University Student Housing as a Synergistic Tool Between University and City

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Abstract. University student housing has always been a phenomenon that affects the socio-economic community in which it settles. It lends greater importance to the university institution in the role of urban stakeholder, than it would have if deprived of housing and accommodation facilities. Starting with a historical-typological excursus, the paper describes the impacts that university student housing has had through the scientific research that have moved innovation in processes and regulatory procedures, since the dawn of the first *universitas*. In addition, the contribution describes, within the effects in Italy of the application of Law No. 338 of December 14, 2000, and the potential for funding in the sector by the PNRR, two application cases that involved authors with a design experience aimed at the recovery of buildings with historical value in Puglia. The buildings are converted in university student housing and for local University and for the city of Foggia. In this way it allows to summarize the existing value of university student housing and the tools that today allow the architects to intervene on it.

Keywords: University student housing · 5th Public Competition · NRRP · Urban Regeneration

1 University Student Housing During History: From the Right to Study to Urban Regeneration

During the 1230s, Western Europe became the hub of trade with the East, and Italy was the first port for Arab scholars.

This involves a kind of "secularization" of knowledge from which a new kind of cultural pilgrimage arose: that of teachers and students. Without distinction of class or origin, groups of intellectuals emerged within the host city; they were gathered for the purpose of assisting each other.

These groups, which became associations, gave rise to the first *Universitas*, which re-sold autonomy against absolute powers both temporal and religious (Chiarantoni, 2008).

One of the major differences between monastic schools and *Universitas* was that the former were inevitably rooted in the place they were established, because of the inescapable relationship with the monastery and its community. *Universitas*, by contrast, had no classrooms, libraries, or equipment because of the rate of mobility of teachers

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and students. However, the relationship with the city in which the *Universitas* transited was real: the city took care of the pilgrims' housing needs, taking advantage of their labour. For this reason and to protect their autonomy, the *Universitas* left no traces of their passage, other than the student housing (in Italian: *collegi*) (Coppola Pignatelli, 1969).

At each place, it was necessary to find suitable spaces for cultural settlement: if finding classrooms created few problems because large community halls or church halls were always available, for student housing it was necessary to rely on the private market. It is not uncommon that some municipalities had to intervene to lower rents with the aim of making the *Universitas* stay as long as possible (Chiarantoni, 2008).

Since the presence of *Universitas* was an opportunity for local economies, people began to think of special structures for student housing: (Brizzi and Pini, 1988). Almost simultaneously, for no apparent reason (Kiene, 1997), during the 14th century, buildings, called *collegium*, began to spring up in Italy, France, England, and Spain, with the specific function of providing temporary housing for students. Until then, architecture had not had the opportunity to confront itself with a typological theme such as the *collegium*.

Bologna is among the oldest university seats in Europe having been recognized as *Universitas* by Federico Barbarossa in 1158 and becoming autonomous from municipal power in 1278. The first building intended for university student house is in Bologna and dates to the 13th century: the *Collegio di Spagna*, created to house Spanish pilgrim students. It was desired by Cardinal Arbozon, who entrusted the design to *Matteo Gattapone* from Gubbio (Kiene, 1997).

The connotation as a building for the right to study is clear from the outset since residents could be housed there free of charge if they were of non-wealthy status, as well as of Spanish origin and Christian religion. Its construction lasted only two years, from 1365 to 1367, and it is a typological reference for many of the buildings that would follow it (Belforte, 1996).

The University of Padua was founded in 1222, and the municipality of Padua worked from 1260 to construct buildings for temporary student housing and to lower rents. In four centuries from 1373 to 1771 more than twenty *collegi* will flourish in Padua (Dal Negro, 2003).

