



## Public Space Policies from Francesco to Ludovico Maria Sforza

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This article explores whether Sforza’s Milan exemplifies significantly relationships between forms of power and the styles of configuration and use of public space in evidence in other Italian regions. In particular, it asks whether the projects devised and realised (often ephemeral ones) were one-off affairs or part of a wider strategy or plan. While there have been numerous studies on the age of Ludovico Maria Sforza, we believe that an analysis of the relationship between all the Sforza princes, their city, and its civic institutions can yield further insights. We examine the dukes’ influence in three different urban spaces in Milan, the capital city of the duchy, that sit in front of public buildings: the Piazza del Duomo (formerly the Piazza dell’Arengo), the Piazza del Broletto, and the Piazza del Castello.

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Nisuna cosa più desideraressimo como de redure la forma de quella cità [...] ad quella lauticia et elegantia de vie et fronte de edificii quale merita el nome et grandeza de la cità ('There is nothing we desire more than to adapt the form of that city to the joy and elegance of streets and building facades that its fame and grandeur deserve').

—Ludovico Maria Sforza, 8 July 1492

The urban politics of the Sforza dukes and their major building enterprises have been the subject of numerous studies which document their reasons and methods (Soldi Rondinini 1983; Giordano 1993; Giordano 1995; Boucheron 1998) but do not, however, effectively identify any planning intentions, despite the substantial number of documentary and literary sources available.<sup>1</sup> It might be thought that trying to make sense of the actions of princes and to identify the processes behind urban policy is misguided, given that one must attempt to extrapolate contemporary mentalities and approaches to do so, but it is undeniable that certain interventions in Milan need to be understood as reflecting certain cultural and political choices.

Studies published since the early 1990s have focused on the Ludovico Maria Sforza period and the Porta Vercellina area (Cislighi 2001; Rossetti 2016) and the square in front of the castle (Schofield 1992–1993; Rossetti 2020) in particular, two cases celebrated because it has been documented that Donato Bramante and Leonardo da Vinci had some role in their realisation. Extending the analysis of the relationship between princes, their city, and civic institutions to Francesco Sforza (1450–1466), Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1466–1476), and Gian Galeazzo Sforza (1476–1494, at first under regency and then as a duke) offers new insights, although one should both consider the existence of an 'extended' court comprising other important subjects and take into account that for economic reasons the acts and events often relies on painted and sculpted architecture, celebrations, theatre, illumination, fashion, and ceremonies linked to devotional offerings.

Today, we are aware that power assumes different forms: stories, tales, literary works, temporary structures, clothing and unique fashion pieces, art, and architecture can all shape the behaviours of subjects without coercing them. Resignification measures in the public spaces of a city can be plain (renaming, displaying coats of arms, decorating) or 'disguised' (temporary devices used in celebrations, religious, political, and dynastic ceremonies, or games and tournaments or works such as new buildings and the opening of streets and squares that transform the city). We examine the dukes' influence in three different urban spaces in Milan that are situated in front of public buildings: the Piazza del Duomo (originally known as the Piazza dell'Arengo), the Piazza del Broletto, and the Piazza del Castello (**Figure 1**).

