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ATLAS

RETHINKING

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RECOMMENDATIONS

BOOKLET / SAN DONATO MILANESE

San Donato Milanese

San Donato Milanese, a municipality with a population of 33.000, borders Milan to the southeast. It is well connected to Milan via the metro (M2), whose final stop is located in San Donato Milanese. Its good accessibility, along with other qualities such as abundant green spaces and good access to services, renders the city highly attractive and livable. However, these factors also contribute to rising housing prices and increasing difficulties in accessing housing.

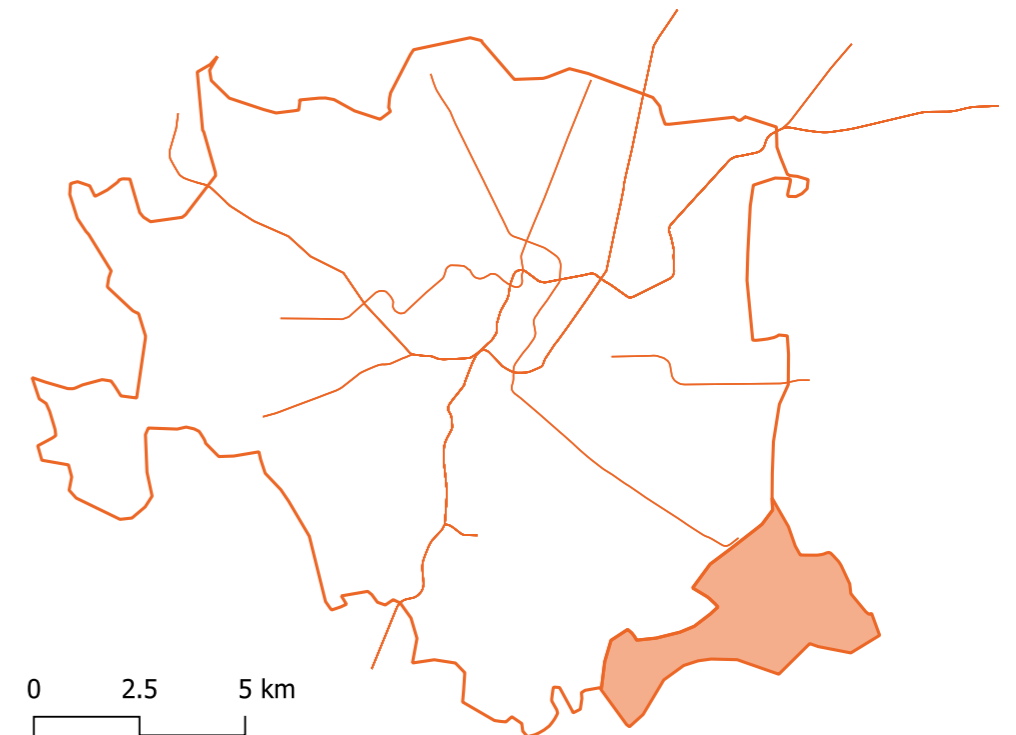
The city's history and development are quite unique, closely tied to Enrico Mattei, who in 1953 founded the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) and established its facilities and offices in San Donato Milanese, which at the time was a town of less than 3.000 inhabitants (2,667 in 1951). The population grew tenfold over two decades, reaching around 27.000 in 1971, accompanied by the construction of various structures, including office buildings for thousands of workers and housing for employees.

Today, due to structural changes in economic dynamics and new work patterns (including the rise of remote work), accelerated by the pandemic, ENI - meanwhile partially privatized - remains in San Donato Milanese but has left behind a large architectural heritage, part of which remains unused and awaits transformation. One such site is located between Via Cefalonia and Viale De Gasperi and includes the "Third" (Terzo) and "Fourth" (Quarto) ENI Office Buildings.

These two buildings and the surrounding areas (covering about 15 hectares) have been selected as project sites for this research. The buildings are located approximately one kilometer from the metro station and in close proximity to residential areas and various tertiary facilities (schools, churches, the town hall), as well as green spaces to the south and northeast.