Another example of archetypical student housing is in Siena: in the 13th century the municipality established an *Universitas* that already from its foundation had no relationship with either the papacy or the empire. Teachers are paid from the taxes of all citizens, which in fact makes teaching completely free for anyone (the first case in Italy of a public university). In 1408, the municipality is authorized by Papal bull, to build the "house of wisdom" to provide hospitality for poor students. However, the building, once completed in 1416, takes on the character of a residence for wealthy students, attracted by the families of the Sienese bourgeoisie for the purpose of engaging in business dealings (Belforte, 1996).

The Renaissance saw a quest to transform university buildings and those for university student housing, in institutional landmarks, such as public and religious buildings.

One of the main proponents of this change, even from an architectural point of view, was *Cardinal* Branda Castiglioni, who in 1492 founded the first college in Pavia and in 1439 the School of Castiglione d'Olona.

Emerging is the desire to specialize the parts of the building organism, making the educational didactic value of the college prevail. In addition, the sharp distinction between residence spaces, study spaces and collective spaces for socializing practices makes it clear that the desire to frame such buildings as extensions of universities was prioritized, with the aim of placing a higher value on them and making them attractive to students from all over the world.

After the Council of Trento, university institutions underwent a process of strong centralization, aimed at warding off the dangers of spreading heretical theories, associated, increasingly, with the pilgrim student (Chiarantoni, 2008).

Educational *collegi* by the new religious orders such as the Jesuits began to spread in university towns.

The *collegio* acquires, in addition to the function of housing, the function of educational outreach, as happens emblematically in Pavia, with the *Collegio Borromeo*, built between 1561 and 1588: Pellegrino de Pellegrini, known as Tibaldi, was entrusted with the project: he did not pursue the fortress model that had characterized the previous period, but the appearance of Renaissance palaces, openly declaring the residential function.

The relationship with the city is reinforced in the typological evolution as the ground floor is designated to collective spaces.

The 18th century saw the spread of Enlightenment ideas that envisioned a secular revolution in education. The religious monopoly of culture that had been strengthened by the spread of Jesuit educational colleges dissolved, and teaching became a social service administered to citizens by the secular state.

In Turin, Vittorio Amedeo II freed the colleges from religious authority in a move to reform the whole of public education, and, indeed, the King decreed the suppression of all colleges not directly linked to universities.

As it happens in Turin, the goal was to create a widespread network of university seats and supporting facilities such as student housing, under the name of "*Collegi delle Provincie*" (Chiarantoni, 2008).

The first among the *Collegi dellеProvincie* was designed by Bernardo Antonio Vittore, who renovated a building in Turin's *Piazza Carlina.*

The building retains the settings of the type defined already by the *Collegio di Spagna*, however, the idea of the single room is abandoned, which comes to accommodate up to four students. Such "crowding" transforms the room into the place for only sleeping, while all other functions are delegated to the common spaces.

Another substantial change concerned the overlooking of the rooms, which, until then, were isolated through distribution from opening to the outside and which now, for the first time, face the city.

In 1810, Napoleon established the *Scuola Normale* in Pisa, following the French model of having the residential structure integrated into the didactive one.

A few years later, King Carlo Felice interrupted the policy of autonomy that had begun with the *Collegi delle Provincie*, returning the management of the student housing

to the Jesuits: these resumed the canons of the building type they had devised, while nevertheless retaining the idea of the multiple room, in order to cope with a greater number of students enrolled in higher studies and to be able to have a more lucrative management.

During the Fascism years, some measures, such as the establishment of closed numbers for enrolment in faculties, made the university accessible to a bourgeois elite. However, the principle of the right to study was preserved by the "*Opere Universitarie*" public bodies with the task of organizing forms of material and moral assistance for the underprivileged. Thus, the "Student Houses" were born (Turri, 1935).

After the *Città Universitaria* in Rome, the project for which was coordinated by Marcello Piacentini, who called together the masters of the time, institutional buildings and university student housing became a field of national experimentation for rationalism.

