the evolution of the



**Fig 3:** General plan of Mileto, traditionally attributed to Hippodamus, V sec BC. Reconstruction based on archaeological remains of the city.

Image from: Virgilio Vercelloni, *Atlante storico dell'idea europea della città ideale*, Jaca Book, 1994



**Fig 4:** Manuscript containing Book IV of the "Politics", a work by Aristotle dedicated to the administration of the "polis", the city, 4th century BC.

Book IV: oligarchy and democracy, 4th century BC



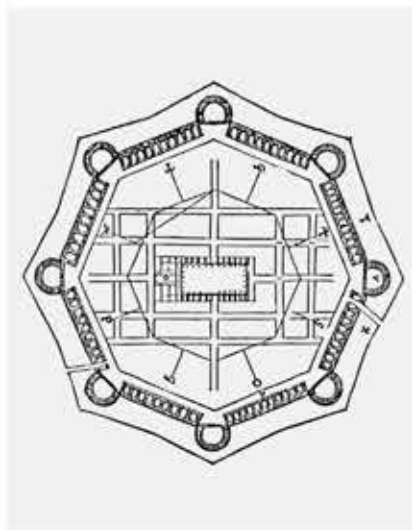
**Fig 5:** Fragment of Plato's "Republic", a philosophical dialogue, written approximately between 390 and 360 BC., in which the author described his view of an ideal city.

Platonic dialogues, VIII tetralogy, Athens, 4th century BC



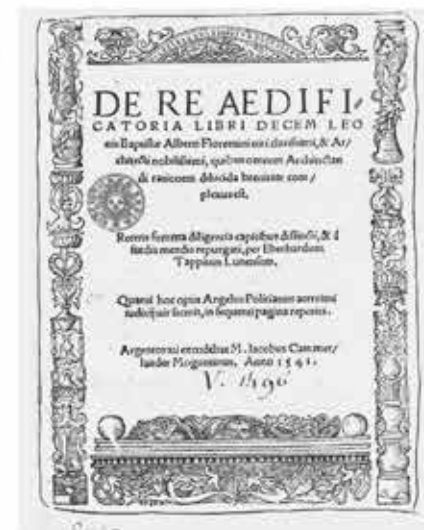
**Fig 6:** The ideal city of Vitruvius described in his *De Architectura* in the 1 century AC.

Graphic interpretation of Cesare Cesariano, Italian edition of *De Architectura*, 1521



**Fig 7:** The ideal city of Vitruvius described in his *De Architectura* in the 1 century AC.

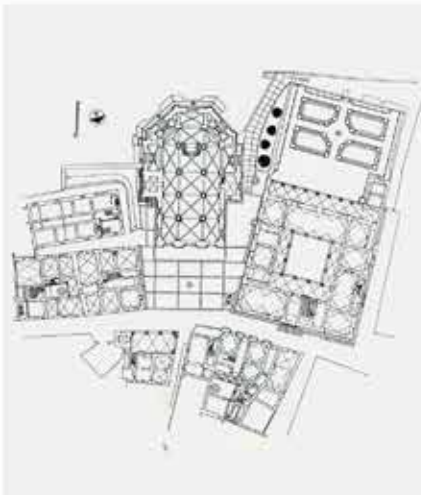
Graphic interpretation of Daniele Barbaro, *Dieci Libri dell'Architettura di M. Vitruvio*, Venezia, 1556



**Fig 8:** *De re aedificatoria*, a classic architectural treatise written by Leon Battista Alberti between 1443 and 1452.

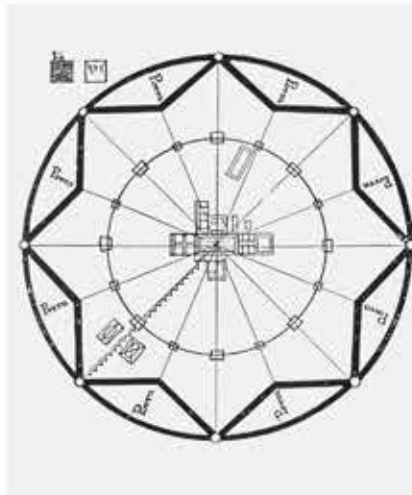
Although largely dependent on Vitruvius's *De architectura*, it was the first theoretical book on the subject written in the Italian Renaissance, and in 1485 it became the first printed book on architecture.

Title page of the 1541 edition



**Fig 9:** Plan of the square Pio II of Pienza. In 1459, the medieval village of Corsignano in Val d'Orcia has been transformed in the Renaissance city of Pienza by the architect Bernardo Rossellino, hired by the Pope Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pio II).

Image from AA. VV., *Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, Milano, Cariplo, 1985



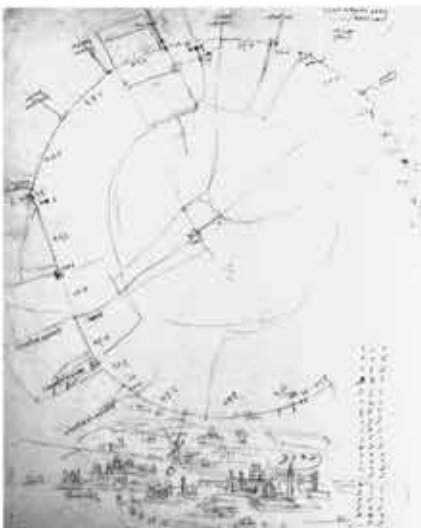
**Fig 10:** Plan of the ideal city of Sforzinda, a project by Antonio Averlino called Filarete, designed between 1462 and 1464.

Pen and ink on paper, 398 x 285 mm  
Codice Magliabarchiano, II.I.140, sheet 43, recto  
Florence, Central National Library



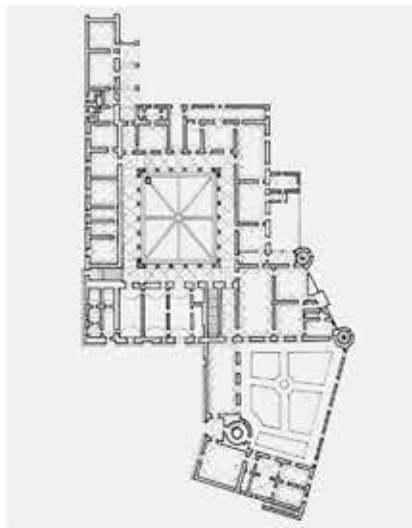
**Fig 11:** The Addizione Ercolea or Ercolean Addition is the area of urban expansion created in 1492 by the enlargement of the walled city limits of Ferrara. It has been ordered by the Duke Borso d'Este and, today, it is celebrated as an example of Renaissance urban planning

Image from AA. VV., *Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, Milano, Cariplo, 1985



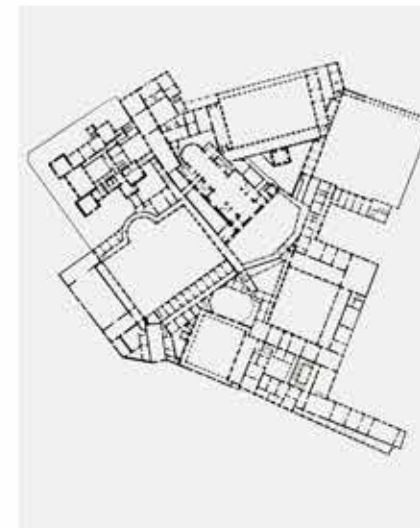
**Fig 12:** Plan and perspective view of Milan by Leonardo da Vinci, 1497.

Codice Atlantico, sheet 199 verso, Milan, Ambrosiana Library



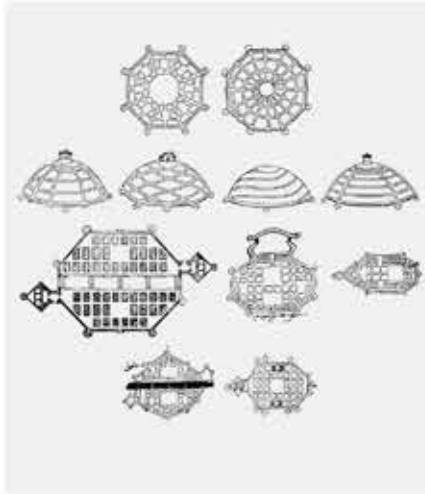
**Fig 13:** Plan of the Ducal Palace of Urbino, a city in form of a palace, XV century. The construction of the building was begun in 1454 for the Duke Federico III da Montefeltro including the pre-existing Place of the Jole.

Image from: Virgilio Vercelloni, *Atlante storico dell'idea europea della città ideale*, Jaca Book, 1994



**Fig 14:** Plan of the Ducal Palace of Mantua, a group of buildings built between the 14th and the 17th century mainly by the noble family of Gonzaga as their royal residence in the capital of their Duchy.

Image from: Virgilio Vercelloni, *Atlante storico dell'idea europea della città ideale*, Jaca Book, 1994



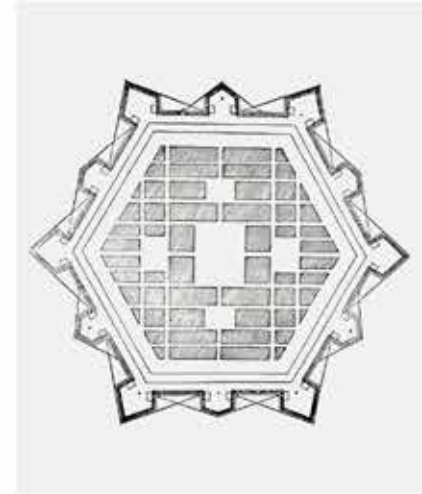
**Fig 15:** Diagrams of cities by Francesco di Giorgio Martini, XV century.

*Trattato di architettura civile e militare*, vol II, Senese code S.IV.4 of the Biblioteca Comunale di Siena



**Fig 16:** Illustration for the 1516 first edition of *Utopia*, a work of fiction and socio-political satire by Thomas More (1478–1535) published in 1516.

*Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*, Habsburg Netherlands, 1516



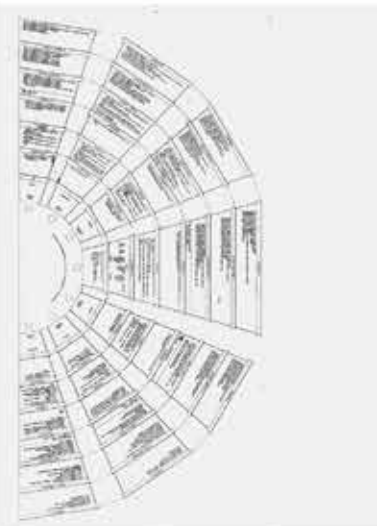
**Fig 17:** Plan of ideal city by Pietro Cattaneo, 1551.

*I primi quattro libri dell'Architettura*, Venice, 1554



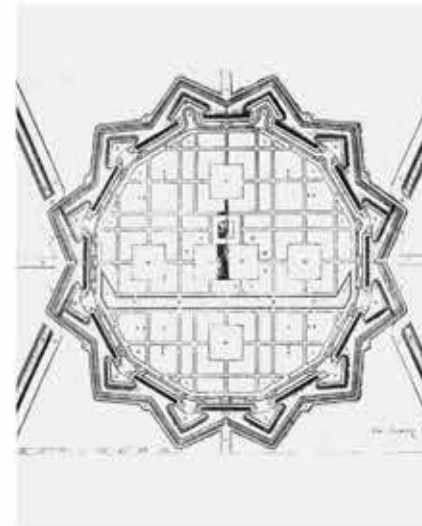
**Fig 18:** Plan of Palmanova, a fortified city built in the Province of Udine in 1593, still existing nowadays.

Image from: Matheus Merian, *Topographia Italiae*, Frankfurt, 1640



**Fig 19:** Image of the "Civitas Solis", the ideal city of Tommaso Campanella. it is described in his homonymous book edited in 1602.

Page from the manuscript of 1602 kept at the Municipal Library of Trento



**Fig 20:** Ideal city by Vincenzo Scamozzi, 1615.

*L'idea dell'architettura universale*, vol II, 1615

culture, the theology, the philosophy, the destiny of the man. The idea that the man, his reason, was the centre of the universe start to pervade every field of knowledge. Hence, the need for new cities, built around this idea. Consequently, the figure of the architect acquired a new role, as the designer of the spaces for the life of the man. The architects became the most politically influential among the artists, because, with their skill, they could create beautiful plan and buildings able to reflect the perfection of the political and social arrangement conceived out by the wisdom of the prince.

The elaboration of the theories about cities found a way of expression in the treatises. The treatises "De Re Aedificatoria" (Fig 8) of "Leon Battista Alberti" (finished in 1452 and published in 1485) or "Utopia" (Fig 16) of Thomas More (1516) were important references for artists and architects of that time and the further generations.

Alberti studied the Vitruvius's ancient text "De Architectura" (ten books written between 29 and 23 B.C.) and elaborated its content establishing a new discipline, the science of the city or urban planning. The ideal city for Alberti is no more a closed and protected space, but a centre of relations and power, it is a State. The architect did not give ideal models for the city but a hierarchy, a rule.

After Alberti, the theoretical debate went on for more than a century.

Other important utopic examples are Filarete's Sforzinda (Fig 10) and the projects of Leonardo Da

Vinci (Fig 12).

During the earlier phases of the Renaissance, the theoretical thought about ideal cities expressed in the treatises found a way of being put into practice. It is important however, to distinguish different typologies: the city founded "ex novo" like Sabbioneta or Palmanova (Fig 18), the interventions on pre-existing cities like the cases of Pienza (Fig 9) and Ferrara (Fig 11) and the monuments built like symbols of ideal cities like the Ducal Palace of Mantova (Fig 14) and Urbino (Fig 13).

However, as it is possible to notice in these examples, when the concept of ideal city is applied on the reality it has to face different issues like the structure of the pre-existence, the morphology of the place, the defensive needs and so on. It is evident that there is always a big gap between the ideal city and the real city.

The project of the cities described and showed on the treatises have always regular schemes, circular, polygonal or grided, with a star shape defensive system. In the most of the cases, the defensive system guides the drawing of the entire city. However, many of the description coming from the treatises were not aimed to become reality: their aim was to become ideal schemes, in which the regularity, the repetitiveness, the hierarchy of the parts were able to underline the social hierarchy and the difference between residential and public. Therefore, the theme of the ideal city has always being a pretext to think of the forms and the

nature of inhabiting, to understand what a city is and how to represent it as an image.

In this panorama of real and ideal cities, Sabbioneta stands out for its peculiarities. Sabbioneta is a fortified city (like most of them, on the eve of modernity), but it is not only a fortress: it is a capital of a small principality. The example of Florence and that of Sabbioneta, both "real" and at the same time "ideal" cities, however, represent the outcome of different stories. Florence is the result of a diachronic process, it has gradually grown. The original fabric has expanded and changed over time: new streets, new squares, new churches, new buildings. The overall principle is a non-geometric *ratio*, which identifies, as the unit of measurement, the same forces that determine its development: the arts, traders, bankers.

Sabbioneta, on the other hand, rises from a single action, it is the result of a plan that erases, with the exception of the old fortress, the traces of the primitive medieval village. It is a "new foundation city", modeled according to a precise geometric *ratio* that identifies the unit of measurement in the founder, Vespasiano Gonzaga. At the end, Sabbioneta assumed the appearance of a "real city" in which the personality of its founder can be detected in the walls, in the streets, in the variety of the factories.

Besides Sabbioneta, circumscribing the research to the period of the Renaissance, there are other examples of newly founded urban centers: Castro (since 1537), Vitry-le François (1545), Guastalla



Fig 21: Claude Battelier, Vitry le François, 1766

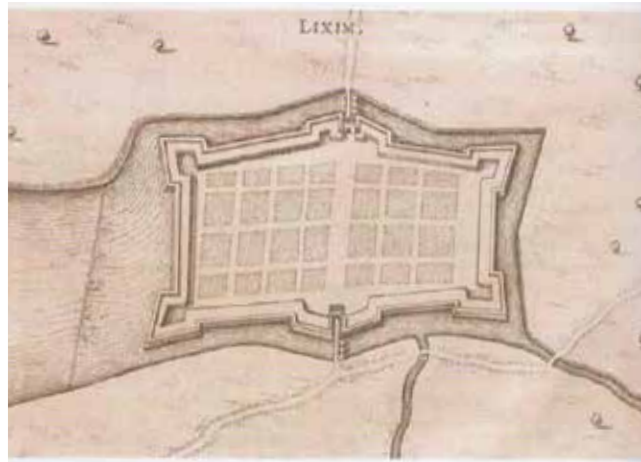


Fig 22: Matthaus Merian, Lixheim, in Topografia Palatinatus, 1645



Fig 23: George Braun, Franz Hogenberg, Zamosch, 1618



Fig 24 and 25: Model of the current state of the city of Sabbioneta. The monuments and the walls have been underlined in white color. Piece of the exhibition "Le città ideali dei Gonzaga", hold in Palazzo Ducale di Mantova from 22th September 2017 until 2 April 2018.

(1553), Valletta (1560), Pfalzburg (1570), Lixheim (1608), Karlstadt-Karlovac (from 1579), Zamosc (from 1578), Freudenstadt (1599), and finally Charleville (1606). But compared to these cities, more or less radically transformed over time, or disappeared, Sabbioneta has a peculiarity that makes it, in many aspects, an exception. Today it is almost intact in its essential features: the hexagon of the ramparts, the two gates, the straight streets to delineate the orthogonal urban fabric, the palaces of the prince, the houses of the subjects, the theater.

Born by the will of Vespasian, it survived after the death of the founder (in the absence of male heirs) in a centuries-old state of historical inertia, as crystallized over time.

A strict class hierarchy determines the morphological connotation of the city. At the summit is obviously the prince and his factories. The palace of government, soaring in height, and the private factories, the Palazzo Giardino and the Galleria degli Antichi, developed in length, reveal monumental characters. At the intermediate level there are the Palazzo della Ragione and the residences of the court officials (Palazzo del Cavalleggero and del Capitano), equipped with marble moldings. Finally, the houses reserved for the subjects are more modest, originally not

exceeding the two floors above ground, sometimes equipped with porticos, useful for the exercise of trade.

Vespasiano also cared about the overall decor of the city, which was decorated by painters who painted the facades of the houses with stories and tales "*on capriccio*".

Sabbioneta is also characterized by the presence of a "city in a city", the perspective scene of the theater. The revolution experienced in the first quarter of the sixteenth century by Baldassarre Peruzzi and Girolamo Genga, then codified by Serlio (1545), contemplated a scene characterized by a square and a street that, for synecdoche, represented the city, animated by citizens /actors. In Vincenzo Scamozzi's drawing, preserved in the Uffizi, a straight line, the horizon line, unites the loggia to the place of representation. From a high place, privileged by the crown of the Olympic divinities, Vespasiano could project his image on the perspective city, in a veritable sublimation of his Sabbioneta. After all, he was the real actor on the scene.

#### NOTES:

1- The introduction made in this chapter is a brief summary of the researches made by various authors dealing with the exhibition "*Le città ideali dei Gonzaga*", hold in Palazzo Ducale di Mantova from 22th September 2017 until 2 April 2018. Catalog of the exhibition: a cura di Paolo Bertelli, *Costruire, abitare, pensare. Sabbioneta e Charleville Città ideali dei Gonzaga*, Universitas studiorum, Mantova, 2017





# FROM THE MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT UNTIL THE DUCHY OF VESPASIANO

On the left

**Fig 1:** Map of the city of Sabbioneta, Gaspare Beretta, XVII century, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan

The main sources for the study of the city of Sabbioneta are the texts of Giulio Faroldi (historian and member of the clergy that lived in XVI century) and Nicolò de Dondi (general commissioner of the buildings at the time of Vespasiano, writer of the volume *"Estratti del diario delle cose avvenute in Sabbioneta dal MDLXXX al MDC"*).

Other books, written in a more recent period, like the Antonio Racheli's *"Delle memorie storiche di Sabbioneta"* (1849) and Enrico Agosta del Forte's *"Sabbioneta e il suo comune, dalle origini al 1980"* (1981) are fundamental to understand Sabbionetan events, even before the Vespasian government.

Professor Agosta del Forte begins the documented history of Sabbioneta with a Roman plaque, found during the demolition of the church of S. Biagio occurred in 1583 by order of Vespasiano, which shows the inscription: AQ. PROCLU... ROM... COH... PRAEF. OPMUS. FIDSU / Q. PHOLCARIS IVICTSS. EXTREAM... SEU / TUS N. MQ. IMP. DED... TES DROCT / ULFI BRIXELIO... M. FUGA SAUCIUS SABU / LONETAM OPPID... IT... VIXT. A. PLM. LXIX DEPO /... HOC SACILLO. S. PRD... NON / A. DXCIL N.EVE NOSP... ALISQ... TV

(Translation: The prefect of Roman courts Proclus, excellent soldier and loyalist, followed the extreme fortune of Folcari, devoted to the will of the emperor, and, sided with Drottulfo, he was injured in Brescello, and therefore he escaped in the castle of Sabbioneta. Healed by Lucio Neva, he lived a long time, died at the age of 78 in 561 and was buried at the expense of the guest in the chapel

of the place),<sup>1</sup>.

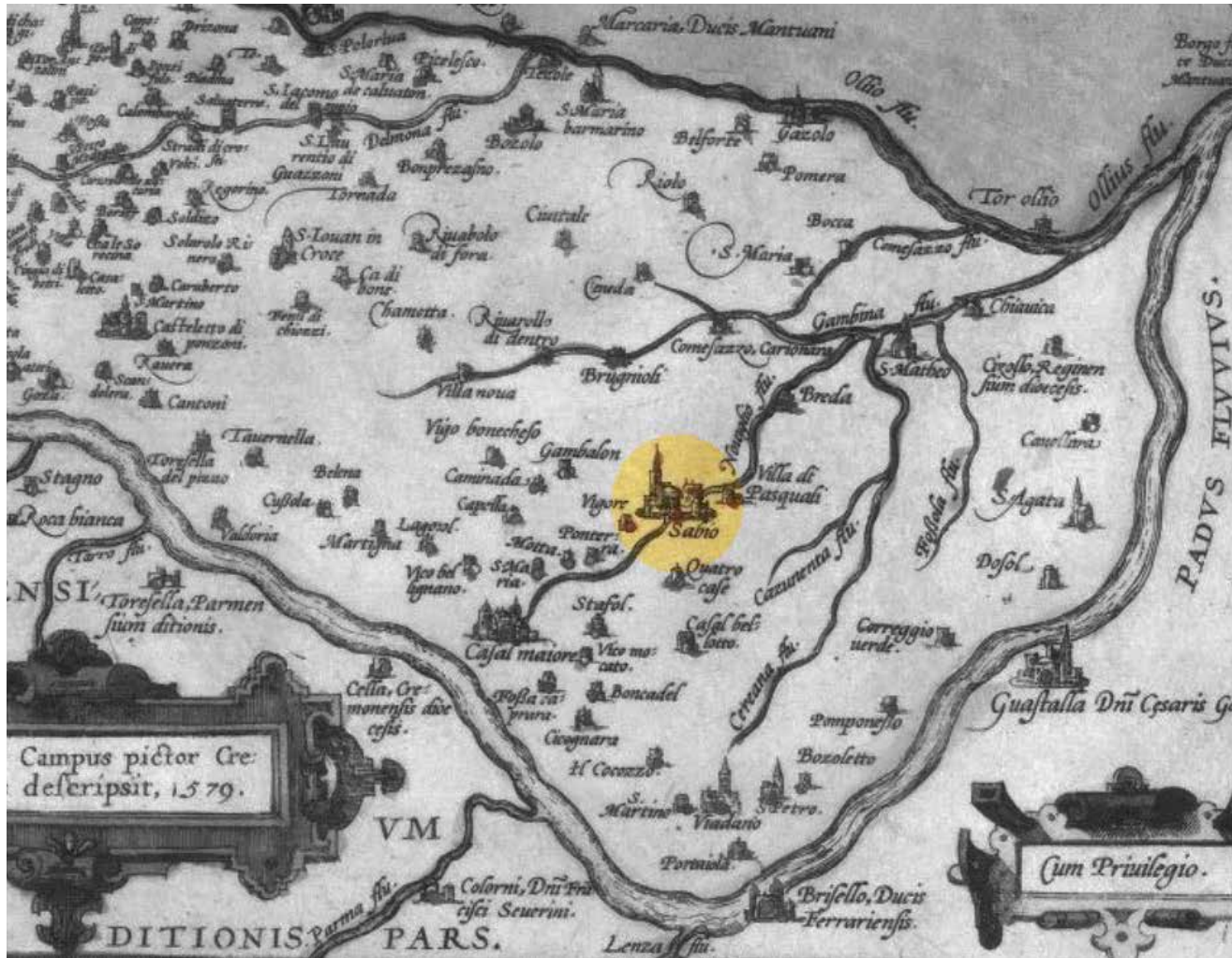
We know, therefore, that Sabbioneta was a fortified village, whose importance was linked to the proximity to two consular roads such as the Via Emilia and the Postumia, as well as to the connections with the centres of Mantua and Cremona and with the two nearby rivers, the Oglio and the Po. The city, probably, existed from the first century BC as it was proved by some archaeological discoveries. The historian Luca Sarzi Amadè suggested that the original name of Sabbioneta village was "Capo della Volpe"<sup>2</sup>.

The most ancient document where it is possible to find the name of Sabbioneta is a donation act of the XXI century in which the city is called "Sabluneto". The name, probably, comes from the Latin word "sabulum", which means sand and refers to the sandy soil of the Po valley territory.

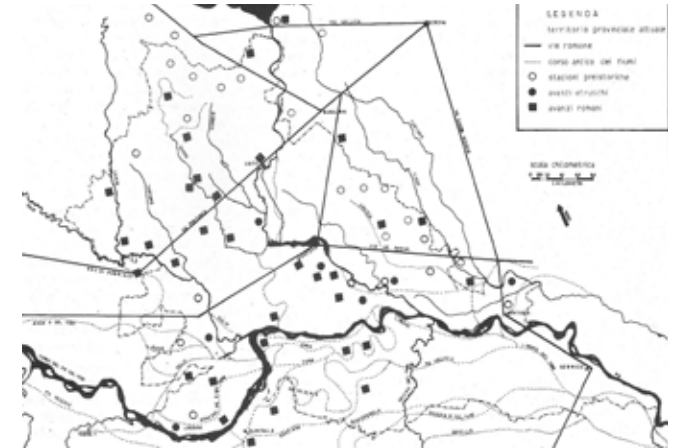
The substantial works of Roman centuriation that determined the setting of the agricultural landscape, which is still partially preserved today and which has been integrated over the centuries by reclamation and river embankment works, affected the site in which the city was built.

On the period following the fall of the Western Roman Empire Sabbioneta was part of the Byzantine Empire and then of the Lombard kingdom until in 774. After the battle of Pavia, Charle Magne conquered Sabbioneta and donated it to the Brescian abbey of Leno.

The jurisdiction of the abbey of the Leno area lasted, almost uninterrupted, until about the second half



**Fig 2:** Agri Cremonensis typus, Antonio Campi, 1524-1587, Acquaforte con acquerellature policrome, Sabbioneta, Vittorio Rossi Collection. The representation of the Cremonese territory was included in the Theatrum orbis terrarum of Abraham Ortelius, published in Antwerp from 1570. It can be observed that Sabbioneta was crossed by a tributary of the Oglio river.



**Fig 3:** Topographic map of the province of Mantua with Roman streets, ancient rivers and archaeological remains, drawing by E. Paglia, from *Castelli dei Gonzaga*, by PALVARINI Maria Rosa, PEROGALLI Carlo, Milan, Rusconi Libri, 1983



**Fig 4:** Symbolical map of the Mantuan castles, drawing by S. Bazzi, from *Castelli dei Gonzaga*, by PALVARINI Maria Rosa, PEROGALLI Carlo, Milan, Rusconi Libri, 1983

of the tenth century. However, it was officially lost in 1020 when the Sabbionetan dominion passed to the Persico family, in the hands of Giampietro, to whom is attributed the construction of a defensive wall and a castle. However, this information cannot be confirmed: the historian Luca Sarzi Amadè suggested that, before Vespasiano, Sabbioneta had no defensive walls<sup>3</sup>. Paolo Carpeggiani recused this thesis quoting Faroldi, who spoke about a *castello*, surrounded the *Rocca*. In fact, in the medieval tradition, the castle is a fortified enclosure<sup>4</sup>.

The family of the Persico retained the lordship of the municipality probably until the beginning of the thirteenth, when in a war between Ferrara, Cremona and Mantua for the control of the Po they was defeated and had to leave Sabbioneta to the Cremona lords.

In the mid thirteenth century, Sabbioneta was in the hands of the Cremonese family of Dovara. Buoso was officially appointed Count of Sabbioneta by Emperor Frederick II in 1246, but his lordship lasted until the sixties of the thirteenth century when, in the struggle between Cremona and Mantua, the city returned in the hands of the Persico to Rolando, descendant of the previous lords.

The fourteenth century is a decisive century for the history of the city: Sabbioneta passed under the control of Mantua, with the Bonacolsi's first and then the Gonzaga's government. The events that led to this change are linked to the wars between Mantua and Verona on one side, Cremona, and

Ferrara on the other: the Bonacolsi were, in fact, allies of the Veronese Scaligeri and together they wanted to limit the expansionist ambitions of the Ferrarese Estensi who found support from the Cavalcabò family from Cremona.

Persico family sided in favor of the latter, with the consequence that Bonacolsi and Scaligeri gave the assault to the town, which tried to resist in vain in 1315 under the command of Gilio Persico.

The Mantuan Bonacolsi then occupied Sabbioneta. Their lordship in Mantua was interrupted in 1328 by the revolt of August 16th organized by Luigi Gonzaga who became the new captain general of the Municipality. The lordship of the Gonzagas was questioned in the year 1348 when an alliance of Visconti, Scaligeri and Estensi threatened Mantua. Therefore, Sabbioneta was conquered by the Milanese in whose command had been placed Michele Del Persico, descendant of Gilius. However, thanks to the arrival of the troops of Filippino, son of the Mantuan lord, the situation was reversed and the Gonzagas won.

In the following period, Gonzaga and Visconti became allies, but, in 1354, Mantova took part in the anti-viscontea league in order to make more stable relations with Venice.

This move, however, reversed again the political situation. The Milanese conquered the city of Virginia in 1358; therefore, many lands had to be sold to them as a guaranty for their control. In this context, Sabbioneta returned in the possession of the Persian.

During this period, the control of the Persian family was reduced due to the constant presence of Milanese troops in the area. The early years of the renewed lordship of the Persico were peaceful thanks to the good relationship between Francesco Gonzaga and Gian Galeazzo Visconti.

But after the death of Gian Galeazzo, a series of local conflicts woke up: Sabbioneta went back to the Gonzaga family with the expulsion of Michele del Persico and again returned to the latter's sons until 1426.

In the context of the war between the Visconti, supporter of the Persico, and Florence and Venice, to which Mantua was allied, the Mantuan troops reconquered the town by taking Cristoforo del Persico, the last descendant of Michele, as a prisoner. At this moment, the long period of Gonzaga domination on Sabbioneta begins. It lasted until the end of the 16th century and then again at the beginning of the 18th century.

The first years of the Gonzaga domination were characterized by clashes and different occupations. At the death of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, in fact, the marquisate was divided between his two sons: Ludovico, who had Mantua, and Carlo, who had Sabbioneta, Rivarolo, Isola Dovarese, Luzzara, Suzzara, Gazzuolo, Viadana, Gonzaga and Reggiolo. This partition did not satisfy Carlo, who clashed several times with his brother, taking part in the vicissitudes of the war between Milan and Venice, when the transition from the Visconti lordship to that of the Sforza was taking place. The

situation was solved in favor of Gianfrancesco's firstborn in 1456 with the defeat of Carlo and the return of Sabbioneta and the other villages under the marquisate of Mantua. The next period was quiet despite the floods of 1474 and the plague that struck Mantua in 1478 causing the death of his lord.

The succession brought Sabbioneta, Bozzolo, Gazzuolo, Isola, Rodigo, Rivarolo and San Martino under the control of Gianfrancesco and his brother Francesco, who, however, did not actually exercise his power. During the domain of Gianfrancesco, the villages of Bozzolo and Gazzuolo became his residences. The death of Gianfrancesco in 1496 caused a further division between his sons. Sabbioneta, Dosolo, Correggioverde, Pomponesco, Gazzuolo, Belforte and Rodigo went to Ludovico and Pirro; Bozzolo, Rivarolo Fuori, S. Martino, Isola Dovarese went to Federico and Gianfrancesco II. Gianfrancesco II died young and Federico remained, therefore, the only lord of his portion, while Ludovico and Pirro had Sabbioneta and Gazzuolo respectively. Ludovico, the progenitor of the so-called Gonzaga di Sabbioneta, married Francesca Fieschi, daughter of the Doge of Genoa, and had many children including Giulia, Pirro, Luigi called Rodomonte and Gianfrancesco known as Cagnino.

The rebirth of Sabbioneta is due to Ludovico, who decided to move his court there and started some urban works like the enlargement of the castle. Ludovico's policy was mostly pro-imperial,

having first supported Maximilian and then his successor Charles V, to whose court he sent his son Rodomonte who was later made captain general of the troops in Italy and distinguished himself in many warlike actions. Rodomonte also participated in the sack of Rome in 1527 with the Lanzichenecchi of Carlo V, but later favoured the escape of Pope Clement VII from Castel Sant'Angelo (the Pope's gratitude towards Rodomonte will be very important for the fortune of his son Vespasiano). With the peace of Cambrai of 1529, Rodomonte passed into the Pope's troops without compromising his good relations with the emperor. This fact was decisive for the private life of Rodomonte: his sister Giulia was, in fact, married to the Duke of Traietto and count of Fondi Vespasiano Colonna, who, in his will, had foreseen for his daughter Isabella (stepdaughter of Giulia) a marriage with the nephew of the Pope Ippolito de' Medici. After the death of Colonna in 1528, the Pope tried to occupy his lands but was opposed by Napoleone Orsini, Farpa's abbot. Therefore, the Pope sent Rodomonte against him. Following this act Rodomonte secretly married Isabella, not without the annoyance of the Pope. The union of Isabella and Rodomonte did not last long due to the military commitments of the Gonzaga. The 6th of December 1531 his young wife gave birth to a male child who was called Vespasiano. Rodomonte died only one year later, during the siege of Vicovaro against Napoleone Orsini. In 1533, Isabella took Vespasiano to Sabbioneta,

but her father-in-law Ludovico arose a dispute for the education of her son, so that she decided to return to Fondi. In 1540, Ludovico died and, in his will, he appointed Vespasiano as the sole heir of his possessions. He also indicated his daughter Giulia as his guardian. The Sabbioneta's possessions were administered by the Cardinal Ercole from the Gonzaga family of Mantua because Vespasiano was under age.

In 1541, the emperor Charles V disposed about the tutorship of Vespasiano: he removed him from his mother and entrusted to aunt Giulia, who raised him in Naples. In addition to humanistic education, he was initiated into military discipline, and sent, in 1545, to the court of the Infant Philip, of which he became a page of honor, establishing a relationship of trust that was decisive for the political career of the lord of Sabbioneta. Vespasiano followed Philip on his journey in Flanders to the court of Brussels and then returned to Sabbioneta in 1549.

In the meanwhile, Bozzolo and Rivarolo Mantovano were added to Sabbioneta, Ostiano and Rodigo as the heritage of Vespasiano.

Although at the time of the ascent of Vespasiano Sabbioneta probably existed for 1600 years, it is only with and thanks to Vespasiano that Sabbioneta has been able to reach its maximum splendor that today has placed it among the heritage sites of the Humanity.

For the reconstruction of the events about Vespasiano's life the historians studied the testimonies of the magistrate Alessandro Lisca

written in latin in 1592, as well as Giulio Faroldi's. An important volume is also Ireneo Affò's "*Vita di Vespasiano Gonzaga Duca di Sabbioneta, e Trajetto, Marchese di Ostiano, Conte di Rodigo, Fondi ec.*" written in 1780.

The old village of Sabbioneta, chosen by his grandfather Ludovico as his residence, was completely transformed by Vespasiano.

The philosopher Mario Nizolio reported this latin inscription:

*"Sed iam, veniamus ad id, quod primo loco propositum fuit dicendum: hoc est, admirabile oppidi huius aedificationem. In quo condendo illud mihi ante omnia maxime admirandum videtur, quo dubi nunc est Sabuloneta nova, hoc est ubi nunc sunt tot novae, & pictae domus: tot latae & stratae viae: tam ampla & spatiosa platea: & tam multa alia oppidi huius ornamenta; ibidem ante tres annos, praeter arcem, & pauculas quasdam domos; nihil ut audio, fuit aedificati. Sed tantummodo fossa ingens aquis; rasinaq; plena, & circa fossam loca inculta, herbis dunisq; obsita; quae aspicientibus tunc quodvis potius, quam oppidi aliquando incolendi fundamentur, ac sedes fore videbantur. Ac tallis quidem nunc, hoc est, tam pulcher, tamq; visendus est aspectus sabulonetani soli tam repent mutati. & talis tunc, hoc est, tam orrida & inculta erat facies eiusdem soli, antequam conderetur. Quae cum videret & diligenter consideraret magninimus Princeps noster, more veterum heroum, qui fere omnes urbium conditores fuerunt, nulla labore, nulla difficultate, nullo sumptu perterritus, statim*

*adiecit animum ad tam difficilem, tamq; laboriosam oppidi molem colendam, hoc est, ad opus vere heroicum & divinum"*<sup>5</sup>.

