ROME 1981
Fourth Year Class
University of Waterloo

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The studio of the University of Waterloo in Rome was concerned with the elucidation and development of the notions of typology and morphology. The theory allowed consideration of both the exceptional (the monument) and the plain (the fabric).

It is the power of the general case that establishes normal expectations in a city. The atypical elements of the city were therefore the first objects of study.

The first project concerned the idea of monument. The students were asked to choose an example and make a documentary drawing that explained the object in a manner appropriate to its nature and significance. A second drawing was to represent the object transformed.

The documentation drawing San Carlo alla Quatro Fontaine (fig. 1) describes the building through a formal decomposition.

The transformation drawings of the Porticus Octavianus consists of plan (fig. 2) and axonometric (fig. 3). The classical portico was the entrance to a monumental precinct. It has undergone many transformations over the centuries. During the middle ages attempts were made to restore the monument to an image of its original condition. Architectural elements were placed incongruously within the composition, due to a lack of understanding of the classical language.

A new layer of elements extended the portico. The transformation was discussed as a critique of recent architectural practice, and of the studio itself.

The second and major project asked that the suggestiveness of the history of the city of Rome be used to deal with contemporary problems in its culture. The programme was for a museum to house
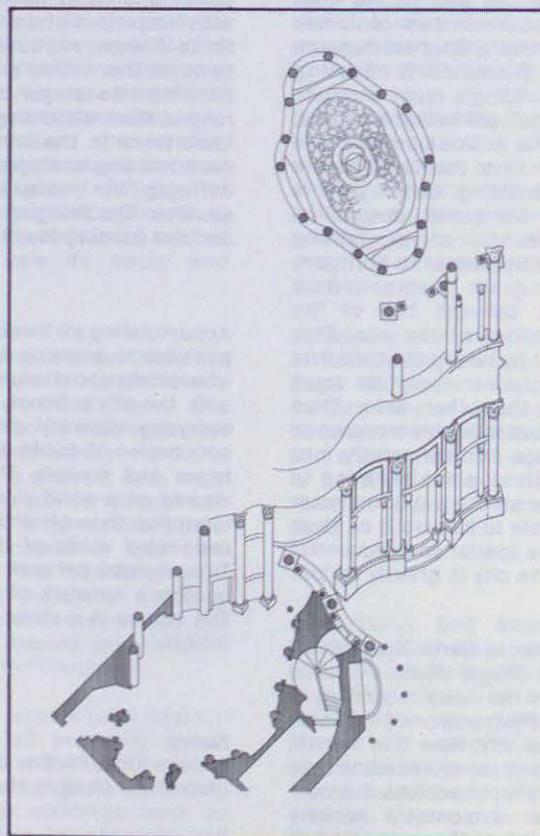

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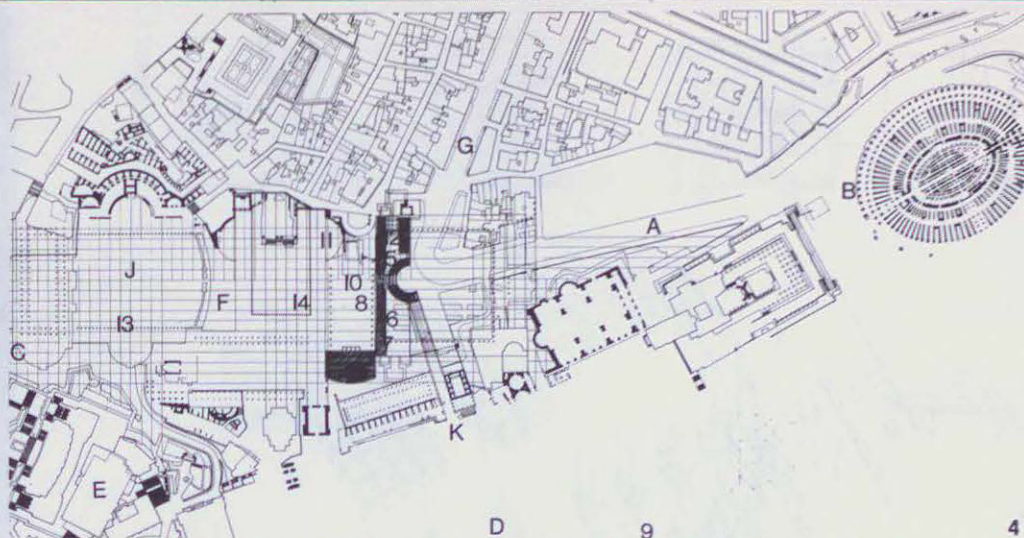
the Torlonia collection of classical statuary, which was to be sited within the boundaries of the new district that will be created by the destruction of the Via dei Fori Imperiali (fig. 4 A). A general proposal was required for the new archaeological zone, as well as a specific design display of the 600 antique sculptures.