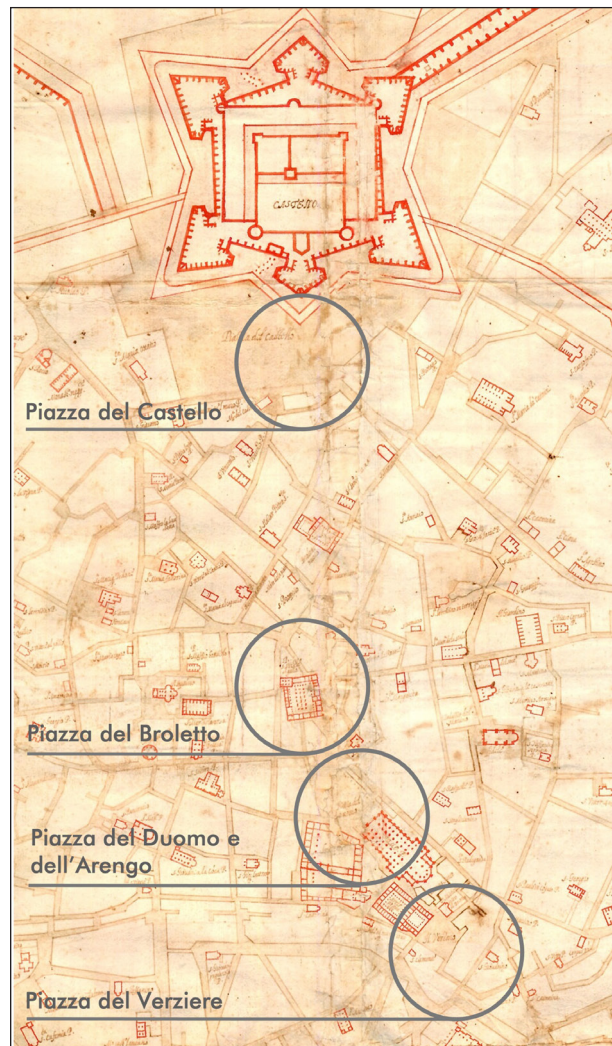
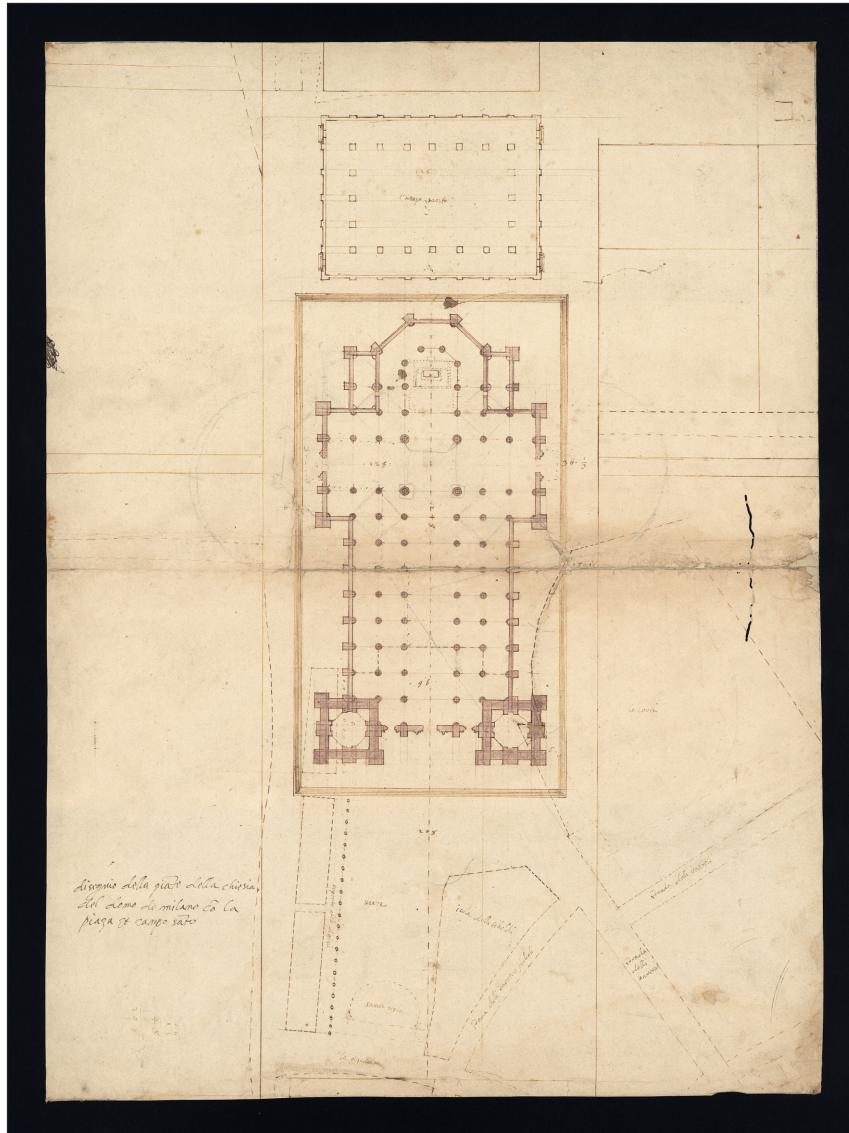


Figure 1: Giovanni Battista Clarici, detail, plan of Milan, about 1584. Accademia di San Luca, Rome.

### Piazza dell'Arengo/Piazza del Duomo

The idea of creating of a new public square in front of the duomo, the area known as Platea curiae Arengi, which was where the ducal palace was located, arised when the new cathedral was founded in 1386 on the site of the old Santa Maria Maggiore. The square, first deemed possible due to the progressive demolition of the San Giovanni alle Fonti Baptistery (1355) (Grossi 1997: 109; Gritti and Repishti 2016–2017: 28–29) and the Basilica di Santa Tecla (1458–1462), must have consisted of an area surrounded by porticoes that were built using preexisting structures (21 May 1472, AVFDMi, Ordinazioni capitolari, 3, f. 72; *Annali* 1877: 276).<sup>2</sup> Francesco Sforza's politics dictated that the ducal palace be an *open* court where he would be visible to citizens, and so the

square was situated close to the ducal court and interconnected with it. The square was composed of two small, separate open areas: one in front of the duomo and another closer to the Arengo (**Figure 2**).



**Figure 2:** Plan of the cathedral of Milan and surrounding buildings, 1558–1567. ASCMiBT, Raccolta Bianconi, 2, f. 2r.

Different documents attest that as soon as Francesco Sforza acceded to power in 1450, he began to define an urban space in front of the cathedral to serve as a theatre for his actions and as a site where both the nonreligious power of the community and the ducal court could be expressed. The area was impacted by the gradual erosion



of parts of the ducal court by the advancing duomo site from the west and by the forced alignment of buildings at different phases and stages of construction. We can consider the starting point to be the decision in September 1450 to demolish and reconstruct ‘parietem muri curie Arengi respicientem versus ecclesiam maiorem’ (‘the wall of the Corte dell’Arengo [i.e., the ducal palace] which faces the cathedral’) to a length of almost 57 braccia (approximately 33 metres). The following year Giovanni Solari, an engineer of the duchy and the Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano, was entrusted with designing and charting a new road from the ‘curia archiepiscopali in plateam Arengi’ (from the palace of the archbishop to the Piazza dell’Arengo [i.e., the square in front of the ducal palace]) (24 January 1451, AVFDMi, Ordinazioni capitolari, 2, f. 120), a road which to this day demarcates the space surrounding the southern face of the duomo.

The demolition of a part of the ducal palace convinced the members of the *fabbrica* that it was possible to complete the original design for the site. This concession was celebrated in 1456 with the symbolic placement of a red column at the construction’s end point that was meant to indicate where the future facade would be located. The laying of this milestone heralded the construction of the new piers in the Piazza dell’Arengo and the demolition of the Basilica di Santa Tecla, which occupied the ‘maiores partem platee et etiam locum ubi extendenda est ecclesia maior’ (‘most of the part of the square including the area designated for the completion of the cathedral’), a demolition that was carried out on the direct request of Francesco Sforza himself. It had been deemed necessary: ‘Civitatis mediolanensis decore ante eandem ecclesiam platea remaneat expediens, quemadmodum ab initio structurarum illius tractatus dicitur extitisse’ (‘For the decorum of the city of Milan, a square in front of the church should remain free, as it is said to have been decided since the beginning of the building site’) (11 November 1458; *Annali* 1877: 185).