The philosopher describes the site before the foundation of Sabbioneta as ugly and fallow. Vespasiano, the founder of the city, is identified as a heroic figure, comparable with the ancient Roman and Greek emperor.

The most important act of Vespasiano as the founder of the city was the construction of a new defensive wall. When the lord began the construction of the hexagonal city walls, the city start to develop a completely different image. However, this was not the first intervention of Vespasiano, since he already had ordered the opening of new schools in 1551 and had allowed the construction of a Jewish typography which will have become very important over the years. The construction of the walls began in 1554, when Vespasiano returned from a series of trips to serve the Emperor. He managed to stay for a short time in his state, probably planning and directing the work in person. In the following years, he was engaged as general captain of the imperial infantry in Italy for the emperor and he returned to Sabbioneta in 1556 and then move away again in 1558, year of the abdication of Charles V in favor of his son Philip II.

In 1559, after the peace treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, he came back in Sabbioneta to continue the urban works, such as the construction of the Porta Vittoria. In the same year, Vespasian was struck

by a family mourning: his wife Diana di Cardona, married in 1550, died without having given sons to the lord of Sabbioneta, who became, however, Marquis of Giuliana, count of Chiusi and baron of Burgio, all Sicilian localities.

Vespasian returned to Sabbioneta in 1562 to verify the progress of the walls and the organization of the mint, started by the late wife. He also started the settlement of the Grangia and Villa Pasquali as a hunting and fishing residence.

The duke ordered a series of demolition in order to modify the structure of the city. In 1562 he demolished the Serviti (or San Biagio) convent in order to rebuild it inside the city; in 1565 he destroyed a park in order to expand the city on the eastern side.

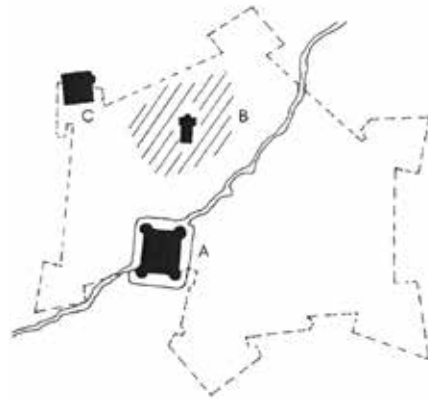
It is very important to remember two measures that he ordered. With the former, the residents of the state were ordered to move to the city, under the threat of pecuniary sanctions. This guaranteed the possibility to control emigration, trades and above all taxation, providing for a real census:

*"tutti i cittadini, e altre persone comprese nelle passate gride, ad abitar dentro la terra di Sabbioneta se vi debbono ritrovar dentro con tutta la loro famiglia per tutto l'otto del mese di ottobre prossimo sotto pena quanto alli cittadini dell'ammissione d'ogni esenzione, immunità e privilegio, così per la persona loro quanto per li propri beni che si ritroveranno avere, quali venendo il caso,..."*<sup>6</sup>.

With the second, he instituted an Academy for high education, to whose guidance Mario Nizolio



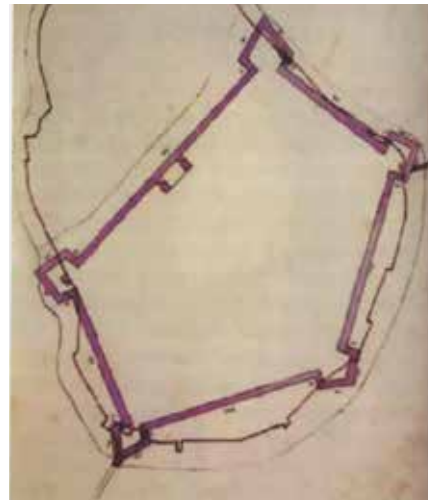
**Fig 5:** Portrait of Vespasiano Gonzaga, Oil on the table, 117 x 91.5 cm, 1558/59 - attributed to Anthonis Mor, a Flemish portraitist (1520 - 1577), Civic Museum Gallery of Como



**Fig 6:** The medieval map of Sabbioneta by Kurt Forster

A: The rocca  
B: santa Maria church  
C: San Biagio convent

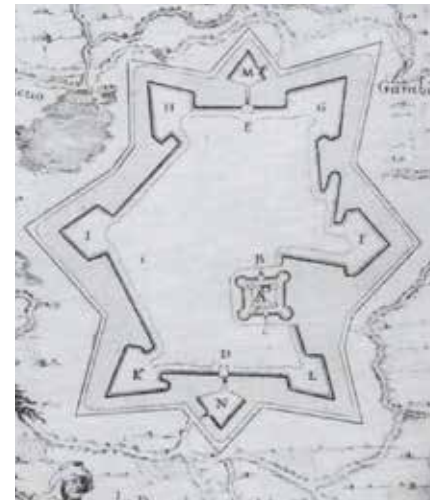
*From Rocca to Civitas: Urban planning at Sabbioneta, In: "L'Arte", s.II, V, 1969*



**Fig 8:** G. B. Belluzzi, copy of a preliminary pentagonal project of sabbioneta . Florence, national Library. The similarity with Domenico Giunti's project for Guastalla is quite evident.



**Fig 7:** Project of Guastalla by Domenico Giunti, 1553, Parma, Archivi di Stato. The chronological coincidence and the urban analogies between Guastalla and Sabbioneta have suggested to Forster the plausible hypothesis of the presence of Giunti also alongside Vespasiano too.



**Fig 9:** the first printed sandpaper representing Sabbioneta. Performed by the Spanish D.José Chafrion in 1687. Small format copper engraving, Civic Collection of the "Achille Bertarelli" prints, Milan

was placed.

In these years Vespasiano manages to solve a question opened by his grandfather Ludovico, that is the possession of Commessaggio, for which the ancestor had paid a considerable sum of money: Vespasiano succeeded in obtaining it in 1567, from the cousins of Gazzuolo.

In 1565, Vespasiano was appointed Marquis by the emperor Maximilian II and, in 1566, his new wife Anna d'Aragona, fifth cousin of Philip II of Spain, gave birth to a child, Isabella. In the following winter, she gave birth to another son called Luigi. The next year, however, the young wife died because of her weak health aggravated by the climate and the two pregnancies.

In 1568, after having participated the year before the war of succession of the Monferrato and having suffered from a serious illness, he went again to Spain, to the court of Philip II who held him for a decade. The emperor appointed him first *maestre racional*, or governor of the region of Cartagena, and then viceroy of Navarra, where he fortified the cities of Guipuzcoa, Fontarabia and Pamplona. Later, he was sent to North Africa and southern Spain, until he was entrusted with the Valenza region of which he was viceroy until his return to Italy. Almost at the end of his stay in Spain he was first raised to the rank of prince and then, with a caesarean diploma of 18 November 1577, duke of Sabbioneta. In addition, in recent years, due to the death of his mother, he had also inherited the duchy of Traietto and the county of

Fondi, which allowed the duke to implement his program to revise his capital.

On his return to Sabbioneta in 1578, in fact, Vespasiano gave new impetus to the project started twenty years earlier, that was entrusted to local governors and the technical direction of Giovan Pietro Bottaccio since 1557 (other collaborators where Bernardino Panizzari and Girolamo Cattaneo). Vespasian made him build the second door, the Porta Imperiale, and reform the building fabric of the city, demolishing many buildings to be rebuilt according to a planimetric approach and unitary compositional criteria. Not only the city, but also the surrounding countryside underwent considerable modifications: Vespasian improved the system of the embankments to make the territory safer from floods. The historian Kurt W. Forster believes that also Domenico Giunti, a military engineer that worked in Guastalla, collaborated with Vespasiano in the design of the city. In fact, Sabbioneta and Guastalla, capitals of near duchy, have been rebuilt in more or less the same period 7.

Many monumental buildings that characterize the town have been built between 1578 and the death of the duke. Starting from 1578, significant changes were made to the Palazzo Ducale; between 1580 and 1582 the Palazzo Giardino, residence of prince's delight, was built; in 1581, the construction of the church of Santa Maria Assunta began; in 1583, he started the construction of the Corridor Grande, completed in 1586; in 1584, he

placed in the heart of the city the Roman column with the statue of the goddess Athena, stolen by her father in Rome during the sack; between 1586 and 1588, the Incoronata church was built; in 1587, the Palazzo del Cavalleggero and that of the Capitano were started and in 1588 the famous Teatro all'Antica of Vincenzo Scamozzi was born.

These years were also characterized by important private events that strongly influenced the future of the duchy. In 1580, the second son Luigi, heir of Vespasiano, died; in 1582 Vespasian married Margherita Gonzaga, who soon turned out to be unable to have children; in 1584, the eldest daughter Isabella married the prince of Stigliano Luigi Carafa; eventually, in 1585, he was named Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

Vespasian died on 26th of February 1591, after many years of illness. He was buried on March 4th in the Incoronata church.

What Vespasian has accomplished at Sabbioneta is, as we read on the plaque affixed to Porta Vittoria, to re-establish the village received as a legacy by his grandfather Ludovico, to make it the capital of his own duchy, as well as his main office. During the years of his stay in Italy the duke did not intervene only on Sabbioneta, but also on the other inhabited centers under his control. Only in Sabbioneta however he managed to accomplish a complete overhaul of the military, urban and architectural structure such as to make the critics speak of "ideal city": a city created by a unitary will, the will of the prince, on the basis of a rational



Fig 10: Sabbioneta, Ducal square, ancient lithograph, Civica raccolta di stampe A. Bertarelli, Milan



Fig 11: S.Smeraldi's plan of sabbioneta, 1605, from *Il corso del Po nel territorio farnesiano*, Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Raccolte mappe e disegni.

This representation, although very ancient, has evocative purposes rather than an intent of a realistic refiguration



Fig 12: V. M. Coronelli, Sabioneda, from *Città e fortezze dello stato di Milano...*, Venezia, 1693

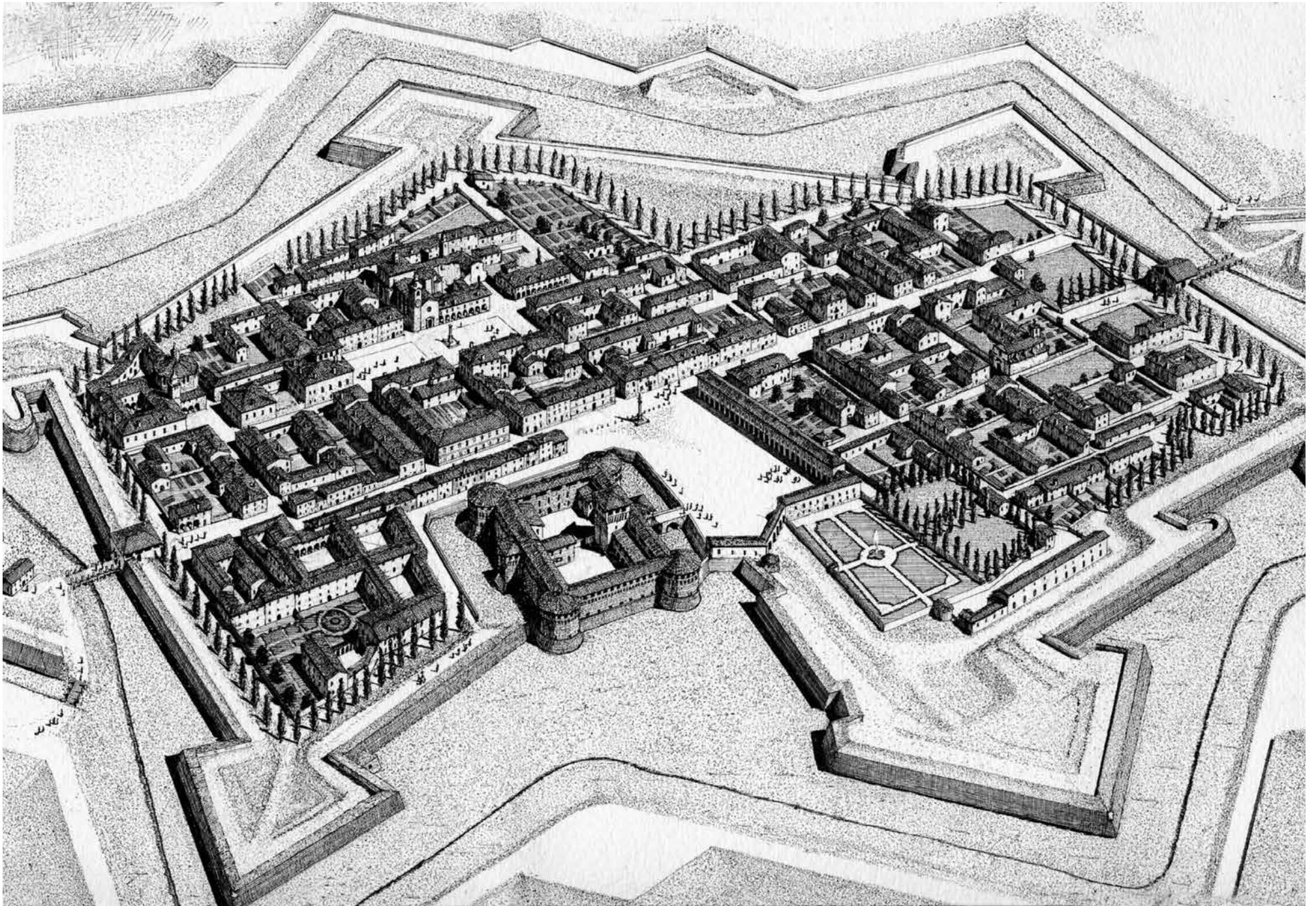
Compared to the previous one, this refiguration, although very simple, manage to represent the urban reality of Sabbioneta, with its walls and the rocca.



plan determined a priori. Within the city, it is possible to identify an order that has informed the construction in its various constituent aspects such as the defensive system, the urban structure, the upward development of the insulae, and to which only the prince's factories are the exception. The presence of Vespasiano is so concrete that it is possible to say that Sabbioneta is a "palace in the form of a city", reversing the terms of the lucky epithet that Baldassare Castiglioni referred to the Palazzo Ducale di Urbino. In fact, Carpeggiani speaks about Sabbioneta of an ideal city whose unit of measure is the prince; a utopia embodied in the immanence of streets and squares, palaces, churches, bronzes, colors; a splendid and fragile creation, alive and pulsing by the will of the founder, extinguished already at the death of Vespasiano<sup>8</sup>.

## NOTES:

- 1- In E. Agosta del Forte, *Sabbioneta e il suo Comune dalle origini al 1980*, Tipografia la Sabbionetana, Sabbioneta, 1981, pg. 15
- 2- In Luca Sarzi Amadè, *I Conventi di Sabbioneta e la vita di Nicolao Dondo*, Sabbioneta, Edizioni Associazione Pro Loco, 1982, pg. 8
- 3- In Luca Sarzi Amadè, *I Conventi di Sabbioneta e la vita di Nicolao Dondo*, Sabbioneta, Edizioni Associazione Pro Loco, 1982, pg. 99, note 8
- 4- In Ercolano Marani, *Sabbioneta e Vespasiano Gonzaga Sabbioneta*, Tip. "La sabbionetana", 1977, pg. 51, note 4
- 5- Speech of Mario Nizolio hold at Parma in 1563, reported by Paolo Carpeggiani in *Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, Milano, Cariplo, 1985, pg. 47-48
- 6- Proclaims of Vespasiano Gonzaga dated back 1562, reported in Ireneo Affò, *Vita di Vespasiano Gonzaga Duca di Sabbioneta, e Trajetto, Marchese di Ostiano, Conte di Rodigo, Fondi ec.*, Parma, presso Filippo Carmignani, Stampatore, per Privilegio di S.A.R., 1780
- 7- In Kurt W. Forster, *From Rocca to Civitas: Urban planning at Sabbioneta*, In: "L'Arte", s.II, V, 1969, pg. 9
- 8- In Paolo Carpeggiani, *Appendici: Sabbioneta, San Benedetto Po*, in P. Carpeggiani, Mantova: profilo di una città, Officina Grafica Ceschi, Quistello, 1975, pag. 133



On the left

**Fig 1:**  
Representation of Sabbioneta at the end of XVI century, Lorenzo Confortini, 1986. The opera is now kept in the synagogue of Sabbioneta

*“È da considerare di poi che, essendo la città più di ogni altra fabbrica importante, per essere ricetto de gli huomini e di qualunque altro edificio, che ancora la più importante cosa di tutta l'Architettura, oltre al recinto delle mura, sono i buoni compartimenti e distributioni delle strade, delle piazze, del pomerio, e di ogni altro spazio o vano dentro alla città [...]. Onde sendo prima terminato il recinto angolato delle mura della città di conveniente grandezza, conviensi di poi con buona ragione, compartire ogni suo spatio dentro, come le strade, le piazze, il pomerio e qualunque altro vano, lassando nel mezo e centro della città il vano per la sua principale piazza, acciocché a tutti li habitatori sia ugualmente comoda: la quale si potrà fare in tutto o in parte porticata con magnifiche e honorate colonne, e da quella essendo piano il sito dentro le mura, si potrà a ciascuna porta riferire per retta linea una strada principale, e talvolta continuare la sua dritta fino alla opposita porta”<sup>1</sup>.*

The conformation of the space inside the city walls, as it is possible to guess from this step of Cattaneo, is considered very important, such as the design and the construction of an efficient defensive line. Nonetheless, in a small city of new foundation as it is Sabbioneta, a good urban conformation is necessary to complete the war machine of the stronghold. Vespasiano's urban planning follows the indications coming from the treatises, substantially agree with the quotation above, which contemplate a design based on a mesh of orthogonal axes that define

the spaces. The Sabbioneta road network, in fact, is arranged in a system, like the Roman “castrum”. The plot of the streets divides the space in about thirty blocks. The façades of the buildings are compact and form continuous curtains along the streets. The buildings are usually two-story and have courtyards or green spaces in the rear.

Despite the fact that its form and purpose were pre-conceived, the city does not present the structured image of a planned city at all. Instead, the outline of the rampart forms an irregular hexagon and the inside is a broken pattern of streets intersecting at right angles and at first sight bearing no directional relationship to the outline. There have been repeated attempts to identify a construction shape for the irregular outline. In 2003, the German professor Jan Pieper started studying the geometry of Sabbioneta. The results of these studies were very interesting, the professor affirms:

*“For ground plan configurations of single buildings, circle geometries play a very minor role in the history of architecture and they are practically irrelevant in urban architecture. This is mainly because geometric operations with the compass on the drawing board are indeed very easy to do, but they present almost insurmountable difficulties when practiced on the building site [...]. Because of that, instead of measuring shapes based on circular geometry, there has been a tradition of orthogonal or square stake-outs since antiquity. These are worked inwards from*



the outside and originate from an orthogonal "Campus Initialis", an enveloping shape which surrounds the entire construction site. From this outer square or rectangle, streets, insulae and single constructions are measured on the inside. [...] In fact, Sabbioneta's ground plan is inscribed into a square, whose corners point exactly towards the four compass points, so that the diagonals run exactly from north to south and from west to east. The tips of the bastions are set precisely on this square enveloping shape, whose sides are thus divided into sections of 16:18 and 8:20:6. The length of these sections is 40x40 braccia di Sabbioneta, the cubit of 0.493m which Vespasiano Gonzaga introduced on the basis of the Roman foot[...]. This grid also determines the location of all major buildings, the city gates, the Palazzo Ducale, the churches, the theater and the gallery. However, most importantly, it defines the directions of the main axes of all streets and squares, which were determined before the start of the constructions on the inside by setting up massive ashlar blocks at the corners of the insulae and individual monumental structures. These corner stones called "cippi" are also modeled on the practice of Roman urban planning, in which the corners of the building blocks were arranged before dividing the individual contract sections. They were never changed since the legal titles of the real estate were based on them. The main axes of the internal structure of the city ground plan of Sabbioneta are not aligned with the measuring shape of 34x34 squares but inclined to

the grid of the Campus Initialis at a ratio of 1:9. Since the outer square is oriented after the four compass points, the inclination of the axis away from the astronomical north-south direction can be exactly determined, it is 308,46° (degrees). This is the south azimuth of the sunrise on the 6th of December, the birthday of the city's founder, Vespasiano Gonzaga. [...] The birthday orientation of the urban main axis is also an ancient Roman practice in the planning and founding of cities. A significant number of the city foundations in imperial times and an even bigger part of the systematically structured Roman camps was aligned with the longer of the two main axes, the Decumanus, directed towards the location of sunrise on the birthday of the founding emperor.<sup>2</sup> The thesis of the professor cannot be proved by historical documents; however, his studies have become an interesting starting point for the understanding of the urban structure. The city has two main squares, piazza Ducale and piazza d'Armi. There is also a smaller square, piazza San Rocco. In this case it is possible to notice that Vespasiano did not follow the prescriptions of Cataneo, who contemplates only a big main square at the center of the town: in Sabbioneta the two squares have had two complementary roles and it is also difficult to point one or the other as the center of the city. The Piazza Ducale was the center of political, religious and juridical power, with the buildings of the Palazzo Ducale on the west side, the church of Santa Maria Assunta on the northern side and the Palazzo della Ragione. The

latter is identified in some cases in the building with the portico opposite that of the prince, while in others in the building opposite the church.<sup>3</sup> The Piazza Ducale was also the core of the economic life of the city, being surrounded by porticos with shops and craft activities. Since the duke forbade in 1562 to carry out mercantile activities outside of the walled city, the Piazza Ducale used to host the city market.<sup>4</sup>

The shape of this square is regular, almost two 32 meters squares, like the typical renaissance Italian square.

This type has been theorized by Alberti which wrote: "I greci facevano la piazza quadrata ed in Italia ella era larga per i 2:3 della lunghezza; l'una e l'altra erano circondate da portici sopra i quali vi avevano le logge. Ma io lodo che la piazza abbia due quadrati, e che i portici intorno abbiano alcune proporzionate misure [...] Sarà comoda poi l'altezza degli edifizii pel terzo della larghezza della piazza, e niente meno della sesta parte." (the Greek used to design square shape squares, the Vitruvian shape is a square and a third. Both are surrounded by porticos covered by loggias. But I want squares formed by two squares, with porticos following some proportions. The height of the buildings should be the third of the length of the square, not less than a sixth.)<sup>5</sup>

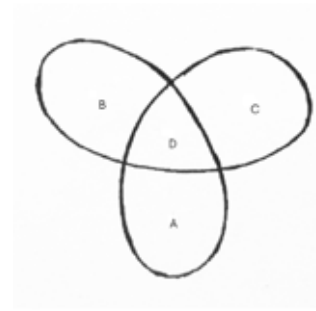
The regular shape of Piazza Ducale is in contrast with the one of Piazza D'Armi. The buildings that overlooked the latter were: the castle, the Palazzo Giardino, the Galleria degli



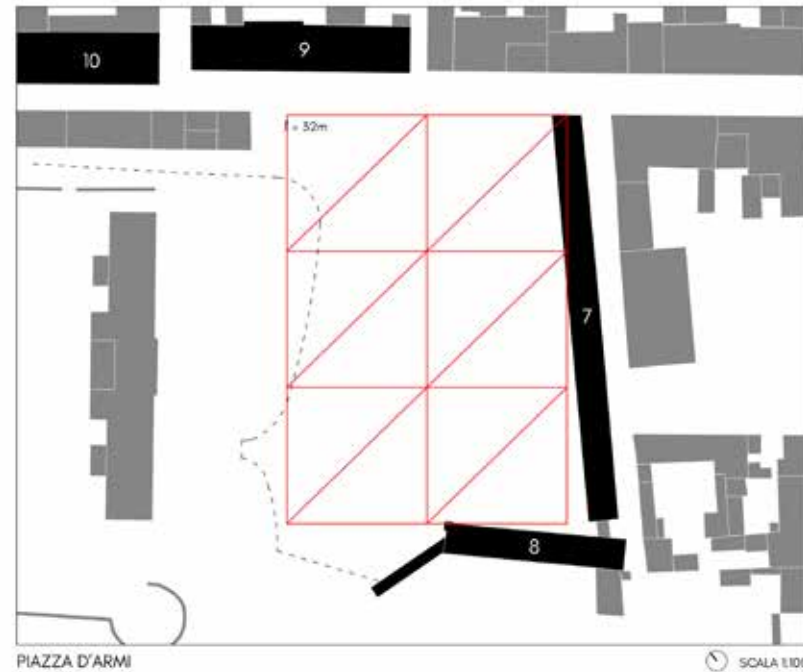
**Fig 7:** The three squares of the city  
 1: Piazza D'Armi  
 2: Piazza Ducale  
 3: Piazza dell'Incoronata



**Fig 8:** Following Kurt Forster's studies it is possible to recognize three main areas in the city whose center of gravity can be identified in the areas containing the two main squares of the city, Piazza D'Armi and Piazza Ducale



**Fig 9:** The main areas that Kurt Forster recognizes are:  
 A: The private area of the prince, with his residence and his leisure villa.  
 B: The public area of the prince, center of political power, with the ducal palace.  
 C: the productive area of the city.  
 D: the center of interaction between the areas



**Fig 10 and 11:** Dimensional analysis of the two main squares. the first one have a regular renaissance shape, formed by two squares. The second one is more or less three times the first, but its shape has irregular boundaries.

Antichi and the Armeria. Contradicting again the Cattaneo's treaty, neither of the squares is clearly located at the geometric center of the city and from none of them there are streets that connect directly to the city gates. For many historians the center of the city is, in reality, the crossroads between the current Vespasiano and Dondi streets, where, before 1931, the column of Minerva found place. According to the historians, the two roads constitute respectively the decumanus and the cardo of the urban grid: the first, almost cutting the whole length of the village from west to east; the second, starting from the square of San Rocco until Piazza d'Armi.

The current via Vespasiano, originally entitled to the aunt of the prince, Julia, effectively constitutes the main axis of the city. It is the main privileged path, even if not linear, for crossing the walled city. Another important road is Via Campi, which connect the Piazza Ducale to the Incoronata church. The small square in front of the church, the result of the intersection of non-aligned road axes, was originally called "Of the hospital" since part of the convent was intended for this function. Today it is called Piazza della Libreria Grande because Vespasiano decided to move his library there in the convent.

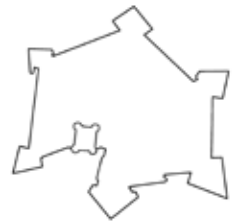
As stated above, in Sabbioneta, it cannot be recognized a chessboard road system, because in many places there are interruptions of the road axes, or theirs offset, with the consequent realization of T or L shape crossings. The most

obvious examples are those of the paths that pass through the doors and which are interrupted after a few meters. Therefore, there is not a direct axis that cuts the city in two, but from both sides the streets bend and converge in Via Vespasiano. Historians believe that the reason for this artifice have to be found in Alberti's book "De re aedificatoria:

*"Quando si giunge in una città, se questa è famosa e potente esigerà strade dritte e molto ampie, confacenti al suo decoro ed alla sua dignità. Se invece è una colonia o una semplice piazzaforte, le vie di ingresso più sicure non sono quelle che conducono diritto alla porta, bensì quelle che svoltano a sinistra o a destra lungo le mura, meglio ancora se passando sotto la merlatura; e all'interno della città non dovranno passare in linea retta, ma piegare con ampie curve, come anse di fiume, più volte da una parte e dall'altra. Ciò perché in primo luogo, apparendo più lunga la strada, si avrà l'impressione che la città sia più grande; inoltre perché il fatto è di grande giovamento sia alla bellezza, sia alla pratica convenienza, sia alle necessità di determinati momenti. [...] Inoltre la strada a curve sarà sempre ombreggiata, anche d'estate; e d'altra parte non vi sarà casa ove non giunga la luce del giorno. Mai vi mancheranno le brezze, le quali, da qualunque parte vengano, troveranno sempre un passaggio diretto ed agevole. Né vi sarà pericolo di venti nocivi, che verrebbero subito respinti dai muri frapposti. Infine, se vi penetrasse il nemico, si troverebbe in gravi difficoltà, potendo essere colpito di fronte, di fianco e da tergo."*

Alberti believes that linear and long axes that cut in two the urban plot are suitable only for big city. This may be the reason why Vespasiano chose an irregular path as the main road of Sabbioneta.

Following the Albertine precepts, the not linear roads in the small cities are on one hand functional (the defense of the city, the protection of houses from the winds, the need for buildings to have an adequate solar supply), on the other hand aesthetic, as the British architect and journalist Ivor de Wolfe points out in his article "Italian townscape". De Wolfe claims that both the irregularity of the medieval design and the orthogonality and regularity of the Renaissance design are produced by a rational intent. It is a prejudice to consider the regular grid as the only way of designing rationally. Sabbioneta, according to him, has little to do with the ideals of the sixteenth century. He finds romantic, or rather picturesque features such as the realization of the T shape crossings, the creation of crossing routes that bypass the main square, the reduction of the road sections, the masked entrances to the city, and the realization of a perimeter that excludes the outward view. The author believe that this way of designing can be compared to the Beaux Arts picturesque and classical aesthetic: a picturesque approach to the Great Manner or a romantic use of the classic principles. The analysis of de Wolfe demonstrates how in Sabbioneta's design both principles are used: the rational one and picturesque one. Moreover, he states that the



**THE WALLS**



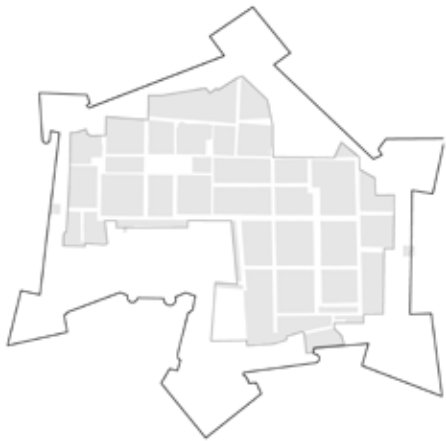
**THE BLOCKS**



**THE LOTS**



**THE ROAD STRUCTURE**



**Fig 12:** The walls of Sabbioneta and the Rocca are part of the same entity and define the boundary of the city. The city blocks have an irregular shape so that the space between the wall and the city assume a fragmented conformation.

**Fig 13:** The blocks of Sabbioneta are arranged in a way to form L and T shape crossing. The scheme, although is arranged following two main orthogonal direction, assume a labirintic characterization.

**Fig 14:** Dividing the lots in two, the ones with east-west direction and the ones with north-south direction, it is possible to notice that the buildings change orientation frequently, even in the same road. The way they are arranged remarks the principle of having multiple hierarchies in the urban plot and the labirintic principle as well. The buildings seem to change direction facing always the space which is more important.

**Fig 15:** The hierarchy in the road system can be recognized thanks to the orientation of the buildings: the main streets and squares are the ones towards which all the building show their main façade. It is interesting that along Via Vespasiano Gonzaga, the buildings change orientation after the theatre.



urban project is the result of a unitary conception, a unique will that gave form to the whole area.

However, although this theory is shared by the most of the historians, there are contrary opinions. Luca Sarzi Amadè, for example, believes that the irregular design of the city is due to the will of maintaining some preexisting buildings.

“è stato detto che Vespasiano Gonzaga si ispirò alle antiche città romane imperviate su cardo, decumano e foro; alcuni studiosi hanno tentato di spiegare la ragione per cui la via Giulia non si innesta direttamente sulle due porte, ma obbliga chi entra in città ad un doppio scantonamento: si tratterebbe di un espediente difensivo per disorientare eventuali invasori. Tale schema non fu però mai adottato, a quanto ci risulta, nelle città degli antichi romani, che tuttavia nell’arte di difendersi dal nemico non erano certo sprovvisti. Benché non si possa escludere del tutto la spiegazione che è stata data, tale apparente incongruenza urbanistica potrebbe conciliarsi col fatto che Sabbioneta non fu progettata ex novo

ma seguì un’intensa metamorfosi condizionata da quanto esisteva già.”

Sarzi Amadè believe that the city has not be planned “ex novo”, but it is the result of a long urban metamorphosis. The discrepancies that he finds in the design of Sabbioneta are the same features that Wolfe describes as the picturesque expedients.

It is not possible to say which of the historians is right; however, both the historians agree that Sabbioneta’s design is a unicum in the sixteen century urban planning.

It is important to underline the substantial uniformity and the coherence of architecture and public space: uniformity that also involved use of materials, in many cases decided by the prince in order to give prestige to the image of his city. The duke regulates the height of the buildings (the only exceptions are the monumental ones) and the composition of the facades, which requires the adoption of low windows for the attics and frescoed walls with architectural or fantasy motifs.

A rule emanated in 1586 stated that homeowners on Via Giulia had to realize their house entrances with steps in marble or stone; in 1588, another decree imposed them to renovate the façades of their buildings with new frescoes to increase the decor of the city. In this way, the public space could have a uniform background, in order that only the ducal factories could be distinguished (usually they were embellished by the use of bresciano or veronese marble, as well as the most traditional brick).

Also the flooring must have a unique language: the streets were made with a central outflow plan and the materials used were the river pebbles on gravel and sand to form the driveway and bricks knife arranged for the sidewalks, according to a system that the Fancelli had already used in Mantua. The urban, architectural and material features of the city contribute to create a clear image of the inhabited area and the public spaces, giving the feeling of a metaphysical framework still preserved nowadays.

#### NOTES:

1- In P. Cataneo, *I primi quattro libri d’architettura*, Libro I, Cap IV, 1554 quotation in P. Carpeggiani, *Città ideale e città reale: l’evento di Sabbioneta in AA. VV., Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, CARIPLO, Milano, 1985, pag. 54-56

2- Department of History of Architecture and Conservation Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Jan Pieper, *Sabbioneta - The measuring shape of an ideal city*, in Aachen University website <http://arch.rwth-aachen.de/cms/Architektur/Forschung/Verbundforschung/Cultural-Heritage/~cqcq/Sabbioneta/?lid=1>

3- In *Mantova e Sabbioneta – Linee guida per il progetto dello spazio pubblico urbano*, Allegato 3 Documentazione Storica, pag. 101 it is reported that Alberto Sarzi Maddidini, local historian, and professor Marco Romano, in *Estetica della città europea* (1993), wrote that the building was opposite to Palazzo Ducale, while Alberto Gozzi e Antonio Medici in *Città dei Gonzaga: Sabbioneta, Guastalla, Pomponesco* (1993) believe that it was in the other position

4- In Ireneo Affò, *Vita di Vespasiano Gonzaga*, Parma, 1780 quotation in *Mantova e Sabbioneta – Linee guida per il progetto dello spazio pubblico urbano*, Allegato 3 Documentazione Storica, pag. 103

5- From Leon Battista Alberti *De Re Aedificatoria*, vol 2, capo VII

6- From Leon Battista Alberti *De Re Aedificatoria*, vol 4, capo V

7- Luca Sarzi Amadè in *Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, Milano, Cariplo, 1985, pg. 192



On the left

**Fig 1:** The Galleria degli Antichi, view of the ground floor

### Palazzo Ducale

The Palazzo ducale, also known as Palazzo Grande, is the most ancient monumental building built by Vespasiano. It is the main public building of the city and, therefore, it is located on the west side of the Piazza Ducale.

The construction started in 1554; in the same period the city walls were started as well.

The construction process can be divided in two phases: the first ending in 1568 when Vespasiano left for Spain; the second starting from 1577, when the duke came back to the city.

The part of the building standing between the two central columns of the loggiato belongs to the first phase of construction, as well as the araldic decoration of the main hall and of the Stanza degli Antenati and Sala del Trono on the upper floor. In fact, in none of these rooms is possible to find ducal arms, because Vespasiano gained that title in 1577.

The Palace was completed adding new rooms, an internal loggiato, a courtyard and a tower.

Its planimetry shows an elongated shape, not completely coherent. In the western part of the building there was a big room that today is no more existing because it was destroyed in a fire. That was the *Salone del duca D'Alba*, which hosted the equestrian statues dedicated to Vespasiano's ancestors and a Duca D'Alba's bust sculpted by Leone Leoni.

The façade is composed by an ashlar five arcades

loggiato. Over an intermediate frame, there is the second register with windows axially aligned with the loggiato's openings. Over the windows, there are alternated triangular and curved gables. Over them, there are five busts representing Gonzaga family's characters. A heavy cornice is placed at the top of the façade: in the middle of it there is a belvedere, underlined by a balcony.