The project had many implications; it is necessary to elucidate some of the background for the project. The project was begun in the eighteenth century by Giovanni Raimondo Torlonia. In general it contained works from the late Imperial age; with several Greek originals, a group of 107 busts of Emperors and a series of famous relief carvings. The sculpture has not been seen in public since 1975. The problem hypothesized their donation to, or expropriation by the Italian State.

The site of the Via dei Fori Imperiali is located in the valley between the Palatine, Esquiline and Quirinal hills. In the 1st century B.C. and the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. the Emperors constructed the magnificent public buildings. While their purpose was to accommodate expanding bulic life, their lavish construction and ornamentation was indicative of a propagandistic nature.

The present civic administration, the Communist party, has decided to excavate the entire area, joining the Palatine (fig. 4F) into a vast park in the centre of Rome.
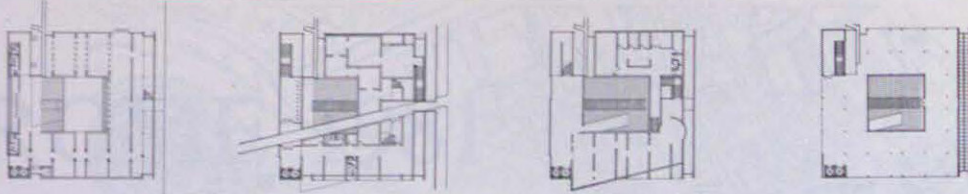
Architectural issues were conditioned by the attitudes of students towards political and programmatic issues. Furthermore, an attitude had to be assumed towards building in an archaeological zone, and towards the surrounding urban conditions.
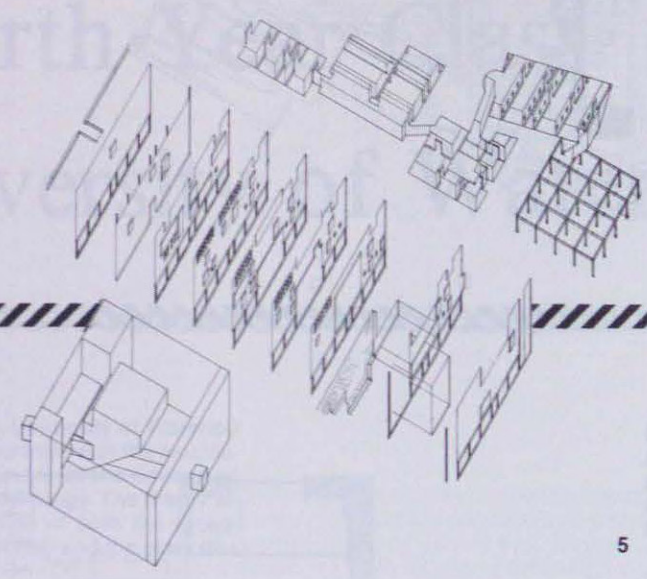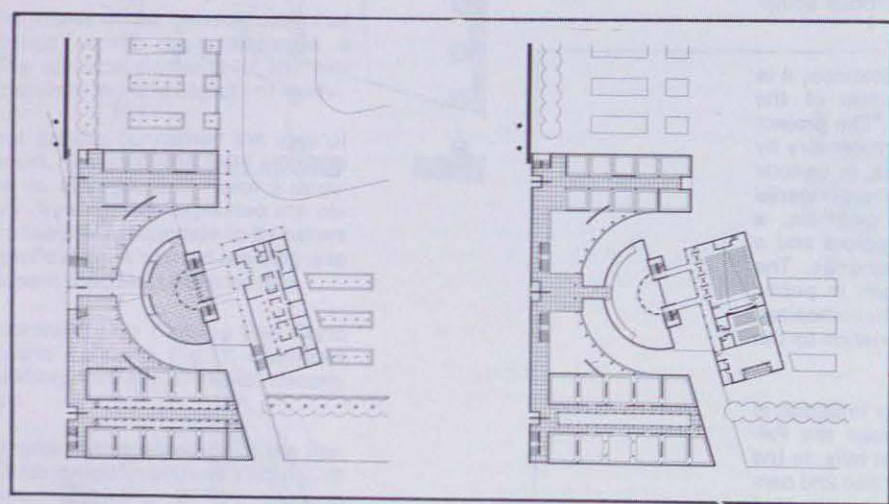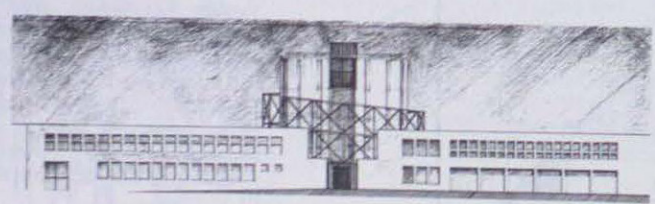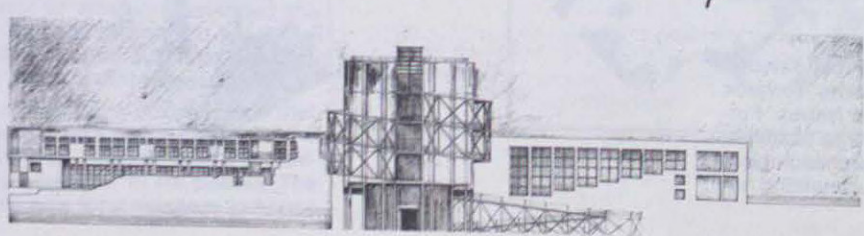