In the Territorial Governance Plan (PGT), the area is classified as "urban regeneration zone", including guidelines outlining its strategic transformation. As office functions have been phased out, the site will be converted into a mixed-use district featuring services, (potentially) a museum dedicated to ecology, and various housing solutions, including student residences, social housing, and market-rate housing.

The plan also places strong emphasis on sustainable mobility, including improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, and the creation of a new "urban park" in the southern part of the area, designed to enhance green spaces and promote social interaction within the local community. The transformation aims to create a livable, inclusive, and integrated environment that meets both current and future residents' needs.



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A participatory process has been initiated to address housing-related issues in San Donato Milanese, to discuss needs, spatial qualities, and underutilized resources. The process is characterized by a strong interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach, bringing together various departments of the municipality at both the political and operational levels, along with third-sector actors. The dialogue with and among these stakeholders has gathered insights, contributions, and reflections useful for guiding the planning process. The most relevant themes and issues that emerged include:

How do housing needs manifest in San Donato Milanese?

The need for housing solutions for a younger population is urgent but is part of a broader process of generational and demographic transformation. The existing housing stock is characterized by “typological crystallization”, with large dwellings occupied by a small number of people. In this context, self-organized solutions such as cohabitation among young people within inherited family homes (the so-called “casa della nonna”) are emerging as informal responses. However, many families struggle to find adequate housing solutions, as recent residential developments in the city have primarily targeted wealthier segments of the population. Housing policies must therefore support lower to middle income groups and be integrated with strategies that address the challenges of demographic and socioeconomic transitions, while implementing services that meet diverse needs.

“The Milan Effect”

Rental prices and property values are increasingly approaching Milanese levels, having rendered various attempts to regulate the market ineffective. Proximity to Milan represents both an opportunity and a challenge. A rise in short-term rentals is perceived in San Donato Milanese, linked not only to major Milanese events (such as fashion and design weeks) but also to the presence of the city’s hospital hub, attracting students and temporary visitors in need

of accommodation. Furthermore, the potential construction of a new stadium and the expansion of the metro network could further intensify pressure on the housing market, radically transforming demand in the coming years.

Open Spaces and Social Interaction

Public spaces in San Donato are perceived as insufficient in qualities and often too formal. The city lacks spontaneous gathering places and the urban density needed to foster social interaction and proximity. Additionally, open spaces are not perceived as truly public and need to be redesigned to integrate social functions. Finally, mobility is still too car-centric.

The Relationship Between Public and Private

The interaction between the public administration and private stakeholders is polarized and complex. There are different categories of private actors, ranging from small property owners to the social private sector and large commercial players, which operate within a profit-driven framework. To effectively negotiate with these various stakeholders towards positive contributions to the city’s housing issue, the municipality must develop and implement diverse tools and incentives.

“Mamma ENI”

The presence of ENI has left an indelible mark on the identity of San Donato Milanese, as a foundational and defining element, and a historical and cultural heritage. This influence is evident in the city’s urban morphology, through large office complexes, residential neighborhoods, vast green spaces, the absence of fences, and a range of sports facilities. In this context, the proposal in the Territorial Governance Plan (PGT) to create a museum stands out as a particularly interesting idea. Such a museum could serve not only to preserve this important part of the city’s historical memory but also as an opportunity to reflect on and plan for its future.

The project site: The “Terzo” and “Quarto” palazzo ENI

Viale de Gasperi / Via Martiri Cefalonia
45°25'11.7”N 9°16'15.0”E

Area: 15 ha

Il “Terzo”

Area (built-up): ca. 9.000 m²

GFA: approx. 45.000 m²

Architects: Albini, Helg, Piva

Construction period: 1969-1974

Use: tertiary

State: dismissed (since 2022)

Il “Quarto”