The façade as it appears today is not like it was in the past. The elements that today are no more present are: two pinnacles at the top and a bronze and lead pavilion that covered the balcony.

Today, the painted decoration that used to be under the cornice has disappeared. It was characterized by monochrome decorations with festoons, trophies, grotesques and angels with the ducal coat of arms and a Madonna by Bernardino Campi.

The façade of the palace reminds the style of Giulio Romano, especially in Palazzo Te and Mantuan Pescherie. The rhythm of upper openings could have been inspired by Michelangelo's architecture. Eventually, the belvedere reminds some Milanese palaces like Stampa and Spinola.

It is believed that Cremonese workers also participated in the construction.

The groundfloor of the palace has only few decorations. From the hall it is possible to enter in the *Sala della Gran Guardia*, with a wooden ceiling and Aragona's arms. The next room is the *Sala delle Quattro stagioni*, with allegoric paintings probably done by Pietro Martire Pesenti.



**Fig 2:** First floor plan of Palazzo Ducale, drawing from P. Carpeggiani, *Sabbioneta*, Quistello, Officina Grafica Ceschi, 1977

**Fig 3:** View of Palazzo Ducale

The most important room of the groundfloor is the *Gabinetto di Diana*, richly painted and decorated with stucco. The central fresco "*Diana and Endimione*" is attributed to Bernardino Campi. The *Sala dei Dardi* and the *Sala d'Oro* are characterized by gilded wooden ceiling inspired by the Spanish architecture that Vespasiano met during his travels. In the first room there is a shield with the coat of arms of the Holy Roman Empire (the black eagle on a gold background) and the word LIBERTAS in golden letters on a light blue background, symbol of the duchy of Sabbioneta. Near the shield, there is a hat with a crown, symbol of the empire, and a collar of the Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

On the upper floor there is the *Sala delle Aquile*, the biggest room of the palace. Its decoration is by Pietro Martire Pesenti. The room hosts four painted wooden statues of four of the Gonzagas, including Vespasiano, sitting imperiously on horseback.

The next room is *Sala del Trono*, with a fridge decorated with floral motifs and a wooden ceiling. Going on there is the *Sala degli Antenati*, where there are paintings representing Vespasiano's Gonzaga ancestors.

Other remarkable rooms are the *Sala degli Elefanti*, *Sala dei Leoni* and *Sala dell'Angelo*.

### Palazzo Giardino

The Palazzo Giardino, or, more properly, Casino of Sabbioneta, is an externally non-descript white

building, aligned east-west and standing at the south end of the Galleria degli Antichi. The building was erected from 1580 to 1588 as the private residence of the prince. The exterior is now plain white stucco but at its completion, it was said to have been decorated with geometric designs. It has two formal stone entrance portals, and a sculpted cornice (1583). The interiors, however, are richly frescoed; the paintings were completed (1582–1587) by a team of painters led by Bernardino Campi, who was inspired by Giulio Romano's style in Mantua. Each room has a specific dominant theme, but the entirety represents a wide sampling of classic pagan antique mythology.

The function of this building is linked to the private life of the prince, just like Palazzo Te in Mantova and the prince of Guastalla's suburban villa. As well as these palaces, the Casino has a big garden on the rear, with a triforio cave and a fountain. The only difference with these building is the position of the Casino: it is not a suburban villa, it is inside the city, in the specific place that the prince reserved for his private life, near to the castle and the gallery, to which it is connected to (although today the link with the castle is completely lost).

Ascending via a marble staircase, one reaches the *Camerino dei Cesari* on the piano nobile. On the wall is Rome Triumphant with Winged Victory. A peristyle has portraits of six emperors. The room is decorated with grotteschi.

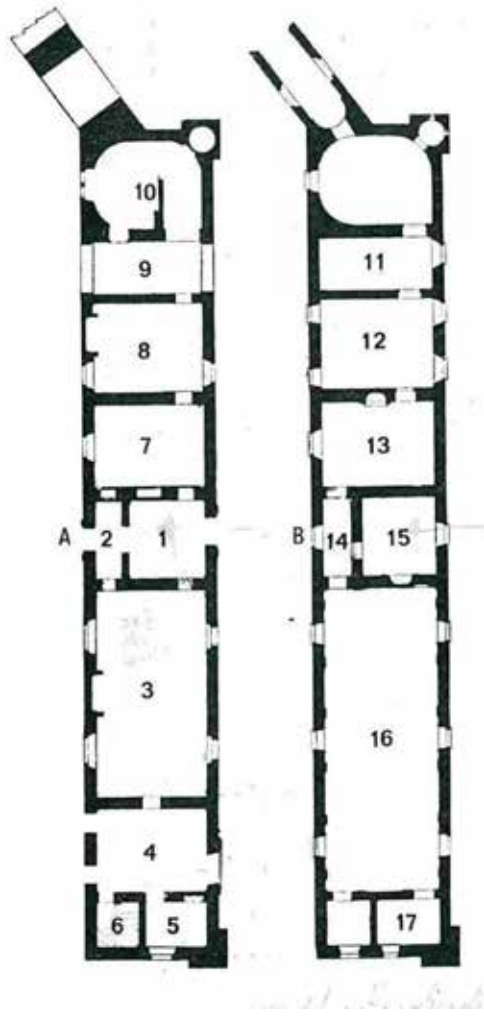
The next room is titled that of Baucis and Philemon. A Gonzaga coat of arms is painted in the center,

flanked by two cranes and two lions, symbols respectively of vigilance and strength. The stucco frames were modeled by Giovanni Francesco Bicesi. The individual panels depicting scenes from the story of Philemon and Baucis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were painted by Bernardino Campi. The long walls depict the Circus Maximus and the Circus Flaminius, and between the windows is an urban perspective from a theatre.

In the next room, the *Camera dei Miti*, niches once held busts, statuary, and paintings of Gonzaga properties. The vault has gilded stucco frames by Pietro Martire Pesenti, these hold panels painted by Campi.

Floor tiles and marble shelves were moved in 1773 to the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua.

Across a small corridor decorated with a fresco of the myth of Orpheus, one enters the duke's *studiolo*. Here ovals frame depictions of the cardinal virtues with dense decoration of classical images. Campi was aided in this regard by Carlo Urbino. Another corridor, again painted with Orpheus, leads to a hall of mirrors. In the long walls are painted displays of trophies and weapons and four panels depicting the myth of Paris. In the arches of the courtyard walls were mirrors, made of Venetian glass, that served as doors of cabinets. On the shelves around the doors were busts. The bas-reliefs over the windows depict scenes of Roman life sculpted by the stucco artist Bartolomeo Conti, while the landscapes have been attributed to the Flemish painter Jan Soens.



**Fig 4:** Floors of Palazzo Giardino, drawing from P. Carpeggiani, *Sabbioneta*, Quistello, Officina Grafica Ceschi, 1977

**Fig 5:** View of Palazzo Giardino

The next room is the *Camerino delle Grazie*, decorated by Fornarino. The walls are richly decorated with grotteschi and mythological figures. The vault had gilded stucco frames, with a Medusa in the center. Finally, a small stairwell painted with ivy leads to a dressing room, called the Venus Room.

Little remains of the former Italian garden, visible through the windows of the hall of mirrors only a few grottoes with niches. The central one has a marble clamshell basin. In the 16th century, the gardens had walkways sheltered by trees, and the garden facade had sculpture in its niches.

### Galleria

The galleria or gallery was once a corridor, aligned south to north, designed in order to host the collection of the prince. Described as a “grand corridor”, it was built with stone and brick in 1583–1586. It is characterized by twenty-six arcades standing on heavy square columns. It connects to the externally drab Palazzo Giardino, which through a second portico (corridor piccolo), once connected to the castle. The statuary collection was acquired in the 16th century by Vespasiano Gonzaga from antique dealers and collectors of northern Italy, as well as much of it carried away as booty by his father after the imperial Sack of Rome in 1527. The hunting trophies originated from imperial collections in Prague. Much of this collection remained in the palace until 1773, when

the Austrian authorities transferred them to the Palace of the Accademia di Mantova, leaving the gallery an elegant but vacant shell of its former state. In 1915 the renamed Accademia Nazionale Virgiliana ceded the collection to the comune, which has since moved it to the Palazzo Ducale of Mantua. Many pieces however, were either sold or looted in the imperial Sack of Mantua (1630) during the War of the Mantuan Succession.

The fresco decoration of the narrow gallery was completed in 1587 by Giovanni and Alessandro Alberti, and included some architectural trompe l’oeil.

The Galleria degli Antichi is an autonomous structure, typical of some French galleries of that period (like the *galerie des cerfs*, with naturalistic decorations) <sup>1</sup>. However, its type reminds more directly to two Italian interventions: the Vasari’s corridor in Florence and the “covered path” that connected Palazzo Estense to the castle in Ferrara. Both these examples refers to galleries, which the main aim is to connect spaces. Apparently, this is not the case of the Galleria degli Antichi. However, not all the historians agree that the gallery was designed to be an autonomous structure. In fact, to the north, the gallery ends with a closed door. Many historians believe that the gallery once was connected to the other buildings of the prince through a “high corridor”. In 2003, The German professor Jan Pieper guided a survey campaign in Sabbioneta and founded many proves about the existence of such a corridor.

However, it was not possible to prove if such corridor was ever existed or it was just a project. It is known, in fact, that Sabbioneta was not complete at the death of Vespasiano.

The Galleria degli Antichi remains, however, one of the most important examples of its type, testifying the evolution of the gallery type, from France (were they were born) to Italy.

### Teatro all’Antica

The Teatro all’Antica is the first example of an autonomous stable theatre building done ex novo, without the constraint of a pre-existing structure. The theater was constructed in 1588 and 1590 by the celebrated Vicentine architect Vincenzo Scamozzi under a commission from Duke Vespasiano I Gonzaga, as part of Gonzaga’s effort to turn his tiny Ducal seat into an idealized classical city.

Vespasiano, probably, hired Scamozzi for this construction because he was fascinated by the Teatro Olimpico di Vicenza, which Scamozzi worked for.

The Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza, in fact, designed by Palladio, gave the inspiration for the theatre of Sabbioneta. The influence of the Teatro Olimpico upon the Teatro all’antica is evident in a number of features: most notably in the colonnade at the rear of the seating area and in the set designs. Such influences are to be expected; Scamozzi had overseen the construction of the Teatro Olimpico

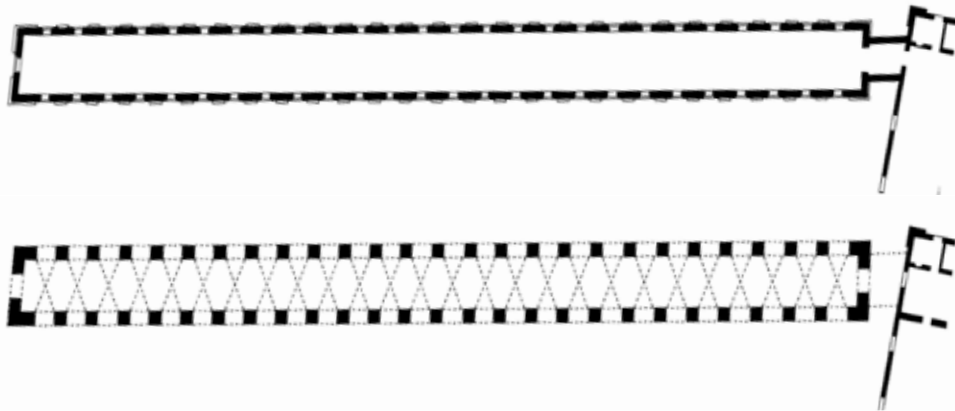


Fig 6: First floor and ground floor of the Gallery



Fig 7: View of the Gallery

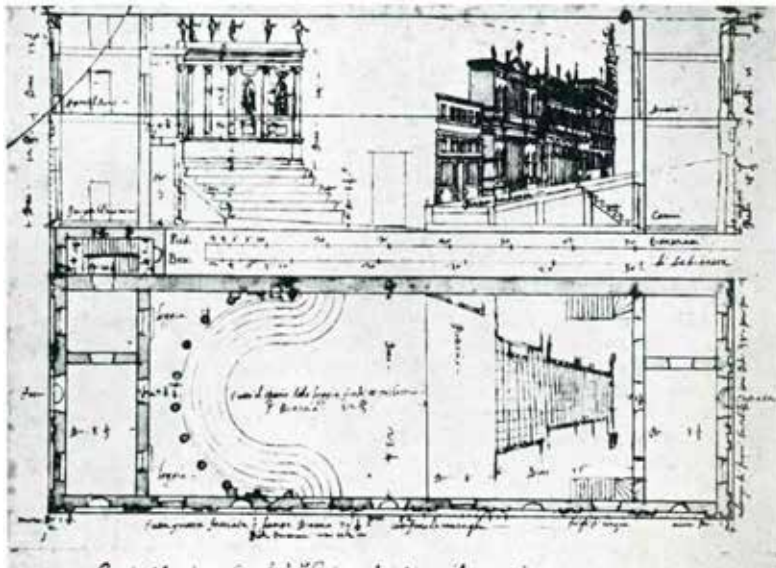


Fig 8: Drawings of the Theatre, from AA. VV., *Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, Milano, Cariplo, 1985



Fig 9: View of the interior of the theatre



following the death of the great Andrea Palladio, who had laid out its original design. In particular, Scamozzi had been responsible for the remarkable perspectives, which form the onstage scenery at the Teatro Olimpico.

However, the Teatro all'antica was a much different theater, in part because of the different building in which it was placed, and in part because Scamozzi had learned important lessons as a result of his labours at the earlier theater.

The importance that the theater had come to hold, as a sign of the civilized society that the Duke was trying to create, is indicated by the prestigious location that was reserved for it. It is located in the principal street of the town, the Via Giulia, in an intermediate position between the area of the public life of the prince and the private one.

The fabric reminds the idea of the Italian "Palazzo", with lexical elements that are typical of Scamozzi's cosmopolitan culture. The theater building is roughly three times as long as it is wide, whereas the space occupied by the Teatro Olimpico is approximately square. The longer, narrower structure of the theater building meant that Scamozzi was unable to build the seating area in the form of the semicircle that had been seen by Palladio as the ideal form for an audience, based on the model of ancient Roman theaters. Where the wide, shallow space available in the converted building that was used to house the Teatro Olimpico had forced Palladio to stretch the ideal semicircle into an ellipse, the opposite change

was forced upon Scamozzi in Sabbioneta, and the seating area was transformed into a horseshoe.

As well, Scamozzi abandoned completely the elaborate and classically inspired scaenae frons that in many ways is the defining feature of the Teatro Olimpico. The removal of this rigid stage backdrop, which had forced him to build seven separate street scenes in order that all audience members could see at least one part of the scenery, made it possible to construct a single perspective view of a single street scene. Scamozzi's plans for this trompe l'oeil scenery are clearly visible in the upper-right corner of his plans for the theater. The illusion of great distance was achieved by rapidly diminishing the size of the false-front buildings over a compressed distance. As an integral part of the illusion, the floor level rose rapidly to allow the buildings to shrink vertically, and the two sides of the street closed in on each other sharply. These two features of the set design can be seen, respectively, on the upper right-hand side and lower right-hand side of Scamozzi's plans. Given the narrowness of the seating area, a single perspective was sufficient for all audience members. Its only spectators are pallid marble gods, fake-bronze emperors and ghostly painted courtiers.

In the XVII century, Scamozzi's original scenery was removed and replaced by a new system with sliding wings. Moreover, between XVIII and XIX century the theatre was subjected to further structural intervention because of the decay. However, his

original plans were preserved in the archives at the Uffizi in Florence, making it possible, in the twentieth century, for new scenery to be rebuilt based on the original plans and added to the theater.

### **Chiesa dell'Incoronata**

The Chiesa dell'Incoronata was built between 1586 and 1588 in order to substitute the demolished convent of the Serviti and a prior church dedicated to San Nicolò. It was the private temple of the prince and, today, it is his mausoleum.

The Chiesa dell'Incoronata is remarkable mainly for its trompe l'oeil roof, which appears to be three times higher in than out, perhaps an apt comment on Vespasiano.

The building has an octagonal layout, similar to the Bramantesque church of Santa Maria Incoronata in Lodi.

It has eight surrounding chapels, one with Vespasiano's funereal monument, that were decorated mainly in the 18th century. The frescoes in the church were painted with quadratura in 1768 by a team led by Antonio Galli Bibiena.

The main altar has a statue of the Vergine Addolorata (Virgin in Grief) by Angelo Piò. Among the altarpieces in the chapels is a Flight to Egypt by an unknown Parmesan painter of the second half of the 17th century. The second chapel has a painting depicting the Crowned Virgin with Saints Pellegrino Laziosi and Giuliana Falconieri, and the

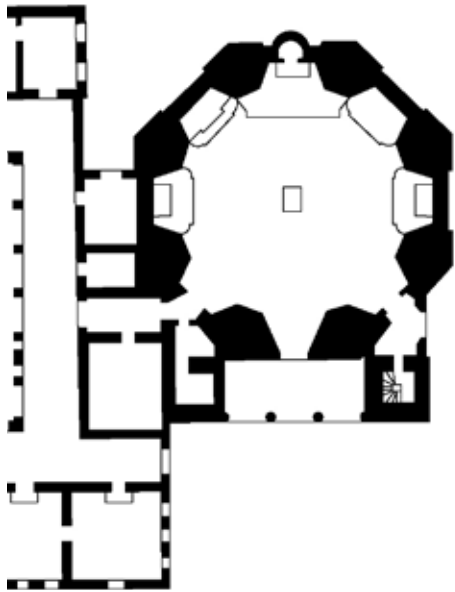


Fig 10: Incoronata church ground plan



Fig 11: Incoronata church view

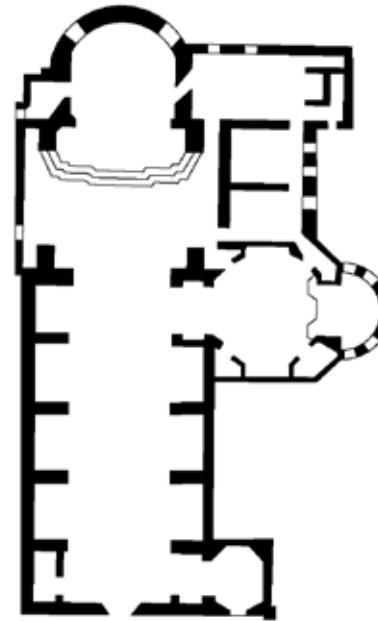


Fig 12: Maria Assunta church ground plan



Fig 13: Maria Assunta church view

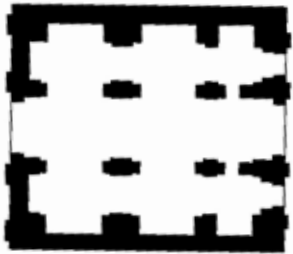


Fig 14: Porta Vittoria ground plan



Fig 15: Porta Vittoria view

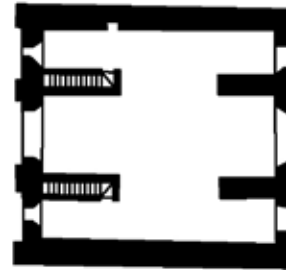


Fig 16: Porta Imperiale ground plan



Fig 17: Porta Imperiale view

blessed Gioacchino Piccolomini by a follower of Giovanni Morini. The wooden confessionals were carved by Antonio Maria Lodi.

The funereal monument to Vespasiano, in polychrome marble, was built in 1592 by Giovanni Battista della Porta (architect). The bronze sitting statue of Vespasiano, dressed like a Roman Emperor, was built by Leone Leoni in 1588 and, originally, it was placed in front of the Palazzo Ducale.

During recent restorations, the skeletal remains of Vespasiano were found with his badge of the Order\_of\_the\_Golden\_Fleece, granted to him in 1585 by the King Phillip II of Spain, and awarded by Ottavio Farnese in Parma. The jewel is now conserved in the Sala del Tesoro of the Museum of Sacred Art in Sabbioneta.

### **Chiesa Maria Assunta or Maggiore**

The construction of this church dates back in the eighties of the XVI century. Vespasiano built the church substituting a provisional one that he had built in the same place.

In 1585, the apse was rebuilt and in 1592 the building was completed with the bell tower, as De Dondi testifies. The baptistery is a recent intervention because it was added in 1926.

White and pink marbles that reminds Venetians gothic architectures characterizes the façade. The interior is single nave with lateral chapels and a little transept. The decoration of the interior is not original, it dates back to the XVIII century.

### **Porta della Vittoria**

Porta Vittoria was the first gate built at Sabbioneta. Forster suggests that it was built in 1560. The plan is a square, the building is covered by a pitched roof supported by cross vaults.

The façade is composed by a rusticated marble basement (four pillars and three arched openings) in the inferior part and a brick wall with loggiato in the upper part.

This architecture reminds San Michele's project for Porta San Zeno in Verona.

### **Porta Imperiale**

The Porta Imperiale was realized in 1579, as the inscription on the façade testify, and dedicated to the emperor Rodolfo II who nominated Vespasiano duke.

The plan is a square, the building is covered by a pitched roof supported by cross vaults.

The inferior part has a rusticated white marble

basement and is composed by three arched openings. A tympanum surmounted by pyramidal cusps characterizes the upper part. According to the historians, it is possible that the upper part of the building is not the same as the original.

Paolo Carpeggiani believes that the inspiration for this gate came from Giulio Romano's Porta della Cittadella in Mantova.

#### NOTES:

1- In Wolfram Prinz, Claudia Cieri Via (a cura di), *Galleria. Storia e tipologia di uno spazio architettonico*, Modena, Edizioni Panini, 1988, pg. 14



# THE EVOLUTION OF THE SABBIONETA AFTER THE DEATH OF VESPASIANO, HISTORY AND MAPS

On the left

**Fig 1:** Ducatus mantuani, ceu sedis belli 1733-1753 recentissima dominatio..., 1735, aquaforte con acquerellature policrome, Sabbioneta, Vittorio Rossi Collection

With the death of Vespasiano the issue of his inheritance was suddenly opened up. In the testament of the 25th of February, he entrusted his duchy to his daughter Isabella, married with Luigi Carafà. However, Isabella had to start negotiating with her Mantuan cousins for the succession, since they did not want to allow a woman to inherit the Vespasiano's fortune. Isabella managed to keep the duchy of Sabbioneta after a large payment. Moreover, she had to accept that, at the time of her death, in the absence of male heirs, the duchy would have passed her cousins' hands. Isabella signed a real convention in 1591 that regulated his succession in the terms set out.

The Gonzaga di Bozzolo became interested in the duchy of Sabbioneta when Isabella's son, Antonio died prematurely and so did his first-born Giuseppe, leaving Isabella's nephew, Anna, as his sole heir. Isabella succeeded, however, to solve the situation obtaining from the emperor Mattia the investiture in 1613 of her niece, who then went in marriage to the Spanish viceroy of Naples Ramiro Filippo de Guzman, duke of Medina de las Torres. In the same years, the duchy of Mantua passed into the hands of the Gonzaga of Nevers, because, after the death of Carlo Gonzaga, his daughter Maria married Carlo Gonzaga of Nevers in 1627. The duke of Mantova actively participated to the clashes between France and Spain for the dominance of the north of Italy and, therefore, he involved Sabbioneta too. In fact, the Nevers tried in 1637 to conquer it in vain and, in the same year,

he died.

Isabella and Luigi Carafa died respectively in 1637 and in 1638 and the hereditary question was reopened as Scipione Gonzaga di Bozzolo tried to get the investiture of the duchy: he did not succeed because, at that time, the Spaniards staffed Sabbioneta. Until the death of Anna's son, Nicola de Guzman in 1684, Sabbioneta remained, therefore, in the hands of the Vespasian dynasty.

In 1693, the Spaniards decided the passage of Sabbioneta to the Duke of St. Peter Francesco Maria Spinola, Genoese and commander of the Iberian troops as well as creditor of the crown of Madrid. The duke maintained possession of the city until 1703, when he renounced for unknown reasons. The Gonzaga of Mantua, who in the meantime had confiscated the assets of the extinct Gonzaga di Bozzolo, had benefit from this action. Mantua maintained Sabbioneta under his control until 1707, when, because of the vicissitudes of the Spanish succession war, the gonzaga's city passed under the imperial control and Vincenzo Gonzaga of Guastalla was also invested with the principality of Bozzolo and duchy of Sabbioneta.

In 1746, during the war of succession for the throne of Austria that ended with the succession of Maria Theresa of Habsburg, the dynastic line of the Gonzaga of Guastalla became extinct with the death of Giuseppe Maria. The empress, after the clashes, reformed the administration of the state and Sabbioneta became part, together with the other areas belonging to the Gonzaga family, of



Fig 2: T.Fritschen, *Sabioneda*, 1702



Fig 3: G.B. Sesti, *Sabioneta*, 1718

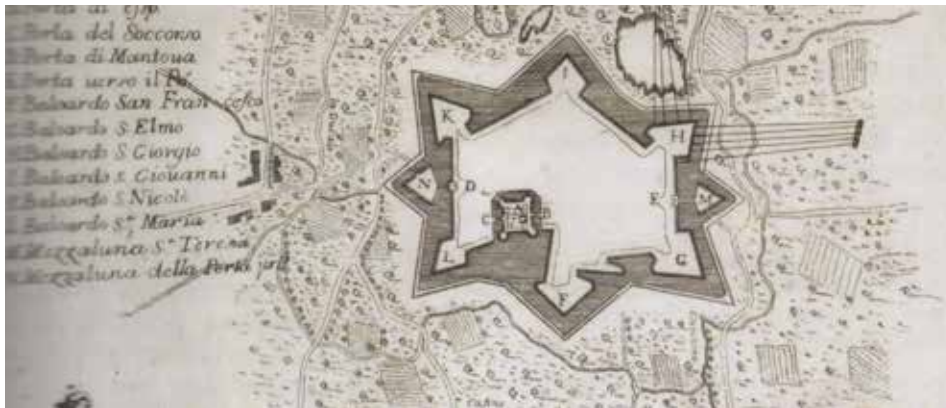


Fig 4: G.B. Sesti, *Sabioneta*, 1734

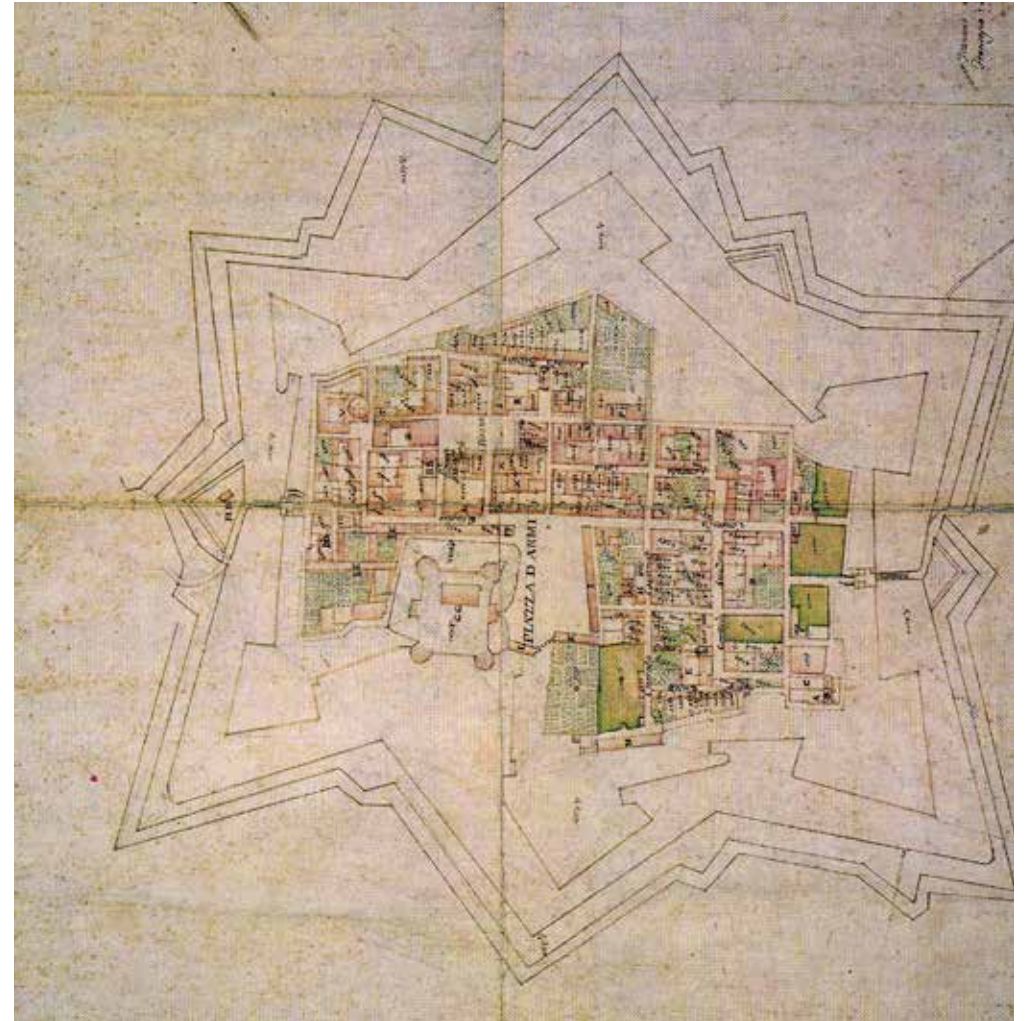


Fig 5: Catasto Teresiano, 1774. The map represents Sabbioneta with the rocca few years before its demolition



Fig 6: G. Bodenehr, *Sabioneta*, 1740

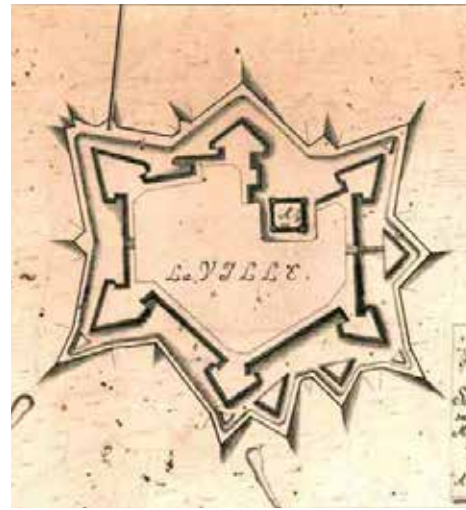


Fig 7: G.C. Kilian, *Sabioneta*, 1720



Fig 8: Austrian military survey 1806-1869, Mapire Eu website. Although the rocca has already been destroyed, the map represent it

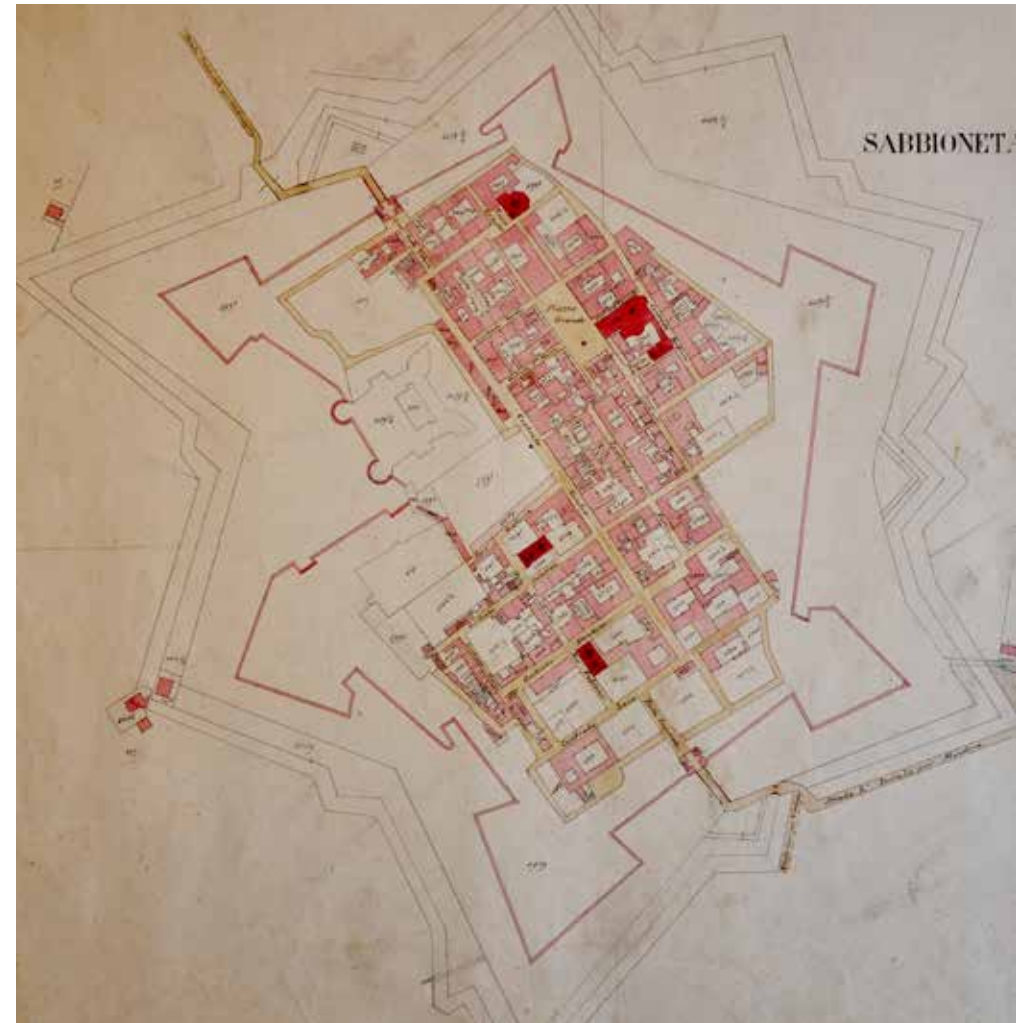


Fig 9: Catasto Lombardo-Veneto, 1848. The rocca has been demolished, however the map shows its limit

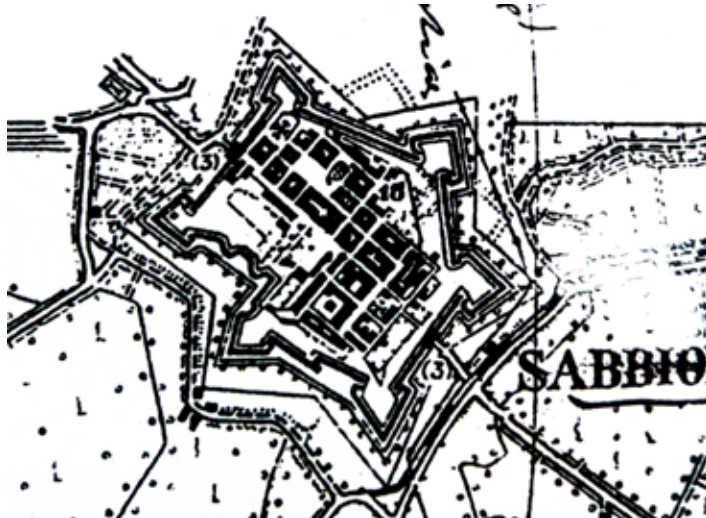


Fig 10: IGM plan, Foglio 74 - IV N.O. of the Carta d'Italia, 1888

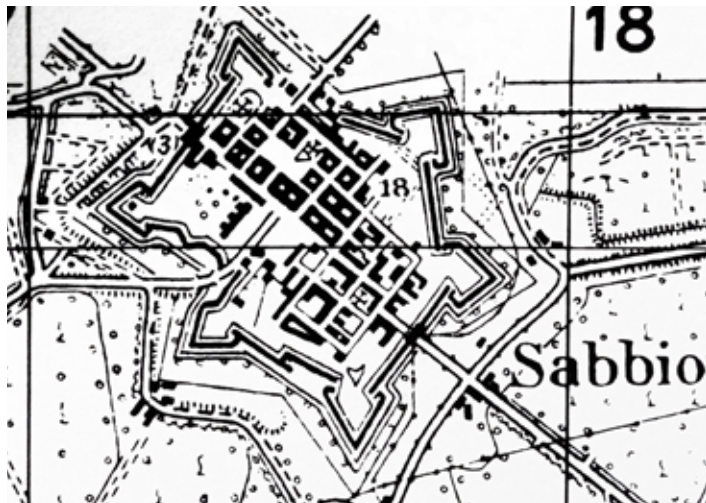


Fig 11: IGM plan, Foglio 74 - IV N.O. of the Carta d'Italia, 1933

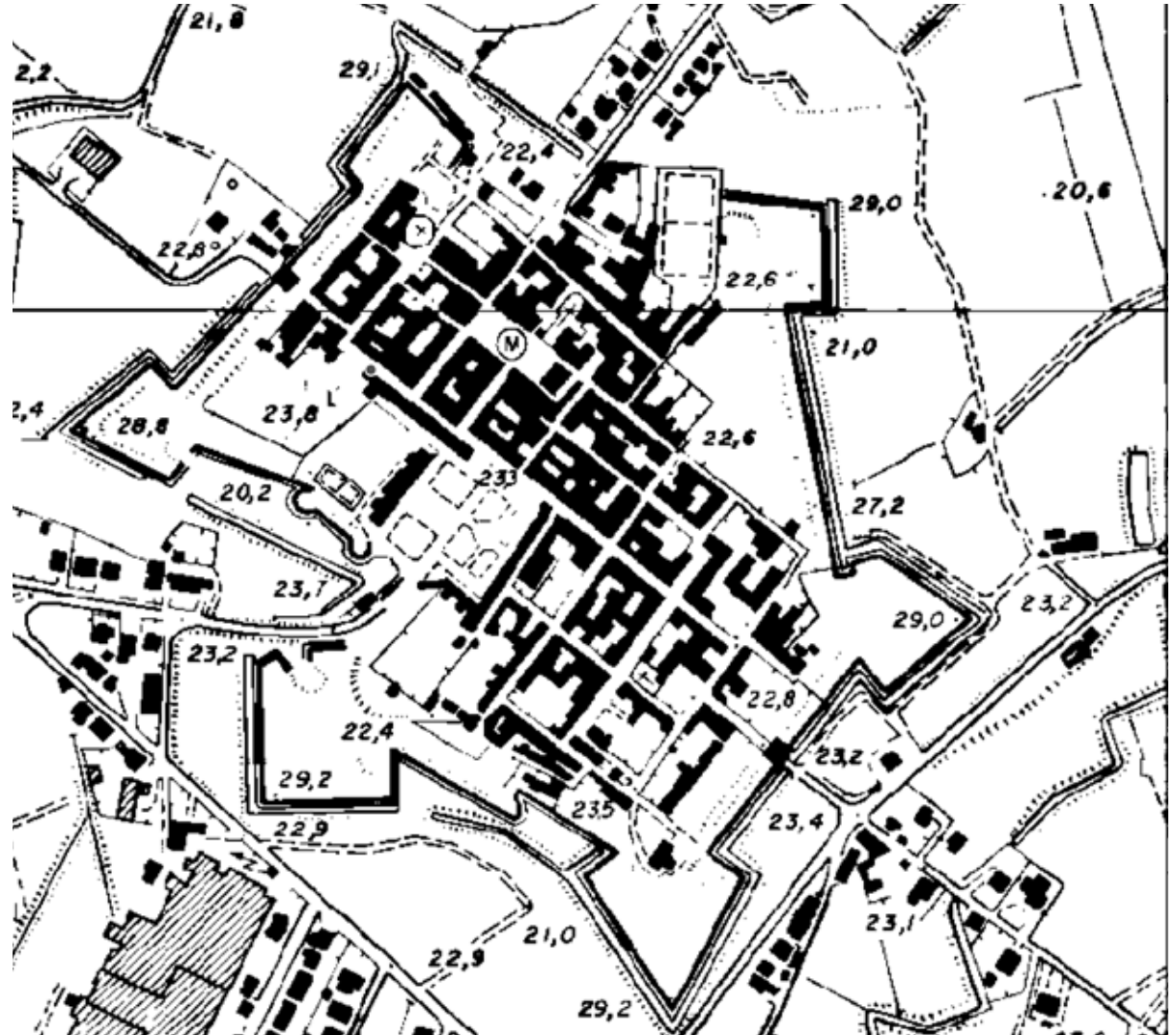


Fig 12: Carta tecnica Regionale della Lombardia, 1994



the province of Mantua.