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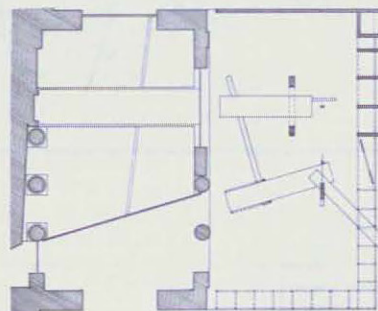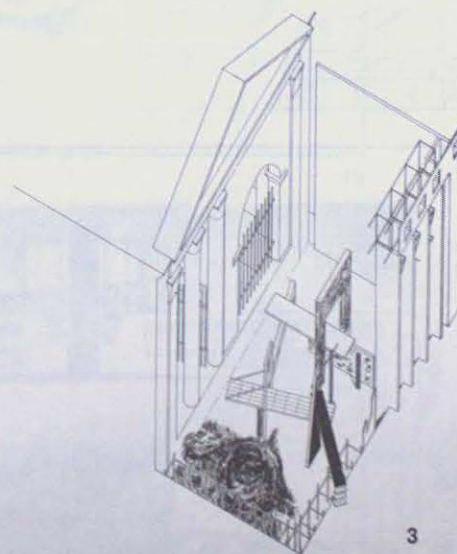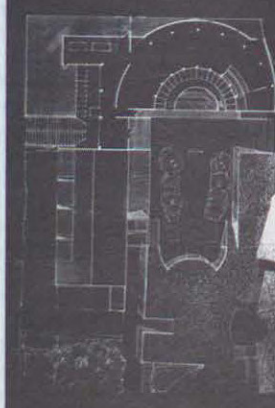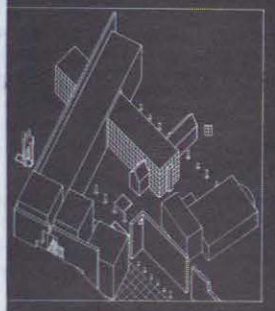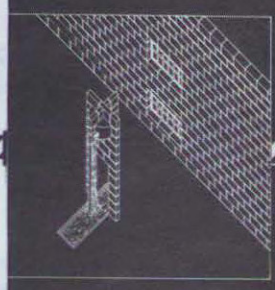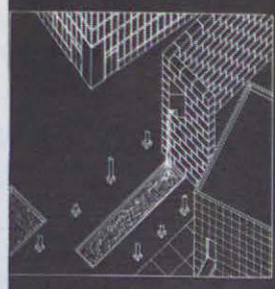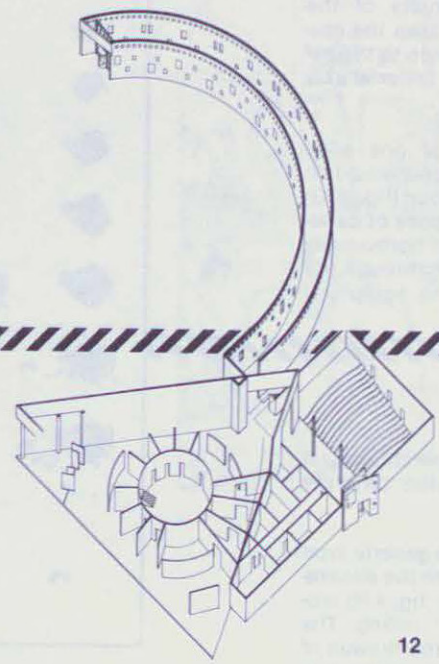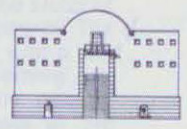
One approach to building in the forum was concerned with the excavation in relation to the surrounding fabric and monuments. The museum formed an edge to the excavation, and provided a boundary to the discontinuity of the general fabric. In several cases the museum was seen as an entrance to the excavation, or a barrier to the imperial axis (figs. 5, 6, 7).

