Volume 2

With texts by:
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Edited by LUDOVICO CENTIS, MATTEO D'AMBROS

SPECULATIONS ON THE IMAGE OF BEAUTY *PUBLIC SPACE AND GLOBAL COASTAL CITIES*

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Summary

FROM THE SHORE: NEW HORIZONS FOR THE PROJECT OF THE CITY

Ludovico Centis
Matteo D'Ambros

Speculations on the image of beauty. Public spaces and global coastal cities investigates the evolving forms and meanings of urban open spaces within twelve global coastal urban contexts in Abu Dhabi, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Marseille, Naples, Oslo, Rijeka, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Tangier and Trieste. The research has been articulated in two complementary sides, each returned in one of the two volumes.
Volume One gathers the theoretical, historical, and interpretative reflections that frame the conceptual ground of the investigation, while this second one concentrates on the empirical outcomes and case studies, proposing the current configuration of a significant part of each city which is described and illustrated through original drawings, historical maps, iconographic materials, and a thematic critical essay specifically developed by an invited contributor for the occasion.
Volume Two specifically focuses on a reading – or re-reading – of the city, of open spaces, of the relationships between built spaces and of the ways in which space can be practised and transformed in the broadest sense. It is in these dynamic environments that the changes taking place in societies are revealed and become particularly evident. In light of the epochal socioeconomic and climatic challenges to our contemporary society, and given an increasingly complex transformative framework, this volume posits that open space gives space to reflection on the quality and value of contemporary urban planning, allowing us to define new uses and performances in an ambitious and prescient way. By investigating the forms, connotations and devices with which the open space is equipped, by identifying the semantic values of inclusion and exclusion in the ways in which open space is used and occupied, the contributors develop an active critical reflection on the potential of open space as a project.
Taking these elements as its starting point, the volume proposes a reasoned and critical reading of open space in its various aspects, investigating some notable urban experiences chosen among global coastal cities. In such cities, the challenges caused by climate change and by the search for an increasingly fragile balance between economic development, justice and social inclusion manifest themselves in a more explicit and paradigmatic way.
During the creation of this volume, the work of mapping, measuring, reasoning and representing the cities, both textually and graphically, took on an increasingly important role for the reflections shared between its contributors. The Nolli Map itself seemed to us to be the most suitable conceptual and operational reference for exploring significant portions of

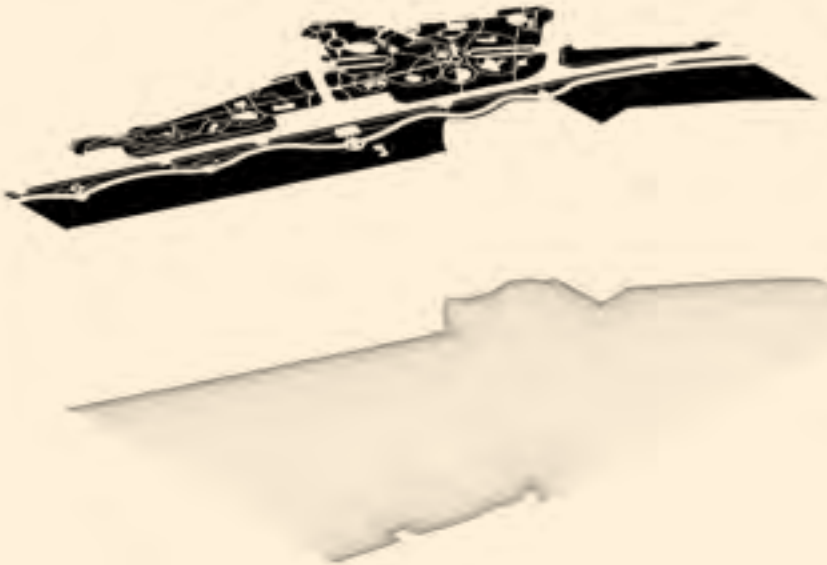
the twelve coastal cities. While reference to the Nolli Map is by no means a new exercise in itself,[1] this volume is innovative in its comparison of twelve global coastal cities through a Nolli-style mapping and in a redesign based on solids and voids along coastal strips.
The final and overall result is comparable to a kaleidoscope. While staking no claim to exhaustiveness or permanence, this volume seeks to reveal essential and significant features of the urban environments and to investigate them in their different manifestations. The authors of this volume give space to a number of questions and points for discussion, some of which can be listed briefly as hypotheses for future discussions in the field of urban studies. Oorvi Sharma describes the accelerated transformations of urban spaces which are entirely disconnected from the traditions present in Abu Dhabi. Sabina Favaro turns her attention to the difficulty of implementing an effective spatial justice project capable of decolonising an altered urbanity in Cape Town. Gianni Talamini looks at the tortuous project of infrastructure and densification of the city, producer of devices of inclusion and exclusion within the controlled sphere of contemporary public space in Hong Kong. Ilaria Mazzoleni discusses the ecological tensions inspiring new cohabitations in Los Angeles, which are hoped for as possible foundations of an unprecedented redistributive spirit that may be able to overcome the contradictions of the Anthropocene.
Giuseppe Biasi narrates the emotional and experiential charge in the landscapes of Marseille, where the need for urban renewal passes through the construction of an idea of a constantly evolving society. Giorgia Aquilar and Davide di Martino trace the almost ancestral porosity and radical planning that can be summed up in the potential of the hybrid, physical and historical spaces of Naples. Giambattista Zaccariotto examines the paradox of the capitalist project, a clear contradiction of an induced and, at times, forced renewal, capable, however, of reconquering and reformulating unprecedented spatial relationships in the city of Oslo. Luka Skansi illustrates the complex semantic and geopolitical stratification of a modernity that has

1 See for example, among the most recent experiences, the mapping exercise of the city of Nanjing described in Ji and Ding (2021) or even before that, the famous mapping of the Las Vegas Strip by Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour (1972). Other design experiences and contemporary theoretical reflections can be found in Verstegen and Ceen (2013).

perhaps become both too fluid and an unresolved urban design paradigm of the present in Rijeka. Matteo D'Ambros looks at the constant cumulative capacity for storing a composite biodiversity, made up of naturalness and socio-cultural heritage, which together build a capital and are fundamental for constant survival and regeneration in Rio de Janeiro. Urtzi Grau turns to the young, artificial and hyper-planned modernity that celebrates a hierarchical and exclusive neoliberal idea, aimed at progressively stabilising Sydney's urban development. Hakim Cherkaoui captures the constant search for identity and reformulation of public space in the need to achieve an image of semblance with an international character in Tangier. Finally, Francesco Krecic turns to the choice to transform and modernise that, though hoped for, is, never fully achieved, or grasped, in Trieste. Through a vibrant debate resulting from multiple experiences and points of view, these themes and issues can and should contribute to the construction of a renewed project for the city.

The exploded axonometric views on pages 10-16 render the accessible coastal area in the urban contexts of the twelve cities – Abu Dhabi, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Marseille, Naples, Oslo, Rijeka, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Tangier, Trieste – considered through solids and voids. All drawings are of the same scale.
This volume was conceived and created by ideas and reflections developed within the “Theories and design of public space” course of the Master’s Degree in Architecture at the University of Trieste, conducted by Ludovico Centis and Matteo D’Ambros in the academic year 2023-2024. During the semester, the students were coordinated and distributed into working groups.

Abu Dhabi



Cape Town

Hong Kong

Los Angeles

Marseille

Naples

Oslo

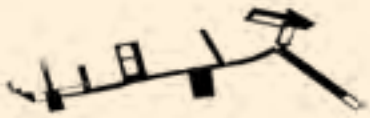
Rijeka

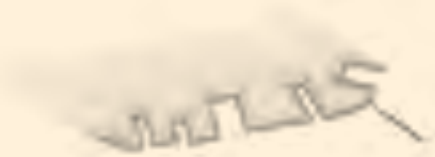
Rio de Janeiro

Sydney

Tangier

Trieste





In the following pages, some glimpses of Abu Dhabi, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Marseille, Naples, Oslo, Rijeka, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Tangier and Trieste are briefly presented. Each section dedicated to the cities begins with zenithal views that frame a significant portion of the territory, extending over a surface of 800×1500 meters. The three views include: an aerial photogrammetric image, an ichnography of the current state of the city and an interpretation of the open space system inspired by Nolli's method of representation. The latter was developed by expanding and reinterpreting the graphic indications of the 1748 New Plan of Rome and its legend. In particular, the graphic code has been updated to reflect the contemporary use of the spaces.

Finally, each city is described through historical maps and significant panoramic images, which highlight a relevant aspect of its evolution over time. At the end of each section dedicated to the cities, an essay broadens the perspective, focusing on themes and issues related to the current topicalities of the urban project.

	Trees
CORSO VALDOCCO	Toponymy
	Permeable grassy surface
	Permeable surface
	Impermeable surface
	Buildings
	Buildings perimeter
	Perimeter of the built public space
	Built public space
	Fresh water
	Salt water

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates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100

Hunting Geological Ltd., Detailed aerial photography of the city of Abu Dhabi, 1976.
Antiquariat Inlibris Gilhofer Nfg

Anonymous, Aerial view of Abu Dhabi, 1954. BP plc

Anonymous, Aerial view of Abu Dhabi, 1963. BP plc

DEEPER THAN SKIN: ACCRETIVE VALUE, RECOGNITION, CONSERVATION. LEVERAGING EXISTING BUILT HERITAGE IN ABU DHABI THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Oorvi Sharma

CONSTRUCTING AND CONSERVING CONTEMPORARY ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi's coming-of-age in the 20th and early 21st centuries was dominated by the city's architectural and urban aspirations, which were heavily influenced by a broad cultural matrix. Abu Dhabi's own terrain and economic demands were important factors within this cultural environment, alongside the development efforts of its neighbours (including *Dubaification*) which emphasized wealth storage and speculation. As a result, initial versions of Abu Dhabi's master plan prioritized not the flow of people, but of capital. Early on, the density of that financial investment overwhelmed existing cultural histories, sustainable labour and vernacular wisdom. Salma Samar Damlūjī notes in her book, *In Search of the Vernacular*, that Western ideals were regionally embraced and desired in the cities of the United Arab Emirates from the 1960s onwards because of, "a preconceived economic mode of operation that was dominated by the international market" (Damlūjī, 2006, p. 28). Through these development models, regional practices were influenced by new forms of expression from authors who typically practised in the West and their design modalities were superficially adjusted to respond to the hot, humid, fluctuating climate of the desert. With gleaming, freshly cast surfaces and plastered, ubiquitous edifices characterising a lasting avatar of Abu Dhabi city's urban network, new developments and evolved social contexts within the city offer a new opportunity to develop construction ecologies informed by native knowledge and regional know-how.

Within this rapid spatio-financialized standardisation and conservation, there lies a contemporary, regional challenge: How can the built environment of Abu Dhabi be built, or re-built, to sustain spaces of thriving social interaction, rather than devolving into containers which prioritise financial transactions? Debates on the expressive logic of evolved vernacular language versus perceived retention of "essentialized" representations add an further layer of complexity in the negotiation between architectural production as an tool for affirming identity versus its use as a medium for finance.

Reinhold Martin notes that cities are not defined anymore by boundaries and enclosures, arguing instead for challenging blind faith in numerical imaginaries (Martin, 2017, p. 10). As a result, Martin warns of the imaginaries that contemporary adherence to enumeration frameworks

Hamdan Street, a key thoroughfare, features diverse developments and mixed-use blocks with a focus on retail and varied demographics. An evolving project, the buildings along Hamdan Street constitute an evolving collage of the city's diverse tectonic paradigms. The Obeid Al-Mazru'i building, a modern heritage site, features varied facade depths and strategic fenestration. Courtesy O. Sharma, 2024

can generate. This analysis broadens the dialogue between regional policy and the development of conservation of modern heritage (Chabby and Mahdy, 2011, p. 75) to include the observation of modern cities and modern lives in the form of dominant political-economic institutions or corporations. The interrogation of these themes in contemporary architectural production of the Arabian Gulf has the potential to foster a rethinking of practices surrounding reuse, ethics of building, and values of conservation in Abu Dhabi and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (*ibid*, p. 77).

CONTEMPORARY POLICYMAKING

The process of urban capitalization is not entirely new. The entanglement of aesthetic values with political economy has always existed and inherently become more readily identified with the policymaking apparatus that delineates it. Specifically, building and construction cultures in Abu Dhabi have all been all been influenced by the underlying paradigm of large corporations. Since the 1960s, the city's building stock has prioritised capital generation and that lineage challenges contemporary policy makers to navigate the delicate balance between building representation and the financial forces of real estate. What values would preserve property without "freezing" them in time, marrying community character with market integrity? Conservation and preservation are but two of the tools available for exploring successful and sustainable urbanity, liveability, and the economic vibrancy of changing cities. The modern heritage initiative in Abu Dhabi deserves to be a movement as dynamic as the places it will be saving.

THE INTRACTABILITY OF CONSERVATION POLICY

Today the concept of adaptive reuse is a new ideology in the Gulf where most buildings have a lifespan of "30 to 40 years before being demolished and replaced" (The National, 2021). In a concentrated span of 20 years, the UAE's cities came to host expanding areas characterised by increasingly sprawling suburban enclaves, mega towers, retail malls, theme leisure parks, and artificial islands.
These trends in urban expansion have revealed and raised questions about designers and developers' underlying value systems with regard

to ecological, environmental, and social responsibilities.
Yasser Elsheshtawy's article *We Need to Talk about the Modernism Fetish in the Gulf* highlights the debate resulting from foreign perceptions of what constitutes vernacular-built heritage and local authorship's understanding of the same. On one side of the debate, Elsheshtawy holds the view that buildings designed in the 1960s and '70s when the nation was still young by expatriate architects, belong to a category of Emirati Vernacular which represents a "top-down version of ... what constitutes Emirati identity" (Elsheshtawy, 2017). Meanwhile, transnational Gulf practices of international trade and exchange represent an intrinsic part of the region. Thus, the distinction and debate between "imported" (*ibid*) and vernacular stylistic categories are blurred in the present. The resolution of the debate aside, the city of Abu Dhabi now exists as a collage that is the result of the "distributed mechanisms of authorship and exchange through which such emblems of Gulf modernism took shape" (Kubo, 2022, p. 102).
With a focus on sustainability and its relation to preservation, an issue at the centre of the modern heritage discourse and effort in Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi Culture, 2018), it could be argued that the thermodynamic cycle of materials and labour from formation in the environment through to extraction, production, use and maintenance is already discernible in the built environment – whether authored by 'local' or expatriate architects, designers, and planners. Ultimately, the goal of preservation is also to manage change in a way that respects the materials extracted, elaborated, and embodied within these buildings. As such, while it may be fundamental at some level to define the boundaries of what can be considered vernacular and local in the existing built fabric, it would be troubling to see historic preservation turn away from a sustainable ethos for the sake of resolution between discursive dichotomies.

SUPPORTING HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOOD FABRICS

Just as there is a canon of built forms in Abu Dhabi that can be consulted in the design and governance apparatus for future development, it is also worth chronicling a return to the idea of buildings and building (the verb) as inherently open, socio-ecological processes. In Adrian Lahoud's words, "Buildings are primarily nondiscursive objects even if they are always ensnared in discourses of every kind" (Lahoud,

Some of Abu Dhabi's oldest residential buildings feature internal systems of bridges and balconies, with exterior facades often responding to the internal tectonic logic. Impressionistic shadow-play, expressed tectonics, and climatic-response devices that resulted in intricate elevational patterns were a common tenet of the urban Abu Dhabian building elevations prior to the proliferation of wrapper-like, industrialized cladding and glazing seen in contemporary buildings. Courtesy O. Sharma, 2024

2016, p. 109). As such, our buildings are instruments to host the multitude of social bodies that project a constellation of rituals, attitudes, laws, and other facets of life. More explicitly, without an understanding of sociopolitical realities and working incentives, a significant portion of the "people-centric" (Jacobs, 1961) discourse will be eschewed, at the risk of costing the conservation movement its humanistic ethos. In this way, contemporary conservation efforts in Abu Dhabi might build upon the work of Janet Abu-Lughod who advocated that cities are processes rather than products and that there should be an effort to, "encourage growth in the desired direction [...] since cities are living processes rather than formalistic shells for living" (Abu-Lughod, 1987, p. 173).

