

THE ARCHIVE SPEAKS VOLUMES

THE FIAT FACTORY IN MELFI

A sustainable and resilient project

In spring, the Melfi hills are a jubilation of lush greenery, when the olive trees celebrate their rebirth with their tiny flowers gathered in clusters.

The color of hope envelops the land in a patchwork of a thousand hues, matching nature's other greens, such as laurel, oak, and arbutus, with the basilisk at the center of a three-peaked mountain, also in shades of emerald: it is the ancient heraldic coat of arms of this town in the province of Potenza, evocative of its history that speaks the language of the Daunians, the Lucanians, the Romans, the Normans, and the Swabians.

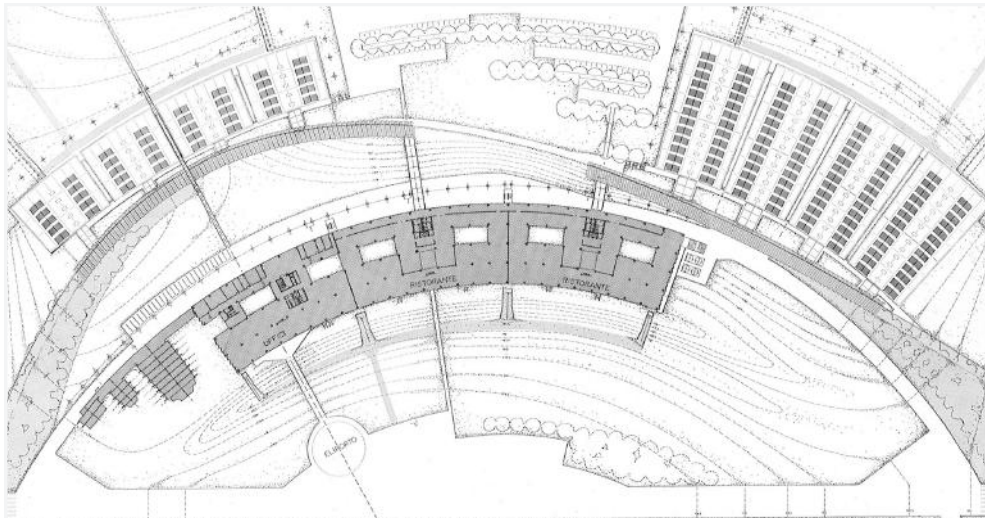
In the “beautiful season” of 1991, 30-year-old architect Marco Visconti finds himself immersed in this context of harmony and beauty, where he is to carry out the task of designing a new factory entrusted to him by Fiat Engineering. Not just another plant, but a large industrial hub for six thousand workers, engaged in the production of Fiat vehicles, known by the name of Sata (an acronym for Advanced Technology Automotive Company).



The area chosen is the township of San Nicola, a handful of kilometers from Melfi, in a strategic location between Basilicata, Puglia and Campania.

All around there are green meadows, wooded brush, contours of low-lying hills, and volcanic stone. A quiet and welcoming nature which the young professional puts at the center of his architectural design. He draws from his artistic character, which is passionate about beauty, and his studies on sustainability and respect for the environment, learned from the school of Renzo Piano and in the United States.

As the excavation area is very large, they choose to excavate in the center of the site to avoid the need for transport trucks, and then reuse the excavated earth to form small hills in keeping with the natural contours of the land surrounding the plant.



The slope of the land is also evaluated and integrated into the construction whose long and low buildings are not perfectly horizontal and are “camouflaged” by the man-made hills. The central body, in particular, which consists of offices, a restaurant, locker rooms, and visitor reception area, appears naturally incorporated into the contours of the surrounding landscape.



Then we proceed by dividing the plant horizontally into sections, which echo the exact shades of the plains when it explodes with green, and we choose to use sheets of siding on the facade, once again of the same green color that characterizes the surrounding countryside, as well as the shutters of the houses.

In addition, to reduce the environmental impact, other horizontal surfaces are coated with shiny aluminum that reflects the iridescent sunlight.



Not only nature, but also history is vigorously factored into the project. In fact, the central section of the factory is built in the shape of an amphitheater, borrowing the style, elegance and welcoming atmosphere of the Roman amphitheater in Venosa, about 5 km as the crow flies from St. Nicholas: harmonious curves, inclusive lines, ideally linking past and present in a constant conversation with nature, which cannot fail to be good for the health.



The factory originates as an avant-garde jewel built on the foundation of a project with “strong principles of sustainability and resilience applied on an architectural scale as well as to the land”

(as Visconti himself defined it), which begins production in late 1993 with the model Fiat Punto and then the Lancia Y; meanwhile, the area is further enhanced by a Barilla plant, becoming one of the country's largest industrial hubs.



With the Melfi factory, Fiat Group Automobiles also achieves first, the implementation of the integrated factory- an organizational model inspired by the principles of lean production- and then later, the modular integrated factory with the ability to produce a greater variety and range of parts and components while simplifying the complexity of production.



Still today, thirty years after its inception and with about 7.4 million vehicles manufactured, the Melfi hub continues its “adventure,” looking ahead through the developments of the second decade of the Third Millennium, which aim to achieve real sustainable development with the help of science. The same development that was flowing like lifeblood throughout Visconti's project three decades ago.

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