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## Urban and Architectural Design of the *Piazza del Governo* in Enna

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### 1 ABSTRACT

The present essay deals with the urban space of *Piazza del Governo* in Enna, a town located in the center of Sicily. This square is a work projected and realized in 1935 by the palermitan architect Salvatore Caronia Roberti. This area is a wide space representative of the 1930s fascist regime: the square would worthily hold the public headquarters of the politic-institutional and economic-financial power.

The planimetric compositive layout is assigned to geometric rigor. The wide urban empty space does not erase or destroy the memory of places, on the contrary the high tower of the *Palazzo del Governo* fits well in the historic skyline. The buildings overlooking the square, most realized ex-novo, show the temper of monumentality and representativeness that are called to accomplish.

Our investigation started by analyzing the historical documents preserved at the Historic Archive of the city of Enna (project drawings, letters, historical images) to better understand why some decisions have been taken.

The research used the tools of Survey and Representation to better understand the shape and the measure, the dimensional ratios both at the urban and at the architectural scale.

To achieve that we have carried out an integrated survey (direct, photogrammetric, 3d laser scanning) in order to acquire a whole set of information essential to describe, document and appreciate all the features of these urban space and buildings.

The final result represents the historical memory up to date of the whole urban space and it allows any academics to investigate more about the project: the initial decisions, the conservation state, the possible and more coherent interventions of maintenance and preservation.

### 2 GLOBAL DESIGN AND PRESERVATION OF ORIGINAL CHARACTERS

Today the term Design includes the meaning of creation of products according to mass production principles, in which the aesthetic value and minimalism combine with the economic value and that of consolidated identity. It involves the design of ‘new things’, of new material, conceptual and behavioural elements – from mass-produced objects for industry to packaging (industrial and product design), to advertising as a communication strategy, to exhibitions, to fashion and accessories (interior and fashion design), to the creation of web-sites (web design) and objects meant for solidarity (love design). It is, thus, a creative process aimed at all areas of industry, that is, global design for the global user. It is the ability to design objects, environments, lifestyles which are culturally significant by combining the ‘new’ with the ‘necessary’ and the ‘beautiful’. Global Design expresses present multi-ethnicity through modernity, by avoiding standardisation and by passing on critically the characters of identity. It is important “not to lose the past, but neither the future” (Borges).<sup>1</sup>

With these characteristics, design becomes, both in architecture and urban projects, a process which, by analysing and synthesising what already exists, makes it possible to move from knowledge to the carrying out of a project, through the use of ‘signs’ which have to be modernised in order to build new identities. Knowledge becomes, in fact, a part of the process of modification of the urban context and its architecture in harmony with history, with local traditions and unique characteristics, not just an act of transformation.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are ours.

Knowledge based on critical interpretation by retracing the historical development of the constructions and of the places, from their conception to their transformation over time, to their present conditions. In this way it is possible to use innovative methods of re-creation: by re-creating places, functions, contexts and constructions which produce new behaviours, new impressions with which the citizen can identify, as well as, at the same time, promoting new economies.

Thus, the systematic analysis and consequent understanding of reality and of the immaterial, intangible values (traditions, culture, views on life) result in value judgments and strategic solutions. Understanding is an essential element in the event of actions for the conservation of cultural heritage, for the active preservation of the territory and for the transformation of the cities.

It is, therefore, possible to carry out projects of conservation in an existing city by using strategies of development with the help of new computer technologies in order to analyse reality as well as documenting both the 'material' and the 'immaterial'. Computer technologies which are able to transform acquired data through effective automatic processing, as well as representing information as effective cognitive processes through fast and dynamic connections.

This study is a detailed analysis of the urban context and the architecture which defines *Piazza del Governo* in Enna, a city lying in the centre of Sicily. It was designed and carried out in 1935, during the fascist regime, by Salvatore Caronia Roberti, an architect from Palermo and a cultivated professional who, with creativity, presented the architecture of the Regime by drawing on the values of the classical period as well as on the original characteristics of the city. The area being analysed is a large enclosed space representative of the political ideology of the 1930s which had to house, in suitable style, the public buildings of institutional and financial power. The solution which was adopted is, in fact, a combination of urban and architectural design with a constant search for underlying modular relationships, scenographic geometries of the hierarchically organised spaces, eurythmies or hidden symmetries, the processing of the unique characteristics and values of the place which represents the fascist ideology. Order, geometrical rigour and rational turreted elements characterise the place by lending it a strong symbolic-emotional cultural content, investing in it a representative identity and a new sense of nineteenth-century monumentality.

The overall creative quality of the project of *Piazza del Governo* is, de facto, an innovative act which draws on its consolidated historical identity, by finding connections and values, by using the memory of the past as a force capable of producing innovation. "The mark of the past – as Calvino said – is the project of the future".

This research was carried out in a homogeneous manner by using the tools of Survey and Representation in order to understand form, dimensions and dimensional relationships on an urban and architectonic scale.

