

PATH, PLACE, AND COVER:
Observations in Three Italian Towns

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Karen Barned Mary Griffin

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on 6 February 1979 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

Abstract

As you get to know Europe slowly, tasting the wines, cheeses and characters of the different countries, you begin to realize that the important determinant of any culture is, after all--the spirit of place.

L. Durrell, Spirit of Place

Understanding the "spirit of place" is essential to our work as architects. But we need to look beyond the ambiance of experiencing special places to the specific qualities of their physical form and use if they are to become references for our work. This study documents our exploration of place. We chose one built condition as the basis of our analysis: a building open on its ground floor to adjacent paths and open spaces. We observed examples of this building type in three Italian towns--Bergamo, Rimini, and Venice--trying to understand the full range of issues which shape the successes and failures of these places. Through drawings, descriptions, and comparisons, we attempt to clarify the physical qualities and use potentials of these three places with the conviction that this effort to carefully understand is the basis for both knowing and creating environments which possess a "spirit of place"

Thesis Supervisor: _____

John R. Myer

Professor of Architecture

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Thank you to Jack Myer for advising well.

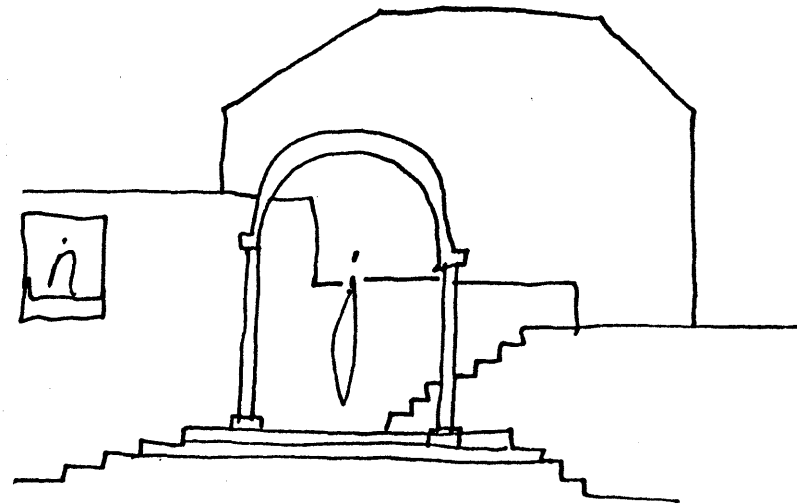
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And the kind assistance of the Uffici Urbanistica in Bergamo, Rimini and Venice.

*For Donlyn Lyndon,
who introduced us to aediculae,
and the magic of the number three.*



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Introduction

Intentions

This study shares our exploration of place--the specific qualities which give character to environments and enables people to identify with them. As architects, we found an unsettling discrepancy between time spent in evocative places--Urbino, Rome, Venice--and the task of generating some of their quality in our own work. It seemed we had been captivated by the power of place, but we needed to better understand our intuitions. Why did these places affect us? What about them could we carry with us? The essence of an experience sometimes coalesces at a certain moment in time--the sun setting over the Grand Canal casting a rosy haze over the buildings, or the Piazza San Marco enshrouded in the foggy dawn, for a moment belongs only to us. Virginia Woolf epitomizes this phenomenon when people, place, and time crystallize, as "the moment that endures."¹ As architects, the makers of places, we need both to experience these moments in place, and also to understand the actual characteristics of evocative places which are the stages of our lives, our dreams and our memories.

In order to explore the qualities of place, we chose one condition which intensifies the paths and open spaces of certain environs: a building open on its ground level to adjacent paths and piazzas. We observed and documented this situation in three towns--Bergamo, Rimini, and Venice. We could have chosen a different built condition--gates, or arcades, or gallerias--and learned many of the same things. For we found that the condition was a foothold, a hunch which allowed us to look, to compare, and, finally, to understand something about the specific successes and failures of these three places. This focus also enabled us to consider and speculate upon

broader issues, such as the quality of urban space, the relationship between building fabric and architectural monuments, and the interaction of use and physical structure.

Convictions

Two convictions shaped our observations. The first is that architecture finds its most important meaning in the opportunities it provides people who inhabit it. As Norberg-Schultz writes: architecture "allows man to experience a meaningful environment, wherever he may be on earth, and in this way helps him to find an existential foothold. This is the true purpose of architecture, to help make human existence meaningful."² If places are to be meaningful, then people living in or using them should be able to structure their own experiences, and to make choices about where and how to carry out their everyday actions. In The Place of Houses, Charles Moore and Donlyn Lyndon observe: "The dreams which accompany all human actions should be nurtured by the places in which people live."³ Places should engage and encourage people--leaving room for the unanticipated. But places need also to invite people to identify with them--to bring their own lives and associations into play--for "when a person identifies himself with a place we say that he dwells."⁴ And the dwelling is essential to feeling comfortable and connected to the environment, to belonging. It is the basic property of human existence.

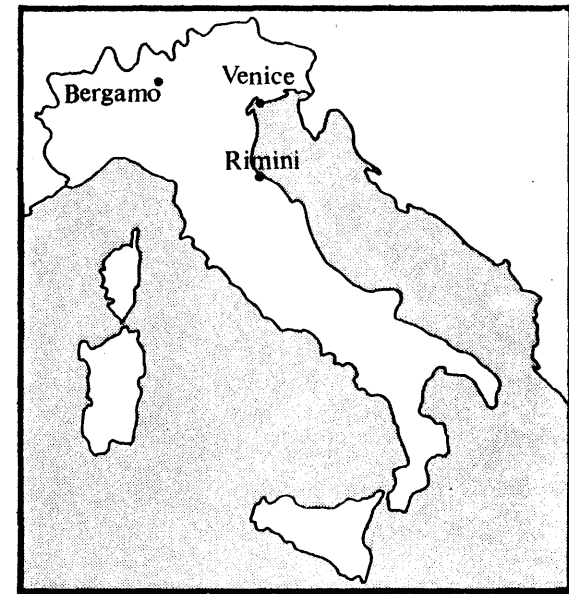
The second conviction is that buildings must be studied in context--as a series of building acts which impinge upon each other, reflecting the intentions and aspirations of people over time. As John and Margaret Myer write in Patterns of Association:

An environment, then, where there is a positive association between the part and its context can be deeply reinforcing because it evokes in its inhabitant forms of being, knowing and activity which touch on our deep needs and wishes to have strong ties to others, to be able to give to and to nurture, to be part of something larger than ourselves.⁵

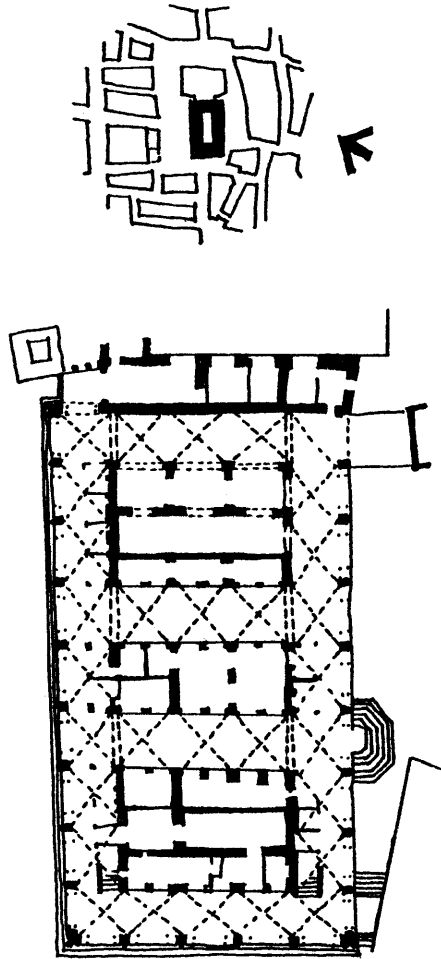
In order to know places, we must understand them in time and in setting. The three towns we studied have evolved through time: their existing form results from successive layers of building and inhabitation. Each layer responds in some way to the previous order. We began by focusing on one building, whose ground floor is a field of open arcaded space, then by looking at the adjoining places and, finally, by understanding how these places related to the larger context of paths and open spaces.

Three Towns

The three towns--Bergamo, Rimini, and Venice--are similar in that each is a strongly built place, made memorable by its relationship to the surrounding landscape. Each is built with materials which are associative with and part of that landscape. Each in its physical form has strong remnants of its history. Each is intensely Italian in image and lifestyle--manifested by the dominance and color of stone, the emphasis on the outdoor life of cafes and piazzas, the presence of an architectural inheritance of Renaissance arcades and medieval facades, and the evidence of being inhabited, full of friendly, gesticulative people. But each town is a distinct place--memorable for its own images and characteristics. Bergamo is the remote jewel, set high on the hill, a backdrop to the busy city below; Rimini the sprawling, circus-like sea resort; and Venice the



1. Italy: Location of Towns



1. *Location and plan of
Basilica in Vicenza*

intimate, introverted, canal-bound refuge.

The path network of each town structures our experience. How we find our way is affected by the pattern of the paths, whether it is a clear hierarchical system of major and minor streets, as in Bergamo, or a maze of seemingly similar streets, as in Venice. The paths, in the way they negotiate the landscape and are defined along their edges, establish a pattern for movement. This pattern is sometimes intensified by special forms such as arcades, gates, passages through buildings, or bridges. In Bologna, the arcades create a channel of claimable space between shops and streets. In Urbino, the Porto Valbona marks the extent of the old city and is the place of ascent to its center. In Vicenza, the passageways through the Basilica connect two spaces by allowing the paths to penetrate the building's mass. And in Venice, the Academia Bridge allows you to be up, surveying the overall townscape, which is usually obscured by the fabric of intricate paths. In addition to these experiences of the paths themselves--the chance to move through, next to, over, and under--paths are connectors allowing us to reach destinations and experience the range of places along the way.

Specific spaces such as piazzas, where the path opens to become a more centered place, encourage people and activities to inhabit them, claiming more forcefully parts of the public domain. In the towns we observed, the open spaces are made identifiable by specific qualities: the scale of the space and the buildings defining its edges; the placement of buildings and landmarks; the form of enclosure; the definitions, such as arcades, steps, porticoes of the buildings themselves; and the relationship to other paths and spaces. The

paths provide continuity while the places give focus.

A particular opportunity for the intensification of place occurs at the juncture of path and open space. Although familiar with the many ways transitions are made, we chose to observe the situation of buildings whose open ground floors are both places, or use spaces, and also parts of ongoing paths. The quality of cover--being under, protected--is associated with being inside. It is, therefore, particularly evocative as an experience in the world of public paths and open spaces. The use and meaning of the covered, but open, buildings is ambiguous, in some way magical and unfamiliar. This field of covered space is, potentially, both a path and a place. It is a place to be in and a path to move along; it is both a transition between paths and places and a place in itself. Like a stand of trees between clearings, it offers a canopy of shelter and filtered light which both connects and differentiates the spaces on either side. In each of the towns, this building plays a different role in relation to the pattern of paths and open space.

Methods

We observed the ways the buildings worked as places of transition in the larger fabric, and what they were like as entities. We also studied the overlap of the two conditions. We observed the buildings at all times of the day for several days, or sometimes for weeks at a time, trying to understand the cycles of their use. Through literature and through conversations with town officials and residents in each place, we learned the evolution of the buildings and



1. Sketch from journal

the towns. While visiting the towns, we documented the built definitions and use patterns of the buildings and their environs through photographs, sketches, journals and measured drawings.

After returning from Italy, we spent several months making drawings which describe each place. At the same time, we talked and thought about what we had seen or thought we had seen, what we felt, what we had understood as a result of this experience. The process of considering again these familiar places by drawing them, recalling bits of observation that had receded into memory, resolving confusion initially overlooked, and searching information in references for insights into form and history enriched and clarified the work we had begun in Italy. The result is, we hope, a careful, informative sharing of our observations--both written and drawn--on the specific qualities of these places.

This project enabled us to take a second look; to go beyond our immediate, and sometimes fanciful, reaction to foreign cultures and environments. We tried to explore our intuitions, and to articulate and share our care and understanding for these places. We studied these places carefully with the conviction that understanding the specific qualities of place encourages informed abstraction, sensitive eclecticism. Our intimate knowledge of these places enables us to better comprehend and sustain the life of place in our own lives and in our work as place-makers.

In the chapters which follow, the experience of being in each town is epitomized. The towns are then presented in a series of issues considered in our written and drawn documentation. The three places are discussed comparatively in the concluding essay. Following is a list of the drawings and the issue which has generated each:

AREA PLAN	The scale and location of the buildings in relation to the surrounding fabric of built and unbuilt space.
PATH PLAN	The path network of the study areas, emphasizing the ways into and out of the open spaces adjacent to the open buildings.
HISTORY DIAGRAMS	The major historical interventions which have shaped the study areas.
AREA AXONOMETRIC	The placement of the open building on its site.
PIAZZA SECTION	The experience of moving under cover from the major spaces and volumes of the study area.
PIAZZA ELEVATIONS	The characteristics of the walls which enclose the piazza.
PIAZZA USE	The use patterns of the piazzas in relation to the fixed, semi-fixed, and transient elements which define and reinforce use.
BUILDING PLAN	The plan characteristics of the buildings emphasizing the ground definitions.
BUILDING ELEVATION	The face of the buildings: issues of style, scale and symbol.
BUILDING AXONOMETRIC	A volumetric description of the relationship between the covered space and the building mass.



Bergamo

Place Description

It is a long car ride from the Città Bassa to the Città Alta of Bergamo although, in afterthought, it took us much farther through time than over distance. We later learned that a funicular ascends the southern slope of the town in a short, five-minute ride, but in that first arrival, it seemed as though we had travelled a long distance to reach the serene town perched above the Lombardy plains. For we arrived at a place that possesses a rare quality of timelessness, a protected anachronism that has been spared the cars, industry, and sprawl characteristic of modern urban environments. It remains, reminding us that people endure and that traces of their lives and actions continue as physical and spiritual qualities which affect our lives.

To arrive in Bergamo Alta is to experience a special moment--a moment of familiarity, of knowing a place even though we are in it for the first time. Bergamo is recognizable, for it is a place that "feels right" from first glance. Its surrounding, protecting Venetian walls, its pastel and earth-colored buildings, its intimate public spaces made bright by the warm autumn sun--separately and together they extend a welcome that is reminiscent of returning home. This quality of home recalls our primary associations of belonging, and enables us to respond immediately to the dwelling implicit even without the investment of time and experience usually necessary to feel at home.

But the hospitality and intimacy of Bergamo increases with time. As we came to know the structure of the town and its collective

routines, our sense of belonging was reinforced. The bubbling fountain in the piazzetta San Pancrazio came to identify our front door, the Cafe del Tasso was our morning breakfast table, the Rocca our garden. Routines and places associated with the individual house become, in Bergamo, collective acts, easily sharable with the world outside our windows.

Most representative of this is the Piazza Vecchia, the main piazza of the town. To walk into it is to enter a rather lovely salon, defined at one end by the glistening white library with the longest granite couch you have ever seen; at the other by the Palazzo della Ragione, and beyond that, the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore. The exquisite brick paving of the piazza celebrates the special nature of this place and invites you in.

The piazza is a shared room, enclosed by walls of different but harmonious colors. Cafe tables, bollards, steps, a fountain are invitations to stop, to engage. The range of enclosures and views make a place of overlapping rooms with views. It is a place where you never feel lonely, although you may be alone. It is a place to stop for your morning coffee and gossip, or to walk through on an evening stroll. Or it is a place to think, early in the morning when only a few pigeons and the cafe proprietor setting up shop populate the piazza. Or during the dinner hour, when the streetlights gently illuminate the few strollers drifting through the quiet dusk to disappear through the arcaded space of the Palazzo della Ragione.

The Palazzo is a generator of magic for the Piazza Vecchia. Like a friendly beast settled at one end of the space, the Palazzo is an

unavoidable yet welcoming presence. The perception of its mass is contradicted by the transparency of its ground floor, making visible the softly-shimmering pink facade of the chapel behind it. It is a stage with a partially open curtain. To sit on the steps of the library that faces the Palazzo, watching a friend emerge from underneath its cover is almost to experience the end of a dream, when the tide of awakening slowly pushes back the quiet of sleep and you are awake before you are conscious. The Palazzo is a screen through which the drama of everyday life passes. It adds a touch of tension and expectancy that enlivens the piazza and engages you in it.

Even as a newcomer, Bergamo invites you to engage and connect. Remote as it is, the Città Alta is not an escape from the world; it is an invitation to join the stream of life which has its history etched in the stone of its buildings and continues to assert itself in the sounds of voices, the clink of coffee cups, and the clip of footsteps that announce the new day.



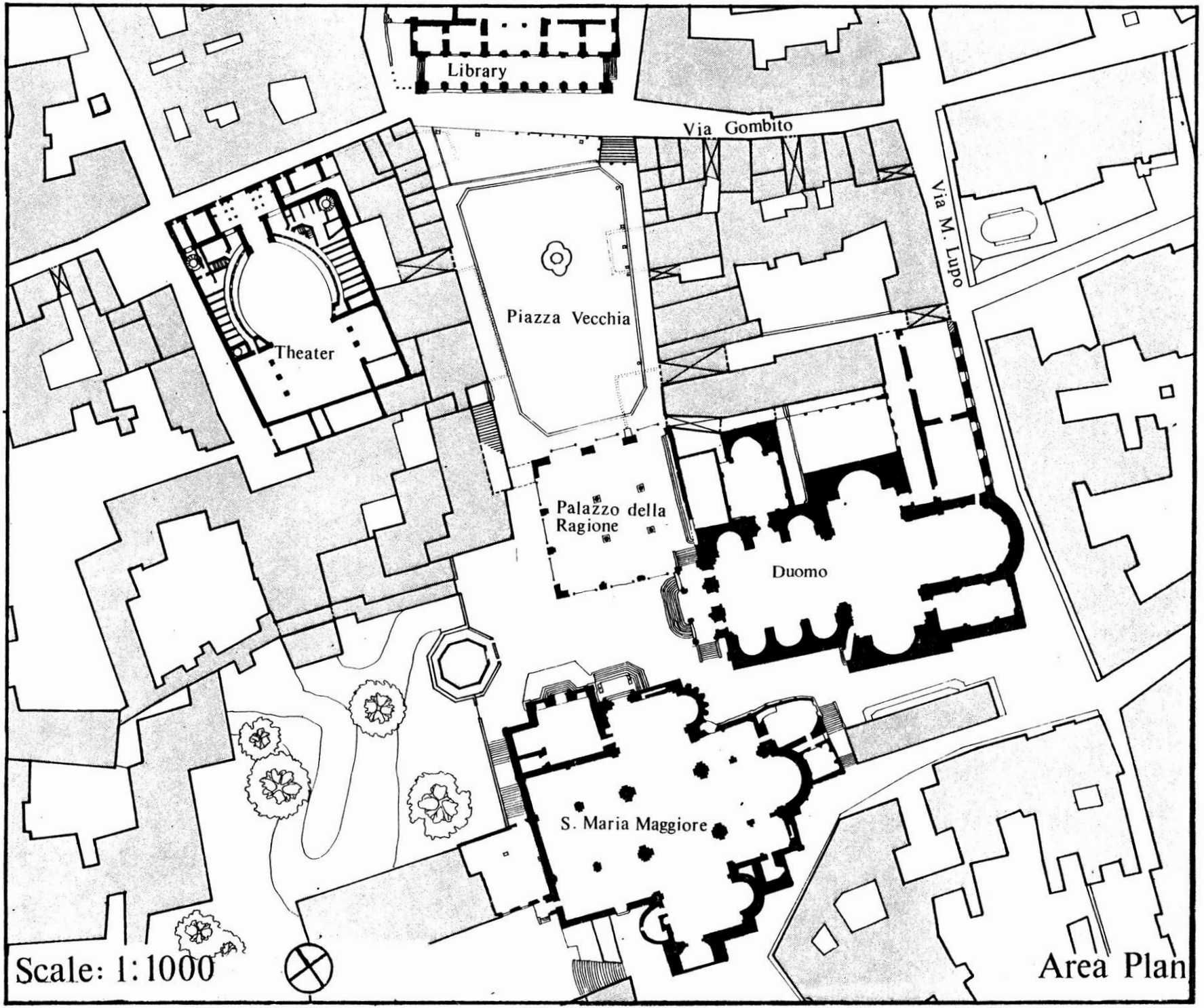
1. Bergamo: Context map of the Città Alta

Surrounds

Both its hill-top site and Venetian walls separate the Città Alta of Bergamo from the Città Bassa. Within the densely built fabric of the upper city, the complex of the Piazza Vecchia and Piazza del Duomo unfolds as the physical and symbolic center. The two squares are separated by the massive volume of the Palazzo della Ragione, yet made continuous by the building's open porticoed ground floor.

The Piazza Vecchia is spacious, and contained in form, while the Piazza del Duomo is small and amorphous. The long sides of the Piazza Vecchia are defined by three and four story residential and commercial buildings while the short sides are formed by the Library and the Palazzo della Ragione.

The Piazza del Duomo is shaped by a cluster of religious monuments. The two are distinct spaces, yet made overlapping by the transparency of the Palazzo, which draws one through from one piazza to the other.

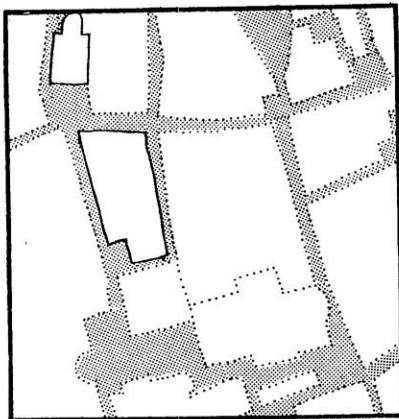


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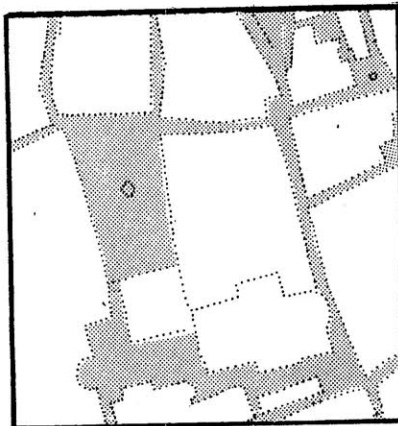
Area Plan



1. *Old Roman axes*



2. *Before Piazza Vecchia*



3. *After Piazza Vecchia*

History

The Città Alta of Bergamo retains a strong sense of its historic development. Enclosed in the massive fortifications built during the Venetian rule, which lasted from 1428 to 1797, Bergamo lost over 800 buildings when the wall construction began in 1561. Within the walls, the old *cardo* and *decumanus* of Roman town planning remain in evidence. The crossing of the Via Gombito/Via Colleoni and the Via Maria Lupo/Via S. Lorenzo approximates today the intersection of the old axes and it is here that the Torre, or Tower, di Gombito sits, a landmark of the Bergamo skyline.

The Piazza Vecchia began to take shape at the end of the 1300's when a smaller square, near the Church of S. Michele dell'Arco was extended. But it was in the 15th century that the square, with its elegant trapezoidal form, was extended to the Palazzo della Ragione, and this building, freed of the houses that had once obscured its north face, was given a new facade enfronting the piazza. It is on this facade that

the lion of St. Mark is placed, a reminder of the years of Venetian rule.

The Piazza del Duomo, behind the Palazzo della Ragione, is the older square. It dates from the 13th century when the cathedral, the bishop's palace and the town hall were situated to create the small irregular space. This piazza is the quiet, religious center of Bergamo, contrasting to the life of the Piazza Vecchia, the social and civic center of the town.

About 400' below the Città Alta is the Città Bassa, which forms a nearly complete circle on the plain interrupted only by hills to the northwest. The lower city of Bergamo grew most during the 16th century, when the upper city was in chaos, disrupted by the construction of the walls and plagued by internal strife and the ravages of the Bubonic plague. The once distinct suburbs of the lower city have merged to form a very modern commercial center, distinct and separate from the Città Alta.



1. Engraving of
the park of Saint
Alexander; from
*Bergamo d'Altri
Tempi*; 1450

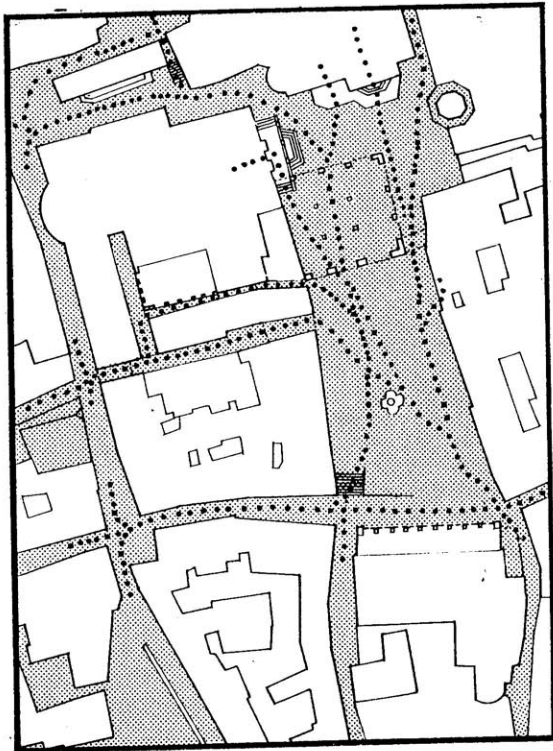
Paths

The Via Gombito is the main spine of the Citta' Alta. Transversing the upper town, it connects two major points of entry, the Citta Della and the Mercato delle Scarpe. Prohibited for vehicular use since the 1960's, the Via Gombito is particularly suited to the pedestrian in its scale and sequence. Edged by 3- and 4 story buildings, the street has the medieval feeling of narrowness and darkness, offset, however, by a series of small open spaces--church parvis and squares formed by the intersection of streets. This gives the street a sense of contraction and expansion, a sense of choreographed movement. Midway along its length, the street opens onto the Piazza Vecchia, although some clues as a vignette of the library glistening in the sun suggests its existence.

Other paths into the Piazza Vecchia lack the clarity and the drama of the Via Gombito. Instead, they are small, intricate, and feel almost private. A pedestrian path, cut through the medieval block

pattern in the 1930's, connects the Mercato delle Scarpe with the Piazza Vecchia. This path parallels the Via Gombito but has a backyard feeling. It is a sequence of ragged spaces, but it is a quiet and intimate alternative to the crowded shopping atmosphere of the Via Gombito. It goes through vaulted passageways, narrow alleys and shared backyards, finally opening into the Piazza Vecchia through a narrow vault.

Another set of intricate paths lead into and out of the Piazza del Duomo, taking the pedestrian between the churches or through the anteroom of a cloister. The Via Gombito is the dominant path to the Piazza Vecchia, but the network is enhanced by the secretive, intricate paths which allow people to filter through the piazzas and to slip out of view, creating a certain drama for the life of the piazza as well as an incentive to participate in it. The scene changes often, as do the actors.



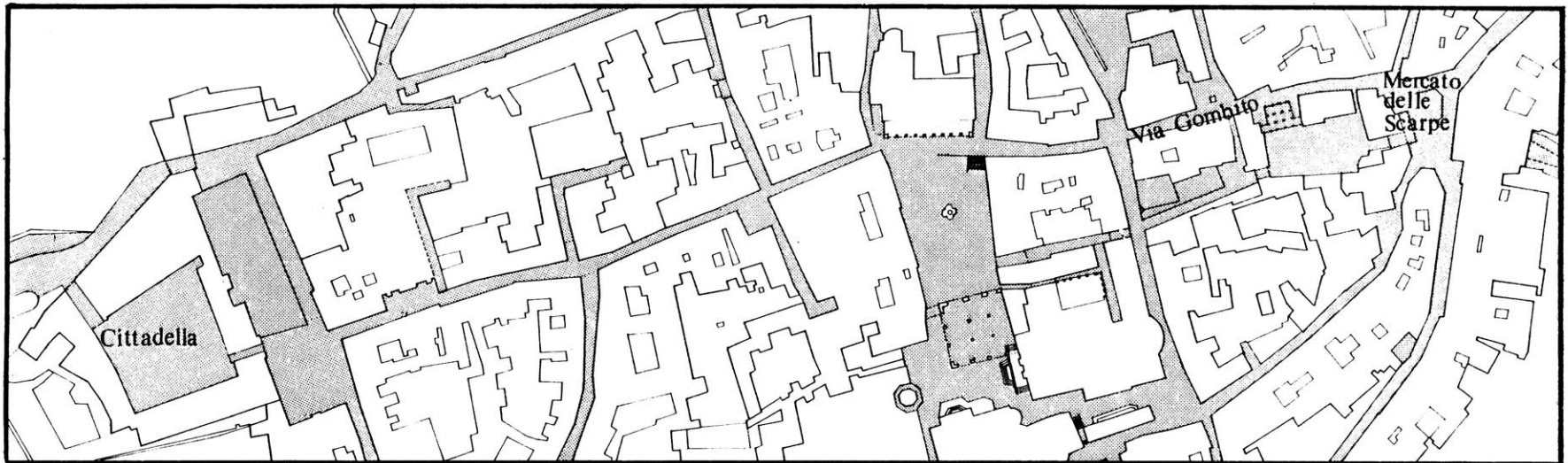
1. Paths through the Piazza Vecchia



1. Mercato delle Scarpe



2. Coming upon the Library
from Via Gombito



Via Gombito



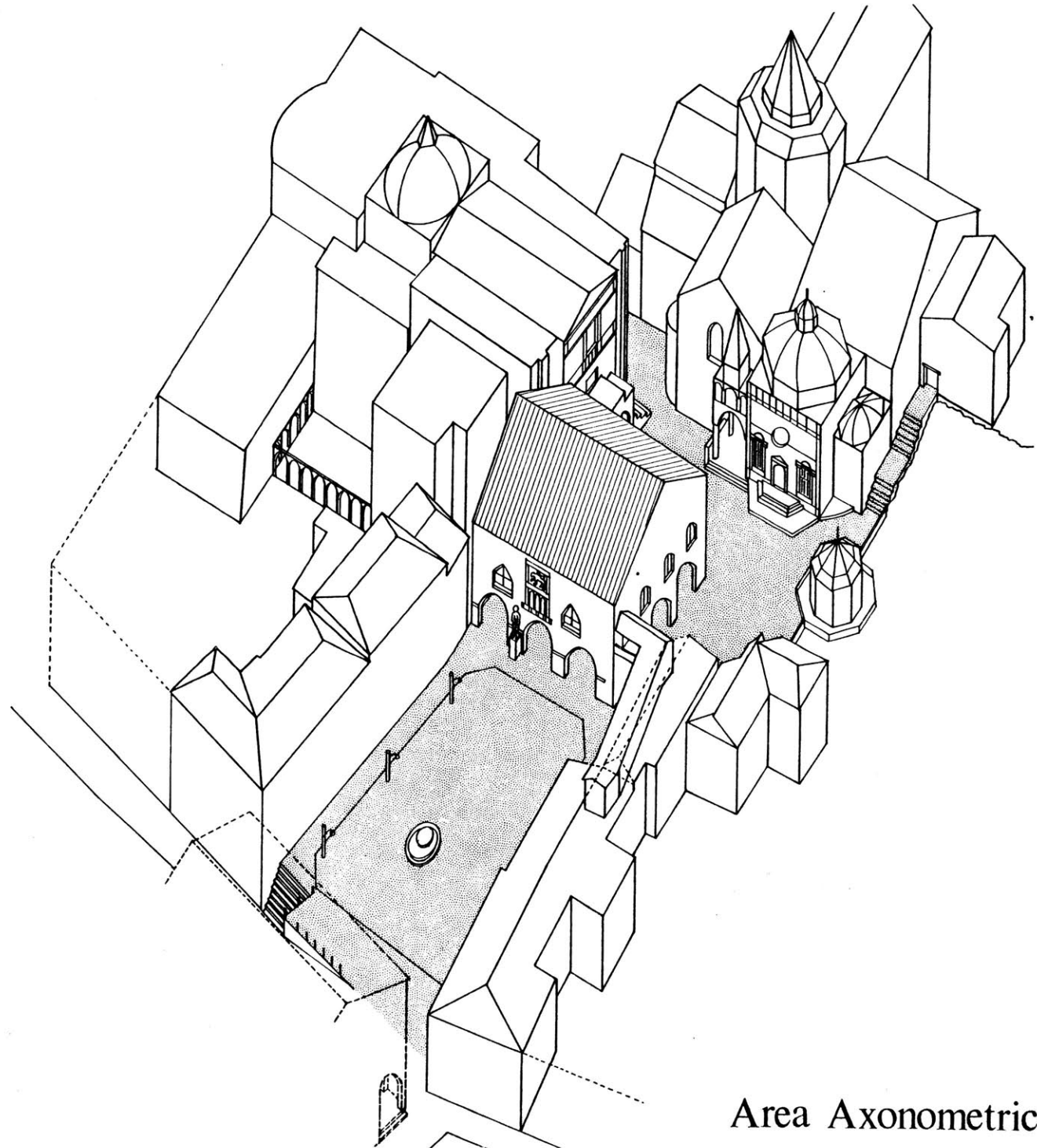
1. Engraving of Colleoni Chapel by A. De Vegni-Firenze 1845
from Bergamo Nelle Stampe

Placement

As the axonometric drawing shows, the Palazzo della Ragione is a building which mediates between two spaces. The power of its presence lies in the way it establishes continuity between the spaces, yet addresses each side with very different gestures.