The results of a series of contests held in those years for the design and construction of Student Houses allow us to infer the major typological characters and strengths in the relationship with the city: the mezzanine and basement floors were intended to host the collective spaces, the second floor was for hospitality for non-residents, the cafeteria and administration, and, sporadically there were collective services such as study rooms. On the second floor were private collective facilities such as laundries, kitchens, storage, and technical rooms, as well as sports and recreational facilities. All subsequent floors were for rooms: the model was that of the hotel, and the rooms were predominantly single with specially designed furniture to ensure the *existenz minimum.*

University residences are shifting their function from simple dormitories to more open facilities for urban territories and people and are beginning to be considered important opportunities for the revitalization of urban contexts (Bellini et al. 2020).

Also from this perspective the end of the century is marked by several regulatory interventions managing student housing and allocating the necessary funds for its implementation. The introduction of novelties in the technical field and in relation to dimensional and qualitative standards had to wait until the beginning of the new millennium.

2 The Regulatory Framework and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan

In 2000, Law No. 338 of November 14, bearing "Provisions on accommodation and residences for university students," codified the most qualificative aspects of this type of building, which until then, for other regulations, had been assimilated to hotel or other types (Bologna and Torricelli, 2021). This law constituted a turning point: thanks to implementing decrees over the last two decades it constituted the first national programme aimed at university accommodation and housing, with the purpose of fostering the right to study (Piferi, 2021).

The objectives that the legislation set out to achieve over time intersect in the different scales of intervention by implementing multidisciplinary actions.

The first is of a technical-operational nature: the law aims to increase the number of housing places available to applicants and to define minimum qualitative-quantitative standards for university student housing and accessory spaces.

The second is the socio-cultural ones: it closely relates urban regeneration as a consequence of the regeneration of underutilized buildings, from the integration of offsite students into the urban fabric, to the introduction of innovative forms of teaching.

In the previous four calls, which followed one another over more than two decades, the resources allocated were significant, but, more important was the cultural policy impact, which saw the promotion of financial co-participation by third parties and the increase of those eligible for co-financing, going so far as to include, from the third call onward, local public housing bodies (Baratta and Carlini, 2012).

In relation to urban regeneration, the first three calls enabled the construction and retrofitting of more than 29,000 housing places. The fourth call has provided for the construction and retrofitting of an additional 10,000 housing places: 60% of the interventions in the first three calls are related to the regeneration of existing heritage, while in the fourth call, interventions on the built environment have risen to 80% of the approved co-financing requests (Piferi, 2021).

The first four calls saw the submission of 487 applications for co-financing; the spatial distribution follows the distribution of universities across the territory: 247 applications were in the north, 144 in the centre and 96 in the south. Of these, 395 applications were accepted, for a total co-financing of more than 1,300 million euros.

From the perspective of urban regeneration, successive calls for proposals have always included the possibility of contributing the value of the property to cover the amount charged to the applicant.

This possibility has led to the rehabilitation of buildings, often of great value, nevertheless in disuse, for which it would have been diffi-cult to find the funds even for maintenance work alone. Such buildings, often located within the historic city or at any rate in the consolidated city, once recovered have made it possible to relocate new university receptivity within highly urbanized contexts, in effect fostering a two-way correspondence between residential facilities and local-level urban services.

Demonstrating the value that this possibility of rehabilitating the existing has offered, it should be noted that more than 76% of the interventions that have been carried out and are in progress have as their object the reuse of the existing heritage (Piferi, 2022b).

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP) fits in by funding a se-rie of additional interventions (Mission 4 - Education and Research, Component M4C1 - Strengthening the supply of education services from kindergartens to universities, Reform 1.7: Reform of student housing legislation and investment in student housing).

Specifically, the decrees aimed at increasing housing places are:

- Ministerial Decree No. 1046 of Aug. 26, 2022, (as amended), which allocates an amount of €300 million to co-finance the purchase and lease of long-term real estate, any necessary upgrades, and the purchase of furniture and equipment;
- Ministerial Decree No. 1252 of Dec. 02, 2022, which uses resources of approximately 150 mi-lion euros as savings derived from the previous decree;
- Ministerial Decree No. 1437 of Dec. 27, 2022, which allocates an amount of 660 mi-lion euros as reimbursement of management expenses for the first three-year period.

