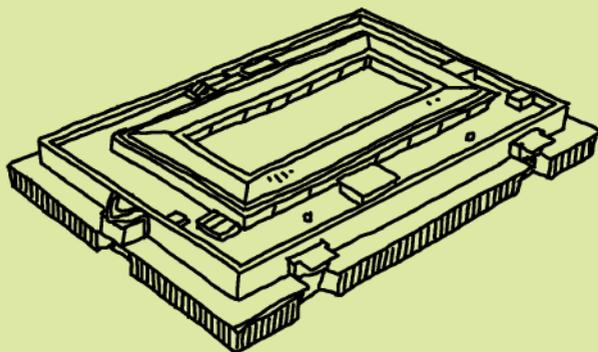


Mercato Lorenteggio

A market of many cultures
from 2013



Via Lorenteggio, 177
20147 Milan (MI)
Italy

 mercatolorenteggio.it

 [MercatoLorenteggio](https://www.facebook.com/MercatoLorenteggio)

 [mercato_lorenteggio](https://www.instagram.com/mercato_lorenteggio)

A covered market in the outskirts of the city, the center of life in a multicultural neighborhood of Milan, is the birthplace of Mercato Lorenteggio, a community project to experiment with a new way of living the city and to revitalize marginal areas through an innovative and virtuous mix of commerce, culture and social responsibility. It is a “town square” to exchange and share knowledge, to enhance and discover diversity between Milan and its local communities.

Mercato Lorenteggio presents itself as a pioneer experience of community cultural welfare, based on accessibility and co-production of culture, self-promotion of the community, and redistribution of value, including economic value, to be reinvested in social issues.

The goal of Mercato Lorenteggio is to redefine a crucial neighborhood as an “open-air workshop”, where citizens, public and private institutions, and local networks enhance indigenous social and cultural resources. Here skills, goods, and services for the community are shared by building concrete opportunities for cultural leadership, social aggregation and economic recovery.



WHERE

Mercato Lorenteggio, one of 23 covered markets owned by the city of Milan, is located in the southwest outskirts of the city, in the Giambellino-Lorenteggio neighborhood, which is composed of about 33% of foreign residents and one of the largest and most valuable patrimonies of council houses in the city. Built in 1954, the market played a central role in the life of the neighborhood between the '80s and the '90s; the decline started at the end of the '90s due to the spread of large supermarkets, the evolution of the migration phenomenon and the more recent economic crisis that gradually emptied the market.

Today, alongside the commercial spaces characteristic to each market, there are spaces for cultural initiatives both inside and outside the market, thanks to the platform built in 2015 by Renzo Piano's G124 group and Dynamoscopio. In the summer of 2018, the renovation of the space was concluded with the completion of the heating and fire prevention systems, finally making the space usable in all seasons for both commercial and cultural activities.

LOCATION

Urban

TYPE OF SPACE

Building

ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Commercial (city market)

YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION

1954

SURFACE AREA

1,274 sqm

OWNERSHIP

Public

CONCESSION

Free cession (Dynamoscopio)
Regular rent (merchant consortium)

CONDITION BEFORE ACTIVATION

Underused

COMPOSITION OF THE SPACE

Commercial spaces
Cultural/performance spaces
Connection spaces with mixed function
External area for cultural use

WHEN

TIME OF DAY USED

Morning 7am - 1pm 40%
Afternoon ... 1pm - 7pm 40%
Evening 7pm - 1am 20%
Night 1am - 7am 0%

Workdays 80%
Weekends 20%

OPENING HOURS

Monday: 8:00am - 1:00pm
Tuesday: 8:00am - 7:00pm
Wednesday: 8:00am - 7:00pm
Thursday: 8:00am - 10:00pm
Friday: 8:00am - 7:00pm
Saturday: 8:00am - 7:00pm

AVERAGE USERS PER DAY

250

WHAT

The market is no longer just a place to stock up on food and drink from sustainable and fair trade producers, but it is also a place that is closely connected to its neighborhood through its services, from the most traditional to the most innovative, such as the "spesa sospesa", a bundle of groceries that consumers can buy and donate to poor families. Moreover, thanks to a rich cultural program that includes exhi-

bitions, workshops, debates and live performing arts, the market becomes a stage surrounded by the council houses of the neighborhood.

SURFACE IN USE

1,274 sqm

THEMATIC AREAS

Commercial
Culture and arts
Education and training
Welfare

USER DEMOGRAPHIC

Associations and collectives
Local community
Young people
Under-represented people: migrants, poor people

COLLABORATIONS

Artists and creatives
Associations and collectives
Citizens and local community
Public administrations and public authorities
Universities and schools

NETWORK

Local
National

WHO

Thanks to a call for tenders launched by the Municipality, the management of Mercato Lorenteggio is entrusted for the next 15 years to the “Consorzio Mercato Lorenteggio”, set up in February 2013 by the “veteran” traders active in the structure. The concession, valid until 2028, requires the Consortium to pay the rent, carry out the renovation works for the entire building, and create a “Point of social aggregation for cultural and educational events” (Cultural Space). Through a loan for use agreement signed in 2014, the Consortium has entrusted the Dynamoscopio

Cultural Association, which contributes to the ordinary expenses, with the management of the Cultural Space.