LOOKING FORWARD

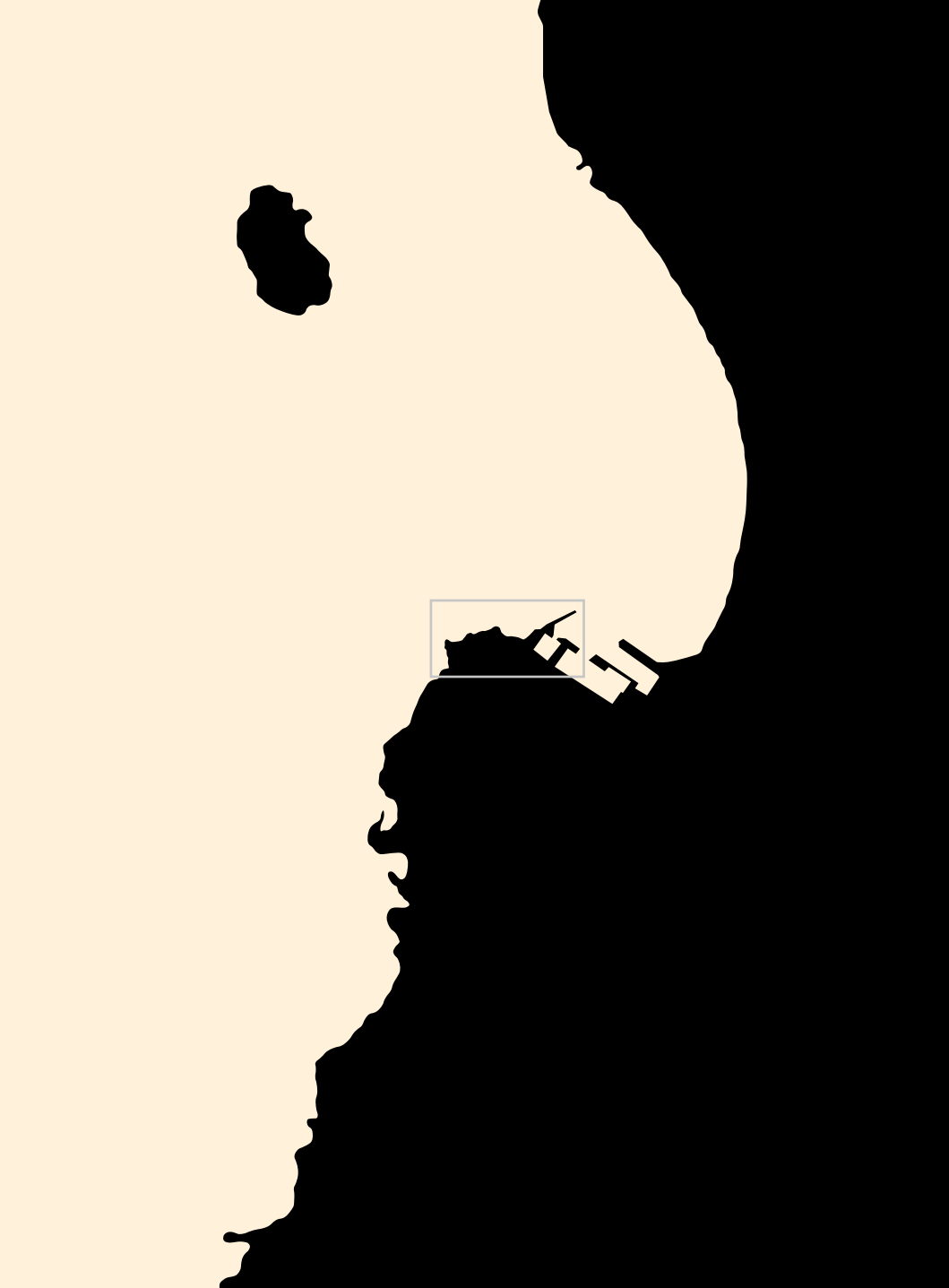
The heightened financial role of architecture and strategic association lead to a culture where architects are inadvertently compelled to appease capital-driven processes which morph profitable terrains to retain buoyancy and negotiate agency. Having recognized that the financial superstructures that define global exchange and investment are tidal, it is imperative to operate with the belief that there must still be a way to address contemporary issues, with consistency, through the architectural discipline in a manner that is more cognizant of the inequalities, inequities, and imbalances fuelled by asset management relayed architectural interventions. In this scenario, it becomes equally important to educate younger populations and non-expert actors. The forthcoming challenges presented by the Anthropocene necessitate multi-pronged approaches in modern heritage and existing built stock conservation practices. Value-grounding and comprehensive social goal-based tools, as presented in this chapter, could be further extended to shake up an otherwise homogenised decision-making chain.

Cities in the GCC are often depicted as, "important global capital[s] capable of positioning and reinventing itself on the map of international architecture and urbanism" (Salama and Wiedmann, 2013, p. 8). In line with this productive outlook, the modern heritage discourse in Abu Dhabi requires additional value-focused direction, grounded by social and environmental priorities. The dissection of the existing buildings as randomly machinated by commercial development or holding companies requires elements of top-down regulation and intuitive bottom-up

pedagogical and paradigm shifts. It is essential that finance-capitalism's playground is disciplined through institutional mandate, while also ensuring that Abu Dhabi's modern heritage stewards ground their work in sustainable practice. This is the way in which Gulf cities will negotiate their presence as regional powerhouses of the twenty-first century, informed by historical dynamics while responsibly evolving into commensurate sites of global practices and economic affluence.

O. Sharma. Repair and revitalisation are crucial for the vernacular's survival. A jumble of Eurocentric architectural styles from various epochs, from neoclassical to art deco and postmodernism, animates the city's modern history and contribute to an evolving vernacular paradigm. Courtesy O. Sharma, 2024

Cape Town, South Africa

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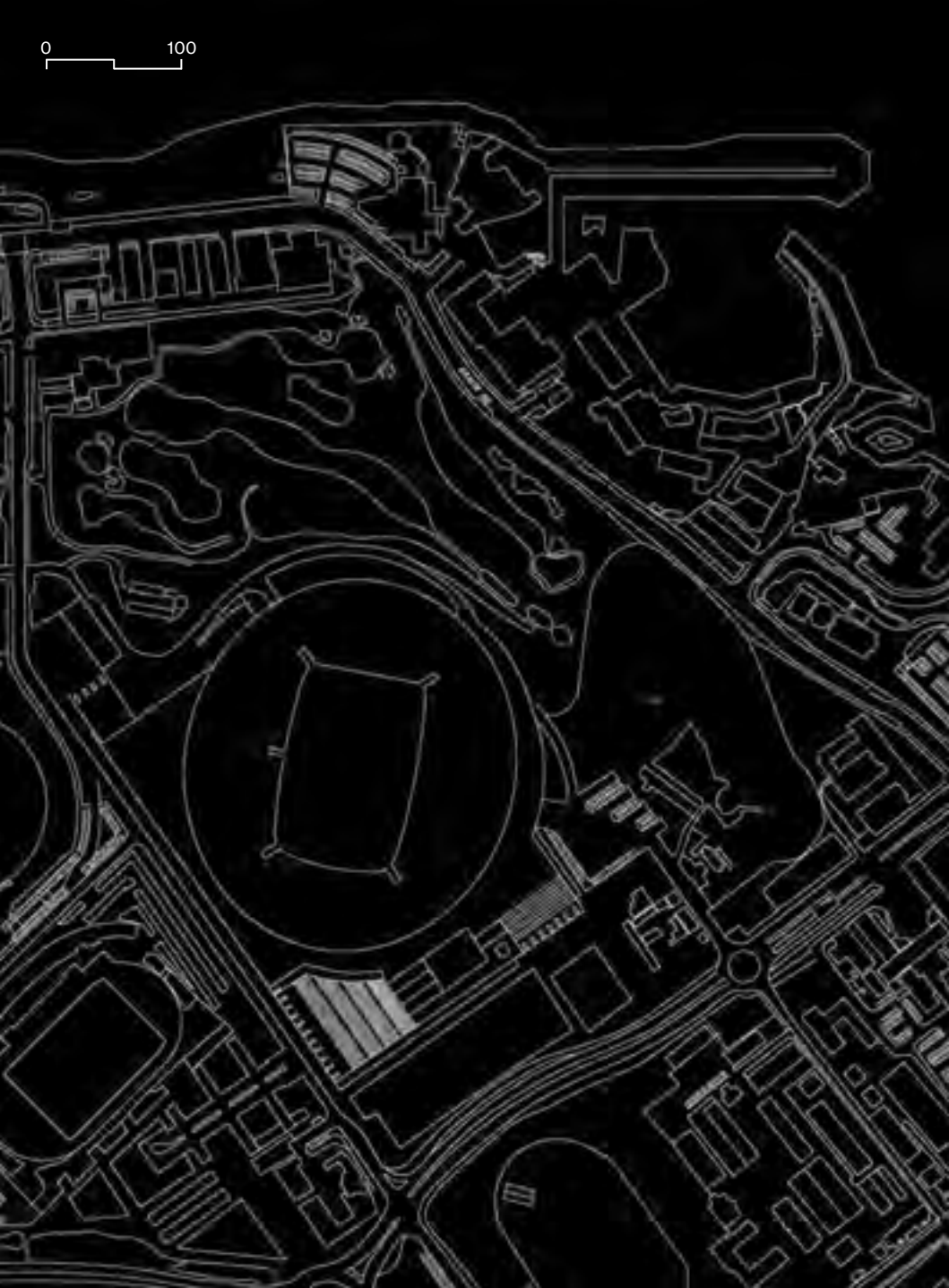
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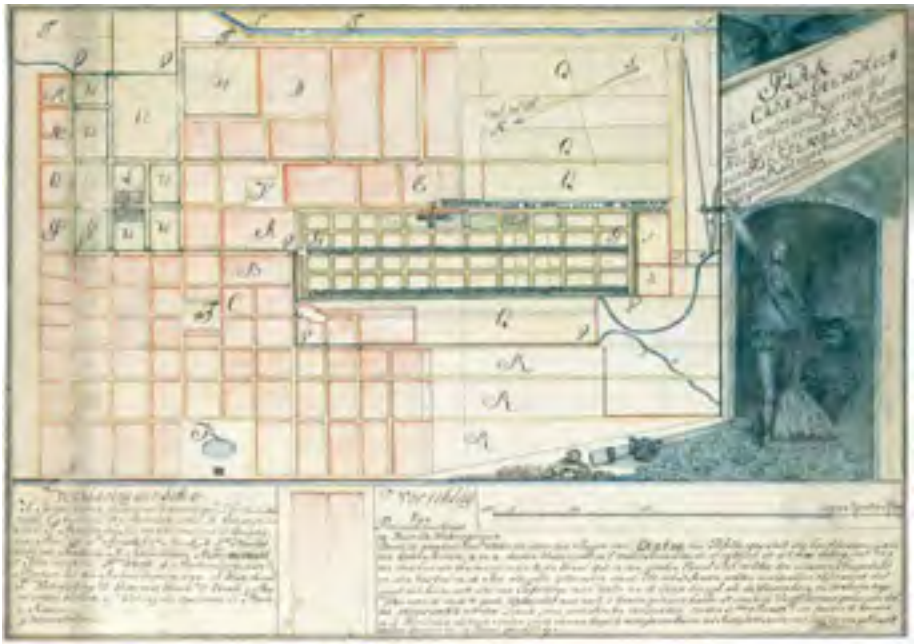
R. J. Gordon, Map of Cape Town and surroundings, 1782. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

R. J. Gordon, Map of Cape Town, 1777. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



R. J. Gordon, detail from Panorama of Cape Town and surroundings, seen from the sea, 1778.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

LIVING (APART-) TOGETHER IN CAPE TOWN: SHARED SPACES IN TRANSITION

Sabina Favaro

Cape Town (and more broadly South Africa) has been undergoing multiple transitions for a long time. A protracted political transition first began the anti-apartheid movement and continued after the legislative end of apartheid in 1994. There has also been an economic transition, marked by the country's reintegration into the global market and a socio-spatial transition as a result of reconstruction and development programmes. Within this context, one cannot overlook the worsening global crises that have driven the country to develop climate resilience (RSA, 2019) and energy transition strategies (RSA, 2022), and, for those who can afford it, to adopt alternative energy resources and systems. Yet, despite the new Constitution, the plethora of targeted programmes and innovative policies, inequality is paradoxically growing.

South Africa appears at the top of global inequality rankings (World Bank, 2022) and is also, by no coincidence, among the most violent countries worldwide. During the past thirty years of democracy, progress has been partial and slow – especially in the realm of spatial transformation – revealing strong inertia in the face of a complex situation. The worsening of socio-ecological and spatial injustices (Soja, 2010) seems to corroborate historian Terreblanche's (2002) early assertion that democratic neoliberalism would fail to redress three and a half centuries of entrenched socio-spatial inequality.

As several scholars and South African architects (Judin and Vladislavic, 1998; Low, 2003, 2022) have emphasised, while political power may be shifting, inscribed socio-spatial patterns endure over time, as seen in the persistent injustices across rural villages and metropolitan regions.

Far from being an exception, Cape Town remains a metropolis of stark socio-spatial contrasts where differences clash, meet, and coexist. Its urban palimpsest counts five million inhabitants and spans a distance of about 2,500 square kilometres, limited only by majestic mountains and the ocean. Any description of Cape Town remains incomplete without mentioning its pervasive segregation, inequalities, and spatial injustices – legacies of colonial rule and apartheid, bolstered by deeply rooted cultural violence. Today, Cape Town ranks as the world's tenth most violent city, with gang-related violence concentrated in historically segregated neighbourhoods. Reflecting upon spatial apartheid, one hypothesis emerges that is challenging to counter: spatial injustice not only perpetuates and accretes inequalities, but also supports structural and slow violence (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Nixon, 2011).

Manenberg: open spaces. Courtesy S. Favaro, 2015

Monwabisi Park: sea public pool. Courtesy S. Favaro, 2014

Only by retracing the history of spaces, and therefore of powers (Cavalletti, 2005; Secchi, 2013), can we begin to understand contemporary Cape Town. From the outset, colonial discourse used topography, water, land, open spaces, and infrastructure as spatial mechanisms of separation. These spatial traces endure, dividing the "colonial core" set along coasts and mountains from the segregated neighbourhoods superimposed onto the inhospitable dunescape of the Cape Flats.

Continuing earlier practices, apartheid urban planning legally enacted racial segregation, spatializing the Group Areas Act of 1955 into the creation of townships. In its pursuit of white political dominance and economic prosperity (Posel, 1991), Cape Town's spatial structure contains contradictions and anomalies, differing from the apartheid city model (Western, 1981). Townships, drawing on simplified European models, atomised the housing question, favouring single-family plots and marginalising public life.

The urban palimpsest remains deeply imbued with spatial segregation mechanisms. Cape Town is an urban mosaic of neighbourhoods and townships, separated by open spaces (buffer zones), infrastructural barriers and impermeable mobility systems. Within the townships, open spaces are often absent, residual, or expanded, raising questions about their maintenance, use, and safety. Despite numerous targeted urban renewal interventions in the townships (parks, schools, public transport interchanges, and markets), the apartheid nomos remains in place (Barnard-Naudé and Chryssostalis, 2022).

In Cape Town, the collective project of transitioning entails *living (apart-) together*, borrowing and extending "*comment vivre ensemble*," what Barthes defined as the phantom of his 1976-1977 lecture course (2013). Inhabitants of the city live simultaneously *apart and together – apart,* as the *nomos* of apartheid is still spatially operative, and *together*, by sharing spaces and imagining how to decolonise the city's transformation processes. Reflecting on the spatial transformation projects and practices since 1994, two spatial figures emerge: housing and the public sphere, both of which have been recognised as such by designers and academics engaged in transitions since the 1970s.

In the case of housing, despite innovative urban policies accompanied by some transformative projects, the continuities with the spatial logic of apartheid urban planning seem to prevail in post-1994 practices.