The facades of the buildings along the Piazza Vecchia are relatively flat walls which crisply define the piazza edges. The facade of the Palazzo della Ragione closes the space, forming a visual climax for the slightly converging trapezoidal sides. The sense of closure is contradicted by the openness of the porticoed ground floor which reveals through its vaulted space the glimmering facade of the Colleoni chapel.

The Piazza del Duomo is formed by large buildings huddled together around the small, irregular space. The churches are not smooth, flat-faced buildings like those that edge the Piazza Vecchia; rather each is an aggregation of elements which provide scale relief to their overall size and height. From this piazza, the Palazzo appears not as a wall, but as a volume standing among, and in the case of the Duomo, almost climbing over the churches. The L-shaped piazza is formed around the Palazzo, with its south and east facades defining the space. The tightness of the piazza restricts a full perception of the Palazzo.

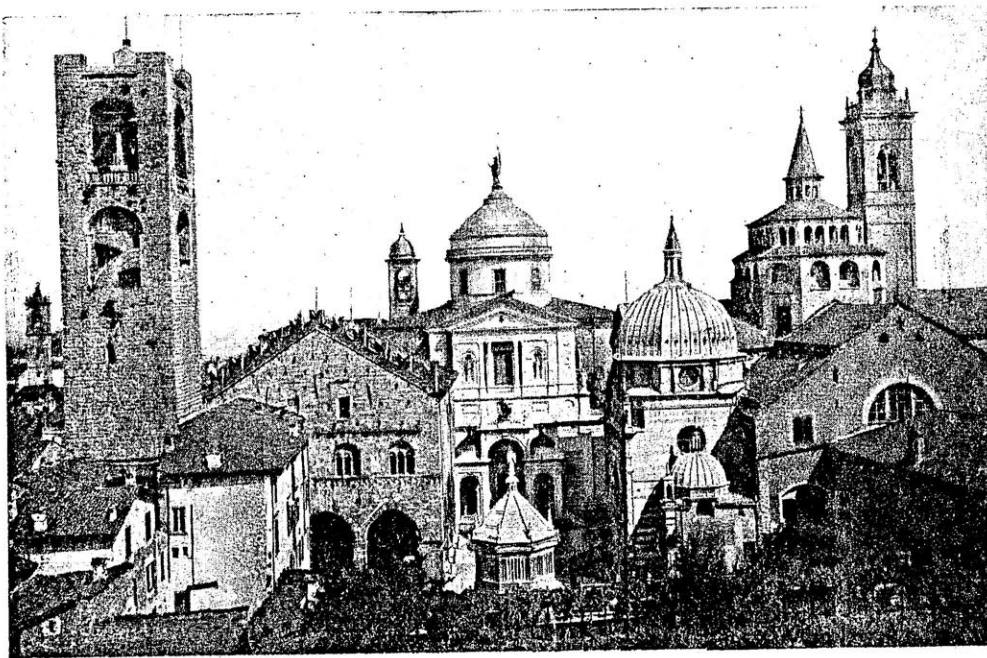


Area Axonometric

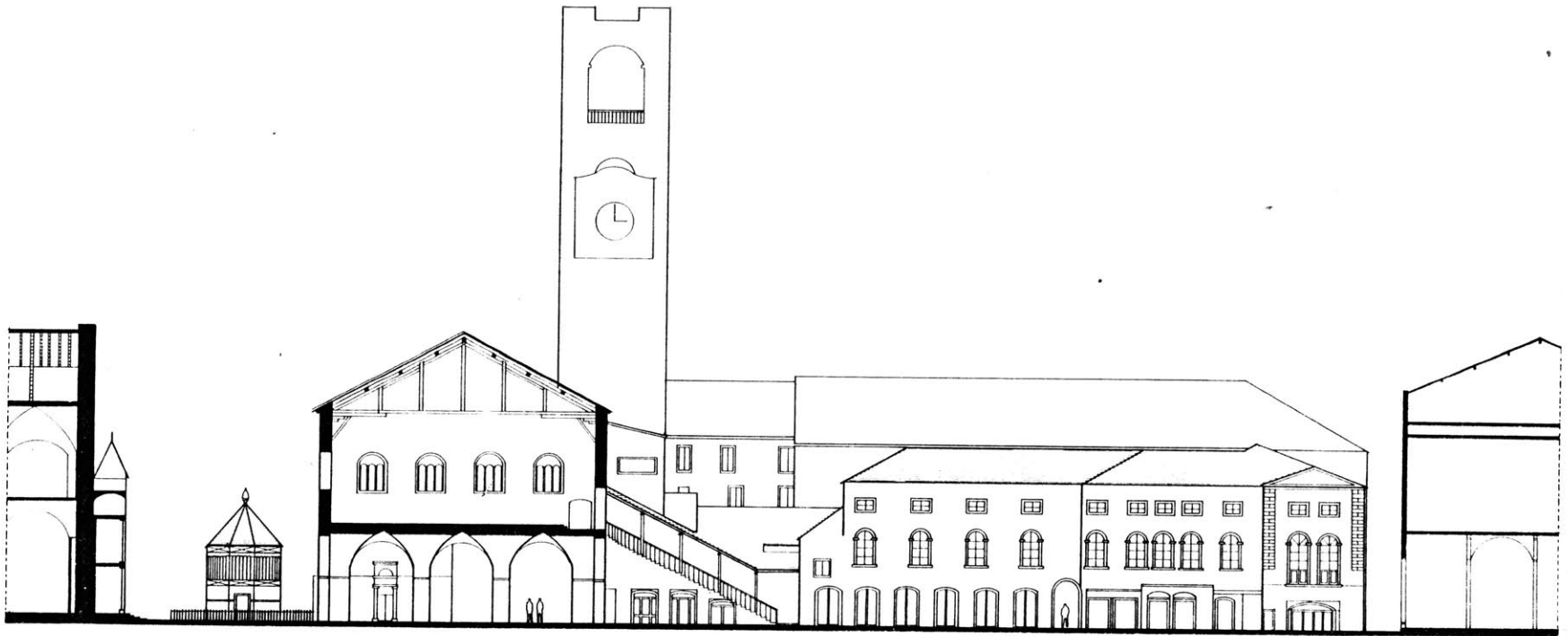
Piazza Section

Multiplicity of definition is one of the strongest characteristics of the Bergamo spaces. The aggregation of the large monuments around the open spaces creates a richly complex spatial experience. Standing close to Santa Maria Maggiore, the Palazzo della Ragione encompasses a space larger than the Piazza del Duomo. The covered space at times seems independent, defined by the building above, at times to belong to the Piazza Vecchia, or to one varied but continuous sequence.

The experience of walking through the space is like walking through a stand of trees in a meadow. The trees change the quality of light and enclosure, and differentiate one clearing from another. The ground level of the Palazzo, like the forest, remains continuous but one moves from being in the open, to being under and among, and then to being in the open again. This well proportioned and modulated sequence expresses the potential of a building which opens itself at ground level to enhance the relationship between open spaces.



1. *View of Piazza del Duomo from behind the Baptistery*



Section of Piazza Vecchia



1. View of Piazza Vecchia and library from tower

Enclosing Walls

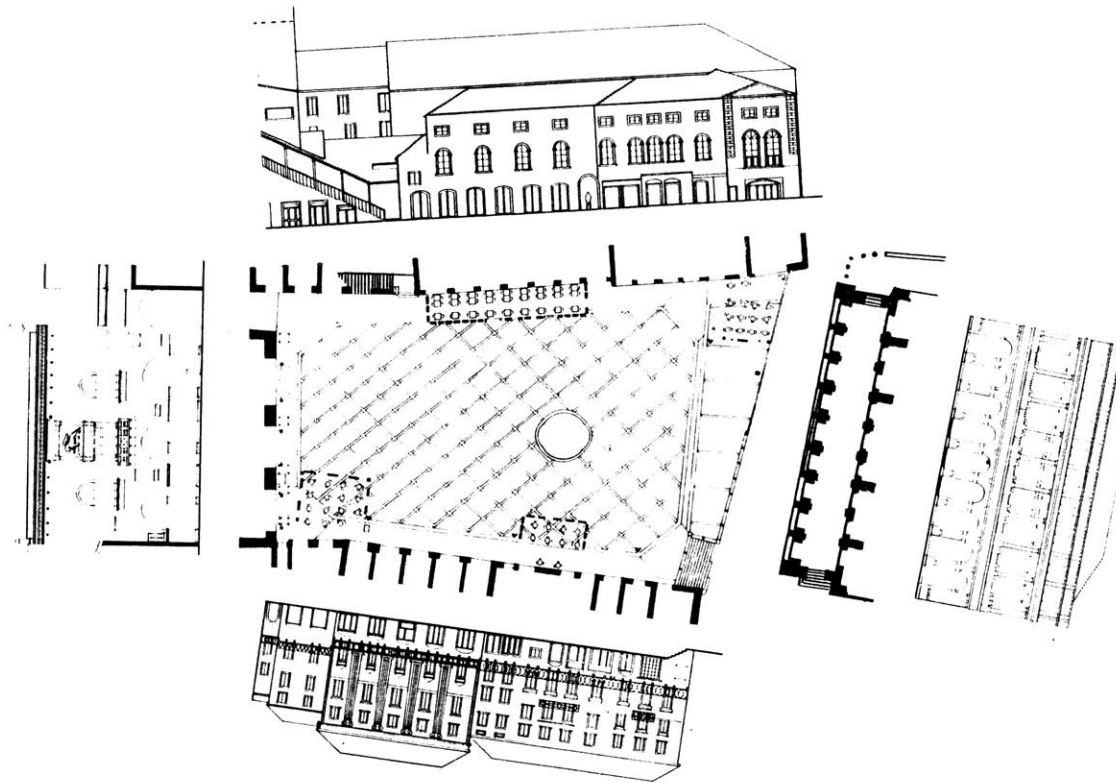
The buildings edging the Piazza Vecchia differ in use, formal vocabulary and materials, yet they complement and reinforce each other, creating an impression of a subtly harmonious totality.

The piazza is closed on the north by the Palladian facade of the library, designed by Angelo Mai and begun in 1604 but not completed until 1927. The facade of the library is white marble, a contrast to the more muted colors of the neighboring buildings.

The west edge of the piazza is formed by the 15th century facade of the Venetian mayor's house. Now used by both commercial enterprises and the town university, the yellow, stuccoed facade with large arched windows makes a serene, unassertive backdrop to the Piazza Vecchia. Next to it is a steep stair that climbs up along the wall, then bridges over to access the upper floor of the Palazzo della Ragione.

The east facade of the piazza is composed of several buildings articulated by iron balconies and domestic scaled windows. The central building has a neoclassical facade, residential in spite of its giant order of corinthian columns.

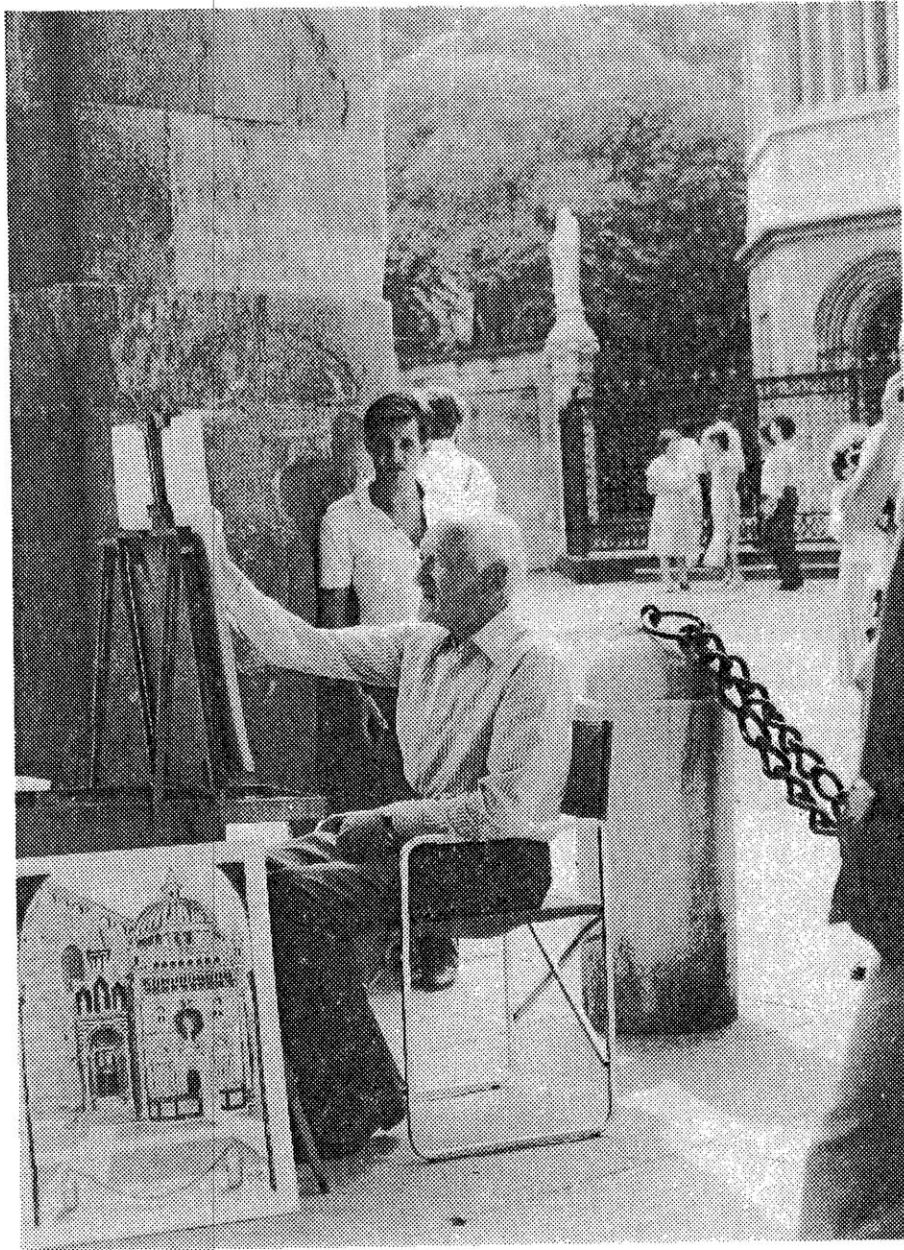
The facades mark the piazza as the monumental center of the town, yet give it a quality akin to a living room.



Scale 1:1000



Elevations of Piazza Vecchia



1. Artist sketches the Colleoni Chapel from beneath the Palazzo della Ragione

Use Patterns

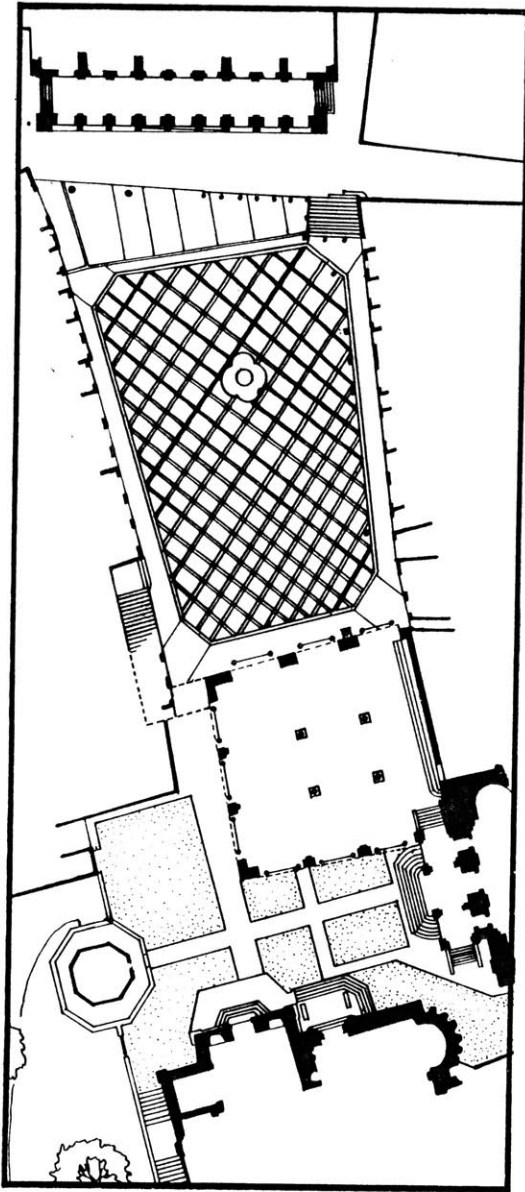
One proposition of the Powers of Inhabitation states:

"As people move through a place, they should have choices of path, choices of cover, choices of outlook, and choices of exposure. People also need the opportunity to linger--places that are on the edge of activities, and places where they can see and be seen."

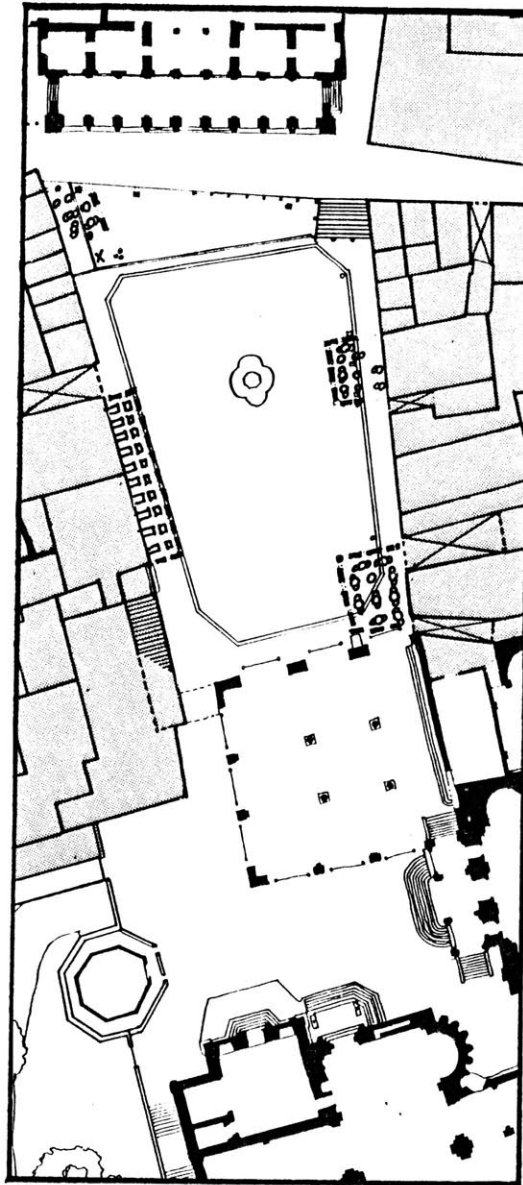
As the first diagram on the right shows, the built definitions of the piazzas in Bergamo offer a range of spatial opportunities. The arcade of the Library shelters people sitting at its base; the fountain of the Piazza Vecchia offers a focus and a destination; the stairs of the Palazzo, a place to be up, surveys both piazzas, and the porticoes of the churches places to be under shelter.

In addition to these permanent elements, there are a number of cafes and restaurants which move out into the Piazza Vecchia to claim space for their tables. (Fig. 2)

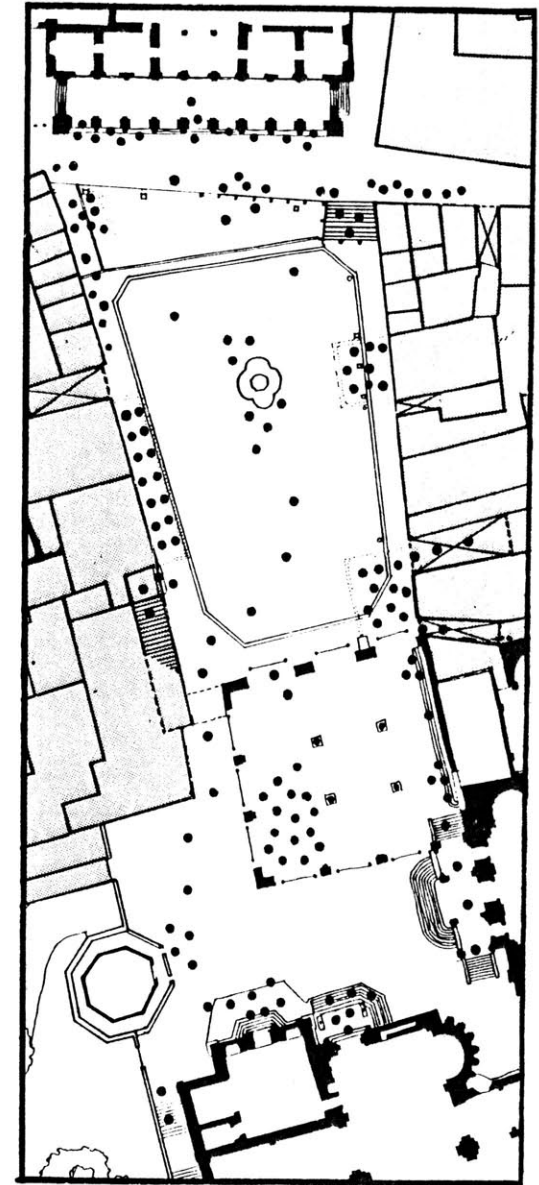
As the final diagram shows, the pattern of people gathering in the piazzas in relation to the permanent elements, such as the fountain or steps, and the less fixed elements of cafe tables and movable additions form an environment full of choice of cover, outlook and use.



1. Plan of Piazas Vecchia and del Duomo showing fixed elements (stairs, benches, bollards).
Scale: 1:1000



2. Plan of Piazas Vecchia and del Duomo showing semi-fixed elements (cafe tables, planters, etc.)
Scale: 1:1000



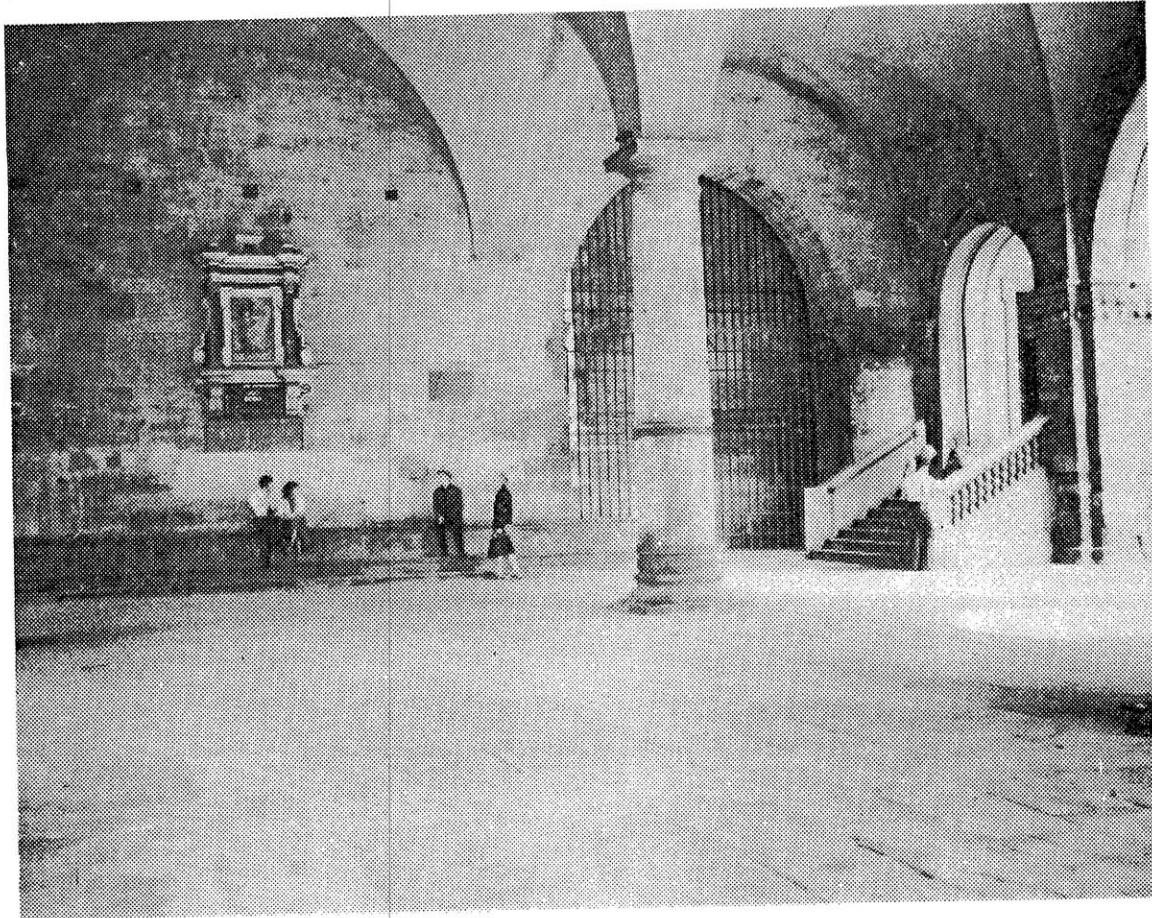
3. Plan of Piazas Vecchia and del Duomo showing locations for gathering.
Scale: 1:1000

Plan

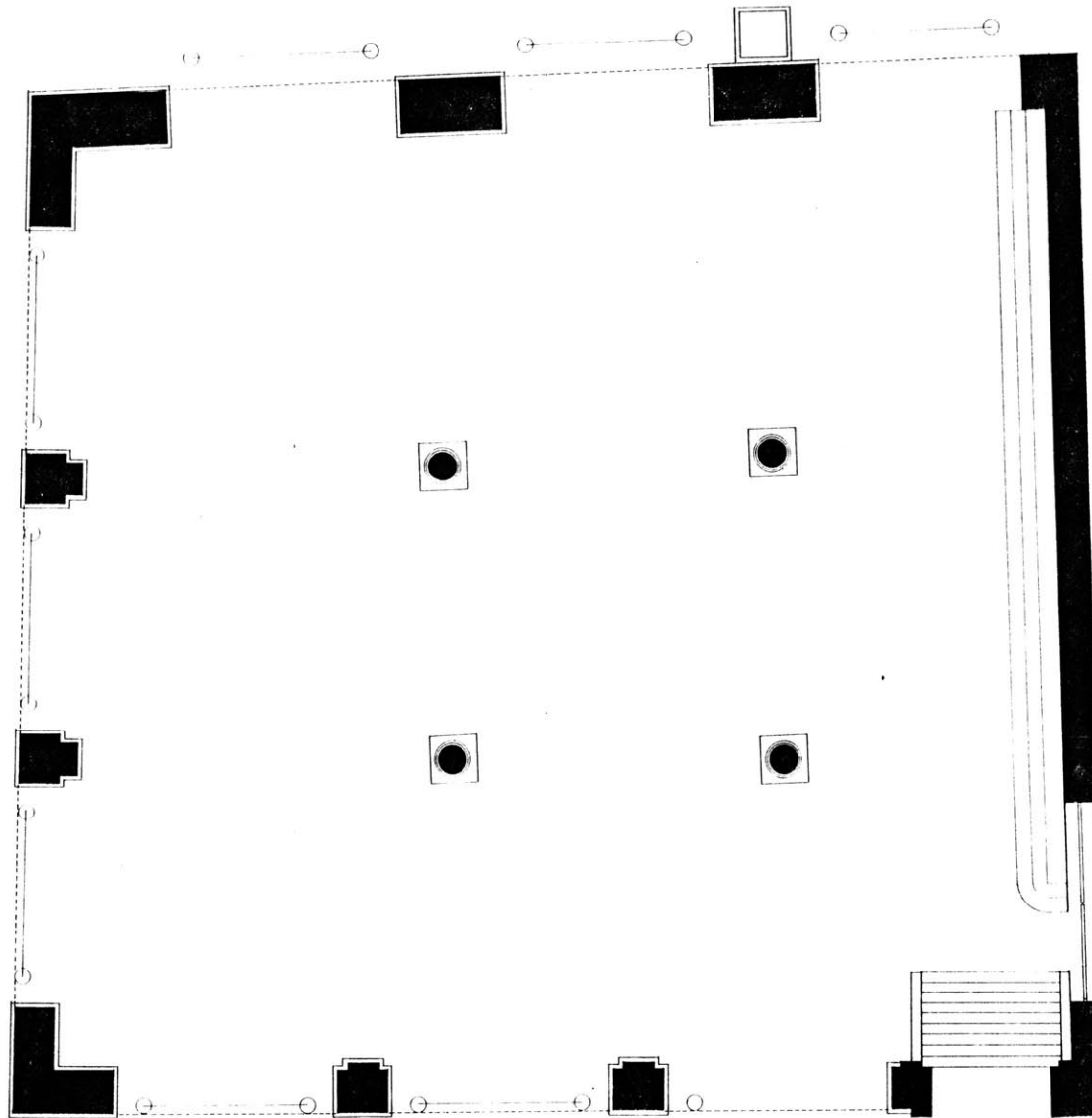
The simple, slightly skewed plan of the Palazzo della Ragione incorporates the traces of its subtle transformation over time. When built in the second half of the 12th century, the main facade, about 27 meters long, had four arched openings and faced the Piazza del Duomo. The north edge was closed until the creation of the Piazza Vecchia. After a fire in 1296, first one arch was opened, and the other two in the second half of the 14th century.

After a fire in 1513, the building was restored, replacing the interior columns which had originally aligned with the south facade. The four new Tuscan columns aligned with the north facade facing the newly formed Piazza Vecchia.

From the Piazza Vecchia, the piers of the south facade are off-center with the three Gothic arches of the north facade, implying the volume of covered space. The building's corners, defined by heavy brick piers, ground the mass of the building, giving it a sense of rootedness. The only interior definition other than the columns, is a stone bench 21 meters long at the east edge. This edge has a closed gate into the courtyard of the Duomo. A set of steps leading to the Duomo slip into the covered space of the Palazzo.



