

## ONE ROOF, THREE SCHOOLS

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The essay focuses on how the contemporary project is able to be a valid tutelage against the consumption mechanisms nowadays. The Archetypical idea, without any connections to a form or an image, is able to assimilate critical points of the contemporary environment, and then, translate itself in physical architecture. In this case, the idea of a roof, is capable to outline all the architectural issues of the project for three schools in Sassa, l'Aquila, becoming the original fulcrum of the design process. A simple roof is placed over classrooms and smaller volumes becoming the city for the children and a complete new space where to learn. The simplicity of the project aims to be a valid alternative to contemporary consumption processes and therefore a qualified approach for a new culturally sustainable design process.

*Keywords:* Archetype, roof, school

Contemporary, modern and ancient architecture has always been influenced, unequivocally, by social, political and economical contexts where it used to be shaped. Out of this close connection between physical, social, and economic spheres, it occurs to focus on dynamics regulating and defining the production, particularly of architecture, and generally of the city. There are many examples of how social changes modified, in a strong way, typology, forms and language of architectural production, pandering, sometimes too quickly, improper transformations and accelerations of the sedimented cultural context. The Enhancement typological revolution, the avant-Garde historical cut, the historical critic review, intended as content rather than image, as well as naive spectacularization produced by late twentieth century Star system, represent extremely accelerated different models, products of social, political and economical influence for practical and theoretical occurrences regarding architecture and the city. In this sense, related to the increasingly consumerist and globalized social contemporary condition, as well as to the less democratic and more nationalist politic forms, how architecture can take position and relate in a conscious and impartial way, to those continuously changing dynamics? The identification of archetypical models in architecture could represent a new critical opposition modality for the project in our fragmented and heterogenous contemporary city. The purity and sobriety of the archetype, in terms of typology, morphology and language, could have the competence to be a common cultural memory able to resist and absorb, in a positive way, the almost unstoppable and rapid economical political and social changes of our collectivity and, never the less, the always more subjected and systemic architectures produced in this context.

In this sense, the capacity of an archetypical concept, or rather the one of perpetuate its *original* essence over time, resides in its intimate possibility to be expressed in the contemporary, whatever it is. Namely, in the present as well as in those belonging to the past. A state, the contemporary, not just linked to a mere synchronic caducity, but moreover able to constantly separate, thanks to his diachronic component, the always pure archetypical root from the influences, styles and languages of the more diverse historical moments where it has been called to be applied, synthesized or interpreted. The primary principle and necessity of the man, to put a roof above itself represent one of the very first architectonic acts related to the civilization of the human being. It describes a primordial notion, or rather the research for the protection of the man. It tells about an instinctive gesture but, at the same time, rational. It defines a spase, without occupying it, making what is positioned below, effectively different from what is not. The project for the realization of Sassa schools campus, located in l'Aquila district, developed with Rocco Vitali, shapes itself out of a clear idea: the will to locate, below a roof, three school complex, required by the competition, developing, consequently, a fluid and free space, where the act of moving becomes reason of the building. The idea is to propone a learning center, autonomous from the usual margins and limits of common school, developing education programs necessary functions a whole of conglomerates, originating an urban-like space, thanks to which the school generate itself. The building, perceived from the outside like a temple, develops inside a complex game of forms.



Fig.1. Planimetry



Fig.2. External view

The school is a city, where teaching becomes a journey into the building, exploring always different contexts and scenarios. The classroom is considered as the house of the children, a cave, or merely a place where to feel protected and learn. The intervention area, located to the east of the center of Sassa, is lapped by via Duca degli Abruzzi, main connection route to l'Aquila, while on the other margins, confront itself with a predominatly rural and a low density built condition. A gentle slope interposes itself between the urbanized valley bottom and the impending nature of the Appennini Abruzzesi. Those are the conditions suggesting the develop of an, at first sight, compact volume, hiding inside an agglomerate of smaller buildings, symbolizing, as a consequence, a filter between the dense slope woods and the urban developed areas. The peremptorily modularity of the grid, authentically defining the grammar of the façade, adapts to limits and necessity of the site. A wide cut, is positioned at about a third of the volume's length, keeping due distances from a lot where, due to the presence of an aqueduct, building is forbidden, responding in a precise, functional and propositive way to a limiting precondition, without loosing the typicality of the proposal, but rather enriching it. A building, in fact, on a large scale, but able to confronts with the medium-small dimension of the rural periphery of Sassa and the main conditions of the site. The strategic position, close to the historic center, make plausible the will of the campus to become not just a school, but moreover, a real open cultural center, a social catalyst, offered to the city.