Area (built-up): ca. 8.000 m²

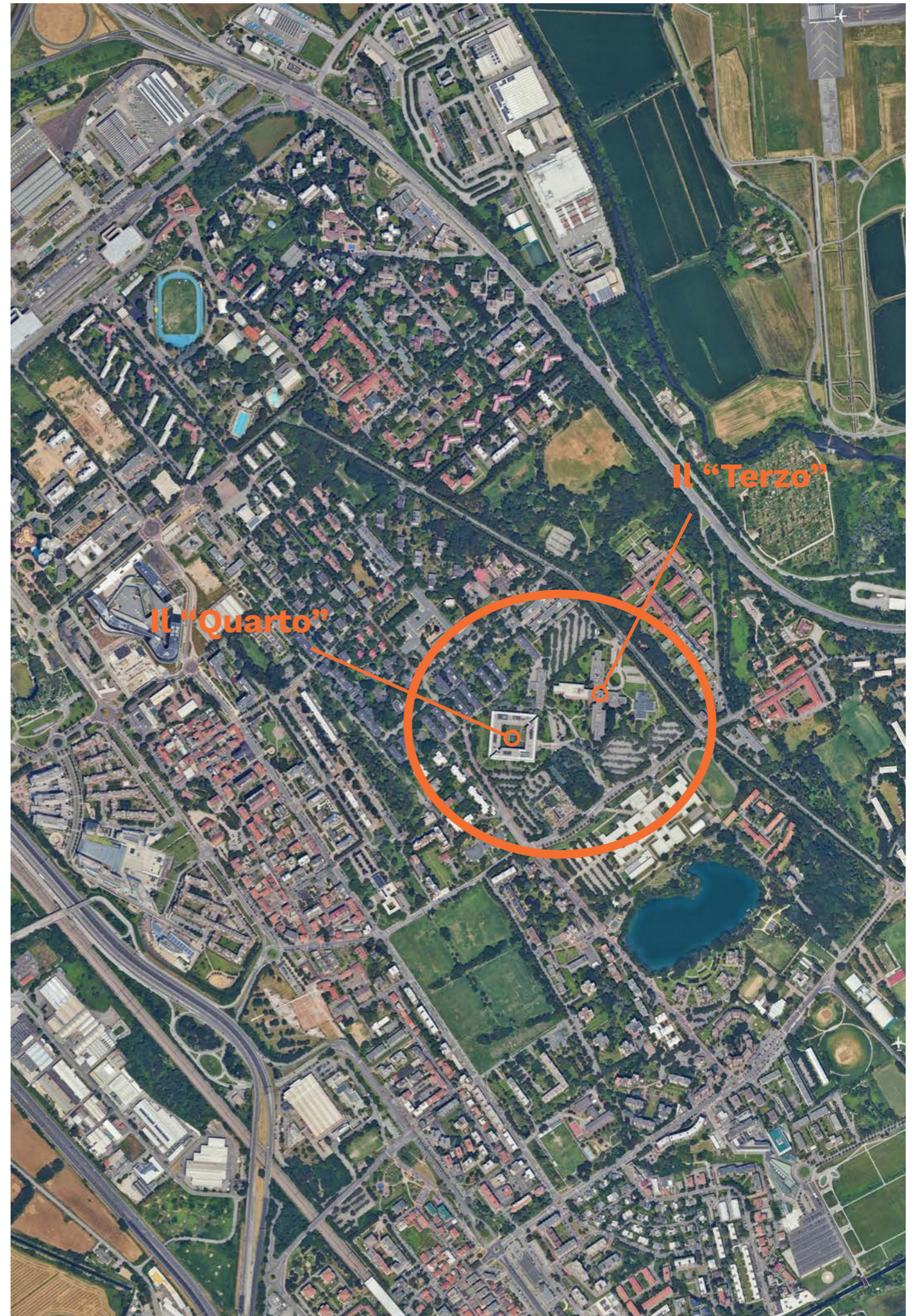
GFA: approx. 32.000 m²

Architects: Bacigalupo, Alberti, Matti

Construction period: 1980-1984