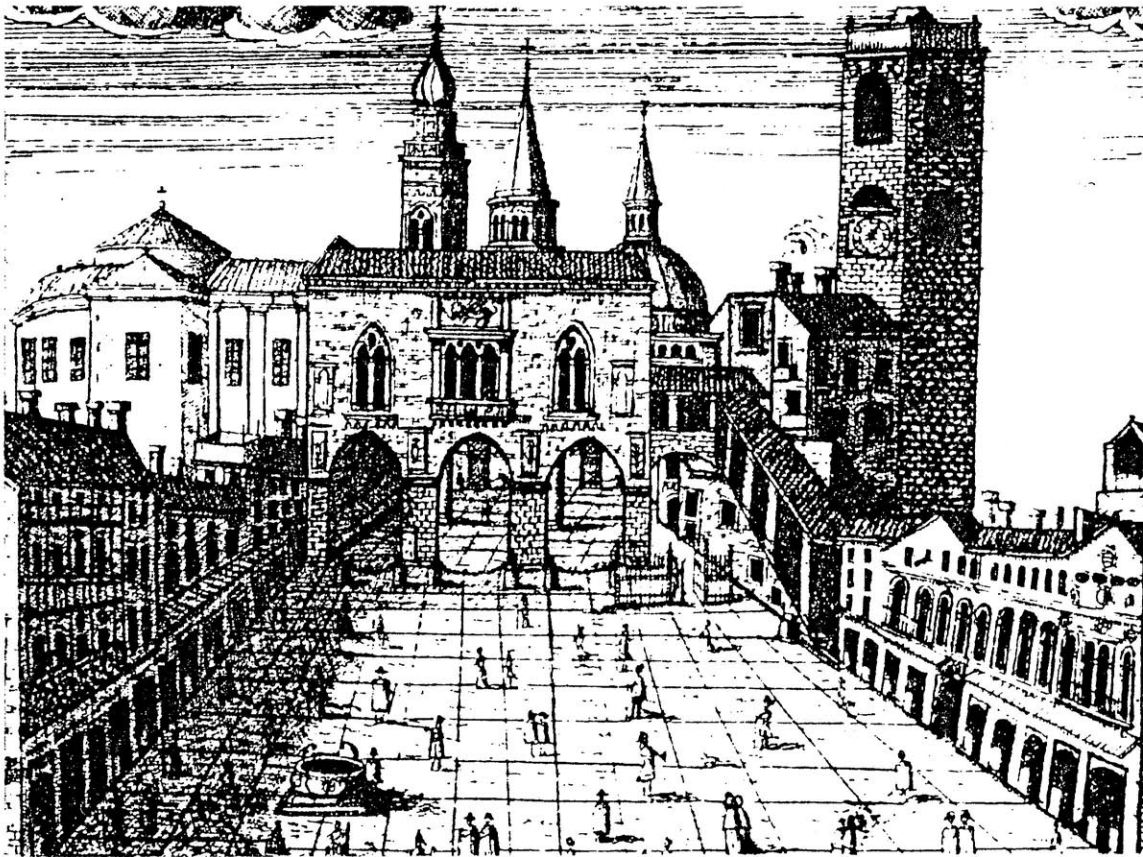
1. *Ground floor covered space of the Palazzo della Ragione*



Scale 1:200



Plan of Palazzo della Ragione



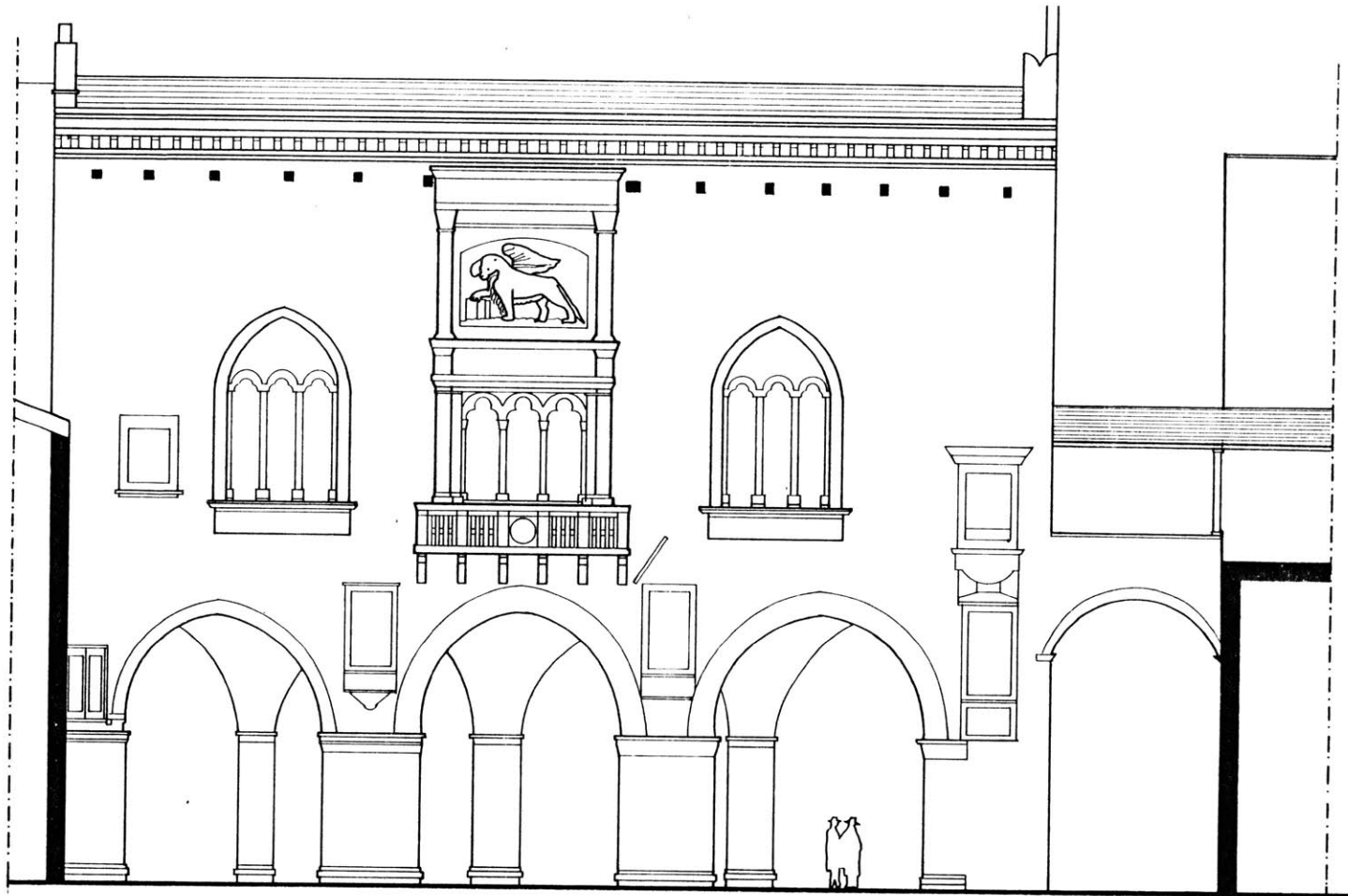
1. *Seventeenth Century Engraving of the Piazza Vecchia*
By *Jacobus Belotti*, from *Bergamo Nelle Stampe*

Elevation

By the midpoint of the 15th century, the Piazza Vecchia had assumed its shape. The Palazzo della Ragione, now freed of the buildings which had stood around it, was given a new facade. This new facade was built in the Venetian gothic style, with trifora windows in pointed arched openings.

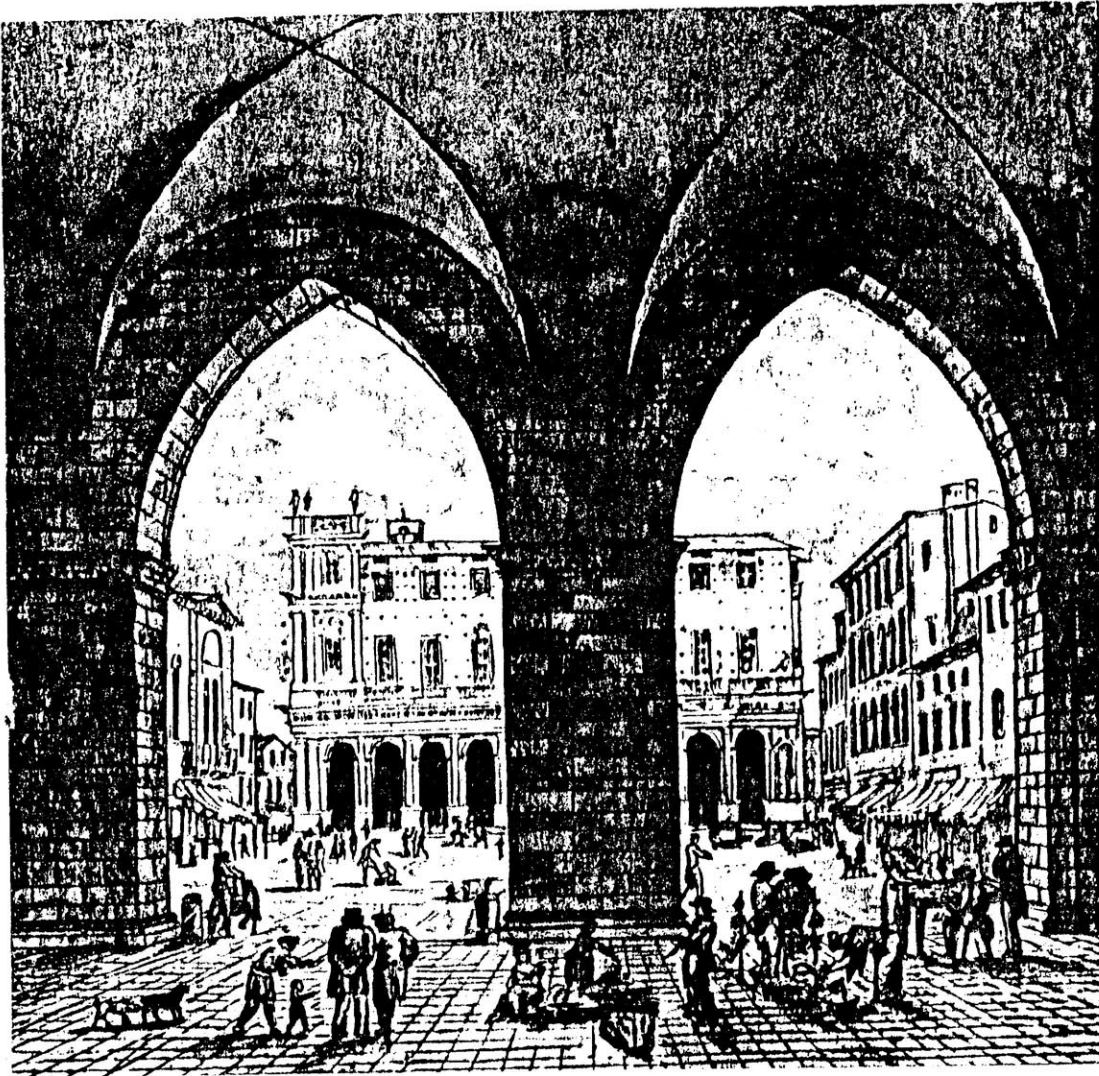
The lion of Venice over the central window announced the Venetian rule of the town. Although the building was partially destroyed by fire in 1513, it was restored according to the original design.

The building is quite large but the design of the elevation reduces the scale. Composed of large, discernible elements, the facade seems to be in the same proportions as the neighboring buildings. It is a friendly object, as recognizable and understandable as the adjacent residential buildings.



Scale 1:200

North Elevation of Palazzo della Ragione

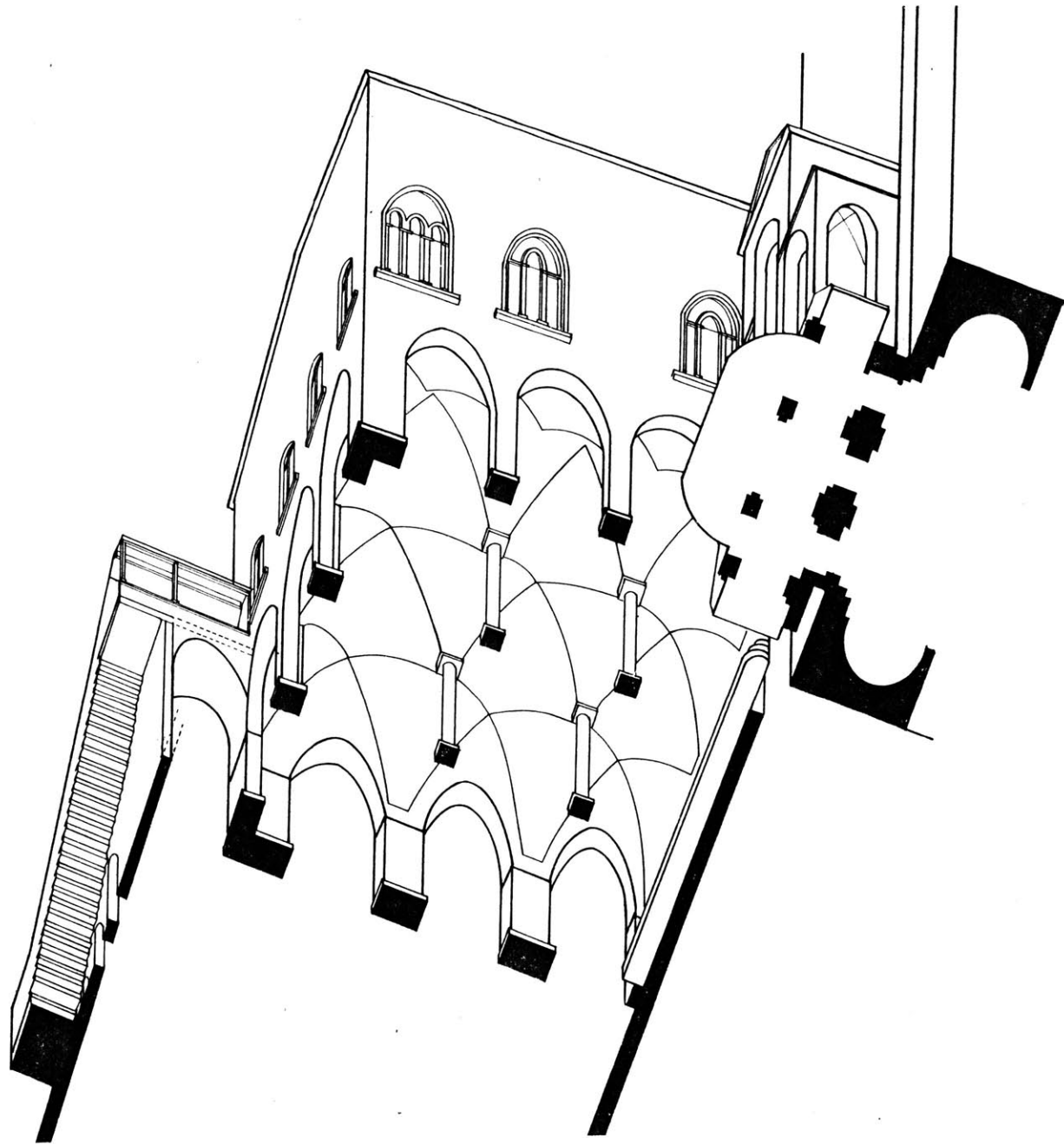


1. Engraving of the arcade of the Palazzo della Ragione, by Giuseppe Rudelli (c. 1820), from *Bergamo d'Altri Tempi*

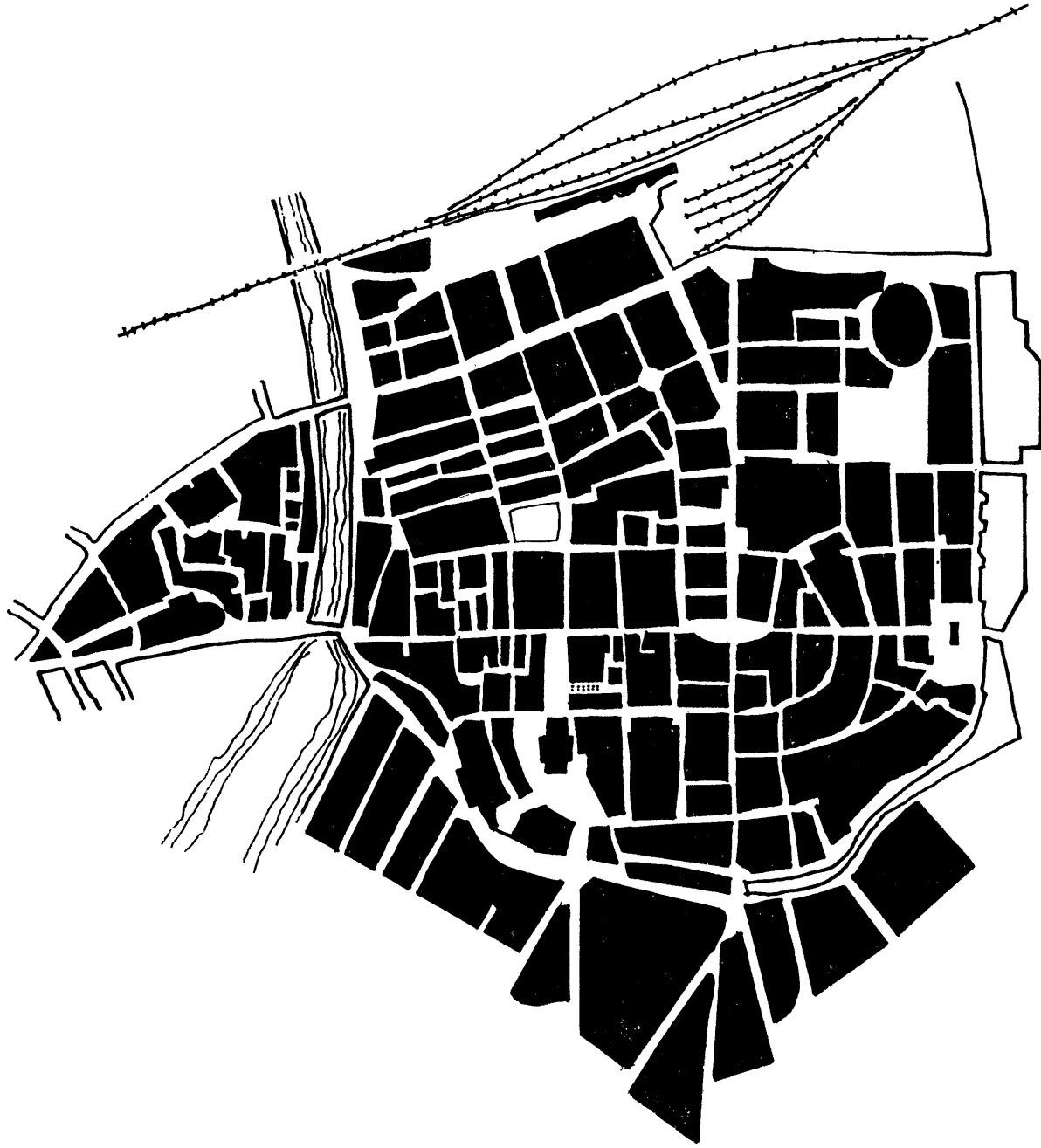
Cover

The sense of being under and inside a space which is covered and contained, yet part of the public domain is the most evocative quality of the Palazzo della Ragione. The building, which serves to both connect and define the piazzas, makes facades and edges to the open spaces and offers an umbrella of vaulted shelter. The building is part of a network where the path becomes a field criss-crossing through the space. The building changes dramatically the character of the path, for the path now becomes a covered place.

Walking through the gothic arches of the Palazzo, the vaulted ceiling lifts up and the covered space is much higher and more spacious than expected. The covered space, once the financial market, has no specific use today. It is a quiet place where people drift through, or sit along the bench at one side, or watch an artist sketching. But its haunting quietness serves well as the transition between the busy, commercial cafe world of the Piazza Vecchia and the quiet, religious quality of the Piazza del Duomo. It is a covered, sheltering place along the path, open and inviting to all.



Axonometric of Palazzo della Ragione



Rimini

Place Description

The sound of the name "Rimini" reminds one of a childhood nursery rhyme, an Italian version of "do-re-mi." Yet Rimini is hardly a childhood fantasy. It is a raw, jarring coast town, ravaged by war-time destruction and subsequent mindless development. Lacking in the calm and dignity evident in so many of the more historically intact cities of Italy, Rimini greets the newcomer with a frenetic intensity that is both exciting and exhausting and even a bit frightening. For Rimini in its public life is a circus, populated by people who accept contradiction and chaos with welcome. Characteristic of this are the streets of the historic center, bounded by undistinguished post-war buildings, punctuated by uninspiring open spaces, and plagued by confusing and maddening vehicular circulation which seems intent upon conquering the pedestrian. The confusion of people and cars seems easily remedied, but apparently is not bothersome enough to those who deal with it daily to invite correction.

The frenetic intensity increases, although the vehicular traffic diminishes, when the main path, the Corso d'Augusto reaches the Piazza Cavour. Here, on a typical evening, a series of spectacles await you--a small drama group may be performing in one part of the piazza, while in another a dance performance may be in progress. The piazza has hosted the entertainment of flame eaters, dancers, actors, and other professional and amateur performers. And always the piazza invites those out for an evening stroll or an after-dinner drink.

During the day, the Piazza Cavour is no less intense. The range of activities and uses that occur is broad, with little apparent connection. On some days, it is the busy town playground, with children madly biking around the statue of Paul V, or devilishly scaling the fountain in an intense water battle. The cafes service a changing clientele, while teenagers and elderly linger on steps or benches around the piazza. Then, on market days, the broad expanse of the piazza disappears under a canopy of numerous umbrellas and a new, canvas sky is created. There is barely room to move between the tightly packed stalls and there is little opportunity to hear above the modern rock music blaring from different corners of the piazza. At lunch time, the stalls are dismantled, the goods stored away, the garbage picked up and by two o'clock, the frenzy of the morning market has disappeared so completely that it is hard to believe it actually happened.

The appearance of the piazza is no less consistent. The buildings that define the edges of the piazza are different in style, scale and elevation. Yet it is an amusing inconsistency, inspiring the same sort of affection that the good-humored chaos of the town ultimately elicits. And so it is somehow all right and, in fact, quite delightful to discover Buonamici's baroque facade, richly exuberant and eccentric in the texture of the otherwise unremarkable set of buildings that define the east edge of the piazza.

At night, the facade seems most unearthly, half-illuminated by the piazza lights, which only partially describe it. Upon closer inspection, the arched openings become visible, revealing the loggia-like building behind it. The building is an enigma. It has nothing in

common stylistically with the other buildings of the piazza. The facade that faces Piazza Cavour tells you little of the building behind it, a modest, one-story market building that was used as the fish market until recently. In contrast to the feisty piazza facade, the body of the building is a highly articulated, carefully designed, yet simple shed. Nudged between the neighboring buildings, it is a long, low-lying animal raising its face to the activities of the Piazza Cavour, and allowing pedestrians to quietly transverse its narrow length to disappear into the maze of tiny, crooked streets behind it. It is as representative of the circus that is Rimini as the flame eater, the mock-warring children...or the fluffer puffs.

Surrounds

The Piazza Cavour, a long and narrow space, is located to the south of the Corso d'Augusto, one of the main axes of Rimini. One edge of the piazza continues the commercial enterprises of the town, including several outdoor cafes. This long and relatively low wall of buildings is interrupted by the Pescheria, erected in 1747 after a design by Giovanni Francesco Buonamici. A small baroque monument, it respects the scale of this edge.

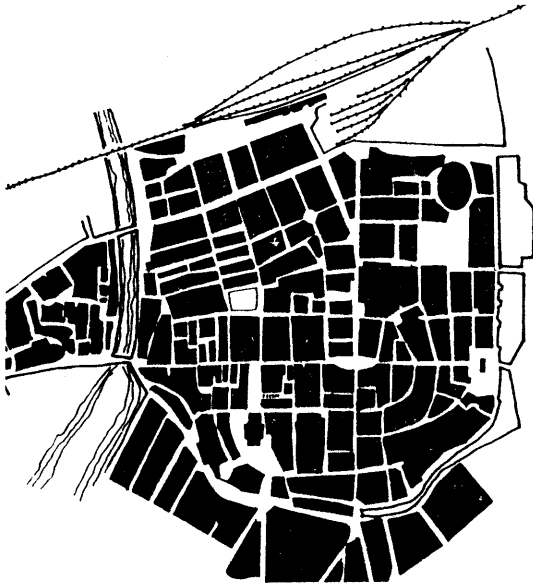
The opposite side of the piazza is characterized by a number of monumental buildings. The first of these is the Palazzo Garampi, the seat of the Commune. Erected in 1562 by Ludovico Carducci, it presents a high-arched loggia and tall 'piano nobile' to the piazza. Its size is emphasized by its base, which is several steps above the level of the piazza.

The town tower separates the Palazzo Garampi from its two medieval neighbors, the Palazzo dell'Arengo and the Palazzo del Podesta, both of which are also raised above the level of the piazza. The Palazzo dell'Arengo,

erected in 1204-1207, and the Palazzo del Podesta, erected in 1334, possess huge arched openings at the ground level and castellated ridge at the eave.

The neoclassical Teatro Communale, designed by Luigi Paoletti in the 19th century, sits at the west edge of the piazza. Although almost completely destroyed in World War II, it retains its original facade, a high and beautifully imposing presence in the piazza.

The surface of the Piazza Cavour is marked by the presence of several sculptures. Very near the Pescheria is a fountain in three concentric levels, constructed by Giovanni da Carrara in 1543. The fountain is a focus of activity in the piazza, especially for playing children. In the center is a bronze statue of Paul V, designed and started in 1611 by Cordier and finished in 1613 by Sebastiano Sebastiani. It is both a meeting place and a seat for irreverent children watching events in the piazza. The remaining sculptures are relatively new and undistinguished, but provide zones for gathering .



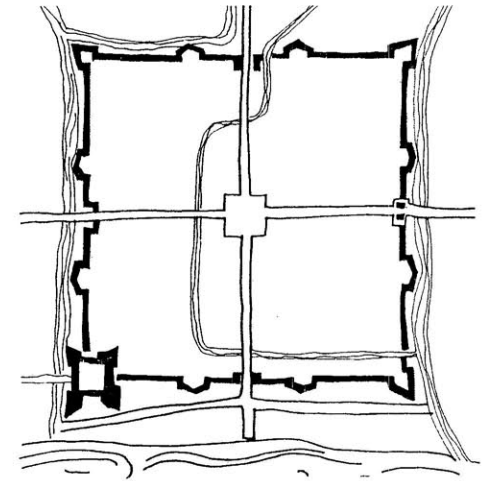
1. Rimini: Context Map



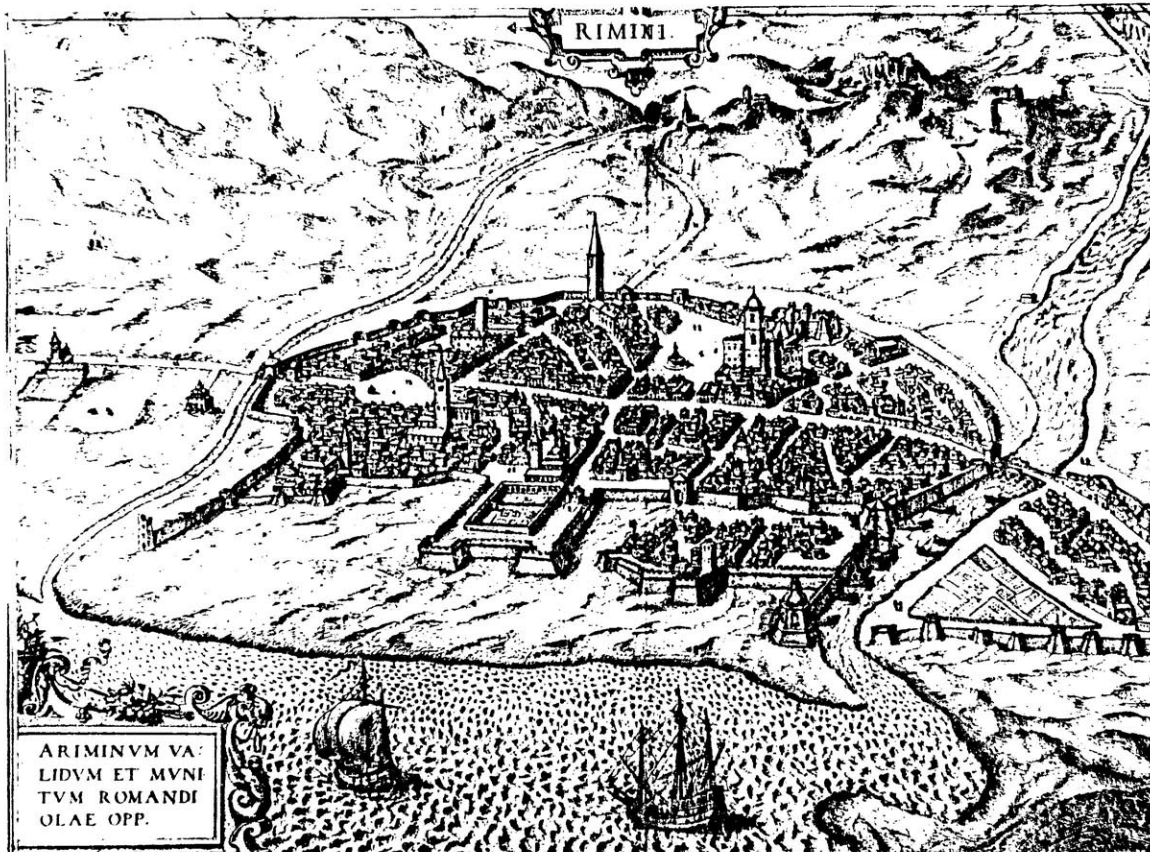
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Area Plan



1. Schematic plan of Roman axes



2. Seventeenth century view of Rimini; Piazza Cavour to the right

History

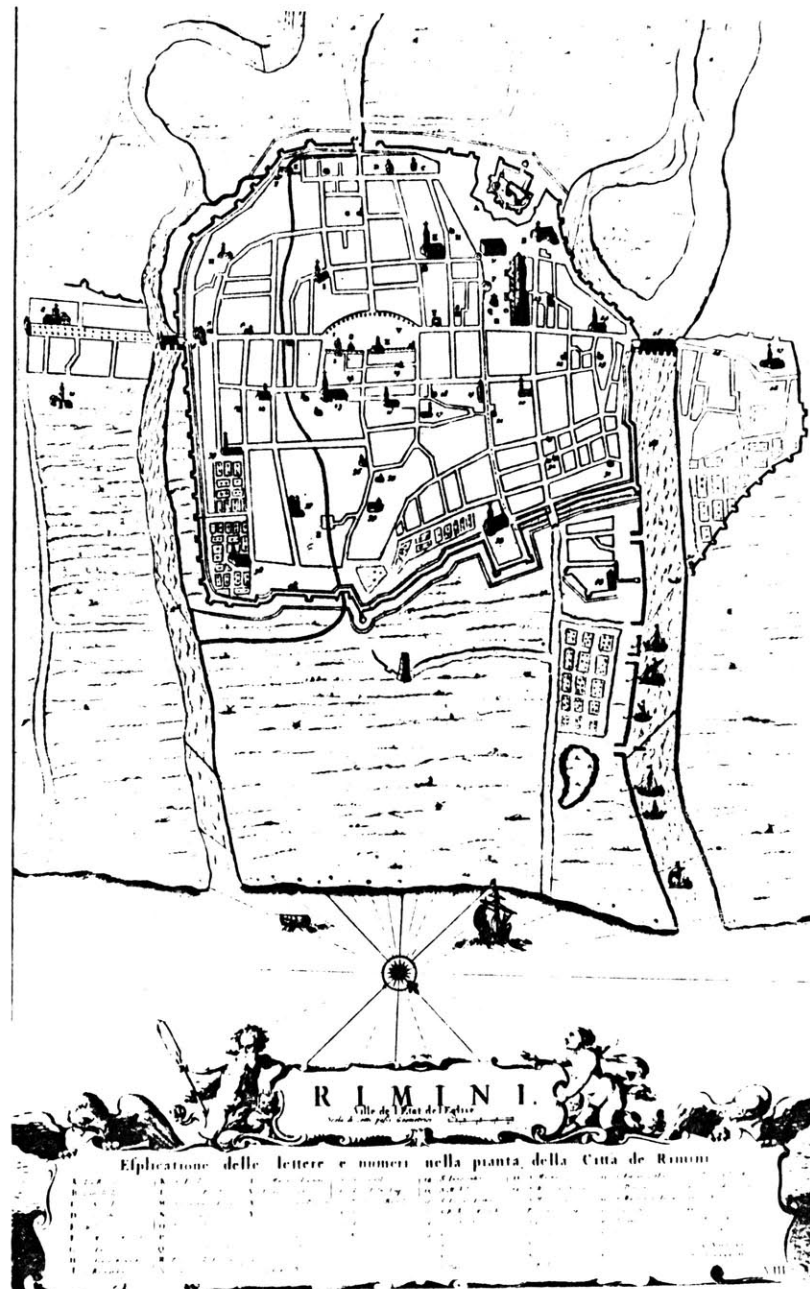
Rimini, an early colony of the Umbrians and then the Senonian Gauls, was made a Roman colony in 268 B. C. One of the most important towns of Italy under the rule of Augustus, Rimini still possesses traces of the grid of the old Roman axes, which intersect in the Piazza Tre Martiri, the forum of old Roman times. The Corso d'Augusto, the Roman decumanus, joins the Via Flaminia, which was built in 220 B. C. to connect Rimini to Rome. One end of the Corso is marked by the Arch of Augustus, built by the people of Rimini in 27 B. C.

