

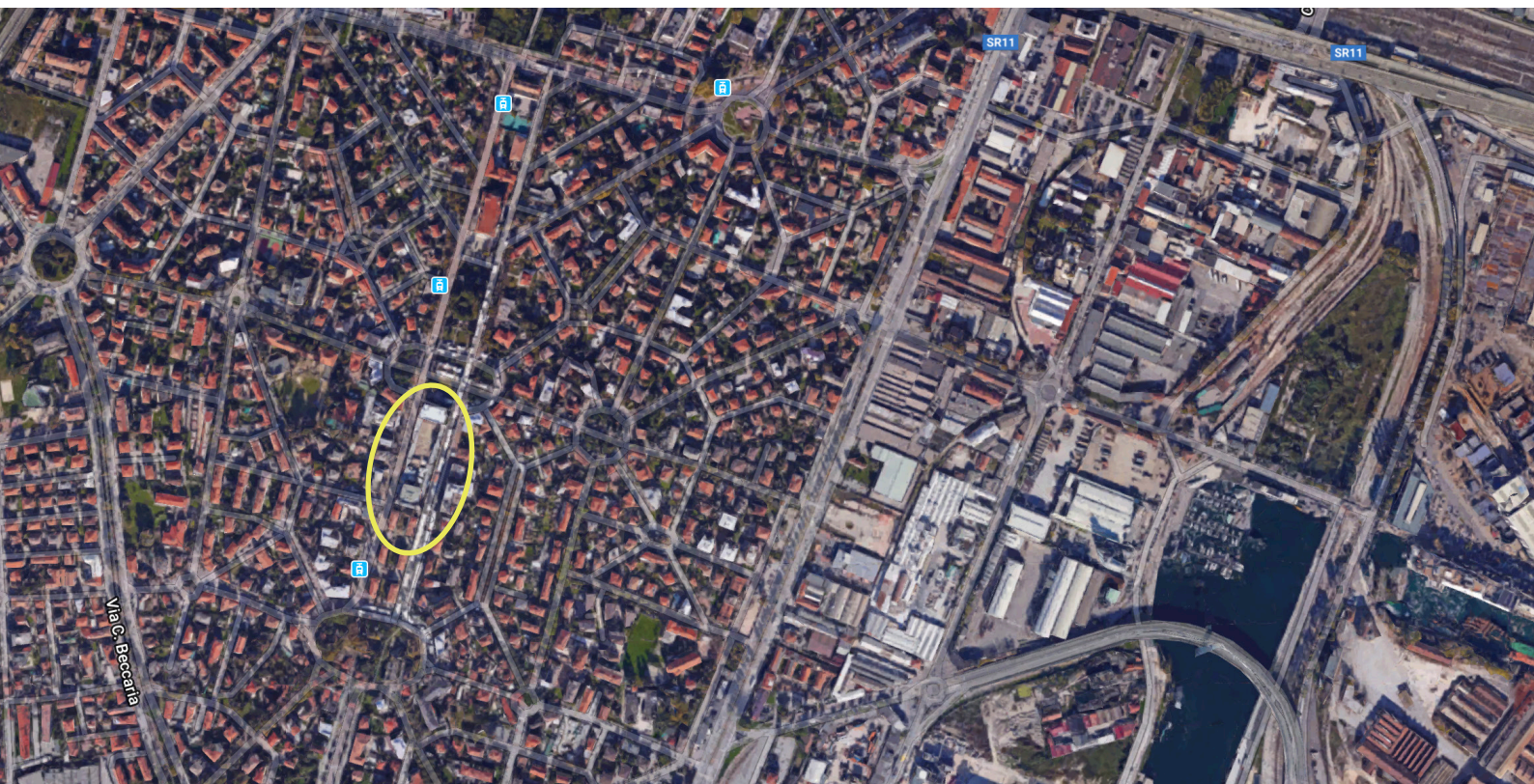
Italy

Marghera Garden City Piazza del Mercato

The 'Area Gasometri', Bovisa, Milan

The Riviera del Brenta





## Marghera Garden City, Piazza del Mercato

In 1917 a new industrial area and harbour was created on the Venice mainland and annexed to the lagoon city, as well as an urban district to accommodate workers. Known as Porto Marghera, it soon became one of the main powerhouses and industrial hubs in Italy. However, the urban district, which was planned as 30.000-inhabitant garden city, grew slower than expected. The original 'garden city' design was thus soon abandoned before post-war housing emergency and real estate development further modified its features. Today, the modernisation of Venice and the urbanisation of the Venice mainland are still significant in its impact. The town's coherent layout, the contained dimensions, and abundant greenery strongly distinguish it from the nearby Mestre.



The città giardino underwent a conservation process as a 'significant area' in the 1990s that was carried out by both planning and heritage administrations. As much as the original garden city plan proved innovative in the early-20th century Italian context, such process constituted a rather progressive move decades later. Urban renewal interventions were jointly conducted with a focus particularly on Marghera's main square: the piazza del Mercato.