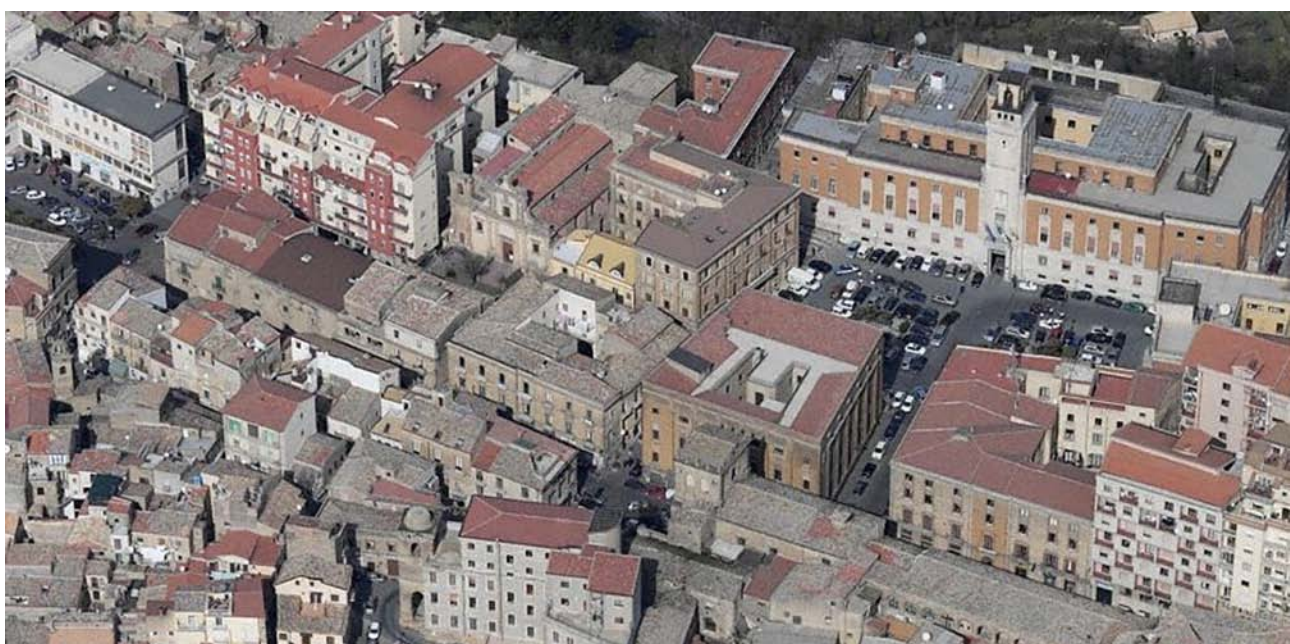


Fig. 1: *Piazza del Governo* in Enna. The urban space of the *piazza* rises from the old medieval texture of the city.

At the beginning a research method based on an analysis of the documents kept in the Archive of the City of Enna (drawings of the project, letters, historical photos) was used in order to understand better, through the interpretation of the direct sources of the project, the reasons why specific choices had been made.

Later, an integrated (directed, photogrammetric, 3D laser scanner) survey was carried out by putting different data together in order to acquire a complete set of information which was essential for describing, documenting and appreciating all the qualities of this urban space and of the buildings which surround it.

The 3D laser scan provided a three-dimensional model of unprocessed data which helped to collect as much detailed information as possible, so as to build a three-dimensional model of the whole *piazza*. The textured 3D model highlights the harmony of its dimensions and proportions, its geometry and structure, its colours and materials.

This meticulous methodological approach produced a model for the understanding of the overall formal, spatial, functional and material characteristics of *Piazza del Governo*, which makes it possible to examine its state of conservation as well as planning coherent actions of maintenance and preservation without radical changes.

### 3 URBAN DESIGN: THE GEOMETRY OF *PIAZZA DEL GOVERNO*

The spatial operation carried out in order to create the enclosed area of the *piazza* is an act of design on an urban scale (in the modern meaning of the term) in which, by drawing on existing models, individual cultural models are produced. Memory becomes a productive synthesis of local identities.

The various documents kept in the Historical Archive of the City of Enna testify to the constant dynamic change experienced by the city during the 1930s due to the new conditions of the Sicilian provincial capital<sup>2</sup>. The new city has, in fact, to meet the social, cultural, urban planning and architectural demands which a capital must possess: modernity, functionality, representativeness. A process of modernisation and restyling of the city is, thus, carried out through funds for the new public works both within the infrastructural context (roads, *piazas*, systems) and the public/representative construction context. Among the most urgent works there is the construction of the new home of the *Palazzo della Prefettura* or *Palazzo del Governo*, which, in other cities, is usually found in buildings representative of the historic centre or in old convents. Like in Enna, where the *Prefettura* has for some years been in the ex-monastery of San Marco<sup>3</sup> sited in the *piazza* of the same name, which was later named *piazza VI Dicembre*<sup>4</sup>.

The building was sold in 1927 and it involved huge amounts of money both for the purchasing and for the restoration work as well as for the construction of new buildings which would prove ineffective over time. The costs already faced and the shortage of funds were the main causes of a dispute between the local and provincial administrations of Enna and which lasted some years. The heated debate over the question "... has the new *Palazzo del Governo* to be built?"<sup>5</sup> required the advice of the most renowned architects of the time: Francesco Fichera from Catania and, later, Salvatore Caronia Roberti from Palermo.

Thus, in 1931, Fichera was called in as a consultant and designer. Profiting from the new project of expansion and connection of *piazzetta Crispi* with *via Panoramica*, he suggested the construction of *Palazzo dell'Economia Corporativa* (ex Chamber of Commerce) on the corner of *via Belvedere* and *piazza Crispi*. Fichera designed a Littorian tower which fits in with the historic skyline of the turreted city, thus "adding the emphasis of his modern fascist tower to the movement of those very old towers which the other cultures had left as their testament..." (Fichera, 1931).

<sup>2</sup> The old Castrogiovanni is raised, on Mussolini's advice, to the rank of provincial capital thus regaining the name of Enna. See no. 1918 note of 27 March 1931 of the City Administration.

<sup>3</sup> The monastery of San Marco was suppressed in 1871.

