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ATLAS

RETHINKING

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RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHEDA / BARI

Bari

Bari, the capital of Apulia, has a population of 316.226 as of January 1, 2024, covering a territorial area of 116.17 square kilometers. Since 2014, it has served as the capital of a metropolitan city comprising 41 municipalities with a total population of 1,221,782. The population remains relatively stable, partly due to immigration, but its demographic composition has changed significantly. The old-age index has risen from 92% in 2002 to 192,8% in 2024 (+100,8%), surpassing the national value: from 131,7% in 2002 to 199,8% in 2024 (+68,1%). The population structure reflects an increase in residents over 65 years old (from 201.848 in 2019 to 487.611 in 2024) and the average age of the population rises from 41.9 years in 2002 to 46.6 years in 2024 (Istat 2024). Family dynamics are also evolving slowly: single person households are on the rise, while the average household size is decreasing (Istat, 2022). Although the number of young people is shrinking demographically, their presence in the city remains strong, thanks to universities. Students enrolled in these institutions account for approximately 18% of the total population. Immigrants, while fewer in number compared to other urban centers, have become a stable part of the city's social fabric. Among them, younger groups are particularly prominent, as Bari is a key destination for unaccompanied minors.

From an economic perspective, Bari has increasingly transitioned into a tertiary economy, with trade, tourism, and advanced services, alongside construction, representing the most significant sectors in the labor market. Employment remains a pressing social issue despite some recovery. Bari boasts the highest employment rate in Southern Italy: 42.9% compared to the national average of 46.8% (Istat, 2023). Over the past two decades, the central area has undergone significant transformations. While the

suburbs remain peripheral, they have experienced shifts, particularly in social composition. The central area has been shaped by gentrification and, more recently, touristification.

Although segments of the traditional resident population remain, parts of the professional middle class have moved, and the area has become a major tourist attraction.

In other neighborhoods, gentrification and touristification have progressed more gradually, driven by urban policies alternating between laissez-faire, deregulation, and “growth-dependent planning”—a reliance on real estate development as a tool to generate collective benefits, accompanied by efforts to promote and support investments in the construction sector.

Demographic and social shifts have diversified housing demand. There is an increasing need for housing tailored to single-person households and non-traditional living arrangements, although traditional demand, driven mainly by larger immigrant families, persists. At the same time, economic and urban transformations have made housing increasingly unaffordable, whether for rent or purchase.



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Project Themes

The housing situation in Bari is characterized by layered and diverse needs—layered in terms of economic hardship and diverse by generation and citizenship. There remains a significant shortage of housing for individuals in severe economic distress, primarily reflected in demand for public housing (ERP). The public housing stock is outdated, and its residents are increasingly elderly, often living alone in large apartments on upper floors of buildings without elevators. At the same time, demand from immigrant families continues to grow; as their years of residency increase, they gain access to public housing waiting lists due to their disadvantaged conditions (poverty and large family size).

Bari is a key hub for managing new arrivals of migrants, particularly unaccompanied minors, who participate in social and work inclusion projects and are housed in reception centers. However, they must leave these shelters at the age of 18–20, often ending up without housing despite sometimes being employed. This group contributes to the growing demand for housing from individuals and families who do not meet public housing criteria but cannot afford private market options. This includes other family units, individuals, and non-resident university students. Real estate market changes—such as rising rents, the conversion of housing into tourist accommodations, and evictions—exacerbate the challenges faced by those excluded from public housing or university housing systems. Generationally, there are marked differences in housing behavior. Older residents typically follow traditional family and housing models, while younger groups increasingly adopt innovative arrangements such as cohousing.

Significant investment is needed to renovate uninhabitable or severely outdated public housing buildings and construct new units. Social housing has failed to meet the population's needs, university housing is insufficient for non-resident students, and initiatives targeting immigrant populations have yielded limited results. A survey of public properties in Bari revealed a lack of available buildings to address these issues. Numerous stakeholders are involved in addressing these challenges, yet they lack strong connections and interdisciplinary collaboration. Through this research, stakeholders are engaged in a participatory process to foster mutual understanding, map ongoing initiatives, projects, and policies, develop a shared vision, and identify common needs to design collaborative strategies.