All of these programs have provided for or envisage the participation of public and private entities and partnerships. Specifically, Ministerial Decree 1046 co-financed

3,838 housing places of which 904 were in the regions of the South (23.55% of the total) for a total of 200,027,235.96 € (corresponding to state co-financing of 65.15% of this amount).

To these are added the housing places provided by the interventions admitted to co-financing with reserve (797 p.a. equal to 44,395,000.00 € co-financed for 54.97%).

The subsequent Ministerial Decree 1252 co-financed 4,661 units (1,229 of the "purchase" type and 3,432 of the "rental" type) for a total amount of about €135.5 million. Implementing decrees are expected to be published for M.D. 1437 in the coming months.

The regulatory provisions highlight how university student housing is a major topic that attracts a great deal of funding and whose value in terms of impacts and effects in the city is characterized by the different settlement patterns and the possibility of intervention and regeneration of the existing heritage, consistent with the most recent energy and ecological transition objectives.

3 Settlement Patterns in and for the City

The Italian university model is structured, for the most part, in a diffuse manner throughout the territory, with a particular predilection for historical centres. In addition, the Italian heritage is characterized by the presence of buildings, often of great value, that are abandoned or underutilized and in need of rehabilitation.

For these reasons (Del Nord, 2014), the main purpose of Law No. 338 of Nov. 14, 2000, is to encourage the recovery and renovation of existing heritage, introducing a use in which the idea of urban regeneration is inherent, given the lifeblood and economic benefits that university students bring with them.

To the great topicality of this issue, it adds the possibility offered by the legislation to intervene for energy efficiency, which, combined with the possibility of conferring the value of the property to cover the costs borne by the proposing party, zeroes out the expenses for the latter (Baratta and Piferi, 2015).

With the new implementing decrees, the principle of recovering the architectural heritage was further reinforced: Art. 15 of Legislative Decree 152/2021 adds paragraph 4-bis to Art. 1 of the Law, specifying that according to the European Green Deal and the NRRP, "high environmental standards were to be pursued in the implementation and management of interventions."

In addition, Legislative Decree 1257/2021 implementing the Fifth Public Competitive Call, specifies in Art. 4(1) that new green-field construction is not eligible unless it is included in existing campuses or in areas adjoining university settlements.

In addition, the significant advantages in terms of flexibility in dimensional standards, directed at buildings listed for historical architectural merit, consents them to be the preferred target of rehabilitation interventions.

Thus, up to the Fourth Call, more than 76% of the interventions implemented and in progress involve existing buildings (Piferi, 2022a).

The redevelopment of buildings pertaining to the existing heritage is facilitated by the multiplicity of settlement models that the regulations provide, all of which are suitable for student residency and university mobility in general (including that of professors and researchers).

The main types envisaged are hotel-like type, mini lodgement type, integrated cores types and mixed types, solutions that include the *mixité* of the previous types.

If the distribution of housing places determines the settlement type, the other residential services determine the degree of integration with urban spaces (Fig. 1).