New residential neighbourhoods, predominantly monofunctional, continue to emerge at the margins of the urban fabric, often neglecting or trivialising public spaces as leftover areas for stormwater collection. By contrast, the concept of public space has re-emerged as a key element in the break with the apartheid city model and is understood as a spatial mechanism for the enactment of democracy (Tomer, 2020). This is evident both in metropolitan-scale master plans developed by the municipality and in academic writings, such as the *Manifesto for Change* (Dewar and Uytenbogaardt, 1991) which advocates a return to Humanism inspired by European, and in particular, Italian models of public spaces. The Dignified Places Programme (Southworth, 2003a, 2003b) has partially realised the ambitions expressed in these writings and frameworks by ground-proofing the strategy of urban acupuncture. Severely constrained by a lack of resources, participation, and management of public spaces, the seventy urban renewal interventions (which have been both successes and failures) have begun to chip away at the urban palimpsest. At the very least, the Dignified Places Programme has demonstrated that, no matter how strategic the location, proceeding with punctual spatial transformation projects without continuous participation/co-design is not sufficient to bring about radical change. Since 2005, a third approach to urban renewal has been advanced by Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU), which existed initially as a municipal development programme and later as a non-governmental organisation (Cooke, 2014). Designed to counter direct, structural and cultural violence, VPUU's urban strategies focus on the socio-ecological needs of specific vulnerable urban areas. Reimagining the public realm across multiple socio-ecological levels and scales, these strategies integrate social empowerment programs with the production, activation, and management of public spaces. The spatial and programmatic interventions are carried out through participatory urbanism and co-design practices, involving ongoing dialogue and collaboration between local authorities and the communities within the target areas. This approach demonstrates what is required to root and situate the Constitution not only as legal transformation, but also as socio-ecological and spatial change. These participatory processes simultaneously democratise urban renewal, promote social emancipation, and transform collective spaces. Despite its imperfections, this approach has been recognised as successful, though it demands significant

Shared spaces on a metropolitan scale, 2017. Superimposed on the topographical map of the Department of Rural Development and National Geographic Information. Courtesy S. Favaro, 2010

Dis-connected urban islands

Ocean

Topographic map 2010

Hanover Park and surroundings: shared spaces and spatial barriers. Courtesy S. Favaro, 2018

Disconnected urban blocks – living

Undefined shared open spaces

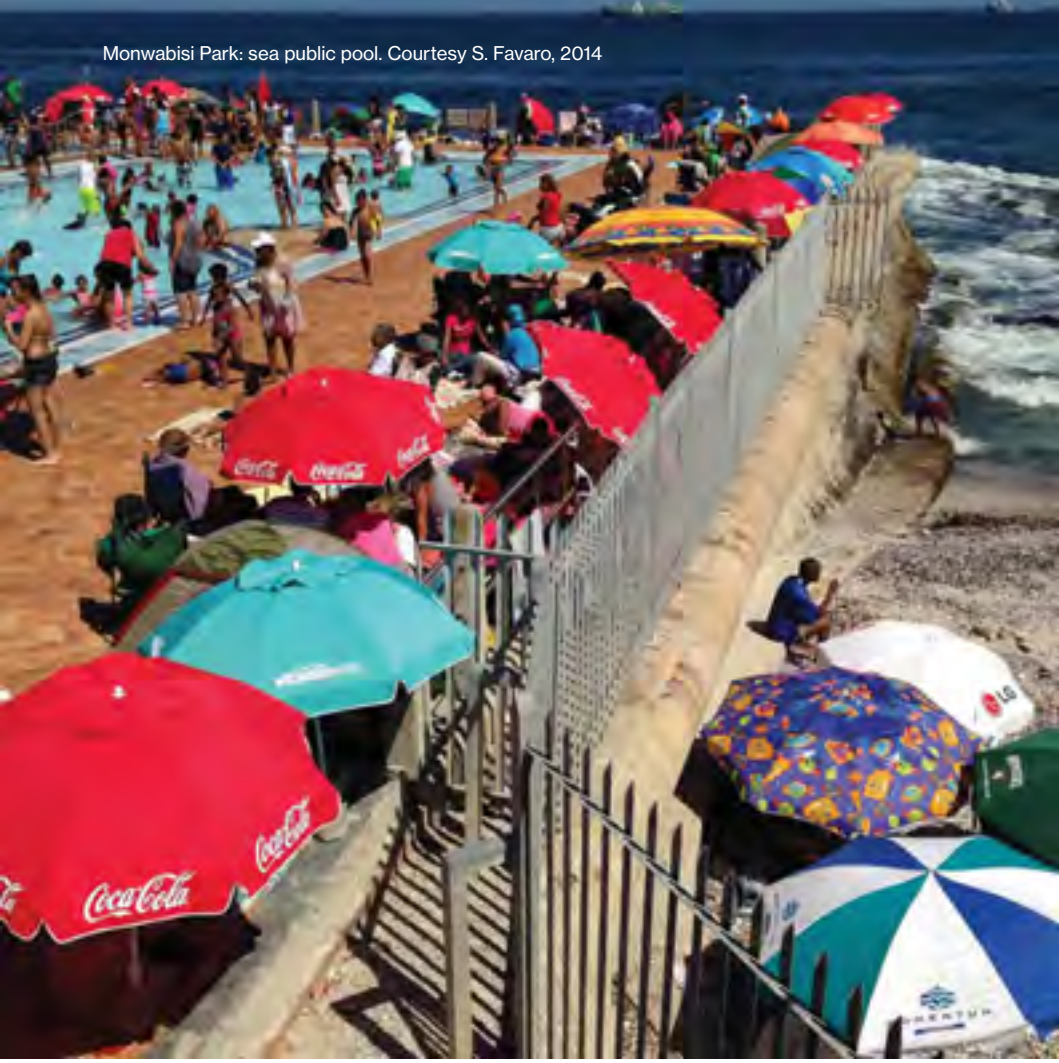
Urban support and production elements

Invisible walls – discontinuity of the urban network

Barrier roads – elements of disconnection

Access points

financial investment, time, and coordination. Unfortunately, the high number of vulnerable urban areas within a context of scarce resources makes it difficult to replicate this approach on a large scale.
Ultimately, innovative policies and targeted projects have failed to bridge the divide between legal reform and socio-spatial transformation.
Without spatial justice, there is no justice. Without participatory processes and robust socio-spatial programmes, substantive, meaningful change cannot occur. Indeed, as Robinson (1996) asserts, the apartheid city appears as a modern archetype, and its spatiality raises urban questions that extend beyond the South African context: How to decolonise cities, territories, public spaces, and urban planning practices?



Monwabisi Park: sea public pool. Courtesy S. Favaro, 2014

Hong Kong, SAR of the People's Republic of China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I. Michitoshi, Guangdong Guangzhou Fu ying ling Xianggang dao, 1882. Library of Congress

J. Imray, Transport Channels to Hong Kong and Macao, 1885. Library of Congress

W. H. Jackson, Queens Road, Hong Kong, 1895. Library of Congress

Mee Fong Studio, View of the Hong Kong waterfront, ca. 1900–1930. Library of Congress

HONG KONG'S PUBLIC SPACE IN NINE FIGURES

Gianni Talamini

The city of Hong Kong developed as a colonial outpost built on unfavourable topographical conditions, with British settlements initially located on Hong Kong Island and subsequently extending to the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories. The nature of the territory, with its privileged fiscal regime, low taxation, and limited redistribution of resources, affects the spatial production of the former city-state. In this context, public space, scarce and highly regulated, becomes a metaphor for the bipolar social condition that has always characterised Hong Kong. Interpreting this spatial production must go beyond efforts to describe its changing nuances and necessary contextualisations to disentangle the socioeconomic machine's modes and functioning mechanisms, along with the superstructure's ideological framework. From this perspective, Hong Kong's public space can be read and interpreted through the following nine figures: margin, function, repetition, fragment, stratification, concentration, conflict, comfort, and commercialisation.

The concept of *margin*, often key to the interpretation of a territory

Event in a residual public space, under a viaduct in Kwun Tong. Courtesy, G. Talamini 2023


景新樓
KING
SAN
HOUSE

Public housing in Choi Wan, Kowloon. Courtesy A. Saccon, 2017

(Lynch, 1964), is understood here as accessory to that which is central. As a result, the word often assumes a negative meaning, especially in European culture (Barthes, 1970), which has itself long been a reference point for Hong Kong. The city's public space, except for a few celebratory places, is often residual. Similarly, the production of these public spaces seems to be an add on or afterthought when compared to the production of the built environment. Urban emptiness is not filled with meaning (Barthes, 1970) but is instead a by-product of policies aimed at fulfilling primary needs, such as housing and work.

Since the days of British rule, Hong Kong's urban space has been dominated by engineering, a discipline anchored in ideals of *functional* optimisation and organisational efficiency, useful for the maximum exploitation of the workforce with the minimum expenditure of material resources. Since the rapid expansion of manufacturing after World War II, the city has been conceived as a place dedicated almost exclusively to work and certainly not as a tourist or recreational destination. The urban void and the built environment have been produced with extreme attention to functional aspects and maximum use of resources and, at the same time, an institutional framework dominated by technical knowledge has regulated this urban production.

The regulatory framework includes a series of detailed requirements on the forms of space dedicated to mobility. Indeed, space given over to urban transport constitutes the backbone of the open space system in a city where over 90% of daily trips are by public transport (Villani, Talamini, and Xue, 2022). The resulting public space is, therefore, a direct reproduction of rules and regulations, with a consequent *repetition* of elements in space and time. The fact that these outdated regulations are kept and strictly applied[1] is down to historical, political, and cultural reasons, including the idealisation of the colonial period, the structure of the city's administration,[2] and risk aversion (Villani and Talamini, 2023a). Regulations and zoning, in the absence of urban design parameters and

1 During the protests of 2019-20, approximately 60 kilometers of railings containing pedestrian areas were torn down and used to build barricades. The opportunity to redesign these spaces and their boundaries was not seized, and the barriers were reinstalled. (Talamini, Shao, Chow and Sun, 2022).

2 Hong Kong is a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China whose governor (Chief Executive) is elected by a government in which trade associations represent the vast majority of parliamentarians.

structural plans, result in repetitive formal solutions that constitute a series of *fragments* deposited in variable topographical conditions. For Bernardo Secchi, the fragment becomes a useful epistemological tool for interpreting the contemporary city, which is itself made up of materials deposited over time.[3] Pavements or bike paths abruptly interrupted at the edges of new towns, or playgrounds used as carparks in rural villages, are

Event in a residual public space, under a viaduct in Kwun Tong. Courtesy, G. Talamini, 2023

just a few examples of deposits that lack a comprehensive design. Looking at the city as a collection of practices and materials without a clear architecture, a fragmented collection, facilitates an understanding of Hong Kong as a repository of constructed history, typologies, and materials from the past. This view emphasises the *stratification* of

3 "[...] the concept of fragmentation has shaped the idea of a procedural and incrementalist policy for the construction and modification of cities and territories, a policy consisting of fragmentary interventions, cumulative additions and subtractions which, while acting punctually and locally, manage to give new meaning to the entire urban fabric" (Secchi, 2011, pp. 21-22, translation by the author).

Three-dimensional public space: pedestrian walkway in Wan Chai. Courtesy A. Saccon, 2017

practices and uses of the public space, a stratification that is articulated in space and time. Taking a long view, Hong Kong can be seen as an overlapping of indigenous, colonial, global, and generic material deposits. On the ground, from the viewpoint of a single day, the city's public space offers a further interpretation, a way of reading the various practices of everyday life which rhythmically materialise and disappear in the same place. Emphasising the stratification of materials and practices is also a way of alluding to their resulting *concentration*. A critical figure at the origin of modern urban planning, concentration is a necessary interpretative key for Hong Kong (Talamini, 2022). The public space of the Asian city, articulated across three-dimensions and densely used, is home to a concentration of practices, interests, and intentions. Settlement concentration is the basis for the exploitation of the workforce and economic efficiency that is referred to in *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome: Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore* by Manuel Castells, Lee Goh, and Reginald Yin-Wang Kwok (1986). It is this same concentration that has become a prerequisite for the spread of viruses in recent epidemics and pandemics (Talamini, 2022). Stratification and concentration are terms linked to the concepts of density and scarcity. Hong Kong stands out for its scarcity of public space, which amounts to approximately 2.7 m^2 per capita. On Sundays, the little public space available is filled with almost half a million domestic workers who have no private space at their disposal (Villani and Talamini, 2021). Naturally, in addition to functioning as Hong Kong's collective living room, public space also serves as an arena for social *conflict*. It is therefore a battleground, a space where people can claim their Lefebvrian right to the city through their physical presence and this public presence becomes a mass presence through the accumulation of suspended bodies united by common vision (Villani and Talamini, 2023b). The physical presence of almost two million people on the streets of Hong Kong on June 16, 2019, gave way to an intense period of social unrest. Linked to the concept of the body is the idea of *comfort*, a notion that has historically been considered almost exclusively in terms of intimate, private space. Renewed attention to the conditions of open space, microclimatic factors, and the presence of urban greenery constitutes both a scientific and a design response to the growing demand for comfort in public spaces. In Hong Kong, the issue has become all the more important because of the need to generate spaces of global

interest, sparking intense reflection and heated debate about ways to redesign the waterfront and regenerate the city (Talamini et al., 2023; He, Talamini, and Jiang, 2021).

The regeneration effort is part of an institutional framework in which urban design is often subject to real estate speculative operations that are managed or coordinated by the Urban Renewal Authority. This parastatal body operates under favourable conditions and has the authority to expropriate upon reaching a predetermined threshold (65%) of real estate acquisitions in an area of interest.[4] Once control of the site has been obtained, the agency proceeds with the demolition and reconstruction of several blocks of buildings and the creation of sterile, pacifying public spaces, typically with a commercial aim (e.g., Lee Tung Avenue). These fragments of regenerated public space are deposited between colonial-era industrial neighbourhoods on the margins of business districts where they serve a function for commerce and capitalist accumulation and reduce comfort to the absence of conflict. Reading the production of public space through the figures of margin, function, repetition, fragment, stratification, concentration, conflict, comfort, and commercialisation has allowed us to restore (with no claims to an exhaustive treatment of the subject) the multifaceted complexity of Hong Kong's urban voids. Continuing this interpretative journey requires a good pair of shoes.

Acknowledgements

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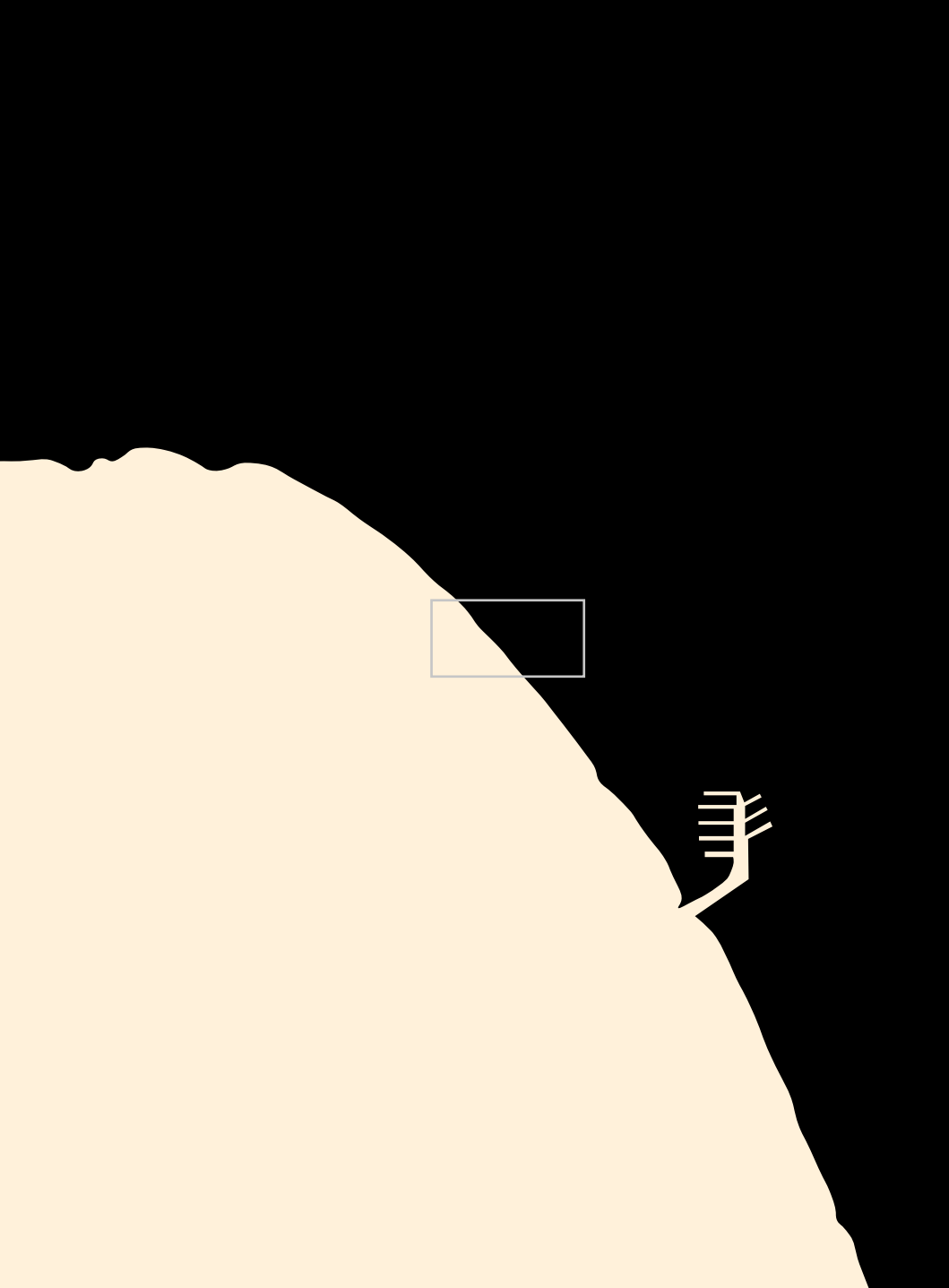
Los Angeles, United States of America