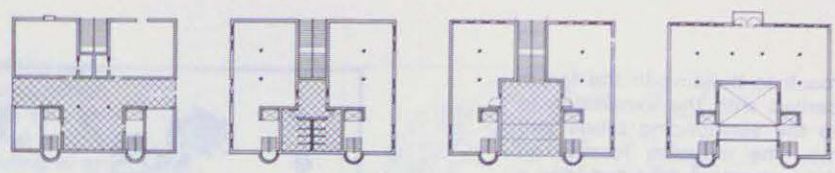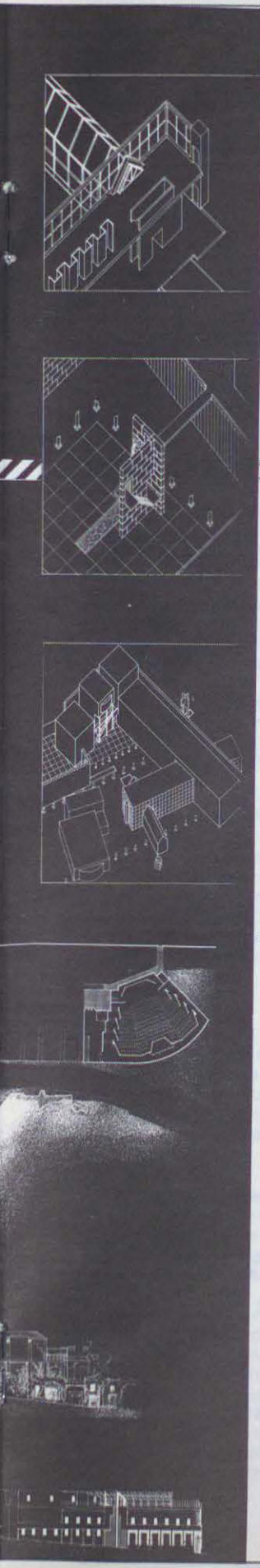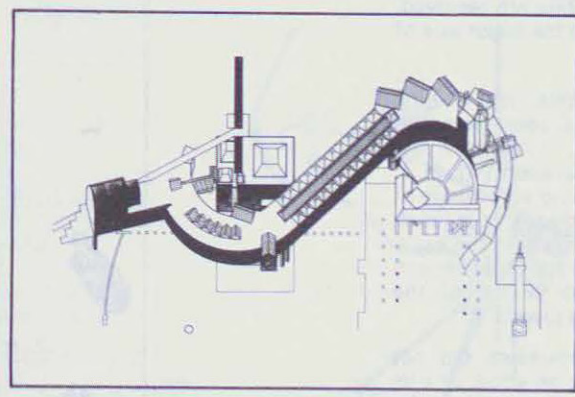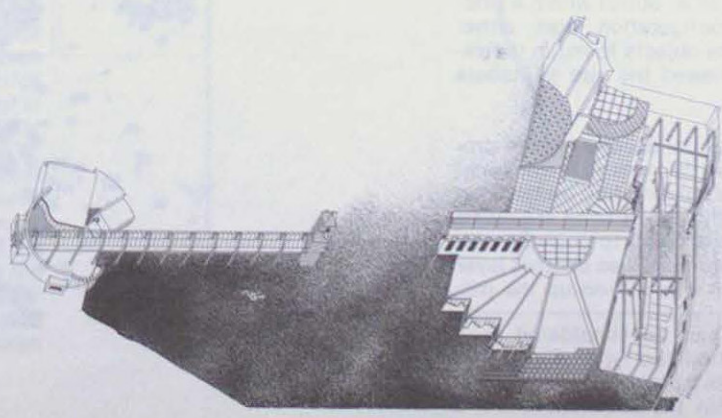The first example, sited at one edge where the Via dei Fori Imperiali would be re-routed into the Via Cavour (fig. 4 G) was constructed as a sequence of parallel spaces that transformed horizontally and vertically as one moves through the building. The nature of the sculptural

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programme informed the architectural programme, by grouping the different subjects.