The Piazza Cavour, the second forum of ancient Rome, was separated from the Corso d'Augusto by a block of buildings as shown in the 17th century view of Rimini. In this view, the piazza is open to the Rocca Malatestiana or

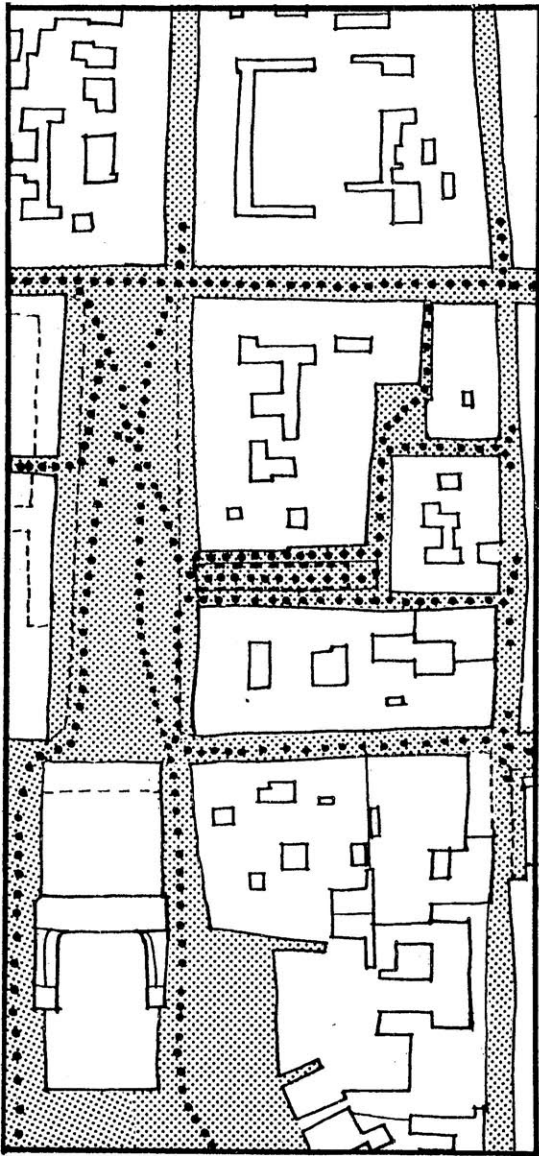
or Castel Sigismondo, the ancient fortified royal palace that Sigismondo Pandolfo built between 1437 and 1446.

The accuracy of this view is questionable, however, since another 17th century view (1616) of the town shows this block of buildings gone. The Piazza Cavour area is shown to have the line of civic monumental buildings, the fountain, the street pattern of the site where the fish market was eventually constructed, and the public granary on the site of the 19th century Teatro Communale.

The form of the Piazza Cavour has changed little from this 17th century view. The theater, although grander than the granary serves to separate the Piazza Cavour from the Piazza Malatesta in much the same way as the granary once did. The construction of the fish market did little to affect the structure of the block into which it was introduced, affecting more the experience of the Piazza Cavour wall elevation. The history of the Piazza Cavour, then, has been one of minor adjustments and change to the 17th century structure shown in the 1616 view, (shown in photograph to the right).



1. 1616 view of Rimini, Piazza Cavour upper right



1. Paths through the
Piazza Cavour

Paths

The major axis of Rimini is the Corso d'Augusto, defined at one end by the Arch of Augustus, dating from 27 B.C.; at the other, by the Ponte di Tiberio. Between these two landmarks, the Corso d'Augusto moves through two major public spaces, bisecting the Piazza Tre Martiri and edging the Piazza Cavour.

The Piazza Tre Martiri is the intersection of the old Roman *cardo* and *decumanus*. Here, cars, buses and pedestrians meet in a confusion of noise and crowdedness. This is not a particularly inviting part of the Corso and does not invite lingering.

Continuing west along the Corso, one reaches the Piazza Cavour, historically the second forum of ancient Rimini. It runs perpendicular to the Corso and is the most inhabitable open space in the larger network. Totally pedestrianized, the piazza is a release from the tightness of the Corso and the confusion of cars and people.

On the east side of the piazza, one arch of the Palazzo dell'Arengo opens through to the piazza, the streets, and the

sculpture garden behind. This is not a major nor particularly obvious connection.

Almost directly across the piazza, the Pescheria provides a rather unique connection to the small streets behind this side of the Piazza Cavour. The Pescheria, or fish market, attempts to mediate between the large scale of the piazza and the tiny piazzetta and streets to which it connects.

At the far end of the piazza, the theater separates the Piazza Cavour from the Piazza Malatesta. On one side of the building is a public parking area; on the other a market zone. Behind the theater and beyond the Piazza Malatesta is the Castello Sigismondo, marking a major exit from the city center.

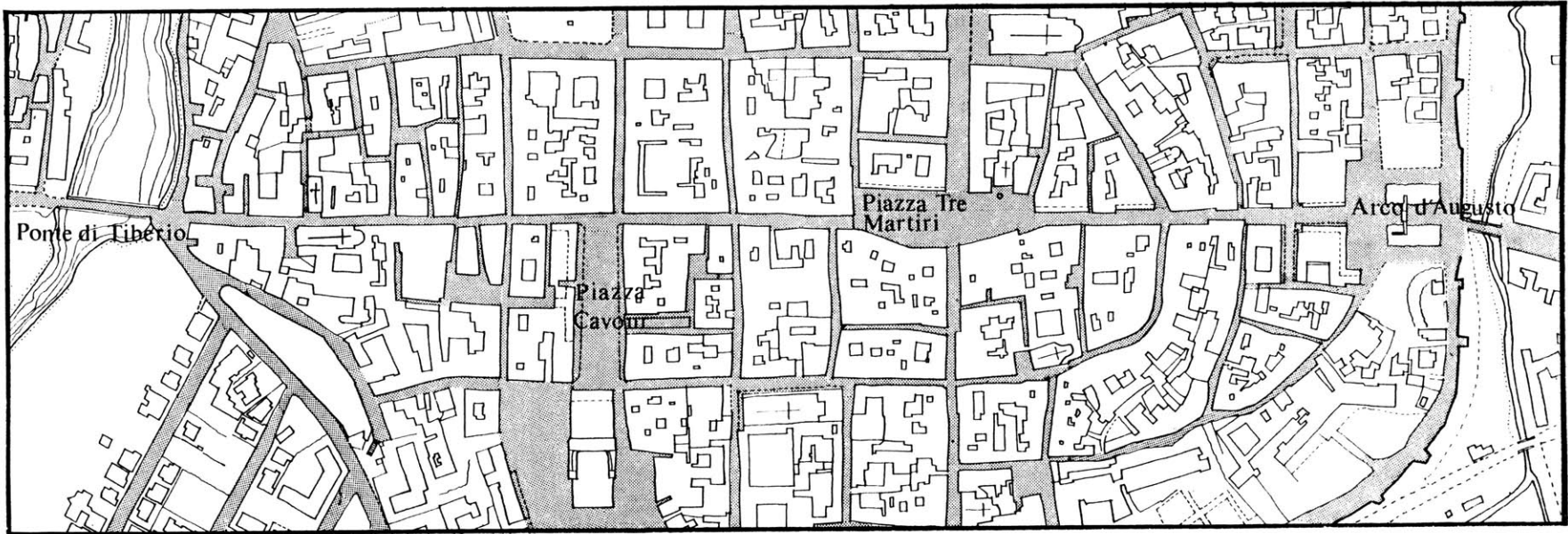
Returning to and continuing along the Corso d'Augusto, the path narrows and remains pedestrian almost to the bridge. Here, cars reappear and people and vehicles intensely challenge one another. The Ponte di Tiberio, bridging the River Marecchia, connects the center of Rimini to one of the many suburbs that lie beyond the remnants of the old Roman walls.



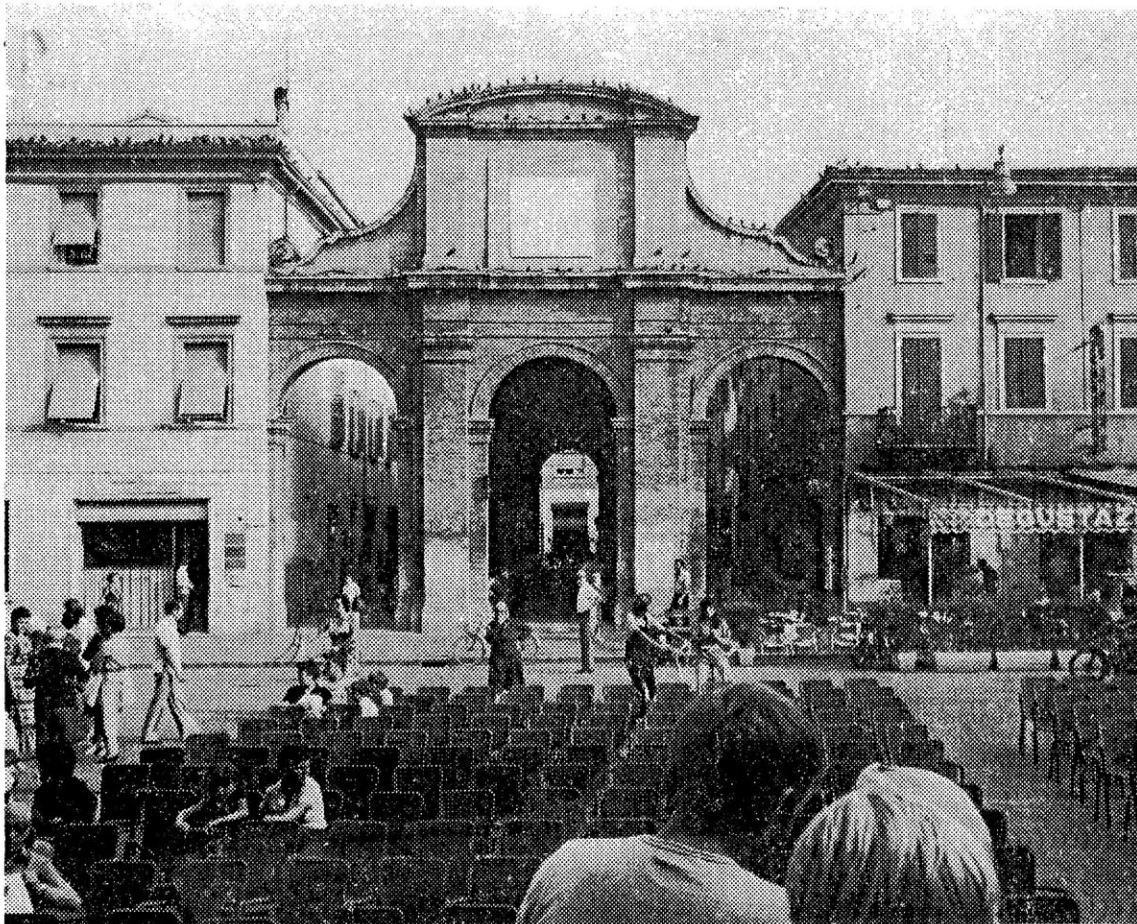
1. Ponte di Tiberio



2. Arco d'Augusto



Corso d'Augusto



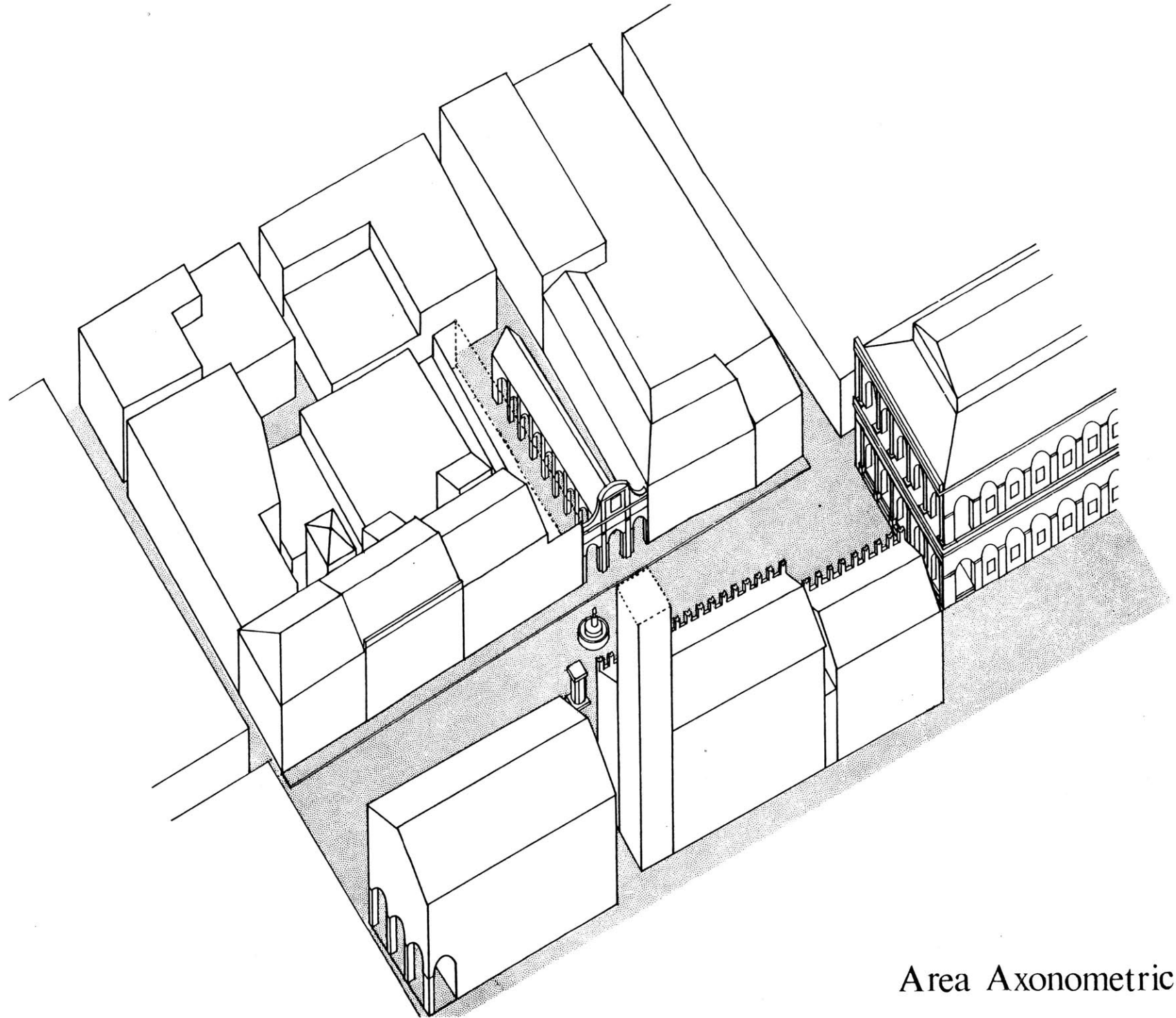
1. *View of the Pescheria from the Piazza Cavour*

Placement

Volumetrically, the Piazza Cavour is a play between smaller scaled block buildings and monumental civic buildings. Both the edge made by the palazzi and the edge made by the theater dominate the piazza visually with their size and solemnity. The generous steps and platforms at the bases of these buildings become, during the normal day, zones for resting and watching; at special times, they are transformed into stages for various individual and collective performances.

The Pescheria edge of the piazza is a wall, with little sense of the volumetric implications that exist opposite it. The wall breaks almost at a two thirds point and it is here that the facade of the Pescheria appears, a relief to an otherwise unbroken walk. Moving through the gate of the Pescheria, one finds a single bay market building nudged between and bounded on either side by two streets lined with small shops. All three paths end in a very small piazza, formed around the back facade of the Pescheria.

From here, there are two streets: one leads directly into the Via Cairoli; the other to a small piazza and then on to the Corso.

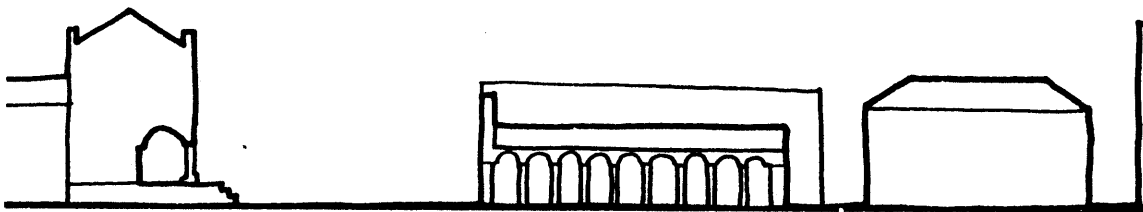


Area Axonometric

Piazza Section

Looking at the longitudinal section of the Piazza Cavour, what is most striking is the eccentricity of the Pescheria facade in the commercial wall of the piazza. The Pescheria is an edge, not a volume, to the Piazza Cavour, attempting to deal with the scale of its adjacencies although its facade design is uniquely baroque. It breaks the monotony of the long wall that runs from the Corso to the theater, as well as providing a perpendicular exit from the piazza.

This section also shows the much larger scale of the theater building. Nearly twice as high as the other buildings, the theater never seems overscaled because the piazza is so long and large and because the other civic buildings visually relate to its scale.



1. *Cross-section sketch of Piazza Cavour*

Looking at the cross section sketch of the Piazza Cavour, one perceives the vast difference in scale between the Piazza Cavour and the tiny piazzetta behind the Pescheria. The difference in scale between the civic buildings, high and narrow in cross-section, and the Pescheria, low and long, is evident. The difference in directionality is quite clear, emphasizing the fact that the fish market enfronts the Piazza Cavour but does not sit in it.



Section of Piazza Cavour



1. *The loggia of the
Palazzo Garibaldi*

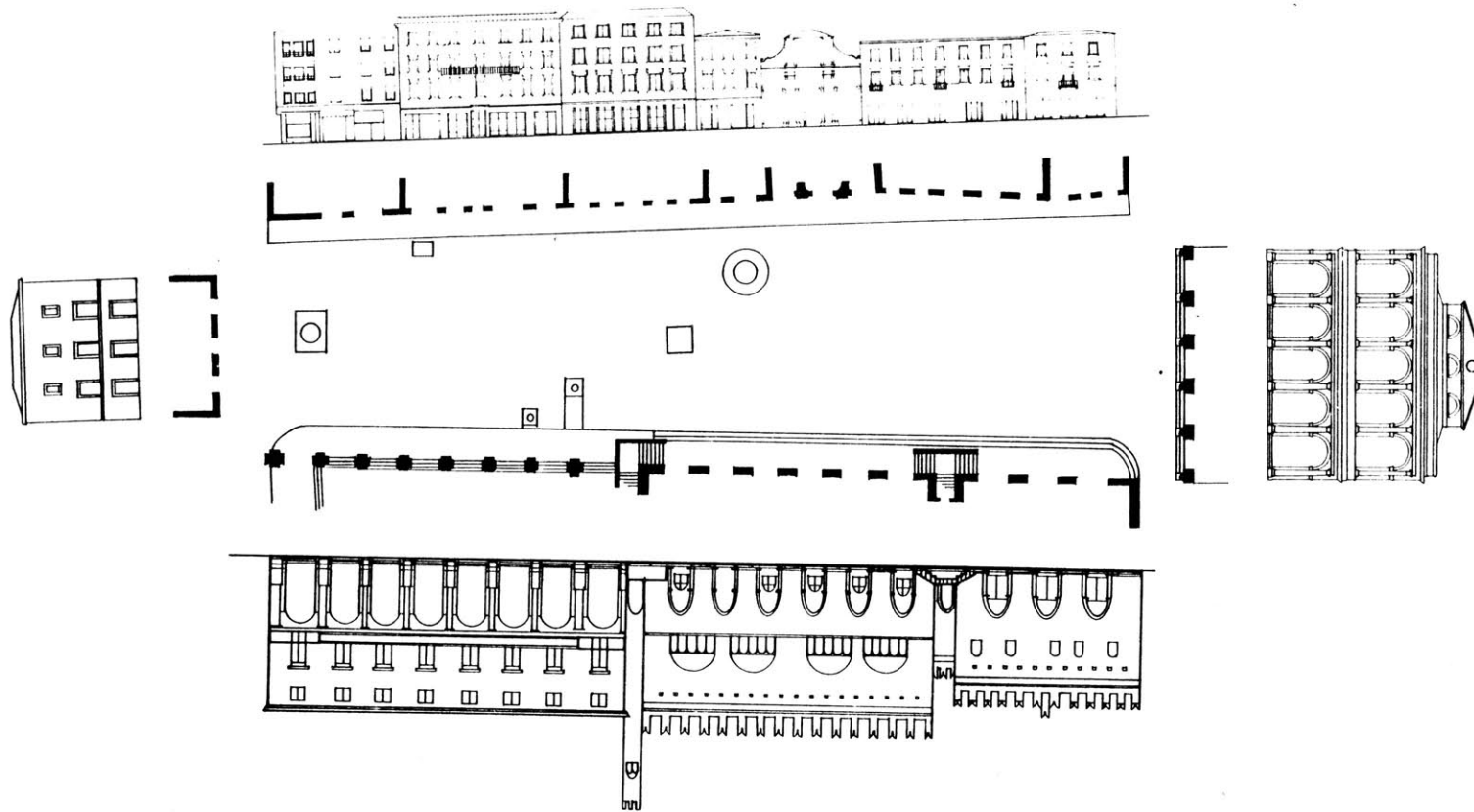
Enclosing Walls

The elevations of the Piazza Cavour pair off to form two L's of different character. The L of the Corso elevation and the Pescheria elevation possesses a commercial, everyday quality and image. Directly accessible from the piazza level, the ground floor holds commercial activities, and is characterized by large, glassy openings. The upper floors are marked by smaller scaled windows and occasional balconies and flowerpots on window sills. The edge varies slightly in height and window rhythm, but the overall sense is a busy, inhabited wall.

The Pescheria sits squeezed in this wall, presenting a very different facade from those adjacent to it. Although it maintains the height of the wall, its arches and proportions suggest an at-

tempt to be a special event, a monument. It is a bizarre but rather wonderful surprise in this elevation, although one suspects it would rather be on the other side of the piazza, where there are convincing monuments.

The other L of buildings, comprised of the theater and the civic palazzi, is much more stately and monumental. All of these buildings are set up from the piazza level, making the moving up and into them a more conscious action and setting them apart from the humdrum of daily activity. Although the theater is much larger in scale than any of its neighbors, it seems to be the same size as the civic palazzi. Its high-arched portico and glassy upper floor presents a richly elegant and beautiful end to the Piazza Cavour.



Scale 1:1000



Elevations of Piazza Cavour

Use Patterns

The Piazza Cavour has a range of definitions encouraging a number of activities. The fixed elements in the piazza--the steps of the civic buildings, the statue and fountain and the loggia-like Pescheria--are always available for use and improvisation, props in an ever changing stage set.

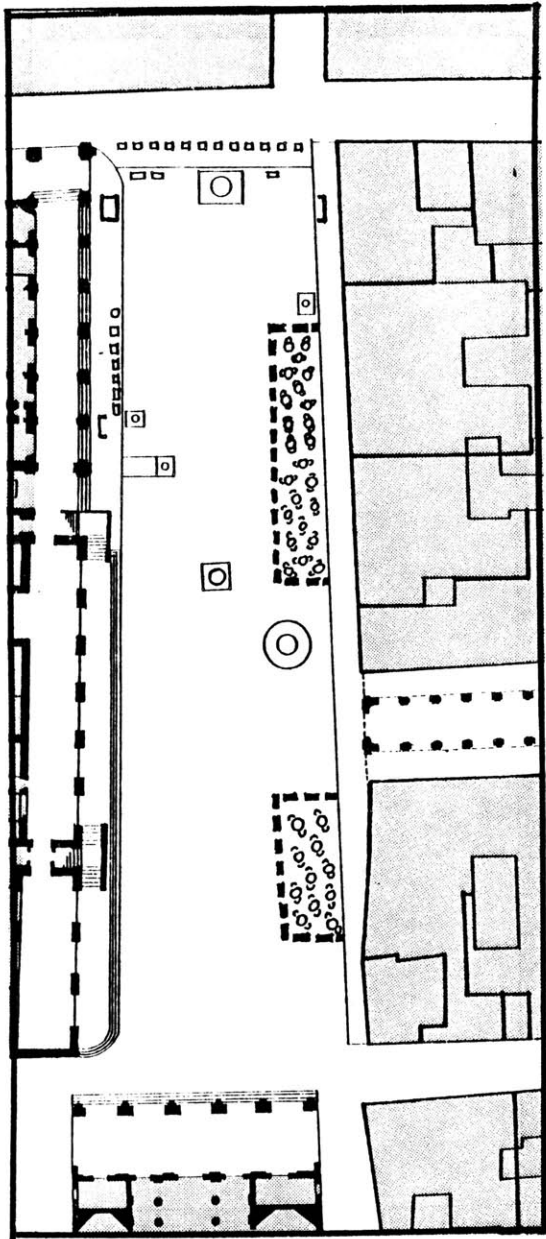
The more semi-fixed elements in the piazza are the numerous awnings and cafe tables that inhabit the zone along the east edge of the piazza, providing lounging space to those willing to pay. Benches along the north edge provide resting places for others and the various public sculptures provide foci for encounter and conversation. The zone of the Pescheria provides a quieter, less conspicuous area for people to inhabit, to chatter, to eat lunch, or to watch the Riminese world go by.

On certain days, the market activity in Rimini takes over the open space of the piazza and canopied stands fill all of the piazza, leaving little open space except that of the podiums of the civic buildings.

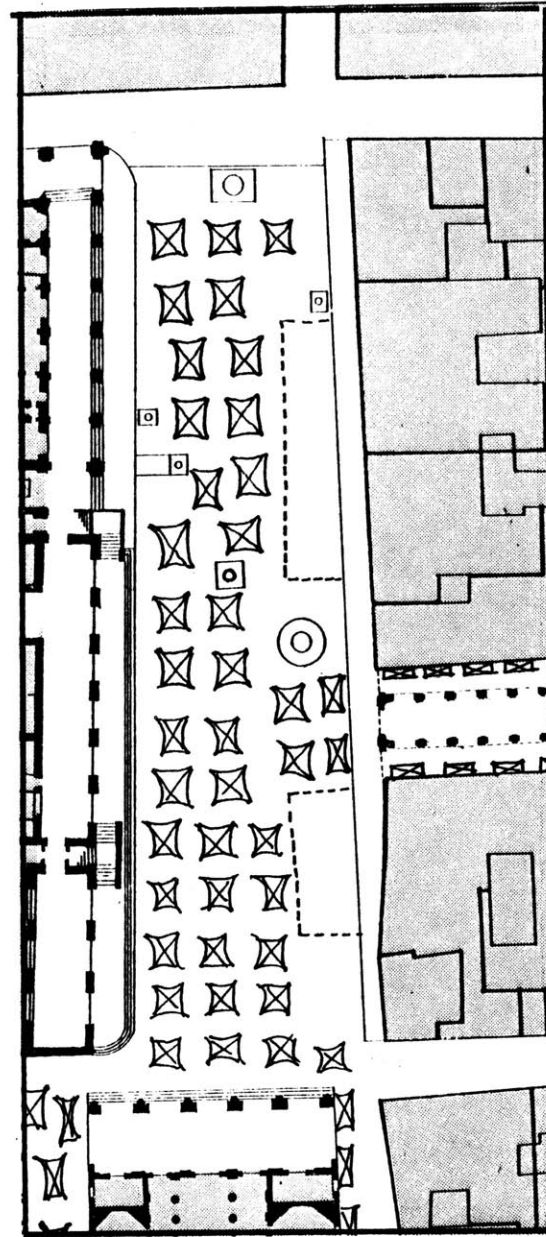
On other days, the zone in front of the Palazzi dell'Arengo and del Podesta is inhabited by chairs placed in an auditorium fashion for yet another piazza spectacle.