## Challenges

Marghera is essentially a residential urban district that suffered from the decline of the industrial area's employment, and a chemical hazard that is still active. Conversely, a large mall inaugurated in 2015 completed the settlement of a shopping centre hub at its opposite margin. The mall had a significant spatial impact, as well as a negative effect on local shops and businesses.

Today, Marghera is the district with the highest proportion of foreigners among its inhabitants within the Venice municipality. This has raised issues regarding services (schools above all) and uses of the public realm, but also has an impact on residents' sense of place.

## Lessons

The conservation and promotion of the città giardino as urban heritage was essentially pursued and implemented by experts. Residents in Marghera hardly related to their hometown's built environment in historic terms, but rather through their own memories and uses of it, which also characterised the significant sense of community. The renewal of piazza del Mercato, which eventually led to the removal of the weekly open-air market from the square, had a significant but mixed impact on residents' perception and experience of the space. Meanwhile, Marghera is still valued and managed as a mere peripheral district of Venice. Venice instead concentrates local authorities and is figured as the epitome of historic urban cores.







## The 'Goccia' or 'Area Gasometri' in Bovisa, Milan

The north-western borough of Bovisa played a key role in the XXth-century industrialisation of Milan and surrounding areas in terms of its relationship with the development of rail transport. The 'Goccia' was given its 'raindrop' shape by the railways that surround it, and constituted the main gasworks in the Milan area. Formerly characterised by open fields and scattered farmhouses, the area was progressively urbanised throughout the century. While the borough was often depicted in literature, cinema and visual arts, the working-class memory has faded away, and the two remaining Gasometers stand as mere landmarks of the industrial past. By the mid-eighties, factories and plants had become redundant and were dismissed. The higher education institute of architecture and planning, Politecnico di Milano took this opportunity to develop a new campus that partially reused industrial structures. But this process occurred only in part of the 'Goccia'; the northern area was fenced off in 1994 and made unavailable to redevelopment due to the contamination of its soils.



## Challenges

Since no form of listing was applied in the area, the conservation of its built environment was subject to stakeholders' interest, which is explicit only regarding the two remaining Gasometers. Facing Italian legislation's restrictiveness in the field, stakeholders are still struggling to find the resources required to properly decontaminate the site, which in turn is the condition for its comprehensive redevelopment. Both the identification of such resources and the modality of the successive redevelopment imply a strong partnership between Politecnico, the Milan municipality, and private developers as well as civil society. The 'Goccia' thus raises singular issues in the Milanese context, which is still a thriving laboratory for the regeneration of dismissed industrial areas.

## Lessons

Due to the area's scarce accessibility but also to its predominant use by Politecnico, the 'Goccia' has become much more marginal in Bovisa residents' experience. Only recently, have attempts at civic engagement and the activities of a local association contributed to draw attention to the 'Goccia' again. In the meantime, the dismissed area has been covered with vegetation, and many residents would like to see reopen as a park; a perspective that doesn't match with Politecnico and other stakeholders' plans. Greenery and leisure thus appear to be values that could be related to industrial heritage when renewing a sense of place. This applies almost exclusively to the built environment, while working-class culture has blatantly faded away since the plants closed.







The Riviera del Brenta extends between Padua and Venice, along the naviglio (or 'canal') Brenta. Included in a land improvement system progressively developed by the Republic of Venice, the naviglio was used as a transport and irrigation infrastructure. Meanwhile, Venetian patrician families elected its banks as a favourite resort destination, making the Riviera famous for its numerous XVth- to XVIth-century villas and gardens.

The Riviera was no exception to the urbanisation process that took place in Veneto from the 1960s. The built environment was significantly densified, especially beyond the naviglio's banks. Its population increased, and the nearby presence of key transport infrastructures such as the Padua-Venice highway, as well as the intensification of commuting between the Riviera and the cities of Padua and Venice, caused traffic pressure and overbuilding. On the other hand, agriculture has still remained a relevant activity in the Riviera, and tourism offers the opportunity for a new leisure use of historic villas and gardens.



## Challenges

In addition to challenges that already exist, such as the Padua-Venice highway and the inter-modal terminal in Fusina (Venice), several large-scale transport and logistic infrastructures have been planned and only partly realised. Further development and a consequent intensification of traffic could have a significant impact on the Riviera's landscape, as well as on agriculture and tourism development and its residents' quality of life. The failed realisation of such heavy infrastructures is characteristic of the complex governance of the Riviera, in which local administrations have made attempts to play a bigger role -including the municipality of Mira.

## Lessons

Attempts to enhance governance at the Riviera's level have been made by several local authorities. Municipalities, but also business associations have played a key role in this. Although efforts have been made, citizens call for an improvement of interconnected public realm and green infrastructures. In addition, environmentalist associations have nurtured engagement across the Riviera against large-scale developments. A spontaneous network of farmers, craftsmen, activists and consumers has been promoting a 'slow' development of the Riviera's territory. Although this movement relates to a general environmental sensibility rather than a specific awareness of the Riviera's landscape as heritage, some synergy is perceivable and may be cultivated further.