The second example of the generic type (fig. 6) formed an entrance to the excavation. The Markets of Trajan (fig. 4 H) provided the model for this building. The Markets were built behind the firewall of the Forum of Trajan (fig. 4 J). Within this development the regular geometry of the Forum, and the circumstantial development of the general fabric are resolved. The museum is sited on the major axis of the Imperial Forum.

The third example of this type is illustrated in elevations as seen from the level of the street (fig. 7) and from the lower level of the excavation (fig. 8). It consists of a wall-building at the edge of the excavation, and a tower that is located as a free-standing object in the excavation. The entrance to the museum and the archaeological park is through the wall and the base of the tower.

The second type of museum did not form a barrier, provide an edge, or provide an entrance from the street to the park. Generally, the museum of this type was perceived as an object within a landscape. Its configuration was either informed by the objects found in the excavation, or, viewed the site as 'tabula rasa'.

One example of the second type of proposal built upon the ruins of the Imperial palaces on the Palatine hill, overlooking the Sacra Via (fig. 9). Existing structural elements were allowed to co-exist with the new. The proposal was another layer of construction that picked up the pat-

A third type can be considered as a hybrid of the first two types. Figures 11 and 12 illustrate a proposal consisting of buildings within the excavation, and a
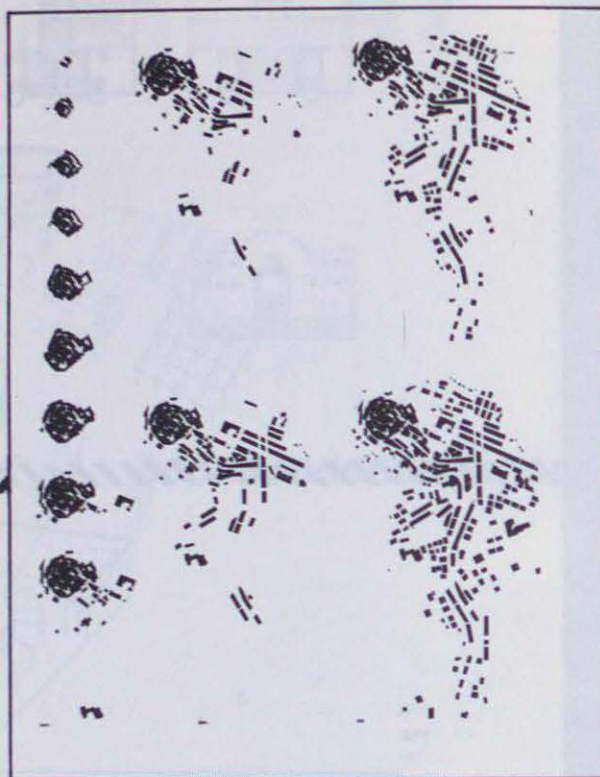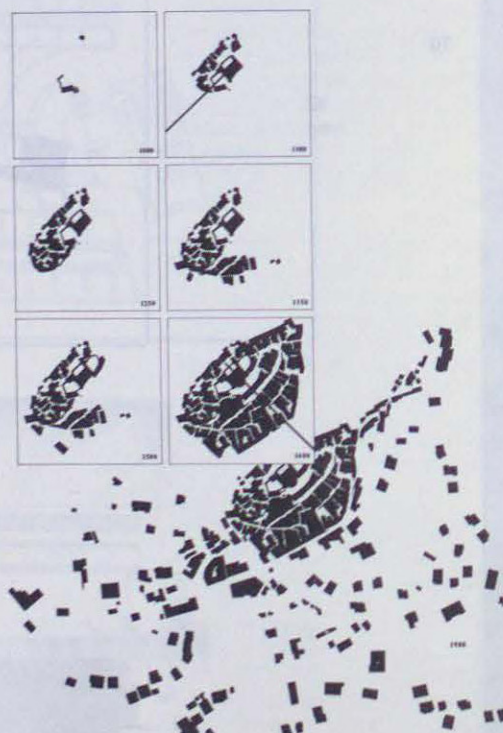
pavillion located at the edge of the park. The excavation building is a composition of primary forms that intersect one another. Collisions are resolved at points of intersection. The edge building is an isolated object in the composition that is constructed of separate rules. It is the gate to the excavation.