During the reign of Maria Teresa, some reforms were carried out, guaranteeing better control of the territory and better collection of taxes (arrangement of the boundaries between the provinces and the courts, census started in 1771, the road network, unification of the judicial procedures).

The most significant provision for Sabbioneta is the one dating back to 1771, which allowed the sale of allodial goods, including palaces, houses and gardens belonging to the Gonzaga of Sabbioneta. In 1774, there was an initial dispossession, followed by a subsequent raid of 1775 and the sale in the 1786 of the fortress to a certain Giuseppe Vignali. At this time, the castle was destroyed and its materials used to reinforce the embankment of the Po.

The period of peace that Sabbioneta lived during the first phase of Austrian domination was interrupted with the passage of the French, who entered Sabbioneta in June 1796. In the following year, they started some works to reinforce the walls, demolishing also the plants around the town to facilitate military maneuvers. The French domination was not well seen by the population because of the new taxes imposed by the Cisalpine Republic and the Kingdom of Italy.

The period of the Restoration was characterized on the one hand by new taxes, but on the other by a peace favorable to the recovery of economic activity and population growth.

The revolutionary clashes of the years 1821 and 1831 did not involve Sabbioneta, although in the post-revolutionary years there were some Masonic and independentist organizations. However, the Sabbionan territory was touched by the clashes followed in 1848 during the First War of Independence. The subsequent war of 1859, once again did not directly affect the territory of Sabbioneta, but clearly led the municipality to be part of the Kingdom of Italy.

Sabbioneta after the unification of Italy was merged with the province of Cremona until 1867, when it was decided to establish the province of Mantua with the sale of some municipalities by Cremona, Brescia and Verona.

In the post-unification years, some infrastructural works were carried out in order to make Sabbioneta better connected to the Lombard capitals. In 1869, the construction of the Mantova-Cremona and Mantua-Casalmaggiore-Parma railway lines began and, in 1875, there was the installation of a telegraph service. In 1887, the construction of the Mantova-Viadana tramway line was completed. It was also improved the situation of the agriculture, with the strengthening of the banks and the establishment of the Consorzio di Bonifica Cremonese Mantovano.

The early twentieth century was characterized by an economic growth driven by the improvement of agriculture, the development of breeding and the dairy and textile industry.

During those years, some works for the

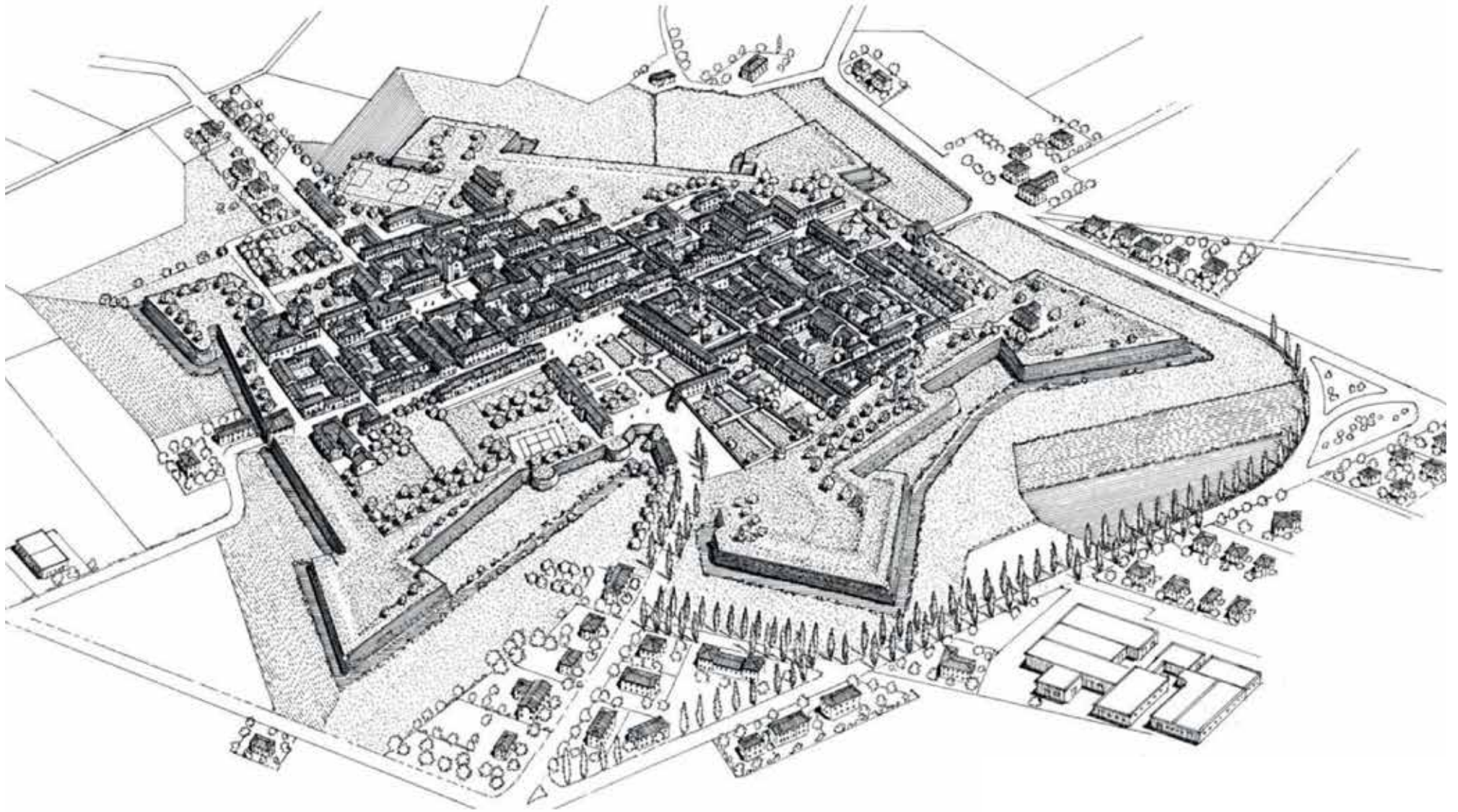
replacement of ramshackle rural buildings with more modern constructions were carried out. In 1921, a large section of the northeastern walls was demolished in order to allow a better connection with the districts of Mezzana and San Remigio. This operation was followed, in the 1924, to another demolition of a part of the walls close to Piazza d'Armi to improve the connections with Vigoreto, Ponteterra and Casalmaggiore.

During the Twenties, Sabbioneta had a new fascist administration during which the restoration of the Palazzo Giardino, the Galleria, Palazzo Ducale and Teatro were carried out.

In the 1930s, a new school was built on the area of the ancient fortress, definitely changing the image of the square. Another important event was the foundation of the Pro Loco Association in 1938 to promote the tourism.

The two world wars did not involve the city in a direct way. Sabbioneta at the end of the war could start its economic development in line with the rest of the province. The residential development influenced the organization of the landscape, significantly modifying the areas adjacent to the walled city.

Eventually, tourism began to manifest itself as a possible source of stimulated income, as will also be seen in numerous publications and awards.



# SABBIONETA TODAY, THE VALUE OF THE CITY AND A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

On the left

**Fig 1:** *Sabbioneta contemporanea*,  
Lorenzo Confortini,

The story of Sabbioneta after Vespasiano is the story of the progressive cancellation of its political relevance within larger and larger entities, from the first duchy of Mantua, to the Lombardo Veneto and ending with the Kingdom of Italy and the Italian Republic.

However, if on one hand the loss of political influence was unavoidable, even considering the size and the geographical location of the town, on the other hand there have been a progressive acknowledgement of the cultural importance of Sabbioneta's heritage. This process passed from the first restoration of the Napoleonic era, to the decrees of the Italian kingdom, up to the inscription on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which had consequences on local programming tools written after that event.

A first act of recognition of the cultural value of the heritage built at Sabbioneta was the restoration of the roof of Teatro all'Antica in 1802 by the Napoleonic administration. Moreover, the restorations approved in 1910 concerning Palazzo Giardino and the Corridor Grande, Palazzo Ducale and the Teatro all'Antica were significant. These facts managed, in some ways, to create the first awareness of the value of the works enclosed in the perimeter of the "Little Athens" which was then ratified by the constraint decrees issued after the Unit.

A first significant restriction was posed by the Austrian government. This constraint was concerning the sale of the Galleria degli antichi

to Mr. Lorenzo Casali, who wanted to carry out some craft activities inside the building itself. The constraint prevented, however, the installation of these activities and prohibited the demolition of the building.

The first State decrees of constraint emanated in Sabbioneta were those of 1939. The law 1497/39 declared the areas bordering the city walls of considerable public interest, while 1089/39 put under constraint thirty municipal buildings including the two city gates, the Palazzo Giardino complex and the Galleria degli Antichi, the Palazzo Ducale and the Teatro all'Antica.

In the thirties of the twentieth century, there was a resumption of theatrical activity with a series of operatic and dramatic performances. Significant for the development of tourism was the foundation in 1938 of the Pro Loco Association, which began to publish a series of articles and essays on the artistic heritage of Sabbioneta with the aim of raising awareness of the issue of its protection.

After the Second World War the interest grew further, many works of restoration of the architectural heritage were carried out: the Palazzo Ducale and the Palazzo Giardino were freed from the functions they hosted, ie the municipal offices and the parties' headquarters. The Palazzo Ducale was then restored, as the Gallery of the Ancients, the Theater, the walls and the doors were restored in more or less recent times. After the two decrees of constraint of 1939, a series of imposed limitations were added from spatial planning

tools, at regional, provincial and municipal level. In the PRG of 1974 the historical center and the area of respect just outside the fortifications were classified as homogeneous territorial areas where only restoration and conservative interventions could have been allowed. It is also approved a special Piano Particolareggiato for the areas of the historic center. The PRG has also imposed a series of building limits in the buffer zone areas for preserving the visual and monumental impact of the historic center.

In 1999 the municipality adopted the PPIS plan for the historical center which aims to preserve the building heritage, open spaces and walls, considered a determining element for the historical image of the village, the improvement of accessibility and the arrangement of the Piazza d'Armi.

In 2002 the Lombardy Region promoted a Program Agreement between the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, the Lombardy Region, the Province of Mantua, the Municipality of Sabbioneta and the Polytechnic of Milan - Mantua Campus for the enhancement of the walled city of Sabbioneta. This agreement allows the municipality to carry out a series of cognitive surveys and feasibility studies or projects aimed at protecting the wall curtain, as a fundamental element for the recovery of the walled city, and a series of buildings such as Palazzo Forti, Palazzo Ducale, Palazzo del Cavallegero and Palazzo Giardino.

An important moment of recognition of

Sabbioneta's asset value is represented by the inscription of the "Mantova and Sabbioneta" site in the list of World Heritage and Natural Heritage, which took place during the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee held in Québec between the 2 and on 10 July 2008. This event represents an event of great importance for a town such as Sabbioneta, far away, like Mantua itself, from the main Italian tourist flows because of its geographical position and the absence of efficient connections. The addresses contained in the application dossier submitted for the purpose of the registration proposal have therefore constituted an important starting point for programming at local level and express a very clear vision regarding possible developments for Sabbioneta. The application dossier analyzes the reasons why the two cities should be included in the list, evaluating them as fundamental experiences for the complete comprehension of the artistic and urbanistic events of the Italian Renaissance. The three criteria proposed in the dossier refer to this concept: the ability of the two cities to explicitate "the perfect" idea of the city", a synthesis of the figurative arts, of the architectural, urbanistic and engineering-hydraulic"<sup>1</sup>; the value of "the most eminent examples of the two most emblematic modalities of Renaissance urban planning, respectively the evolutionary one and the foundational one"<sup>2</sup>; the presence in the two cities of masterpieces of great importance for the art of the early Renaissance and for subsequent

artistic developments.

The World Committee approved only the last two criteria and reported them in the Universal Declaration of Value.

The justification provided in the dossier for the purposes of the application clearly shows how the proposed site fully respects the criteria of authenticity and integrity that are the basis of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage convention<sup>3</sup> of the eight of July 2013. According to what is reported in the dossier, "authenticity is synthetically expressed in respect of the permanence of the original material and the historical-environmental context, in respect of the figurativity of the asset, in the maintenance, when possible, of the original use"<sup>4</sup> and "integrity", in turn is embodied in the concept of completeness and recognition of the good itself, as a work of man, in respect of the principle of authenticity<sup>5</sup>". On the basis of these definitions we declare the site of the city of Sabbioneta essentially authentic, because, as well as in Mantua, in addition to the blocks of the buildings, the functional articulation of these and public spaces has been preserved. The protection of traditional functions within the historical fabric indicates a fundamental guiding principle for local planning: a principle that should push the Sabbionetan administrations to oppose the demographic decline in progress, as it necessarily determines a change in the current and traditional functional articulation, resulting in the abandon of many buildings constituting the

fabric of the historic center.

The objectives of the Management Plan drawn up for Sabbioneta are aimed to coordinate the planning tools for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the assets. It is also necessary to guarantee economic development compatible with the conservation objectives. Once these objectives have been defined, the plan reviews the tangible and intangible elements that constitute the heritage of the site. These include fabrication and building products, public spaces open to green or otherwise, institutions and services such as museums and libraries, or associations, which promote knowledge of the heritage and increase the cultural offer of the city. The focus is therefore the increase of the number of events in the city, improving the tourist facilities and the offer reserved for schools and promoting agri-food products, in order to involve the agricultural sector as well. Public works are planned to improve the quality of green spaces, parking lots, squares and paths of scenic interest. Important interventions are also foreseen in favor of citizenship, such as the strengthening of social welfare services, sports services and spaces dedicated to leisure, school and

youth policies, or the involvement of associations and citizens in programming activities.

The Territory Government Plan PGT adopted in November 2015 and approved in May of 2016 was born with the explicit intention of developing the UNESCO's objectives for the site. The PGT was born, therefore, in the wake of the previously discussed tools and welcomes, in fact, largely the strategic directions, first of all the tourism promotion, declining and adapting them to the local scale. An important objective of the plan is the recovery of the walled city and other historic centers, goals to be achieved through two very significant operations such as the recovery of the walls and the surrounding spaces and the repopulation of the historic center of Sabbioneta.

This last objective involve the improvement of the public utility equipment, such as open spaces, bicycle paths and parking lots. Therefore, the Piano dei Servizi is aimed to development a public interest service system and a municipal ecological network. It is underlined the importance of green areas and, especially, of parking lots, for which it is demanded their displacement out of the city walls. The green areas inside the circuit of the

walls should undergo a considerable increase. The plan establishes that such areas return to the real use of people: the PGT computes them as public green spaces, despite being in fact inaccessible to the population. It is also planned to create two ring routes around the walls, one at the foot and one at the top (even if the fragmentation of the property of the areas of the stands makes this path impossible in fact).

Finally, the 2016 PGT provides a strategic framework to carry out concrete actions. The architectural and environmental heritage of Sabbioneta appears to be an important development opportunity. The significant presence of a series of open spaces close to the walls, for example, is considered as an opportunity for the implementation of the municipal services system and this is a strategy that clearly aligns with the desire to promote tourism.

Therefore, the hope on which is based Sabbioneta's urban planning and, also, the proposal that will be advanced in the following chapter is to overturn the thesis advanced by Carpeggiani, ie Sabbioneta could only live as long as the prince Vespasiano, because it has been conceived as an image of his power <sup>6</sup>.

#### NOTES:

1- In *Mantova e Sabbioneta - Proposta di Iscrizione nella Lista dei Beni Culturali e Naturali del Patrimonio Mondiale*, January 2009, pg. 119

2- Ibid.

3- *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, article 82 and 89

4- In *Mantova e Sabbioneta - Proposta di Iscrizione nella Lista dei Beni Culturali e Naturali del Patrimonio Mondiale*, January 2009, pg. 155

5- Ibid

6- In Paolo Carpeggiani, *Città reale e città ideale in AA. VV., Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, CARIPLO, Milano, 1985, pg. 63



## PART 2

DESIGN AREA, HISTORIC VICISSITUDES AND ELEMENTS OF THE SITE





## EVENTS THAT LED TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF PIAZZA D'ARMI AND THE SITE OF THE ROCCA

On the left

**Fig 1:** photo of the school of Sabbioneta, 1933, Archivio Storico comunale

The events that determined the deep transformation of Piazza D'Armi and the nearer areas are a consequence of the demolition of the castle in the late eighteenth century.

In 1771, the Austrian government enacted an important provision: the publication of the "Plan" of the new order of justice and finance, which article XXII was dedicated to the two states of Sabbioneta and Bozzolo and their aggregation to that of Mantua.

In the case of Sabbioneta, the unfavourable consequences suffered by the application of such Plan were devastating: a clause of the "Plan", the XL, ordered the sale of allodial goods, and, among these, they had to include the Palaces, the Houses and the gardens belonged to the Gonzagas of Sabbioneta. Thus, the buildings and galleries of the small Athens were ransacked to the benefit of the state and the museums of Mantua, where a part of the precious "relics" are still found. A first raid was carried out in 1774. The second the following year. The historian Gian Francesco Marini reported the chronicles of Mr. Raineri, an eyewitness of that time. He wrote that, on the 12th of July 1775, the Secretary Carli of the Museum of Mantua went to Sabbioneta with two other colleagues, the painter Bottani and architect Pozzi, to make the total count of the antiquities of the Palazzo Ducale, as well as the Villa's Gronzia. In his book "*Sabbioneta: piccola Atene*" (1914), Marini reports the complete list of the precious works of art stolen from Sabbioneta. The ransack was done quickly because of the fear

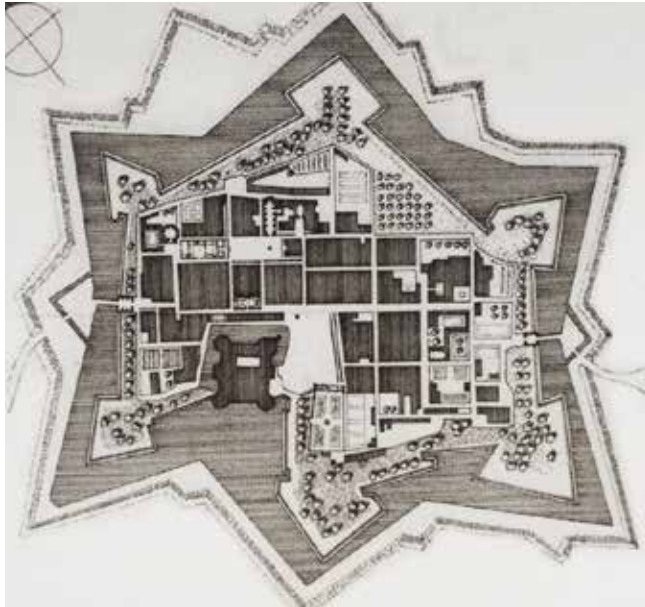
for the reactions of the population, whose riots had to be sedated by the intervention of the soldiers. Such intervention, carried out clandestinely, was completed by the sale of the magnificent castle (for 8600 liras of Milan, with deed of October 1786) to a certain Giuseppe Vignali, who used the material to reinforce the bank of the Po, near Agoiolo, where there had been a leak. The protests of the contemporaries were useless, as well as the requests for restitution of the works of art still available in Mantua or elsewhere. Unfortunately, the legal raid also caused irreparable damage to the buildings and their furnishings, as well as the library and archives: these losses limit historical, artistic and economic documentation.

Hence, the castle, whose wreck was completed in 1794, was destroyed for economic and political reasons but also for the lack of materials to repair the leak.

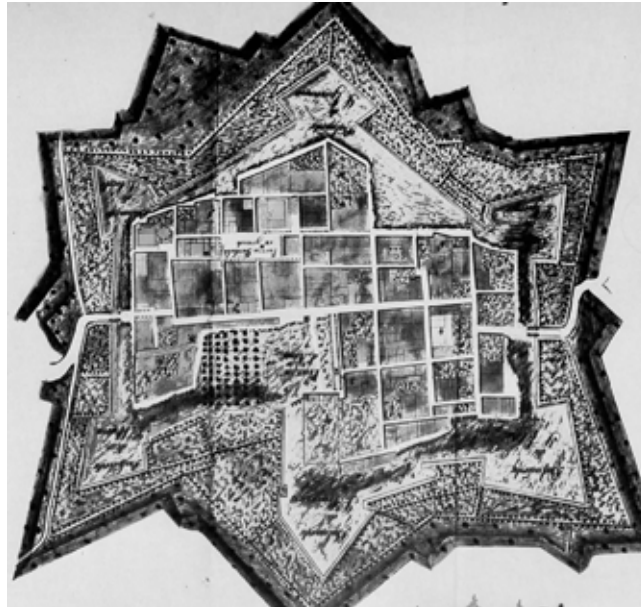
In that period, Sabbioneta was totally ransacked: everyone could have part of its richness by paying it to the Austrian government.

In addition, the Gallery risked being demolished too, having become private property in 1829. The sale, however, excluded that the owner and his heirs or others, could demolish it. This provoked a dispute between the Municipality, the owner and the heir of the buyer. The final document of the dispute is still preserved: it testifies the purchase of the Gallery by the Municipality, for the sum of L. 5000.

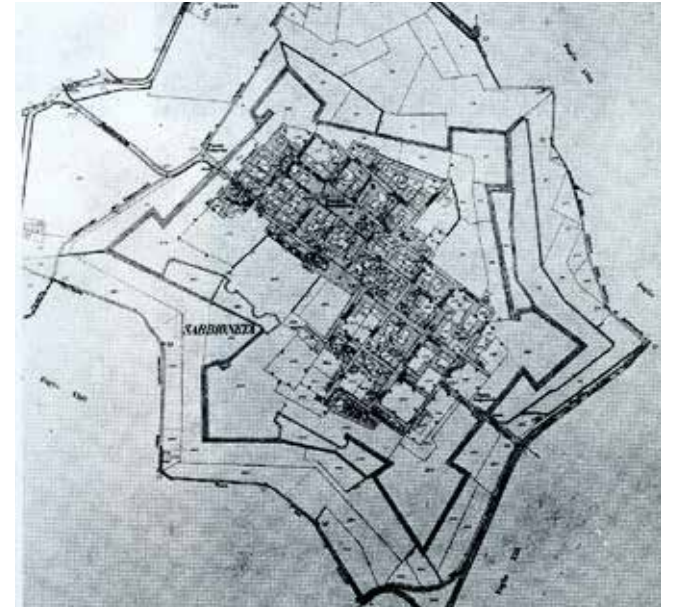
Previously, also the Theater, the Incoronata and



**Fig 2:** Reconstruction of Sabbioneta in 1780 by James Madge based on the survey of A.G. Noè. The rocca and the monastery are still visible.



**Fig 3:** Reconstruction of Sabbioneta in 1860, unknown artist, plan displayed in the Council room of Sabbioneta. The rocca have been demolished and the site have been covered with trees and vegetation. The monastery is still present.



**Fig 4:** Map of Sabbioneta before the construction of the school, 1919

the Palazzo Ducale were sold.

The "Italian campaign" was the beginning of a new phase of misfortune for the people of Sabbioneta, as well as the rest of Europe. While the bulk of the French army was proceeding on the great roads of communication, other departments occupied the inland places, above all, the more important militarily and safer ones for the abundance of supplies that could be requisitioned without much regard, also in the name of freedom and fraternity. Their anti-religious attitude and their consequent manifestations of intolerance led to unpopular legislative measures, such as the sale of ecclesiastical assets. Moreover, the prohibition of recurrences or religious ceremonies very rooted in the conscience and customs of the population, increased popular resentment and disappointment.

It is in this period that the monastery near the castle was suppressed, then divided in several properties and finally demolished.

A plan of 1860 testifies that the monastery was still existing but a topographic map of Istituto Geografico Militare dated back to 1888 reports its definitive loss (Fig 3).

The area of the castle experienced a further transformation: after the demolition of the building, the site became a green space where many trees were planted (the same map of 1860 testifies it).

However, the French administrative organization decided to improve the city military security by cutting most of the vegetation of the city. In fact, in

order to adapt the defensive system to the modern needs, such as wider movement manoeuvre spaces and greater visibility, many plants were removed around the built-up area. The massacre of the trees, 3355 mulberry trees and 4093 plants of various species, was of great damage to the arboreal heritage and to private owners.

The damages of the Austrian and the French on the Sabbionetan heritage, although very serious, they did not manage to move the conscience of the next governments that, instead of protecting and valuing their patrimony, they inflicted new damages.

The architect Guido Boroni Grazioli managed to reconstruct the vicissitudes of Sabbioneta in the twentieth century, despite the disorganization and the poorness of the testimonies<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the negligence and the displacement of the Municipal Historical Archives from Palazzo Ducale, which took place in the 1960s, contributed to the loss of important documents.

The architect was able to find information on the surviving books reporting the Council deliberation and the podestarile acts. This research allowed the architect to reconstruct the story of the most important urban event in the city of Sabbioneta after its foundation, linked to the "*Progetto per la demolizione delle mura dei bastioni e otturazione delle fosse*" which ended with the construction of the school building.

Between 1914 and 1934, the desire to ensure the development of the city and the well-being

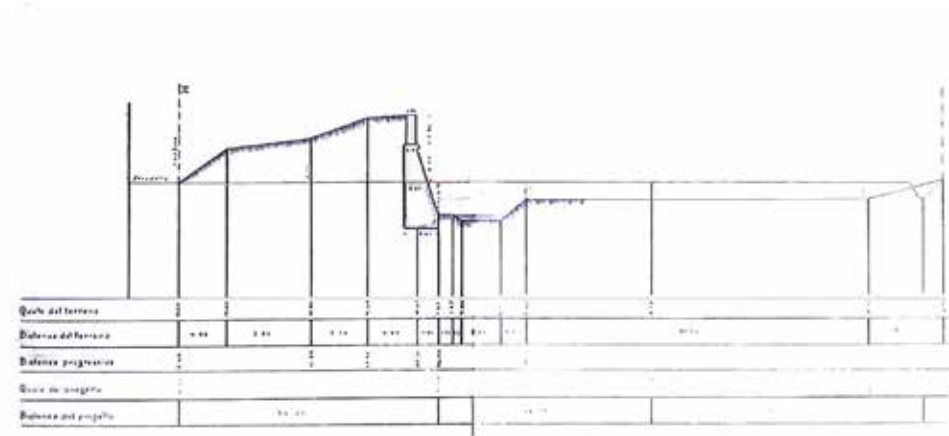
of its population, brought to a first proposal of destruction of the entire defensive system. Luckily, the city wall is still preserved, however, the vicissitudes of those years brought to the demolition of about 300 meters of it, with the modification of the dimensions of the external land and with the creation of two new accesses, a significant transformation of the urban layout of the city conceived and built by Vespasiano Gonzaga Colonna.

The "*Progetto per la demolizione delle mura dei bastioni e otturazione delle fosse*" was drawn up at the end of 1914 by the engineer Cavour Beduschi, with the approval of the socialist municipal administration presided by the mayor Costante Boni. He thought that such project could be an opportunity to ensure economic growth to this town, to regenerate the country hygienically and, finally, to provide a profitable occupation to the large mass of unemployed workers.

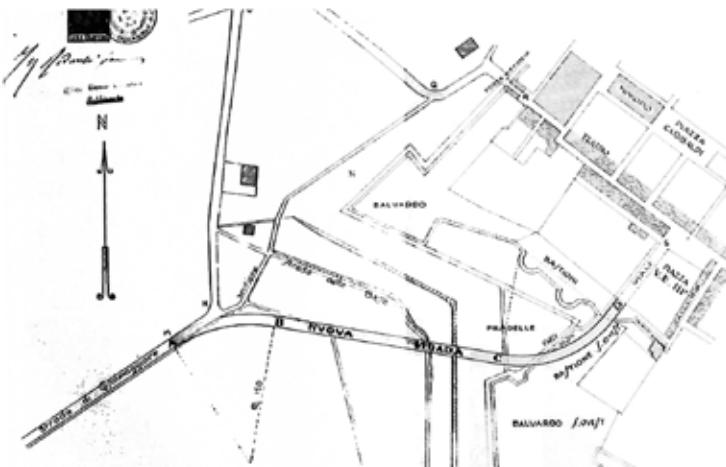
The first area available for enlargement of the city was the surface freed from the embankments of the walls, following the guidelines offered by the extension of the existing road network. Boroni Grazioli found eight project panels, and four annexes with metric calculations, tender specifications, appraisals for demolitions and sewers and the hygienic-sanitary relationship. The panels show the stamp of the Civil Engineers of Mantua with date 1919, so probably they were used for the partial demolition project approved that year. Panel VIII (the area's plan) represents



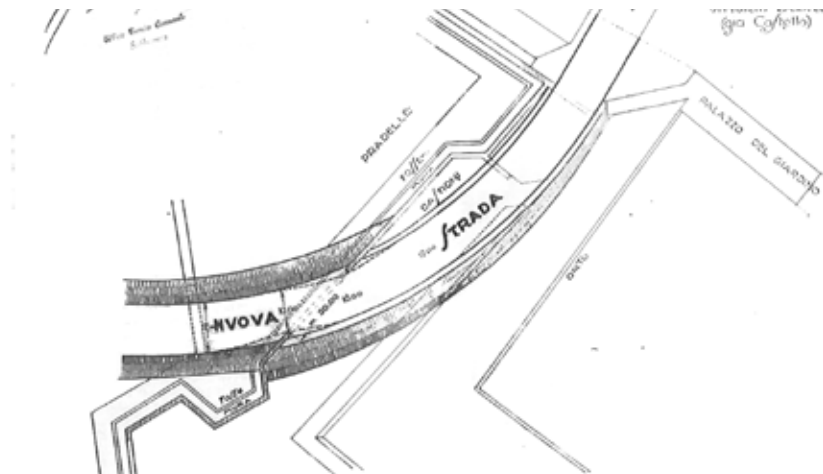
**Fig 5:** Project for the demolition of the walls of Sabbioneta, Panel VIII, Masterplan of the site, 1919. Sabbioneta, Municipal historical archive



**Fig 6:** Project for the demolition of the walls of Sabbioneta, Panel IV, sections, 1919. Sabbioneta, Municipal historical archive



**Fig 7:** Project for the construction of a south-west access road for Sabbioneta, General plan, 1928. Sabbioneta, Municipal historical archive



**Fig 8:** Project for the construction of a south-west access road for Sabbioneta, detail, 1928. Sabbioneta, Municipal historical archive

Sabbioneta plant in scale 1:2000 after the demolition, with indication of the road network, the available areas and the drains of the water (Fig 5). Panel IV (profiles and sections in scale at 1: 200) has various sections with the walls and the corresponding external area, with indication of the part that had to be demolished and the backfillings (Fig 6). This panel, together with the analogous one of 1927, could allow to define the consistency of the areas outside the walled city.

The unhealthiness of the city is the argument that is used to justify the project. The health and hygiene report, signed by the Health Officer of Sabbioneta, Stanislao Cavandoli, and the doctors of the fractions, Dr. Clemente, Dr. Romano and Dr. Rabitti, describes the bastions as the first cause of the city's insalubrity and their demolition, associated with the filling of the pits, a reason for "true hygienic regeneration".

The project is endowed with a manifesto signed by the municipal secretary Celso Uggetti, with the book published at the end of 1915 entitled "For the demolition of the Walls of Sabbioneta, critical historical notes" whose incipit, "The health and the future of a people are above any sentimentality ", expresses clearly the attitude of the author towards the historical monument. In the various chapters, he shows a series of historical, hygienic and economic arguments, all aimed at demonstrating that the walls are not historical and artistic testimonies of value, but only source of damage for men.

The outbreak of the First World War and the

contrary view of the Ministry of Education, General Direction of Antiquities and Fine Arts, seemed to stop the project. However, a letter from the Ministry, dated 3rd February 1916, although recalling the opinion already expressed on 30th November 1915 decisively opposed to the demolition, expressed a favourable opinion for a partial intervention. Such decision was again linked to hygiene. He agreed to fill the moat that surrounds the ramparts and to open two narrow fornices on the wall. Regarding the backfilling of the ditch, the letter states that this should not have altered the proportion of the walls and no buildings should have been built in the surrounding area.

Partial demolition interventions, carried out in the years following the general project of 1914, were aimed to improve the hygienic conditions of the historic centre, with the realisation of an internal sewer system, and the road connections to the north and south.

The mayor of Sabbioneta Costante Boni, as documented by a telegram from the Prefect of Mantua on 23 April 1919, communicated that the Ministry of Education had authorized the demolition of the north-east sector of the ancient walls. There are no documents related to the draft drawn up by engineer Beduschi on 19th January 1919 to which the telegram refers. Therefore, it remains unexplainable how it was possible to pass from the planning hypothesis of a fornix, to the approval by the Ministry of the demolition of the entire section of the wall located between the

bulwarks of San Nicolò and San Giovanni, for a length of about 220 meters.

Some documents, in particular one of 1936 concerning the payment of the mortgage contract with the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, describe a more complex project titled "*Lavori di colmata delle fosse, di realizzazione del primo lotto delle fognature, di demolizione del tratto nord est delle mura e costruzione del tronco di strada delle Mezzane*", identifying the lots and the builders. The works for the construction of the new road trunk for Mezzana were carried out by the Società Muratori di Sabbioneta, delivered on 10th September, tested and cleared on November 15th. The demolition of the north eastern sector walls were carried out by the Muratori di Sabbioneta Cooperative, delivered on the second of March, tested and cleared on 15th of November. The works of filling the pits and levelling the bastions in the northeast sector were carried out by the Provincial Consortium the Cooperatives of Production and Agricultural Work of Mantua called Virgilio, delivered on the second of March, cleared and tested on November 15th. The first batch of sewage works were carried out by the Muratori di Sabbioneta Cooperative, delivered on 15th of September, completed on 12th of March 1921, tested and cleared on 31th December 1923.