20 March 1461 is the day in which the most important relic held in Milan at the Basilica di Santa Tecla was transferred: this was one of the nails from the cross which had been recovered by Saint Helena in Jerusalem. It was an operation not dissimilar to that which had been supported by the Gonzagas in Mantua with the acquisition of the church of Sant’Andrea and the precious relics linked to Longinus.<sup>3</sup>

Both the duke and the members of the *fabbrica* wanted a new square, but the ideas for at least regularising its shape, that we might imagine were grandiose, were not relished, except for the use of the northern naves of the Basilica di Santa Tecla to build the Portico dei Figini facing the entrance to the court.<sup>4</sup> In the *ordinazione capitolare* of 22 November 1472 relating to the construction of the portico, which was intended to resolve controversies regarding the ownership of spaces already entrusted to certain

merchants, reference is made to Francesco Sforza's desire to create a square, which Duke Galeazzo Maria too cites later in his plans.

Quod fuerat de mente bone memorie quondam illustrissimi et excellentissimi domini domini Francisci Sfortie olim ducis Mediolani, erat quaquam de mente etiam moderni illustrissimi domini domini ducis nostri Mediolani, quod quicumque super dicto spatio terre, seu super ipsis bonis dicto domino Petro locatis, edificaret seu edificari faceret edificium huiusmodi, faceret non ville nec abiectum sed sumptuosum et magnificum ac tale quod haberet plurimum honorare plateam ipsam, maxime cum ipsum spatium esset respiciens curiam illustrissimi principis nostri et super platea ecclesie maioris Mediolani (AVFDMi, Ordinazioni capitolari, 3, ff. 73v–75).

(It was the intention of his lordship, renowned most illustrious and excellent Francesco Sforza, once duke of Milan, and it was also the intention of his lordship, the current duke of Milan, that over that area, that is, over the properties leased to Petro Figini, a building should be realised: this building must be not despicable and abject but lavish and magnificent so as to give honour to that square, particularly since that space faced the palace of our most illustrious prince and was above the square in front of the cathedral.)

Nevertheless, this plan to expand the residence and the nearby reception areas never materialized, and by the time Galeazzo Maria assumed power, the rebuilt castle with its adjacent square had become home to the duke and the affairs of the court, while the Platea curiae Arenghi area had been definitively ceded to the *fabbrica* in 1477. On 22 August 1492, Ludovico Maria Sforza ordered that a square be built in front of the castle, that would have celebrated, especially in the age of Ludovico Sforza, the image of the duke so as to refer a meaning that was different to that wanted by the first Sforza duke, due to its regularity and the presence of the equestrian monument created by Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>5</sup>

The area in front of the Duomo served as a public space for the dukes' personal celebrations throughout the second half of the 15th century. Here, between the duomo and the ducal court, the family's marriages and baptisms and investitures were held in temporary structures (Figure 3). Some of these events overlapped with those organised by the citizens of the city's *porte* (gates) to mark the ceremonies for offerings to the *fabbrica*. For example, as early as 22 December 1389, the Porta Vercellina staged *Jasonis et Medeae*, erecting a wooden structure for this purpose in the Piazza dell'Arengo (Tisconi Benvenuti 1983; Covini 2001; Ventrone 2013).



**Figure 3:** Ducal investiture of Ludovico Maria Sforza. Front page of the *Messale Arcimboldi*, BACMMi, ms. 2-D-01-013, f. 1r.

Thanks to documentary and literary descriptions of the most important ceremonies of that time, most notably that of Stefano Dolcino marking the occasion of the nuptials of Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Isabella of Aragon in 1489 (Schofield 1988; Schofield 2011–2012; Passera 2017; Passera 2020), we know that the ducal procession entered

the square through an arch of triumph and that there were ‘tyburii, archi triumphali et theatri’ between the old Arengo court and the duomo, while a *tribunale*, that is, a system of platforms where the court, the ducal ambassadors, and other individuals sat according to a preestablished order, was located in front of the facade of the cathedral. These structures were open on at least three sides to permit the citizens to witness the celebration and the events of the court.

### **Piazza del Broletto**

The relationship of the dukes to the municipal institutions and the urban spaces where these institutions were located — in the so-called Broletto Nuovo (New Broletto), where they had been since the 13th century, having moved from the Arengo neighbouring the cathedral — became sensitive to the changing political system and legislation in particular, as was the case in other Italian settings. The transition to the duchy had resulted during the Visconti period in not only legislative adjustments but also a consensus that protecting the common good was a worthwhile endeavour: public ground was the property of the municipality, and the lord, who understood the importance of assets in the prosperity of a state, had a responsibility to protect and regulate it. Crimes against public and private properties were thus punished more severely than in the past, and the sentences given to those that committed crimes in the Broletto — even if the crime amounted just to provoking a fight — were double those for the same crimes committed elsewhere (Sinatti d’Amico 2010: 228–229).

Furthermore, it was the responsibility of Gian Galeazzo Visconti himself to enact new statutes for the city of Milan, which he did in 1396. These remained in force for a long while, although in 1498 during Ludovico Maria Sforza’s rule amendments that had become necessary due to political change were added that were not abolished until Austrian rule came into effect (Sinatti d’Amico 2010: 265). The Sforza, unlike the Visconti, were not dukes by imperial investiture (at least until 1495); their authority was instead based on a set of acts of varying legality, and they led the duchy by public acclamation. The benevolence of the *cives Mediolani*, therefore, became crucial in the politics, urban or otherwise, of Francesco Sforza (Covini 2015).<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the authority of the prince over the city was undisputed, and now the fortunes of the public and those of the prince coincided (Sinatti D’Amico 2010: 266).