<sup>4</sup> The square is named in memory of the 6.12.1926, when the Council of Ministers, on Mussolini's advice, raised the city to the rank of provincial capital, against the neighbouring Piazza Armerina which was already home of a sub-prefecture and a district capital, and was considered a subversive city because of the presence of the Bishop Sturzo who opposed the regime together with his brother Luigi, the founder of the People's Party. On 27 October the city of Castrogiovanni regained, by Royal Decree, *ope legis*, the old name of Enna.

<sup>5</sup> Historical Archive of the City of Enna, Ctg 10 cl 9 file 5 ex 1-6-2 year 1931, correspondence of 4 July 1931 year II – no. 4070.



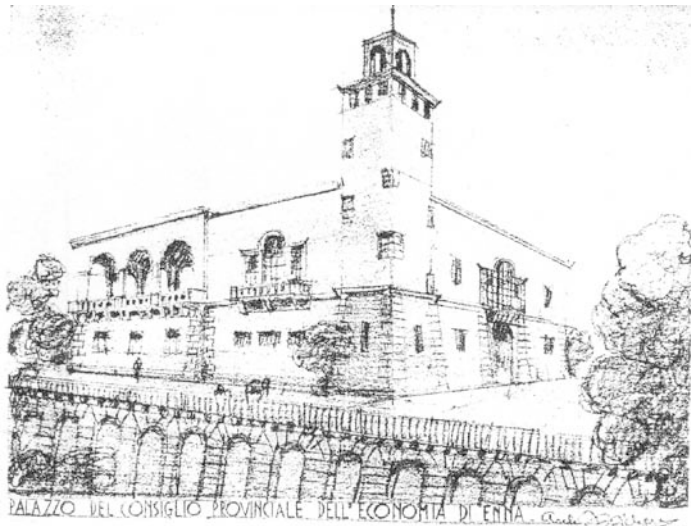


Fig. 2: *Palazzo del Consiglio Provinciale dell'Economia*. The project in piazza Crispi designed by Fichera with the angular Littorian tower in memory of the skyline of the turreted city.

The planned intervention consisted, therefore, of the construction of a new building placed at a short distance from the old home in which to locate some offices and the residence of the Prefect. Essentially, the project appeared as a simple enlargement of the offices of the Prefecture, a localised action not on an urban scale but on an architectural scale, in contrast to the spirit of the time according to which architecture had to comply with the celebratory principles of the new regime.

To this purpose, in 1932, a wide urban area was identified, by the *Preside* (President) of the *Provincia* D'Ayala, in the historic centre of the medieval city, which was occupied by the old hospital. A large enclosed space with low rural cottages and vegetable gardens, strongly linked to the environmental needs of the area, in which the INCIS (National Institute for the Housing of State Employees) had already built, on the western side, a residential building for its employees. In addition, the previous year, De Luca, an engineer from Catania, was commissioned to construct a decorous access from *via Maestro Chiaramonte* as well as to embellish the entrance of the building with a *piazzetta fiorita* containing a fountain or central monument. A readjustment project of this area which was not carried out because it would involve a substantial reorganisation of the urban landscape.



Fig. 3: Cadastral plan of Enna, 1877. In red is highlighted the area of the *piazzetta Crispi*; in blue the area of the old hospital.

Only in 1935 (Ruggieri Tricoli, 1987), Caronia, who had already been asked to solve the old problem about whether or not to construct a new building in *piazza VI Dicembre*, that is, in the same place where the fifteenth-century *Palazzo Pasquasia Varisano* rose, was commissioned to design the new *Palazzo del Governo* and the *Palazzo del Consiglio Provinciale dell'Economia Corporativa*. The area to the north of *via Roma* was definitively chosen in order to carry out an urban scale intervention which had to house, in the appropriate manner, the public buildings of the political, institutional and financial power. This area, despite not being officially included within the urban structure, would affect the ancient road system and its relationship with the countryside of the valley.

Caronia proposed and constructed a new type of *piazza*, a large enclosed area representative of the *Regime* of the 1930s, within a historical texture with a strong identity, where the medieval road system contrasts with the rigid geometry of the new urban plan.

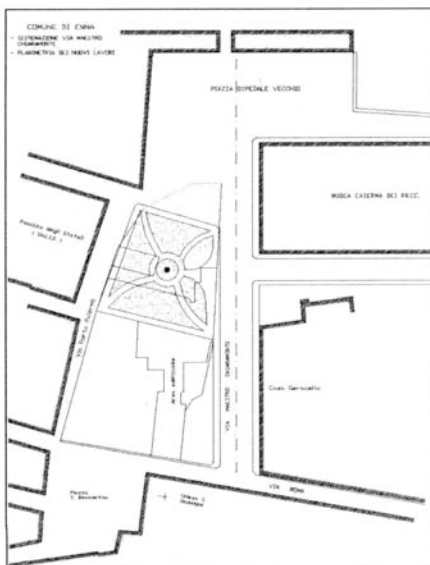


Fig.4: Plan of the project. The design of the urban space in front of the *Palazzo dell'INCIS* projected by engineer De Luca in 1931.

Fig. 5: *Palazzo dell'INCIS*. Residential building for the agency employees.



Fig. 6: *Palazzo del Governo*. The first solution of the project of Salvatore Caronia Roberti in *piazza VI Dicembre*.



Caronia created a new twentieth-century monumentality, which connected new and old spaces, at the same time retaining the historical urban texture as well as enriching the historic centre with a new, highly representative site which revolved around a monumental *piazza*, in close competition with the monuments of the past from the point of view of expression.

Despite being an area free from any limitation, he worked by taking into consideration the pre-existing surrounding structures, by referring to the previous elements through visual solutions, scenographic effects, connecting elements with adjacent areas, dimensional tests, thus adapting the project to the characteristics of the site.