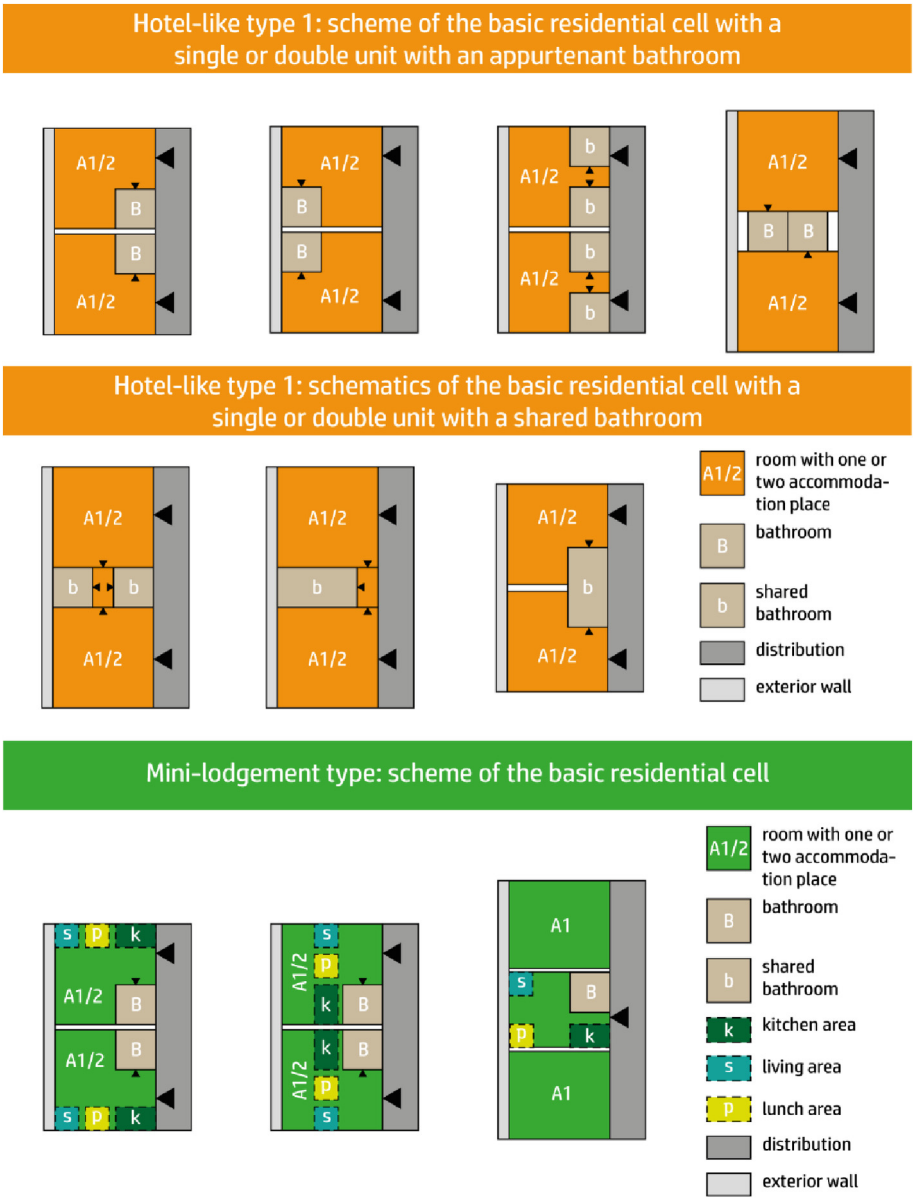

Fig. 1. The functional aggregations provided by the regulations: A) hotel-like type, B) mini lodgement type, C) integrated core type.