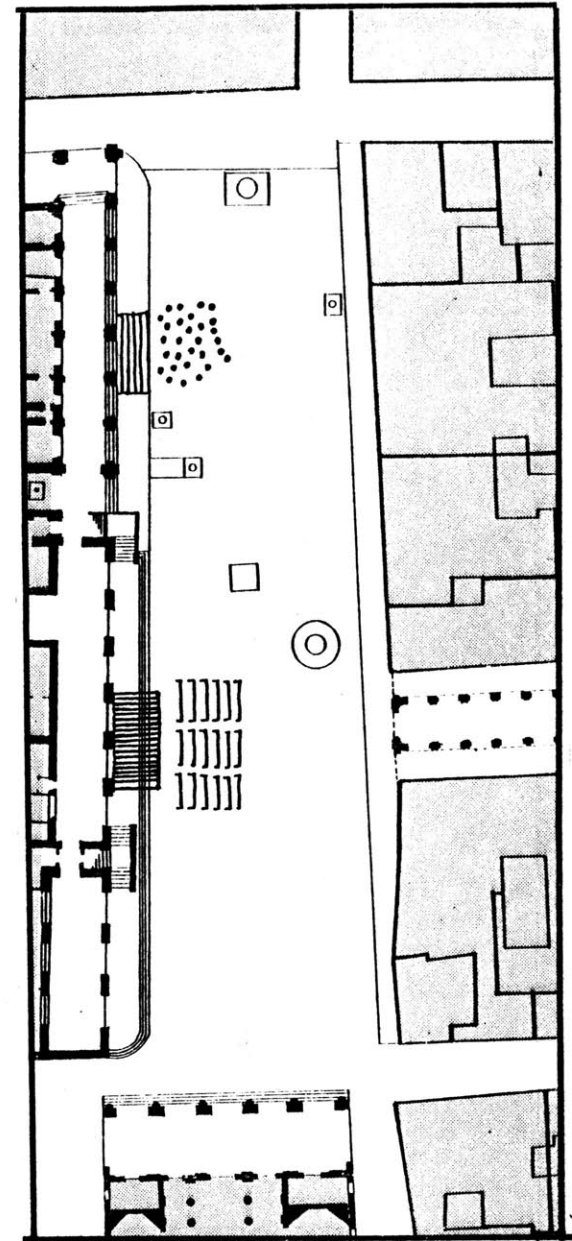
1. *The Piazza Cavour on market day*



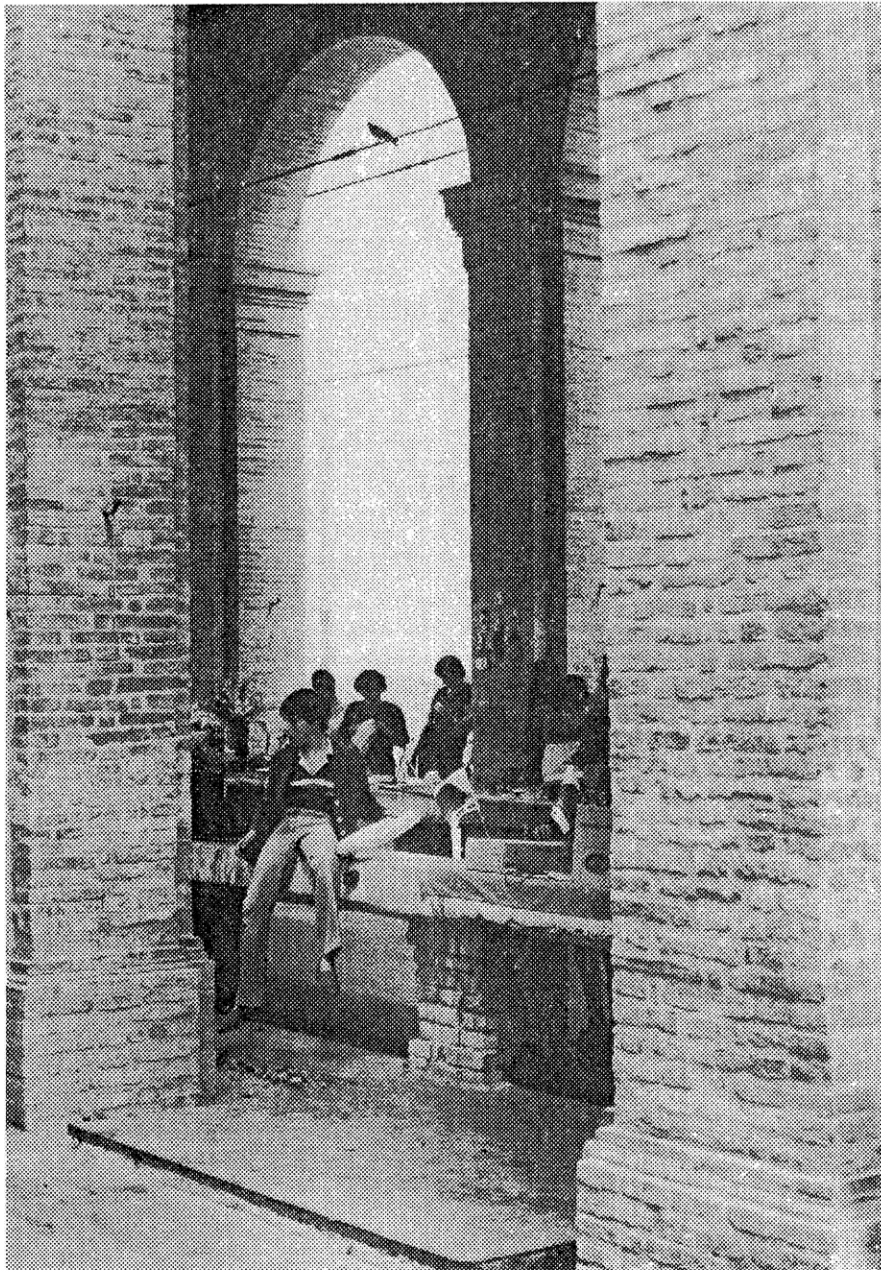
1. Plan of Piazza Cavour showing fixed and semi-fixed elements (stairs, planters, etc.)
Scale: 1:1000



2. Plan of Piazza Cavour showing extent and arrangement of market stalls.
Scale: 1:1000



3. Plan of Piazza Cavour showing locations for public performances.
Scale: 1:1000



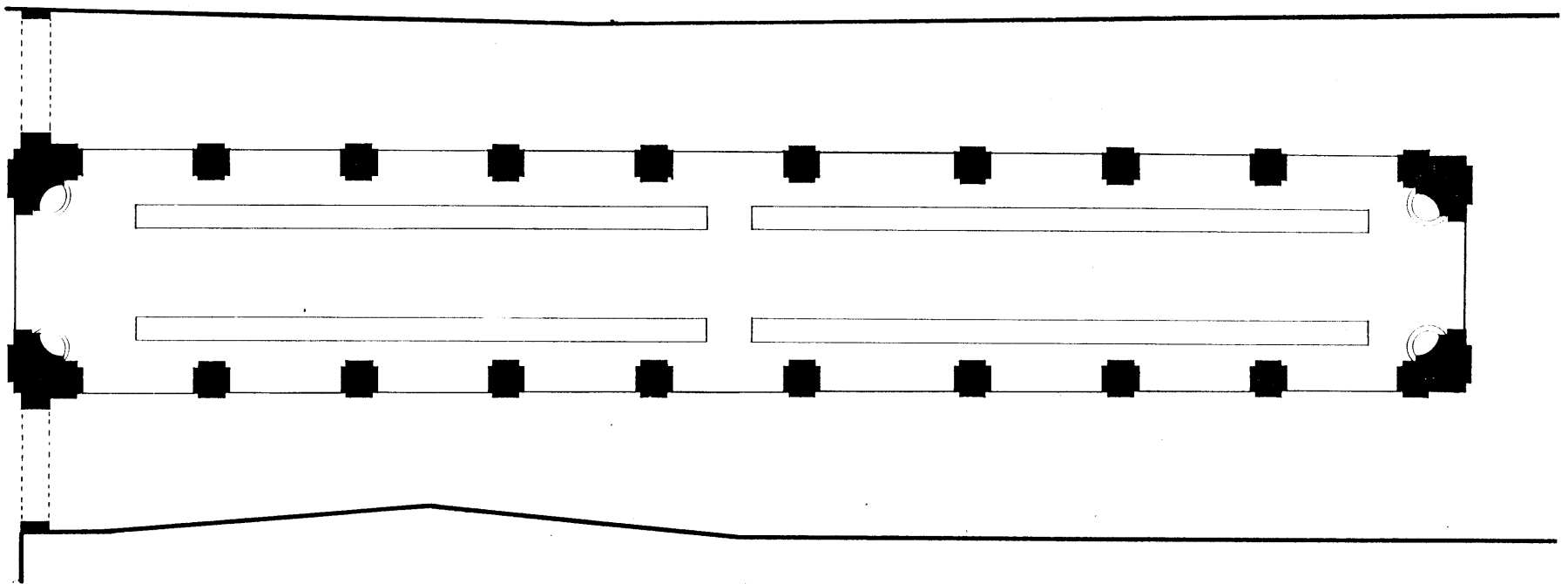
1. *View into Pescheria from side street*

Plan

The plan of the Pescheria reveals a long, narrow building, 6.5 meters wide, and 39.5 meters long. Although the facade spans the entire break in the wall, the building itself is the width of the middle arch only. On either side are uncovered paths which access the stores of the adjacent buildings. The volumetric suggestion of the facade is in fact belied by the actual volume.

Between the baroque facade enfronting the Piazza Cavour and the temple facade enfronting the piazzetta at the other end is a series of columns approximately 4 meters on center. The corner piers of the fish market have a concave interior surface, at the base of which there is a fountain intended for washing fish. Running the length of the building is a pair of benches which once served as selling stands for fish peddlars. The benches break once in the middle of the market to allow lateral traffic.

The benches enforce a rigid demarcation of paths; this zone becomes three parallel paths with little movement across possible. Only one of the paths makes a visible continuity with another street. Since the market is currently unused, it is an object in the space with most of the movement occurring along the two uncovered paths on either side.



Scale 1:200



Plan of Pescheria



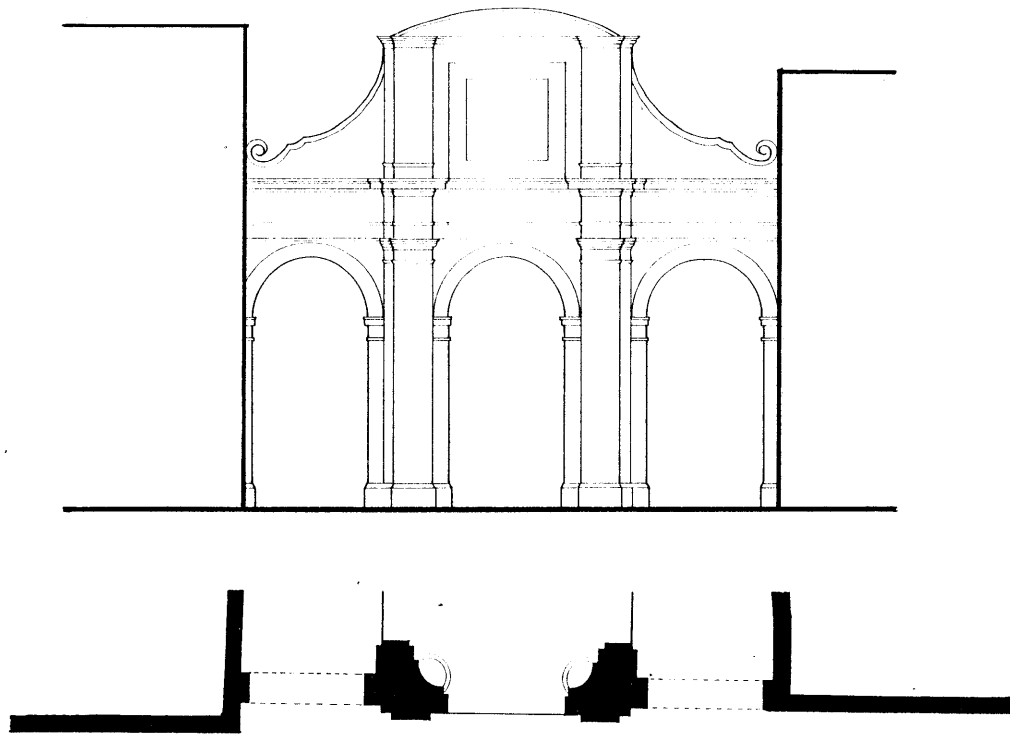
1. *View of Pescheria facade spanning the side street from alongside the Pescheria*

Elevation

The Pescheria, erected in 1747, by Giovanni Francesco Buonamici, has an elaborate edge enfronting the Piazza Cavour, behind which sits the single-bayed, one-story market building. The building's elaborate design is an homage to the importance of fishing to the economy of Rimini. Buonamici undertook this project after working intensely in the area around Ravenna. The task involved in the design of the Pescheria was the reconciliation of practical needs with symbolic gesture.

The facade presents a triumphal arch motif with three arches rather than one. The arches are of the same size, separated by high pilasters which continue through the cornice that divides the lower and upper parts of the facade. The upper part of the facade supports a curved timpanum, joined by two lateral volutes.

The facade of the Pescheria was inspired by Buonamici's design for the Duomo of Ravenna. From this facade came the image for the Pescheria--three arches surmounted by a highly visible timpanum. The Pescheria facade is simpler, and unlike the Duomo, the upper and lower parts continue in the same plane, but still distinguishable from one another.



Scale 1:200

East Elevation of Pescheria

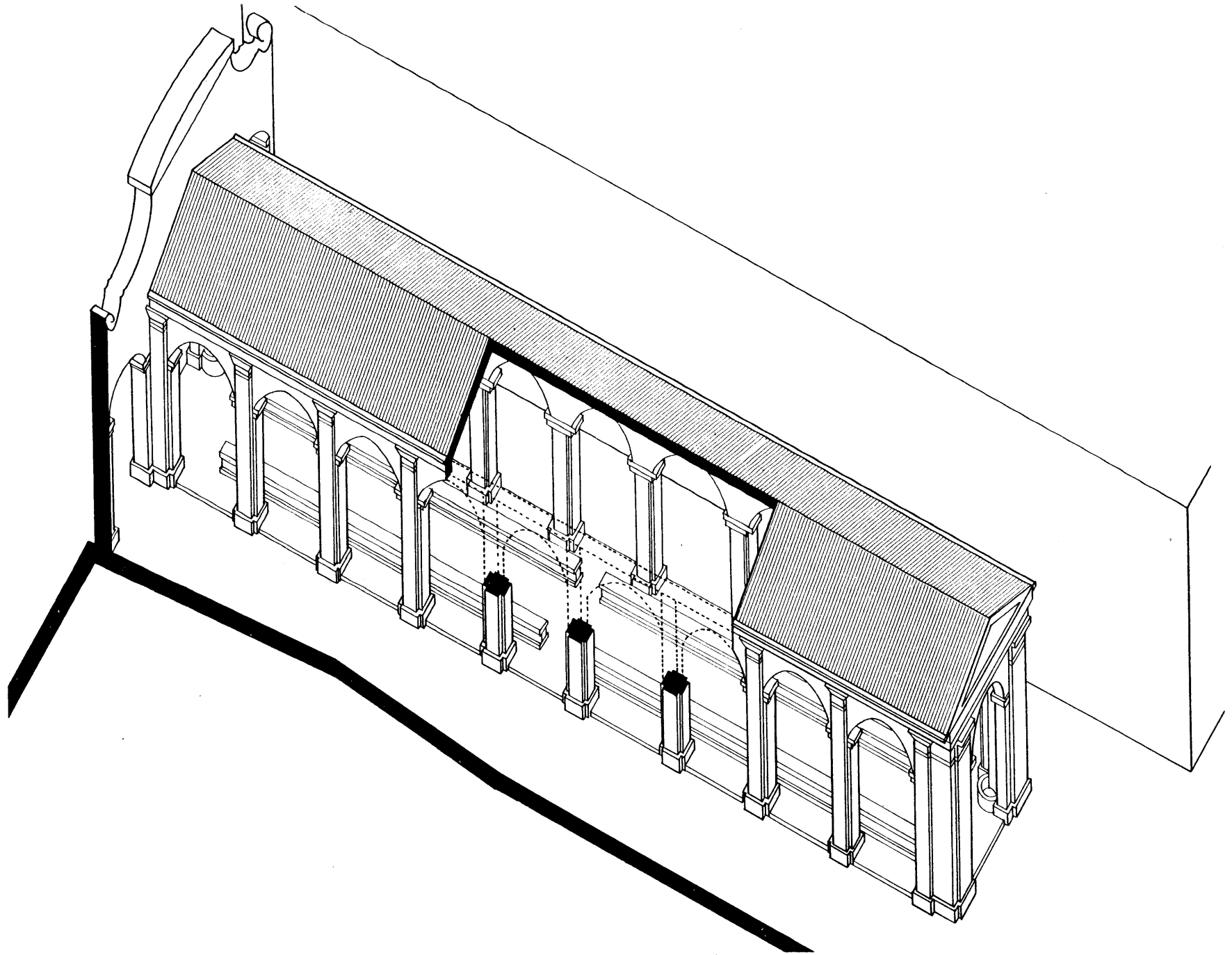


1. *View through Pescheria looking toward Piazza Cavour*

Cover

Slid into a break between two blocks, the Rimini Pescheria is a tightly constrained, too-snugly fit element in its environment. Although the elements of the building are exquisitely proportioned and carefully designed, one senses that it needs to be bigger to deal with the scale of design it conceptually entertains. The building is surprisingly long and the proportions between its width and length are somewhat awkward. The long, narrow space lacks a center; it is a covered path rather than a covered place.

The Piazza Cavour facade is the tallest piece of the building, 13 meters high. The rest of the building is a simple, one-story shed with the cornice line at 7.5 meters and the gable peak at 9.6 meters. The structure is simple but the building pieces are carefully constructed, with four, somewhat mannerist fountains at the interior corners, presenting the building with an unexpected sophistication. The selling stands, just below waist height, constrict cross-movement. This, coupled with the general darkness of the zone, creates moments of oppressiveness. One senses that volumetrically, the building needs more room and more dimension, or conversely, needs to be much shorter, a tiny temple in the space.



Axonometric of Pescheria

Place Description

It is 6:30 p.m. and the fish market area is quiet. A few wizened old men sit in the corner cafe of Campo delle Beccarie, drinking wine and playing cards. Small children zoom about on their bicycles, tormenting the young man with waist-high rubber boots who is hosing down the long building of the two-part Mercato del Pesce. The square, pavilion-like part of the fish market which enfronts the Grand Canal is also quiet except for the few people awaiting the gondola which runs continuously between the market area and Campo di Sofia, across the Canal. The scene is reminiscent of a stage after closing, as the crew emerges to move the props, unplug the house lights, and store the costumes until the next performance.

The magic of meeting a place in this fashion lies in the sense of a secret shared; of coming to know a place in a special and privileged way. Normally, the long building of the complex is alive with buyers and sellers. Casually strong and efficient Venetian men stand behind their stalls, sorting seafood and slicing fish with huge, heavy cutting knives. Stylishly dressed men, boot-clad women, and black-kerchiefed grandmothers move through the market, shoving their purchases into satchels filled with fruit, vegetables, eggs and cheese from either the nearby open-air stands and small shops or from the vendors along the Rialto bridge. There is barely room to move, and to wait patiently to be served is to wait forever-- before long, you are shoving your lire aggressively into the hands of the vendor in order to leave triumphant with your kilo of grapes or bundle of wrapped fish.

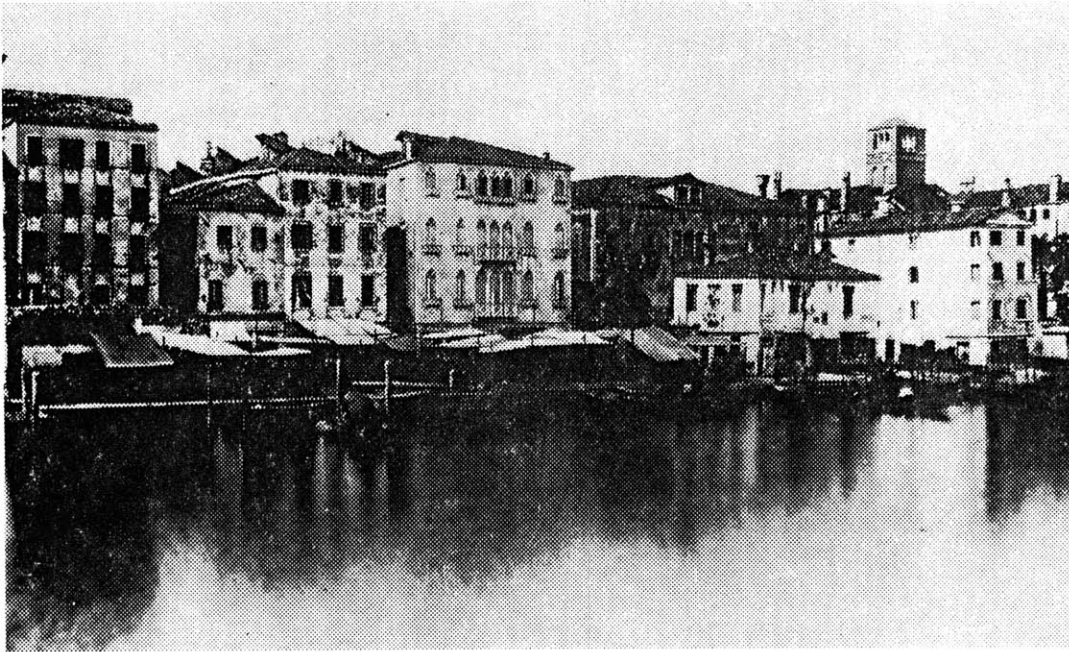
In the midst of this activity, the one quiet zone is the pavilion part of the fish market. Once the wholesale fishmarket, this part now stands empty, with only a few fruit and vegetable sellers occupying two or three of the arches near the Campo de Pescheria. A few people stand further under the cover chatting; others sit along the canal edges eating lunch or reading. Passengers disembarking from the gondola trickle through on their way to the nearby bridge, or the Campo delle Beccarie.

Later, after the market has finished its day's business, the area assumes a sleepy ambiance, returned to those who live around it and play or meander through it. For most Venetians, it is a place to shop and it is a typical market in that sense, a singularly defined and specifically used place. There are some exceptions, though. On the day of the Grand Regatta in September, the pavilion and the adjacent open market are crowded with people watching, cheering on their favorite competitors. An oom-pah-pah band of men dressed in black trousers and white, pressed shirts cluster under the pavilion, randomly tooting their instruments during the course of the afternoon.

For a brief time, the fish market steps outside itself, assuming a role more engaging than its everyday function. For the most part, it sits in quiet, a respite from the busy activity of the selling around it. It is a gazebo, perched at the edge of the Grand Canal, providing the busy shoppers a rare opportunity to look up the Grand Canal and to experience a larger view of Venice than is normally available in the tightly knit fabric of the town.

Contradictions define much of the intrigue of this area. On the one hand, the function and purpose of the back half of the building juxtaposes the seemingly uselessness of the pavilion part. It is perched almost free at the edge of the canal, with a one-bayed bridge connecting it to the back building, which fits unobtrusively into the block pattern. The extensive market activity, which begins at the Rialto bridge and continues uninterrupted to this area, ends in this quiet, seemingly irrelevant pavilion that leads nowhere. Instead, this is a place to stop and to choose to change direction or to turn around to retrace your steps. The building divides to allow the path to continue through, but this route deadends two blocks later.

The pavilion itself is a unique type in Venice, since so few buildings stand free from the fabric to be perceivable as distinct objects. Even the beautiful cathedral in Piazza San Marco must compete with the Doges Palace and the Campanile for attention. No other facade competes with this part of the fish market that perches somewhat grandly at the canal edge. It is a rather special place that creates respect and affection for itself in spite of its seeming frivolity--a pretension in a working class neighborhood. Yet it is humoursly, inoffensively pretentious and, at moments, a place with which to share secrets.



1. Early photo of market area



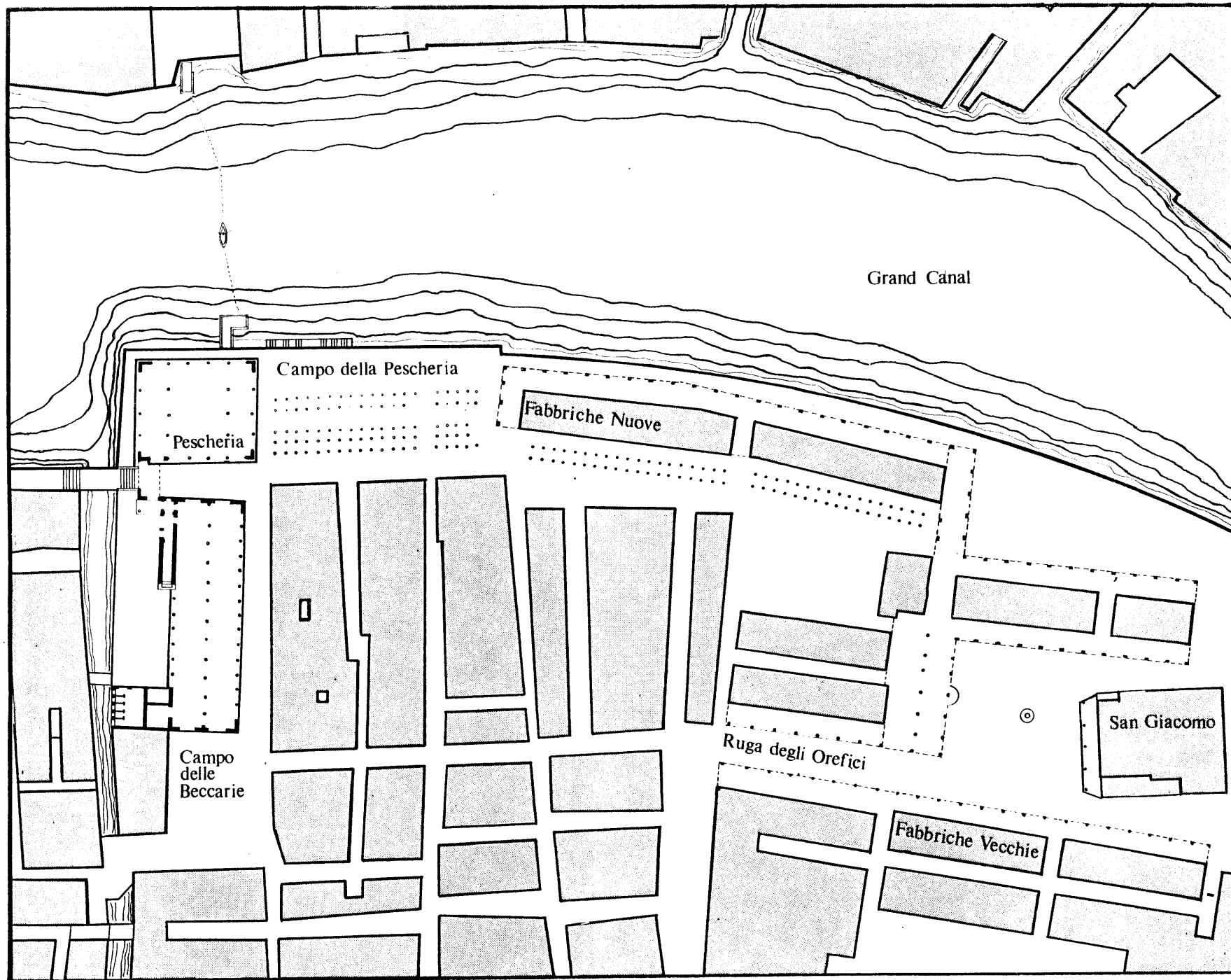
2. Market area showing Forcellini's metal-roofed market, 1884

Surrounds

Our study focuses on the Pescheria buildings in Venice. Located at the end of the Rialto market zone, the Pescheria is a two part building. The older part, the Palazzo Querini, dates from the mid-13th century. It survived partial razing, a fire, and use as the public slaughterhouse before its restoration as the retail fish market in the 1908 renovation by Laurenti and Rupolo, when the new wholesale market building was added.

The photographs on the left show two views of the Campo of the Pescheria before the 1908 restructuring. The upper photograph shows the situation which is recorded in maps dating to the early 1600's--an open market space with one small, house-like building standing separate from the rest of the fabric at the edge of the Canal. The restoration of this area was considered in various projects in the 18th and 19th century, including one by Berchet in the 1860's proposing a huge new market building filling the entire open space.

The second photograph shows the metal market built by Forcellini in 1884. Its vast metal roof covered the entire campo. The area finally assumed its current form when Laurenti and Rupolo built the new market, joining it by a bridge to the Palazzo Querini.



Grand Canal

Campo della Pescheria

Pescheria

Fabbriche Nuove

Campo delle Beccarie

Ruga degli Orefici

San Giacomo

Fabbriche Vecchie

Scale 1:1000



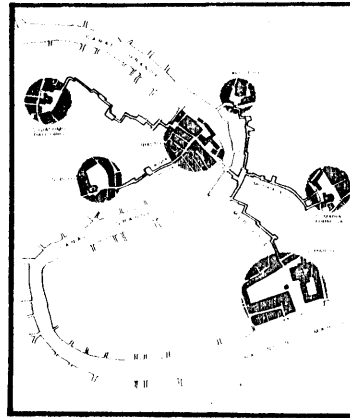
Area Plan

History

The Rialto was the site of the earliest settlement of the Venetian islands. Its name is derived from "rivo alta" or high bank, indicating it was the highest and driest land form. The Rialto is almost the topographic center of Venice, and is linked to the Piazza San Marco by the Merceria, the main street of the city. Being both the lowest bridging point along the Grand Canal and the highest point to which sea faring ships could navigate, its emergence as a center of the city was inevitable.

The strongest visual symbol of the area is the Rialto Bridge. The original pontoon bridge was replaced by a wooden structure, with a drawbridge at the center. This bridge collapsed under the weight of crowds watching the arrival of Emperor Frederick III in 1450. It was replaced by another wooden structure, illustrated in the etching of Jacopo de Barbari, and finally by the existing stone bridge, designed by Antonio da Ponte in 1588. Ruskin describes Ponte's bridge as "the best building raised in the time of Grotesque Renaissance; very noble in its simplicity, in its proportions, and in its masonry."

While the Piazza San Marco evolved into the Venetian political center, the Rialto area became the financial and trade area. Both the exchange of foreign goods and all the banking functions were located



1. *Rialto Context*, from *Civiltà de Venezia*, V.2

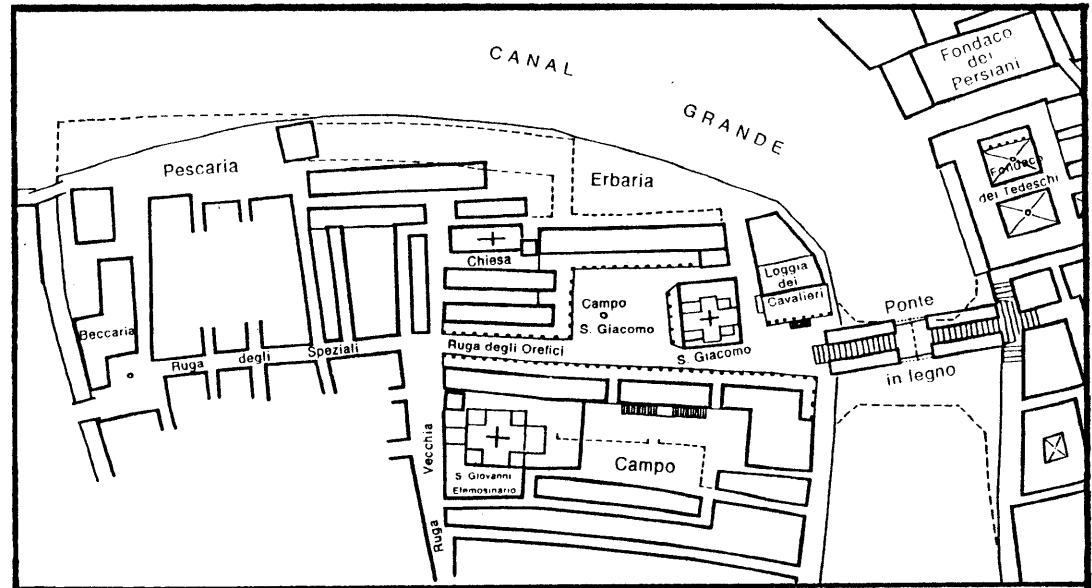


2. *Jacopo de' Barbari: Map of Venice, detail showing the Rialto, 1500*

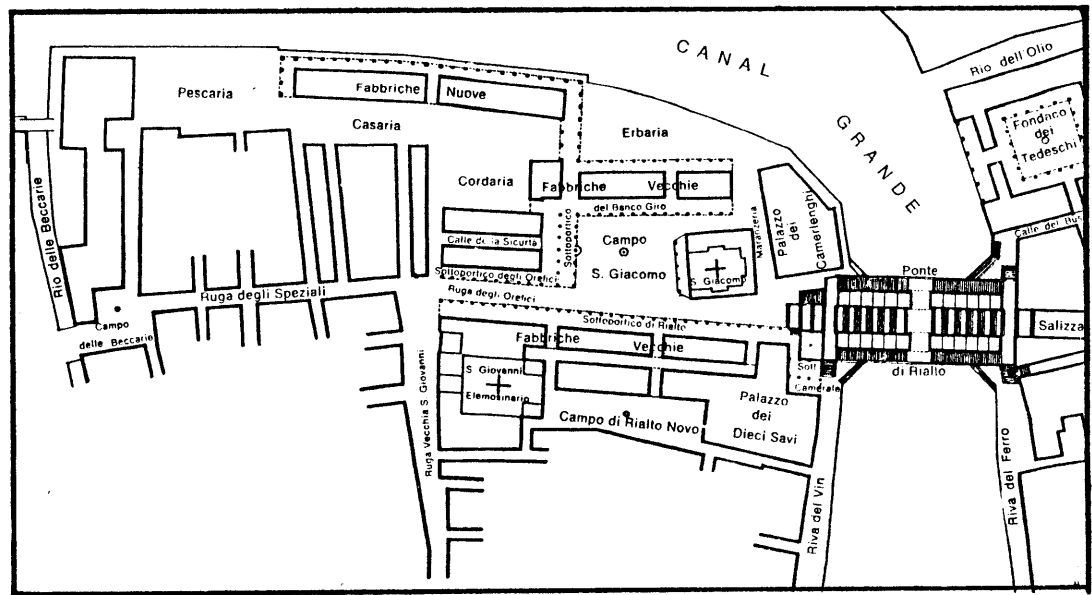
in the Rialto. In Renaissance Venice, the central role of the area is recorded by Sanudo in his comment, "it is the principal place in Venice and the richest," while Vasari observed it seemed "almost like the treasury of the city."