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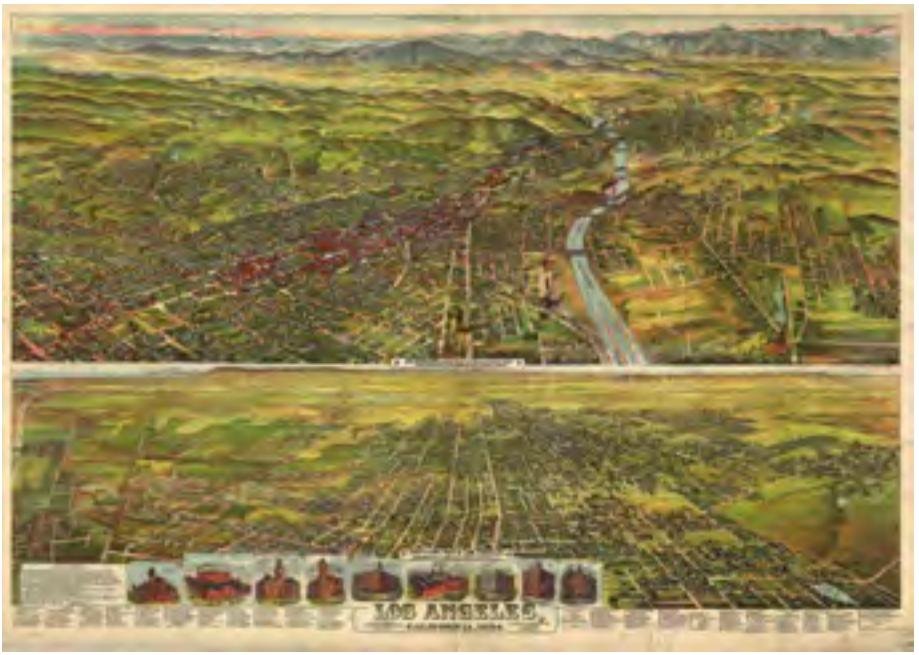
E. T. Wright, Official Map of Los Angeles County, California 1898. Library of Congress

B.W. Pierce, Bird's-eye-views of Los Angeles, California 1894. Library of Congress



A. M. Price, Santa Monica roller coaster, 1914. Library of Congress

BETWEEN WATERS: TREADING THE LINE OF GLOBAL URBANITY

Ilaria Mazzoleni

Los Angeles is known for its long streets, at times lacking sidewalks: elongated, continuous urban corridors that may appear anonymous and thin. These non-places spaces, however, constitute some of the city's most dynamic and latent forms of public space — not only for their function of traversing the metropolis, but more importantly as connective elements that link the fragmented and dispersed distinct spaces of the mineral city. Sidewalks unfold in uninterrupted stretches for miles, accessible to almost everyone, and it is here that a civic sense of freedom and collective identity becomes evident once again. If these networks are read together with the waterways — historically indispensable to the city's territorial development — they enable the formulation of a renewed vision of the public city: dynamic, continuous, fluid, zero-carbon and slow-moving. Reyner Banham, in his book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (1971), portrays the city as perceived from the window of a Chevrolet Impala. More than fifty years later, and still inspired by that seminal work, we propose a reading of the post-COVID city experienced on foot and by bicycle — imagined, therefore, through alternative perspectives and across multiple scales. This approach foregrounds the possibilities of slow mending generated by the careful gaze as it traverses the metropolis from shore to shore, encountering a multiplicity of spaces and buildings — large and small, permanent and temporary — that can be crossed, inhabited and breathed in. We reclaim slowness as a contemporary necessity to cope with the frenetic rhythms of life in megalopolises. This awareness, which was brought sharply into focus during the pandemic, has become evident even in vast metropolitan conglomerates of heterogeneous assemblages, where many residents rediscovered the practice of walking.

WALKING AND CYCLING THROUGH LOS ANGELES COUNTY, SOME MOMENTS: THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND THE OCEAN FRONT WALK

We begin with perhaps the most iconic place: the Pacific Ocean, its beach and the Ocean Front Walk. This extensive and expansive strip along the western edge of the Los Angeles megalopolis constitutes its true urban park. The wide, sandy shoreline simultaneously unites and separates the immense expanse of the Pacific Ocean from the dense, solid and populous city, mediated by the Ocean Front Walk, which, incrementally, consumes the beach. It is increasingly paved and consolidated in order to

provide residents and tourists with comfortable surfaces for walking, running, cycling and play. Everyone is present here, everyone wants desires to be here: indeed, we are here — tentatively, politely, along the line, precariously balanced.
In these moments of strolling, gently caressed by the ocean breeze, the impulse for ecological and sociological reflection grows strong. One confronts a world in which the most vulnerable — across all species — struggle to retain the spaces they have gradually secured, too often yielding to the overwhelming force of the fittest and fastest. Artificiality is produced through the very materiality of nature's own elements, which risks being defeated by itself. Within this over-constructed world, palm trees stand tall and happy above in the wind, yet their presence is equally precarious because they do not belong to the ecologies of these places and their permanence remains uncertain.
The Ocean Front Walk is an almost interminable promenade that links a succession of coastal municipalities from north to south, alternating between diverse forms of intensive occupation, including recreational facilities and public attractions. The renowned outdoor Muscle Beach gym, skateboarding areas and spaces for street performances — frequently flanked to the east by a continuous frontage of commercial and residential buildings, and only occasionally interrupted by iconic works of architecture — serve as constant reminders of where we are: the land of architectural experimentation of the 1980s and beyond!

BALLONA CREEK BIKE PATH

Venturing slightly further inland, one encounters the Venice Canals: the utopian scheme conceived and realised by Abbot Kinney in 1905, with the ambition of transforming this part of the city into a tourist destination. Its construction, inspired by Venezia (Italy), initiated a distinctive chapter in the urban imagination of Los Angeles.
This area today is composed of a modest network of canals, the largest of which flows southwards to discharge into Ballona Creek. Cycling along its banks, we encounter and pass through several small neighbourhood parks animated by young athletes, active seniors and leashed dogs, who inscribe the territory with sensory mappings of the city that are otherwise invisible to humans. These spaces are coveted by multiple species that also inhabit their substrata and even the more alchemical part of the

Santa Monica Pier. Courtesy I. Mazzoleni, 2024

gases we breathe. The high and low fences enclosing these areas regulate behaviours and practices, designed to ensure that no one dares to linger or settle for too long. At the terminus of the Creek, in Mid-City, our route continues eastward along Venice Boulevard, one of the primary structural axes of the metropolis. The boulevard offers a generous sidewalk, often presenting an appearance of neglect and a latent desire for renewal. Some ride bicycles, others skate: many break the rules of use in pursuit of personal safety.
The walk continues through neighbourhoods where the sidewalk remains a cherished space for market activity and social exchange. Crossing Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA), one can only be grateful for the presence of these linear strips that serve the city without asking for anything. Their value is increasingly evident, as their surfaces provide access to the majority of services that connect buildings to the city's infrastructure — an invisible line mediating between public and private domains, between what is desired and what is rejected. This too is the public city — maybe even more so than anything else!?

THE INDUSTRIAL CITY OF VERNON AND THE LA RIVER MASTER PLAN

Moving south-east of DTLA, we once again come across infrastructure and logistics — this time in perhaps their most magnificent form: the city-non-city of Vernon, a county municipality with only 222 inhabitants (2020) and completely covered in concrete. It is a landscape of industrial warehouses and logistics, situated between Alameda and the LA River: concrete, asphalt, water and vast sidewalks designed for no one. And it is here that the city might embody what the 21st century most urgently needs: an unpaved public space which, echoing the sand of the beaches at the continent's western edge, reclaims sidewalks with vegetation — Envisioning a green Vernon.
Across the long history of urban infrastructure, sidewalks have functioned as parallel edges framing streets along which people move and through which food and goods circulate to nourish and sustain life in the city. Although sidewalks are zoned corridors, spaces ensuring the safety of pedestrians, their modern purpose extends far beyond protecting pedestrians and regulating vehicular traffic. They perform multiple functions, embodying a complex assemblage of infrastructural demands and governmental responsibilities. Standard services such as energy,

Norton House in Venice Beach, Frank O. Gehry. Courtesy I. Mazzoleni, 2024

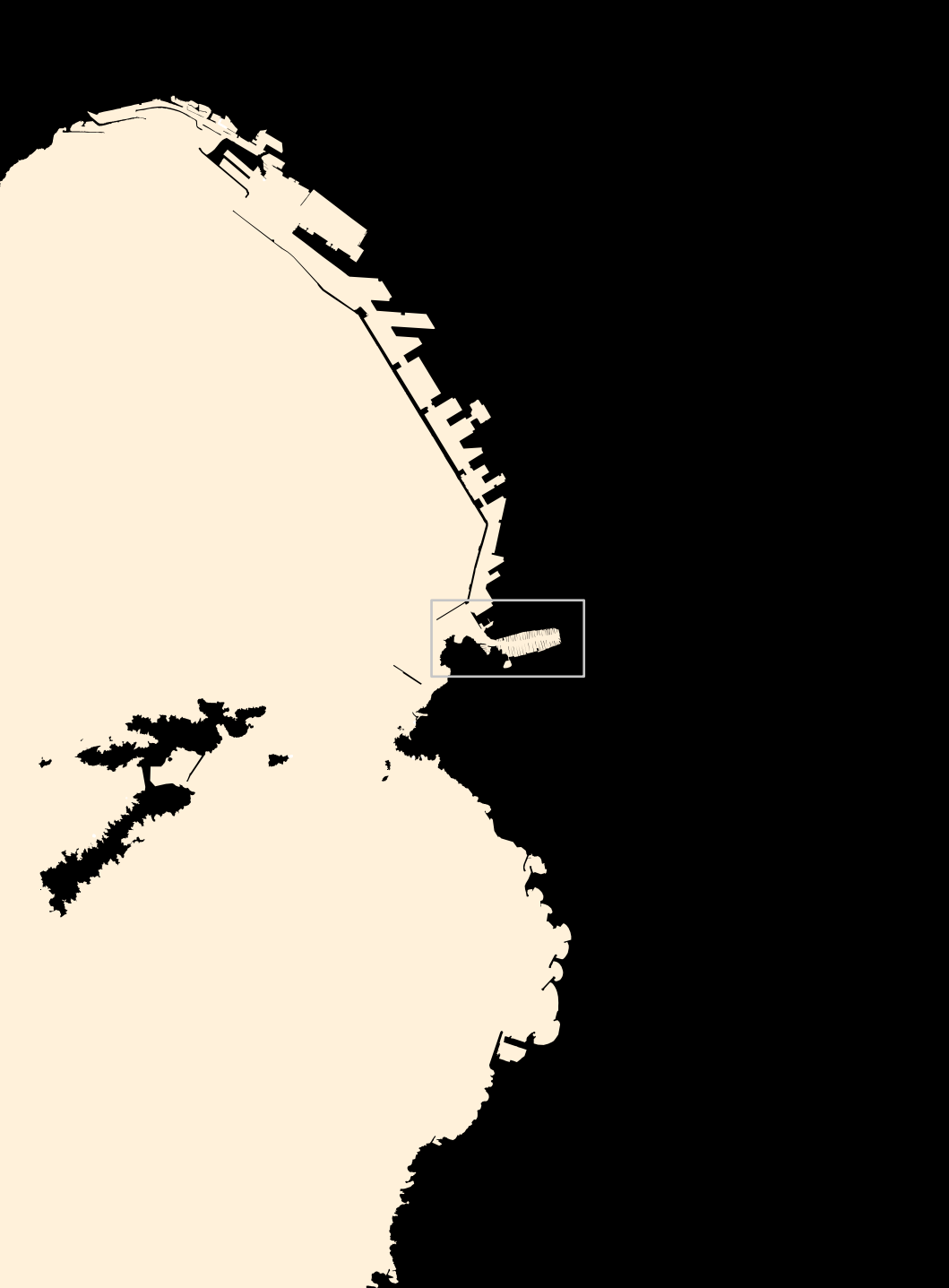
Skatepark in Venice Beach. Courtesy I. Mazzoleni, 2024

water and other information exist above and below the surface, where a deep network reveals the wider built urban environment that the sidewalk serves and connects. However, within the industrial districts of the metropolis, with far fewer pedestrians, we have observed sidewalks acting less like pedestrian paths and more like barriers that merely protect buildings. In these contexts, these stripped-down strips of land have long foregone the potential for intelligent and alternative forms of design.
In this transformative vision, breaking with 20th-century norms, the project design team employed principles of biodiversity to embed ecological resilience within the framework of conventional industry, generating a speculative project that imagined the city of Vernon overrun with greenery in all those non-places rarely frequented by humans — even on the sidewalks — thus restoring oxygen and shade to its urban fabric.
This somewhat utopian project for Vernon expands the city's exclusively industrial limits, not with the aim of abandoning them, but rather connecting them with the contemporary urban urgency of securing green space. It aligns well with the Master Plan for the LA River, which also intersects Vernon and in which the rationale underpinning the smaller Vernon proposal appears magnified and takes on greater significance. This ambitious Master Plan, elaborated over multiple phases by key working groups, has now entered its initial stages of implementation, beginning with interventions adjacent to the Sixth Street Bridge, a few miles north of Vernon. In the coming decades, the redevelopment of an urbanised area with highly developed infrastructure will restore public access to the river through the creation of a park designed to link previously disconnected segments, thereby prioritising forms of slow mobility.
Los Angeles sees slow multi-mobility — whether on foot, by bicycle, by public transport or other means — as a key driving force, especially when combined with the presence of water bodies. It fosters a renewed mode of inhabiting and experiencing the multicultural and multispecies city of the 21st century.

Envisioning a green Vernon, IM STUDIO Mi/La, 2016

Compton-Paramount Connector, LA River Master Plan 2021. Credits: LA County Public Works, OLIN, Gehry Partners, Geosyntec

Marseille, France

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A. Beeck, G. de Baillieu, Map of the Citadel, Port, and Arsenal of Marseille, 1709. Library of Congress

Anonymous, Site Plan of the Port of Marseille, 1726. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Anonymous, Harbour of Marseille, ca. 1890. Library of Congress

MARSEILLE, *TOTAL KHEÓPS*

Giuseppe Biasi

In 2013, Marseille's celebrated becoming European Capital of Culture. However, these celebrations were the culmination of a process that had begun in 2001 with the inauguration of the Paris–Marseille TGV line, which reinstated the city among Europe's principal hubs of interest.

The substantial investments made for the Capital of Culture celebrations extended across multiple areas of the city and encompassed a wide range of activities. The Vieux Port's public spaces were redeveloped, featuring Foster and Partners' iconic *Umbracolo*. Several new cultural institutions were inaugurated, including Rudy Riciotti's Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations (MUCEM), Kengo Kuma's FRAC (Regional Fund for Contemporary Art), and Ora-ïto's MaMo located on the rooftop of *La Cité Radieuse*. In addition, new commercial, office, and residential complexes were constructed and renovated along the République–La Joliette axis. The illumination of the Hôtel-Dieu, now the Intercontinental Hotel, symbolically marked the opening of a new tourism season, projecting the city onto the global stage.

The Euroméditerranée initiative unfolds within the framework of one of the most extensive urban renewal programmes currently underway in Europe, encompassing approximately 480 hectares in the central–northern sector of the city. The project is supported by the European Union, the French State, the Regional and Departmental Councils, the Métropole and the City of Marseille, alongside a broad coalition of internationally recognised stakeholders.

Complementing this transformative scenario, port operations led by CMA–CGM continue to expand, underpinned by significant investment in both commercial shipping and cruise tourism. Through this process of renewal, Marseille seeks to reposition itself, distancing itself from the inaccessible and violent city – an image shaped in part by its historic role in the heroin trade within the Palermo–Marseille–New York triangle. Although the city remains marked by episodes of violence and lawlessness, it is opening itself up to France and the wider world as a distinctly Mediterranean metropolis. Here, the quality of life is supported by a favourable climate, increasing opportunities forinvestment, the relatively affordable cost of living, enhanced standards of living, and a quotidian rhythm sustained by deeply rooted and collectively shared practices.