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Project site: ex ospedale Bonomo

The former Lorenzo Bonomo Military Hospital is located in Carrassi district, a semi-peripheral residential area near the ring road, featuring a mix of 1970s–80s buildings and new constructions.

The site spans approximately 71,545 square meters, with roughly 57,810 square meters of open space, situated between the Bari-Carbonara provincial road and Vaccarella road.

Inspired by rationalist architecture, the complex features simple, balanced designs with restrained monumentality. Designed by the Civil Engineering Corps (1933 project by engineer Ettore Bianco) and the Ministry of War (1935–36 project), it was inaugurated in 1939 and later expanded with specialized clinics. The site includes a chapel and 19 pavilions with flat roofs, mostly isolated and separated by an orthogonal road network interspersed with green spaces.

Pavilions 1–4 are connected by a central spine extending from the administrative building (Pavilion 1), whose symmetrical façade, interrupted by two glass semicylinders, is the most iconic feature of the complex. The chapel (Pavilion 5) is noteworthy for its slender bell tower, Carrara marble façade, and understated interior, featuring a single elongated window and frescoes by Prayer. Its flat ceiling modernizes traditional coffered designs.

Pavilions 1–5 collectively form the monumental section of the complex.

In 2008, the hospital was closed due to cuts to military healthcare and has since been abandoned. The entire complex was designated a heritage site by a Protection Decree issued on December 20, 2003.

Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the State Property Agency, the Apulia Region, and the Regional Agency for the Right to University Education (ADISU) to repurpose the monumental part of the complex, aiming to create new housing and services

for university students to address the housing shortage for non-resident students.

Specifically, the project includes:

1. Repurposing Pavilion 2 and parts of Pavilions 1 and 3 to create university residences, providing housing for approximately 400 students, visiting professors, and doctoral students. The project also includes shared amenities such as cafeterias, study halls, libraries, and spaces dedicated to sports, leisure, cultural activities, and entertainment.

2. Repurposing Pavilion 1 and parts of Pavilions 3, 4, and 5 for office and archive use.

3. Redeveloping outdoor areas by creating a fully equipped park.

The State Property Agency's near-exclusive focus on student housing fails to adequately address the broader and more diverse needs currently present in the city. This approach risks creating a monofunctional enclave. Moreover, the project can only be partially implemented due to current funding limitations. This shortfall leaves open the possibility—starting with Pavilions 4, 5, and the southern section of Pavilion 3, which are excluded from the first phase of interventions—of exploring more flexible repurposing solutions. These alternative solutions could meet a variety of needs, not only for students but also for young workers, couples, immigrants, and others, while ensuring a more integrated connection between new services and the surrounding area.

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Project site: ex ospedale Bonomo

**Surface area of the intervention site:
32,688 square meters**

**Gross surface area of buildings included
in the intervention:
19,184 square meters**

**Cadastral Data:
Map Sheet 48, Parcel 303**

**Details for the monumental section of the
complex (Pavilions 1 to 5), as included in the
Memorandum of Understanding between the
State Property Agency, the Apulia Region, and
ADISU.**