In 1514, the Rialto area suffered a disastrous fire. After burning unchecked for twenty-four hours, little of the area remained. Only the palace of the Camerlenghi, the church of San Giacomo, and several buildings around the Pescaria, including the Palazzo Querini, survived. Critical to the financial survival of the city, the Rialto stalls were rebuilt and banks reopened.

The larger reconstruction of the area was considered in four architectural projects. Although some proposed a dramatic restructuring of the area, a committee of nobles selected the most conservative project, submitted by Scarpagnino. This plan neither expanded the original area nor changed the basic arrangement of the buildings. Within ten years, the area was rebuilt in a functional style minimizing ornament and costly materials. Then, in 1554, the city responded to the pressing need for more market space. To expand and to improve the appearance of the area, Jacopo Sansovino was commissioned to design the Fabbriche Nuove--a long, narrow building enfronting the Grand Canal with an austere, repetitive facade.



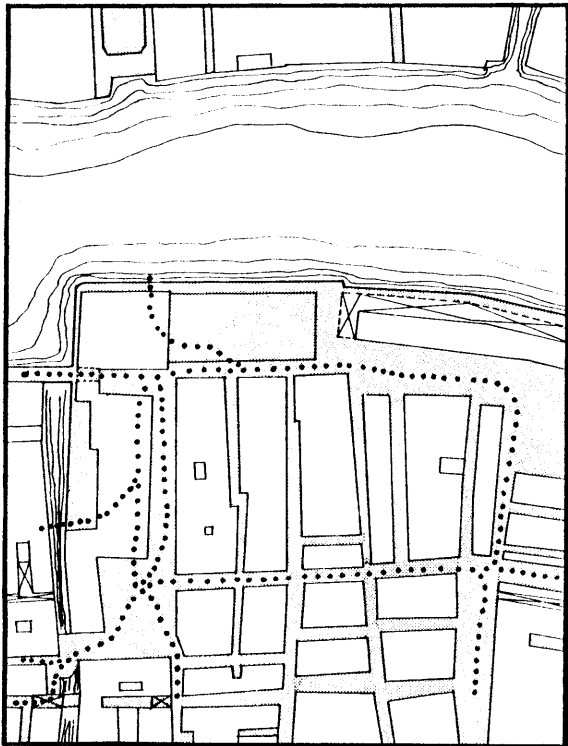
1. Plan of market area, 1500



2. Plan of market area, 1974
Plans from *Civiltà di Venezia*, Vol. 2

Paths

Coming across the Rialto bridge, dense with the activity of pedestrians at shopping stalls, a relatively straight path leads from the market area to the Campo delle Beccarie. This street, the Ruga degli Orefici, is defined by the continuous arcade of the Fabbriche Vecchie along its south edge. The north side is more spacious where the campo of the church of San Giacomo opens off it, but this open space is usually blocked off by market stalls to re-establish a narrow street dimension. The sense of the Ruga degli Orefici is typically Venetian--an interior street filled with people and shops without any clues to where it leads.



1. Paths through market area

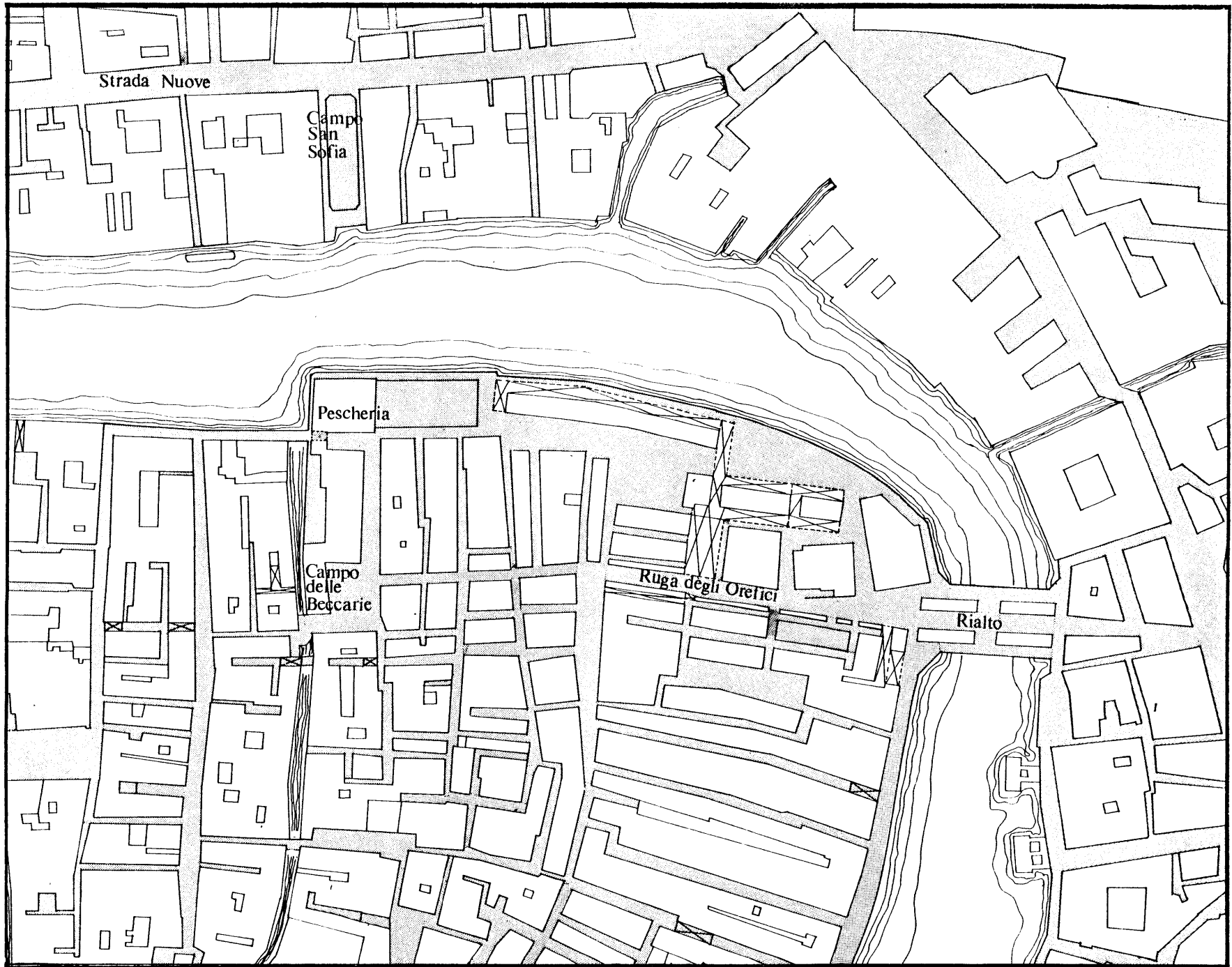
Arriving in the Campo delle Beccarie, the path cuts diagonally across the small square and a bridge to disappear into a residential neighborhood. The Casa Querini, the retail fish market building, forms the north edge of this piazza. The building does not strongly enfront the space, and one barely notices that the ground floor is open. It feels much more like a wall than a transparency or filter. The clear building definition of the covered open space is further reinforced by paths that parallel the building. There is no real need to go through the building unless attracted by the market activity.

Another path from the Rialto

Bridge, more circuitous and dramatic, ends at the building of the wholesale fish market. Although it is possible to walk from the Rialto Bridge to the Pescheria along the edge of the Grand Canal, this path is closed by wire gates which seal off the arcades of the Fabbriche Nuove. Instead of a path that would be special in Venice, the water's edge is claimed for delivery and storage of goods, and people are routed through the dense maze of markets. The market action fills and shapes the space. The buildings and open spaces are subordinate to the network of narrow paths made by stall keepers to encourage passersby to buy their products.

After passing San Giacomo, one can pass through the arcades of the Banco Giro to arrive to a series of open market spaces. The first space is obscured from the water's edge by the Fabbriche Nuove. The Campo of the Pescheria opens to the Grand Canal. The wholesale market sits at the end of this open space. Pavilion-like, it perches on a piece of land jutting out into the canal, and its open arches provide views up and down the canal.

The paths skirt the building. Bounded by water on two edges, it feels clearly like a destination in itself, rather than a connection to other places and paths.



Paths of Pescheria Area

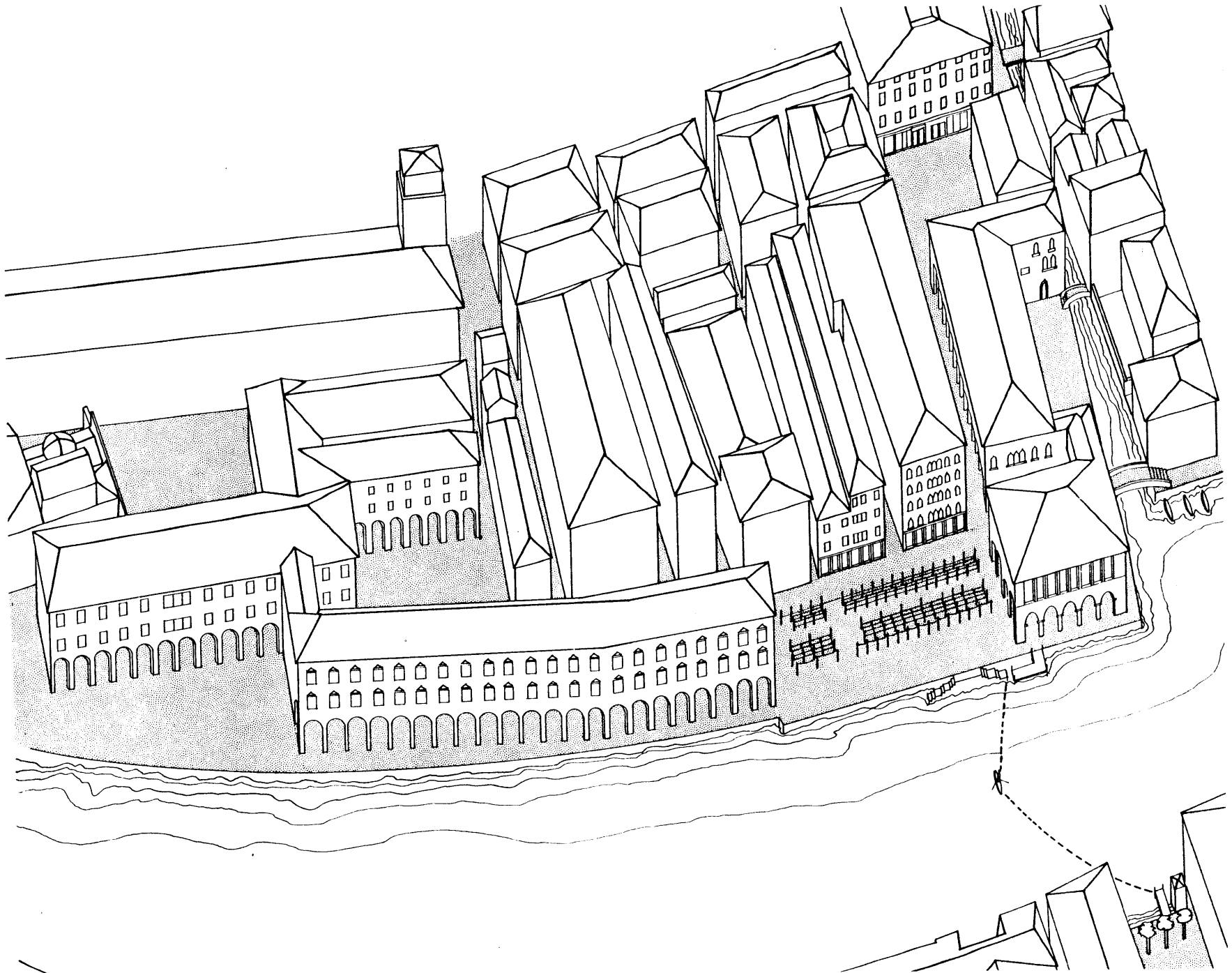


1. *View under bridge connecting Pescheria buildings*

Placement

The two buildings which form the Pescheria are quite distinct in type and placement. The Pescheria al Minuto, an old palace which has been restructured, is one of the most simple and frequent Venetian building types: a long, rectangular building perpendicular to the water's edge in a comb-like block pattern. Its volume is very similar to the neighboring buildings. The building's L-shape encloses a small outdoor market area edging the Rio delle Beccarie. The space has a sense of intimate enclosure similar to a courtyard.

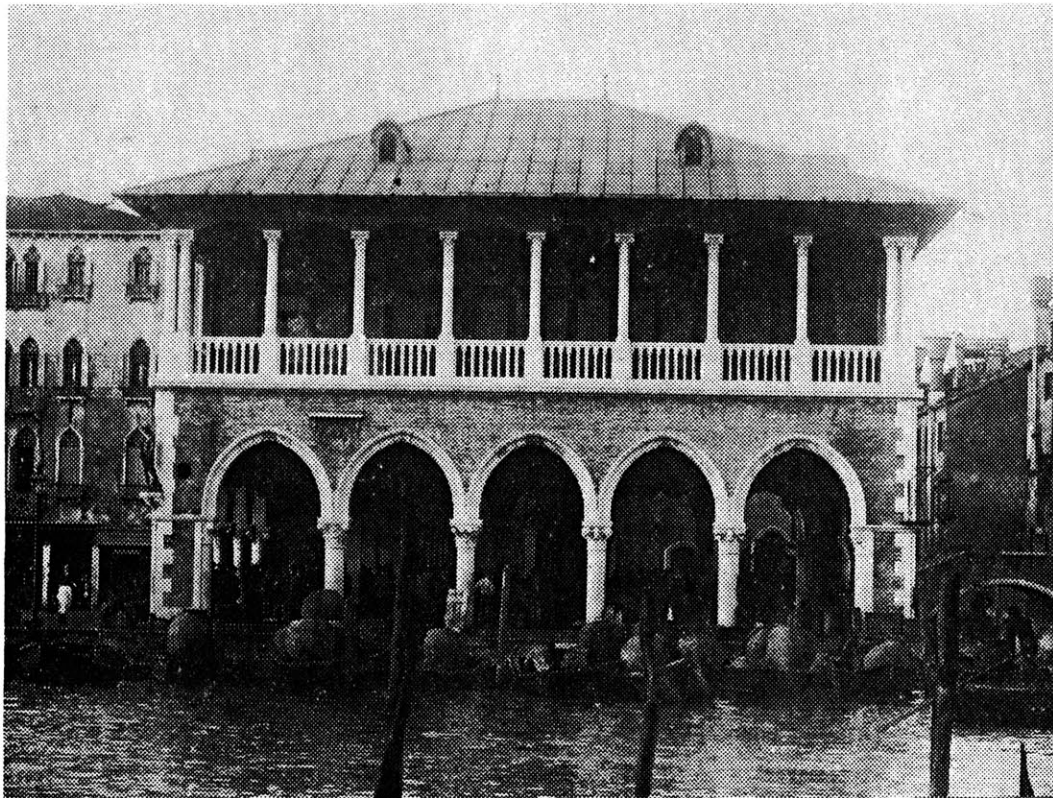
The other part of the Pescheria, a departure from familiar building types, stands alone, connected only by a bridge to the other building. Square and freestanding, it enfronts an open market space on one side; the Grand Canal on two other faces. The corner site is a rarity in Venice where buildings usually have only one face to the canal and the density of the urban pattern obscures building elevations except in the campos. The siting of the Pescheria makes it memorable and recognizable. It also isolates the space under the building as a destination, offering views across and down the canal, with minimal connection to the adjacent paths and spaces.



Area Axonometric

Piazza Section

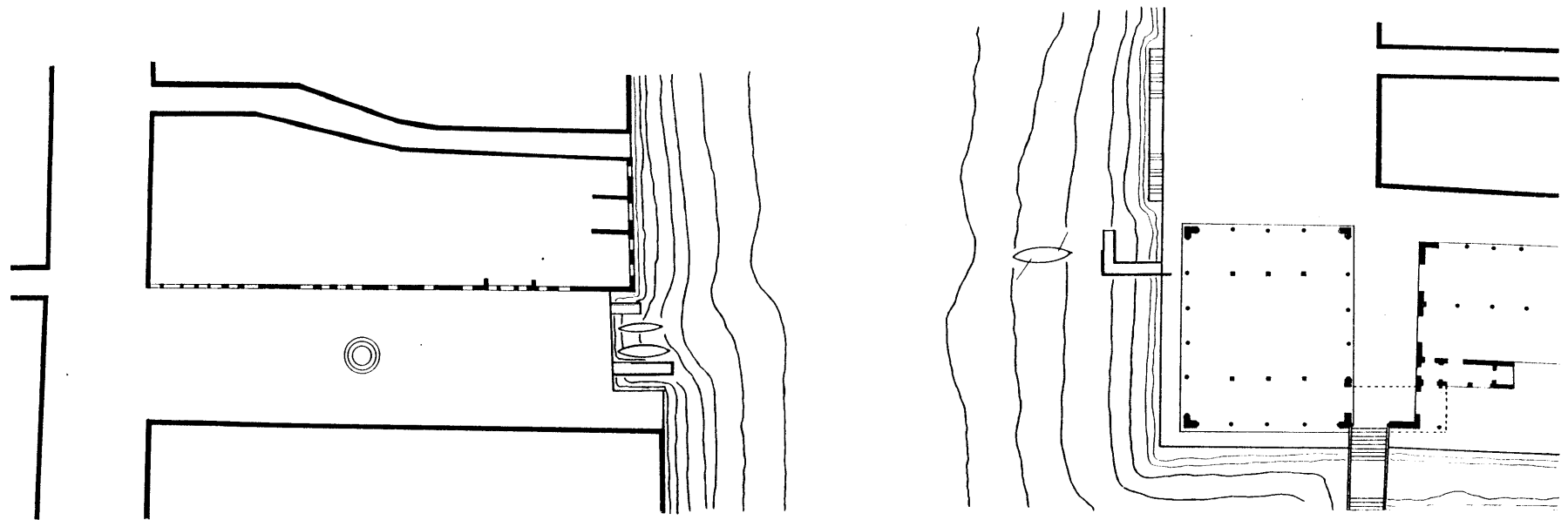
Although the Pescheria stands at the end of the Rialto market area and is often approached on foot, it also has a connection with the Campo San Sofia across the Grand Canal. A gondola ferries people back and forth across the canal between the Pescheria and the Campo. Since the wholesale market building is no longer used, one of the only destinations which draws people under its covered space is the gondola slip. The Campo San Sofia edges the Strada Nuova, a 19th century intervention which runs from the Campo Aspolitali towards the railroad station.



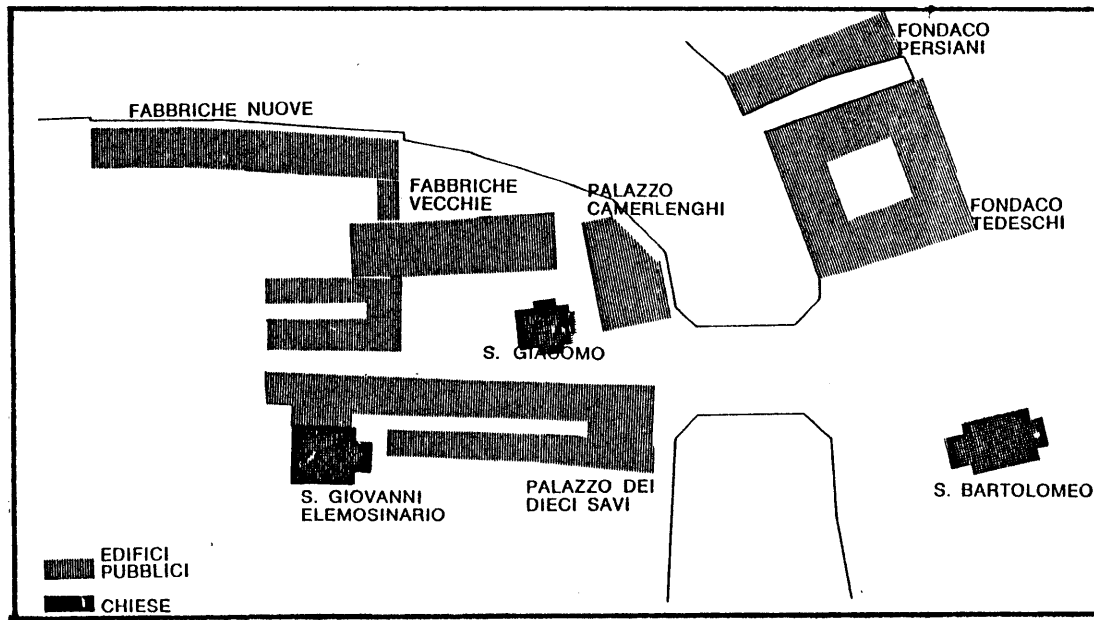
1. Grand Canal facade of Pescheria seen from Campo San Sofia

The connection across the Grand Canal from the Pescheria to the Campo San Sofia was once considered so important that Berchet, in his late nineteenth century proposals for a new market included a bridge across the canal. The markets were never restructured according to Berchet's vision, nor was the bridge built. Instead, the gondola makes its way back and forth all day, carrying Venetians shortcutting their way through the intricate city.

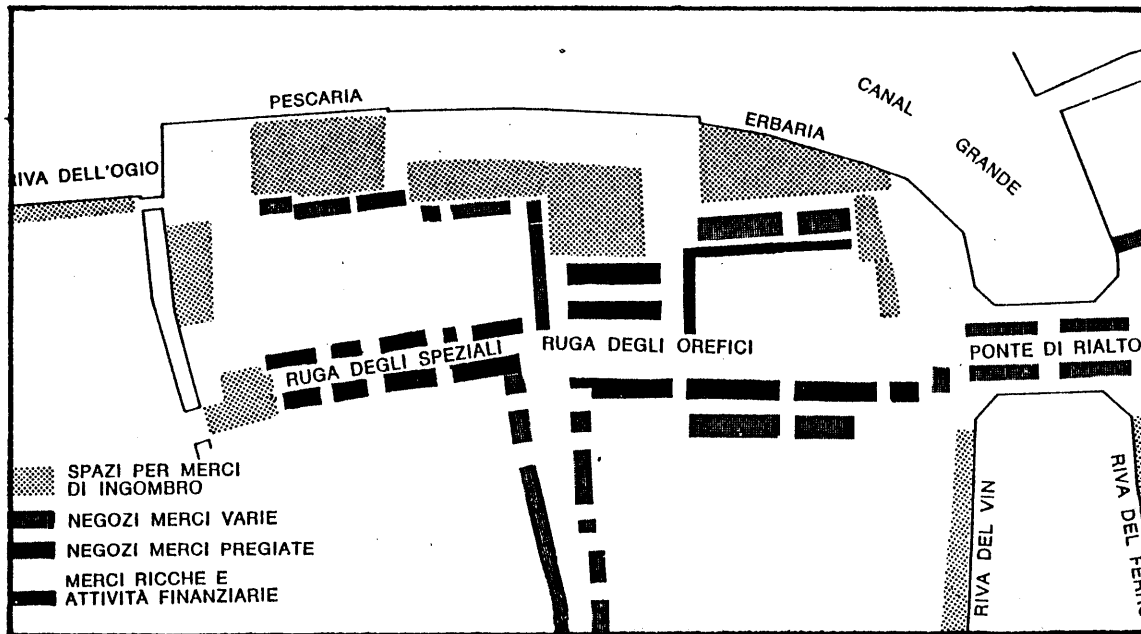
The section also reveals the pavilion quality of the market, free-standing at the water's edge. Either of the cross sections of the building shows this abrupt confrontation with the water's edge, a reminder that this building stands apart.



Section of Grand Canal



1. Plan of Public Buildings and Churches of the Rialto Area



2. Plan of Open Spaces and Businesses of the Rialto Area
Plans from *Civiltá di Venezia*, Vol. 2

Use Patterns

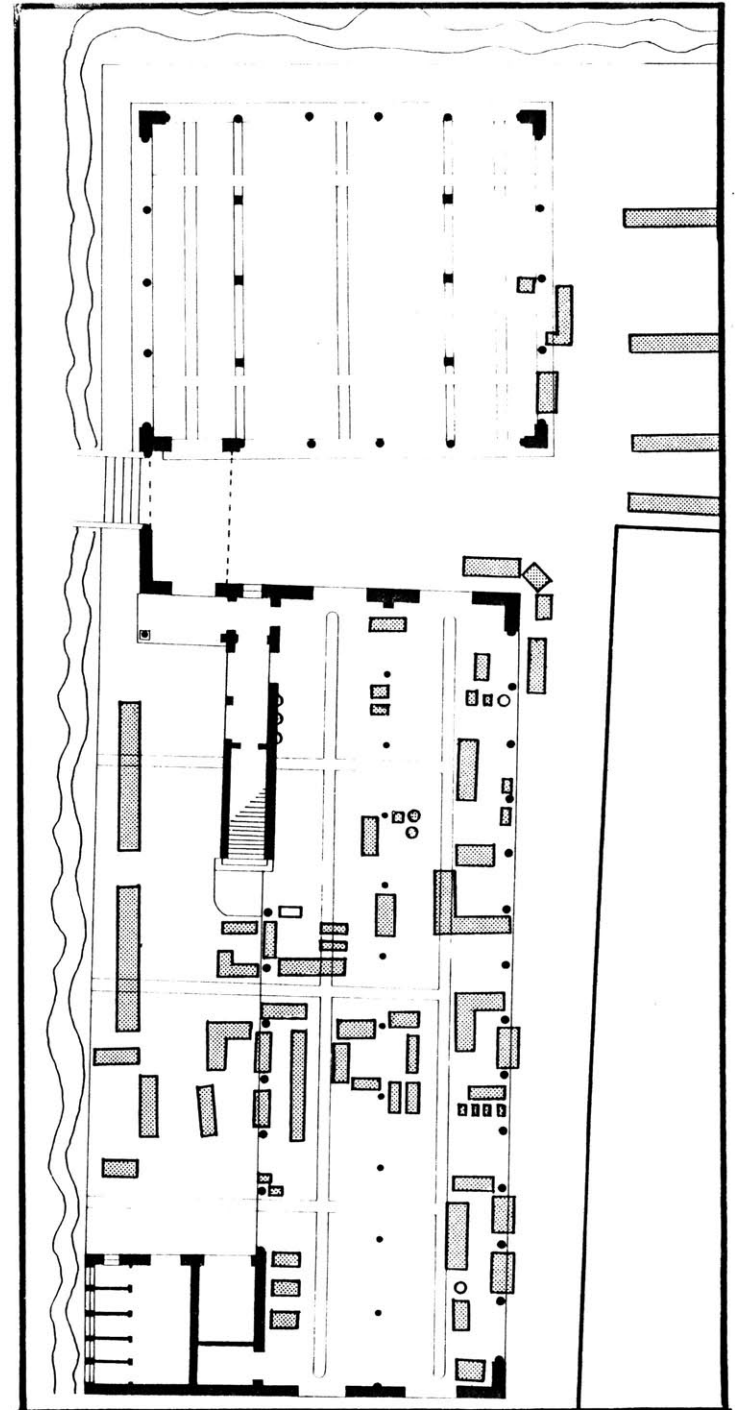
The diagrams on the left contrast the building pattern of the Rialto area with the pattern of the open air markets. The use of the area for markets has had impact on the structure of the paths and spaces.

All of the spaces and buildings directly adjacent to the Pescheria are used for markets and shops. In contrast, the part of the Pescheria fronting the Grand Canal is no longer used for any scheduled activities. Its wholesale market activities were moved to the Piazzale Roma where access to transportation is more convenient. Since this relocation ten years ago, the city government has not allocated a new use, and the eighty-year old building stands empty. The building's special location encourages people to drift under its covered space to look down the canal, or to lean against one of its columns while picnicking or sketching.

The retail fish market is still used, although it is rarely crowded. The diagram on the right shows the irregular pattern in which the stalls are arranged on a typical day, randomly oriented but most often clustered around one of the columns at the edges or down the middle of the space. Others set up canopies in the open space along the Rio delle Beccarie, crowding into this area since it is most accessible to the water's edge.



1. Photo of vendors in retail fish market



2. Location of stalls in retail market.

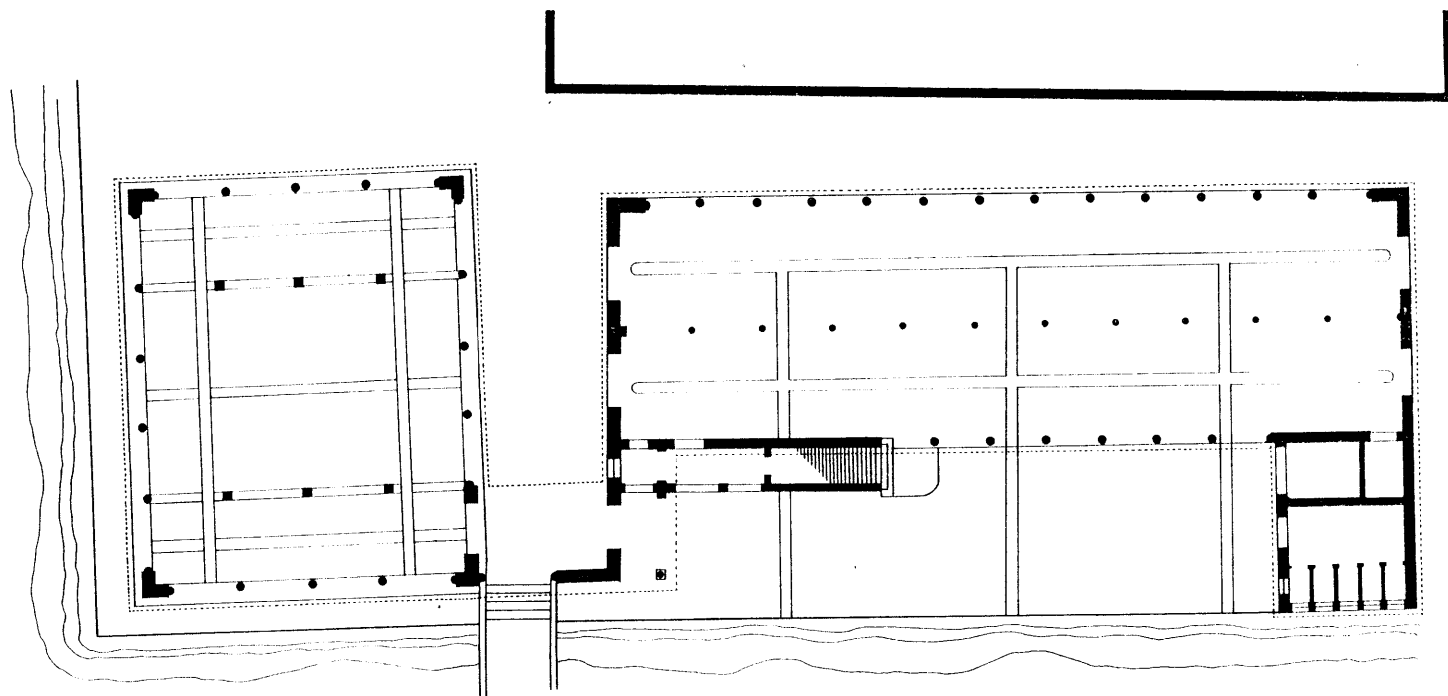


1. *Open space of Pescheria along Rio delle Beccarie*

Plan

The plan of the older section of the Pescheria is long and narrow, a hall-like space defined by a row of columns along the middle of the space. The two end walls have heavy stone piers with Gothic arched openings. These walls create a strong sense of closure, obscuring the open space within. The older building encloses a small open space. From this space, an outdoor, uncovered stairway climbs up along the building wall providing access to the upper floors of both buildings.