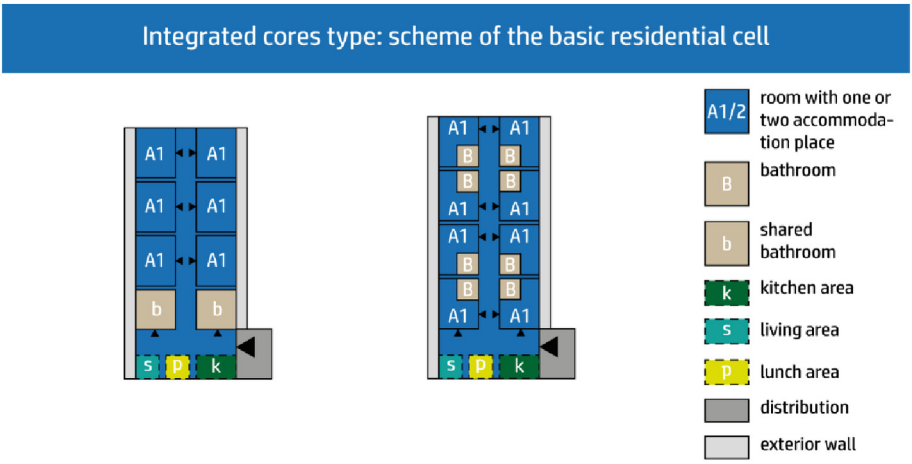

Fig. 1. (*continued*)

The regulations provide for the following functional areas:

- Cultural and educational services, i.e., those functions intended for study, research, reading, meetings, etc., which are carried out by the students individually or in groups, even outside their residential area.
- Cultural and educational services, i.e., the functions intended for study, research, reading, meetings, etc., which are carried out by students individually or in groups, even outside their residential area.
- Support, management, and administrative services, where access and distribution are included, where student meeting and exchange activities take place in addition to spatial connection between and within functional areas, including parking lots and technical rooms or techno-logical services in general.

Such services can be made available to the city, extroverting interior spaces to provide support for citizens as well, fostering the integration of offsite students and transforming the building into an urban landmark. In this sense, residence as understood by the Italian legislation, goes beyond the domestic and private dimension to approach a new model of neighbourhood and city, based on co-neighbourhood i.e., weaving a complex of relationships apt to stimulate the creation of a sharing system that generates transformations.

In the more than 20 years in which the law on university residences in Italy has been operating, the standards on functional areas mentioned above have been considered as minimums and methods have been developed for their verification (Catalano et al. 2022), ensuring that redevelopment interventions can be transformed into opportunities to support the city with new and innovative services: there are been built residences with large libraries, fitness centres with fields and swimming pools, recording rooms, cinemas, restaurants on scenic terraces, and shopping centres.

All these services expand the offer for students (resident and non-resident) and help integrate the student residence into the city.

According to Pike (2002), students who inhabit university residence halls develop a greater predisposition to diversity, since it is in shared spaces that social interaction takes place, the effects of which converge in creating a sense of community and increasing a sense of belonging: these qualities are inversely proportional to the study dropout rate (Berger, 1977) and directly correlated with improved learning activities (Wisley and Jorgensen, 2000).

From what has been written, it can be seen how important it is not only to promote the sharing of spaces and services for students staying in a residence hall, but to encourage wider-ranging actions, initiating redevelopment and re-infrastructure processes extended to the complex of university campuses (Catalano et al. 2022) or urban suburbs where residences are usually located, to ensure effective integration of university residences with city services and functions (Schiaffonati, 2010).

4 The Rehabilitation of Underutilized Heritage Buildings: The Case Study of Foggia

On the occasion of the Fifth Call for Proposals of Law No. 338 of December 14, 2000, the research group of which the authors of this paper are members, participates with different roles in scientific support for the design of a series of interventions, presented by different eligible subjects.

The following details the experience of Foggia, namely the recreation and reuse of a derelict building called the "former Conventino" with the historical function of a women's orphanage. The building is a disused property located near the center of Foggia, whose site area occupies the entire block circumscribed by Via Orientale to the north, Via Carpentieri to the east, Via Barra to the south and Via Diomede to the east.

The original structure of the building, which has a rectangular floor plan of 86 × 30 m and disposed on two levels, had 52 rooms, as well as a gymnasium, two large terraces, a garden, a small church, a parlor, and two schools: an elementary school and a music school.

The building was for a long time used by Caritas as a shelter for the needy, and, later, partially renovated to house a kindergarten of more than 1,700 m^2 between covered and uncovered area by the Azienda Servizi alla Persona "Istituto dell'Addolorata" of Foggia. As of 2018, it has been in a state of abandon.