Use: tertiary

State: dismissed



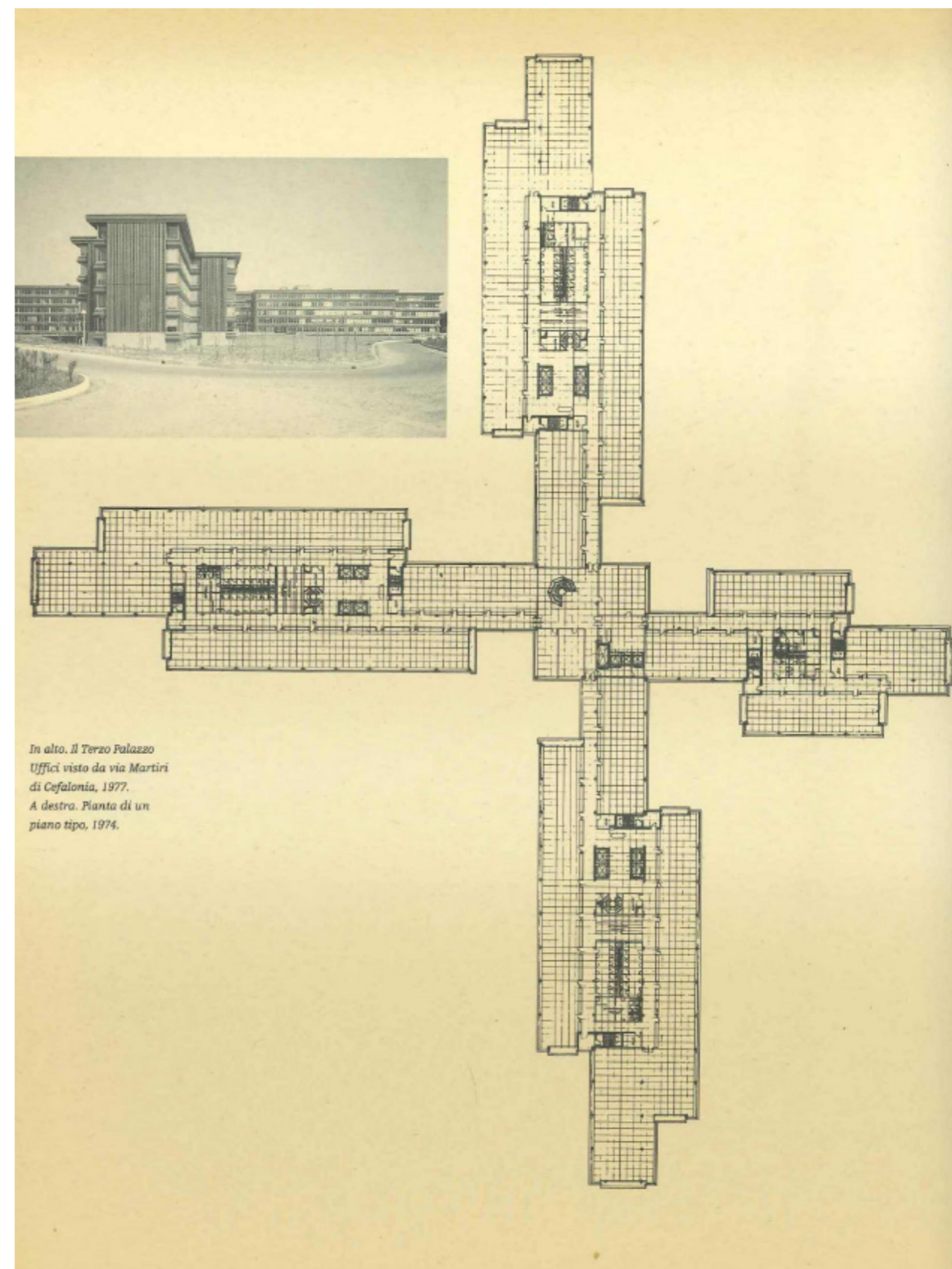
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Terzo Palazzo Uffici