The new *piazza* – unlike medieval *piazze* which had multiple roles and functions (religious, political, commercial, social) as well as expressions and languages according to their own rhythm and time – is a place of representation *par excellence*, that is, the symbolic and rhetorical form of the fascist power of the time. It is a place where the popular/anthropological dimension typical of the open space is lost, in which there is a combination of civic history and cultural movements, of popular traditions and rituals, collective memory and material culture, leaving space for Representativeness.

*Piazza del Governo* in Enna was built according to an authentic intentional model by following the rules of the new regime: rationality of the project, regularity of geometrical characteristics and of the planimetric scheme.

Its construction derived mainly from the need for areas appropriate to solemn occasions such as the visits of the Duce, and to celebrate the new rituals created by the regime, which required the planning of *piazze* with a scenographic scenery.

Caronia fully expressed the fascist philosophy of hierarchical organisation of spaces – according to which the piazza is placed at the top of the urban structure thus becoming the *mise en scène* of the political power – by drawing on, as well as reinterpreting, the representative role of the piazza in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

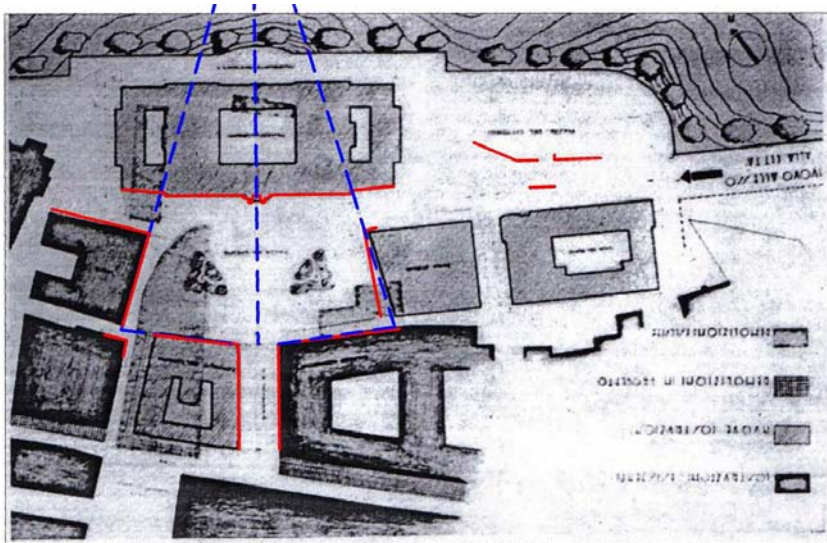


Fig.7: The project of the *piazza del Governo*, Salvatore Caronia Roberti. In the design project in red is highlighted the front of the façades surveyed through 3D laser scanner; in blue the geometric construction of the square according to inverse perspective.

It embodies an innovative action which uses the memory of the past as a productive force, by drawing on the consolidated historical identity in order to find its connections, its values, its compositional principles. Among the symbolic turreted elements taken from medieval architecture and the pure lines and volumes of contemporary rationalism, through the fusion and reinterpretation of stylistic features, Caronia created a perfect mediator between identity and innovation, modification and transformation, classicism and rationalism. He planned a modern city centre, in which he did not adapt the historical elements to the new organisation but connected them according to a logic/intuitive system, by using and interpreting the symbolic

historical and architectural elements of the place, which are the heritage of the cultural identity of the citizens.

The compositional planimetric scheme is characterised by geometrical rigour, a large urban void which does not cancel nor destroy the memory of the places by demolishing historical parts of the city, as often occurred in other areas of Italy<sup>6</sup> at that time, but which, instead, retrieves, with the standing tower of the *Palazzo del Governo*, the historical topographic profile of the array of monumental architecture<sup>7</sup> overlooking the northern face of the rock from which it dominates the whole city of Enna.

Thus, by drawing inspiration from past memories, Caronia analysed the urban context as an architectonic box which is a representation as well as the representation of itself, and within which the imposing and square-shaped surrounding architecture is displayed. Architecture which defines, from the outside, the area of the project with a scenery which keeps intact the relationship with the monumentality of the existing medieval architecture.

Through the accurate Survey<sup>8</sup> and the Representation of the planimetric scheme and of the elevations the surrounding architecture, the visual-scenographic as well as functional relationships between public and private spaces, between architecture and empty space, have been studied retrospectively. With the aid of digital, 3D laser scanner technology, the history of the project of the piazza has been traced back with scientific accuracy and the dimensional/metrological/geometrical characteristics of the area and of the surrounding architecture – architecture which, despite maintaining its independence, contributes to the morphological homogeneity of the context – have been examined in a critical manner.

Starting from the constant reference to classical principles, to the Greek ideal of perfection, and to the eurythmies and symmetries, to which most of the designers of the fascist period turned for inspiration, Caronia Roberti planned a planimetric drawing based on the geometry of the trapezium. The slanted sides of the figure converge according to perspective on the main building, the *Palazzo del Governo*, which occupies the whole short side of the trapezium, like the sixteenth-century *piazza del Campidoglio* designed by Michelangelo, which emphasises the perspective towards the visual focus represented by the *Palazzo Senatorio*.



Fig. 8: *Piazza del Campidoglio* in Rome (Incision of Etienne Dupérac, 1569).

Fig. 9: *Piazza del Governo* in Enna. The *Palazzo del Governo* with the entrance tower in axis with *via Maestro Chiaramonte*

<sup>6</sup> The urban area of the piazza recalls the project of *Piazza della Vittoria* in Brescia, which was built between 1927 and 1932 by the architect Marcello Piacentini through the demolition of a part of the medieval historic centre, the district of the fish markets, the farthest southern stretch of the Carmine district which was in terrible environmental, social and hygienic conditions.