Regarding the project for the construction of the access road from the southeast, Boroni Grazioli found many documents: deliberations, letters exchanged with the Royal Superintendency of



**Fig 9:** With the demolition of the walls, Via Presenti becomes a new access road for the city, connecting with Via san Remigio. Beyond the walls, the street changes: the street pebbles become asphalt.

**Fig 10:** The new Via Giulia, built after the demolition of the walls, is an asphalt street. It is connected with the porphyry street Via Vespasiano

**Fig 11:** The remains of the rocca

Trento and the ministry, correspondence with the designer and an almost complete documentation of the project.

At the beginning of December 1927, the podestà of Sabbioneta Carlo Morandi entrusted the municipal technician Cavour Beduschi with the task of drafting a project aimed to improve the road network and the economy. The first objective concerns the improvement of the connection between the centre and the main transit street of the city, the one towards Casalmaggiore, with the reduction of the road distance from 940 to 460 meters and the construction through the walls of a new access road of great section and without the bottleneck of Porta Vittoria. (Figures 7 and 8)

The second objective indicates a guideline for urban development starting from the consideration that the south-west area is the highest and healthiest in Sabbioneta and therefore suitable for both housing and municipal services such as schools, the sports centre, the gym, the slaughterhouse and the cattle market, which had not yet found a suitable place. As well as the 1914 project, there was a discussion between the Royal Superintendency of Trento, proposing the construction of a fornix, and the Municipality, preferring the demolition of the entire section between the bulwark of San Francesco and the tower of the castle. The

executive project contemplate a break in the wall section, 18 meters wide and 60 meters deep, as well as the filling of the external area of the pradelle, necessary to bring the road to the height of Piazza Vittorio Emanuele III, the current Piazza d'Armi.

In the letter of the fourth of April 1928 addressed to the mayor, the director of the works Cavour Beduschi expressed his surprise for the 100 meters gap that was done in the wall, much larger than what authorized by the Superintendence. The superintendent, Marquis Alessandro Da Lisca, during the inspection of March 2nd, had in fact agreed to open a big gap and, therefore, not a fornix. Then he suggested postponing the request for a more extensive demolition, in order to obtain the opinion of the Ministry of Education to which the same request had already been sent. The verbal opinion of the Marquis Da Lisca is confirmed by a letter dated April 13th, but, at that point the grand opening, which is the existing one, had already been carried out by direct order of the podestà, without waiting for the opinion of the supervisory body.

All the works were started in March and were completed in October 1928, as the final bill, issued on 3rd January 1930, testifies it. Their execution was entrusted entirely through direct economies.

A podestarile resolution of June 16th in 1931 documents that, since the work related to the rectification of the road between Breda Cisoni and Commessaggio had already been completed, earlier than expected, the prefectural commissioner Filiberto Cavandoli had the inspiration to arrange the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele III in accordance with the long-unanimous desire expressed by the entire citizenship. The works for moving the marble column and levelling the square were designed and directed by the same engineer Cavour Beduschi, carried out by Chiozzini Francesco and liquidated on August 14th of the same year.

A decision by the Podestà Latino Monici in March 1932 awarded the supply and planting of trees necessary to decorate the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, bringing what will be the Piazza d'Armi to its current appearance. The column, then, lost its meaning of pole of the urban construction of the city of Vespasiano and became an element of furnishing of the public gardens that are still there today.

The current appearance of Piazza d'Armi was achieved with the realization of the municipal schools designed by the same Beduschi, whose construction, contracted to the Cooperative Society Anonima Muratori di Boretto in 1932, was completed on September 20th in 1934.

#### NOTES:

1- In Gian Francesco Marini, *Sabbioneta: Piccola Atene*, Casalmaggiore, Giovanni Toscani Editore, 1914

2- Guido Boroni Grazioli, *La vicenda urbanistica di Sabbioneta nel primo Novecento*, In: *Nonsolosabbioneta secondo*, a cura di Giovanni Sartori e Leandro Ventura, Comune di Sabbioneta, 2012





On the left

**Fig 1:** view of the walls of Sabbioneta

The walls of Sabbioneta are the most interesting element that characterize the image of the city. Vespasiano, educated to military architecture, managed to build a system that have been used for about half a century.

The fortified system of Sabbioneta represents, in some ways, one of the most significant results and the most complete application of principles coming from a fervent debate about the military art that occurred during the sixteenth century. However, the roots of this debate have to be found in the theoretical writings and practical experiences dating back to the previous centuries. The following chapter will be focused on the evolution of the fortification techniques during time, in order to understand the features of the walls of Sabbioneta.

The city walls built in the Middle Ages were characterized by very high fences in order to make the assault more difficult and interspersed with mostly flat towers (quadrangular, which interrupted the path of eaves allowing the control of the surrounding territory and the defence of the interposed walls).

In addition, the whole perimeter was equipped with high battlements to protect the soldiers on the patrol path. From there, it was used the so-called plumbing defence, by which it was possible to hit the enemy even when he was near the circuit.

Attackers used to compromise the strength of the walls using not only launching machines, whose

range was poor, but rather trying to open gaps, removing blocks from the lower part, or digging tunnels under the masonry in order to make it collapse. To solve this vulnerability and to prevent the approach of the machines, they used to build obstacles such as palisades and ditches.

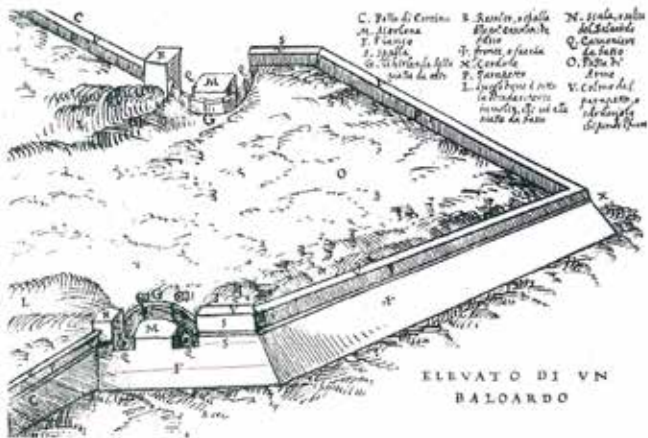
The invention of gunpowder, dating back to the thirteenth century, can be considered the engine of the substantial change in the construction techniques of the defensive system that became bastioned.

In fact, the effects of the guns on the old fortifications were devastating, because it was possible to hit from greater distances than before. New fortifications had to resist gunfire: lower and thicker walls were reinforced by embankments to absorb the impact; the top parts were curved or bended in order to deflect the shots; the towers (preferably circular) were as high as the walls and much wider than before.

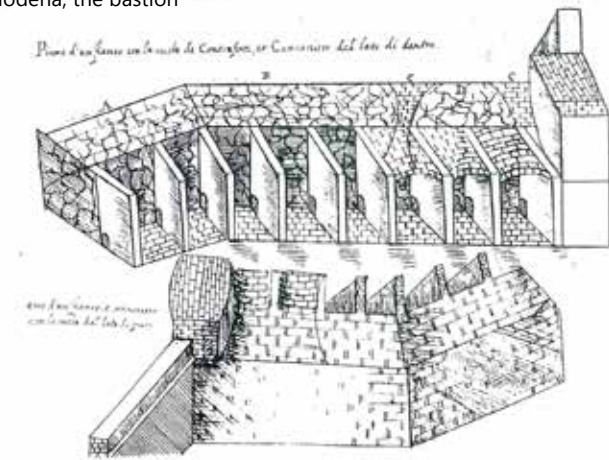
The fortress, a type that anticipate the future bastion front, was the first response to the introduction of firearms.

The typology of the fortress developed throughout the fifteenth century. Francesco di Giorgio Martini was one the most important theorists of this type. He described it in his *"Treaty of civil and military architecture"*, published in the nineties of the fifteenth century.

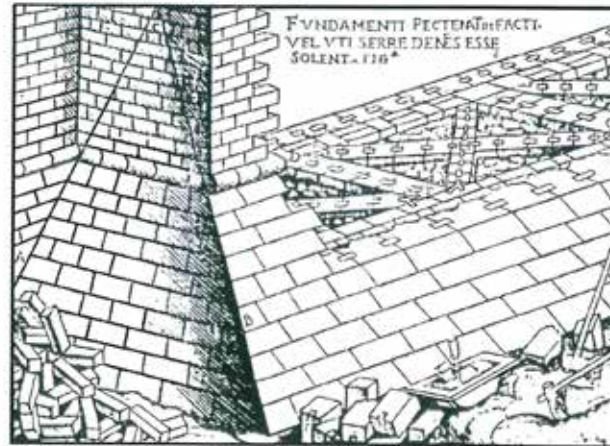
In the same years, the use of firearms is also applied to the defence, therefore, the conformation of the fortifications had to change further, without,



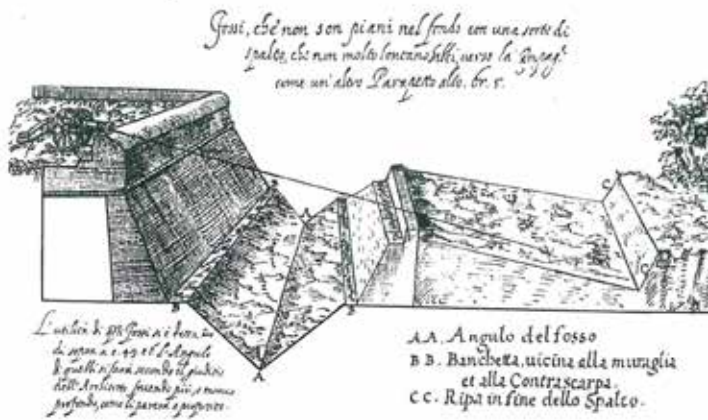
**Fig 2:** Building techniques for the strongholds between '500 and '600. Alessandra Coppa - G.Alessi, 1564/70 Biblioteca Univ.Estense Modena, the bastion



**Fig 4:** Building techniques for the strongholds between '500 and '600. Alessandra Coppa - G.Alessi, 1564/70 Biblioteca Univ.Estense Modena, the rampart



**Fig 3:** Building techniques for the strongholds between '500 and '600. Alessandra Coppa - Vitruvio Cesariano, lateral "sproni" to strengthen the walls



**Fig 5:** Building techniques for the strongholds between '500 and '600. Alessandra Coppa - G.Alessi, 1564/70 Biblioteca Univ.Estense Modena, ditch and parapet



**Fig 6:** Detail of the bastion

however, deny the innovations inherent in the model of the fortress. The use of cannons needed larger spaces and it was necessary to make sure you could defend the walls without being an easy target for the shots of the assailants. These necessities led to the introduction of a new architectural form, that of the angular bastion. The design of the angular bastion allowed the besieged to defend the nearby bastions and the interposed walls without being attacked from the enemies, because the gunboat, was kept hidden by the two shaped façades of the corner. Moreover, the shape of the bastion made impossible for the enemies to hide in the shadow cones of the previous towers. The invention of the bastion is not easy to attribute: Vasari, in his book *“Le Vite”*, states that Sanmicheli was the inventor of the angular bastion in the design of the Cornaro and S. Croce fortifications of Padua. However, this attribution does not take account of previous research, which surely determined the birth of this new form. Ian Hogg in his *“The history of fortifications”* he attributes to Brunelleschi the first attempt to define a form of bastion: the Florentine architect would have designed the fortifications of Pisa in 1433, building a shape in order that every corner and part of the wall is equally protected by the gunboat, set in a strategic position.

The conformation that the bastion will assume is the result of a series of researches and debates, starting from the shape for the towers. If, on one side, Vitruvio and Francesco di Giorgio Martini

prefer the round fortification, the late Roman author Vegezio and the Alberti prefer the angular one. Alberti conceives, in fact, a fortification with a star shape. The fact that made the angular bastion prevail is the new conception of representation of architecture as an element of cognitive investigation. For example, Leonardo da Vinci, in 1504, designed the walls for Piombino studying the possible trajectories of projectiles and, therefore, he drew the best shape for the defence of the city. However, not even such sketches can be proof of the fact that Leonardo invented this new typology. Once this new concept has been clarified, the following authors developed improvements or variations of the new system and codified it into their treaties. The applications of this method can be found, for example, in a drawing by Michelangelo del 1526 for the fortifications of Florence where he conceives a bastion with a form such as to maximize the effects of the so-called grazing defence. There is also the treaty of Piero Cataneo, *“The first four books on architecture”* (1554), in which the author represented the schematic profile of the bastion and its formal reasons (Fig 2).

The walls of Sabbioneta were built in this cultural context: when the future duke begins the construction of the wall circuit, in 1554, the bastioned front had already been widely established as a modern method of fortification and some important treaties had already been published.

The education of the prince himself (at the court

of Naples and then at the imperial court) had been marked by the study of the liberal arts, especially mathematics and military ones. Vespasiano, therefore, became a good expert of buildings and fortifications. Many historians believe that he was the designer of the Sabbioneta fortification system, while others give greater weight to his collaborators, as we already mentioned: Domenico Giunti, cousin of Vespasiano, architect from Prato who worked for Ferrante Gonzaga in Sicily, in Milan and in Guastalla; Bernardino Panizzari, architect from Piacenza that the duke consulted starting from 1557; Giovan Pietro Bottaccio, from Piacenza too, to which the prince entrusted the general superintendence of the wall factory from 1557; and finally Girolamo Cataneo, author of the aforementioned treaty, also praised by Vespasiano in person.

Probably, the latter's advice was important to design the general configuration of the fortification in the form of an irregular hexagon, conceived in order to include in the new perimeter the old fortress which, in fact, was not demolished by the duke. The design and supervision of the construction work of the city is testified by one of his non-contemporary biographers, Ireneo Affò, who states *“non bastò a Vespasiano aver chiamato alla grand'opera celebri architetti e specialmente Girolamo Cataneo Novarese per le fortificazioni che anzi volle egli medesimo per lo studio che fatto aveva nelle matematiche assistere all'ardua impresa. Non si trovò forse a que' giorni principe*



*alcuno meglio di lui intendente della civile e militare architettura perché non solo volentieri studiava i libri de' moderni, ma continua era l'applicazione sua sulle opere di Vitruvio [...] "(he wanted Girolamo Cataneo Novarese for the fortifications because of his mathematic ability. He was an expert in civil and military engineering as he studied and applied the Vitruvian principles<sup>3</sup>.)*

The events of the construction of the walls are partially known thanks to the eighteenth-century chronicles. The prince began the construction of the walls in 1554 starting with the construction of a rampart to encircle the existing castle on three sides, which is the bulwark of Santa Maria, in the western part of the inhabited area. Then, from 1559 to 1564, he proceeded up to the Porta Vittoria and the nearer areas. After the wedding with Anna of Aragon, the prince continued the construction in the southeast side, creating the stretch between the fortress and the Porta Imperiale in order to defend the large hunting grounds, in the ramparts of San Francesco and Sant'Elmo. From 1567 to 1578 the remaining part of the walls were built: the ramparts of San Giorgio, San Giovanni and San Nicola and, in 1579, the Porta Imperiale.

Regarding the construction methods of the walls, the workers and the costs for the realization, there are not many news: the only reference is Umberto Maffezzoli's "*Le mura di Sabbioneta: dal Restauro alla Manutenzione ed alla Visitabilità*", an article written on the occasion of a conference, held at the Teatro all'Antica of Sabbioneta on the third of

June 2000.

This document concerns the contract for the construction of the bulwark of San Giorgio, which is the one at the eastern edge of the city. It is characterized by a development wall of about 270 meters, with lowered shoulders to accommodate the guns needed to implement, the so - called flanking throw, one of which is set back to defend an exit called the secret door of Santa Caterina.

The contract was stipulated in 1564 between Paolo Trussardi, a master builder from Piacenza, and Giovan Piero Bottaccio, in quality, as already mentioned, of superintendent of the fortifications of Sabbioneta. The object of the contract was essentially the supply of labour for the construction of the masonry work related to the bastion, being the foundation excavations already made by the ducal workers.

The contract defined the obligations of the prince against the master builder. He would have to provide Trussardi all the necessary tools for the construction and the transport of the material to make the scaffolding. Moreover, Vespasiano committed himself to build the embankment of the wall in the same time the masonry was built, in order that they would not have needed so many scaffoldings. Finally, the prince would have procured and transported the materials necessary for the construction at his own expenses.

The obligations of Trussardi were also clearly defined: he needed to prepare the bricks and the mortar; to do all the work in a workmanlike

manner and in "retracted mortar", that is placing the mortar uniformly all over the brick in order to improve the stability of the work; to guarantee a work force of ten masons at work simultaneously. Eventually, the contract established prices and guarantees for both parties. The price of the service was equal to 50 money for every 1,000 bricks laid on weekly bases. In the case of late payment, Vespasiano would have had to correspond to Trussardi also the expenses he undertook to continue the work. Trussardi should have provided a caution of 150 scudi for the construction of the bulwark and would have to rebuild the factory at its own expense if it was not correctly done. The duke should have warned the master builder at least two months before if he had the intention to not proceed with the construction. Finally, in the case of the death of one of the contractors, the contract stated that the payment for the works should have been calculated basing on the state of realization, without possibility for one of the two parts to prevail on the other.

Although not having more detailed information on the chronology of the construction of the walls, from this contract we get some information about the modalities of their construction. The foundation excavation was carried out by the duke, as well as all the works which required the movement of the land, and therefore, non-specialized labour. The operations of construction of the elevated structures, instead, had to be entrusted to teams of expert masons, of which Trussardi seemed to

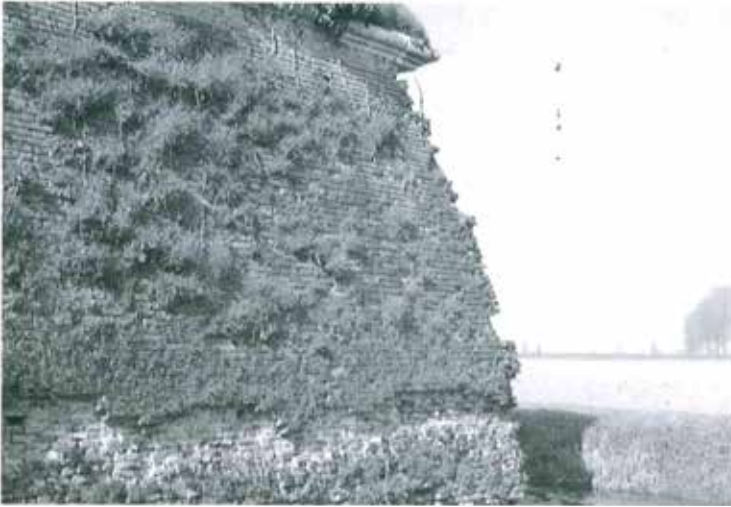


Fig 12: State of the walls before the restoration in 1991



Fig 13: State of the walls before the restoration in 1991

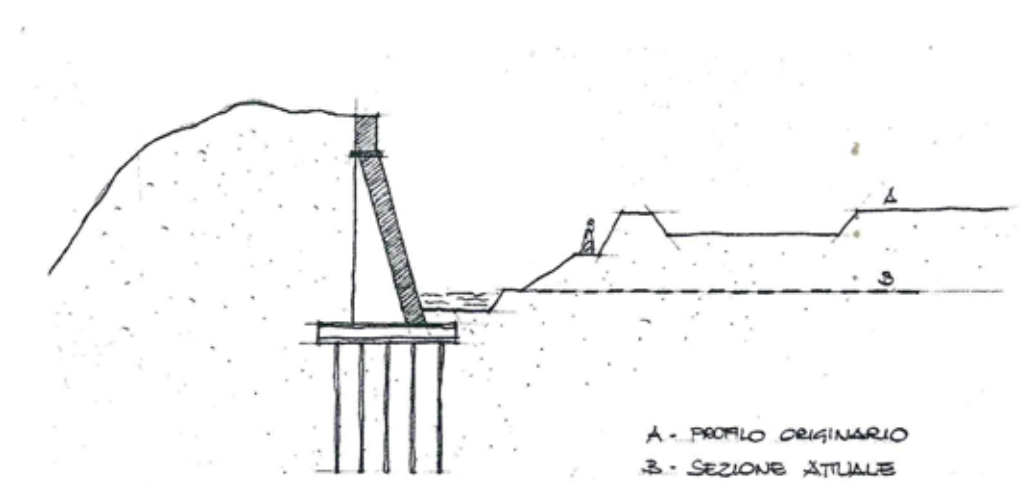


Fig 11: Section of the walls of Sabbioneta, from *Le mura di Sabbioneta: dal Restauro alla Manutenzione ed alla Visitabilità*, A. Bellini, Atti del Convegno, Sabbioneta, Teatro all'Antica, 3 giugno 2000, Viadana, Arti Grafiche Castello, 2001

be rather the clerk than the master builder. The construction proceeded in successive layers with the raising of the embankment in order to minimize the need for construction of scaffolding, as it is suggested by Pietro Cataneo. This means that the masonry work does not represent the simple embedding of the embankment, but, probably, they have to be considered as two collaborating structures for the purposes of the general stability. As we can read also from the treatises of the Alghisi, of the Cataneo and of Maggi and Castriotto, the brick was considered a very useful material for the purpose of building the walls, as they were considered more resistant to artillery blows. The stone was instead used in splinters or pebbles to fill sack walls with common vestments in brick. The walls could be made in various ways described by Maggi and Castriotto. I.e. thin walls reinforced with soil mixed with raw bricks, clay, chestnut and oak branches or double walls filled with clay and connected by thick buttresses bound by thick arches (typology considered particularly resistant by the Castriotto, as it is able to cushion the shots of the enemy artillery in a very effective way). Actually, this technique is the one used in the case of the Sabbioneta wall, as it was possible to detect thanks to archaeological investigations.

## NOTES:

1- Alessandra Coppa in *Le mura di Sabbioneta: dal Restauro alla Manutenzione ed alla Visitabilità*, Atti del Convegno, Sabbioneta, Teatro all'Antica, 3 giugno 2000, Viadana, Arti Grafiche Castello, 2001, pg. 23

2- "La rotundità delle torri e [dei] circuiti di mura [...] io confermo essere utile e necessaria, perché più resistente (per rotundità) e meno riceve le percosse della bombarda" In F. di Giorgio Martini, *Trattato di architettura civile e militare*, vol 2

3- In Ireneo Affò, *Vita di Vespasiano Gonzaga Duca di Sabbioneta, e Trajetto, Marchese di Ostiano, Conte di Rodigo, Fondi ec.*, Parma, presso Filippo Carmignani, Stampatore, per Privilegio di S.A.R., 1780

4- In N. Dondi, *Estratti del diario delle cose avvenute in Sabbioneta dal 1580 al 1600*, 1857 quot. in Mantova e Sabbioneta – Linee guida per il progetto dello spazio pubblico urbano, Allegato 3 pag. 98

Even the soil was considered an excellent material for the construction of the fortification, especially if shaped to resist in case of collapse of the masonry and if reinforced with branches and shoots or from the roots of the trees, in particular the poplars. This expedients, the plantations of poplars on the embankments in order to stabilize the land and their grassing, were also used at Sabbioneta:

*"il mese d'aprile 1589 l'eccellentissimo signor duca fece mettere le lotte [zolle d'erba, ndr] al baluardo di S. Francesco, quali le pigliavano nel prato del signor Geronimo Gisolphi fuori dalla porta Vittoria"* (in the month of April, 1589, the Duke planted the grass to the bulwark of S. Francesco, that he took from the meadow of Mr. Geronimo Gisolphi outside the Porta Vittoria) <sup>4</sup>.

In the same month, the duke ordered the landowners to plant poplars on the embankments of all the other bulwarks and to replace the dead trees with new specimens; otherwise, they would have to pay a fee.

The soil was used, as mentioned, both to make the embankments behind the walls, both to create new structures, and to fill the external "controscarpa" with relative covered road. The bastion system, in fact, contemplates a series of works, apart from the masonry, necessary to maintain the enemy in

a distant and disadvantaged position compared to the city. Sabbioneta was equipped with such defensive structures, which were built after the masonry wall was finished.

The first defence built outside from the walls was the moat. At the points of the bastions, it reached a considerable width, perhaps equal to 35 meters. Currently there is only one ditch of less than 5 meters. In addition to the moat, an embattled embankment of covered road and some casemates was built. In this way, it was created a sort of irregular six-pointed star, the first consisting of the fortified circuit in masonry, the second from the external embankments necessary to remove the placement of the artillery. The area outside the city was owned by the duke himself, who arranged it in this way for military reasons. It always remained free of trees, and was therefore defined "tagliata". Therefore, the image that connoted Sabbioneta in the last years of the prince's life was noticeably different from the current one: no construction or trees around the circuit built in an area of considerable extension, only a tree-lined profile above the boundary of the wall from which the main civil and religious building stood.





On the left

**Fig 1:** photo of the remains of the rocca. It is possible to see the remains of the towers of the castle and the school in the back

The castle is a fortified enclosure. In the Roman architecture, it was very similar to the "castrum" but with smaller dimensions. In the Medieval age, it was the dwelling of the lords, but it declined with the fall of feudal systems. Generally, it was built over a hill, in order to defend a road, a site, or a city and it used to have very thick walls, deep wells and cisterns. Its plan was formed by a fortified enclosure armed with towers, later substituted by bastions, as it was already said in the previous paragraph.

It is known that Sabbioneta used to have a castle even before Vespasiano. The historian Luca Sarzi Amadè managed to recreate the image of the old castle of Sabbioneta studying old inventories written after the death of Ludovico Gonzaga.

In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Ludovico decided to move from Gazzuolo to Sabbioneta with his family and, therefore, he started some urban reforms. First, he decided to restore the castle, transforming it in his residence. The castle used to be a walled enclosure, probably quadrangular, perhaps with towers. It used to have a main tower, a small courtyard in the center with some loggias facing it. Moreover, it hosted some houses and the parish church, as it was common in the medieval age castles.

As already explained, it is known that this castle already existed in 1308. At that time it used to host masonry houses and it was big half a "biolca", i.e. between thousand and two-thousand square meters. It was very poky: buildings, probably,

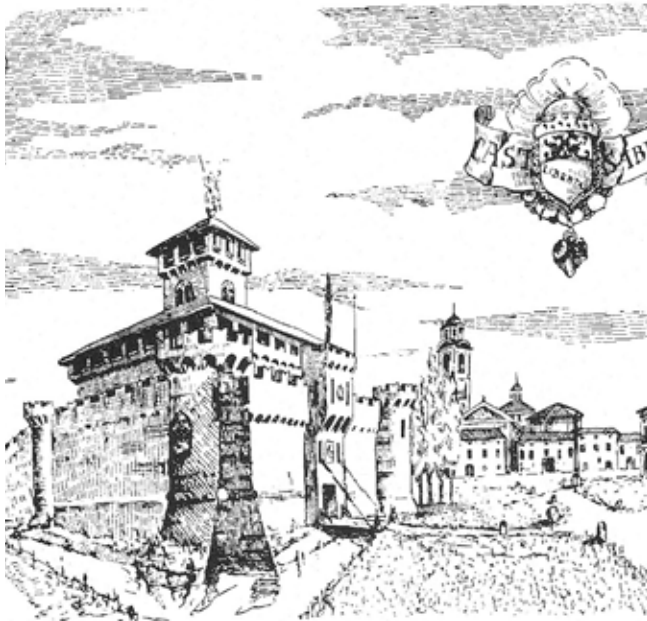
used to grow in height and leaned against each other. In fact, even the father of Ludovico, Gianfrancesco Gonzaga used to own only some rooms in it, without even having a study room. The embellishment and enlargement of the castle is due to his son Ludovico.

In 1508, it had already been enlarged, because part of it was called "old castle". In that part, there used to be the church of Santa Maria, having different chapels and local family monuments. There was also the canonical house with a loggia, where different priests used to live.

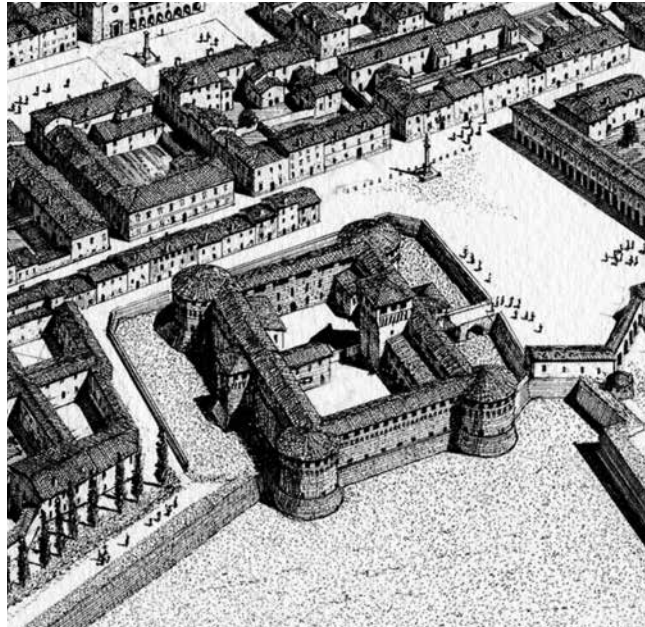
The dwelling of Ludovico was wide and adorned, maybe the only one having a courtyard, and it was connected to the central tower. It had almost twenty rooms, among which: the "salvarobba", the wardrobe; the armory in the tower; the room "del bo:me", which was the room of Ludovico; the room "del castellano"; the room "della s.ra Madama", the mother of Ludovico; the "guardacamera dela s.ra contessa", his wife's; the "guardacamera all'entrata della sala"; the "camera del s.r Aloys bo:me, room of Luigi Rodomonte; the "camera di mezo", toward the courtyard; the "camera dela s.ra Leonora", sister of Ludovico; the "camera degli Alambicchi", hosting different beds.

Moreover there were: the "camera presso el Tinel dele Done", the tower room, room of the stairs, the countess room and its guardacamera, the footmen's room, the kitchen and the women wardrobe.

The inventories that Amadè found did not match



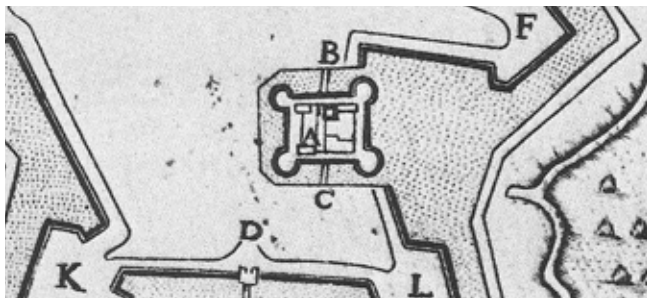
**Fig 2:** Reconstruction of the rocca Sabbioneta by Luigi Betti. The drawing has been done after 1793.



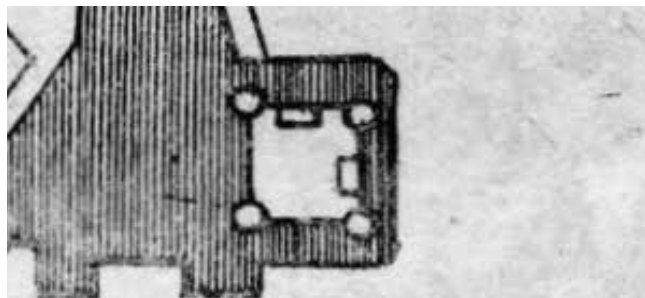
**Fig 3:** Reconstruction of the rocca of Sabbioneta at the end of XVI century, Lorenzo Confortini, 1986.



**Fig 4:** Plan of the castle in XVI century, postcard based on a topographical map of the XVIII century



**Fig 5:** G.B. Sesti, *Sabioneta*, 1718



**Fig 6:** T.Fritschen, *Sabioneda*, 1702



**Fig 7:** Catastale map of Sabbioneta, ing. A.G. Noè, 1842

perfectly and make it impossible to draw a precise plan of the castle; however, they managed to give a general idea of the place, which was rich but not as cosmopolitan as Vespasiano's court.

The prince's dwelling was permeated by courtiers' rooms too: they were doctors, notaries, priests, but also other families, from lower social classes. The houses sometimes were only one room. A central street, probably very narrow, brought to the inner spaces of the castle, which were composed by multi-storey buildings, a big medicine shop, the bank and the pawnshop (the latter from 1527). Eventually, few but rich Jewish family had their dwelling in the castle, among which the Foà, who were usurious.

A drawbridge led to the castle; probably it was located in the northern side of the castle, facing Casa Agosta Sabbioni.

It is not clear which transformation Vespasiano did when he inherited the castle. Some documents mention an oratory built in the castle in 1577, perhaps the church to San Giovanni Battista. Faroldi, then, testify that Vespasiano built a rampart which surrounded the castle for three sides, perhaps set toward Casalmaggiore, and then he wanted it to be destroyed<sup>2</sup>.

Following De Dondi's texts, the Duke finished the castle in 1590. It was an embanked fortified enclosure, with four corner towers having a cylindrical section. In the internal part, there was a quadrangular building and a tall tower with a tambour and an angel on the top done by

Nascimbene Borzana.

The best description of Vespasiano's castle is reported by Antonio Racheli<sup>3</sup>. He reported that, before Vespasiano, the castle was old and surrounded by a ditch full of putrid water, the city was a little village of houses in raw bricks laying on a muddy soil. Vespasiano's transformation gave new glory to the castle as well as the village itself that became a beautiful city.

He said that the castle was hundred meters long and seventy meters wide, a rectangle with ninety-degree angles. Its shape is still preserved in the municipality's historical memories, in the documents, the topographic planimetries, as well as the ancient paintings.

Each corner was characterized by a circular tower with "sproni al piede", i.e. transversal walls with a reinforcing function set in the lower part of the tower. The top part of the tower was horned with a beautiful cornice. Two of them are still preserved nowadays, even if they have been lowered: they are almost a quarter shorter. The other towers, facing north, used to have a triangular marble "sprone", a reinforcement that was added to the towers in the sixteenth century to improve the defence.

Old and tall walls surrounded the castle area, they were as tall as the cornice of the towers and, in the lower part, they were connected to the towers' sproni by a lead element. On the top of the walls there were medieval battlements which had been close, in order to be suitable for the firearm defence.

A ditch used to surround the castle; a drawbridge gave access from Piazza D'Armi to the castle, where a great palace stood. It was ancient and solid, of Roman style. The façade where blackened by the time, the windows big, compact and harmonic, the massive roof was protruded towards the square. In this palace, there were big rooms, with frescoes inspired by Roman and Greek myths: unfortunately, today there are no rests of such operas.

In the middle of the palace, there was a tall clock tower, with a bronze angel on the top of it. The tower was built in a more modern style than the palace and, probably, Vespasiano's court astronomer used to live there.

The bell is the only rest that exist nowadays of that tower. Now, that bell is located in the parish church of the city.

The southeast tower was connected to other very ancient buildings having different type and style, some of them rusticated other of noble order. Crossed them, it was possible to enter in the armory, located in the south side of Piazza D'Armi. The armory was a long and wide portico building: it stood on marble columns and pillars in the corners; over them, a series of arches leaned. On the upper floor, there was a big loggia with wide arched windows; on the roof, there were marble pyramids and balls.