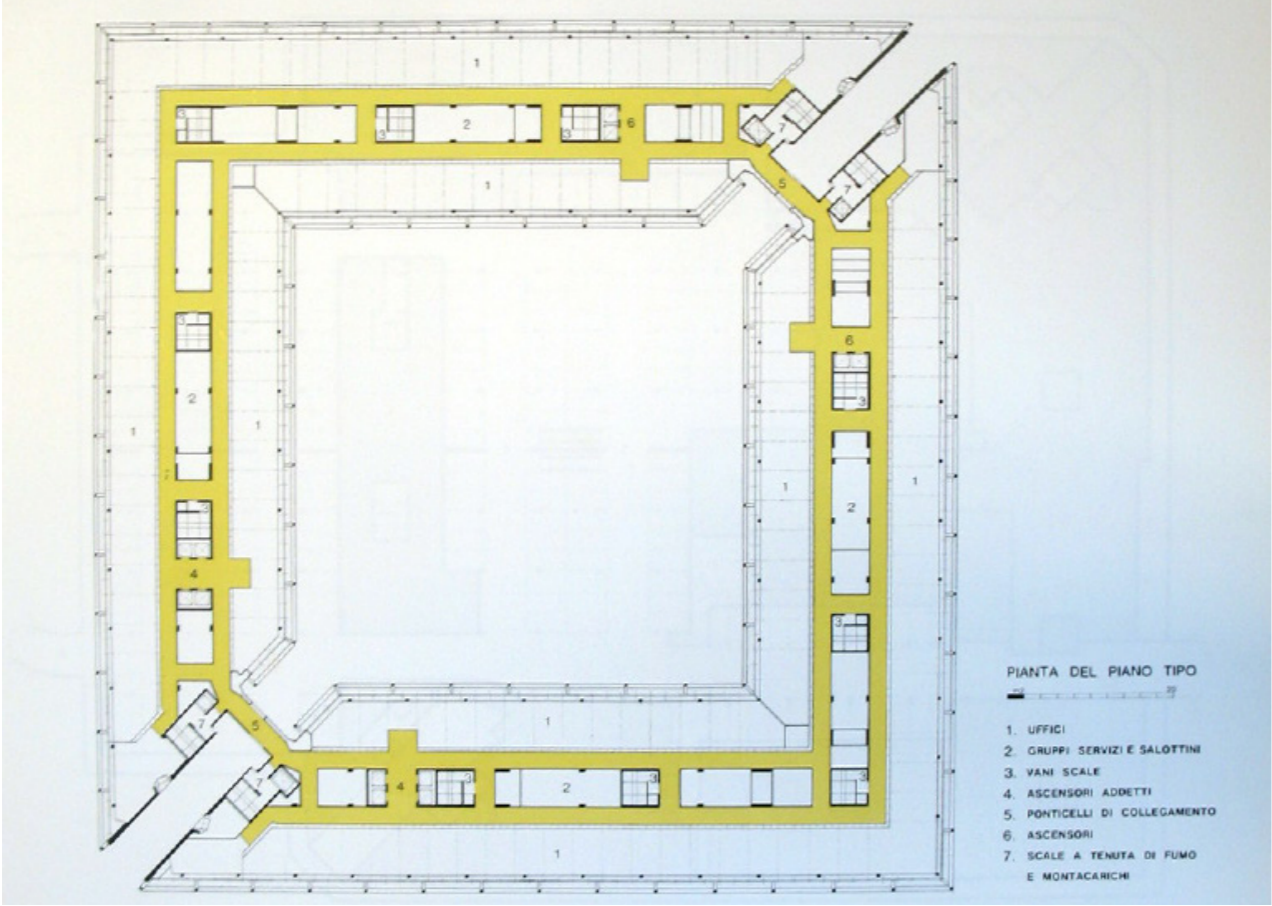
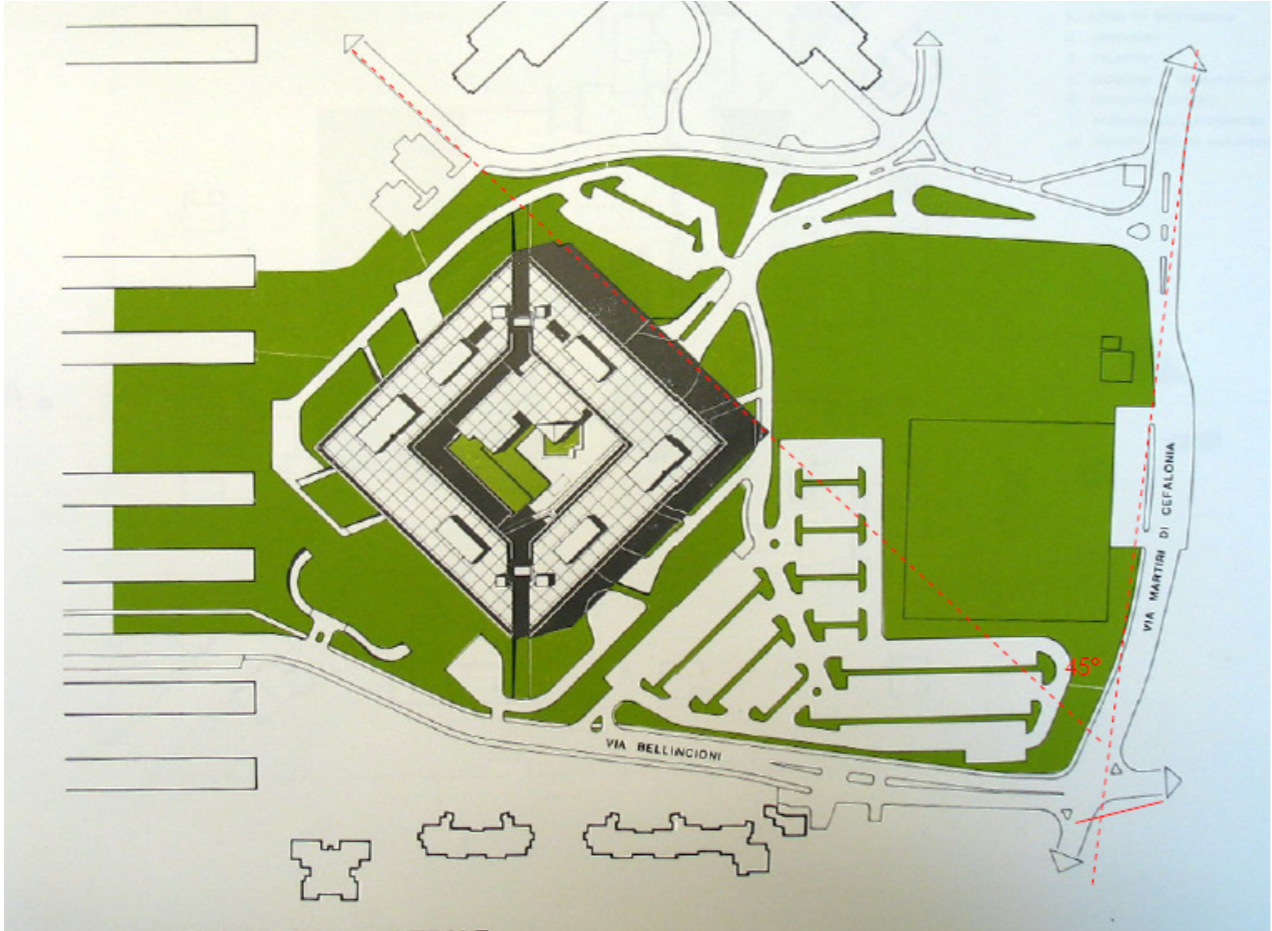


Photos provided by Dea Capital Real Estate SGR



Source: Sermisoni S. (n.d.), Metanopoli. Attualità di un'idea. SNAM.

Quarto Palazzo Uffici



Source: Archivio studio Alberti Matti Ferrari

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