MANAGING ORGANIZATION(S)

1. Dynamoscopio (association, 2013)

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT

5 part-time employees of Dynamoscopio
Up to 30 volunteers

HOW

NATURE OF THE INITIATIVE

Bottom-up

TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Horizontal

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

5% Donations
80% Public grants
15% Self-funded

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

100% Free



How did your story begin?

Mercato Lorenteggio was built after the Second World War to provide food access to the lower classes. During the '90s, the proximity trade in the market declined – as in most Italian communal markets – in the face of the expansion of large-scale distribution. While an Esselunga megastore was being built at the turn of the millennium a few hundred meters from the market, the turnover of migrants, who find their first landing place in Giambellino and settle there to start new life projects, has grown in the last decade to such an extent that not even the reception policies have yet managed to deal with it. The Giambellino neighborhood made headlines as a symbol of the recession, urban poverty, social discomfort and conflict, working-class condominiums, unemployment, lonely elderly, mismanagement of housing and service needs, and the absence of public policies. Marginality and prejudice undermine trust and human bonds, and the fear of not succeeding is rampant. Even Mercato Lorenteggio was left without customers, trade and opportunities. In 2010, the fate of this small public asset seemed marked by the degradation of spaces, the dismantling of activities and the sale to private parties.

Many people, however, fought against this destiny: we discovered that, together, the few traders who remained open and dozens of locals and regular customers had collected signatures for a petition, with which they asked the City Council at that time not to dismantle the market, but to restructure, rethink and reactivate it; in short, to give it a “new life”. Six hundred signatures were effective, and after complicated negotiations and rumors, in 2011 the president of the Zone 6 City Council was very forward-thinking and introduced an innovative solution: a public tender, which would assign the management of the entire property to function as a covered market to a consortium, in exchange for the renovation of the building and the destination of 25 square meters of floor area on loan for use to a non-profit organization for entertainment activities. In 2012, the remaining traders created a Consortium, finalized the proposal for the renovation of the building and developed, together with Dynamoscopio, the permanent project for social and cultural entertainment. A few months later, the consortium was awarded the tender for the management of Mercato Lorenteggio and Dynamoscopio, which in the meantime had obtained funding through an experimental call by Fondazione Cariplo and obtained the right to the management of the entertainment activities.

“The goal when we started was to show that there were many other possibilities for that place. Josaph’aire is a place of experimentation and the house we built is the symbol of this action, something that helps to identify what we carry on”

and of bilingualism, which is not appreciated in the same way for “migrant languages”. Observing the neighborhood and daily practices, we have noticed that many mothers, so as not to lose the cultural link with their origins, had started teaching Arabic at home. This gave us the idea of bringing this practice outside the home, inside the market, with the goal of reaching a wider audience who already

Is there a practice or value that represents you and you think may be an inspiration to others?

The experience of the Intercultural Playroom came from the study of the context, of a neighborhood with a very high rate of immigration,

visited the market. So they began offering Arabic language courses through a more fun, hands-on, collective approach. Alongside the classic lessons there were open days (for all children) to present this culture through lighter activities. On the day we opened the enrollment, we received 110 applications for 20 spots. So we understood that we had found a winning approach that has strengthened over time.

Another inspiring project is the creation of the Giambellino Archive. Over time, many students, researchers, writers, videomakers, artists and photographers have come through Giambellino. In many cases, these explorations have produced studies, research, dissertations, as well as photographic, audio and video projects. That's why, witnessing the birth of some of these works, the Association decided to collect them in the "Giambellino Archive". The aim of the archive is to house as much research as possible, from the past, the present and the future. It is the best way we could think to present the precious fortune of knowledge produced in and about the neighborhood. The Giambellino Archive is public, digital and shared, so that anyone can publish their work, because Dynamoscopio believes in the principle of knowledge as a community asset.

What is the secret ingredient that makes your story unique?

We do not consider culture as something for the elite, or as a form of entertainment, but we focus on the anthropological sense of culture, which enhances the set of values, symbols, daily practices, and behaviors that characterize the life of a social group. For this reason, the outskirts of cities are also extremely diverse cultural assets, "frontier lands" that reveal emerging urban cultures and the social ingenuity that brings innovation to the entire city.

Our secret lies in bringing this focus back into every activity and project we carry out, which then allows us to give value to the community we work within.

Mercato Lorenteggio is a regenerating place, because it gives back this potentiality through paths of cultural co-production and civic protagonism addressed first to the local population, fragile and less in touch with everything the city offers, and then to the whole city. We have always conceived Mercato Lorenteggio as a spark that, together with other local entities, triggers a process that includes the entire neighborhood. Culture as an engine for the regeneration of Giambellino is the vision we have been practicing for years.

Interview with: Ambra Lombardi



Discover the
Giambellino's archive