<sup>7</sup> The *Castello di Lombardia*, the complex of the Cathedral, the fortified *Palazzo Pollicarini* and the bell tower of the *Chiesa di S. Francesco* with the adjacent *Palazzo Chiaramonte*.

<sup>8</sup> The digital equipment used is the Leica 3D laser scanner HDS 3000.

The view of the whole area becomes a view from a definite point of observation and according to a predefined direction which Caronia included in the new drawing of a pre-existing street, the new *via Maestro Chiaramonte*, tangent to *Palazzo Geracello*. The new road, the only coaxial perspective reference to the high “tower” entrance to the *Palazzo* – the consolidated symbol of authority and control in the history of Enna – is planned according to the classical taste of the huge straight stretches, of the Italian style gardens (Versailles, Stupinigi) which anticipate the surprise.

The planimetric trapezoidal figure of the enclosed area is analysed according to two criteria of interpretation: geometry and perspective. Caronia planned, by ‘leaning’ on the pre-existing architecture (*Geracello* and *INCIS*), an isosceles trapezium in which the symmetry between “the converging sides produces a controlled effect on the perception of the scenery by eliminating any distracting irregular element” (Guidoni, 1990). Thanks to the scenographic effect of the perspective, the architect creates, in the observer who places himself on the line of the perspective and on the longest side of the trapezium, the illusion of a greater distance of the façade of the *Palazzo del Governo*, thus reversing the point of observation. He uses an area of a trapezoidal matrix and with an emphasised straight and not-reversed perspective, which results in a greater spatial depth. The perceptual approach leads the observer to stop and contemplate the building at a distance, like within the *mise en scène* in which the illusory deepening of the stage is created.

The architecture of the *piazza* rises beyond a prospective scheme intersecting the sides of the imposing *Palazzo del Governo*, and the new road system represents the axis of symmetry along which the weight of the central building is repeated by secondary lateral elements (*Palazzo INCIS* and *Palazzo Corporazioni* in the west; *Banca d’Italia* and *Palazzo Geracello* to the east) which for their visibility appear continuous and symmetrical.

The data collected and processed through both traditional and digital models have confirmed *a posteriori* the quality of the project in which space is influenced by definite visual and representative intentions, and precise political, social and cultural hierarchies are respected.

The study is a scientific analysis which retraces the phases of the project and compares its results in order to understand what the conditioned planning choices and the intentional solutions were.

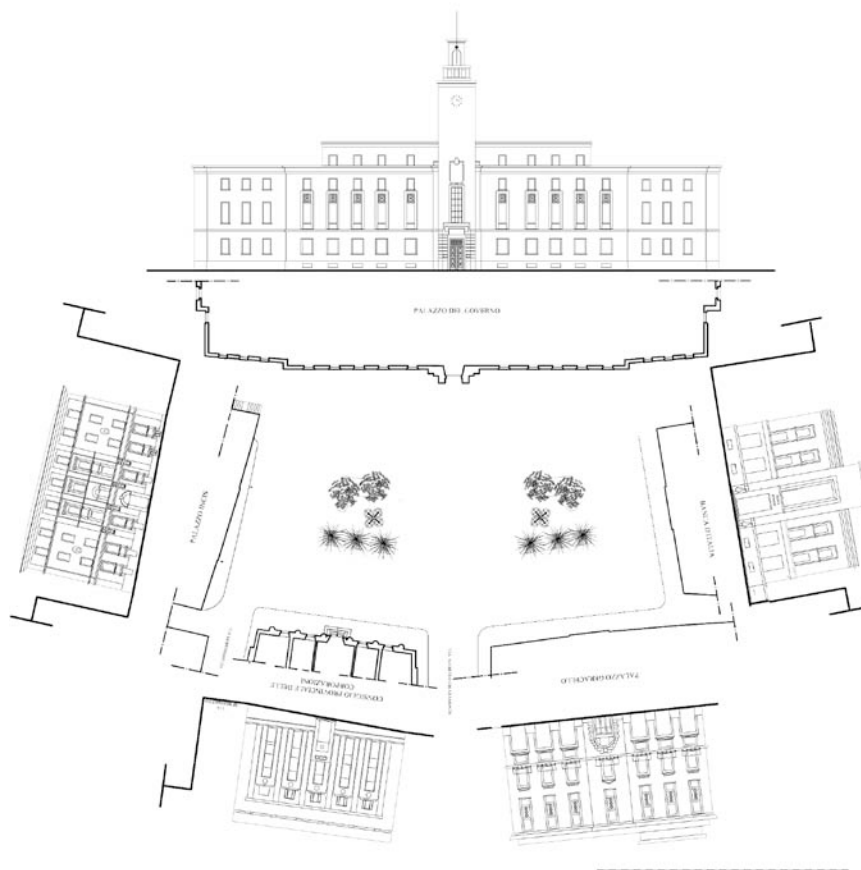


Fig. 10: The survey of *Piazza del Governo* in Enna. The large urban space is representative of the Regime of the 1930s.



The research has clearly demonstrated Caronia's creative and intellectual characteristics, which are essential to understand in order to plan possible projects of restoration, re-use and modification of cultural heritage. The successive studies have represented the means to control and verify the project – the underlying geometrical rules, the choices of materials, the functional and spatial features – in order to carry out an effective protection and organisation of change of the city and of the territory.

#### 4 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: SURVEYED ARCHITECTURE– REVEALED ARCHITECTURE

The survey of the architecture of *piazza del Governo* in Enna has represented a significant opportunity of in-depth study which has distinctly revealed its typological, stylistic and material characteristics.