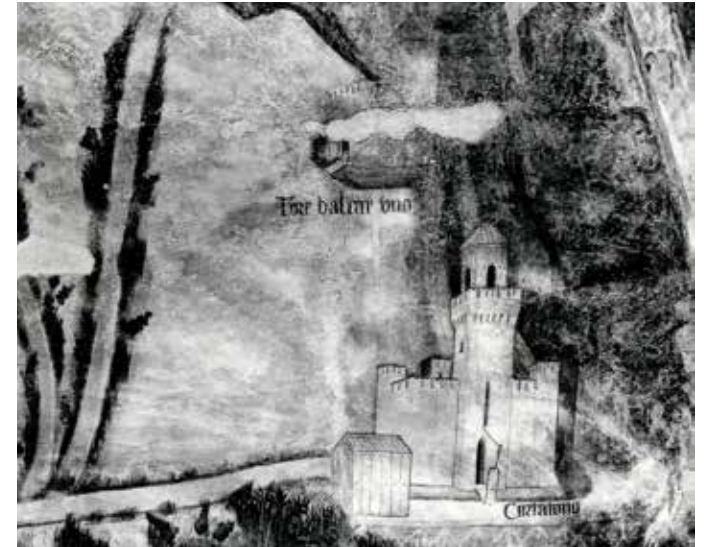
A corridor was connected to the armory, that element is still existing and it is the building that is connected to the Palazzo Giardino. The corridor is opened in the lower floor; it stands over heavy



**Fig 8:** One of the gates of the ancient walls of Rivarolo Mantovano



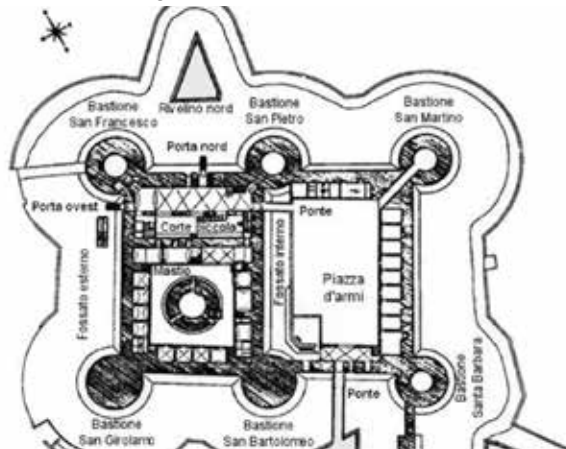
**Fig 9:** Plan of Guastalla in XVIII century, from *Castelli dei Gonzaga* M.R. Palvarini, C. Perogalli, Milano, Rusconi Libri, 1983



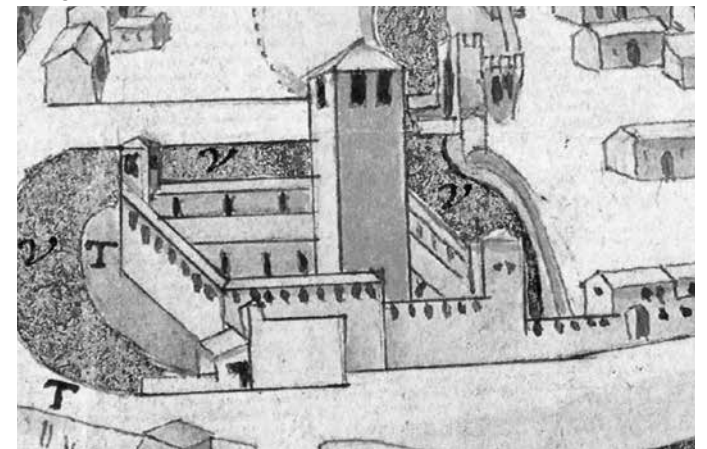
**Fig 10:** Curtatone castle, from *Castelli dei Gonzaga* M.R. Palvarini, C. Perogalli, Milano, Rusconi Libri, 1983



**Fig 11:** Remains of the Rocca of Ostiano



**Fig 12:** Plan of the Fortezza Firmafede in Sarzana



**Fig 13:** The castle of Marcaria, from *Castelli dei Gonzaga* M.R. Palvarini, C. Perogalli, Milano, Rusconi Libri, 1983

pillars and have a vaulted ceiling. It is in masonry, with big and smooth bricks. That building was trucked when the adjacent building had been destroyed. Racheli noticed that the corridor have been closed then, using the same material and style, but with a different refinement, perhaps due to a bad ability and technic.

Between the still existing towers, there are the traces of an ancient door, maybe the ancient access of the castle. Looking toward west direction, it is possible to see a further little door, maybe a secret exit from the castle.

The Adda River, whose water filled Sabbioneta's ditch, used to flow south of the castle, as it is testified by some traces that have been found in the soil.

Racheli's description is very accurate; the discrepancies between his witnesses and Sarzi Amadè's are not so relevant. One is the position of the ancient entrance of the castle: Amadè believes that it was set in the northern side; Racheli wrote instead that it was in the southern.

Basing on this description, the changes that Vespasiano could have done to the castle are: surely, the connection from the castle to Palazzo Giardino; the construction of the central tower (or restoration, if it was already existing); the closure of the medieval battlement to have more suitable defense (but there is the possibility that Ludovico did this intervention before him).

De Dondi's diary reports further intervention that Vespasiano did on the castle. In 1583, he reported

that an emergency door was built, maybe the secret entrance that Racheli mentioned. In 1587, he built a vaulted ceiling inside the main tower and put marble arms on the external façade. In the same year, the angel has been placed on the top of the tower. In 1589, the duke built the parapet for the ditch towards the square and he reinforced the walls between the towers with a three-bricklayer wall. Then, he lowered the embankment of the main tower.

It is possible to have further comparison with historical representation of the castle. The most ancient drawing was made by Luigi Betti after 1793 (Fig 2). The image of the castle is not matching perfectly with the description of Racheli: the connection with the Palazzo Giardino is missing and the battlements are not closed. However, the general structure (a fortification with four towers, a central palace and the main bell tower) seems to be truthful, even according with De Dondi's witnesses.

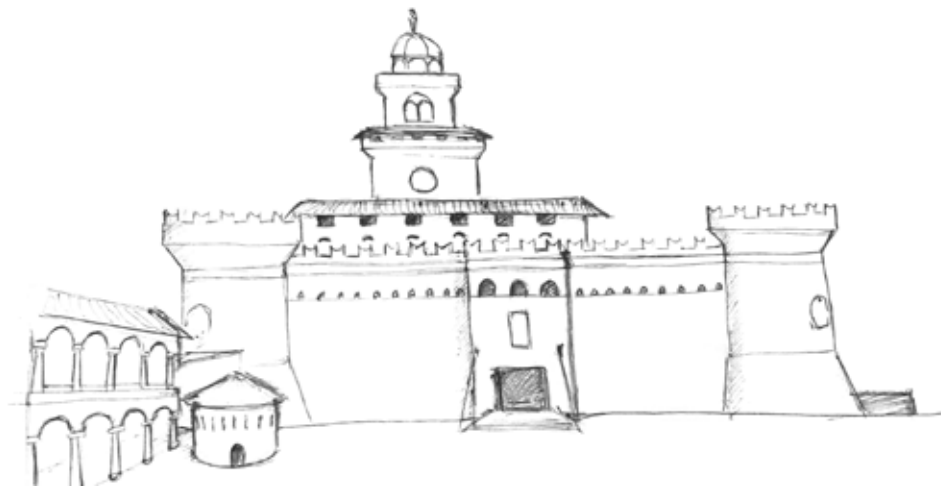
There is another famous representation of Lorenzo Confortini that now is kept in the Sabbioneta's synagogue (Fig 3). This drawing, dating back to the eighteenth century too, seems to be less accurate, because some details seem to be arbitrary guessed. For example, the castle defensive system: the battlements and all the perimeter of the building are covered with a roof, that is a common element in the design of sixteenth century castles, but there is no mention of it in the ancient documents.

It is interesting to notice that, in this representation, the big central palace that was present in the previous drawing is missing. It seems that the author based his representation on the topographical plan of the city of his time. These plans show very simple images of the castle, where it is possible to notice the presence of two courtyards and a series of little buildings connected to the internal perimeter of the fortification. Moreover, the main tower is not located in the center but it is moved from the central passage that connects the drawbridge with the opposite side of the castle. Furthermore, the connection with the Palazzo Giardino is not as complex as Racheli suggested. If, on one hand, the location of the armory is coherent with what Racheli wrote, as well as the fact that the corridor was longer (here is drawn with five arcades), on the other, the connection with the castle's tower is not defined. About this point, it is important to mention an ancient map of Sabbioneta, which shows the hydraulic system of the city. From this map, it is possible to see that in the point where the castle connects with the armory there was a "chiavica", a hydraulic system that was set to control the level of the water, closing and opening to adjust the flow. It is possible to suppose that this structure could be crossed on top and, perhaps, it appeared as a building, or a series of them.

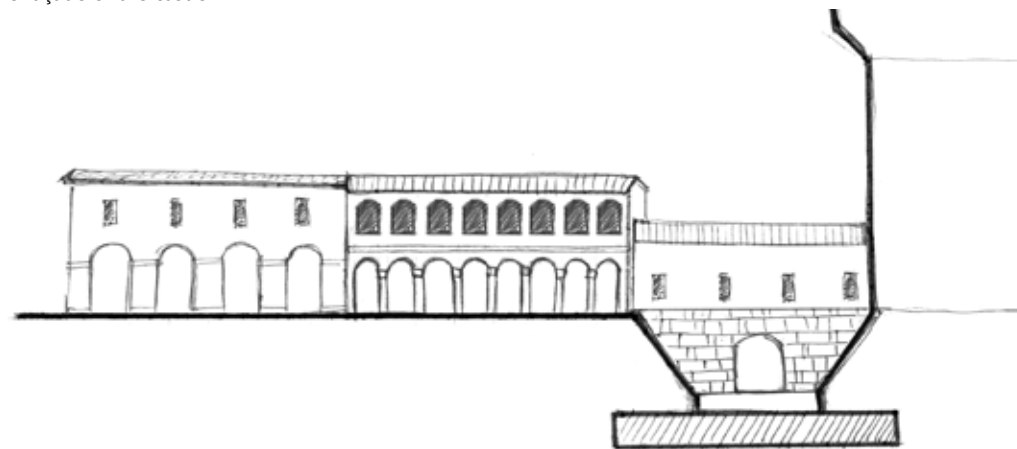
Another interesting issue is the existence of two courtyards. As already said, the topographic representations of the city show the castle with



**Fig 14:** The inner façade of the courtyard of Incoronata church. The inner loggia can be considered an example for the reconstruction of the armory in Piazza D'Armi



**Fig 15:** The façade of the castle



**Fig 16:** Section of the south-east tower of the castle, looking towards the Corridor Piccolo, reconstruction of the armory and the sewer

two courtyards. However, both the Teresian and the Lombardo-Veneto land register present the castle with only one small courtyard. Although the land register should be more accurate, it is very strange that such a huge building had only one small courtyard.

The best way to make hypothesis about the original configuration of the castle is to compare it with other building of the same period. For example, observing the plan of the Sarzana castle (Fig 12), it is possible to notice that there was a big "mastio", the main courtyard, and a smaller secondary court, that could be the case of Sabbioneta. However, many of the castle that could have been compared to the Sabbioneta's one have been destroyed. In the book "*I castelli dei Gonzaga*", Maria Rosa Palvarini and Carlo Perogalli describe and compare the features of the Gonzaga's fortification. It is possible to find some similarities with the destroyed castles of Castelluccio, Curtatone, Guastalla (Fig 9,10,13), but also the existing castle of San Giorgio in Mantova. For what regards the appearance of the façades, historians believe that there could have been some similarities with Ostiano castle and Rivarolo Mantovano gate (Fig 8,11), which remains are still preserved.

Palvarini and Perogalli analyze also Sabbioneta's

castle. In their reconstruction, they make hypothesis about the existence of two more towers: one facing the drawbridge and the other positioned symmetrically towards west, both having a quadrangular plan.

However, the two historians found an anomaly in Vespasiano's defensive system. Near the castle, the city boundary recess creating a shape not congruous for the system. Moreover, the presence of the towers of the old castle integrated into the new bastion is another blatant anomaly. The writers could not give an answer to this issue; however, they mentioned other buildings in a similar situation: the Forte Borgiano in Cività Castellana, with four bastions and a round tower; the Forte di Sansepolcro with three bastions and a round tower; the existing wall of Verona, with both bastions and towers; the Treviso wall, made only with towers.

The story of the old castle of Sabbioneta, as it is possible to notice, is still full of open question and issues; the remains of such building, as well as the whole city, are still shrouded in mystery. New discoveries open up new question, whose answer, perhaps, will never be given.

Even after the demolition of the castle, happened in 1794, interesting discoveries have been done.

In fact, on that site, the first Roman testimony was found: a bronze statue thirty centimeters high, engraved with an inscription on the base. Racheli himself interpreted it as a vow of Aulus Veleio, to Venus, during the second triumvirate:

VENERI F. EX V. A VOLEUS OB IUS CONN. AB. ANT. TRIUM CONC<sup>4</sup>.

This discovery is due to the writers Benvenuti and the Sollazzi. In their manuscripts, they assure that they have also seen a marble stone, one meter high, unearthed near the armory, and which bears a very eroded Roman epigraph, but still decipherable, and concerning a vote made to Jupiter, for the health of a certain Vedio linked to the emperor Ottone.

Between 1991 and 1995, some archaeological researches have been carried out in the area of the castle, however, any further discovery have been done.

Nowadays the site of the castle is an urban void. The hope is that the place will acquire again the value that have been lost during the centuries and became again the symbol of the city.

#### NOTES:

1- Luca Sarzi Amadè in Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura, Milano, Cariplo, 1985, pg. 180

2- "*Vespasiano*) ritornato dalla guerra in Piemonte, si diede a fabbricare, con allargare in quel principio e munire d'un baloardo il castello che cingeva la rocca di Sabbioneta da tre bande, del qual adesso non vi è vestigio veruno" In MARANI Ercolano, Sabbioneta e Vespasiano Gonzaga Sabbioneta, Tip. "La sabbionetana", 1977, pg. 65

3- In Antonio Racheli, *Delle Memorie Storiche di Sabbioneta*; libri IV. Casalmaggiore, Tipografia e Libreria de Fratelli Bizzarri, 1849, pg 178

4- In Enrico Agosta Del Forte, *Sabbioneta e il suo Comune (dalle Origini al 1980)*, Sabbioneta, Tip. "La Sabbionetana", 1981, pg. 230



Sabbioneta (1967) - Veduta dal Campanile dell'Assunta



On the left

**Fig 1:** photo of Piazza D'Armi in 1919, Archivio Storico Comunale

In the first documents of the sixteenth century and in the plan of the seventeenth century kept in Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Piazza d'Armi appears with its ancient name, Piazza del Castello.

Luca Sarzi Amadè managed to reconstruct the story of the square, starting from the government of Vespasiano's grandfather, Ludovico<sup>1</sup>.

The idea of the transformation of the village has to be attributed to Ludovico, even though it is only with Vespasiano that Sabbioneta acquired its power and magnificence. The Sabbionetan humanism of Ludovico left no monuments, no literary testimony, art but only signs and traces of an ambitious project. He could not complete his program because he owned only three fiefs: Sabbioneta, Ostiano and Rodigo, which became five with Bozzolo and Rivarolo Mantovano. Moreover, it was a period of wars and calamity. In fifty years of reign, he could not even finish the excavation of the castle ditch. He was not a traveler or a warlord; he used to lead a sedentary life. As a warrior he was overtaken by his son Rodomonte, as a humanist by his nephew Vespasiano.

Sarzi Amadè tells that the medieval village of Sabbioneta was located at the foot of the castle. It was a small-inhabited area, with few near houses gathered around a square, probably the place where, many years later, Piazza d'Armi would have been built.

Ludovico Gonzaga, as many other Renaissance lords, was fascinated by the idea of building his own ideal city. Many documents, dated back to

sixteenth century, allow to understand how the ancient village of Sabbioneta was, from the death of Ludovico (near 1540), to the government of Vespasiano.

The centre of the village was the square that, at the time of Lodovico, was called "vecchia", fact that testify the existence of a new square that had been built in the village. In fact, following Amadè's reconstruction, Ludovico started the construction of a new square, "Piazza Nuova", characterized by a modest Renaissance architecture. In that square, he built up a palace (certainly inferior to Vespasiano's), with porticos and commercial places.

Instead, in Piazza Vecchia there were houses and markets. There were also the municipality palace, the Palazzo della Ragione and the house of Agamennone Eletti Vitaliani, whose position allows historians to identify the old square with the existing Piazza D'Armi. In fact, a document dated back to 1547 testify that such house was near to the castle's ditch.

In the old square there were not a church, because, as already mentioned, the parish church was set in the castle. However, there were many houses; most of them were Ludovico's property. In fact, Ludovico used to rent them. Some bourgeois families, merchants, traders and artisans, owned other houses there, where they used to live and run their activities. The businesses that brought richness to the village were that of selling medicines and fur coats and the artisanship of tailors, shoemakers

and blacksmiths.

Between 1540 and 1550, even though the municipality palace remained on the old square, the Piazza Nuova became the new center of the city that Ludovico was building. The area of the old square and the nearer old buildings were still called village of "Capo della Volpe". In fact, probably, the idea of Ludovico was that of substituting the function of the old square with the new one, so, the Piazza Nuova became the new seat of markets and trades. It is therefore natural to believe that it corresponds, in whole or in part, to the current Piazza Ducale.

As Racheli also testify, at the time of Vespasiano Piazza Ducale was the commercial square, called Piazza del Mercato, instead, Piazza D'Armi or del Castello was the military square.

Piazza D'Armi, as mentioned, was both the seat of the prince's military power, with the castle and the armory, both the place for his leisurely, with his villa and the gallery, representing the two souls of Vespasiano as a Renaissance prince.

The Gallery, or Corridor Grande occupied the long east side of the square, instead the Vespasiano's villa with its garden, was located on the south east side. The garden was set between the square and the southern bastion of San Francesco; it was cut by two perpendicular axes with a fountain in the middle. The reason for placing a green area there was both to grant some resting natural space for the villa, both to allow a complete sight of the south bastion and the areas outside the walls from

the castle.

On the southeast corner of the garden there was the stable, it was kept far from the main building in order to avoid bad smell.

Such part of the city, even if integrated with the context, was mainly conceived for military needs. Nowadays, without the castle, the armoury and part of the walls, the square lost its original character. Moreover, the whole square, including the casino and its garden, was very different from what it looks like today. Even the gallery project included a more elaborate perspective. Through its arches, it was possible to see a further portico, without shops. The documents of the period testify this fact, as well as the traces in the corner house facing Via Giulia. The ground floor of this house, now used as a bar, still has a difference in floor level. In fact, the basement does not occupy the entire area of the building and it is missing where there was the ancient portico<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, in the context of the square, even the existence of the Gallery itself is still a mystery. Should its arches suggest a continuity with the rear façade, or not? Was it mainly thought in relation to the castle as a background of it?

De Dondi wrote that Vespasiano designed the Gallery as a sign, a single element to define a space<sup>3</sup>. The Gallery, which design reminds the roman aqueduct of Segovia in Spain, define the eastern side of the square by the repetition of its twenty-six arcades. Being a linear element, it suggest a strong longitudinal directionality, without emphasizing

any specific point on its length. After 1585, a large marble emblem with the collar of the Golden Fleece was incorporated in an aedicule in the center of the gallery, underlining its symmetrical center. In 1799, the French chiseled the imperial hall and the Golden Fleece that stood at the foot of the crown in the lintel of the aedicule. This fact affected the future development of the square, because, improperly, the center of the gallery became the fulcrum of a new axis, according to which the Italian garden that is existing today was designed.

Another element that today is lost is the connection of the prince buildings in the square.

The gallery, the Palazzo Giardino, the armory and the castle were connected together, linked by a continuous high path. As mentioned in the previous chapter, professor Pipier developed a theory about this high passage, the "hochkorridore":

*"Ende September 2008 begann ein neues von der DFG gefördertes Forschungsprojekt: „Die Hochkorridore von Sabbioneta. Architektur und Ausstattung eines städtischen 'Piano Nobile' der Renaissance." Sabbioneta, die Residenz des frühabsolutistischen Kleinfürstentums gleichen Namens, die Vespasiano Gonzaga (1531 – 1591) nach 1554 von Grund auf neu erbauen ließ, gilt als eine der konsequentesten Umsetzungen des Idealstadtgedankens der italienischen Renaissance. Grundriß und Umrißfiguren der Stadt sind so angelegt, daß sie den gewandelten Begriffen der Zeit vom Fürsten und seinem Staat architektonischen*

*Ausdruck verleihen, zugleich aber in zahlreichen Rückgriffen auf den antik-römischen Städtebau eine Kontinuitätslinie zurück zum kaiserzeitlichen Imperium konstruieren. Das neue Selbstverständnis fürstlicher Macht artikulierte sich jedoch nicht allein in den axialen und flächigen Konfigurationen des Stadtplanes, sondern erfuhr durch Hochkorridore, die die Herrschaftszonen der Stadt – Rocca, Palazzo Ducale, Palastkirche, Theater, Galerie, Gartenpalast – miteinander verbanden, eine dreidimensionale Hierarchie der Wegeführung. Auf dieser Ebene bewegte sich der Fürst, ungesehen und dennoch immer präsent. Teile dieses Systems haben sich bis heute erhalten, seine ursprüngliche Ausdehnung, der genaue Verlauf der Gänge und ihre ehemalige Ausstattung sind jedoch unbekannt. In einem ersten Teilprojekt des Forschungsvorhabens soll dieses System der Hochkorridore in seinen erhaltenen Resten komplett aufgemessen, gezeichnet und fotografisch dokumentiert werden, danach werden alle Gebäude einer intensiven Bauforschung unterzogen, so daß am Ende das Piano Nobile der Stadt komplett rekonstruiert werden kann."*<sup>4</sup>

(Translation: At the end of September 2008, a new research project funded by the DFG began: The High Corridors of Sabbioneta, Architecture and equipment of a Renaissance urban Piano Nobile. Sabbioneta, the residence of the early absolutist small duchy, which was completely rebuilt after 1554 by Vespasiano Gonzaga (1531-1591), is considered one of the most consistent implementations of the ideal city idea of the

Italian Renaissance. The plan and outline of the city are designed to give architectural expression to the changed concepts of the time by the prince and his state, while at the same time constructing a continuity line back to the imperial empire in numerous references to ancient Roman town planning. However, the new self-understanding of princely power was not articulated in the axial and flat configurations of the city plan, but through three corridors linking the city's dominions - Rocca, Palazzo Ducale, Palace Church, Theater, Gallery, Garden Palace - to a three-dimensional one Hierarchy of the routing. At this level, the prince moved, unseen and always present. Parts of this system have survived to this day, but their original extent, the exact course of the corridors and their former equipment are unknown. In a first subproject of the research project, this system of high corridors will be completely measured, drawn and photographically documented in its surviving remains, after which all buildings will undergo intensive construction research, so that in the end the city's Piano Nobile can be completely reconstructed).

From Pipier's studies, it is possible to understand how important Piazza D'Armi was for the prince: the high corridor surrounded the square from all sides, a situation that does not happen in the Piazza Ducale.

The strong relation between the prince buildings is now lost, as well as the relation of the building with the square itself.

An important fact that determined the change in the conception of the square was the displacement of the Colonna di Pallade from its original position. The monument consists of several overlapping elements. On a pyramidal truncated base, of recent epoch, covered with porphyry cubes with angular strips in white stone, there is a base, 1.05 m high, consisting of three steps in white stone. At the center of the upper one, there is a high square-section parallelepiped nut, with molded crown and base frames. Above it, on a stone plinth, stands an Ionic column, in Botticino stone, 4.85 m high, with plinth and base in bronze, finely decorated and with a bronze, Corinthian capital. Over this, there is the marble statue of Minerva, or Athena. The overall height of the monument is 10.20 m.

Such statue was supposed to have ancient origins; the ancient witnesses believed it was a Roman statue, coming from the Sack of Rome, to which Rodomonte participated. Modern studies proved instead that the statue is not so ancient but, probably, it had been built at the time of Vespasiano<sup>5</sup>.

It is not a case that Minerva was chosen by Vespasiano to stand over Piazza D'Armi: she is the goddess of loyalty in struggle, of the great virtues of the war (war for right causes or defense), of wisdom, strategies, textures, also recognized as protector of artisans. She is represented with a lifted arm holding a spade, that today is no more present.

Originally, the monument was set on the



**Fig 2:** Sabbioneta, Via Giulia (today Via Vespasiano), before the paving in porphyry, end of XIX century, Archivio storico comunale



**Fig 3:** Via Giulia at the end of XIX century, the column is still in the original position, Archivio storico comunale



**Fig 4:** Piazza D'Armi in 1932, the column has been moved in front of the gallery, Archivio storico comunale



**Fig 5:** At the beginning of XX century, there was a grass garden in front of the gallery, Archivio storico comunale.



**Fig 6:** The municipal building built between 1933 and 1934 on the north side of Piazza D'Armi, Archivio storico comunale



**Fig 7:** Piazza D'Armi at the end of the interventions, Archivio storico comunale

crossroads between the current Vespasiano and Dondi streets, tangent to Piazza D'Armi. That place is more or less the center of the city, a position full of symbolic meanings. Moreover, the statue originally was looking toward north, where the Piazza Ducale and the center of political power was. Today the statue has been moved, rotated and lifted on a base: now it is at the centre of the Italian garden facing the Gallery and it has been rotated looking towards Palazzo Giardino.

The meaning of the statue, therefore, has been lost and the square, as well as the city, have lost its symbolic centre.

Not only principal buildings and monuments, but also the noble house on the northern side of the square have changed their image. Several houses of Sabbioneta preserve, at some street corners, drafts of disproportionate grandeur, traces of sumptuous buildings, then looted and partly dismantled. This stretch of the Giulia district, which is the main one, logically, had to present its maximum elegance.

The house that today is marked with the n. 81 of Via Vespasiano Gonzaga, has remained the only one of the block that preserves the original design and dimensions. Now it host a branch of Banca

Agricola Mantovana. Its original name was the Captain's house. Although its appearance reminds the Cavalleggero's house (the building on the right side of Palazzo Ducale), it would be arbitrary to state that the two buildings had similar functions, or belonged to the same owner.

Another important house facing Via Vespasiano Gonzaga is the fascist building (n. 31) that now hosts the post office, previously the seat of the Pro Loco Association (now moved to Palazzo Giardino). In 1547, Vespasiano decided to establish the pawnshop in the city and he located it in the castle. In 1651, Vincenzo Dondi, commissioner of the "biade" (horse food), decided to leave all his fortune to such institute, including his home along Via Giulia, now Via Vespasiano. Therefore, the seat of the pawnshop was moved there. That building used to have a rich portal; now it has disappeared, as well as its original façade, now covered with a new one.

Today, Piazza d'Armi is characterized by another important fascist building: the school built on the site of the ancient castle.

The construction of such school determined again a great change in the conception of the square. The building is symmetrically designed, however,

its axis do not have relations with the square. The green area placed in front of the school do not have relation with the garden set on the opposite site too.

The road that have been built in the same period, cutting in two parts the square, emphasizes the discrepancy created in the image of the place. Moreover, the construction of such road determined the demolition of two sections of the city wall, one in the north and the other in the south of the city, near Piazza D'Armi.

Today, Piazza d'Armi has lost many of the features that used to characterize its beauty and value. The demolition of the castle, the armory, parts of the walls had the result of changing drastically the image of the city. Piazza D'Armi, nowadays, has become the touristic access of the city; cars can park there, pedestrian cannot experience the space as it was in the past. As a result, the doors of the city have lost their historical function, their value.

Piazza D'Armi is a space with no boundaries, no character. This is a very huge problem for the image of Sabbioneta and, therefore, its re-design should be the starting point for the enhancement of the city.

#### NOTES:

1- Luca Sarzi Amadè in *Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, Milano, Cariplo, 1985, pg. 180

2- Luca Sarzi Amadè in *Sabbioneta: una stella e una pianura*, Milano, Cariplo, 1985, pg. 218

3-" *la Galleria è ridotta a buon segno, ne si son fatte quelle baccinette di stucco, perchè sarian state più adornate assai di quello che sarebbe il retro di detta galleria [...]*" From Ireneo Affò, *Vita di Vespasiano Gonzaga Duca di Sabbioneta, e Trajetto, Marchese di Ostiano, Conte di Rodigo, Fondi ec.*, Parma, presso Filippo Carmignani, Stampatore, per Privilegio di S.A.R., 1780

4- Department of History of Architecture and Conservation Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Jan Pieper, Sabbioneta - The measuring shape of an ideal city, in Aachen University website

5 - From the article "*La colonna e la statua di Minerva di Sabbioneta*", Elisabetta Roffia, Academi Edu website



## THE MONASTERY OF THE SERVITE

On the left

**Fig 1:** plan of the property of the Santa Maria degli Angeli nuns, detail of the Catasto map of 1774

Today, the area located on the west side of the ancient castle appears as an empty space. Most of the land is a private property.

However, at the time of Vespasiano, it is known that there used to be a big monastery, disappeared in the nineteenth century.

Again, Sarzi Amadè managed to reconstruct the story of the monastery, by a meticulous archive research.

The monastery was a famous institution in Sabbioneta; it was a "cenobio di mantellate", an order of cloistered nuns. However, the official sources does not report detailed information about it, or, sometimes, the news about the monastery have been distorted. In fact, Amadè found many discrepancies: the blessed Toscana Gualtieri was never in the monastery; Filippo Benizzi was not the founder, neither Vespasiano Gonzaga. The founder was instead Ludovico Gonzaga.

The story of the monastery began when a young girl from Sabbioneta, daughter of Francesco de Bosi, inherited from her parents a little house, in which she decided to lead a solitary life, completely devoted to god.

This event was determinant, as it gave the idea of building a nuns monastery in the city. Soon, the building was done and the priest Clemente Lazzaroni, general vicar of the "Servi" order, was commissioned to invite Sister Maria Francesca dei Pittoni, Sister Orsolina, Sister Buonaventura and Sister Monica from Mantova.

The Sisters arrived in Sabbioneta in 1520, greeted

by the population with a big ceremony. They entered in the monastery with de Bosi's daughter and, soon, many other girls decided to join the cloister.

The sisters were Augustinian nuns "servite" from the Observance Congregation. However, they were quite autonomous, under the care of the general vicar. Their church was devoted to santa Maria degli Angeli.

When the convent was built, it was in "contrada Forcadizzo", south of Sabbioneta near Villa Pasquali.

When Vespasiano started to build the bastions of the city, he decided to move the convent inside the walls. He chose the area behind the castle, surrounded for two sides by the walls, near the southwest rampart, that walls called therefore Santa Maria.

The Via Giulia, the most important road in Sabbioneta's urban scheme, was larger and more refined on the east side; after Piazza D'Armi, it became narrower due to the presence on the right of the Theater (built approximately in 1590), to which all the later buildings have been aligned. This section of the street was commonly called "La strada delli suor de Santa Maria degli Angeli" because the monastery used to occupy almost all the length of such street.

In 1576, Isabella, daughter of the prince Vespasiano Gonzaga, was sent to the monastery too, but, betrothed to the prince Luigi Caraffa di Marra, she left the cloister in 1584.

In 1595, the Po river overflowed: the water entered inside the city wall and, when the water withdrew, one hundred and sixty houses and the monastery were destroyed.

The nuns were transferred to the Incononata convent and, in 1601, the works for the reconstruction of the monastery started.

When, in 1635, the Cardinal Pietro Campori, bishop of Cremona, went to visit the convent, where the nuns had finally returned, this was already in decay. There were slits and other anomalies everywhere. Two small wheels were used to pass objects; a large wheel, locked at night, in which a disjointed grille was opened, blocked the main door. Wooden boards closed two windows on the street, but they were damaged and an arm could have been put inside. In the confessions and orations room, the locks were so wide that a hand could have come in, and a window allowed people from the street to peek inside the building. The keys were more than one per door; for example, in the church a small window on Via Giulia had one inside and one outside; while the other window, the one of the altar, had not only a double grating, but was covered also by a newly arranged, well-linked frame. Towards the ditch of the castle, there was another window with grating to lighten the rooms; it was placed under the cliff, high from the ground almost four and a half meters. From the other two, close to this, but inferior, it was possible, avoiding surveillance, to speak with strangers. Here, moreover, a hole was found, which

the cardinal found already closed, whose function he could not understand. The walls, made of row earth, were not plastered and some bricks were missing because children used to steal them.

The cardinal, disappointed for such degradation and transgression, ordered to close all the holes immediately and to secure all the grilles. Moreover, he established punishments for nuns who had not fulfilled their obligations. He fixed the window on the confessional's street and the three ones on the grave with grilles and furniture; the keys were held only by the superiors.

In 1645, they started to enlarge the property to the east, between the ditch of the castle, called "da Porta Vecchia", and the district Giulia, where there was a haunt of houses and shops. In those years, the monastery reached the highest level of its importance. At that time, they erected the new church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, having a single bell tower. The external part was single nave, vaulted, illuminated by two oblong quadrangular windows, towards the street, and a third above the entrance door. On the right side of the altar, there was a window, on the left, the wheel, both linked to the monastery building; on the left, instead, there was the access to the sacristy, raised under the roof, as well as the church was raised above the street.

In the same years, they acquired a very ancient building, perhaps crumbling and fractioned, interposed between the Giulia district and the

ditch, and they dedicated it to the unmarried women. In fact, although the church divided it from the monastery, today it is still considered part of the complex.

Broken from an entrance hall, which was repeated on the first floor, a Virgin of Scagliola appears on the two-step staircase; some decorations echoing the letter M come out from the top of the arches; a marine hood is then stuck in a wall. Any room is bigger or smaller than necessary; the spaces have been organized following the principle of the special economy. A series of rooms with a flat ceiling, set towards the massive walls of the fortress, had been fit in the attic. That ended at noon with a small cell, protected by a grating and controlled by a slit in the wall. In the entrance hall at the ground floor, two doors are surmounted by wooden cymes, one of which has a profane head. In a corner of the first chamber on the left, a conduit, occluded from the earth, descending towards the castle, or the well, then buried, was discovered. From this room, through a door, currently walled up, it was possible to enter a room whose ceiling was lowered and, even today, the original ceiling is hidden. Then there is a whole variety of lowered arch niches, perhaps once occupied by wardrobes. The residence of the unmarried women, perhaps due to the low number of the pupils, was soon sold. In fact, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was already the property and residence of Agosta Sabbioni, a family of officers from Breda and buried in the Assunta.



However, even for the monasteries difficult times came: in 1783, Emperor Joseph II, inspired by the Enlightenment, released a dispatch to exhort the nuns to be more useful for the society; among the Sisters of Sabbioneta, a printed sheet was circulating:

*"Dovrà ciascuna Monaca Corista separatamente ed in iscritto, nel termine di giorni trenta, dichiarare se voglia portarsi ad un sistema di vivere tale che la rendita utile al Pubblico, nell'educare le Figlie di Nobile e di Civile condizione, ovvero (oppure) nel tenere scuole gratuite per le fanciulle della Classe del Popolo, o finalmente nell'insegnare a queste ultime alcuni speciali lavori donneschi, conducenti al progresso dell'Industria Nazionale relativamente alle Manifatture. Si avverte però, che basterà il destinare per ora un discreto numero delle Monache a questi impieghi... quantunque di fatto non siano obbligate tutte ad esercitarlo. Nel caso che la pluralità delle Monache si dichiarerà per l'attuale loro istituto protestando di non volerne alcun cambiamento o modificazione, i loro monasteri si sopprimeranno... 2 "*

This dispatch stated that the nuns had to take on the role of educators for the young girls of the city, for example, teaching them some artisanal work for the progress of the local manufacture industry; otherwise, the monastery would have been closed. The abbess of the monastery accepted therefore the condition imposed by the Austrian Emperor. Moreover, the authorities ordered the change of the current rule for the land management

with the modern system of the rent. However, the monastery entrances were very high at that time, so, such change reduced their benefits only slightly.

After the Austrian government, the French one came in Sabbioneta.

At that time, it is known that the monastery had to auction three of their properties.

Then, on seventh of July 1805, Luigi Fiorio, delegate of the prefecture of the department of the Mincio, in execution of the imperial decree emanated in that year, he went to the monastery for its suppression. Therefore, the nuns were assigned to the Augustinian monastery of Santa Maria della Consolazione in Bozzolo. The next morning, the expert Francesco Sarzi Braga, a Napoleonic correspondent, showed up at the monastery with a scribe, two witnesses and the abbess, in order to make the inventory of all the furniture.

Adjacent to the street were two parlors, one on the right, the other on the left of the entrance, crossed which it was possible to enter in the vestibule, decorated with four paintings: three saints, hell, and two representation of St. Cecilia. The first corridor brought into the inner parlor, adorned with an old framed saint Joachim, as well as five ruined little paintings. Passing through some rooms it was possible to reach a narrow chapel, located in an intimate place, in the south part of the convent. There were an altar, two paintings with a golden frame, two glazed niches with the Madonna and the crucifix, relics, which belonged entirely to

Mother Teresa Margherita Rizzoli. Here, there was also the food storage looking towards the castle, annihilated twenty years before. In a room in the rear, furnished with five paintings, one with the conception, the other with saints, there was also a spinet. There were two courtyards, one of service, the other, instead, was a cloister with porticos; on the back, there were the vegetable gardens, one of them in a small courtyard in the south. The service courtyard had a loggia connected to the kitchen, which, instead, was looking towards the second courtyard. From the kitchen, it was possible to enter in the refectory through a room adorned with a couple of small paintings. In the hall, which overlooked a courtyard, there were seven tables with drawers and a pulpit in walnut, while, on the walls, there were seven great representation of the passions and twelve other paintings. Immediately adjacent there was the old church, oriented towards the nearby Via Giulia. There were a walnut desk for books; two twin wardrobes in poplar, light blue, with rich religious vestments; another smaller, but with the same style and colour; then a picture of Our Lady of no value. From the service court, provided with three damp basements for wine and accessible by car from the public road, it was possible to enter in the secondary garden, from which a corridor led to the sacristy and then to the internal small church, provided with a choir of thirty-two seats. Apart from the silverware, its embellishment was due to the furnishings: the altarpiece, with Jesus, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene,



and St. John the Evangelist; seven medium-sized paintings with saints; the statue of the Virgin, on the altar, with nine paintings; the statues of Our Lady of the Rosary and of the Madonna del Rosario; finally an organ, estimated one thousand lire. The external church, accessible from Via Giulia, instead, is more sober: a high altar in gilded wood, canopy, two angels, two movable statues, two other altars, each with another movable statue, and, in terms of the picture, only two octagonal saints.