However, though recent developments have repositioned the city within the European urban landscape, they have brought with them gentrification, rising property values, the displacement of less affluent

Plage des Catalans. Courtesy G. Biasi, 2024

residents under pressure from real estate investors, and the closure of highly localised and community-oriented businesses.
Nevertheless, Marseille continues to be an example of a city with its identity rooted in diversity, ambiguity, and a recurrent self-denial – themes that underpin and animate Jean-Claude Izzo's celebrated trilogy.
Marseilles is a city of layers, from its foundation through to the nineteenth century; to the rapid expansion during the fifty years following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869; to the repatriation to Europe of Franco-Algerians between 1954 and 1962 after the war of independence; to the interventions of the 1960s and 1980s designed to reinforce the city's relationship with the sea. All of these layers have contributed to making Marseille the socially and spatially complex city it is today and though these layers may not be immediately legible on the surface of the city, they constitute Marseille's genetic code.
Marcel Roncayolo is no stranger to this complexity. Operating within the disciplinary triangle that anchors his research on the city (geography, history, and urban planning),he first published the book *L'imaginaire de Marseille. Port, Ville, Pole* in 1990, which was subsequently republished in 2013 to coincide with the European Capital of Culture celebrations.
This book could be described as a writing-through-memory. Roncayolo does not read the city as a laboratory of experiments or in terms of the

Southern neighbourhoods. Courtesy G. Biasi, 2021

linear evolution of the French city subjected to particular circumstances and models like Haussmannian planning, wartime destruction, or the 1967 land-use law. Instead, Marseille emerges as a constellation of memories reactivated in everyday life. It is a rewriting through memory that grounds itself in imagination rather than in representation or ideology, mobilising the interpretation of structural traces, objects, images, and categories. Roncayolo challenges the notion of a geography of perception in favour of collective representation, focussing not on individual experience, but rather on the elaboration of a collective memory that constitutes the genetic foundation of the city and underpins its regeneration.
It is evident that by prioritising the study of interpretations over purely analytical research culture, the community itself becomes the foundation of the city and of a cultural geography in which places are produced through practices and people. This implies, therefore, that open space is not merely functional to the daily activities of a segment of Marseille's inhabitants, but rather constitutes the very life of the city, with the places that define it shaped as much by people and relationships as by physical

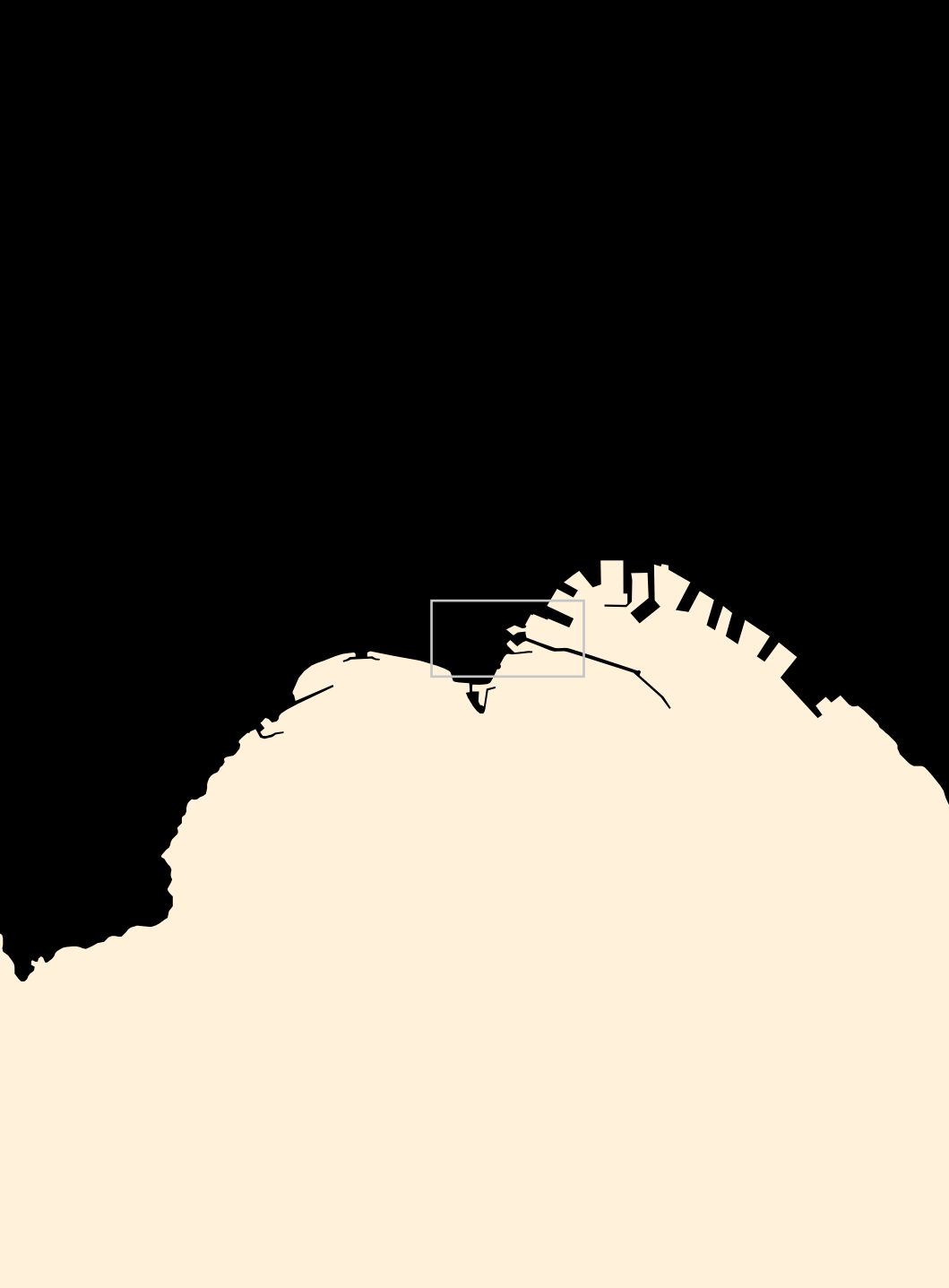
Plage du Prophète and Roucas-Blancs. Courtesy G. Biasi, 2024

form. The city's strong identity is thus recognisable across spatial configurations of varying scales, historical periods, and functions.
Yet, this collective imagination must be investigated, above all, in the relationship between the city and nature (which has been most powerfully articulated in the work of Marcel Pagnol) and, more specifically, in the dialogue between the city and the sea.
The coastline, positioned at the intersection of land and sea, has functioned as the locus of urban identity construction since the city's origins. The Vieux Port, from the earliest settlement to its most recent redevelopments; the Canebière, historically a marketplace for displaying and trading goods from overseas and a genuine civic meeting ground, later supplanted in the 1980s by the Vélodrome (Roncayolo, 1990); the New Commercial Port, whose docks have now been repurposed into cultural and business centres; the modest mountain huts (*refuges*), open on Sundays in the calanques of Sormiou, Morgiou, and Callelongue; the nineteenth-century beach of Les Catalans; the Corniche Kennedy, delineating the city's western edge, which marked the first extra-urban settlements and subsequently emerged as a symbol of urban identity

during the 1960s; and finally, the artificial Plage du Prado and the Escale Borély, constructed between the 1970s and 1980s.
Th artificial beach and the Escale Borély, built using excavated materials from the construction of the metro lines, was strongly championed by Gaston Defferre, mayor from 1965 to 1986. The aim of the project was to reclaim an area of the city long compromised by neglect, recurrent storm surges, and severe pollution carried by the Huveaune into the sea. The intervention constituted an investment both in the community and in the quality of urban services, thereby contributing to population growth and the city's broader renewal.
The project designed by René Egger and Atelier06, extending over 45 hectares along a 3-kilometre stretch of coastline, was approved in 1968 and envisaged the construction of new dams and reservoirs to create beaches, parks, and both public and private developments.
Implemented in two phases – completed in 1977 and during the latter half of the 1980s – the project rapidly demonstrated its value as a shared urban space, becoming a site accessible to diverse social groups with distinct habits, practices, and periods of use.
This new urban area was immediately recognised within the imagery described by Roncayolo not only as a result of the continued relationship between natural and urban spaces that has long characterised the city, but, more significantly, as a result of the openness and freedom afforded by the spatial organisation of the area.
For a variety of reasons, it was ultimately decided to reduce the influence of private initiatives planned in the original project. The construction of buildings intended for public – and especially private – use was abandoned. This decision produced a hierarchical inversion of spatial categories, resulting in an open, free, and uncontrolled environment, initially emptied of any predefined or programmed activities.
In contrast to the critiques of modern urban planning (Choay, 1965), which often associate open space with social disorder, the project's implementation advances a bold interpretation of community through a renewed vision of open space. Here, greenery is not conceived as a subsidiary element enhancing the built environment, but rather as an autonomous component in its own right – potentially open to multiple interpretations and uses, both present and future.

Plage du Prophète and Roucas-Blancs. Courtesy G. Biasi, 2024

Naples, Italy

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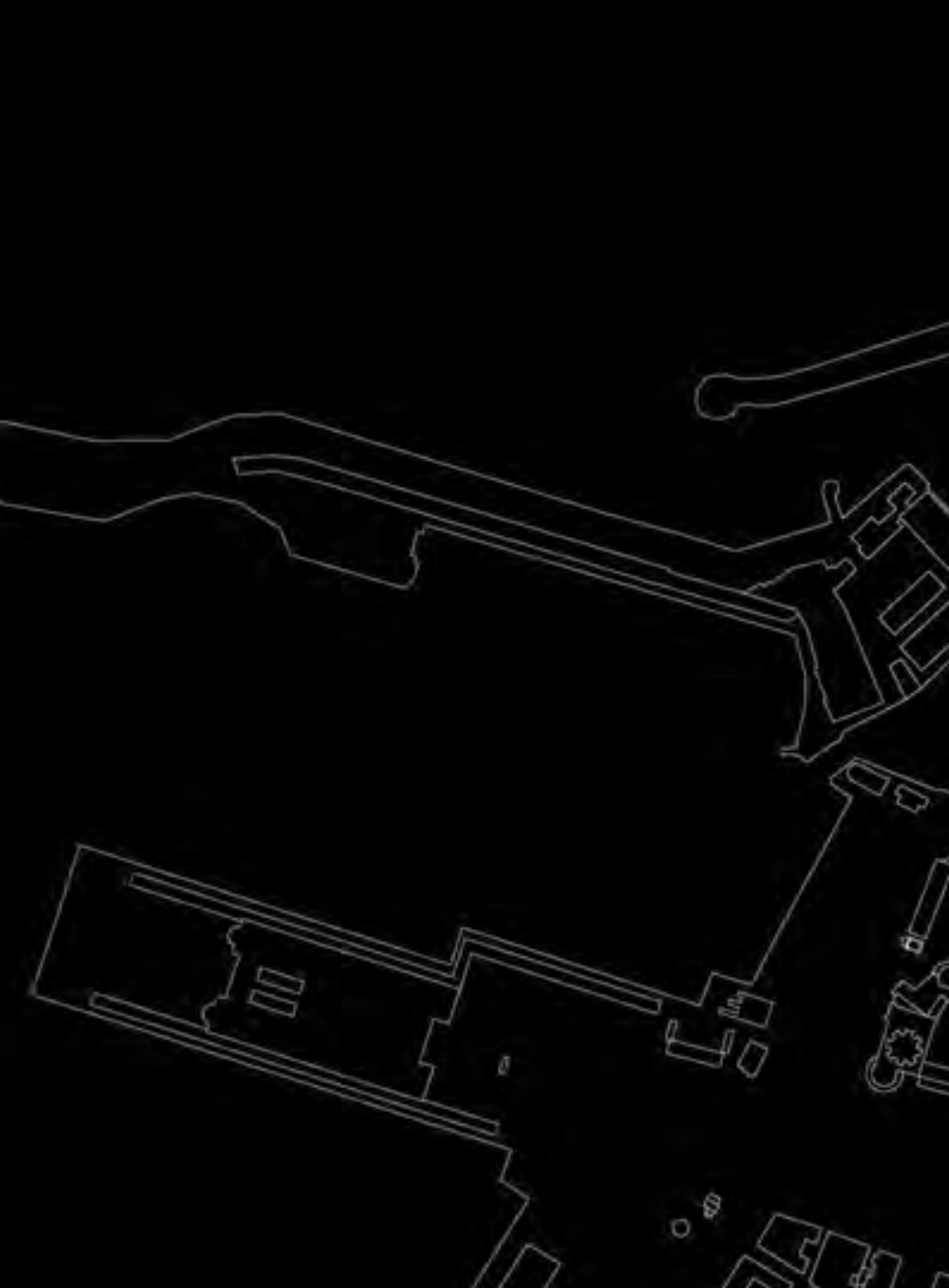
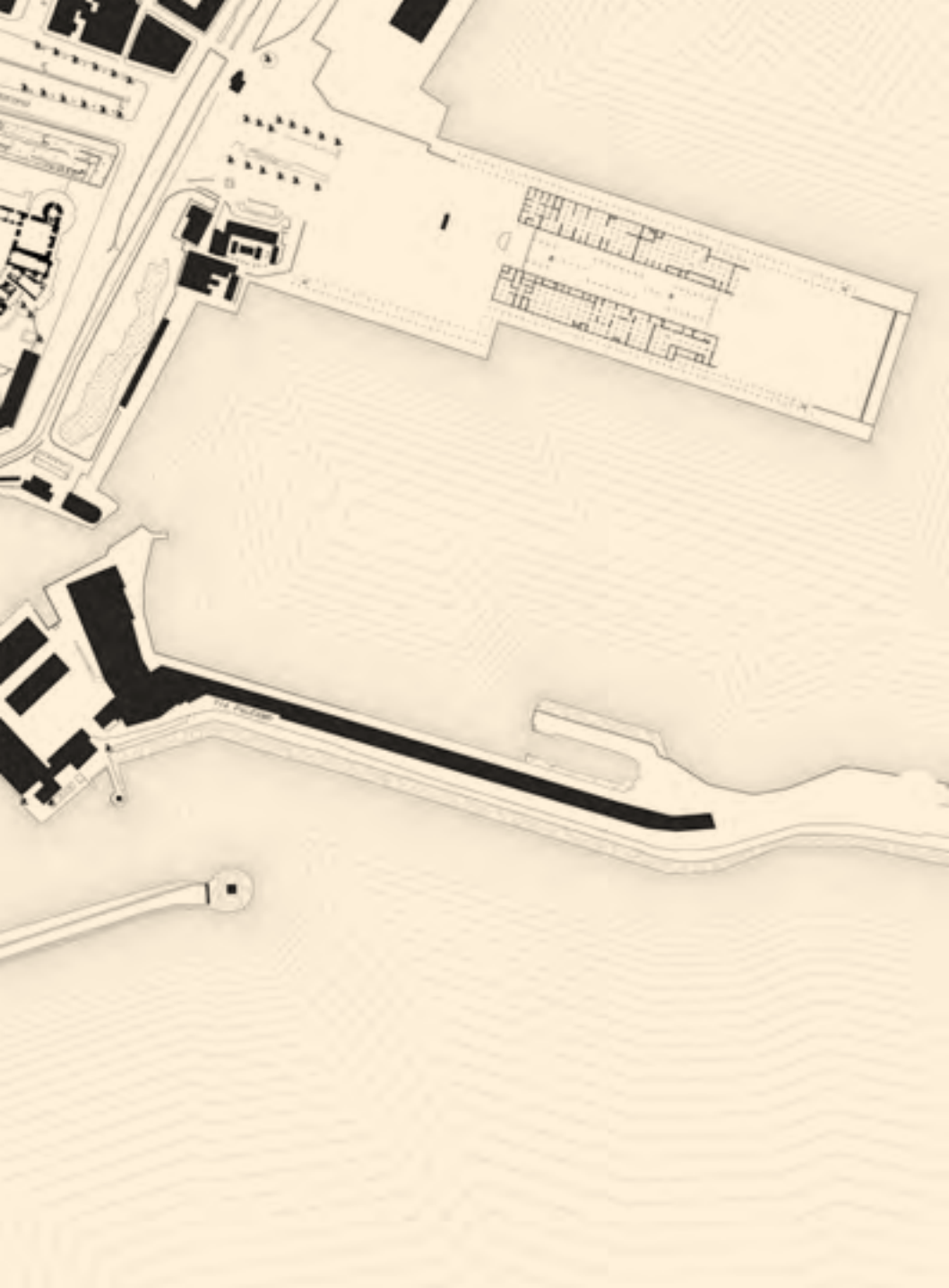
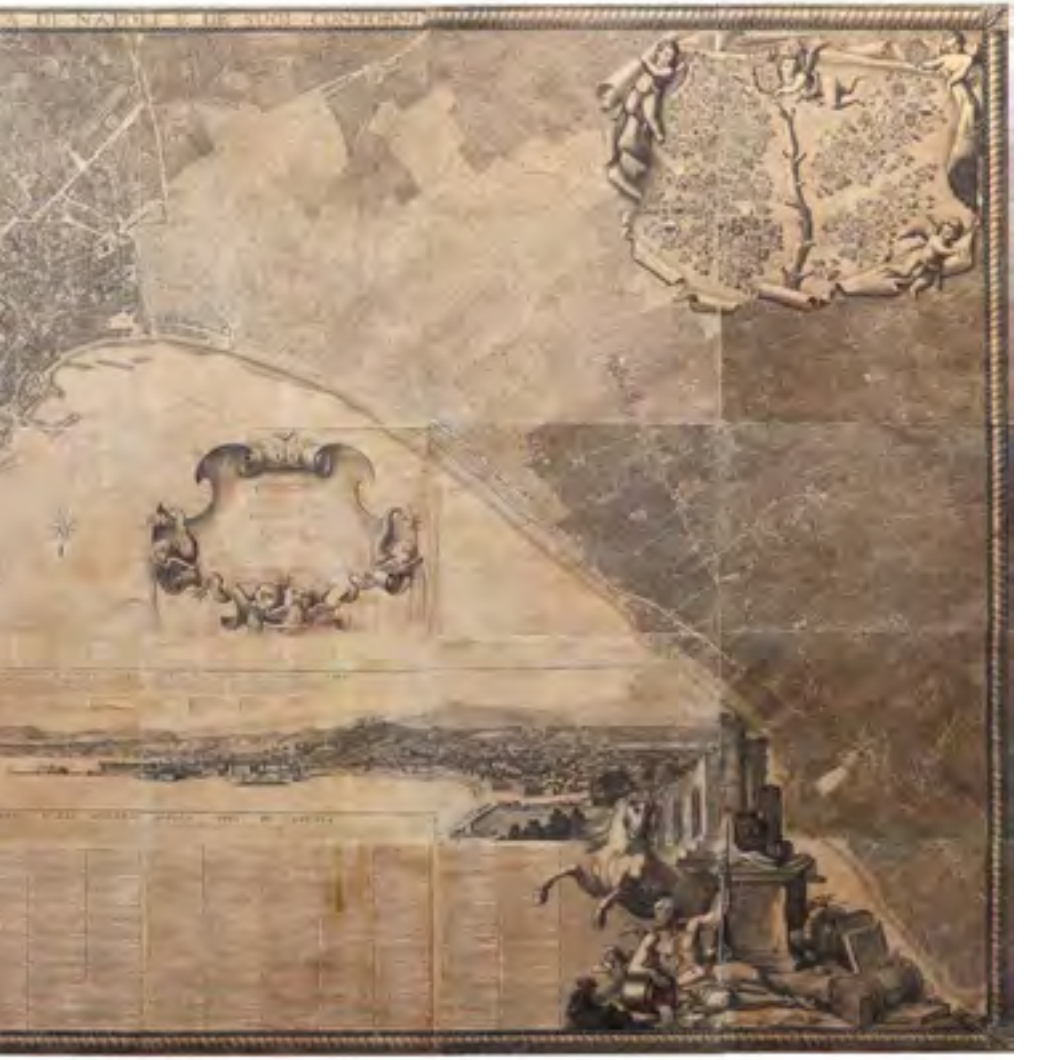