This process of knowledge moved backwards in time in search of the reasons for the project by using the analysis tools of the Drawing and of the Survey: research of history and iconography, analysis of the technical documents of the project, documentation of the architecture through the most up-to-date survey techniques (by checking operating methods and procedures), critical interpretation of the architectonic text.

Palermitan architect Salvatore Caronia Roberti's project for the Government Centre of Enna represents an important opportunity to experiment with the 'modern' for the designers involved.

In this context, Salvatore Caronia Roberti played the role of director and leading actor. His projects for the *Palazzo del Governo* and the *Palazzo del Consiglio Provinciale dell'Economia Corporativa* influenced the work of the designers who were asked to plan the *Palazzo della Banca d'Italia* (the engineer Rocco Giglio) and to carry out the restyling of the façade of the pre-existing *Palazzo Garacello* (the engineer Simone Di Stefano).

In the project for the *Palazzo del Governo* (1935), Caronia conveyed the ideology of the "regime" through a monumental representative building with a huge, standing bell tower which fits into the urban skyline and is characterised by the medieval turreted elements punctuating the city (*Torre Pisana, Campanile del Duomo, Torre di San Giovanni, Torre di San Francesco, Torre di San Tommaso, Torre di Federico*).

The *Palazzo*, placed on the northern side of the piazza as if to protect the inhabited city, recalls stylistically and chromatically the grandeur and the monumentality of Piacentini's contemporary buildings designed according to the aesthetics of the "regime". Suffice to think of the similarities between this *Palazzo* and the *Palazzo del Governo* in Littoria (1932).

The majestic façade of the *Palazzo* is characterised by a tall base in white marble which is meant to hold the mezzanine. The upper section, with three floors and closed by a white framing, is covered with clinker similar to terracotta tiles, and is rhythmically marked by the alternation of solids and voids. The predominance of a horizontal rhythm is obtained by grouping the "rooms vertically aligned" (Caronia Roberti, 1947) through the intelligent use of travertine panels, fixed to the wall with Art Deco "studs", which, due to the figure-background effect, are perceived as a unit.



Fig. 11 – 12: *Palazzo del Governo* in Enna. On the left, the first solution of the project (1935) with the galleries to access the belvedere at the back; on the right, view of the 3D digital survey of the *Palazzo del Governo*.

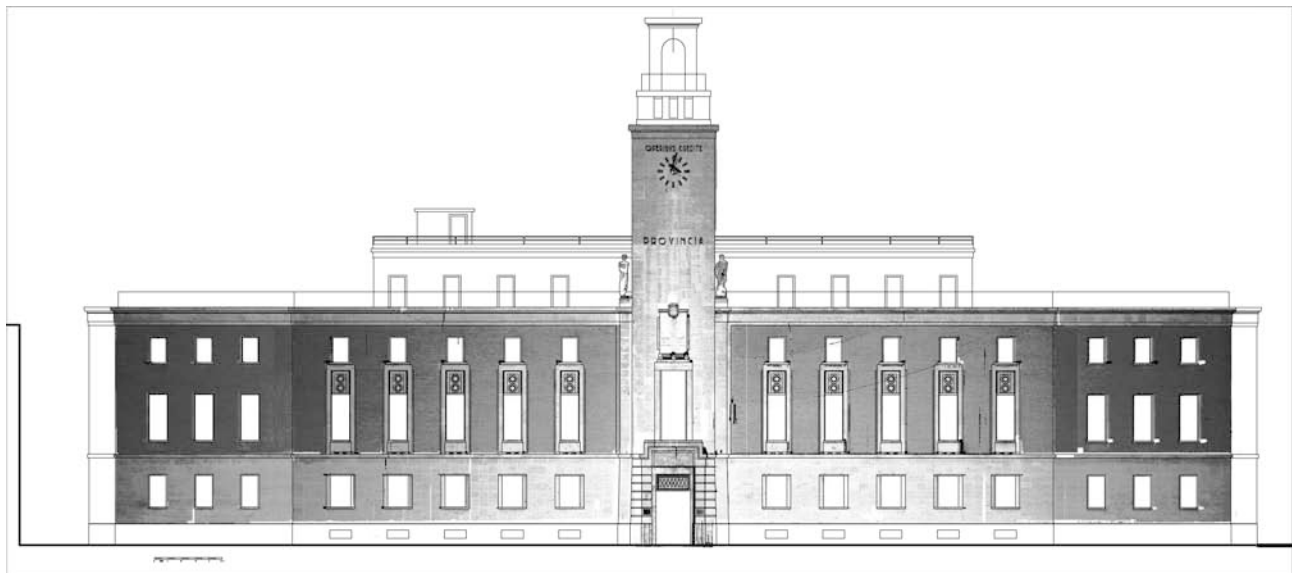


Fig. 13: 2D textured drawing of the main façade of the *Palazzo del Governo*.

The galleries planned in the two wings, which create a corridor to access the belvedere at the back, are eliminated in the final solution (1937) in order to gain more space as well as to lend compactness to the complex. Finally, the axial position of the bell tower – a symbol of fascist power – which is emphasised by the two statues on its sides, marks the centre of the composition thus highlighting the monumentality of the building. The back façade, almost overhanging the valley facing the town of Calascibetta, is essential in its dimensions and is characterised by four eagles lying on the colonnade crowning the building.

The use of materials, which despite not belonging to the Sicilian tradition (that is, clinker and limestone) were appreciated by the designer for the chromatic effects they manage to produce: “... a wall surface so rhythmically marked vibrates in the light with such liveliness that no aggressive colour can ever produce, and, by vibrating, it animates the composition much better than any precious material”, would be retracted in his mature years as can be observed in the text *Introduzione allo studio della Composizione Architettonica* published by Caronia in 1947.