However, in 1805, the coenoby of Santa Maria della Consolazione in Bozzolo was also suppressed, and, by virtue of the decree of that year, the royal hand passed on the assets of the two Augustinian monasteries. In 1810, the complex of Santa Maria degli Angeli could not be rented because it was still occupied by the religious. However, the community was disintegrating over time and, between July and September 1807, all their agricultural possessions had been sold.

Of all the monasteries of Sabbioneta, this was the most unhappy: first it was divided between several renters, then, splits and demolitions have made it illegible in the geography of the town. For what concerns the church, it was divided into several properties and windows, doors, intruding floors and partitions were closed. They put there also a tavern. Currently, in the woodshed of Odero Lodi Rizzini it is possible to notice a beautiful ancient

ceiling.

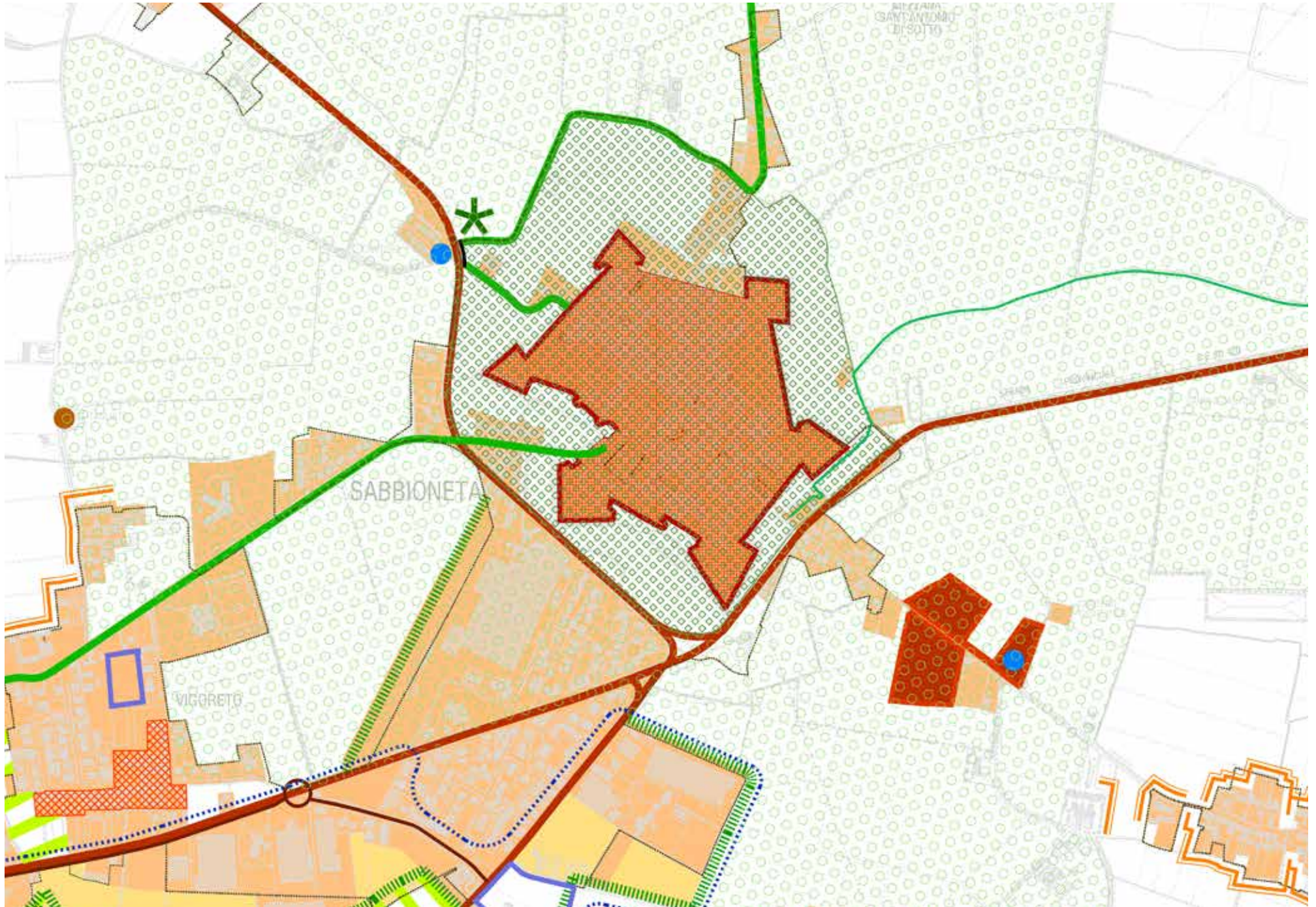
The fate of the cloister, whose site can be still seen from the road leading out to the castle square, is even worse. A fragment of a painting by Sister Francesca Maria da Sabbioneta, preserved by the archpriest, is the only witness of the tradition of the poor convent, buried by carelessness and by time.

The only real remain of such complex is the house of the unmarried women (later Casa Agosta Sabbioni), where, today, tailor Alfredo Federici, a man of other times, lives with attachment and respect.

NOTES:

1- In Luca Sarzi Amadè, *I Conventi di Sabbioneta e la vita di Nicolao Dondo*, Sabbioneta, Edizioni Associazione Pro Loco, 1982, pg. 45

2- In Luca Sarzi Amadè, *I Conventi di Sabbioneta e la vita di Nicolao Dondo*, Sabbioneta, Edizioni Associazione Pro Loco, 1982, pg. 53



## WEAKNESSES AND URBAN ISSUES, HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

On the left

**Fig 1:** extract from *Secondo Piano di Governo del Territorio, Comune di Sabbioneta, S.1 Strategie di Piano, 2014.*

The strategic plan has the purpose to enhance the territory outside the walls and to improve the touristic fruition inside the historical city. The blue spot are the new parking area set in order to remove the cars from the city center.

The purpose of this research and design project concerns the site on which the ancient Piazza d'Armi of Sabbioneta rises. This area, overlooked by Palazzo del Giardino and the Corridor Grande, is today "altered in appearance and size", as Carpeggiani affirms. In fact, following the demolition of the fortress in 1794, the square has been deprived of its historic borders. Moreover, the construction of a school building and a new street in the period of fascism has changed this place even more, altering it in continuity and original integrity, due to the inclusion of foreign elements.

Piazza D'Armi, as shown by the previous analyses, was a space with irregular boundaries, where the discontinuity between the façades of the buildings overlooking it represented its value. The imperfection of the design of the square and its dimensions were elements of uniqueness and, above all, they used to characterize its image in opposition to the Renaissance regularity of Piazza Ducale. The school building stands on the hypothetical east edge of the ancient walls of the castle, recasting its settlement. Its position, however, does not conform to the original structure of the square, in which the western limit was not in the castle wall, but in the irregular edge of the moat that surrounded it. The building, in this way, not only changes the original dimensional relationships of the square, extending a side more than twenty meters, but also changes its character, drawing a straight edge, whose façade is echoed

by that of the Gallery. However, what is most critical in this place is undoubtedly the presence of a driveway, via Giulia Gonzaga, also built in the first half of the twentieth century, which cuts the area of the square into two parts. The construction of this street is contemporary with the opening of two gates, one to the north and one to the south, in the walls of Sabbioneta. This act, which, at that time, was justified in the light of the modern demands of air circulation and vehicles, nowadays, appears as a real abomination of history. The vehicles currently enter Sabbioneta from the south gate and the square has assumed the function of a parking. In addition, the road divides Piazza D'Armi into two different areas on which non-coinciding symmetry axes have been highlighted. The area which the Gallery overlooks is characterized by an Italian garden, which emphasizes its central axis (remarked by the position of the Column at the centre of it); the area overlooked by the school also has a garden, whose axis does not match that of the Gallery. What results is a confused, amorphous space that has lost the monumental character it had in the past.

As the architect Guido Boroni Grazioli reminds, the injuries caused by the historical events that transformed Piazza D'Armi are not only concerned with the physical loss of the historical matter of the walls and the pradelle, but also with the loss of the perception of the urban dimension<sup>1</sup>. The road system built around the south-west road has transformed the old castle square in a new

gateway to the city, relegating the two sixteenth-century doors to passive "monuments". From today's Piazza d'Armi, thousands of visitors come in every year. They visit the monumental building of Sabbioneta, but they do not have the opportunity to understand the space of the city. In his article, the architect Boroni Grazioli reminds his disappointment when the tourists ask him where the historic centre of the city is.

The urban plans adopted since the seventies of the last century, including the long-awaited Detailed Plan for the Historic Center, have ignored this theme, focusing mainly on building management with the classification of buildings and the identification of the interventions allowed. Doing so, they have renounced to give back the city its urban identity. The task of the planning should be that of facing this issue, with respect toward the changes in viability and urbanization.

As mentioned previously, the current PGT of Sabbioneta is more careful toward this issue. In fact, the urban problem of, the areas in continuity with the walls, the site of the castle and Piazza D'Armi are unanimously recognized.

For what concern the walls and their enhancement, the municipality is planning to transform the nearer green areas in a linear park where a low path could allow the experience outside of the walled city, while a high path could allow a panoramic view from an internal circuit.

In particular, the plan for the green spaces is aimed to provide <sub>2</sub>:

*-The restoration and enhancement of the green spaces with historical and landscaping value which are connected with the ramparts and the walkable (or potentially walkable) areas near the urban walls.*

*-The enhancement and completion of the existing cycle and pedestrian paths.*

*-The recuperation of the historical image of the poplars plantations through the new planting of individuals trees, of the species Populus nigra or Populus alba, in correspondence of the ramparts and bastions slope, after the verification of the visual impact on the city skyline from the surrounding area.*

*-The enhancement of the agricultural areas.*

*-The requalification and reintegration of the row of trees*

*-The elimination of incongruous species of trees*

*-The requalification of the swamped moat with stagnant water and relative infesting vegetation.*

*-The relocation of the improper parking areas*

About this last point is important to mention the new big parking areas that the municipality is planning to design outside of the walls, in order that tourists could enter in the city through the ancient accesses of Sabbioneta (Fig 1).

In this way, the issue of the perception of the urban dimension, which Boroni Grazioli warned about, could be solved. Piazza D'Armi would not be the primary access to the city anymore. However, it is important that also such square acquired a new dimension, with respect to its historical space.

The municipality has a plan for Piazza D'Armi

too. However, the design that is proposed is not respectful of the original image of the square. The space still have no boundaries and no historical meaning.

The task that have to be achieved is to bring Piazza d'Armi back to its original importance, working on the shape of the square and on the enhancement of the sediment of the ancient Rocca, balancing the composition again. The question that arises is whether it is possible to intervene in such a context and which means have to be used in order to be able to tackle the issue. In the first place, it is necessary to remove the driveway, in order that the square became a pedestrian area. As already mentioned, the municipality of Sabbioneta has already planned to build a new car park outside the walls to the west, in order to free Piazza D'Armi from the circulation of vehicles. Secondly, it is necessary to develop a strategy that can tackle the various problems. Therefore, the following positions appear to be logical, even if contrasting:

1) The first solution concern the construction of a new straight building in front of the school, in order to define the western edge of Piazza D'Armi. The character of this new building will have to be a sort of contemporary reinterpretation of the Gallery, a sort of mirror image, in order to define clearly the perspective wings of the square. However, this proposal presents certain critical issues. In particular, by giving a regular geometry to the square, it is in contrast with the original character of irregularity of the place. Moreover,

working on the edge of the square, the ancient ruins of the fortress are completely excluded from the composition.

2) The second hypothesis focuses on the ideal reconstruction of the castle, shifting the centre of the composition. In this proposal, the school building would become part of a more complex volume, which, arising from the sediment of the fortress, would evoke the massive and monumental character now lost. This hypothesis, based on the idea of "completing" the site, also presents problems. These critical issues arise from the fact that the castle was completely destroyed and the various reconstructions, documented in the historical texts, are not sufficient to restore a historically valid and defined image. "Completing the site" would therefore imply various kinds of formalisms and historical inaccuracies.

These two positions, because of their issues, do not lead to define a clear path for an intervention. Even in an attempt to mediate between them, the result would be the same. Which strategy, then, is the best for this area?

If this one is the main architectural issue, there is another more practical question, i.e. which function should the new square have in the context of the contemporary Sabbioneta?

To answer to this last question, it is important to

refer to Piero Gazzola's "Sabbioneta: Proposte per la rinascita della Città", an essay where the author explains his ideas about the enhancement of the city.

He believes that the potential given by the tourism phenomenon can lead to greater economic advantages if compared to the potential of an industrialization process.

This is because, above the cultural aspect, encouraging tourism means profiting of the consumption linked to such phenomenon.

He suggests, therefore, transforming buildings and areas in cultural poles, with receptive spaces, public services, bars and restaurant. Moreover, he proposes to insert the city in programs of touristic development connected to other important touristic sites such as Mantova and Verona.

In this way, tourism will become an industry of goods and services.

The area of Piazza D'Armi and the site of the castle, as well as the other urban void of the city, therefore, can assume the role of new cultural poles for Sabbioneta and become the engine of a new cultural and economic development.

*"È urgente quindi che anche gli amministratori responsabili comprendano che una zona archeologica, un borgo storico, un paesaggio decantato sono beni economici fruttiferi, se capiti*

*in tempo e valutati con previdente intelligenza risultino in grado di esprimere un potenziale economico anche maggiore di quello prodotto da una artificiosa industrializzazione.*"<sup>3</sup>

#### NOTES:

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PART 3  
DESIGN PROJECT



On the left

**Fig 1:** Roof plan of the current state of the site, scale 1:1000

From panel 02:  
CURRENT STATE OF  
THE SITE  
Interventions of the  
XX century, scale  
1:500

The purpose of this design project, as already anticipated, is that of enhancing Piazza D'Armi and the site of the castle, underlining the anomaly of the school building in the definition of the square boundary and rebuilding the historical connections that the area use to have with the context, particularly with the walls.

In order to pursue this objective, the first gesture that was done consisted in redrawing the shape of the disappeared Rocca, understanding the measure of such element in the overall composition.

Without the castle, the entire site, from Piazza D'Armi until the area of the old monastery, loses its meaning. The school building, in fact, left a void behind it: his purpose was to create a new façade for the square without considering the waste green areas on the back that today are inaccessible.

Drawing the castle on his original position, the site start to acquire a meaning, a new balance between the dense urban pattern and the mass of the Rocca, connected with the walls.

However, it is not possible to recreate the original feeling: the old monastery totally disappeared, leaving a big void in the city. Therefore, the project should contemplate the enhancement of this area too, creating a new solution able to solve on one hand the problem of the boundary of the square and, on the other hand, the landscape issue.

Therefore, the second gesture was to find, from the context, new alignments able to reestablish an order between the old city and the new intervention.

The final step was to give to these lines a meaning, a theme. The idea is that of creating a system of walls and green platforms connected with the landscape and with and a new high path running along the walls. This idea is coherent with the plan of enhancement of the walls and the green areas that the municipality of Sabbioneta already projected.

The theme of the wall was chosen for two reasons. One is to create a system with the more characteristic element in the site, i.e. the ancient walls of Sabbioneta. The second reason is linked with the most important issue of the place, the absence of boundaries and definition of the spaces. The wall, in fact, is a linear element that divides, defines spaces and meanings. The wall can order open spaces defining paths or, on the other hand, it can enclose spaces defining specific areas. Therefore, the theme of the wall is also associated with the theme of the enclosure, "*il tema del recinto*".

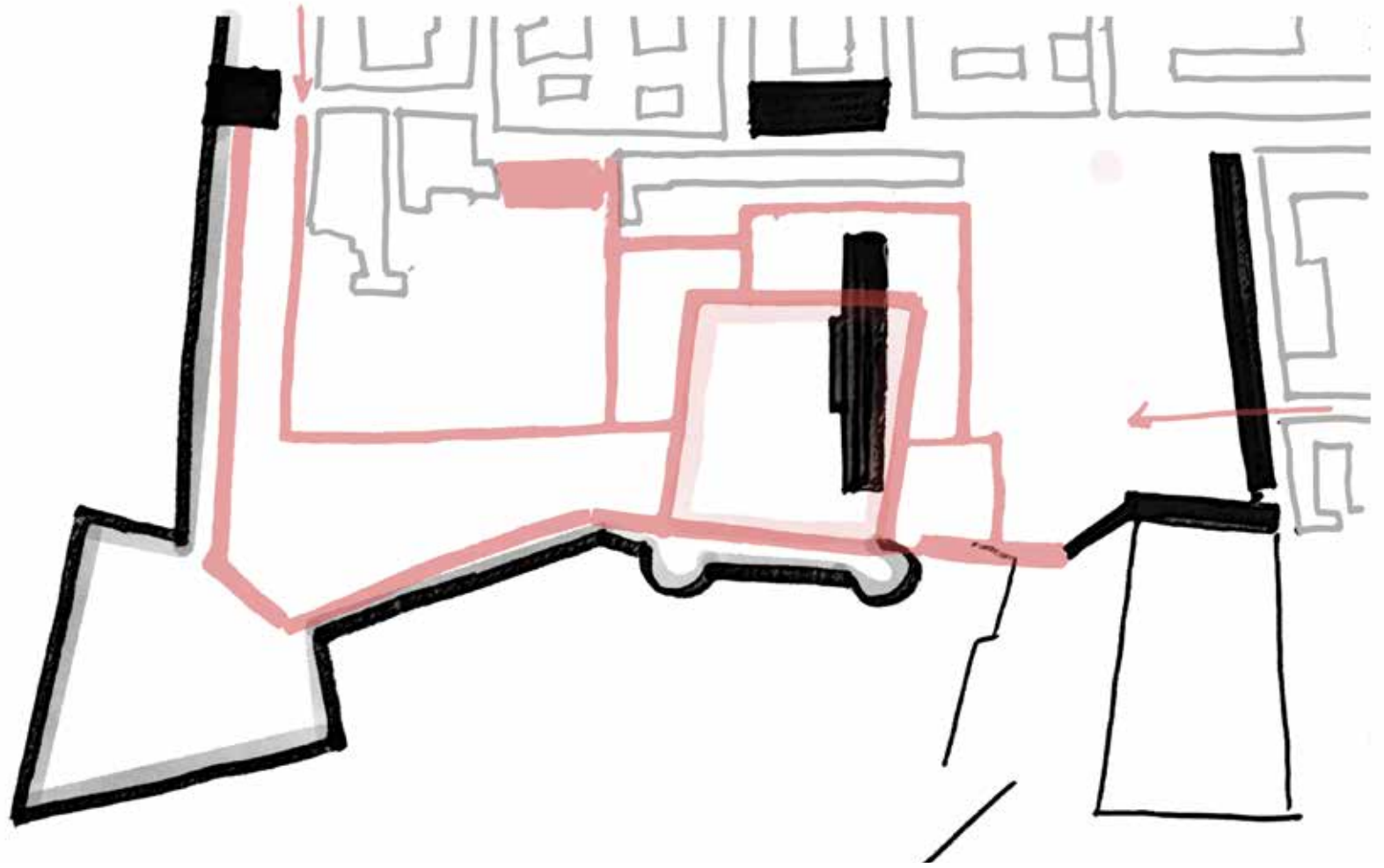


On the left

**Fig 2:**  
 Reconstruction  
 of Sabbioneta in  
 XVI century, scale  
 1:2000  
 From panel 01:  
 THE CITY AND THE  
 ROCCA  
 Ideal reconstruction  
 of the of  
 Sabbioneta in  
 XVI century, scale  
 1:1000

On the right

**Fig 3:** Concept plan,  
 system of platforms  
 and walls





On the left

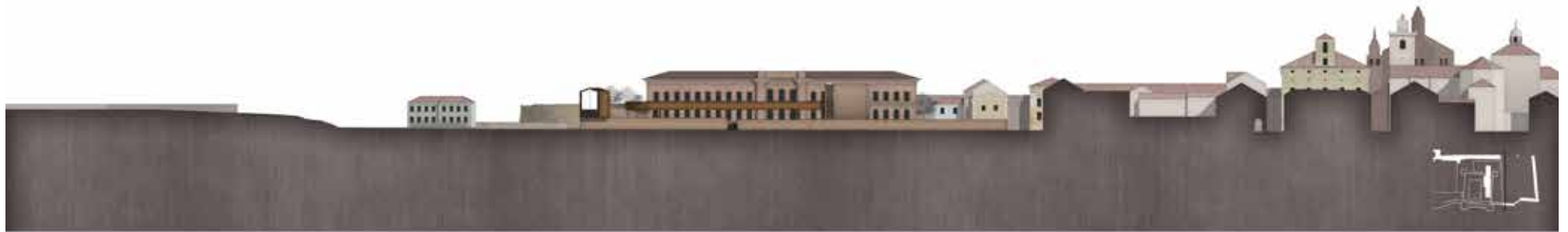
**Fig 1:** Masterplan of the project, quote 31m, scale 1:1850  
From panel 03 THE MASTERPLAN plan and sections scale 1:500

The themes that have been introduced in the definition of the concept plan were developed in the Masterplan. The elements acquire a dimensional and material characterization. The linear elements in the previous drawings become brick walls of 50 and 20 cm. The thick walls defines spaces, the area of the castle, the boundary of Piazza D'Armi, while the thin walls define paths and connection with the landscape.

The walls and platforms logic characterize the landscape design on the area of the ancient monastery, then, moving on the castle's site, the walls define the enclosure of the ancient Rocca where, now, a semi-hypogeum volume stand. This volume has a courtyard inside that reminds the forms of a castle, that "fortified enclosure" where the volumes are built for aggregation around the boundary and form one or more courtyard in the middle. Moreover, the ancient missing towers of the castle are reminded, in a simplified form, by two new volumes containing the vertical distribution. This hypogeum building is connected with the high path running along the walls and, in the underground, with the school volume. Moving toward east it is possible to see two wooden bridges connection. The first one connects the highest tower to the path of the walls; the second one links the path of the walls to the Corridor Piccolo, in order to re-establish the ancient connection between the volume of the Rocca and all the buildings facing Piazza D'Armi. Those two bridges are covered in wood, in order to

remind the old high passages that characterized Sabbioneta in the past, the passages of the prince. While the first bridge connection is an uncovered passage, the second bridge is a wider volume, covered with a pitched roof, in order to better integrate with the other building. The function of the latter volume is also to close the south side of the square. Today, in fact, we have not the perception of being in square because this space have no clear boundaries. Therefore, this volume becomes a new background for Piazza D'Armi.

As mentioned before, the new parking that is going to be built near Porta Vittoria, will change the touristic access of the city. In this way, Piazza D'Armi will be no more the first place we meet entering in Sabbioneta, but, as it was in the past, it will become again a place that need to be discovered venturing into the narrow streets of the city. The system of walls and platforms that organize the project arrives until the boundary of Piazza D'Armi. In front of the school, there is now a green area whose level have been raised in order to become a high platform to enjoy the view of the square and the Gallery and, secondly, to allow the entrance in the building for the disable people. The main access to this place is set, more or less, where there was the ancient drawbridge access to the castle and, moreover, it is in correspondence with the opposite street that lead to Piazza D'Armi. Finally, the urban void near Casa Agosta Sabbioni will be filled with a new volume with the aim of sewing the urban building curtain.



SECTIONS OF PIAZZA D'ARMI

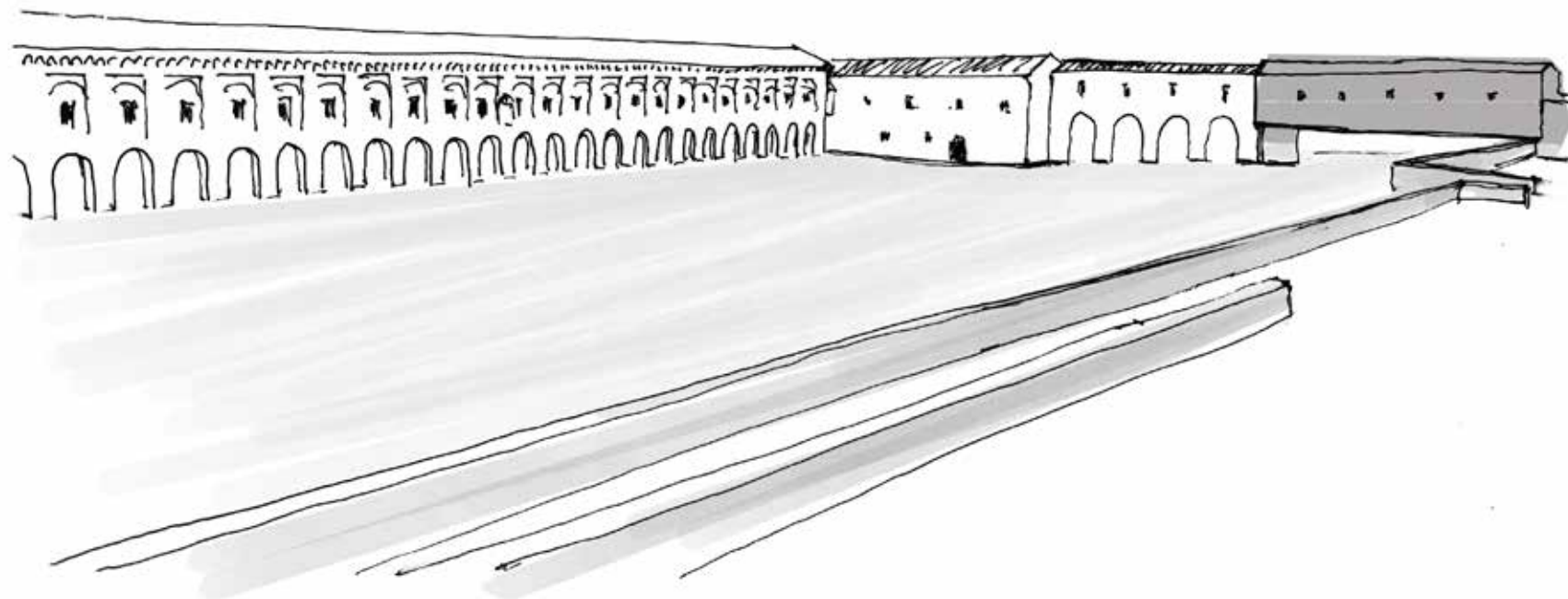


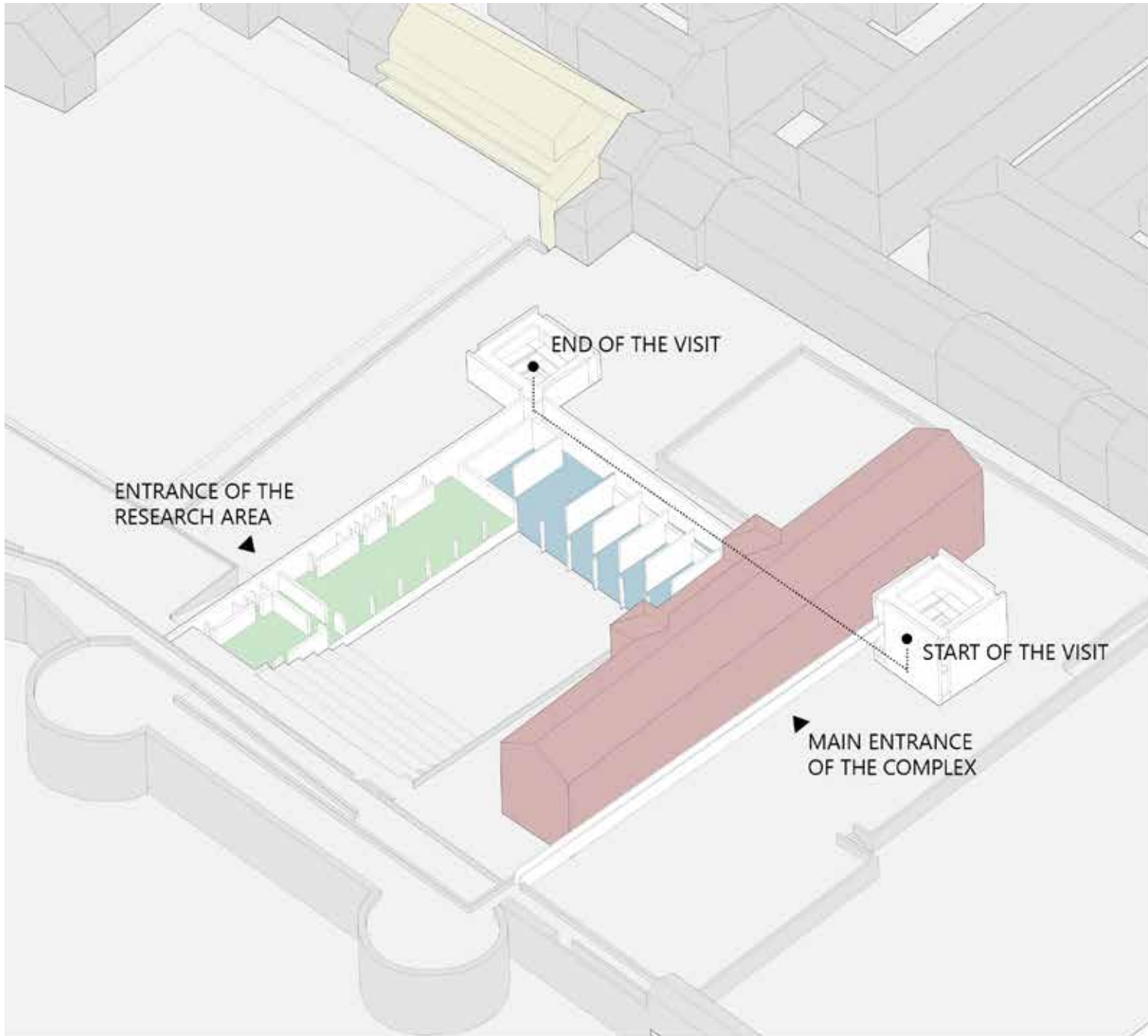
On the left

**Fig 2:** Landscape sections, scale 1:1850  
From panel 03 THE MASTERPLAN  
plan and sections scale 1:500

On the right

**Fig 3:** Sketch of Piazza D'Armi





**FUNCTIONAL PROGRAM:**

■ Guesthouse

■ Public services:  
 -library  
 -multimedial room  
 -auditorium  
 - literary coffee

■ Museum

■ Laboratories

## FUNCTIONAL PROGRAM AND PATH OF THE MUSEUM

On the left

**Fig 1:** Functional program

After describing the general features of the design, it is important to explain the functional program. The idea is to create a big cultural pole, where the school building change its function and become part of a complex for the purpose of studying and musealizing the remains of the Rocca.

The school building now host public services such as an auditorium, a bar and a big library where all the materials and the documentation about Sabbioneta and its Rocca are available for researchers and citizen.

The underground level of the school building is connected with the new semi-hypogeum volume hosting the museum of the Rocca and a center of research for the restoration and preservation of the archaeological remains of the castle.

The access to this research area is different from that of the museum. Scholars and researchers enter from the rear of the museum, where a path, leading to Via Vespasiano, pass by the guesthouse, i.e. that volume set up to sew the building curtain near Casa Agosta Sabbioni.

The wooden volume connecting with the Corridor Piccolo host some exhibition too as an anticipation of the visit of Palazzo Giardino and the gallery.

The courtyard in the middle of the castle site can host open-air exhibition and events.

The path along the walls until the old towers, the courtyard, the auditorium, the bar and the library are opened to the public without any ticket, while the museum and the two bridges connection visit are paid touristic attraction. Two turnstiles

divide the free area from the not free one in correspondence of the ramps to reach the old towers viewpoint.

The visit to this complex start from Piazza D'Armi. The visitor, through the ramp or the stairs, reach the entrance of the ex-school building. After buying the ticket, the visitor proceeds toward the first high tower of the vertical connection (or take the elevator) to go down at the underground.

There, a descending ramp bring the visitor down to the museum level, characterized by equal simple rooms. The visit ends in the second tower, the lower one, where the visitor will take again a ramp to go up and get off in the open air space in the back of the school.



On the left

**Fig 1:** Plan of Piazza D'Armi, quote 26m, scale 1:800  
From panel 04: THE GROUND LEVEL plan and sections scale 1:200 and 05: PIAZZA D'ARMI plan and sections scale 1:200

Piazza D'Armi needs to acquire again its urban dimension. The first intervention necessary to re-establish the role of the square in the city is the displacement of the Colonna di Pallade in its original position, in order to sign the axis of the roman cardo of the city again.

The second step, as already anticipated, is to give a boundary to this place. At the time of Vespasiano, the limit of the square was the ditch that surrounded the castle. The design proposal try to respect that irregular ancient boundary, simplifying the shape that the historical maps attest.

A high brick wall, dived in two by the passage to enter the museum, run along the square changing its height: the northern part of the wall is 1.1m toward the cultural complex and 3 m toward the square, while the southern part of the wall is 1.5 toward the cultural complex and 3.5 m toward the square. The wooden bridge connection stand on the latter high wall, such as to underline the relationship between the two elements. The wooden bridge volume, the new background of the square stand over heavy masonry elements. A huge steel beam, 1.2 m, carries the load of the wooden structure.

The waste area of Piazza D'Armi reach its lowest height in the drainage channel in the middle of it, while towards the complex its height is 23 m on the level of the sea and 22,8 m towards the Gallery. The pavement of the square is in two kinds of porphyry, a lighter one for the areas facing Palazzo Giardino, the entrance of the complex

and the projection of the central column, while a darker one is used for the rest of the area. Via Rodolfini and Via Dondi, getting directly to the square, suggest the direction of the opposite light pavements. This change of color underline a different hierarchy in the ground: the lighter areas are a sort of "churchyard" for the elements that are underlined (the column, the entrance and the villa). The Gallery, instead, gives the rule for the scheme of the stones: the porphyry stones are set in lines according to the projection of the Gallery's pillars. A fine white porphyry line dives the long rectangle of the pavement.

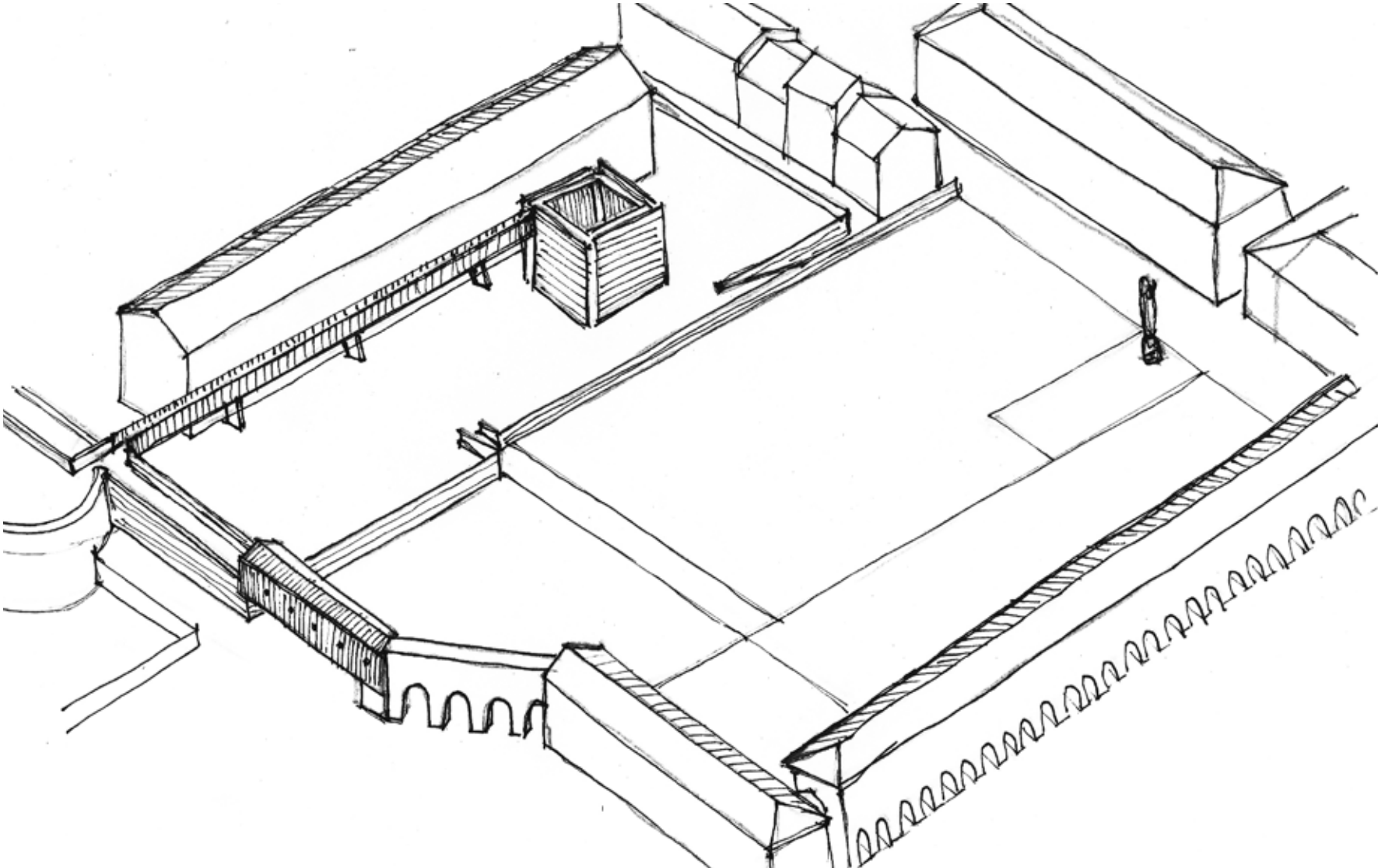


On the left

**Fig 2:** Sections, scale 1:800  
From panel 04: THE GROUND LEVEL plan and sections scale 1:200 and 05: PIAZZA D'ARMI plan and sections scale 1:200

On the right

**Fig 3:** Skech of Piazza D'Armi







# THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE CULTURAL COMPLEX

On the left

**Fig 1:** Plan of the ground floor, quote 26m, scale 1:600  
From panel 04: THE GROUND LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200

The ground floor of the ex-school building now hosts the big hall for tickets, a public auditorium for conferences and a literary coffee.