It is not surprising then that the *Statuta Mediolani*, which were created during the Visconti period and printed in 1480, contained a specific *rubrica* detailing regulations related to the use of the spaces and the allocation of specific buildings to civic entities

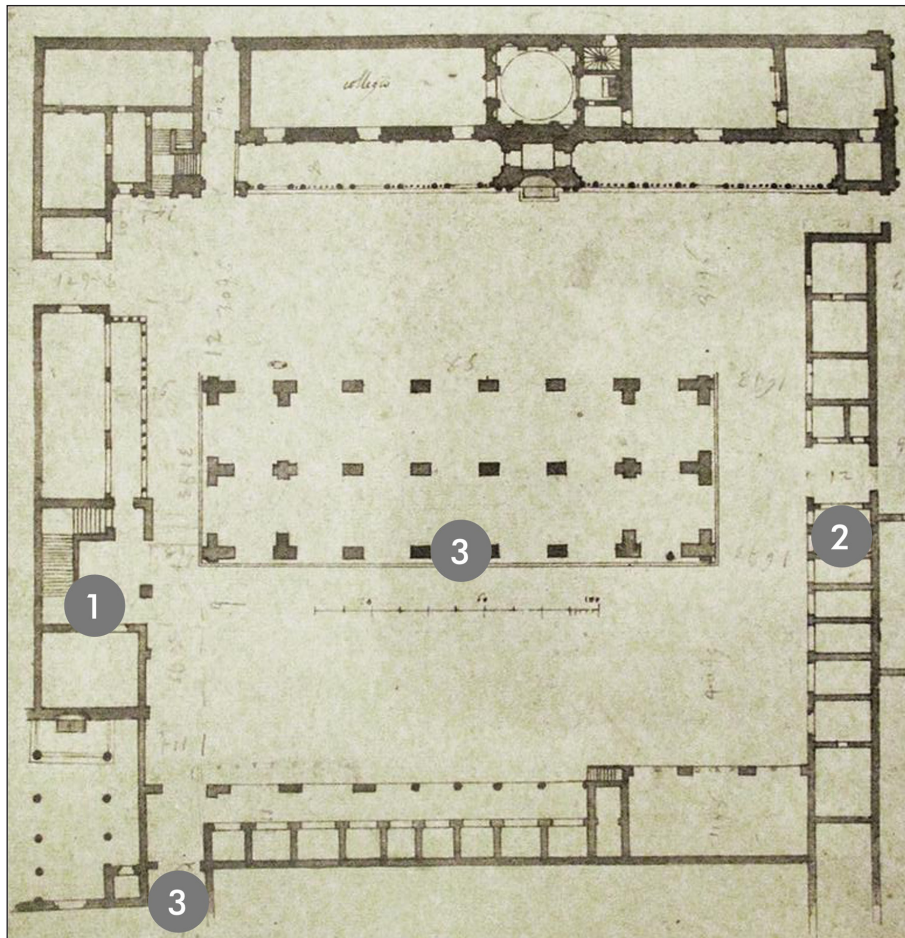


— the *podestà*, the merchant university, the college of jurists, the notary benches, the *credenza* council, various judges — in the Broletto area. According to the *rubrica*, the square had to be paved and cleaned, the portico beneath the Palazzo della Ragione and other spaces had to be kept clear, and the sale of certain foodstuffs within the Broletto area was prohibited. A custodian was responsible for opening and closing doors and monitoring the goods, people, and the cleanliness of the square.<sup>7</sup>

By this time, only the duke could grant concessions for the use of public land and licences; there were no exceptions to this policy even in the case of buildings that housed the municipal offices. This is evidenced by the repeated requests that followed one another from 1433 onwards for a reorganisation of the building used by the Università dei Mercanti — the only surviving 15th-century building, albeit heavily restored (Figure 4) — and subsequently the house of the Podestà (Figure 5). For this latter, and for the paving of the square, the work was done in the 1450s with the involvement of Bianca Maria Visconti, including to cover the costs through the collection of income arising from convictions.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 4:** View from the so-called Casa Panigarola (once a building of the Università dei Mercanti) in Piazza dei Mercanti in Milan, 1930. CAF, Inv. RI 1734.



**Figure 5:** Plan of the Piazza dei Mercanti. ASCMiBT, Raccolta Bianconi, 1, f. 8r. 1. Università dei Mercanti building; 2. house of the *podestà*; 3. position of the ducal painted interventions on the Palazzo della Ragione and on the door which faced the Contrada degli Orefici.

Of most interest in this context are not the works the duke approved but those he carried out in the Broletto area, which may perhaps be interpreted as an example of political interference in an area that was historically characterized by a civic vocation. The Sforza dukes were not advocates of invasive works within the Broletto area, but certain acts were undertaken as part of a Sforza resignification of the Palazzo della Ragione and the doors of the Broletto, which were grafted in part onto Visconti precedents (Vaglianti 2006: 478–483; Ferrari 2022: 245–267).