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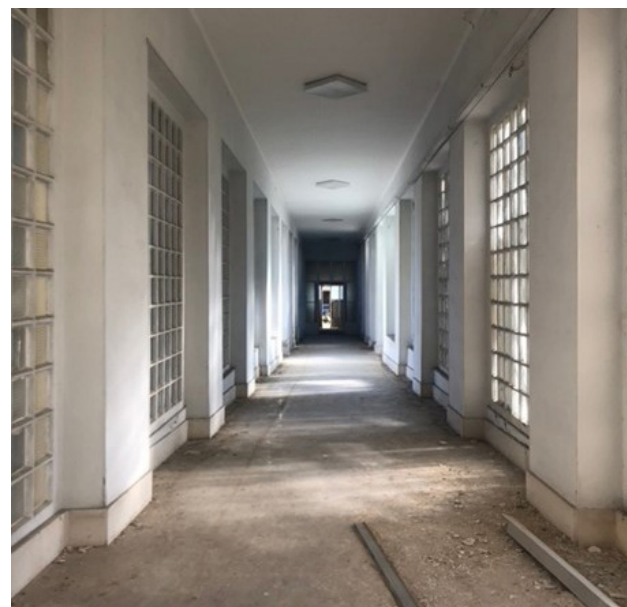
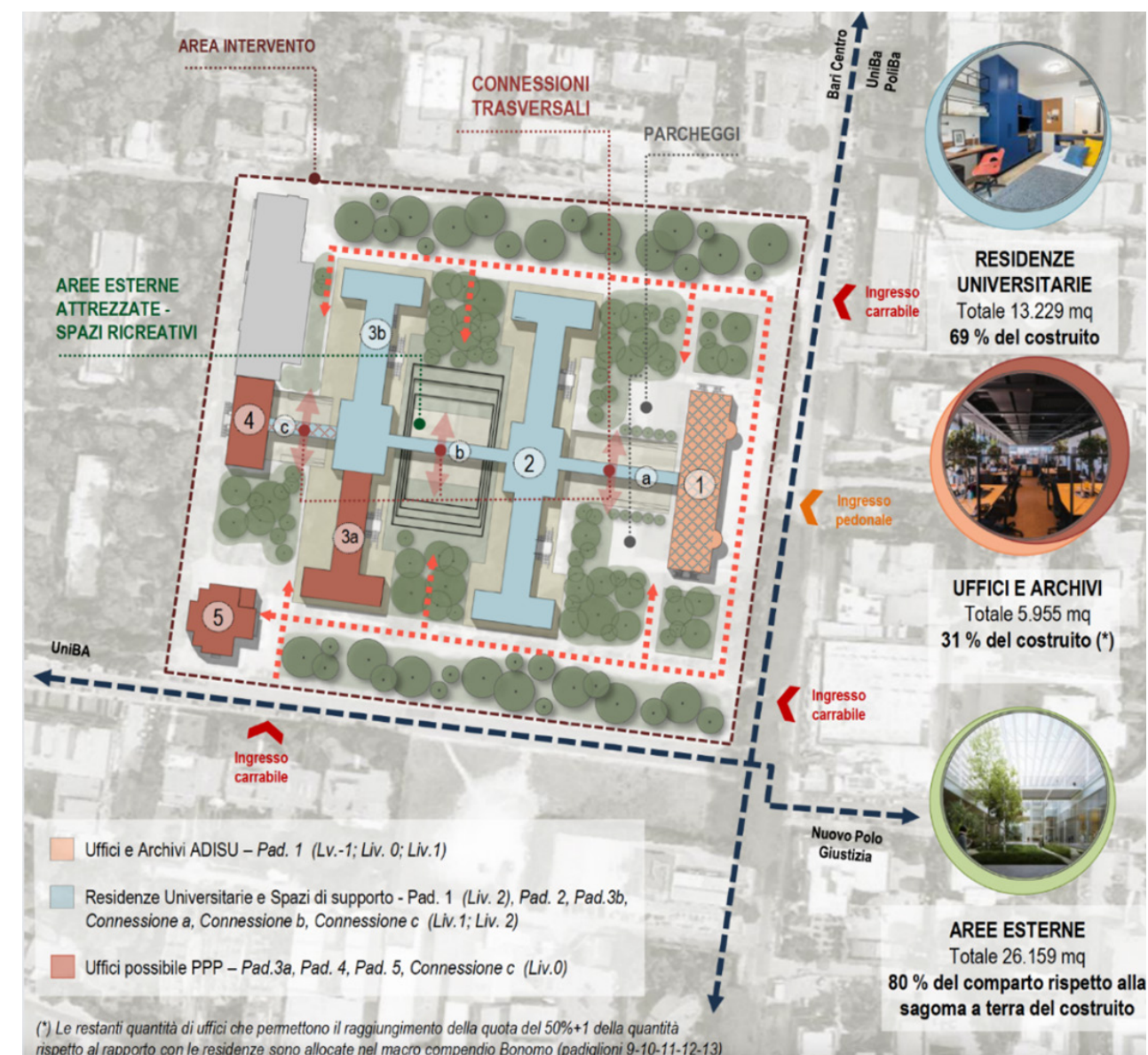
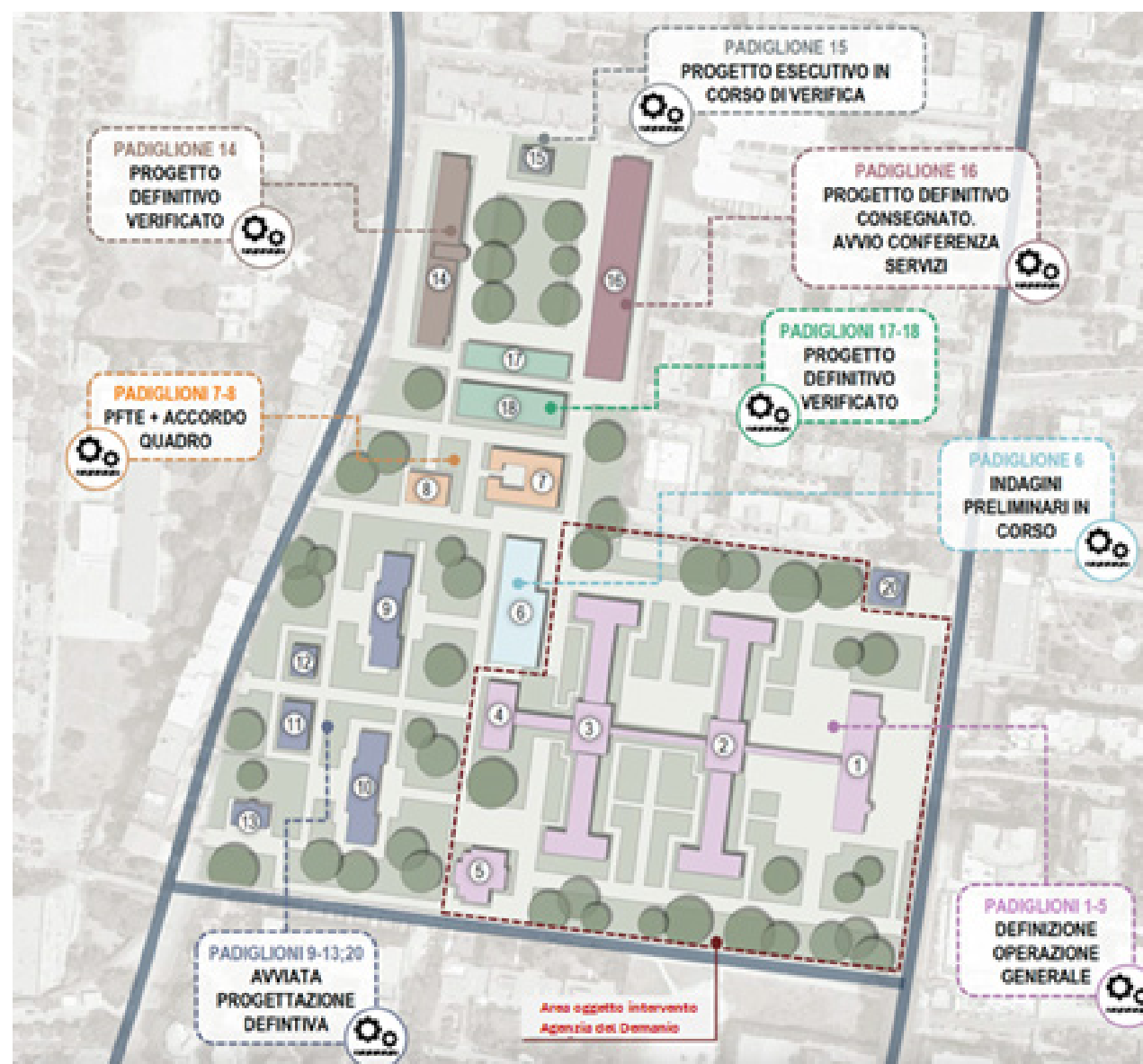
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Current images of Pavilion 1

Aerial view of the building complex (Source: Google Earth)
Photograph of the connection block between two pavilions of the former Bonomo Hospital.

ex ospedale Bonomo



Overview of the buildings and planned interventions within the broader complex of the former Bonomo hospital (Source: State Property Agency, Project for the recovery of part of the former Bonomo hospital, 2024).

Interiors and structure of the monumental section.



Masterplan of the project developed by the State Property Agency as part of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Photographs of the interior and exterior of the chapel.