The building is in good condition today and partly renovated for the still-to-be-completed kindergarten-related work. Less well cared for appear the courtyards, which are difficult to access, in some places infested with wild vegetation and covered with pigeon guano and mouse droppings.

The project proposes a University Student Residence for 64 lodging places, distributed as follows: on the ground floor: 16 lodging places on about 1,200 m^2; on the second floor: 39 lodging places on 900 m^2; on the second floor: 9 lodging places on 250 m^2.

The larger area on the ground floor accommodates a range of support functions for the residence, from play and recreational functions to educational functions, in addition to the actual support services, such as technological services or spaces for carrying out daily household acts. In addition, on the ground floor there are services intended

primarily for students, which have an urban-level value since they are also potentially accessible from the outside and serve the city.

The project is characterized by an optimal management of the ground-floor paths, also for the purpose of better usability from the outside of the services, that is, integration with the city. A glazed volume is created that fulfills the function of connecting the wings of the building, recalling the loggia spaces or convent arcades, perimeter to the courtyard (Figs. 2, 3, 4).

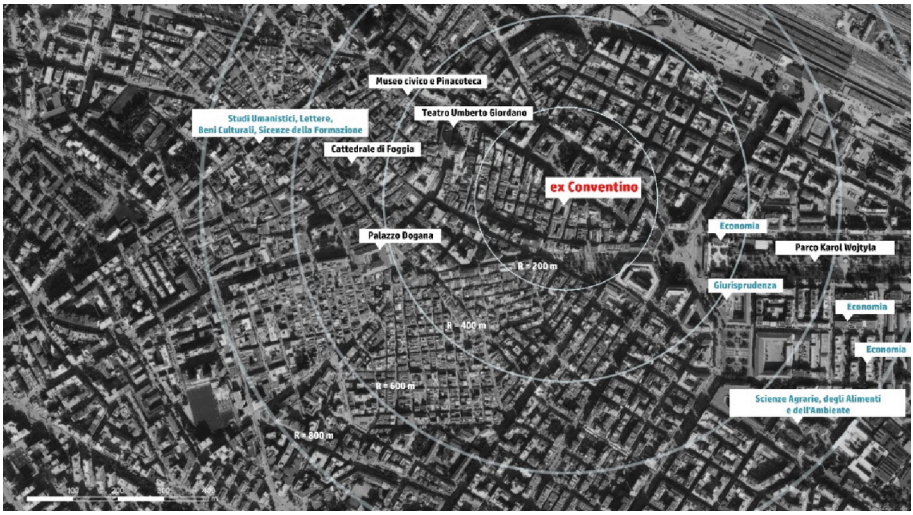

Fig. 2. "Former Conventino." Spatial framing.

Most of the residential spaces are located on the second floor, while on the ground floor it is possible to take advantage of the modular convent layout to create rooms and common spaces of varying sizes that can accommodate different activities.

In particular, the following common spaces that also serve the city are settled in the residence: three study rooms (about 250 m^2); a bar; a newspaper library; and a gymnasium also accessible directly from the outside of about 200 m^2.

The top level is characterized by the presence of a large practicable roof from which there is a privileged view of the city. There is also a series of small attic units, mostly habitable, in which, given the character of independence it is imagined to install mini-housing for different users: visiting professors, visiting researchers, PhD students, etc.

The project, judged eligible for ministerial co-financing, thus becomes an instrument of urban regeneration for several reasons:

– the rehabilitation of a gap in the urban fabric resulting from an abandoned property of historical value, returning a reconnected and redeveloped urban fabric;
– the provision of services that can be enjoyed by the city;
– the inducement of student life on economic activities in the area.



Fig. 3. "Former Conventino." Main elevations on driveways.