In correspondence between Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Bartolomeo Gadio, the engineer and superintendent of the ducal workshops, from June 1469 to November 1470 the duke expresses his desire to paint the Sforza coat of arms on the two facades of the Palazzo della Ragione and on the door of the Broletto which faced the Fabbri (or Orefici)

district (Albertario 2005: 113n30; Vaglianti 2006: 484–486; Riccobono 2014: 107–111; Ferrari 2022: 259). This side of the square was particularly important to the duke because the processions associated with dynastic ceremonies passed through it, and although they never entered the Piazza del Broletto, they skirted it along the Contrada degli Orefici, where at times ceremonial formalities or gestures were performed or temporary dedicated structures were built.<sup>9</sup> The duke wanted to have the ducal crest and firebrands displayed on the outside of the Broletto door facing the Contrada degli Orefici, but Gadio indicated that there was not enough space, as the door was already decorated: the old paintings included the figures of Saint Ambrose in the centre, at whose feet the crests of Bernabò Visconti and that of Gian Galeazzo were depicted, and Saint Gervasius and Saint Protasius beside him.

With regard to the Palazzo della Ragione, Gadio started by making drawings of the paintings present on the two facades of the palace at the time, one of which faced towards the Piazza dei Mercanti proper and that which faced the notary benches (today in the direction of the Palazzo dei Giureconsulti). The ducal arms created during the Visconti period were located between the windows of the building and reached the eaves.<sup>10</sup> These coats of arms, Gadio wrote, were in good condition because they had recently been restored, while those on the other side of the building were rather more damaged.<sup>11</sup> It is evident from the correspondence that initially the intention was not to replace the existing coats of arms with others that were markedly more Sforza — and in any case we know that Sforza heraldry was largely borrowed from the Visconti — but rather to add new ones in the available spaces. Gadio suggested they be placed in the two remaining empty spaces between the windows of the side facing the notary benches. In the end, however, Galeazzo Maria arranged for one of the crests on the side of the Mercanti to be redone so that the firebrand device could be included and also to have the roofline reconstructed, since Gadio had pointed out that the eaves did not protect the paintings from precipitation sufficiently. Finally, all of the works were carried out at the expense of the duke and were itemised in a document dating to 1471.<sup>12</sup>

The renovation of the crest and the roof appears to be the only actions genuinely carried out by Galeazzo Maria, since the other works were supported and financed by the magistrates located in the square, such as the construction of a mechanical clock placed on the side of the palazzo that looked onto the Piazza dei Mercanti, which was financed by the Mercanti di Fiandra between 1455 and 1458 (**Figure 6**).<sup>13</sup> The works undertaken by the Sforza in the Broletto area can thus be described as extremely modest. The first Sforza dukes took no interest in the municipal spaces, and only Ludovico Maria Sforza appears to have planned for the transfer of the civic centre.



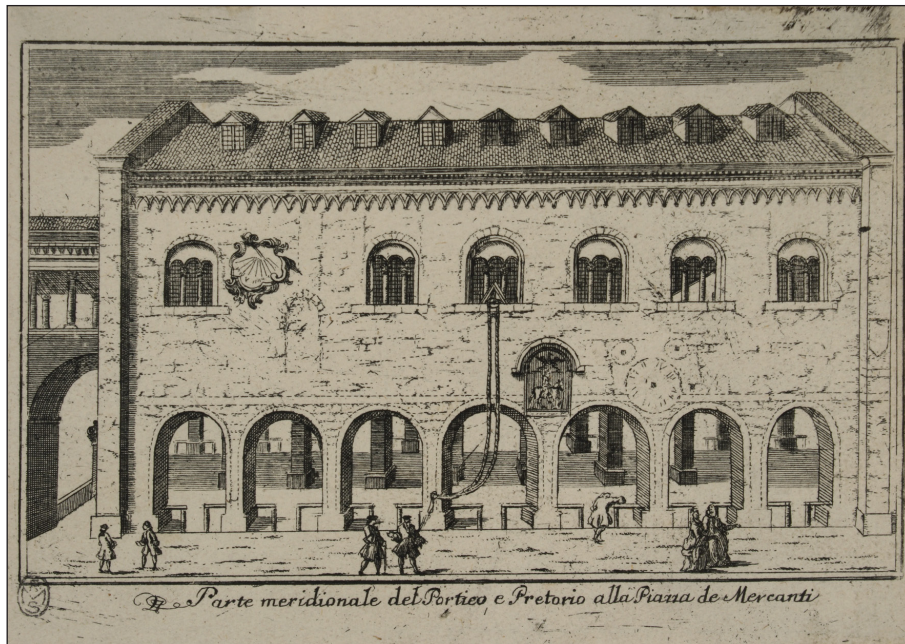
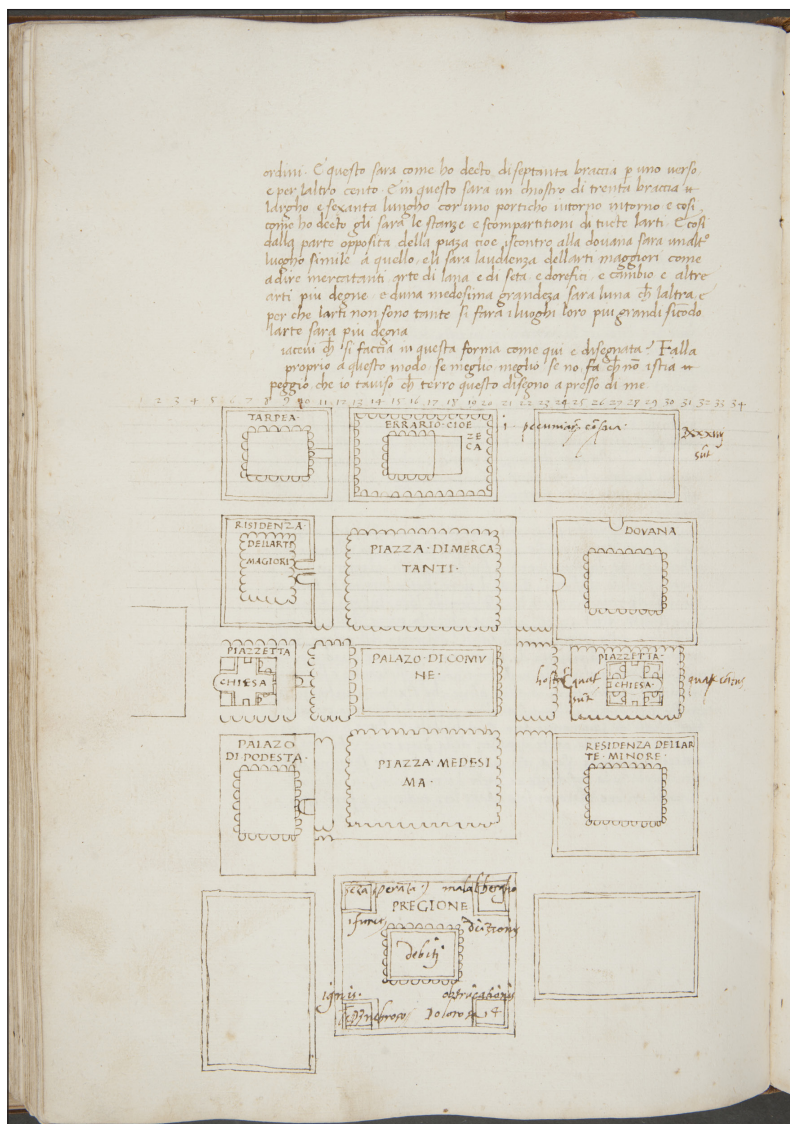