In 1908, Laurenti and Rupolo designed the new part of the building and renovated the older building. In their design studies, there is no indication of the state of the old building or the extent of their restructuring. The addition is a rectangle, 18 meters by 22 meters, defined at the corners with angled piers. But the addition is basically a field of columns, with little sense of wall or mass as it meets the ground. It perches somewhat stiffly on truncated columns adapted after the style of the Doges Palace columns. Its floor, one step above the street, extends beyond the columns, providing a low ledge sometimes used as a seat, along the canal edges. The two rows of columns and the floor drains are the only interior definitions.



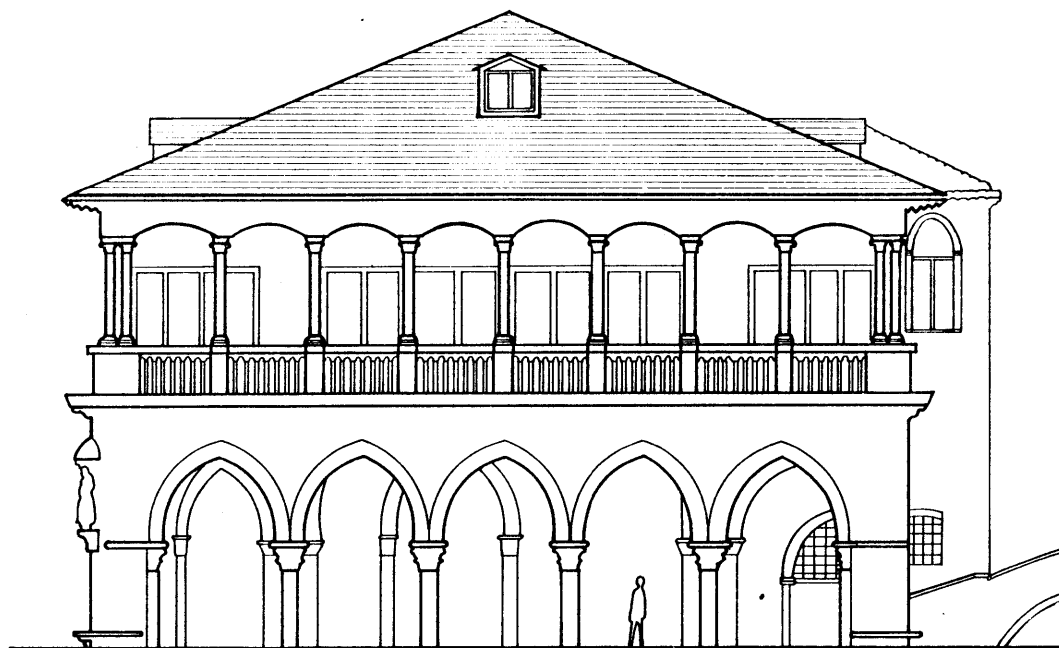
Scale 1:400



Plan of Pescheria

Elevation

The two parts of the Pescheria were built more than 550 years apart. The elevation of the buildings from the Rio delle Beccarie reveals Laurenti and Rupolo's intense effort to mimic the older building, using similar arched openings, windows, and eave lines. The bridge between the two buildings is treated as a continuation of the wall further overlapping the old and new structures.

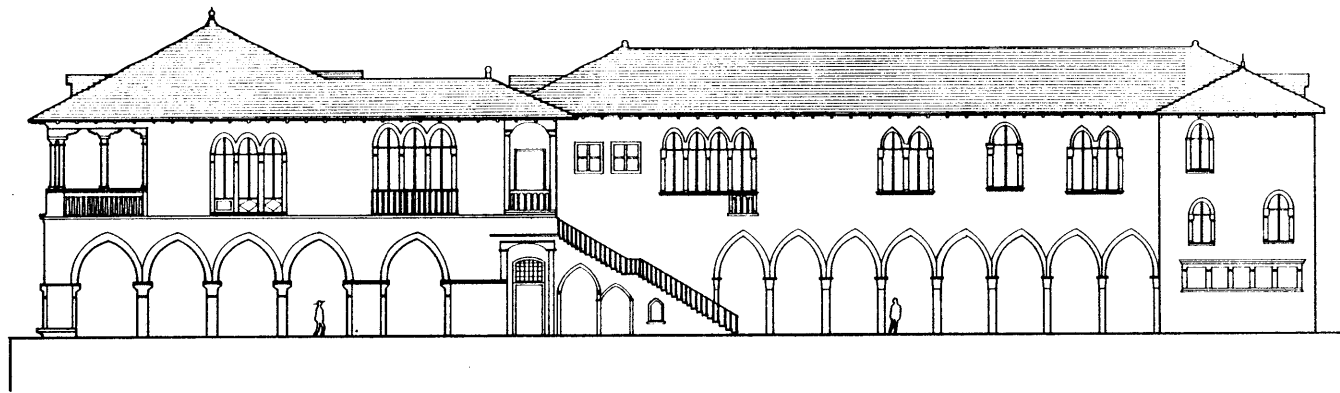


1. *Elevation of Pescheria seen from Campo San Sofia*
Scale: 1:200

Although historical accounts date the Palazzo Querini to the mid-13th century, it is not clear how much the original palazzo was changed in its long and complicated history. Built as the Palazzo of Marco Querini, the building was ordered razed in 1318 when his son-in-law was implicated in a conspiracy against the government. Only partially destroyed, it afterwards became the public slaughter houses. When this use was moved, the ground floor became a poultry market and the upper floor a prison.

Ruskin was particularly enthusiastic about the Palazzo Querini, calling it "one of the most important and interesting monuments in the city" and selecting it as the most perfect example of his third order of Venetian window arches.

The new building is neo-Gothic, borrowing from its older neighbor a vocabulary of elements; yet the crispness of the stone work, and the portico reveal its true age.

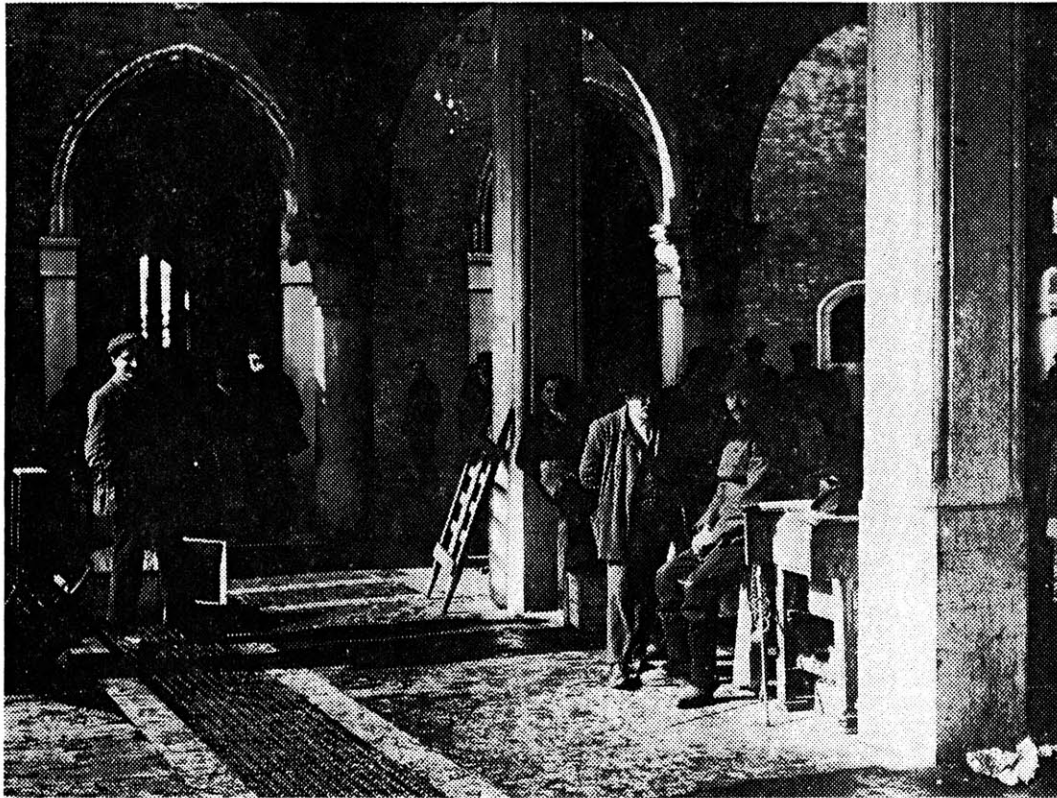


Scale 1:400

West Elevation of Pescheria

Cover

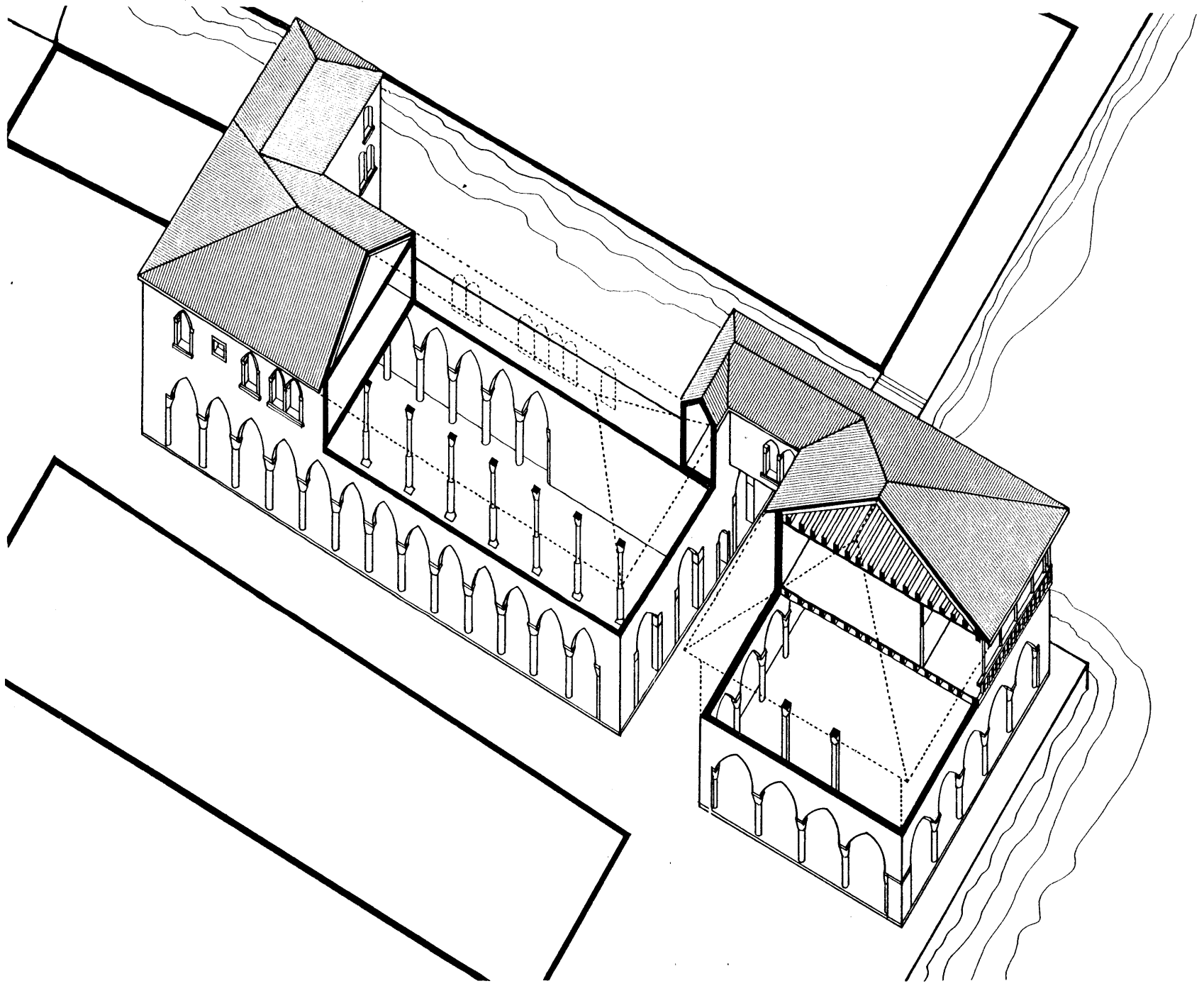
The axonometric drawing describes the relationship between the volume of the buildings and the ground floor covered spaces. In both buildings, there are office spaces on the second floor. These areas were originally used as the market offices, but today house the Venice electoral offices. During elections, the arcades of the first floor of the addition are sealed off and the space is used to count votes.



1. *Early twentieth century view into wholesale market*

Both buildings have flat ceilings on the ground floor with exposed wooden structure. This treatment gives them an interior, room-like quality. The older building, because of its location, its mass, and its wall enclosures, is dark and an awareness of related outdoor spaces is minimal. Since it is smaller and stands free of other buildings, the covered space of the new building is much lighter and more airy, and the views through the space to the Grand Canal establish a strong connection to the larger fabric.

At the ground level the buildings are distinct, and moving from one to the other involves crossing the public path. The market buildings are simple, minimally defined spaces; there is no particular effort to intensify the sense of cover, or their special role as inside/outside spaces beyond use.



Axonometric of Pescheria

Comparative Observations

Our study follows from two convictions: first, that architecture finds its most important meaning in the opportunities it provides people who inhabit it; second, that buildings must be studied in context, for environments are best understood as a series of built acts which impinge on each other. We have looked at what it feels like to approach these places, to be in and move through them. We have tried to present them as parts of complex patterns, not as typological abstractions.

The following discussion compares these contextual and experiential qualities in order to understand how we, as designers, can draw inferences and inspirations from their successes and failures. Our goal in this project is to learn how to look and how to borrow. Architects often defend design decisions by alluding to a beloved and often distant place. We hear of building a Ponte Vecchio across a highway, or an Italian hill town in Boston. But this is misleading: the quality of a place cannot be transposed through time and space without careful reinterpretation. We can do this by understanding the complexity of the places that move us, a complexity revealed by the interaction of physical form and human action, and inherent in the experience of place.

Paths

Norberg-Schulz writes: "The system of paths, therefore, expresses man's possibilities of movement, the range of his world...Paths

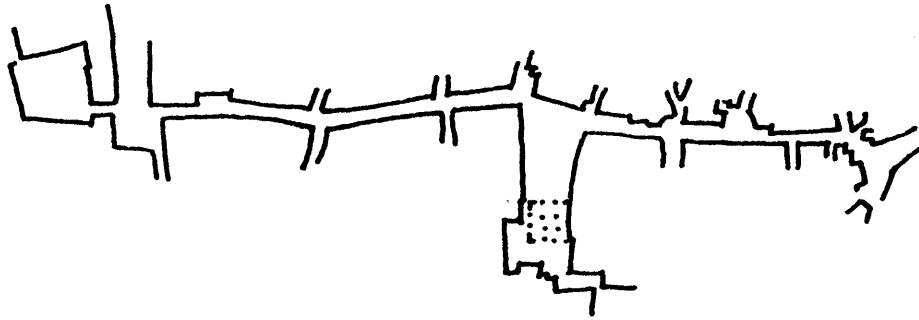
divide man's environment into areas which are more or less well known."⁶ Paths are usually imaged as having clear beginnings and ends, places we leave from and go towards. But more than mere channels, paths have the potential, through both their own definitions and the events along them, to assume a character of their own. For each of the buildings we studied, there is a distinct path or set of paths which structures our approach and our understanding of the places.

In the three towns, the sense of the paths differs: Bergamo awaits you, Venice forces engagement, and Rimini grudgingly tolerates you. The Via Gombito, the main path through the Città Alta of Bergamo, is contained within the Venetian walls and connects two major points of entry. The street is a sequential whole, a continuity of episodes which are integrated and imaginable as one experience. The Città Alta is never oppressive, for the Via Gombito is free of automobiles, allowing the power of its human scale and rhythm to quietly capture you. Spaces unfold, the street bends slightly, the facade of a building glimmers ahead--every experience seems choreographed for the pedestrian.

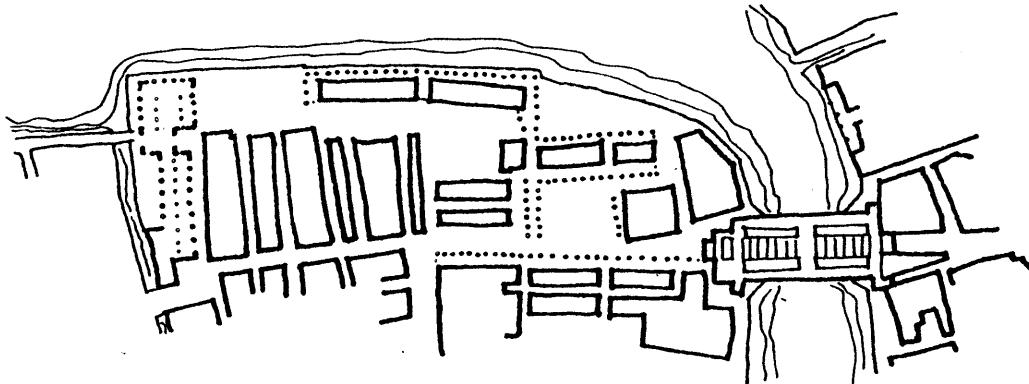
In Bergamo, the stage is set and there is a quiet sense of expectation. In the Rialto area of Venice, however, you are propelled into, and must wind your way through, an area teeming with the life and activity of the market. The density of pedestrian activity and movement assumes a character apart from the physical environment. Unlike Bergamo, or even other Venetian spaces such as the Piazza San Marco--elegant spaces that wait to receive you--the Rialto area is a backdrop to human action. Market activity dominates and it is the market



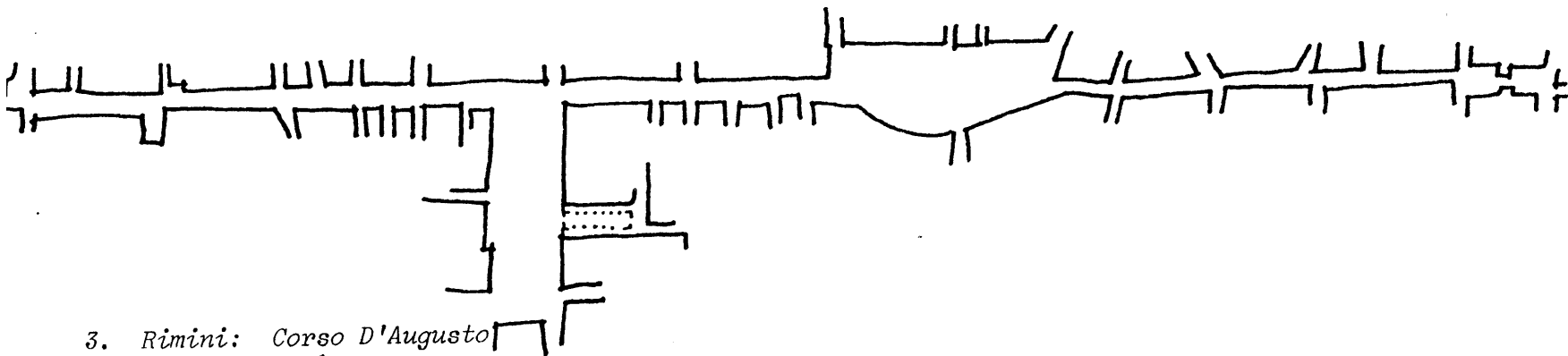
1. View of Ruga degli Orefici from Rialto Bridge



1. Bergamo: Via Gombito Path

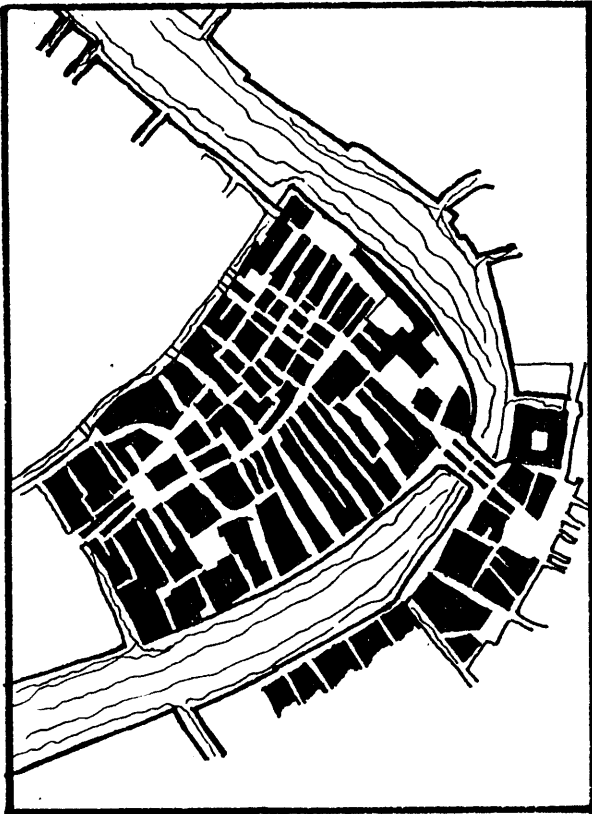


2. Venice: Rialto/Pescheria Area Paths



3. Rimini: Corso D'Augusto Path

stall which shapes the path, obscures the buildings, and invites the throng of people moving along like so many bobbing corks. The urban structure of paths and buildings yields to the power of market activity, leaving the area forlorn and abandoned when it is gone.



1. *Street and building pattern of market area, Venice*

The predominance of the market in shaping paths is reinforced by the lack of one clear way, or axis, through the area--instead there are a number of parallel paths marked by the Rialto Bridge at one end and the Rio delle Beccarie at the other. These paths are part of the ongoing maze of Venetian streets, and yet there is a distinct pattern to the buildings and paths of this area. The deep bend of the Grand Canal causes the land to jut out in a convex curve, almost a right angle. The long, narrow buildings along either side of the curve run perpendicular to the water, but as they converge the two directions must be reconciled. The dense pattern breaks and several buildings, such as the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi and the Church of San Giacomo, are nearly square, trying to resolve the two directions. Other buildings, such as Sansovino's Fabbriche Nuove, extend directionally into the perpendicular field. The paths and spaces of this area are shaped by their special topographical position along the Grand Canal--and the area feels somewhat diffuse compared to other Venetian neighborhoods.

The Rimini path sequence, strongly marked by Roman fragments--the arch and the bridge--is easier to imagine than to experience. Rimini spreads and sprawls around its Roman past. Having suffered war-time bombings and insensitive resort development, the town has lost a sense of physical containment. Of the three, Rimini is the only town not confined by topography. In Venice there is always the

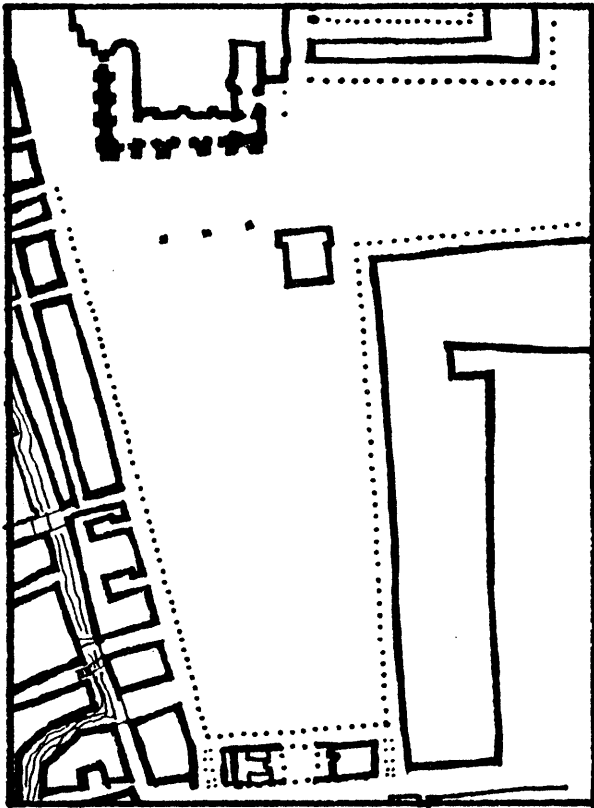
tension between land and water; in Bergamo the steep slope of the hill provides an undeniable edge, but Rimini spreads towards the sea with a sense of unrestrained growth in all directions.

The main axis through the old city, the Corso d'Augusto, is neither stage nor backdrop, but an indifferent channel that tolerates the conflicting demands of cars and people. The street--straight and flat--follows the path of the ancient Roman axis. History has been ravaging, and little of the romantic, timeless ambiance evident in either Bergamo or Venice survives. Too much happens in too little space, and even the pedestrian zone of the Corso feels crowded. The Piazza Tre Martiri, where the Roman axes cross, is a confusion of cars, buses, cafes and people vying for space.

Although the Rimini path is the clearest diagram, an archetypal axis connecting two points, the Via Gombito in Bergamo offers the most coherent experience. The Via Gombito relates to topography and to places along its way, transforming the function of movement and connection into an episode with a character of its own. In Rimini, this character is thwarted by both the architecture and the bureaucrats. In Venice, this character is defined by use; both the path and the physical form of the area are subordinate to the needs of the market.

Surrounds

None of the buildings we studied open directly onto the major path. In every instance, the sequence is to move off the path, into an



1. *Plan, Piazza San Marco, Venice*

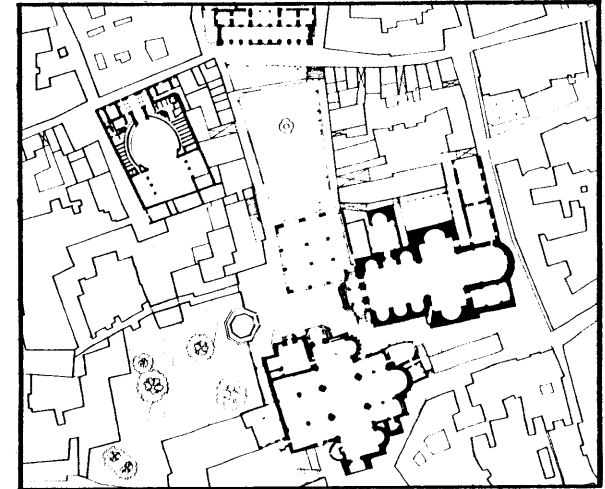
open space which the buildings enfronts. Before looking at the buildings themselves and the ways they make connections and claim space, it is necessary to consider the piazzas in which they stand. The transition from path to place presents one of the most basic dichotomies of urban form. Norberg-Schulz calls it "the tension between centralization and longitudinality."⁷ This tension is resolved by various strong formal arrangements. In Perugia, for example, the path is the place. The spaces at either end of the Corso Vennuci are subordinate to this wide, active street. In Piazza San Marco, however, the arcaded buildings defining the space obscure the path. The path passes through the buildings inconspicuously, and the transition between the piazza and the town fabric happens within the thickness of the framing walls. Or in Verona, neither path nor space dominate, but the paths merge into the elegant sequence of separate yet adjacent piazzas.

In the towns we observed, the tension between path and place is resolved by two patterns. In both Bergamo and Rimini, the piazzas open off one dominant street which edges one of the short sides of the rectangular piazzas. Instead of this direct relationship between the major path and the central space of the area, the Campo of the Pescheria in Venice is part of a field of paths and open space, no one of which is clearly dominant.

Although Bergamo and Rimini are similar in diagram, issues of scale and topography make them quite different experientially. In Bergamo, the path climbs up the hill from the Mercato delle Scarpe, levels briefly and opens onto the elegant expanse of the piazza with its carefully articulated paving pattern. In this hill town, the act of

making a flat surface seems particularly intentional, emphasizing that this place results from special efforts. The Piazza Vecchia is defined and limited, and yet it connects through the open arcades of the Palazzo della Ragione to the Piazza del Duomo. Each space has a unique form, scale and enclosure, and yet they work together in a proportioned and harmonic way.

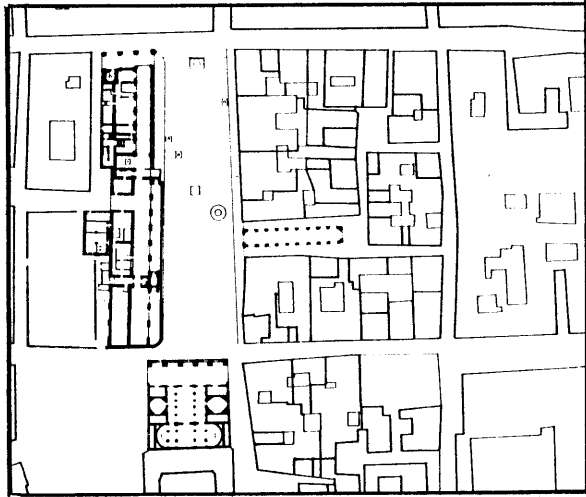
The buildings framing the Piazza Vecchia represent the entire range of civic life: library, theatre, mayor's palace, and town hall. Around the neighboring Piazza del Duomo are collected two large churches, a chapel, a baptistry, and the garden of a cloister. In the plan of the area, the scale of exterior spaces is uniquely balanced with the sizes of interior public spaces. The interior of Santa Maria Maggiore is almost as large as the Piazza Vecchia; the interior of the Duomo is larger than the Piazza del Duomo. Both the Piazza Vecchia and the Piazza del Duomo seem intimate and room-like, in part because there are so many real rooms of the same size around them.