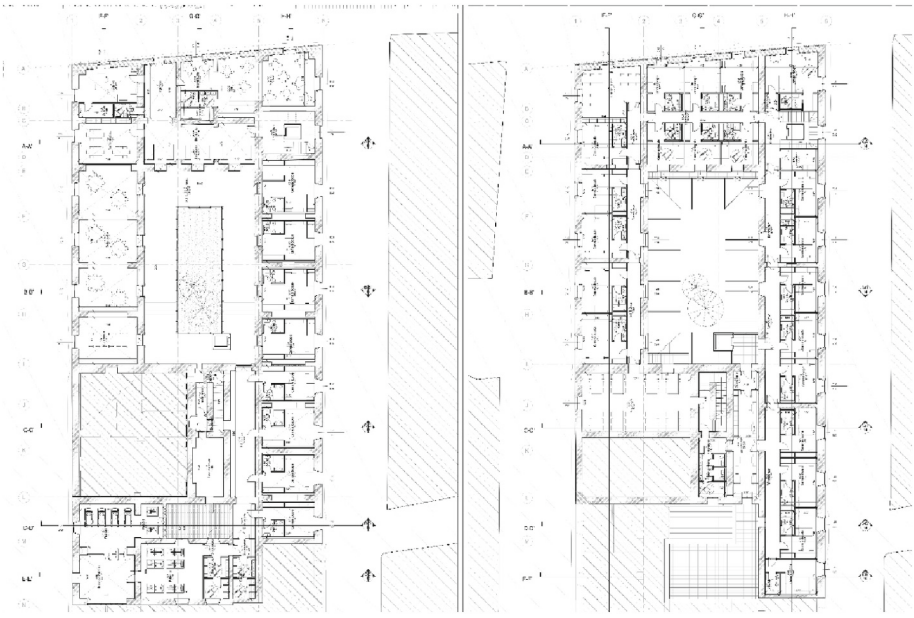

Fig. 4. "Former Conventino." New plants.

5 Conclusions

The brief historical excursus and the case study of Foggia make visible what cultural and political tools, present in regulatory arrangements, make it possible to determine choices in university student housing interventions with positive impacts on the city.

The history of *collegi*, in fact, has evolved by expanding the concept of living from the model of the ecclesiastical cell and of the fortified settlement toward a model in which the functions of living not strictly related to mere rest occupy shared spaces and in which the building for university student housing opens toward the city.

Regulatory arrangements provide the tools for urban regeneration, since as highlighted in the case study they allow for:

- To intervene on the repurposing of built heritage that is often in a state of disuse or obsolete and technologically obsolete, and return a property to the city, often in high-value urban settings.
- To include functions, such as leisure and sports activities to serve not uniquely the university residence hall but the city.
- To intervene with the enrichment of local level services integrated into the building thus allowing for an open project toward the city.

In the more than twenty years of virtuous regulatory leverage, established by Law No. 338 of December 14, 2000, what has certainly come to the fore is that university student housing must be understood as an organism within the urban organism, that is, as a system neither separate nor autonomous from the neighbourhood. They constitute one of the main factors in the growth and development of the social and economic issues of university towns, most likely to a greater extent than the location of industrial or infrastructural facilities of the same size.

Private stakeholders, even those not directly involved in the management or realization of university student housing, have an economic return from them because of the increased consumption paid for by the concentration of off-site students. Moreover, as expected from the design of the interventions in Foggia, the university residence is proposed as a pole of urban regeneration at the small and large scale, since its realization will necessitate the infrastructural innervation of the centre, including through a review of local public transport.

The rental market certainly receives a great advantage from the presence of university student residences: in a wild market situation, rents are those expressed by real estate market operators, however, a market calmed by the presence of such an important entity normalizes all aspects related to normal real estate transactions, depressing speculation and moving in the direction of transparency (Miccoli, Finucci, Murro, 2019).

University student housing provide the city with a range of local-level resources such as recreational spaces, meeting points and educational facilities, while drawing sap from the urban surroundings in terms of commercial, recreational, sports, cultural, etc. activities.

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