The tones, the materials, the dimensions and the rhythmic organisation of the *Palazzo del Governo* were taken up by the engineer Rocco Giglio<sup>9</sup> in the project for the *Palazzo della Banca d’Italia*, which lies on the eastern side of the piazza and which still today matches the adjacent *Palazzo del Governo*.



Fig. 14-15: *Palazzo della Banca d’Italia*. On the left, view of the building in the 3D reconstruction of the urban space of the *Piazza del Governo*; on the right, graphical representation of the main façade of the building.

<sup>9</sup> The engineer Rocco Giglio was a member of the *Ufficio Tecnico* of the *Banca d’Italia* and was asked to plan various branches.

Giglio constructed, in fact, a building characterised by a tall base in white marble (where the bank offices are), and, in the upper section, by a homogeneous base covered with terracotta tiles on which rise the sharp cuts of the openings of the upper floors, which are linked in a single architectonic unit by the white frames closing them. The symmetry of the façade overlooking the *piazza* is emphasised by the projecting tower of the stair unit covered with marble.

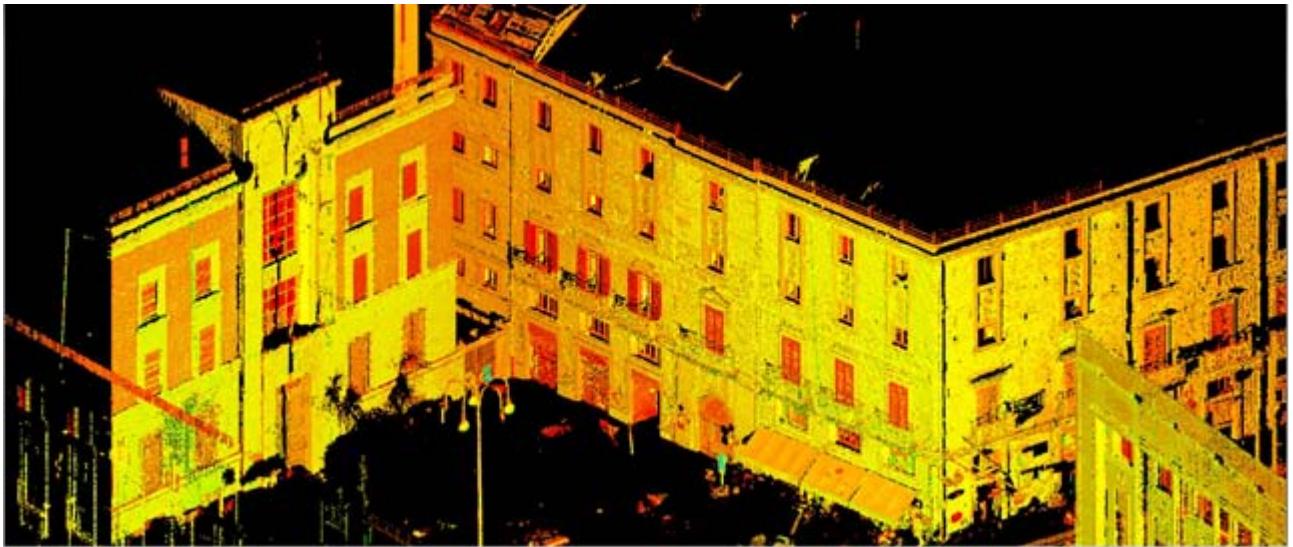


Fig. 16: View of the 3D digital survey of *Palazzo Geracello* in the urban scene of the *Piazza del Governo*.

Also the engineer Simone Di Stefano, who was asked to give a new appearance to the pre-existing *Palazzo Geracello*, which was made necessary by the “cut” of the façade of the *Palazzo* overlooking the *piazza* to be constructed, was influenced by the new constructions. He grouped the openings of the last two floors in one single vertical unit, by linking them with a frame giving the appearance of being held to the wall with Art Deco “studs”.

If the project for the *Palazzo del Governo* is closely linked to Piacentini’s artistic philosophy, far more complex is the philosophy of the project made by Salvatore Caronia Roberti for the *Palazzo del Consiglio Provinciale dell’Economia Corporativa* (now the Chamber of Commerce), which lies on the southern side of the *piazza* and is adjacent to the pre-existing *Palazzo INCIS* thus closing the western side.

The accessibility to archive documentation made it possible to understand critically the planning concept, by retracing the logic underlying the various solutions examined up to the final one.

In the 1934 solution the *Palazzo* appears as a pure geometrical element, a single isotropic block with four levels, almost cube shaped, rhythmically marked by its openings and characterised by a portal-tribune in the middle.