1. *Buildings framing the Piazza Vecchia*

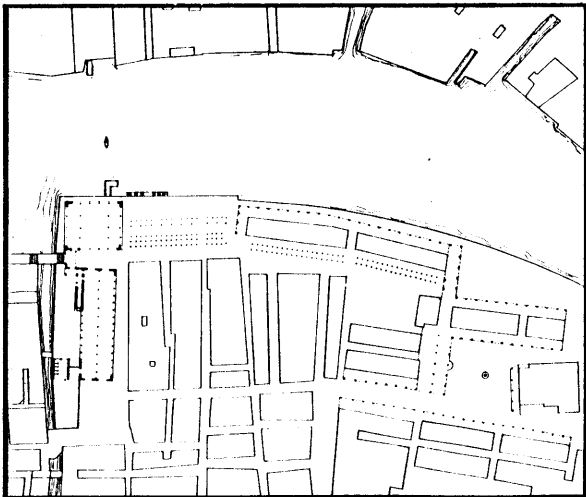
In Rimini, the range of sizes and relationships is more disparate. The Piazza Cavour, consistent with the Roman grid, opens off the flat Corso d'Augusto in a less dramatic way than the Piazza Vecchia in Bergamo. The Piazza Cavour is larger and the scale of the enclosing buildings varies dramatically. The theatre is a monumental building boldly enfronting and closing one end of the piazza, while the fish market is relatively low and unassertive, occurring in a wall of commercial buildings. The buildings defining the Piazza Cavour sometimes seem a collection of strangers, randomly gathered, while in Bergamo the buildings are familiar faces, acknowledging and

reinforcing each other.



1. *Configuration of Piazza Cavour*

The Piazza Cavour is not a centralized space. Somewhat like the Piazza Navona in Rome, it is a long, thin space which lacks a sense of focus. It is longitudinal and one walks through it as if it were a street, observing sequentially events along the way. One is never truly in the Piazza Cavour as one is in the Piazza Vecchia. And yet, neither is it a part of a sequence, but rather a singular space. The area behind the theatre--a large open space used for parking--is neither an expansion nor counterpoint to the experience of being in the Piazza. Similarly, the fish market connects the piazza to a small space and then through to a tiny mid-block piazza. But the spaces are so much smaller than the Piazza Cavour that they do not reinforce one another. Each space seems too different, too separate.



2. *Pattern of Venice market area*

If the domain of the piazzas in Bergamo is characterized by a series of identifiable places which reinforce each other and Rimini is a set of independent spaces standing apart from one another, the Rialto area in Venice introduces a new pattern: a continuous field of inter-related and yet non-hierarchical spaces and buildings. The zone along the edge of the Grand Canal was once open from the Loggia di Cavalieri to the Rio delle Beccarie. But the interventions of the Fabbriche Nuove and the wholesale fish market restructured this area into a series of similarly sized market spaces. The fabric has a sense of repetition. Long arcaded market buildings intersect the pattern of the pallazzi parallel to the old fish market. Except for the wholesale fish market which stands apart and the tiny church of San Giacomo, buried in the dense market area, the buildings and open spaces are difficult to recall separately, as volumes or faces--they

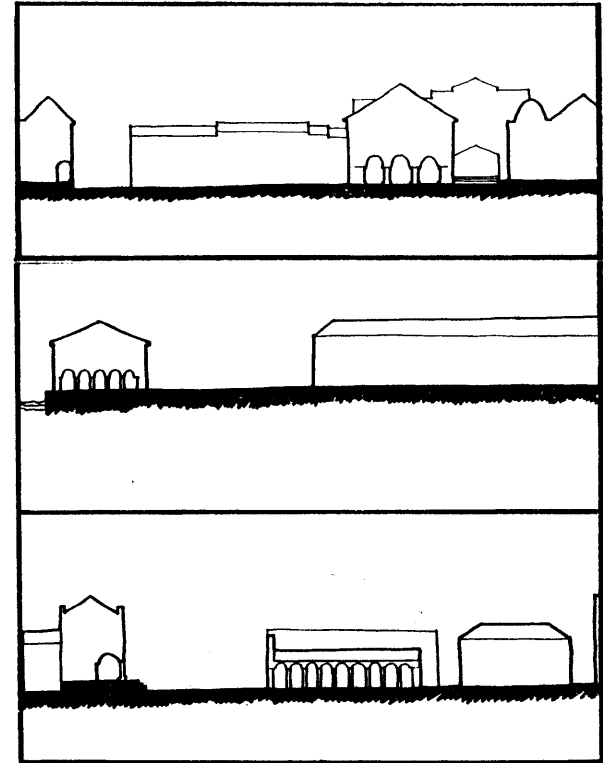
merge together into the "market" image of the area. The tension between path and building is diffused into a network instead of a juxtaposition, as in Bergamo.

Placement

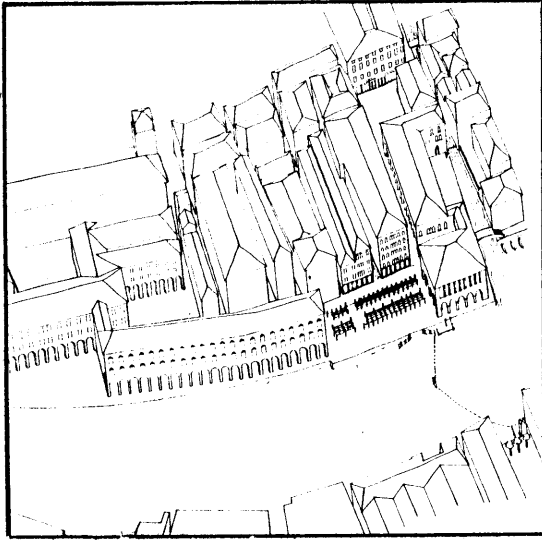
The structure and character of the paths and open spaces in the three towns create very different environments within which the buildings with open covered space occur. The specificity of each environment is further articulated by the placement of the buildings. Each suggests a distinct siting attitude: the Bergamo building stands between spaces to make transition and to claim space; the addition to the fish market in Venice stands apart, object-like; and the Rimini building is inserted into a slot in a continuous wall.

The Pescheria buildings in Venice are identifiable objects. Paths skirt their edges and the two parts of the building are distinct. The older building follows the form and siting of its neighbors; squeezed into a row of parallel block buildings. The addition stands apart, pavilion-like on its spectacular site--the only jog in the continuous edge of the Grand Canal. It is the only building with two faces enfronting the canal, offering the opportunity--usually only possible from the bridges--to look not only across but also down the canal. The addition is a landmark.

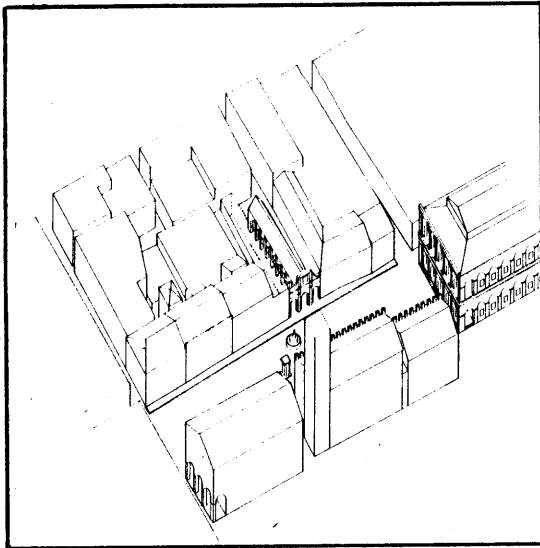
Once, the separation of the two buildings of the fish market delineated the retail activity housed in the older building from the wholesale market located in the addition. The path passes between the



1. From top, Bergamo, Venice, Rimini: Building Placement



1. Venice: Building Placement



2. Rimini: Building Placement

two, covered only briefly by the bridge which connects them. Perched at the edge of the canal, the addition is not part of the on-going path, nor is it used as a market. It stands empty, a respite from the frenzy of the market, inhabited at its edges by vegetable vendors and enjoyed by playing children and occasional lingerers. This building exemplifies one possibility for a covered open building--a pavilion. It has the view and sense of openness associated with pavilions, and yet the quality of standing separate from the adjacent paths does not encourage overlaps of use or meaning.

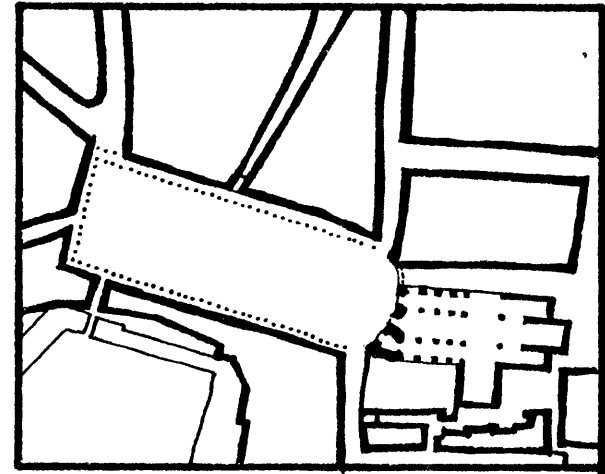
Both the site and the treatment of the Rimini building differ from Venice. Although its scale is small, the baroque curves and arched openings of the Pescheria interrupt the rectangular pattern of the commercial buildings along the eastern edge of Piazza Cavour. Its actual volume is a surprise, contradicting the facade. The facade spans the area between the adjacent buildings but of its three arched openings, only the central arch opens into the Pescheria. The outer arches are gates covering the streets on either side of this decorated shed.

In its effort to enfront the piazza, the fish market defies the traditional relationship between path and building, and between volume and facade. In Renaissance projects, when new facades were added to existing buildings the expression of the facade came to suggest a message independent of the volume behind. For example, the facade of the sanctuary in Saronna contradicts in its style and scale the mass of the rest of the building.⁸ But the facade is consistent with the actual extent of the building. Buonamici, however, implies in his Rimini design a volume where there is no building.

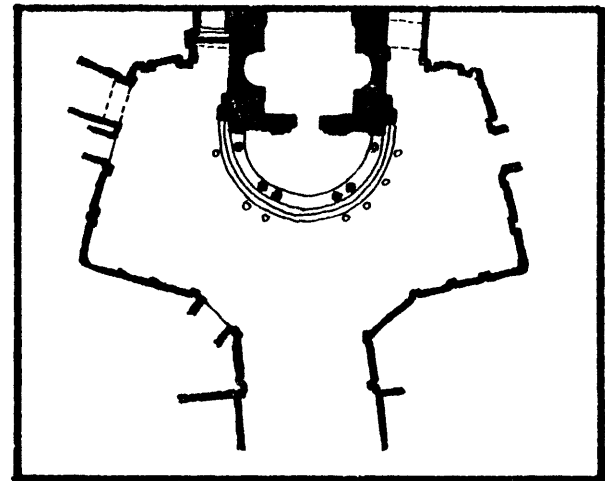
This attitude has precedents in situations such as the Palace of Giustizia in Brussels. The proportions of the facade include a bridge spanning a street. The gateway through to the street is clearly expressed. The unusual condition is incorporated and announced in the treatment of the elements. The facade is not really misleading, as in the case of the Rimini building.

In Vigevano, the Church of Sant'Ambrogio presents a more direct precedent. Instead of aligning itself with the main axis of the church, the facade is on axis with the piazza.⁹ The facade of the cathedral spans both the front of the church and the adjacent street. Of the four arched openings, only three lead into the church; the fourth bridges the street. But they are treated equally, and it is only upon walking through the space that the disparity between the concave facade and the actual volume of the church is evident. The church facade enfronts the piazza, rather than creating a continuity with the existing building. Similarly, the church of Santa Maria della Pace in Rome emphasizes the importance of addressing public space over consistency with the building volume. In the remodeling by Pietro da Cortona in 1657, a symmetry was created by the wings extending from the church facade. This symmetry is an illusion. The right wing frames the entrance to a street, while the left wing is pasted onto a closed wall.¹⁰

Projects such as these--emphasizing the image of the facade over volumetric reality--are precedents for Buonamici's design. The site of the Pescheria is small, basically a wide street. Buonamici attempted to imply a more important event than the reality of the small market.

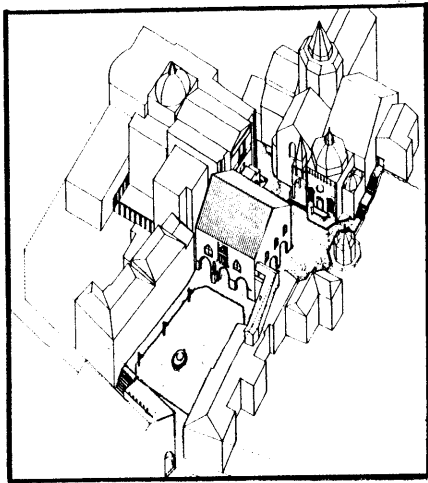


1. Plan, Piazza Ducale and cathedral, Vigevano



2. Church and piazza of Santa Maria della Pace, Rome

Since the site only edges the Piazza Cavour, the Pescheria claims significance by the manipulation of its facade. Unlike the theatre, the scale of Buonamici's building remains too small to strongly affect the large piazza. It is a beguiling attempt to both enfront the piazza and provide transition into the market and adjacent streets, but its image remains eccentric rather than forceful.



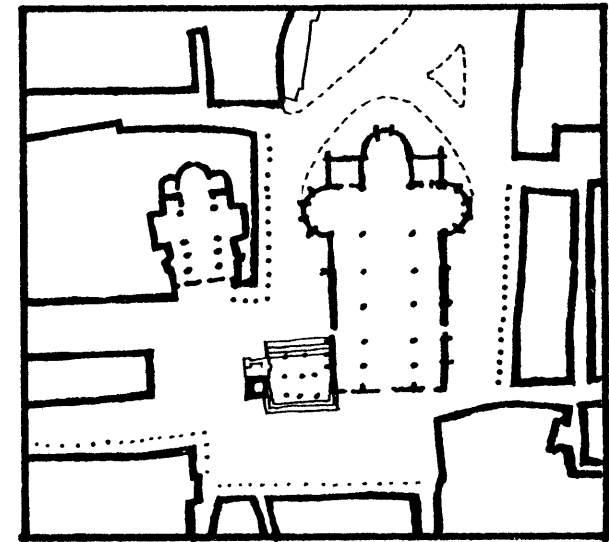
1. Bergamo: Building Placement

In Bergamo, the placement of the Palazzo della Ragione results much more directly from the restructuring of the town fabric, and the need to provide connection between important spaces. No pun or contradiction is intended; the building is inspiring in its honest and elegant resolution. The Palazzo was the medieval town hall. Originally it faced the small parvis of the cathedral, a space shaped by the buildings which cluster around it. When the Piazza Vecchia was formed by removing a block of buildings, the Palazzo della Ragione, once closed, opened the arches of its northern facade to connect the new piazza with the Piazza del Duomo. A new facade was added, but it is directly expressive of the building mass.

The Palazzo mediates between the two spaces, offering the space under its volume as both a transition between places and as a place in itself. From either the Piazza Vecchia or the Piazza del Duomo the building seems to be part of each, and yet it distinguishes and separates them. The two piazzas differ in scale and ambiance, and yet each is significant to the town. The cathedral stands behind the Palazzo della Ragione, always obscured by the Palazzo's mass and yet visible enough to serve as an enticement, a destination drawing people through the Piazza Vecchia and the arcaded space of the Palazzo.

Two attitudes towards the placement of open buildings result from the consideration of the siting of the three examples, although other attitudes exist. The Broletto in Como, for example, forms an edge to the piazza, protecting the piazza's form from the surrounding vehicularized streets. It also provides a shortcut into the piazza, but since there is a level change, the sense of going through a building is clearly articulated. Or another example is a building so placed to allow the path to dominate it. It then becomes a gate covering and marking the path, often inhibiting other uses and activities. Or a building separated from the path, as in the case of Venice, forces people to consciously choose to enter it, and it becomes more dominant as a place than a path.

In our studies, both the Bergamo and the Rimini buildings stand in a space which is part of the path. The Venice building stands apart from it. Of the range of possibilities, the opportunity to make path and place coincident is clearly realized in Bergamo. The path network is not channelled but part of a field of choices. People zigzag through the space and under the adjoining bridge, yet there is always a sense of place, an invitation to linger. The Rimini building, since it connects the more awkward spaces of the Piazza Cavour and the tiny space behind the buildings, is less successful as a mediator. But some of the problems in Rimini are due to the plan definitions, discussed in the following sections.



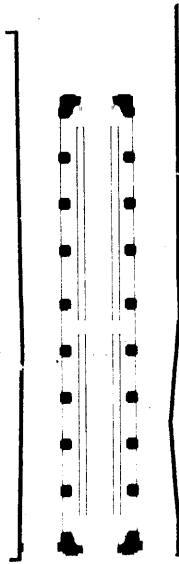
1. *Plan, Broletto and Piazza del Duomo, Como*

Plans

The plans of the buildings further shape the experience of path/place

coincidence. Paths usually have direction and are longitudinal in form, while places, according to Norberg-Schulz, are characterized by limited size, closure and centralized form: "A centralized form primarily means 'concentration.' A place, therefore, is basically 'round.'"¹¹ A tension is inherent in the coincidence of path and place. This tension can be resolved either by emphasizing centralization in the building plan, reinforcing the quality of place, or emphasizing longitudinal movement, reinforcing the experience of path.

The plans of the Bergamo building and the addition to the Pescheria in Venice are both virtually square. Squares are centralized forms--forms of place. Especially in the case of Bergamo, as the paths meander through, there is a real sense of going through a place--a defined, enclosed, limited zone. In the cases of Rimini and the older building in Venice, the plans are long and narrow--path-like. There is never a sense of focus or a stopping point. Path dominates over place. In Venice, the problem is less acute because the building is wider, divided into two zones by a row of columns. But in Rimini the building is only one bay wide, the width of a path.



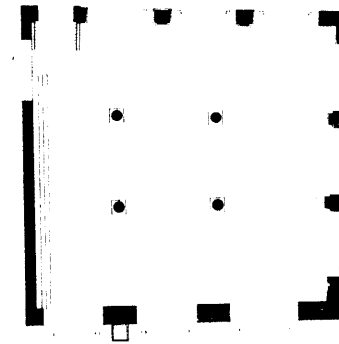
1. *Plan of Rimini Pescheria*

The proportions of the Rimini building--41 meters long and only 6.9 meters wide--further reinforces the dominance of path over place. The building is axial, with its axis running parallel to the streets on either side. Instead of a centralized place, the building and the adjacent streets become a series of parallel paths. The definitions within the building compound this problem. A long marble bench runs along both sides of the interior, breaking only once at mid-point. This break is the only opportunity to cross into the

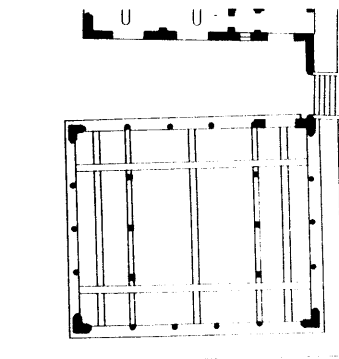
space or out into the adjoining streets. Otherwise, once the choice of one of the paths is made, you are contained in that path. A one-step level change between the building and the parallel streets and adjacent spaces further separates the covered space. If the benches were removed and the ground level made continuous, then the whole zone of the covered space and the adjoining streets lined with small shops would become a field of paths and cover. But this would still not resolve the strong directionality of the building.

Axes encourage one to move along, not linger in. The axis of the fish market is confusing because it does not really lead anywhere-- it leads to a tiny left-over space and then connects to an inner-block network. If the market building connected the Piazza Cavour to another major public space or to important buildings, it then would be a very special path. But its long narrow form, reinforced by the confining benches, are antithetical to the concept of place.

The plans of the Palazzo della Ragione and the addition to the Venice building are centralized. The Palazzo della Ragione has a long stone bench along its eastern wall. This bench provides a stopping place. The dimensions of the columns, piers, surrounding steps and porticoes reinforce the covered space itself and its possibilities for inhabitation. The Venice building has a similar plan, although more regular than the Bergamo building. It meets the ground much more delicately, with the columns touching directly onto the floor surface without the transition of bases. The building lacks any interior definitions for sitting or selling. The emptiness of the space limits its possibilities as a place which encourages people to improvise use or claim territory.



1. *Plan of Bergamo
Palazzo della Ragione*



2. *Plan of Venice addition*

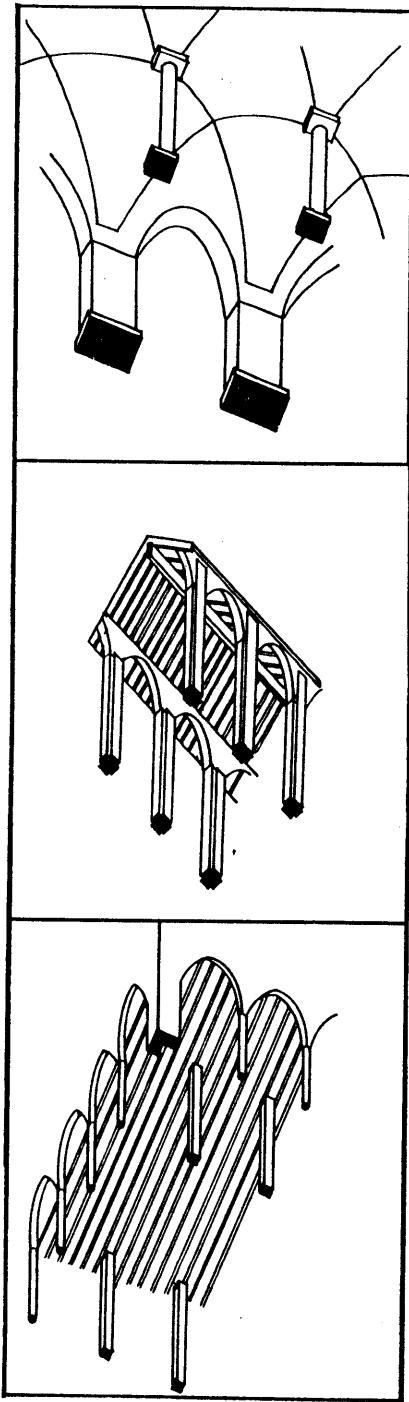
Use Patterns

All of the buildings we observed were once used as markets, a function which seems particularly suited to outdoor covered space because markets need to be closely connected to the paths and open spaces of the surrounding area. None of the buildings, except the older part of the Venice Pescheria, are still used as markets. In Bergamo, the area under the Palazzo della Ragione was once the financial exchange. This arrangement is typical of other medieval town halls such as in Como, Monza and Brescia, where the financial transactions were regulated by the town governments housed above the market. The financial market has long since been replaced by banks, and the covered space in Bergamo has no specific use today. It is a place to pass through, to sit in, to read in, or to watch people. It is a respite--a contemplative space. Its most intense occupation is the occasional artist who sets up his easel under its vaults to draw the cathedral as tourists gather to watch.

In Rimini and Venice the buildings are more recent. The Rimini building was built in 1747; the new Pescheria in Venice was added in 1907. In both of these seaside towns, the fishing industry had a powerful economic and symbolic function. This function received recognition by the construction of elaborate fish markets. Over the last ten years, the demands of twentieth century transport--access to truck loading docks and highways--have removed the actual selling of fish to the outskirts. Apparently, too, the town fathers of Rimini found the smell of the fish market too offensive to be so close to city hall.

Neither of these buildings has yet been adapted for a new use. The towns still own and control the buildings and, in Rimini, there is talk of moving the flower market--with its more pleasant smells--into the Pescheria. Part of the under-utilization is administrative; part is inherent in the physical form. The Rimini building is poorly placed to successfully engage many of the activities that happen in the piazza. The covered space hidden behind its deceptive facade is occasionally used by someone selling jewelry or trinkets. The building location is not part of an intense path and thus is not especially attractive to sellers.

If the Rimini building is too much a path with no place to go, the Venice building is too clearly a space with no real coincidence of path. The older part of the fish market is still used and works well as the end of the market zone. The new building, however, is without activity. What is more limiting, however, is the surrounding area. Since the building exists in a market area, it is hard to use the space as anything other than some kind of market. An administrative decision allowing the space to be used by another market could resolve the use problems. But even without use, the building stands on its spectacular site with views down the canal, potentially a very special place. Its form suggests a pavilion. If the Campo of the Pescheria was not a market zone but a piazza, it is easy to imagine this building as both closing the space and also connecting it to the canal. The building, whether it housed cafe tables, news stands, a vaporetto stop or an information booth and exhibits, would be a room with a very special view.



Cover

The quality of place, however, is not solely dependent upon use. Every place does not need to be used with equal intensity. A place can be a reserve space, both offering opportunities for people to inhabit it and reinforcing the other buildings and spaces in its surround. We have studied three buildings which offer the special quality of outdoor cover to their environs; opportunities to be inside and under without ever going through a door. Each building expresses the sense of cover differently. In Bergamo, you pass through the Gothic arches of the facade into a space defined by the undulating pattern of cross vaults. The vaults are high and express both the strength of carved stone and the lightness of canopy. Each vault defines a zone around a column, like branches of trees in a grove.

The Rimini building is a shed. Unlike Bergamo or Venice, there is no second floor to the building: the ceiling is the actual pitch of the shed roof. The joists and beams are of exposed wood, expressing its construction. The long line of the ridge pole reinforces the long axis of the narrow building, intensifying the linearity of the building and hence the path.

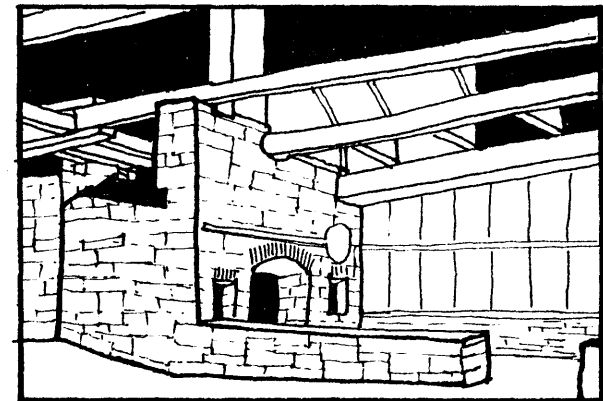
The Venice buildings have flat ceilings, most clearly hinting at the existence of a floor above. The flat ceilings are made of wood with exposed joists, and give the spaces a salon character. Yet the cover is not exploited to make the space special and the simple market use is fitting for this space. In the wholesale market, however, the image of pavilion is diminished by the interior space. The low, flat

1. Cover: from top-Bergamo, Rimini, and Venice

ceiling is disappointing in the context of the Grand Canal at the building's edge. The size of the addition and the sturdiness of its columns suggest a lifting of space that does not occur on the interior. One wants a sense of expansive space in the cover as exists in the view.

Covered spaces in the public domain have a symbolic significance, perhaps as important as actual use. Amos Rappoport writes: "Buildings and settlements are the visible expression of the relative importance attached to the different aspects of life and the varying ways of perceiving reality."¹² A covered space, open to public paths and spaces, implies sharing: it expresses a conviction that people need and want to come together. A particularly evocative example exists in Collonges sur la Rouge, a small village in the Dordogne region of France. Bordering an open square but tucked in among other buildings made of the same red stone, there is a covered space that houses the communal ovens. Once, a fire would have been built and the townspeople would gather to bake their bread. This town hearth epitomizes a sense of community and sharing. The fire is no longer lit, but the building stands as a testament to collective life. Occasionally, a wedding reception, a town meeting or a conversation among friends enlivens the space, acknowledging its gesture to cover and protect.

The uses of buying and selling--the primary collective acts in the buildings we have studied--are not as evocative as the act of baking bread together. Yet it is an activity that encourages interaction and involvement. The buildings of this study, both in their history and in their current reality, are places of character and



1. *Communal ovens, Collonges sur la Rouge*

significance: "When we concretize a character by means of a formal articulation, we bring the work 'close,' we make the existential meanings manifest as palpable things. Thus Heidegger says: 'Close at hand are what we usually call things. When we take care of things as things, we dwell in this place.'"¹³

Conclusion

The idea which originally attracted us to the study of open covered space was an interest in the coincidence of path and place. We considered many of the possible forms of covered paths: gates, passages through buildings, arcades, and gallerias. But in each of these instances the path pattern dominates, and uses move out to claim the edges of the path. We speculated that the relationship between path and place might be more ambiguous: that paths might actually diffuse as they passed through focussed spaces to create a new experience. Our analysis of the three examples reveals that the tension between path and place is difficult to resolve. Of the three places observed, only in Bergamo is the simultaneity of path and place mutually reinforcing. Passing under the vaulted space of the Palazzo della Ragione intensifies the experience of path, while having people meander through gives life and activity to the place. But coming to understand the success of this environment, and the problems inherent in the others, has given us insight into the qualities which create a workable and enriching coincidence of path and place.

As architects, our goal in this project was to learn how to look, how to borrow. Often in the process of design, images of places and spe-

cific built conditions suggest possibilities for an evolving design. But sometimes it is difficult to know whether the form is appropriate or, if so, what the specific qualities are that make the concept a successful built place. The concept of coincidence of path and place has provided us a focus in the exercise of trying to understand place. The methods of observation, drawing, and analysis undertaken in this project are now a part of our approach to looking and thinking about places. They also suggest some criteria for design problems in which place and path coincide. Understanding and evaluating the differences between our three case studies has enabled us to enumerate some specific characteristics to be considered in successfully realizing the coincidence of path, place, and cover.

PATH: The most critical characteristic of paths passing through covered buildings is the connection made to destinations on either side. The relevancy of the covered place increases if the spaces on either side collect paths, so that a number criss-cross through the space. The continuity of the path is reinforced if the covered space is at the same level as the paths, encouraging people to cross through it without conscious adjustment to the ground condition. The path as it goes through the space need not be defined or channelled: rather, it should create a field of possible paths. Finally, the covered space will be used more intensely if the path is not redundant or diminished by parallel paths adjacent to it.

PLACE: A covered space becomes a place when it has a focus which counteracts movement. A centralized, coherently limited space maximizes the tension between the movement of paths and the lingering associated with places. The covered place offers more possibilities

if it includes built definitions--benches, steps, ledges--which encourage people to inhabit the space. The architectural elements--the columns, piers, corners, cover, openings--need a scale which relates to the size of the human body and is understandable in human dimensions. By limiting the size of the covered space, it maintains a scale which relates to the adjacent places, forming a place which in its size and definition contributes to and reinforces the overall pattern.

COVER: Perhaps the most difficult issue for an outdoor covered space is that of an appropriate use. Locating activities such as cafes or shops along one or two edges of the covered space provides uses that are able to claim it, thereby intensifying its use. Uses in spaces adjacent to the covered space also intensify its use and meaning, as the Duomo's porch does for the Palazzo della Ragione in Bergamo.

The special quality of a covered space is the experience of canopy. It seems important to maximize this quality in the treatment of the cover by making it as special as possible. High ceilings and generous wall openings provide relief to a potentially dark and oppressive space. A limited building depth allows filtered light to soften the transition between openness and cover as well as to claim the building edge for both the interior and exterior spaces.

The transparency possible in a covered space creates a dynamic that can enliven the path. The possibility to see through as well as into a covered space is engaging. Revealed vignettes, changing as one changes positions, involves the individual as a participant, not as

a spectator, in the experience of path and place. The simultaneous perception of building volume and the transparency of screen distinguishes the covered space as a unique experience in the environment. If the covered space exists as a part of a fabric that offers a range of spatial opportunities, its uniqueness becomes a special place in the overall domain.

Footnotes

- ¹Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse.
- ²Christian Norberg-Schulz, Meaning in Western Architecture, p. 433.
- ³Charles Moore, Gerald Allen and Donlyn Lyndon, The Place of Houses, p. 32.
- ⁴Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Genius Loci," Lotus 13 International, p. 59.
- ⁵John and Margaret Myer, Patterns of Association, p. 46.
- ⁶Christian Norberg-Schulz, Existence, Space and Architecture, p. 23.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 26.
- ⁸Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, p. 86.
- ⁹Wolfgang Lotz, Italian Renaissance Architecture, p. 132.
- ¹⁰Paul Zucker, Town and Square, p. 155.
- ¹¹Christian Norberg-Schulz, Existence, Space and Architecture, p. 20.
- ¹²Amos Rapoport, House Form and Culture, p. 47.
- ¹³Christian Norberg-Schulz, Meaning in Western Architecture, p. 432.

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