The level of the ground is 25,5 m on the level of the sea, while the level of the garden in front of the building is 25 m. Therefore, a ramp lead to the entrance of the building where a big hall welcomes the visitors.

The old toilets of the building were obsolescent, so they have been removed and new service volumes have been added with the logic of boxes in a box. The existing structure have been preserved and strengthened, while the lateral walls have been demolished to create a more open space.

The main distribution corridor of the building have been kept as the main one, while a smaller corridor on the opposite side works as a service passage.

Two new elevators have been added to allow disable people to move between the levels of the complex. They have been put in the volumes of the existing stairs.

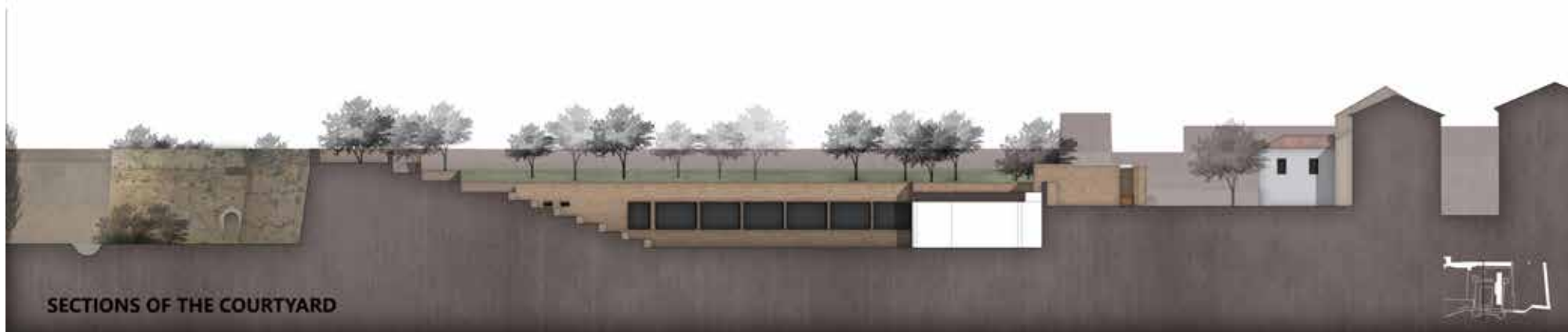
The visitors, once they have entered, have the possibility of turning left and go toward the auditorium, or to turn right and go to the museum or the literary coffee.

The auditorium has 56 places and it host a stage lifted area, a changing room, the projection room and a service toilet.

The literary coffee is a free space where there is the possibility of buying books and magazines while having a coffee at the bar. There is a wide room with tables and libraries, a small kitchen for

the bar and a service toilet.

To enter the museum the main way is to take the descending ramps on the high tower, which bring the visitors down to the underground. The existing stairs of the building becomes secondary stairs for staff.

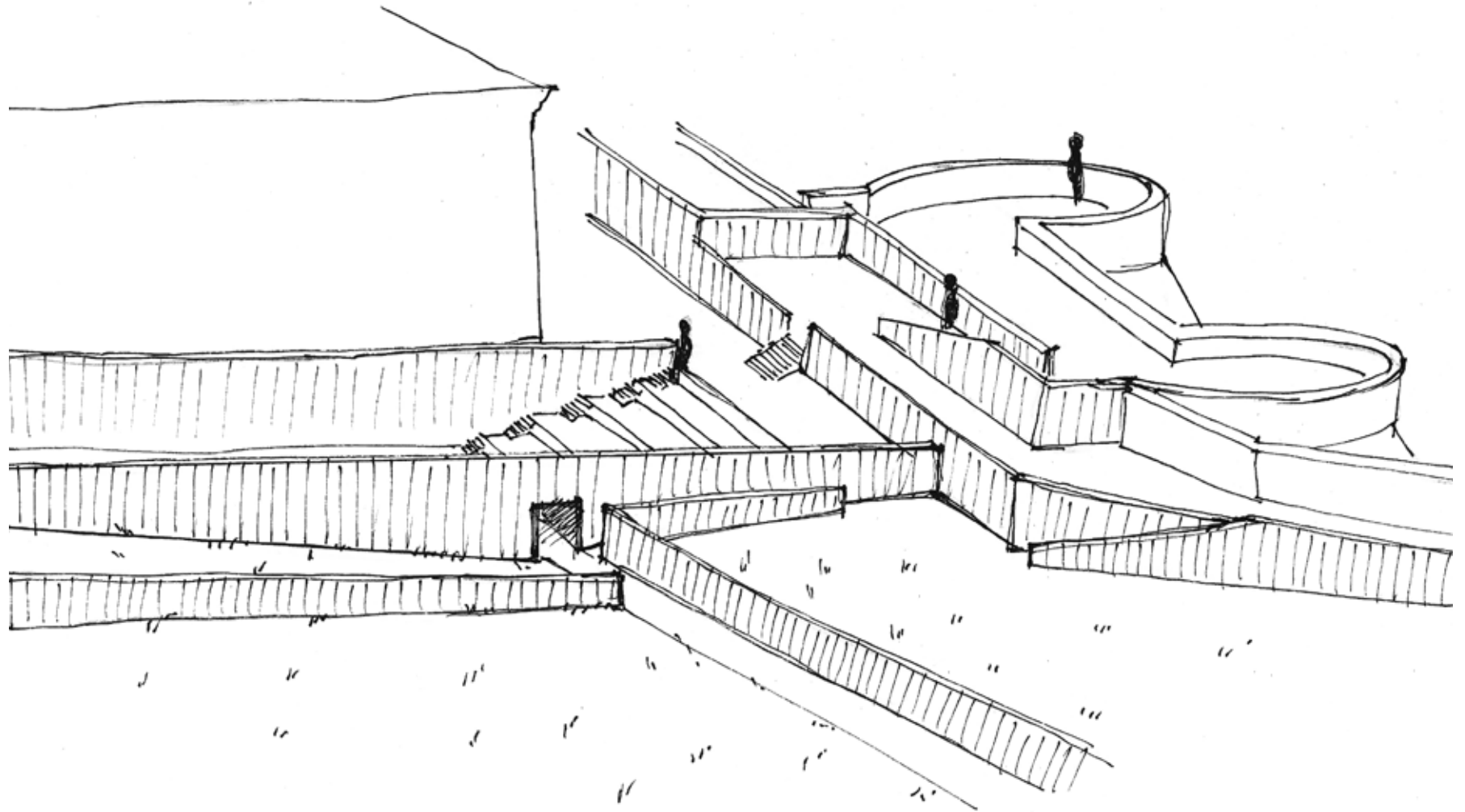


On the left

**Fig 2:** Sections,  
scale 1:800  
From panel 06: THE  
NOBLE LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200

On the right

**Fig 3:** Skech of  
the entrance of the  
research centre





## THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE CULTURAL COMPLEX

On the left

**Fig 1:** Plan of the first floor, quote 31m, scale 1:600  
From panel 06: THE NOBLE LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200

The upper floor of the ex-school building preserves the same structure and distribution scheme of the lower level.

The toilets are set in the same position, as well as the reception and the little office behind it.

This floor host the library and multimedia room for the research and documentation about the city of Sabbioneta and the Rocca.

The hope for the city is that of a re-organization of the municipal archive in order to systemize the information regarding the knowledge of the city.

The part of the library is the one in the northern side. Long tables alternating long libraries characterize it.

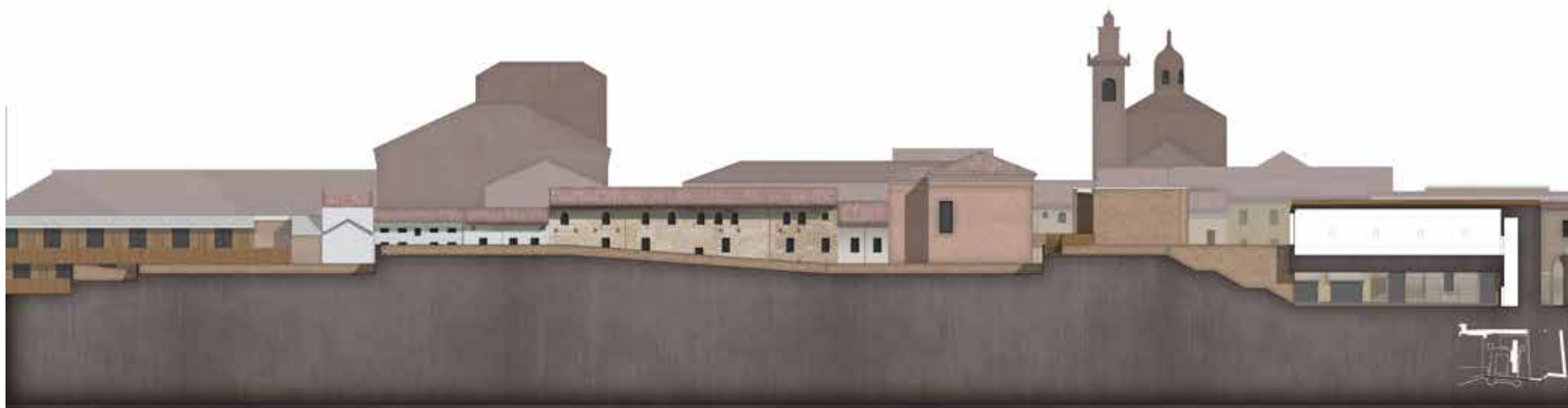
The part of the multimedia room is set on the opposite side. It is characterized by many desks with computer and smaller libraries.

Compared to the space of lower floor, this level is more free, having only two service boxes.

It is possible to reach this level through the old stairs but also from the tower. At this level, the tower connects with the wooden bridge passage that, descending slowly, it is linked to the path along the walls. When the visitor arrive on this passage the parapet is low, 1.1 m. Moving on, the parapet start to raise, keeping the same height in the façade.

This passage is hold by three strong steel plates setted in order to sign four main passages: the passage to go in the green garden behind the school, the passage to enter in the complex and two resulting spaces.

The idea, however, is that of the flexibility. In the future there will be still the possibility of removing such passage as well as the steel structure that hold it.



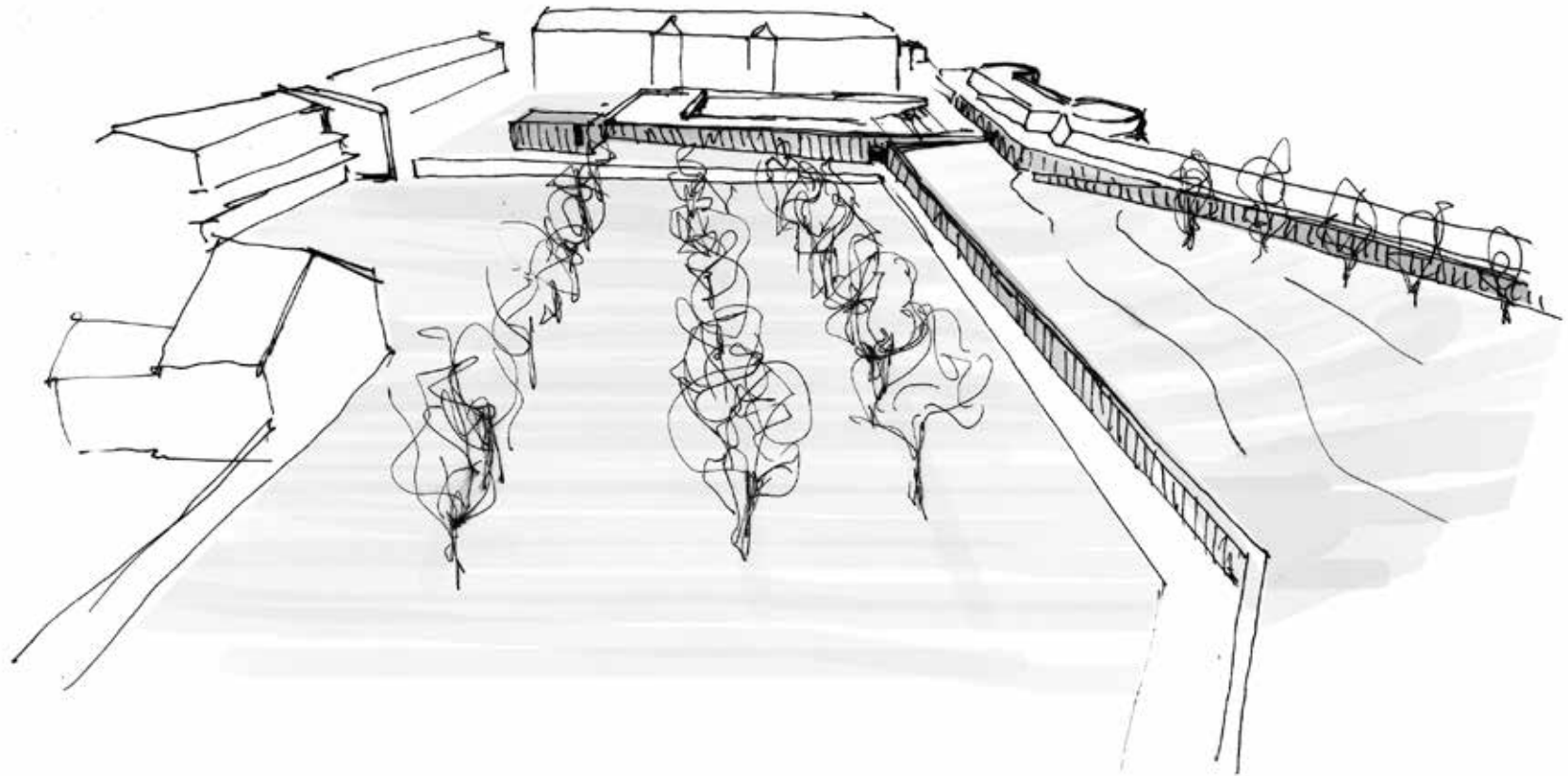
SECTIONS OF THE CONNECTION ELEMENTS

On the left

**Fig 2:** Sections,  
scale 1:800  
From panel 08: THE  
ROOF LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200

On the right

**Fig 3:** Skech of the  
landscape







On the left

**Fig 1:** Plan of the underground floor, quote 22,5m, scale 1:600  
From panel 07: THE UNDERGROUND LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200

Descending through the ramps of the tower, the visitor reach the underground level of the school. This floor was a technical and service floor and did not host schoolrooms; in fact, the total height of the floor is not much, only 2.7m. Therefore, this floor will not be used for the permanent exhibition of the museum but it can host, during certain periods, temporary exhibitions.

The real exhibition of the museum start descending another ramp which bring the visitor at the level of 19m, which is the same level of the courtyard which the museum is facing.

Once the visitor have reached that level, he can enter the rooms of the museum.

On the right, he will find a small room for projections and videos.

On the left, he will start the experience in the seven little rooms of the exhibition. There will be exposed model of the Rocca, historical maps and reconstruction, work of art of local artists and so on, in order to enhance the heritage of Sabbioneta. There is a service space at the end of the museum. Reached this point, the visitor can turn and finish the visit through the second tower.

The museum is also connected with the research and restoration centre that, however, it is on a different level (21m), that is why the need of a ramp.

The scholars and researcher have the possibility to enter in the museum through a private passage near the lower tower.

The research centre has a private access from west.

It is divided in two main spaces. The first is a bright space for restoration and lining, characterized by big tables and big openings toward the courtyard. The second space, that is darker, is a flexible space that can be used as dark room for photo development or as a projection and video room in case of some conferences.

From the courtyard, which is on a different level, it is possible to see the work of the restorers.

The access for this area is linked to a passage that lead to the guesthouse. In fact, the idea is that the researchers can book a room in the guesthouse and then have a direct access to the laboratories.

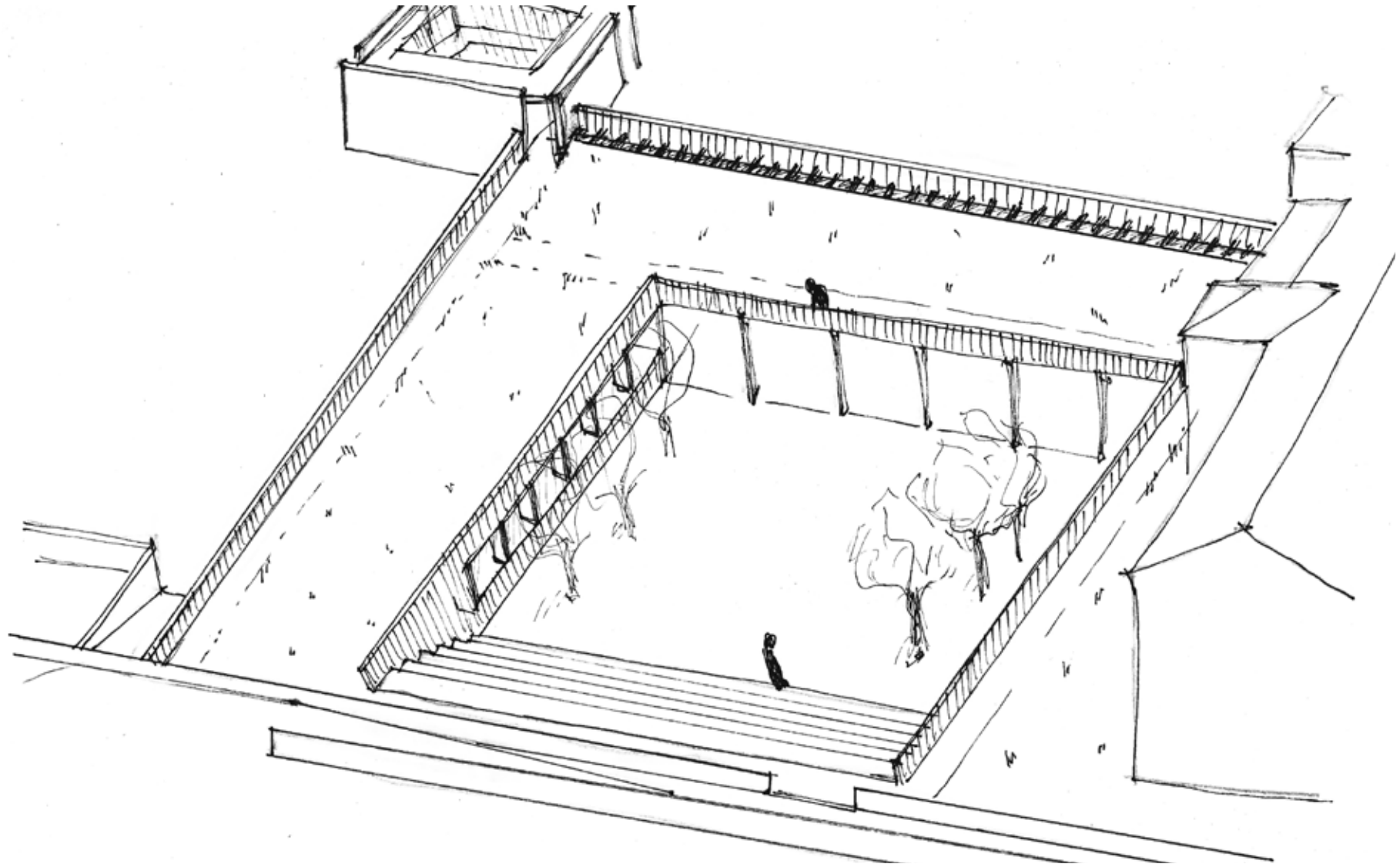


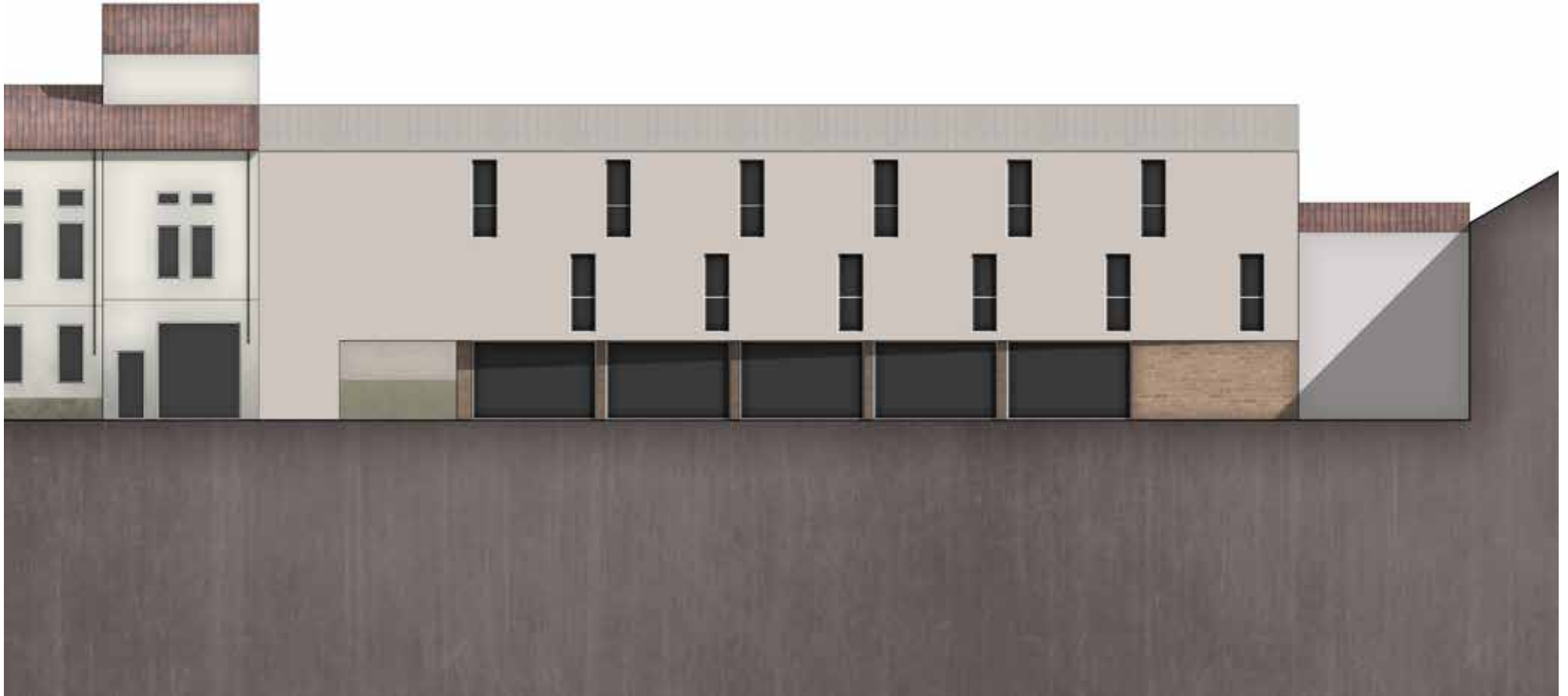
On the left

**Fig 2:** Sections,  
scale 1:600  
From panel 07: THE  
UNDERGROUND  
LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200

On the right

**Fig 3:** Skech of the  
courtyard





On the left

**Fig 1:** Façade on the street of the guest house, scale 1:200  
From panel 08: THE ROOF LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200

The guesthouse is a three floor and twelve-room residence thought for researchers that come from far, but also tourist.

The building is set horizontally along Via Vespasiano in order to sew the urban building block.

There is a gap between the boundary line of the adjacent building: the upper part of the façade on the street, so, is inclined in order to sew this gap, while, on the ground floor, the building assume a more regular shape in line with the western building.

The ground floor of the building is opened in correspondence of the passage that lead to the research centre. This gap divides the building functionally: on one side, there are stairs and elevator, on the other side the rest of the building. At the ground floor, there is the reception and a bar. This floor is characterized by wide opening alternating wooden pillars. The toilets volume is the only one that is not transparent; it is covered in wood and defines the western part of the façade. On the two upper floors, there are the rooms. These floors are cut by a gap in correspondence of the lower passage to emphasize that path.

The distribution is that of a gallery building, where the gallery is wide and look towards the park. It is a space of social interaction, in fact, the kitchens of the rooms are completely transparent and are set towards it, in order that there is the possibility to open the glass and create a unique space with the gallery.

The apartments have a small kitchen, a toilet

and a bedroom. The south façade is totally opened while the north façade is characterized by smaller windows on the street. The back façade is characterized by glass and wooden panels, while the north façade, the slab of the gallery and the stairs and elevator volume are covered in plaster. The roof of the building is pitched and covered in metal sheet. The top of the roof is aligned with the east building's roof, in order to create a continuity with the context.

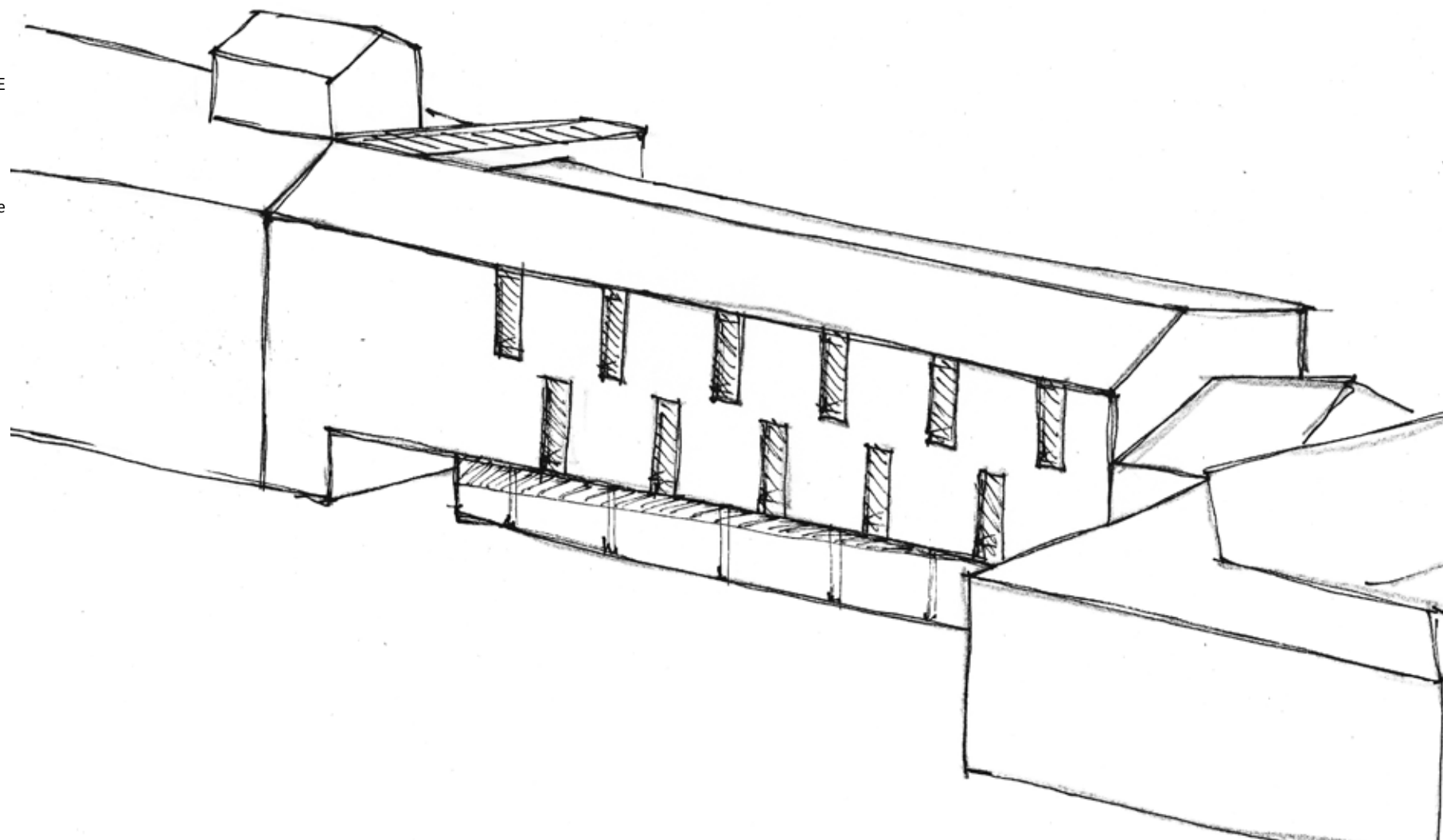
The continuity is also emphasized by the fact that the façade on the street is more regular and in accordance with the city's rule, while the opposite façade is more fragmented and opened toward the park.

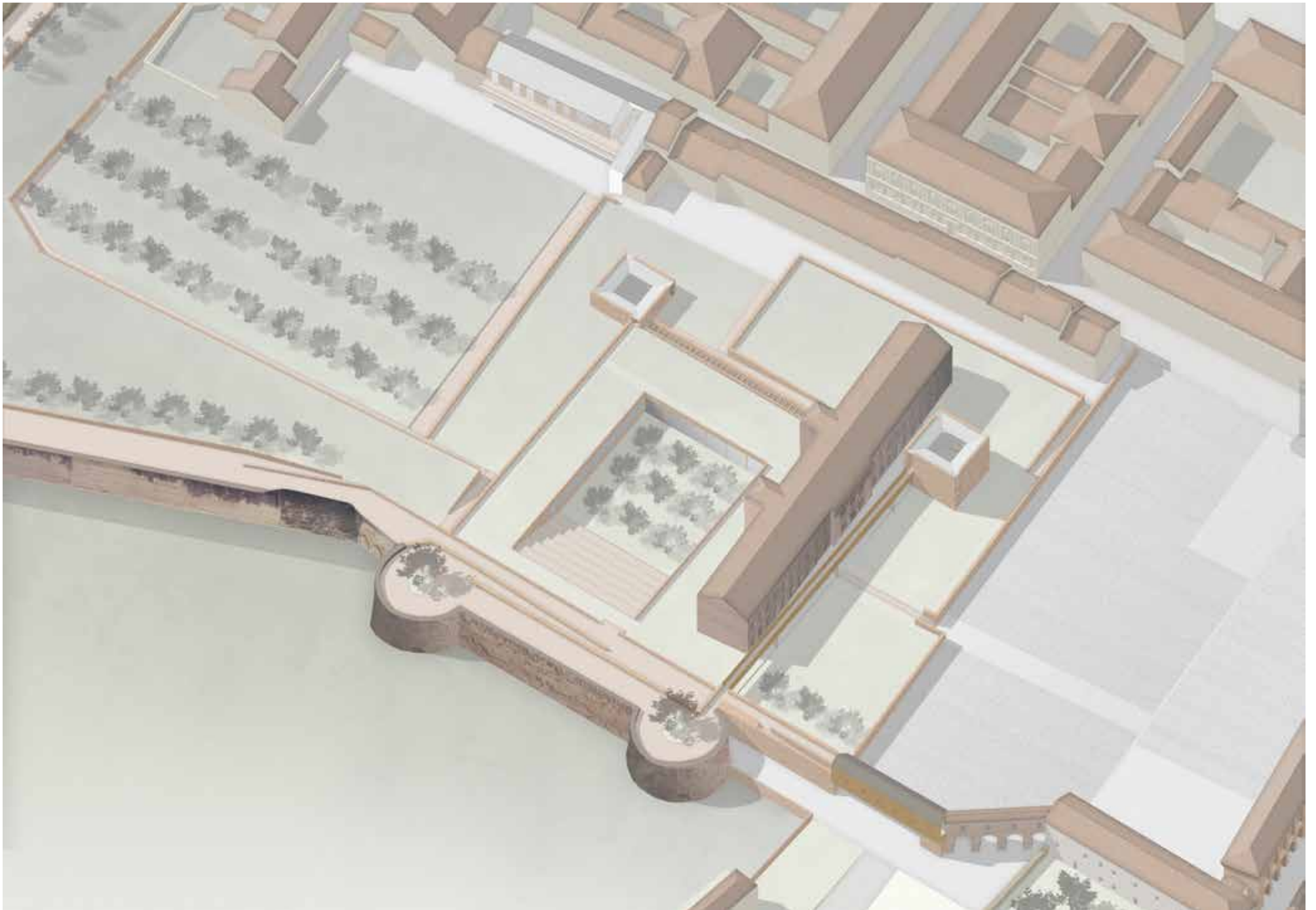


On the left

**Fig 2:** Façade on  
the park of the  
guesthouse, scale  
1:200  
From panel 04: THE  
GROUND LEVEL  
plan and sections  
scale 1:200  
On the right

**Fig 3:** Skech of the  
guesthouse







On the left

**Fig 1:** Axonometry of the project  
From panel 10: VIEWS  
axonometry and sketches

The landscape is organized in terraces with different height, defined by brick walls and ramps that lead to the different levels.

The lowest level is the courtyard of the museum, 19m; then there are the ground floor of the guesthouse and the passage leading to the research centre, 22 m; a terrace of 24,5m; the green roof of the museum of 25,5m and, finally, the high path of the walls, 27m in the lower part and 29m in the highest.

The idea is that the section of the complex grow from the ground emphasizing first the area where, in the past, there was the ditch and, then, the site of the ancient castle.

The ground facing the ancient walls have been raised from 25m to 27-29 m in order to allow the people to have a complete view on the landscape outside the city.

The terraces system goes on also in the western areas (where there was the ancient monastery) defining different green areas that will be opened to the public and become a green park for the city. The path along the walls cannot be continuous of course. There are different ramps to go down and up again in order that the entire city can be surrounded by this system of paths at different levels.

The paths in the park are made in wood, while the parapet are in bricks.

The trees are set in lines and emphasize the path along the ancient walls. The only exceptions are the trees in the museum courtyards and those in

the monastery site. In fact, these trees, instead of underlining a line, they underline an area, giving a particular atmosphere to the space.

The ancient towers are the highest point in the park. from there it is possible to enjoy the best view.



On the left

**Fig 1:** Detail of the tower scale 1:80  
From panel 09: THE TOWERS  
detail scale 1:20 and 1:100

The starting and ending points of the museum visit are the two brick towers.

This elements contain the ramps that allow to move vertically between levels.

Both of the towers are covered in bricks and have a concrete supporting structure. They are cold spaces, with a big opened skylight on top and wide vertical cut along the walls.

The roof is built as an "impluvium". The rainwater rainwater is collected in an underground cistern, so that it can be reused.

The ramps inside are made of wood.

The detail analyses the highest tower and its structure.

- 1- Rainwater drainage (doccione)
- 2- Metal profile to cover the eaves
- 3- Waterproof membrane
- 4- Eaves
- 5- Reinforced concrete beam 20x20 cm
- 6- Roof covering in metal sheet
- 7- Wooden layer on which the covering lay
- 8- Wooden structure to support the covering
- 9- Inclined mortar finishing in concrete
- 10- Anti vapor membrane
- 11- Reinforced concrete cantilevered structure
- 12- Plaster
- 13- Flashing in stone (scossalina)
- 14- C steel profile to support the stone finishing
- 15- Wooden support for the flashing
- 16- Lightened masonry block 35x25x19 cm
- 17- Roof reinforced concrete beam 20x33 cm

- 18- Brick coating, thickness 2 cm
- 19- Mortar layer
- 20- Wall reinforced concrete structure
- 21- Metal bracket (staffa)
- 22- Air gap
- 23- Full bricks facing (ventilated wall)
- 24- Wooden handrail
- 25- Wooden ramp flooring
- 26- Concrete screed (massetto)
- 27- Clay ground (terra battuta)
- 28- Gravel
- 29- Concrete cistern for rainwater collection
- 30- Pipe to drain the rainwater
- 31- Metal grid
- 32- Cotto flooring
- 33- Fondation mortar
- 34- Footings fondation



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# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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