Presenting a modular grid, the proposal becomes extremely flexible, both during the developing phase and the near future. Flexibility represents a strength point for a school, that has to react to changing teaching methods and as well as to the varying number of the students.

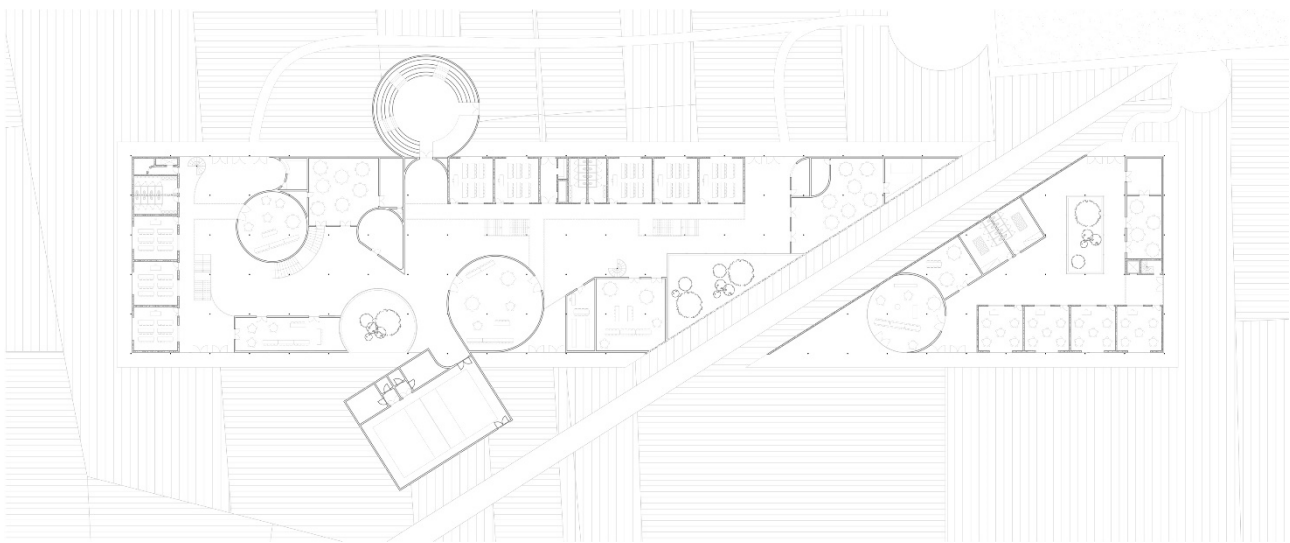


Fig.3. Ground Floor

While the kindergarten, due to project choice and teaching methods, proposes itself as an isolated volume, but always in connection to the whole project, the primary and secondary schools collimate below the roof, giving form to a didactic space in symbiosis. The gym and the auditorium, common spaces for both instruction grades, come together below the roof close to the two main didactic areas, assuming the role of the only abstract exceptions to the peremptory, inflexibility and rigidity to the structural rigidity of the building. The structure that characterizes the school has been developed with a particular attention to the economic aspects. Thanks to a coherent separation between primary and secondary structural systems, the requirements, related to construction static, have been resolved in a simple and economic way. The main structural system, formed by a modular raster of precast concrete pillars, together with the good positioning of the supporting volumes of the classrooms and finally to the walls near the aqueduct, is able to stabilize the building against horizontal forces like wind and earthquakes, solving simultaneously the torsion stability and momentum exigencies. The spaces for the activities, beside the didactic common program, developed thanks to simple wooden truss structures and covered by an opaque covering, adapt to the main structural system autonomously, effectively responding to all loading stresses to which they are subjected. One of the main aspects of this project is identifiable in the compact building body.



Fig.4. Classroom



Fig.5. Public space

The external glass band, in addition to favoring air fluxes necessary to school cooling, forms, with the rooms leaned against it, an extremely isolated shell, both in thermal and acoustic. Also the roof, as well as being the main actor within the design question, hosts the main system services like sprinkler, ventilation and artificial lighting, jointly with solar panes and thermal accumulators, that with a geothermal pump, compensate for the building's thermal requirements, both for cooling and for heating. The plant system issue becomes thus, thanks to the unequivocal design choice, integral part of the intervention, avoiding an approximate and disjoint use of technologies for architecture, but on the contrary, making them an integral part of the design process. Definitely, the project for Sassa schools campus, confess the will to propose and oppose itself, in a critical manner, to an always more subjected to the dynamics and speculations of consumption, and to all of those practices defining the act of build as simple construction, consequently no more architecture but a *non-architecture*, stifled by an irritating design and construction superficiality.