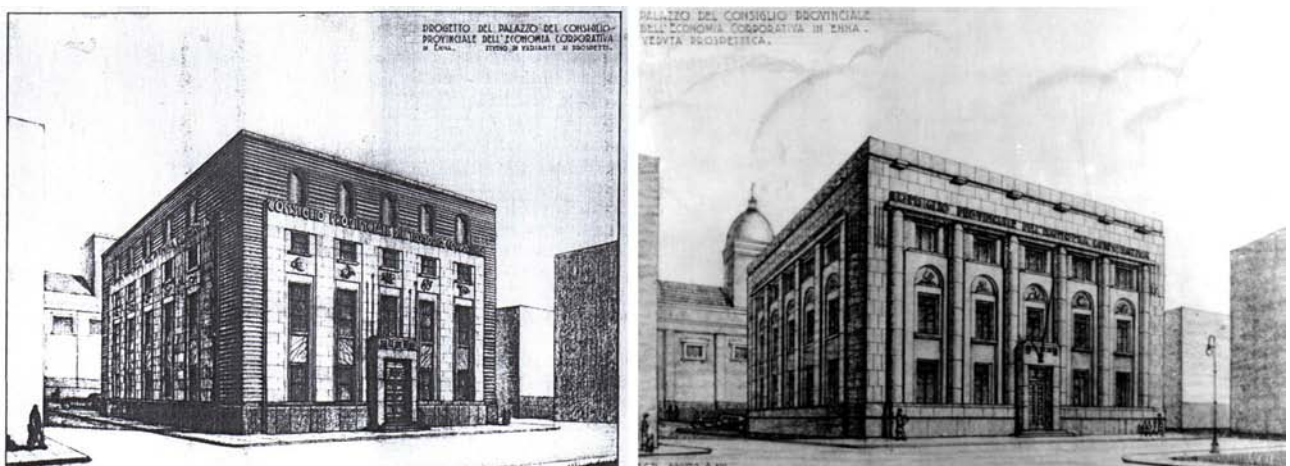


Fig. 17-18: *Palazzo del Consiglio Provinciale dell’Economia Corporativa*. On the left, perspective of the project conceived in 1934; on the right, another solution before the final one.



In this first solution Caronia seemed to follow the stylistic principles of Art Deco architecture. The surface of the façades presents, in fact, horizontal brick borders which hold, in a spatial continuum, the construction and, by alternating, create chiaroscuro effects of light and shade. The plastic quality of the whole complex is, also, a result of the large rectangular panel juxtaposed and overhanging the wall, giving the appearance of being held to it by Art Deco buttons which depict arts and crafts and closed at the top with the inscription “Consiglio Provinciale dell’Economia Corporativa”. On this panel, through sharp cuts, Caronia carves the openings which he groups vertically in a flat frame.

The perspective drawings – which are made from the same point of view placed at an equal distance from the plane of projection – reveal the strength of Caronia’s planning intuition as well as making possible an instant comparison between the various solutions.

The 1935 solution, which recalls stylistically the project for the *Banco di Sicilia* in Palermo (1931-1940), required the use of local materials and chromatic options such as the lava rock from Catania, the natural stone from Sabucina near Caltanissetta and the natural stone from Mount Billiemi near Trapani which place the building harmonically in the existing urban context.

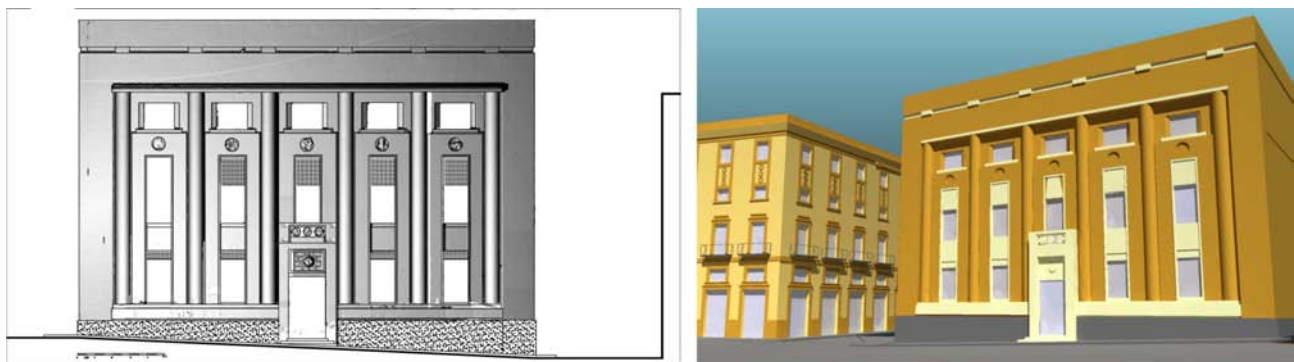


Fig. 19-20: *Palazzo del Consiglio Provinciale dell’Economia Corporativa*. On the left, 2D textured drawing of the main façade; on the right, view of the 3D model of the Palazzo in the urban context of the Piazza del Governo.

In this case, the three-dimensional plastic quality of the shape is obtained through subtraction. The perfect stone parallelepiped, with its smooth surface faces, is harmonically marked by an alternation of solids and voids according to a hexastyle sequence of gigantic half-columns carved on the main façade which rise on three levels. On the side façades the surface is rhythmically marked by pilasters and slightly hollow openings in succeeding planes so as to produce, once again, a plastic, chiaroscuro effect.

The sharp horizontal cut which marks the structure near its end closes the top crowning of the building, thus making superfluous the presence of a stringcourse which would have negatively affected the overall perception of the building.

In this solution the reference to the classical ideal of beauty and perfection – that “metaphysical perfection” (Ruggieri Tricoli, 1987:78) to which Caronia aspired – is evident.

The *piazza* thus completed and defined is, *de facto*, thanks to its unity and homogeneity, an innovative planning laboratory which is able to recreate, from known elements and connections, new sets of values, new identities, new forms of qualities which give value to the site.

Architectural heritage – an expression of time, of place and of the designers who created it – which has to be understood, documented and preserved through the most advanced techniques of survey and 3D representation which, unlike traditional research methods, make possible an alternative/innovative approach, a better understanding of the spatial relationships between the buildings in an urban context, an accurate and meticulous documentation through 3D photographic models which can be used to create two- and three-dimensional representations documenting the material nature, the state of conservation and of deterioration.

In this way, through a process of understanding which reveals the historical, cultural and material identity of the sites, it is possible to carry out coherent and sustainable actions of restoration and preservation.

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## **CREDITS**

Despite the joint nature of the research work carried out, the editorial responsibility for the paragraphs is attributed to: paragraph 2, Franca Restuccia; paragraphs 3 Mariateresa Galizia; paragraph 4, Cettina Santagati.