Figure 6: Marcantonio Dal Re, Palazzo della Ragione, 1743–1750. CRSBMi, Albo C 12, tav. 44.

To this scarce information we can add an idea, in truth a utopian thought, imagined during the era of Francesco Sforza by Antonio Filarete. As is well known, even if the Sforzinda is undoubtedly Milan, it is always necessary to take great care when trying to connect the proposals contained in Filarete's treatise to specific Milanese cases. Recent studies show that although his treatise provides very detailed descriptions of completed projects or existing buildings — for example the Duomo di Bergamo, the Ospedale Maggiore, and the Palazzo del Banco Mediceo — there are other cases in which Filarete proposes models, based on certain aspects of the specific context and in certain cases effectively feasible, but conceived as theoretical examples with not possibilities to be realised. In the case of the idea for the reorganisation of the public squares in the urban centre, the dimensions of the squares described by Filarete do not match those of the squares in Milan (Figure 7), even if there were three main squares separated by function, including one called 'dei mercanti', in Milan (although such a differentiation does not appear to be anomalous in other 15th-century cities). Moreover, constructing these squares would have required the demolition of all the existing buildings, a redesign of all adjacent streets, and the expansion of the civic centre over a much wider area, including into neighbouring urban plots not entirely available to the duke, as in Milan there were no laws relating to eminent domain for public use (Gritti 2018).





**Figure 7:** Drawing of Sforzinda's Piazza dei Mercanti in one of the manuscripts that includes the treatise by Antonio Averlino, who was known as Filarete. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Ms. Palatino E.B.15.7, f. 101v.

### Piazza del Castello

One of the urban works most widely celebrated by literary sources and especially in texts produced at the time by Bernardino Arluno, Giovanni Pietro Cagnola, and Francesco Muralto is the expansion of the square adjacent to the Castello di Porta Giovia. Ludovico Maria Sforza began to take an interest in this area in 1492, as suggested by a decree issued by his nephew, the duke Gian Galeazzo, on 22 August (ASMi, Registri ducali, 187,

ff. 223v–226v; Beltrami 1904: 17–22) which facilitated the sale of the existing buildings and plots to the ducal house from private parties, both through the investment of enormous sums of money and the implementation of compensation schemes by means of the concession of income on the ducal taxes of the following years (Rossetti 2020: 66–68). The intentions of Ludovico Maria Sforza, the then duke's lieutenant, are clear by the opening of the same decree, noting it was important to enlarge the castle's square 'pro decore et ornamento amplissimi castri nostri porte Iovis ac alme civitatis nostre Mediolani ampliare' ('for the decorum and ornament of our great castle of Porta Giovia and our alma city of Milan').

The idea of an expansion implies that a widening must have already existed in front of the castle. However, the new square was larger and more regular in shape (even in the first documents the verb 'squadrare' ['to square'] is used [14 July 1492, Bereguardo, ASMi, Registri delle missive, 187, f. 176r; La Rosa 1983: 76, no. 40]), was home to a new and prestigious residential area, had buildings including a new town hall designated for important economic functions (Schofield 1992–1993: 159), had space for a new residence for Marchesino Stanga, the ducal secretary, in the vicinity of the Piazza del Castello (4 July 1493, Pavia, ASMi, Registri ducali, 209, ff. 96–99; Rossetti 2020: 66–67), and realised a new chapel to the Virgin Mary.<sup>14</sup>

If the medieval Piazza del Broletto remained anchored to civic identity while also being marked by ducal endeavours, this new space in front of the castle was entirely a princely affair. By this time, the ducal family had lived in the innermost court of the castle for many years. The adjacent square, an area connecting the axis of the civil and religious squares, also became a place that celebrated ducal power, where citizens first caught a glimpse of dynastic ceremonies that began inside the castle and then moved outside. It also would have served as an urban stage for games, such as the battle reenactment performed on 14 February 1499, recounted by the Este ambassador who had witnessed it from the windows of the Marchesino Stanga's house overlooking the square (Schofield 1992–1993: 159). The square is also well known because here there would have been space for the bronze equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza forged by Leonardo da Vinci. The square is perhaps recalled in a later design by the Tuscan artist in which he outlines a regular-shaped urban area in front of the castle in line with the ravelin positioned in front of its entrance, suggesting the idea of a street perpendicular to the Castello, heading in the direction of the city centre, through two parallel lines that start on the opposite side of the square (BAMi, Codice Atlantico, 260r; Pedretti 1989: 57).