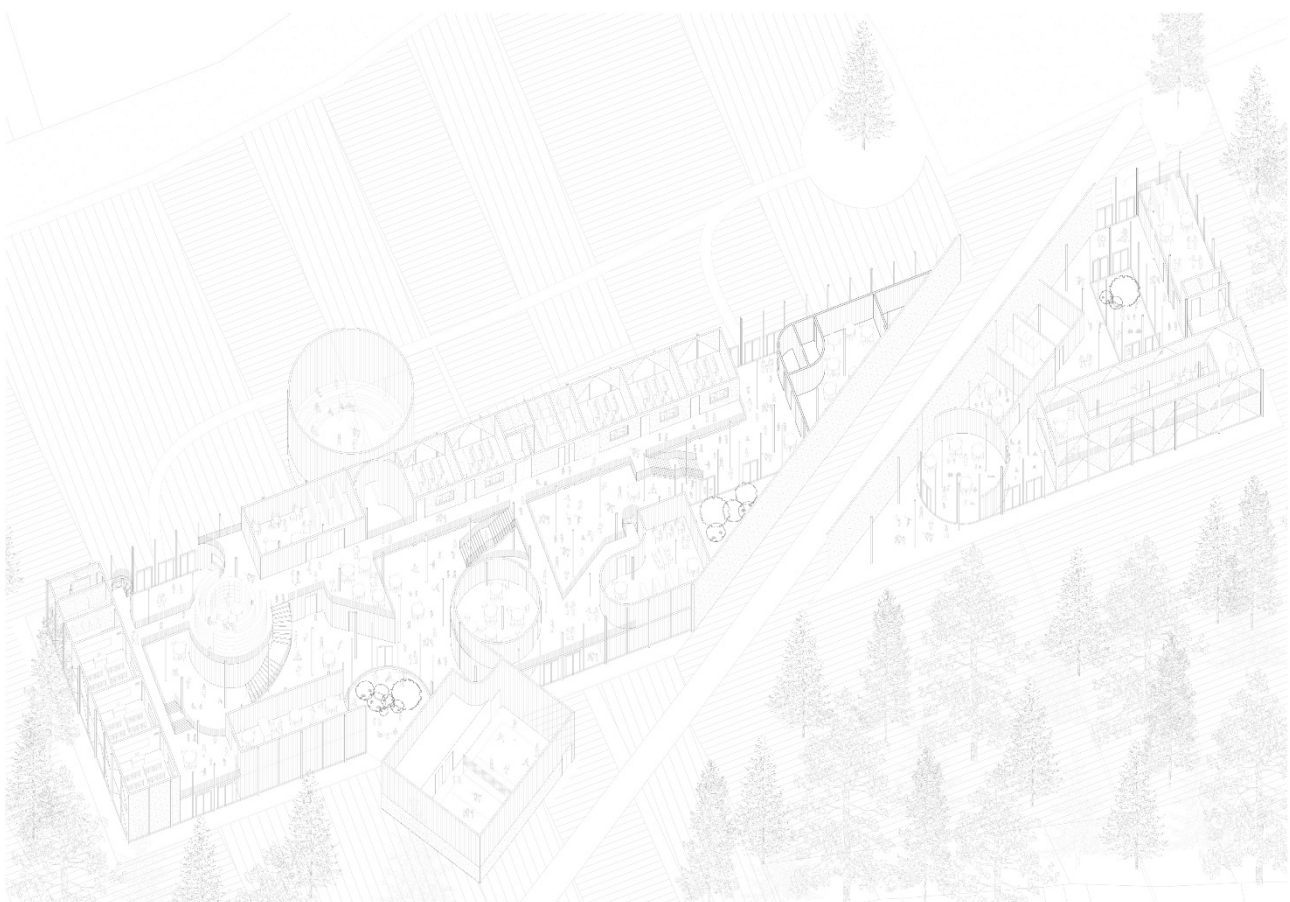


Fig.6. Axonometry

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LORENZO GIORDANO Born in 1991 in Alessandria, Lorenzo Giordano graduated in Architecture from the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, Switzerland, where had the possibility to work with architects like Mario Botta, Valentin Bearth, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Valerio Olgiati, Eric Lapierre, Francesco Venezia, Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus and Jonathan Sergison, his Diploma tutor. During his studies he has also worked for David Chipperfield Architects, in London, UK. Member of the student organization OSA, he promoted and organized cultural events with architects, editors and artists such as: Jurg Conzett, Nicola di Battista, Tom Emerson, Oliver Wainwright, Dino Simonett, Christian Kerez. Since 2018 he is PhD Candidate in Naples, at the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II. His studies focus on the character of contemporary architecture, mainly in connection with economics, politics and society, and the archetypal idea as an act of resistance in our consumption society.