G. Carafa, Duke of Noja, Map of Naples, 1775.
Courtesy of the Photo Library of the National Museums of Vomero



F. Rosselli, Strozzi Table, View of Naples in the 15th century, 1472-73.
Courtesy of the Photo Library of the National Museums of Vomero

MIRACULOUS ARSENAL OF BROKEN THINGS

Giorgia Aquilar

BROKEN AND BODY

Three key words emerge from Alfred Sohn-Rethel's nearly one-hundred-year-old description of Naples. The southern Italian city, in the words of the theorist of social synthesis, is a "miraculous arsenal of broken things" (Sohn-Rethel, 1991, p.13). This quote is taken from *Eine Verkehrsstockung in der Via Chiaia* (Traffic jam on via Chiaia), part of the trilogy that Sohn-Rethel dedicates to Naples alongside *Vesuvbesteigung 1926* (Ascent of Vesuvius 1926) and *Das Ideal des Kaputten. Über neapolitanische Technik* (The ideal of the broken-down: on the Neapolitan approach to things technical). It is in this last essay that the thinker of the Frankfurt School develops a theory of Naples in which the city is simultaneously a "miracle", an "arsenal" and "broken". Contemporary to Walter Benjamin and Asja Lācis' well-known article, *Naples*, which explored the city through the metaphor of porosity and generated readings which sometimes betrayed its intentions in the predominance of form, Sohn-Rethel's *Kaputt* was born from observation of the Neapolitan approach to technical things during a stay in 1926 in the city where "things [...] only start to work when they are broken" (Sohn-Rethel, 2000, p. 45). The hypothesis put forward in this chapter is that, when transposed to architecture and the open space that passes through it, "the "ideal of the broken" drives us to reiterate, through Naples, the urgency of unmasking the "monster" that is the perfectly-functioning machine, thus discovering, as the Neapolitan does, "one's own body" in the self-same monster (Sohn-Rethel, 2000, pp. 46-47).

MIRACLE AND STAGING

By *incorporating* technical things, the *miraculous* transformation of the "most complicated technical tools" takes place. These tools *team up* and radically transform themselves "to provide their involuntary contribution", continues Sohn-Rethel (2000, p. 48). Around half a century on from *Kaputt* (and around half a century from our present), a group of radical architects known as Superstudio, imagined the futures of Italian cities. The project used the absurd and drew on the stereotype of Neapolitan improvisation that Sohn-Rethel considered in terms of a strategy or approach. These are the famous 1972 *Salvataggi dei centri storici italiani* (Rescues of the Italian historic centres), with which Superstudio

Superstudio, Salvataggi dei centri storici italiani. Italia Vostra
(Rescues of Italian historic centres. Your Italy), Naples, 1972. Toraldo di Francia archive

provocatively commented on official speeches made about conserving the heritage of the cities of the *Bel Paese*. Unlike the other apocalyptic destinies developed in the same context for Florence, Milan, Pisa, Rome and Venice, the Naples project is the only one to contain a "proposal" (Superstudio, 1972, p. 4-5). By describing the city with reference to the topos of the "village of Bengodi" – borrowed from the third tale of the eighth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron* – the Florentine radicals proposed an immense Hollywood scenography that eschews any neorealism. Enclosed in a gigantic cylindrical warehouse, the centre of the city becomes a space for the staging of a total synaesthesia; colours, smells and sounds replicate environmental stereotypes of the Neapolitan city. A nineteenth-century panorama of the city is painted along the continuous internal "façade", while on the warehouse exterior, on the surface facing the world, there is a single message: "It was Naples". In comparing the city to a few other places on the planet such as Disneyland or Hawaii, Superstudio preserve the city from reality,

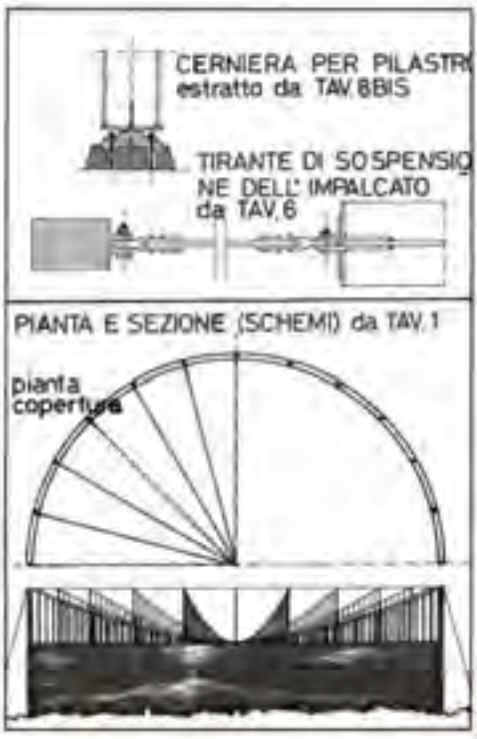
Superstudio, Salvataggi dei centri storici italiani. Italia Vostra (Rescues of Italian historic centres. Your Italy), Naples, 1972. Warehouse design. Toraldo di Francia archive

suggesting that the city be read as a mythical land or a theme park in which the present disappears. For Superstudio, Naples is suspended between past and future while, for Sohn-Rethel the city is the indisputable paradigm of an eternal present of incompleteness. Naples lends itself to staging the antipodes of that "ideal of the broken" which is both its anathema and salvation.

The "rejection of the hostile and closed automatism of mechanical entities", which the German author attributes to the Neapolitans, could then indicate a resistance of the everyday to the norm: an everyday that also requires a project but is capable of entering into an alliance with accident and which, from this negotiation, derives a discovery or an invention. Removed from the sphere of their intended functioning, the "broken things" therefore seem to require a project that reinserts them into the dimension of necessary negotiations. Beyond the object, new transactions could emerge between the open space – "broken" because it has lost its original role – and what is "intact" and therefore disturbing

(Sohn-Rethel, 2000, p. 46). Welcoming the thrust of this project by three voices, which in the warnings of Sohn-Rethel, Superstudio and Samonà searches for the oxymoronic substance of the city, three images –cholera, Caravaggio, cloisters– perhaps allow us to put forward one more proposal.
Arsenal and resistance. Naples appears to be a city described through metaphors and allusions. In the quote cited above, Sohn-Rethel follows the sacredness of the "miraculous" with the military power of an "arsenal" (1991, p. 13). Giuseppe Samonà gestured towards this in his well-known statement which appeared in *Casabella* in 1959: "The case of Naples, which is among the most complex, today appears curiously interesting because it rejects the plans" (pp. 35-36). This refusal seems to contain a resistance similar to that prefigured by Sohn-Rethel's arsenal.
Today, however, as resistance to gentrification falters which, until a few years ago, was an involuntary "rescue" (à la Superstudio, 1972) and "voluntary imprisonment" (à la Koolhaas and Zenghelis, 1973, p. 42), Sohn-Rethel's thinking could suggest the need to review other forms of refusal and resistance. Superstudio's proposal, re-read from this perspective, could perhaps *resolve* the rhetorical figure that is Naples, restoring the possibility of existence as a physical entity through allusion to the need for an *arsenal* in which not only tactics and devices of opposition and contrast may be found but also those *broken things* which, like found objects, are a possible source of new beginnings and, like barricades, aspire to these *other* beginnings by putting back into play what *other* endings have left available.
The "rejection of the hostile and closed automatism of mechanical entities", which Sohn-Rethel attributes to the Neapolitans, could thus indicate a resistance of the every day to the norm. It is an everyday that also requires a project but which can enter into an alliance with accident and derive discovery or an invention from this negotiation. Removed from the sphere of their intended functioning, the "broken things" seem to require a project that re-inserts them into necessary negotiations. Beyond the object, new transactions could emerge between the open space – "broken" because it has lost its original role – and what is "intact" and therefore disturbing (Sohn-Rethel, 2000, p. 46). This background in three parts has searched for the city's oxymoronic substance through the voices and warnings of Sohn-Rathel, Superstudio and Samonà. Now the thrust of the project continues with three elements –malaria, Caravaggio, cloisters– that perhaps allow us to put forward one more proposal.

Superstudio, Salvataggi dei centri storici italiani. Italia Vostra (Rescues of Italian historic centres. Your Italy), Naples, 1972. Warehouse design. Toraldo di Francia archive



INTERNAL OPEN SPACE

Davide di Martino

Naples is known as a coastal city, facing outwards, but its history is deeply linked to the hinterland. Historically, Naples was separated from the rest of the peninsula to the north by swamps that made access and communication difficult (De Seta, 1981).

In the late Renaissance and Baroque periods, the marshes to the north were plagued by malaria and any attempt at reclamation was complicated by the absence of a strong central government. The epidemic pushed rural populations to migrate to the city, causing a demographic explosion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (De Seta, 1981; Rossi Doria, 1960). Subjugation to the Catholic Church and the general disinterest in urban issues of the Spanish Viceroyalty aggravated the crisis caused by overpopulation (De Seta, 1981). The little land available was donated to religious orders for the construction of monasteries and convents, forcing the secular city to relinquish public spaces and expand upwards.

The nature of a compressed and suffocating city is captured by Caravaggio in *The Seven Works of Mercy* in which the scene takes place in an exterior so crowded and narrow that it seems like an interior (Pacelli, 2004).

The ancient centre of Naples follows the Greek foundation structure but was modified during the Baroque period with the introduction of macro-insulae and, above all, with a drastic reduction of public spaces (De Seta, 2007). Most of the open spaces are enclosed within cloisters, often inaccessible to the public or only accessible for a fee. Almost all of these spaces are within universities, political institutions and religious orders, creating a sort of "reverse campus", where open spaces are closed and public spaces are limited (De Seta, 1984).

The result is an implicit project of open space which aims to reverse this situation by opening and sharing the spaces of the cloisters, making them accessible to the public and integrating them into urban life. The objective is to design and manage Naples' open spaces with spatial devices that allow for the overlap of uses and users at different times, avoiding crowding these historic spaces with barriers and gates (Lynch, 1972; Busquets, 2005).

This approach requires the use of public space design strategies that allow for the flexible use of spaces, respecting their historical and cultural value (Busquets, 2005; Lynch, 1972). The gradual reduction of the presence of the public administration and the universities within these spaces, replaced by productive uses and public services organized from below, can contribute to revitalizing the urban fabric (Cottino, 2016).

Self-managed initiatives and local movements have already demonstrated

Caravaggio, Seven Works of Mercy, 1606-1607. Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples

the possibility of recovering abandoned spaces, offering services that the municipal administration is not always able to provide (Russo Spena, 2007).

Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, hydrological instability and urban neglect caused a dizzying increase in housing density in Naples. The construction of the Regi Lagni failed to stop the population growth. Courtesy D. di Martino, 2024

Oslo, Norway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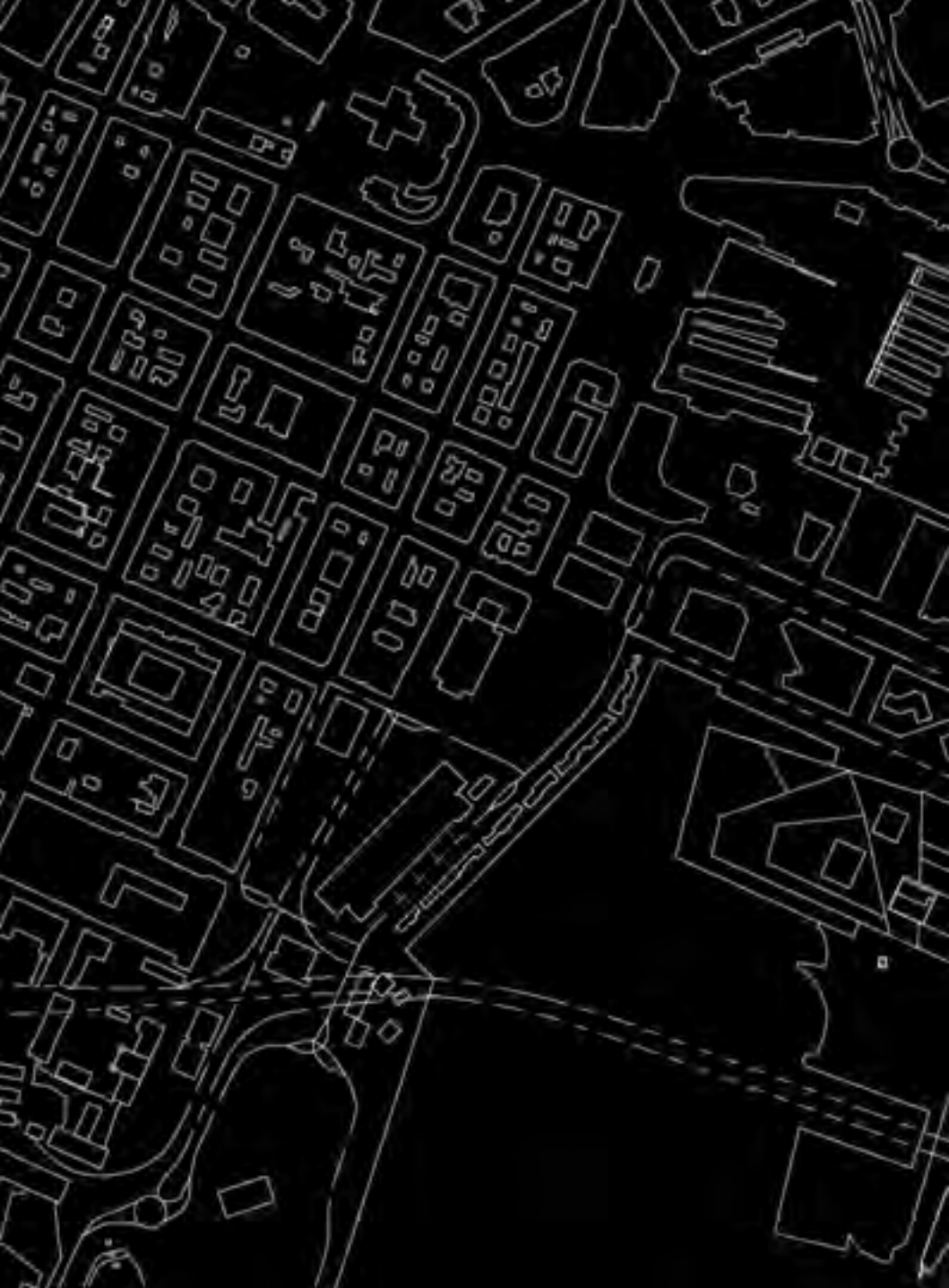


P. Stockfleth, Map of Christiania, 1784. National Library of Norway

B. Opmaalingsvæsen, Kristiania County, 1909. Kartverket, inv. 80-3

J. W. Edy, Christiania Harbour, 1800. National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo

T. Fearnley, View of the Oslo Fjords, 1839. National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design

OSLO, THE PROJECT OF THE CITY

Giambattista Zaccariotto

Situated at the innermost point of the homonymous fjord, Oslo is both the largest city in Norway and the core of its most dynamic urban region. It is also one of the European cities that has experienced the most radical transformations in the post-industrial period, both in terms of its physical structure and in patterns of everyday life. These transformations can be interpreted by looking at four distinct urban images.