The third project comprised the study of a town in the Roman campagna. The towns provided the students with a laboratory for the study of settlement patterns related to the specific natural, historical or social conditions in the place, as well as, allowing the abstraction of general principles relating to town planning.
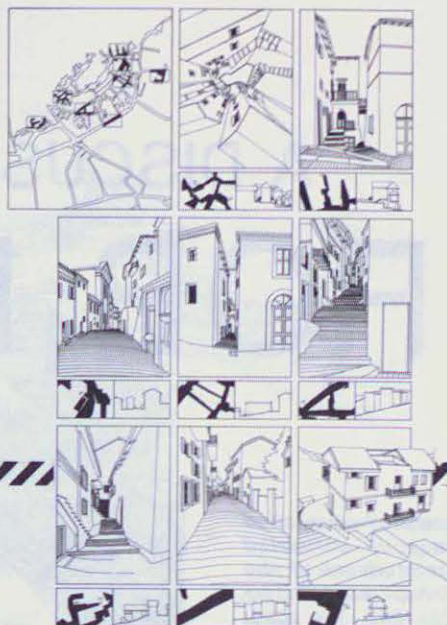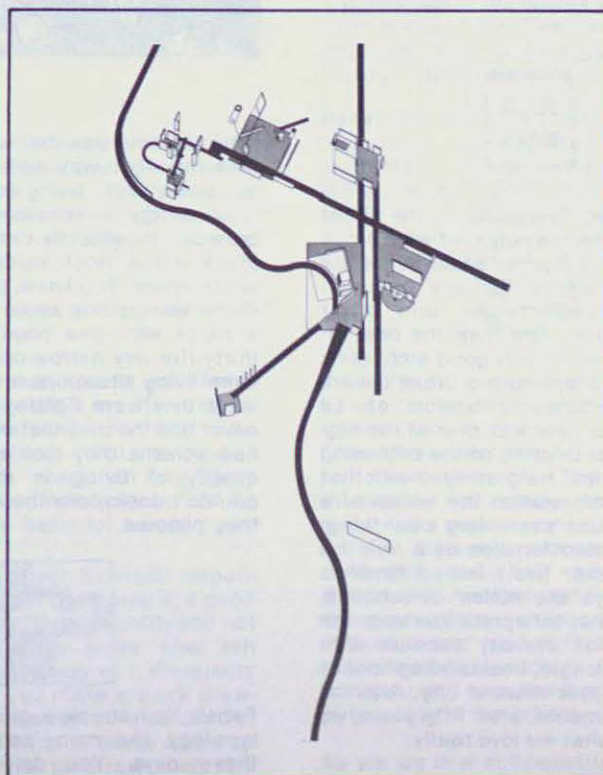

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The existence of a crisis due either to the unsatisfactory conditions of the existing building fabric and infrastructure or the pressure to expand the population of the town allowed the students to produce proposals for the town's expansion related to their analysis. The generic characteristics of the place and its patterns of growth and change were brought to bear on the consideration of new proposals.

Illustrated here are examples of formal analysis. Figure-ground maps for the towns of Moricone (fig. 15) and Ciciliano (fig. 16) describe the morphology of patterns of growth. It was speculated that the re-orientation of the front of the palace in Ciciliano (fig. 16) caused the town to develop along a second axis, in a structure conforming to the contours of the site.

The town of Moricone (fig. 15) was speculated to have grown by acretion at points in the peripheral walls where gates were located. Piazzas within the mediaevel town are now remnants of the space in front of the town gates, and provided clues to morphological speculation.

Perspectives were drawn in an attempt to describe spatial types within the town of Ciciliano (fig. 17) the characteristics of each circumstance can be observed in relation to supposed patterns of growth.

A third method of perceiving the town was derived from the inventory of buildings within the general town plan of Moricone (fig. 18) and a knowledge of the specific roles of each built object in the life of the town. The public spaces structure the town like an armature, upon which the objects and fabric of the town were constructed.

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