In *Dialogo fra un Forestiere, ed un Pittore, che si incontrano nella Basilica di San Francesco in Milano*, Venanzio De Pagave notes that 'Ludovico ordinò un arco trionfale

di legname sulla piazza del Castello, ad uso de' romani, e si ha fondamenti per ritenere che si sia alzato su disegno di Bramante' ('Ludovico ordered a wooden triumphal arch over the castle's square, like those of the Romans, and we have reasons to believe that it was designed by Bramante') (BACSMi, D.221, f. 193; Patetta 1987: 415–416). Beyond the attribution to Bramante, a recurring theme for De Pagave which is scarcely reliable, however, the lack of other sources documenting this event does not allow us to speculate about the specific occasion for which this arch would have been constructed but it is further evidence that area was used for recreational and ceremonial purposes.

## Conclusions

The numerous plans the Sforza dukes conceived, which we have not dealt with comprehensively here but which have been investigated in recent studies, include urban legislative measures pertaining to roads and squares (Gritti 2020), new modes of celebration grounded in various forms of expression such as painted architecture, theatre, tournaments, performances, choral ceremonies, and dynastic literature, and the donation of buildings to the Medici, Este, Gonzaga, and Montefeltro families as part of an effort to foster diplomacy (Martinis 2020).<sup>15</sup>

These plans rarely materialised and more often than not remained mere intentions or else were implemented as part of a short-term strategy whose purpose was to highlight ducal power. The interventions, which spanned the course of half a century, were embedded in and added to one another without any common direction. The plotting of new roads, the straightening of roads via demolition (the current *corso* Magenta and *corso* Italia), the positioning of monuments, renovations on buildings connected to tradition and municipal identity (Sant'Ambrogio, Piazza del Duomo, Piazza del Broletto) or dynasty (Santa Maria delle Grazie), the adornment of public and private buildings including through painted architecture, and the construction of infrastructure and services all were undertaken from time to time as stand-alone projects.

As we have emphasized, not all of these works were carried out during the Ludovico Maria Sforza era, even if this is period is without doubt the subject of the majority of studies. All of the Sforza dukes understood that their legitimacy was required a representation of power to the *cives*. The actions they engaged in on each occasion reflected their political intentions as well as their changing relationship with the citizens.

The dukes mostly limited their plans, which were small in scope or merely utopian, to those areas of the city that had a civic vocation, and the plans, such as that for the

creating a square for the castle, a civic centre that would revolutionise the urban layout of the city and serve as an alternative to the system of the Piazza del Duomo and Piazza del Broletto, unfortunately remained stuck in the planning phase during Ludovico Maria Sforza's rule.