From the late nineteenth century until the 1970s, Oslo functioned as a relatively small industrial city. Its centre, re-established adjacent to Akershus Fortress following the fire of 1624, was organised on a regular orthogonal grid. In the mid-nineteenth century, this layout was further extended with the construction of an avenue connecting the Central Station to the Royal Palace. Along this axis, new national monuments were erected, including the National Theatre, the Parliament, and the University. While urban life was increasingly focused around this representational axis, Norwegian identity, imagery, and lifestyle remained deeply anchored in rurality, closely associated with family intimacy and sustained contact with nature.

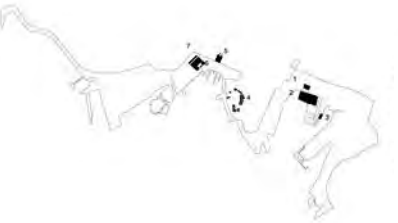
Around the same time, picturesque landscapes were increasingly being tailored to tourism, as is epitomised by the Holmenkollen ski jump, renovated in 1952 when Oslo hosted the Winter Olympics. However, this part of Oslo became notably less healthy than the other districts to the west during the industrial era, as polluting emissions were carried by the prevailing easterly winds and generated by factories located along the Akerselva, the principal river running through the city from north to south. In this period, the idea of two distinct cities was consolidating in the collective imagination with the bourgeois quarters with cleaner air located to the west and the working-class districts to the east, afflicted by poverty and disease, conditions vividly depicted in the paintings of Edvard Munch. Responding to this stark social inequality, the Norwegian Labour Party (Det Norske Arbeiderparti) consolidated its strength and laid the foundations for the democratic social model. Social justice was pursued through processes of urban and economic restructuring. Between the 1930s and the 1970s, substantial expansion of the city was required as a result of population growth, with all public investment directed towards the peripheral areas. The strategy began with the new towns model: autonomous housing developments for the working class, equipped with collective services and situated in proximity to public transport. By contrast, the city centre, regarded as the preserve

of the wealthy, was neglected and entered a phase of decline. Furthermore, in neighbouring municipalities, extensive areas of single-family housing were constructed for lower-middle-class families, financed through public loans and supported by tax incentives.
The 1980s marked a reversal in the flow of investment, with the abandonment of the periphery in favour of the centre, facilitated by new liberalisation policies, including the subdivision of private property. This trend allowed the middle class to reinvest in real estate in the central areas, often after acquiring ownership of their suburban dwellings. Subsequently, in the 1990s, the broader transition from an industrial to a service-based economy, together with the neoliberal reform of the Nordic model (traditionally grounded in values of equality, trust, and pragmatism) was accompanied by new redevelopment initiatives in the urban core. One of the principal ideological drivers of this phase was Richard Florida's theory of the Creative Class (Florida, 2002), which identified an emerging social group composed of knowledge workers, intellectuals, and various types of artists as a rising economic force. According to Florida, this group reflected a structural shift away from economies based on agriculture or industry and played a crucial role in the economic development of post-industrial cities and, more generally, in innovation and competitive success on a global scale. Therefore, enhancing the attractiveness of cities became a fundamental objective in order to draw global talent.
From this perspective, Oslo's urban policy has promoted the convergence of public and private investments in the city centre, drawing in particular on the substantial capital surplus generated by the recently developed oil industry. The principal focus of this transformation is the city's waterfront, articulated through the project known as Fjord City (Fjordbyen), which is directed towards enhancing access to the fjord, redeveloping port areas, and replacing the port's segregated industrial zones with new residential, commercial, cultural, and recreational functions. The port itself is being relocated to Sørhavna, while the main physical barrier between the city and the fjord is being dismantled. A key intervention in this regard is the replacement of the E18 highway with the Bjørvika tunnel. The overall transformation follows an incremental process, encompassing a dozen distinct sites, each characterised by different plans, stakeholders, timeframes, and urban strategies. In some parts, pre-existing elements – such as port buildings – are incorporated into the new urban fabric, as exemplified by Aker Brygge; in others, wholly new typologies have been

introduced, most notably in the Bjørvika Barcode district.
The first phase of redevelopment occurred in Aker Brygge in the 1980s, followed by interventions in Tjuvholmen and Bjørvika during the 2000s. From 2010 onwards, Sørenga and the remaining sections of Oslo's port were redeveloped. Within this framework, major national cultural institutions (including the Opera, the National Museum, the National Library, the Munch Museum, the Architecture Museum, and the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Contemporary Art) were relocated and concentrated along the new waterfront. In close proximity, national economic and financial agencies were established in high-rise blocks (the Barcode development), together with luxury residential complexes. This new configuration constituted a radical transformation of both the image and the structure of the city. While Fjord City was envisioned as an integrated extension of Oslo, the outcome has been perceived as a fragmented mosaic, lacking strong overall coherence. The concentration of cultural landmarks, global agencies, and exclusive housing along the waterfront has required vast infrastructure investments, producing a showcase primarily oriented towards global competition. As a consequence, escalating property values have generated new spatial and social inequality. The principal divide is no longer between the eastern and western districts separated by the Akerselva, but between the privileged waterfront edge and the urban interior.
Metropolitan Oslo, Greater Oslo, becomes legible when the entire territorial structure is considered as an order of physical elements and relational dynamics that sustain and organise fundamental activities such as housing, production, and traffic, encompassing both ancient and contemporary components.
The rationale behind this configuration can be traced to the restructuring of economy and society that accompanied the transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based society, in which major educational, financial, and healthcare institutions became key agents in the urbanisation process. The fact that Oslo is so well equipped for the knowledge economy, has resulted in the strong polarisation of internal migration within Norway, exerting considerable pressure on the city's central areas. This dynamic has in turn prompted critical reflection on spatial planning across the whole territory.
Today, the territory's structure is the result of two distinct processes. On the one hand, it is the product of urban planning guided by a polycentric

I

IV



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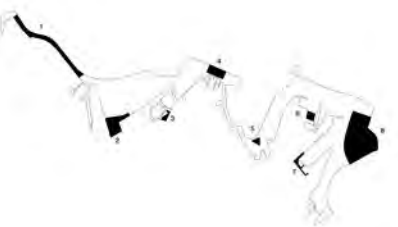


III

VI

I. Mobility system

II. Complementary parts

1. Frognerstranda, 2. Filipstad, 3. Tjuvholmen, 4. Aker Brygge,
5. Vestbanen, 6. Rådhusplassen, 7. Akershusstranda,
8. Vippetangen, 9. Bjørvika, 10. Loenga, 11. Alnas utløp

III. Open spaces and built areas system

IV. The system of nationally significant public buildings

1. New deichmanske main library, 2. Opera house,
3. Munch Museum, 4. Akershus Fortress, 5. Rådhuset,
6. Nobel peace center, 7.Nasjonalmuseum

V. The system of large open spaces

1. Frognerstranda, 2. Filipstad, 3. Tjuvholmen, 4. Rådhusplassen, 5. Vippetangen,
6. Bjørvika, 7. Sørega, 8. Middelalderparken

VI. Havnepromenade

Imagine by the author

Bjorvika from the shore of Sørenga with the Munch Museum and Barcode in the background. Courtesy G. Zaccariotto, 2019

vision and supported by a rapid and non-hierarchical transport system of railways and highways that link existing cities (understood as nodes of the network) and reinforce their consolidation. This polycentric vision posits sustainability as a balance between economic, social, and environmental factors to be pursued across the territory, offering an alternative to a hierarchical model centred on Oslo as the dominant regional magnet. On the other hand, actual dynamics are revealing of a more uneven and unbalanced pattern of development. For example, areas in proximity to global transport infrastructures – such as the international airport and European highway corridors – are undergoing intense growth, while more remote or disconnected areas face stagnation and decline. At the same time, Oslo, is becoming increasingly specialised in high-quality housing as well as cultural and commercial facilities and has consolidated its role as the new regional centre. Three distinct phases can be identified in the transformation of the territory's structure. Before the 1990s, the region exhibited a predominantly radial configuration with Oslo occupying a central position, with three principal urban axes extending south-west, north-east, and north–south directions along highways and railway lines.

The Sørenga waterfront and the island of Høvedoya. Courtesy G. Zaccariotto, 2019

The Munch Museum and Opera House, Sørenga and the Ekeberg promontory. Courtesy G. Zaccariotto, 2019

Subsequently, this radial system evolved into a polycentric structure, with new ring connections linking the radial axes and urban consolidation occurring at the nodal points. The polycentric model was conceived as a strategy to mitigate urban sprawl and land consumption, to limit polluting emissions, and to promote spatial justice.

The polycentric structure is indicative of Oslo's aspiration towards a non-hierarchical order, characterised by balance and equivalence in all directions, both in geometric terms and in territorial relations. However, the fjord and the protected forest zone (Marka) limit the full realisation of this model significantly. Moreover, the north–south corridor, which is anchored by the port of Gothenburg and reinforced by the high-speed rail line currently under construction, has become the principal gateway to the European system. The recent development of logistics and commercial facilities along this axis attests to its growing dynamism. These transformations, and the paradoxes they generate, undermine the very notion of balance that underpins the Regional Plan. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the Regional Plan, by producing unintended contradictions, has itself become part of the problem.

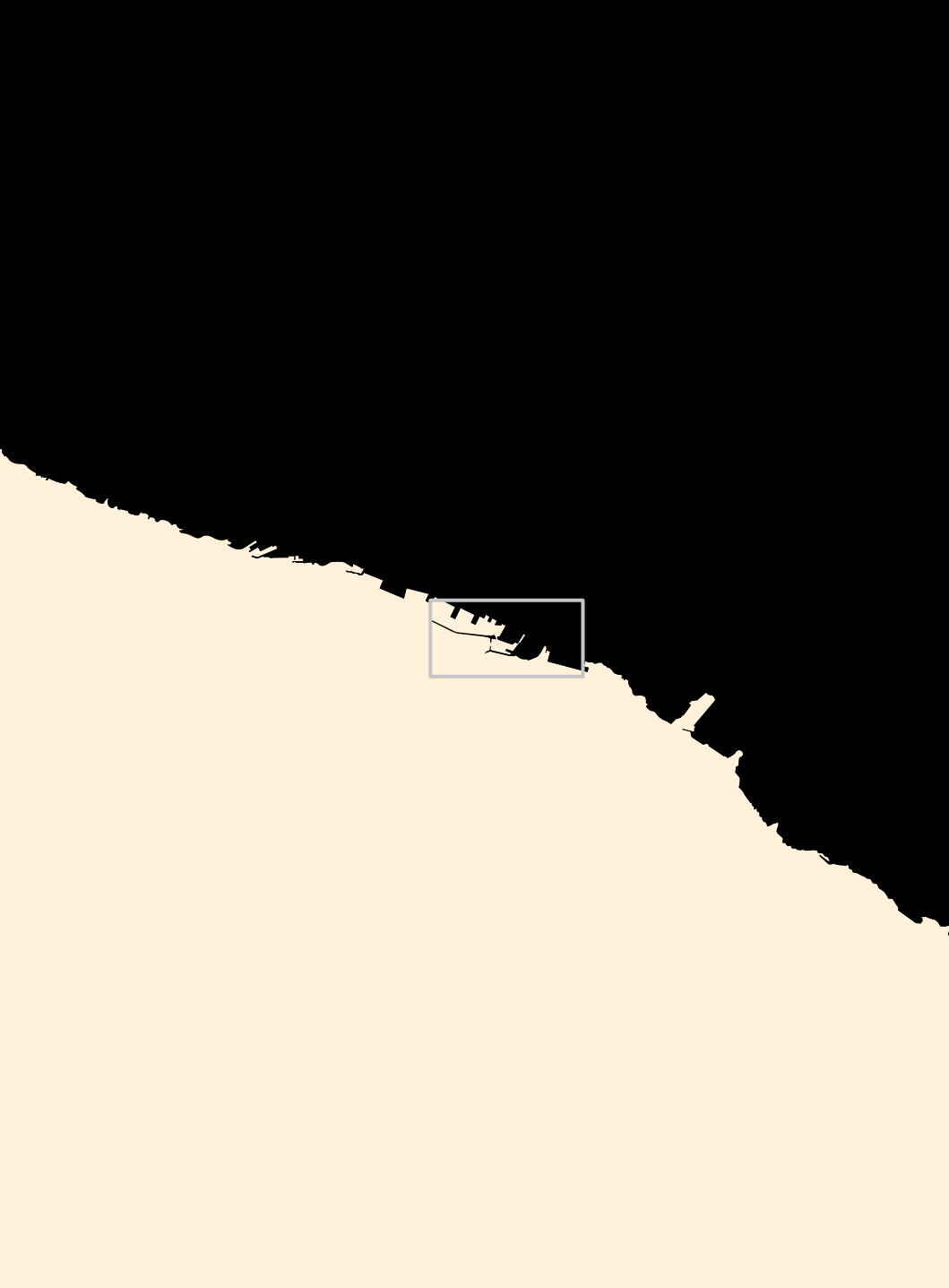
The shore of Akershusstranda and the islands of Oslo Fjord. Courtesy G. Zaccariotto, 2019

One contradiction or paradox concerns the relationship between compact and dispersed settlement within the region. In the Oslo region, dispersed living is a long-term structural phenomenon. The compact city centre originated as a modest commercial cluster, while capital accumulation was historically rooted in centuries of agricultural activity carried out on decentralised farms in the valleys. Between the 1920s and the 1970s, dispersed living was further reinforced as a model actively promoted by urban planning. Even today, approximately 40% of the population resides in areas characterised by detached houses on scattered plots, and prevailing lifestyles continue to favour space-intensive practices such as gardening, as well as outdoor activities connected to the forest and the sea, including skiing, fishing, and boating. Demand for detached housing has remained consistently high over the past two to three decades, particularly among young families with children. In addition, rising economic prosperity in recent years has fuelled increased demand for second homes.

A second paradox concerns municipalities. Municipalities served by rapid transit corridors benefit from targeted investments that stimulate growth,

while those with fewer transport connections are left to sustain existing social infrastructure – such as schools and healthcare facilities – amid rising demand for detached housing that outstrips supply. In response, these municipalities attempt to attract new residents by allocating land for single-family homes in decentralised areas on the edge of the forest, beyond the designated hubs where planning regulations have imposed population density limitations that are incompatible with this type of housing.
A third paradox is evident at the level of the individual, with particular implications for young people.
The policy aim of creating compact centres has resulted in elevated housing costs within designated hubs, driven both by high construction expenses and by competition among social groups. Consequently, access to the housing market has become increasingly restricted for the most vulnerable segments of the population.
A coherent design strategy to counterbalance these market-driven dynamics has yet to emerge, and this remains the principal challenge for urban planning in Oslo: the ongoing search for new concepts, strategies, and actions to achieve real territorial justice.

Rijeka, Croatia

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Ministry of Public Works, Rijeka, Historical Map of the Port Project in Rijeka, 1883.
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Atlas of Foreign Ports

G. Freytag & Berndt, Map of Rijeka, Vienna, 1910. State Archives, Rijeka

J. Rikyžka, View of Rijeka from the Western Suburbs, 1870, in von Littrow, H. (1870), Rijeka in Maritime Context, Rijeka: Mohovich

Anonymous, Rijeka, the Port, Croatia, Austro-Hungary, part of Views of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1897. Library of Congress

FROM FIUME TO RIJEKA: A CITY OF SUPERIMPOSITIONS

Luka Skansi

Among the various narrative techniques available to us for telling the story of a city, the one I prefer to use for Fiume (which is the Italian name for the city of Rijeka) is the historical, or rather, geopolitical narrative. The city's present form is in fact the result of an overlapping of major strategies, political upheavals, and ethnic crises that have enveloped the territory one after the other over the past one hundred and fifty years. To understand this, we need to observe not only the city with its buildings and urban spaces, but also the entire body of water it overlooks, namely the Gulf of Kvarner. Both the city itself and its waters should be situated and considered in ever broader contexts. In other words, we need to take into account the historical geography of Europe and the Mediterranean over the past two centuries.

International crises, as will be seen, have left an indelible imprint on the urban structure of Fiume. Indeed, architecture sets itself apart from other historical documents for the fact that it is not stored in archives, accessible only to a limited number of scholars and enthusiasts, but rather constitutes a physical fact that, through its scale, form, and spatiality, bears witness in a vivid and active way. In the case of Fiume it plays an almost exclusive role in recounting the historical and ethnic complexity of this territory. All this makes the experience of history potentially a collective, daily exercise.

To the history of international relations and geography (to which I will soon return), we must add another altogether unique factor in understanding this territory. The north-eastern Adriatic has always been marked by the coexistence and overlapping of different ethnic cultures: German-Austrian, Hungarian, Italian, Slavic, with all their internal nuances.

