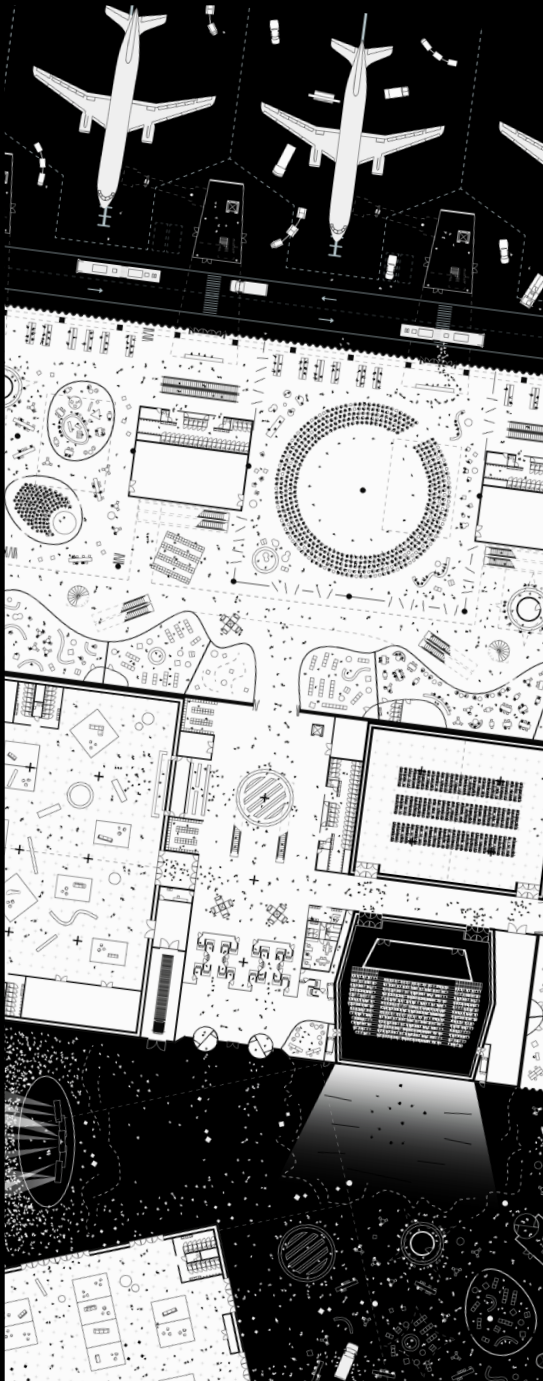


# AEROPORTO FIERA MILANO LINATE



## AIRPORT EXPERIENCE MACHINE

REFLECTION

## Preliminary Results

Within the graduation studio of Complex Projects the architectural design solution to the research question: 'How can airports be reimagined as destinations beyond travel to create engaging event-based experiences?' has been actively explored through an iterative research process.

As of P4, the graduation work has explored and articulated an innovative architectural solution to the real-life multifunctional challenge of 'non-place' airports. This has been done by addressing the increasing demand for flexibility and user-centered design within the airport typology. The developed concept represents a renewal of the traditional airport typology, introducing a new kind of airport that redefines its spatial, programmatic and experiential qualities while preserving its core operational functions. The work contributes to the ongoing discourse on transforming contemporary 'non-places' into meaningful spaces that enhance societal value through improved user experience.

The design concept is characterized by a departure from the traditional airport typology, presenting the airport as a hybrid space that integrates various event-based functions. Rather than functioning solely as an airport, it is conceived as a dynamic 'collage' of multiple buildings, collectively forming a festival-like terrain. Positioned as both a cultural marketplace and a satellite of Milan's vibrant event context, the airport becomes a public-oriented, open building and a destination. Its openness does not compromise security; instead, it is supported by the integration of advanced decentralised security checkpoints and baggage handling systems. As a result, the building becomes accessible not only to passengers but also to ticketed visitors, who can freely experience the space with minimal friction.

Decentralization plays a key role in achieving this concept, as it allows the building to be accessed from multiple points across the site, resulting in a more fluid and engaging user experience. This approach, the rethinking of flows, not only reduces passenger stress but also significantly enhances the overall quality of the airport journey. The event spaces are organized into two categories: static venues, such as the conference halls, auditoriums, and the large concert hall, and flexible spaces primarily located in the concourse at the gates.

The building's structural system and building technology enables a modular and flexible character, making a high degree of adaptability possible throughout the airport. Within this system, events can be organized in separate units, creating active pockets of activity distributed across the building space. These flexible units can host a wide variety of events, including fashion shows, design week installations, art exhibitions, and conferences, allowing the airport to function as a continuously evolving cultural platform. The units are also rentable to brands or companies seeking to engage with a guaranteed high-traffic audience, as well as to retail clients interested in setting up temporary pop-up shops. This strategy fosters the 'destination idea' with a rotating calendar of dynamic happenings, ensuring a constantly changing and engaging airport experience week by week.