In the last decade of the 15th century, the dukes also expressed a desire that the roads and the buildings surrounding these representative focal points, the theatre of public ceremonies, communicate an idea of urban decorum. In this period there were decrees, such as those of July 1492 whose aim was the removal of the *logge*, the *pontili* (wooden hanging walkways), and the *baltresche* (balconies) that were enforced by the ducal provisions of 1493 and followed by decrees calling for standardising the height of buildings and plastering and repainting their facades. But these decrees only applied in specific areas and not to all parts of the city (Gritti 2020: 49–51). In Milan, therefore, the difficulty or the inability of the duke to substantively alter the aspect and the shape of the city is evident and is especially clear with regard to civic spaces, which maintained forms and functions inherited from the municipal era. Conversely, the princes were able to realize their visions for Milan in other places, such as Vigevano, the Sforza family's urban laboratory.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Sforza court, and especially that of Ludovico Maria, entrusted literature with the job of celebrating ducal achievements, and Texts produced in the last twenty years of the fifteenth century and in the first years of the following century help make sense of the ideas and the architectural and ephemeral enterprises the dukes promoted. Different literary genres describe and magnify the ducal city; and a particular role was given to the epithalami composed for ducal weddings. In almost all the sources the idea of a rebirth or refoundation of the city recurs as a feature of the Sforza's Milan (see Visioli 2020).
- <sup>2</sup> On 11 November 1458, Pope Pius II approved the use of the remains from the demolition of Santa Tecla to build the new cathedral and the transfer of 'praeposituram, canonicatus, praebendas, capellanas et alia beneficia' along with 'reliquiis, indulgentiis, libris, calicibus et aliis ornamentis ecclesiasticis' to it; see *Annali* 1877: 185–187, 186.
- <sup>3</sup> That the demolition of Santa Tecla was intended above all to create a space for a square is testified to by Vincenzo della Scalona, the ambassador from Mantua: 'Domane cum grande solemnità se farà qui la translatione del Chiodo è in Sancta Tecla, del corpo de san Galdino et altri santi et se metterano nel domo, perché se intende zitare a terra la chiesa de Sancta Tecla per fare una bella piazza' ('Tomorrow with great solemnity there will be the relocation of the holy nail, which is inside the church of Santa Tecla, and of the body of San Galdino and other saints, and they will be located inside the duomo, because the intention is to destroy the church of Santa Tecla for the realisation of a beautiful square') (Lazzarini 2000, I: 159).
- <sup>4</sup> Until 1864, the portico was located to the side of the area in front of the Duomo near the façade of the cathedral, representing a sort of urban scenery of that place.
- <sup>5</sup> The square is described in *Historia Mediolanensis ab urbe condita ad sua usque tempora* (BAMi, ms. A 114 inf., f. 98v): Bernardino Arluno describes what happened, noting that 'arcis aream contignatione domorum subruta, patentissimi spatiis intus forisque dilaxavit' ('the area of the castle was extended, creating great space inside and outside it by the demolition of houses' (Schofield 1992–1993: 166).
- <sup>6</sup> Milanese citizens are, according to the statutes, all those were born in Milan, those 'de prosapia Mediolani ex paterna linea aut qui pro habitaculo steterit in civitate Mediolani cum familia sua annis triginta continuis' ('of Milanese lineage after the paternal line, or those who continuously inhabited in the city of Milan with their families for thirty years') (Sinatti D'Amico 2010: 224).
- <sup>7</sup> The text of the statutes related to the urban laws is available at <https://milanosforzesca.it/statuti/st-reg>.
- <sup>8</sup> For the documents related to the Piazza del Broletto see the entry Piazza dei Mercanti at <https://milanosforzesca.it/cantieri>.
- <sup>9</sup> Such structures include the large golden sphere on a pedestal adorned with griffins and cornucopias built in the middle of this *contrada* for the wedding of Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Isabella of Aragon in 1489; and there was a column decorated with the symbol of a lion with the crest and a firebrand and a mechanism that dropped a boy, dressed like cupid, over the sphere who then read verses as the bride passed by (Passera 2020: 73).
- <sup>10</sup> On the merchant side, a total of six coats of arms appeared: the imperial one with the crowned eagle occupied the center, while on the right in sequence appeared the ducal arms, a greyhound under the pine, and that of the *semprevivi* and on the left appeared the ducal arm with the 'fazolo' (the *capitergium* device?). Above this latter was the golden monogram of Filippo Maria Visconti and above that the coat of arms with the viper that swallows the Saracen.
- <sup>11</sup> Only four coats of arms appeared here: the imperial eagle in the center, a very worn quartered ducal arm on the right that can only be recognized thanks to the presence of the 'bisse' in two of the quarters; and on the left another quartered ducal arm, with two quarters occupied by the 'bisse' and the other two with the lilies of France, and coat of arms with the Visconti viper in a shield.
- <sup>12</sup> The document notes: 'Item per un'altra spesa facta l'anno suprascripto 1471 cioè in far depingere la faciata del pallatio de broleto de Mediolano con molte arme ducale et regale computate alcune facte sopra la volta de la porta desso broleto che guarda verso li aurifici' ('Furthermore, for another payment made in the aforesaid year 1471, namely to have the façade of the Palazzo del Broletto of Milan painted with many ducal coats of arms, counting some made above the vault of the door of the Broletto that faces the Contrada degli Orefici' [the goldsmiths' district]) (ASMi, Carteggio Visconteo Sforzesco, 1603).
- <sup>13</sup> It is clear that the clock, made by the master Raimondo dei Semini, was mechanical because an attendant was appointed and regularly paid. Minimal modifications of the Palazzo della Ragione in must have been required order to build a room for the mechanism corresponding to the clock face. The clock is documented again in 1470, when after the master's

death it was necessary to put a new person in charge of tempering the clock monthly and using the one located in the Corte dell'Arengo, that is, the 14th-century clock on the bell tower of San Gottardo in Corte, as a point of reference to adjust it. It is difficult to establish what type of clock it was (whether astronomical or planetary), but documents testify that in 1458 the clockmaker had to make 'unam stellam azalis pulchram et bene adoratam de auro fino' ('one beautiful steel star well-adorned with precious gold') to be placed on the dial (14 November 1458; ASMi, Notarile, Giovanni Scazzosi, 535; <https://milanosforzesca.it/cantieri>). In an 18th-century print by Marcantonio Dal Re the dial still appears, positioned so as to correspond with the impost of the arches to the right of the equestrian statue of Oldrado da Tresseno. The clock represented is circular and bears the hours in Roman numerals from I to XII, as usual in the 15th century; moreover, above the dial there are two smaller dials, possibly identifying it as an astronomical clock which also signaled the cycles of the sun and the moon.

<sup>14</sup> The duke's intention to build Nostra Dona della Consolazione sopra la piazza del Castello, which literally translates as 'Holy Mary of the Consolation over the castle's square', was documented in the early 1480s: 'Fa una digna et sumptuosa capella et col tempo se li farà ancora una chiesa' ('He is realising a dignified and sumptuous chapel and time by time a church will be realised too') (2 April 1483, ASMi, Registri delle missive, 155, ff. 125r-v).

<sup>15</sup> All the writers, whose aim is to celebrate the Moro, refer to the quality of urban life in judging whether a government is good, a quality of life that depended on the streets being navigable, predictable, and pleasant, the elimination of obstacles, the renovation of the facades, the creation of monumental urban spaces such as squares and ornate buildings, and the presence of gardens. The texts written by Ambrogio da Paullo, Francesco Muralto, Bernardino Arluno, and Giovanni Pietro Cagnola attest to attempts to produce such a quality of life. The connection between the castle and the square is recognized as significant, as Arluno writes, using the words *palatium* and *forum*, or *palatium* and *circus*, and describing the square as a *cavea* intended for games ('foris vere ut capaciore spectantem populum cavea cum repentinae solemnesque feriae inicerent contineret'; see <https://milanosforzesca.it/fonti/letterarie>).

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## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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ASMi (Archivio di stato di Milano)

AVFDMi (Archivio della veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano)

BACMMi (Biblioteca e archivio del capitolo metropolitano di Milano)

BACSMi (Biblioteca d'arte del Castello Sforzesco di Milano)

BAMi (Biblioteca ambrosiana di Milano)

**BNCF** (Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze)

**CAF** (Civico archivio fotografico, Comune di Milano)

**CRSBMi** (Civica raccolta delle stampe di Milano Achille Bertarelli)

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