The experience for both travellers and visitors is enriched through direct visual connections to ongoing events and activities, transforming passive waiting time into opportunities for active engagement with the space. Additionally, the events or concerts that can be hosted in the large 'box' or in the other venues, will attract more attention to.

Milan. International visitors could fly-in and choose to stay inside of the airport, therefore not overcrowding the centre, as the airport can prove to be a destination of its own. The strategy promotes sustainable tourism and positions the airport as a multifunctional gateway, one that not only facilitates travel but also supports the city's cultural and economic ambitions while enhancing the overall visitor experience.

The airport concept results in an innovative and sustainable destination landmark that attracts visitors, enhances the passenger experience, and reinforces Milan's connection to a broader international context





## Methods

The research employed the method of research by design, integrating iterative development with in-depth analysis to explore architectural concepts in response to the research question. Techniques such as site analysis, case studies, precedent research, and spatial modelling informed the design, while visual tools like sketches, diagrams, and 3D modelling were used to develop and evaluate solutions. Conversations with experts and mentors provided invaluable insights that guided the refinement of the design. Feedback from these discussions, along with ongoing research, allowed for continuous improvement, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of both the functional and experiential aspects of the project.

A key aspect of the approach was the use of a cultural 'lens' to guide the design process. By conducting an in-depth analysis of Milan's culture and event calendar, this lens shaped the project's ambition and character, framing it within the local context. It played a critical role in defining the project's identity and research question, ensuring that the design was deeply rooted in the local environment. The cultural lens not only addressed the immediate functional and programmatic needs of the project but also responded to broader societal objectives, creating a more meaningful and contextually relevant solution.

This method worked effectively by grounding the design in Milan's cultural identity and event-driven landscape, ensuring that the project engaged with both local and global contexts. The iterative nature of the research allowed for continuous refinement of architectural concepts, while the cultural

lens provided focused direction, guiding key design decisions. The combination of these methods was crucial in developing a holistic and adaptable design that addressed both the needs of the users and the broader context.

The final phase of the graduation focuses on reorganising and refining both the project and its narrative. This includes applying finishing touches and producing additional visuals to strengthen the overall presentation. New illustrations, renderings, isometric views, and physical models are being developed to enhance the clarity and impact of the research. The aim is to conclude with a compact, coherent, and visually refined P5 presentation and exhibition.



## Reflective Questions

1. What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

My graduation project is closely aligned with my master's track in Architecture and Urbanism (A), as it delves into reimagining airports as dynamic, multifunctional spaces that go beyond traditional transportation hubs. The project incorporates aspects of urbanism, particularly in how the building interacts with the broader urban environment and the cultural landscape of Milan. The master program in MSc AUBS (Architecture, Urbanism, and Building Sciences) emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach, allowing me to bridge architectural design with urban context, sustainability, and cultural studies. My project reflects this by considering the architectural typology of airports in relation to its cultural, societal, and functional impact, thus blending architecture, urbanism, and socio-cultural analysis.

2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

The research shaped the design by framing it around Milan's event culture. This led to a concept that combines airport infrastructure with flexible cultural spaces. The cultural lens helped define the project's direction early on. In return, the design process raised new questions like how to manage circulation and event integration which deepened the research. The back-and-forth between design and research kept refining both.

3. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

The iterative, research-by-design method worked well. It allowed me to test and improve ideas continuously. Using site analysis, precedents, and modelling helped ground the project in reality. Feedback from mentors and experts made the work more responsive and relevant. The strength of this approach lies in combining practical insight with a strong conceptual base.

4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

The project contributes academically by rethinking airports as active, cultural places rather than neutral transit zones. Societally, it proposes a more sustainable and inclusive model for travel infrastructure, one that connects with local identity and relieves pressure on city centers. Ethically, it considers accessibility, user comfort, and public value, offering space not just for travellers, but for people.

5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

The concept is adaptable to other cities and transport hubs. The idea of combining transit functions with cultural activity through flexible, modular spaces, can apply broadly. The approach is scalable and can be tailored to local needs. The methods used are also transferable to other complex design challenges where architecture meets public experience.

6. How can I approach the design of a large-scale, complex building in a clear and manageable way, without letting the project's scope become overwhelming?

When designing a large-scale project, I've learnt that creating a strong, clear narrative is key to guiding the design process and keeping it focused. The narrative helps define the essence of the project and ensures that all design decisions align with the vision. Going into detail is only necessary when it is exemplar to the story, no unnecessary detailing and keeping it compact is key. Only when a specific element is essential to expressing or testing the story do I go into detail. This way, the design stays conceptually clear and manageable. In my graduation project, this approach helped me

stay focused on the essentials and helped me to communicate the project clearly to others.

7. How did you challenge yourself throughout the project, and what did you learn from stepping outside your comfort zone?

I pushed myself with an ambitious scope that at times felt overwhelming. The complexity of the project challenged my ability to stay organized, but it also pushed me to improve my design, communication, and decision-making skills. Despite the difficulty, I'm confident that I've created a cohesive and convincing design proposal, successfully answering the research question.



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