The overlap between these cultures, unfortunately, has gradually depleted and disappeared almost entirely towards the end of the last century.

The twentieth century impressed upon these territories a gradual elimination of ethno-cultural heterogeneity. With the first great crisis, the First World War, Hungarian and German cultures disappeared from the coast.

With the Second World War, following the tragic exodus of 1947–48, the Italian component was drastically reduced and with the third crisis (the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s), the expulsion of the Serbian and Bosniak components brought about the decline of Slavic heterogeneity.

Today, despite the presence of tiny minorities, Fiume is only Rijeka: a mono-ethnic city dominated by the Croatian population.

Nevertheless, as I stated above, it is architecture that tells the story of this

View of the Gulf of Kvarner and Rijeka: in the foreground, the Cosala cemetery and the Church of St Romuald; in the background, the port and the Molo Longo. Courtesy L. Skansi, 2024

overlapping today. The railway line and the port, the landfills, the *Teresiano* pier stretching one thousand four hundred metres, the industrial and port infrastructures all attest to a boom in Fiume.
Colossal investments arrived from Vienna and Budapest in the 1870s with the goal of transforming an insignificant settlement on the eastern Adriatic into the principal port of the Hungarian Empire. A port that, within a few decades, became the fifth largest in terms of goods transported in the Mediterranean and assumed, along with the far more developed Trieste and following the excavation of the Suez Canal, a crucial importance in the Empire's geopolitical framework. These transformation left their mark on the city on a grand scale and still define its image today, particularly regarding the severing of the centuries-old physical and functional relationship between the city and the sea.
The Austro-Hungarian city was the city of infrastructures, palaces, and the invention of tourism for the Central European bourgeoisie (above all Abbazia–Opatija and Laurana–Lovran), but Italian city was predominantly a symbolic one. Residential buildings, community structures such as schools, Fascist and Italian Youth headquarters, churches, and the interventions at the Cosala cemetery all bear witness to the Italianising imprint on these territories. Eclectic and modernist languages informed

the architecture of Fiume as the extreme outpost of the eastern border of Italy. When Fiume lost its economic and strategic importance within the new geography of Italy, the city became a place where celebration was chiefly enacted. On one hand, it stood for the reconquest of the redeemed lands and on the other, it provided a symbolic border with the other emerging political power, adversary and victor of the First World War: The Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The banks of the Eneo (Rječina),

Anonymous, The skyscraper designed by Umberto Nordio in the months following the Liberation, 1945. City Museum of Rijeka

the river that runs through the centre of the city, marked the border between the two countries throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and, thanks to the river's delta still retains today its border-like, unplanned, unresolved aspect. Socialist Rijeka, in turn, tells of yet another phase of modernisation in which urban planning played a central and decisive role in the functional and aesthetic organisation of urban development. Industrial modernisation, with its great shipyards, warehouses and

Anonymous, The Clock Tower following the removal of the double-headed eagle sculpture. State Archives of Rijeka

workshops, occupied most of the coastal strip and continued the Austro-Hungarian division between city and sea. Residential modernisation, infused the construction of neighbourhoods which were organised into clusters of tower blocks, deliberately redesigning the skyline and image of the city. Tourist modernisation played a fundamental role across the entire gulf, establishing modern tourism in socialist Yugoslavia, part of that social welfare today labelled by new theory as *socialist arcadia*. Tourism became a crucial branch of the economy during the Titoist era, both as a way of representing the country abroad and of attracting foreign capital to offset its trade deficit. Finally, infrastructural modernisation was seen through the building of the coastal *magistrala* road in the 1960s which connected Fiume to the Bay of Kotor. In the same vein, the strengthening of the port, building on Austro-Hungarian structures led to Fiume's port becoming the country's main industrial port while the oil pipeline linked the refinery, also of Austro-Hungarian origin, to the country's hinterland. In today's *fluid modernity*, amid all the administrative and economic crises affecting the port and contemporary Croatia, the city is no longer the subject of planning and design by urbanists and architects. In the

Croatian city, the role of contemporary architecture is decidedly modest. With only a few rare exceptions (such as the university campus, the works of Idis Turato and Studio 3lhd) the city is otherwise a swarm of inconsistent urban developments, insignificant spatial objects and entities within today's sprawling conurbation. Interventions are numerous and large in scale, but they are not conceived to form a city. This certainly does not imply responsibility on the part of architects, but rather describes the current general state of the profession in society and the status that architecture "enjoys" in contemporary urban development.

But, my means of a conclusion, I will change the scale of observation and enliven the difficult yet stimulating geopolitical reading of the relationship between Fiume and the powers that have historically dominated it with an example. Among numerous examples, one in particular is ideal for synthesising and conceptualising the problem.

It is the story of the sculpture that became the city's symbol, placed in the mid-eighteenth century on the dome of the City Tower, the most representative site of the then small Adriatic town. The building stands along the Korzo, the old shore of the medieval city, transformed into its representative axis following the landfills carried out by the Austrian and Hungarian authorities during the construction of the port. The sculpture of the double-headed eagle, whose heads face the same direction (unlike the more famous coat of arms belonging to the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy), was first removed when Fiume became a *Corpus Separatum* of the Empire, only to be reinstalled a few years later (1906). But the first major transformation of this symbol took place during the D'Annunzio occupation (1919), when one of the two heads was mutilated, converting the Habsburg emblem into that of ancient Rome (the severed head is now kept in D'Annunzio's residence on Lake Garda).

The sculpture was definitively removed in 1949, during the early years of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, as it was interpreted as a bourgeois and divisive symbol, especially after the unification of Fiume with the Slavic district of Sušak. After more than sixty-five years, it was re-installed (or rather, a copy of it was) as a symbol of the process of rebirth of the city's ethnic diversity (*različitost*); the slogan with which the Croatian administration put Fiume forward as European Capital of Culture for 2020. This was also the year in which the city reached the lowest rate of ethnic diversity in the past one hundred and fifty years of its history.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil


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Distretto Federale, General Directorate of Works and Transport, under the authority of Prefect General Bento Ribeiro. Rio de Janeiro Map, 1913. The Fondação Biblioteca Nacional Archive

D. A. Martins Costa, 1884; 1808 original. São Sebastião - Rio de Janeiro Map. Library of Congress

J. F. Vogler, Panorama view of Rio de Janeiro, 1873.
Work donated by Emil Bauch to Emperor Dom Pedro II, 1873

Vienna: Leopold Sommer & Cia Art Institute, 1873. Collection of the Fundação Estudar, at the State Art Gallery of São Paulo

G. Ferrez, Entrance to Guanabara Bay with Sugarloaf Mountain in the background from Niterói, 1885. Gilberto Ferrez Collection. Instituto Moreira Salles Archive

RIO DE JANEIRO, A TROPICAL CITY IN THE TIJUCA FOREST

Matteo D'Ambros

The urban structure of Rio de Janeiro is the product of more than five centuries of layered and juxtaposed transformations, which started with the arrival of Portuguese colonisers led by the navigator André Gonçalves in 1502. A critical reading of Rio's urban morphology reveals a sequence of interventions, marked by the recurrent expansion and contraction of the city across an extensive coastal territory. The most substantial reconfigurations of the territorial structure were crystallised between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were defined by a progressive desacralisation of nature and the parallel erasure of historical memory, in pursuit of modernity (Segre, 2013). Today, within the administrative boundaries of an urbanised territory exceeding 1,200 square kilometres, Rio de Janeiro is home to approximately 6.2 million people. When considering the whole metropolis, which includes twenty-two municipalities, the population exceeds 12 million (IPEA, 2022).
The geography of Rio de Janeiro is characterised by pronounced physical singularities, but three factors deserve particular attention, as they have decisively informed planning choices and the shaping of Rio de Janeiro's urban form and design. Foremost among these is the vast and multiform coastline, where the tension between land and sea produces a definitive urban edge and establishes an urban landscape that has and still inspires projects of different scales. The spatial sequence generated along this littoral edge reveals a distinctive system of public open spaces, carefully negotiated with continuous and high-density façades. This sequence stretches from Avenida Atlântica in Copacabana, through Botafogo Bay and Flamengo Park, to the expansive Guaratiba Bay, and ultimately to Niterói, where, as the toponym suggests, "the water conceals itself", offering an example of an irreproducible urban continuum of emblematic sites (de Cazal, 1817, p. 12).
Two further elements, intrinsic to Rio de Janeiro's tropical natural environment, serve as counterpoints to the continuous urban façade along the ocean. The first is the dynamic topography punctuated by the *morros* (brown basaltic hills) that gives the landscape a highly distinctive character, to the extent that this topographical element has become both emblematic and generative of advanced urban planning and design experiments. A notable reference in this regard is Le Corbusier's evocative yet ultimately unrealised proposal for a *viaduct habité* (habitable viaduct). In conceiving a new image for Rio de Janeiro, Le Corbusier – who argued that every city possesses its own geography

Copacabana. Courtesy L. Finotti, 2024

(Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, 1958) – envisioned an immense suspended infrastructure, almost totally indifferent to its immediate context, that would cut across and inscribe itself within the territory's complex orography as a modernist utopia.

Conversely, exuberant *natureza* of the city is a defining feature. The native vegetation of the Mata Atlântica dominates the city, appearing to envelop and, in places, almost subsume the built environment. Indeed, this disruptive natural agency is a vital reservoir of biodiversity for the city. Central to this system is the Tijuca Forest, the largest urban forest in the world, which plays a critical role in regulating the microclimate. Extending across approximately 32 square kilometres – nearly ten times the size of New York's Central Park – the Tijuca comes into direct contact with the urban fabric, asserting itself as a key driver of ecological renewal. It thus offers up a model for urban sustainability while simultaneously positioning itself as a fundamental element in Rio de Janeiro's ongoing transformation from metropolis to contemporary *cidade parque* (park-city) (Boifava, 2020).

Beyond the morphological dimension of inhabited space, these three powerful environmental determinants – the coastline, the topography, and

Copacabana. Courtesy L. Finotti, 2024

the *natureza* – possess a generative force that has historically inspired and conditioned planning. They may be understood not only as objects susceptible to transformation, but also as active subjects, indeed as possible origins, of the major planning choices that have historically concurred in shaping the modern development of Rio de Janeiro (Bernardes, 1987).

These factors engage directly with questions concerning the design of new urban spaces and the sustainable management of natural resources. Among the multiple issues embedded in the city's historical trajectory, water management is particularly pressing and warrants careful examination as it central to the provision of potable water in the future. Equally significant are interventions in wetland areas (*pantanal*), which were systematically drained to enable the occupation of newly reclaimed land, facilitating both agricultural exploitation and urban expansion.

From this perspective, it is possible to delineate a series of salient episodes in Rio de Janeiro's urban history, while also acknowledging its identity as a tropical American city that was Brazil's capital until 1959. Such a reading suggests that the city's urban design has been marked over time by abrupt accelerations of diverse origins, which collectively contributed to shaping the distinctive features of an urbanity that was, in many respects, unprecedented (McNeill and Engelke, 2016).

These transformations are closely linked to historical conjunctures and to shifts in the infrastructural and socio-economic structures of an urbanised territory undergoing rapid expansion, particularly from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards (Abreu, 1992).

The first instance of abrupt acceleration was seen in the large-scale destruction of tropical forest for the intensive extraction of brazilwood (*Paubrasilia echinata*). The Portuguese began deforestation began in the sixteenth century under Pedro Álvares Cabral. The natural environment surrounding the city continued to be degraded to provide land for the expansion of sugarcane and coffee plantations well into the nineteenth century. This process not only brought the valued tree species to the brink of extinction but also caused irreversible damage to the hydrological system upon which the urban settlement depended.

in the second instance of sudden acceleration can be traced to 1808, when Queen Maria I of Portugal and Prince Regent Dom João VI, fleeing Napoleon's advance, transferred the royal court from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro. The sudden influx of approximately twenty thousand inhabitants,

Copacabana. Courtesy L. Finotti, 2011

into what was then a city of around seventy thousand, necessitated additional urban transformation. Elevated to the status of imperial capital, Rio de Janeiro rapidly acquired new spatial and symbolic configurations, most notably through the establishment of a new urban centre structured around the Quinta da Boa Vista project. In that same year, Prince Regent Dom João VI also founded the *Horto Real* – the Botanical Garden – conceived as a privileged site for the acclimatisation and propagation of tropical plant species.

During the monarchical period (1822–1889), urban development in Rio de Janeiro was largely oriented towards beautification projects and infrastructural improvements aimed at addressing public health concerns. The Missão Artística Francesa (French Artistic Mission), established in 1816 under royal patronage, thrived during these decades, reinforcing the association between urban form, cultural representation, and modernisation. At the same time, reforestation initiatives were undertaken in the Tijuca Hills. Beginning in 1862, approximately 100,000 small native trees were planted over a fifteen-year period under the direction of Manuel Gomes Archer, who had been appointed superintendent of the Tijuca and Paineiras forestry reserves. This intervention remains a lasting legacy and can be regarded as a pioneering experiment in urban environmental management, specifically in linking afforestation with the safeguarding of the city's water supply through systematic tree planting and the regulation of public land. The multi-species approach adopted in this reforestation project signalled the emergence of an innovative paradigm for the protection of water resources, as well as for the integration of urban and forestry planning (Drummond, 1996).

Rio de Janeiro's substantial modernisation began during the First Republic (1889–1930). Under the administrations of Francisco Pereira Passos (1902–1906) and Carlos Sampaio (1920–1922), a series of large-scale urban planning interventions were undertaken, predominantly monumental in character, which radically reconfigured the city's morphology. These initiatives can be situated within the broader context of 'Haussmannisation', reflecting the adaptation of European urban restructuring models to the Brazilian capital (Abreu, 1987). Foremost among these initiatives was the opening of Avenida Central (now Avenida Rio Branco), inaugurated in 1905. This project was the result of extensive expropriations and led to the demolition of much of the city's colonial fabric, imposing a new urban axis that not only altered the topography but

also reorganised the symbolic geography of republican power. Along this avenue the principal public buildings of the new regime were concentrated, including the Monroe Palace, the Municipal Theatre, the National Library, the School of Fine Arts, and the Supreme Court.
In the subsequent decades, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, this momentum continued through a number of significant modernist interventions. This period constituted a “heroic phase,” characterised by intensive architectural and urban planning experimentation (Mindlin, 2000), which developed both as a response to and in opposition against the passéist principles embedded in the Agache Plan (Agache, 1930) – an unfinished yet influential precursor to Rio de Janeiro’s modern large-scale urban reorganisation.
The desire to reimagine the architecture and urban dynamics of Rio de Janeiro mobilised an entire generation of architect, most notably Sérgio Bernardes, Roberto Burle Marx, Lúcio Costa, Carlos Leão, Jorge Machado Moreira, Marcelo Roberto, Milton Roberto, Maurício Roberto, Oscar Niemeyer, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, and Ernani Vasconcelos. Their engagement with the city advanced a repertoire of architectural and urban models that came to define a clear path for Brazil’s

Copacabana. Courtesy L. Finotti, 2024

Military Geographic Service of Brazil, Part of the Federal District of Rio de Janeiro, 1922.
Archive of the Fondação Biblioteca Nacional


Parte da Carta do
DISTRICTO FEDERAL
Rio de Janeiro
1922

twentieth-century modernism. Their work attained iconic status not only for their spatial innovations, but also for their development of an original and sophisticated formal vocabulary that resonated internationally (Goodwin, 1943). What is particularly significant is the manner in which these projects crystallised a paradigm *inédit* for urban modernity. They did not merely produce buildings or open spaces of exemplary design quality, rather they reconfigured the relationship between architecture, landscape, and urban infrastructure, establishing reference points that continue to inform Rio de Janeiro's sense of urbanity today. In this light, emblematic interventions such as the Ministry of Education and Health (MES, 1937–43), Salgado Filho Square (1943), the ABI Building (1938), Santos Dumont Airport (1944), the Nova Cintra Housing Complex (1948–54), the Pedregulho Housing Complex (1950–52), the Museum of Modern Art (MAM, 1954), the Flamengo Park System (1962–64), and the Copacabana Promenade (1970) can all be read as more than isolated achievements. They constitute a corpus through which modern architecture became a vehicle for constructing an urban identity that was national in its ambition and global in resonance. Each project, in different ways, merged functionalist canons with a distinctly spatial awareness, blending international modernist ideals with a specific attention to environment, climate, landscape, and social aspiration of achieving democratic ideals.

Sydney, Australia


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C. Leseur, Plan of the city of Sydney, 1802. State Library of New South Wales Z/Ce 82/2

J. Sulman, Plan of the city. It shows the city's railway, new roads and general improvements recommended by the Royal Commission. 1909. In Public Sydney drawing the city by Philip Thalis, Peter John Cantrill

Anonymous, The bridge of the port of Sydney, 1914. Nine Archives

Anonymous, George Street, 1931. Sydney Morning Herald

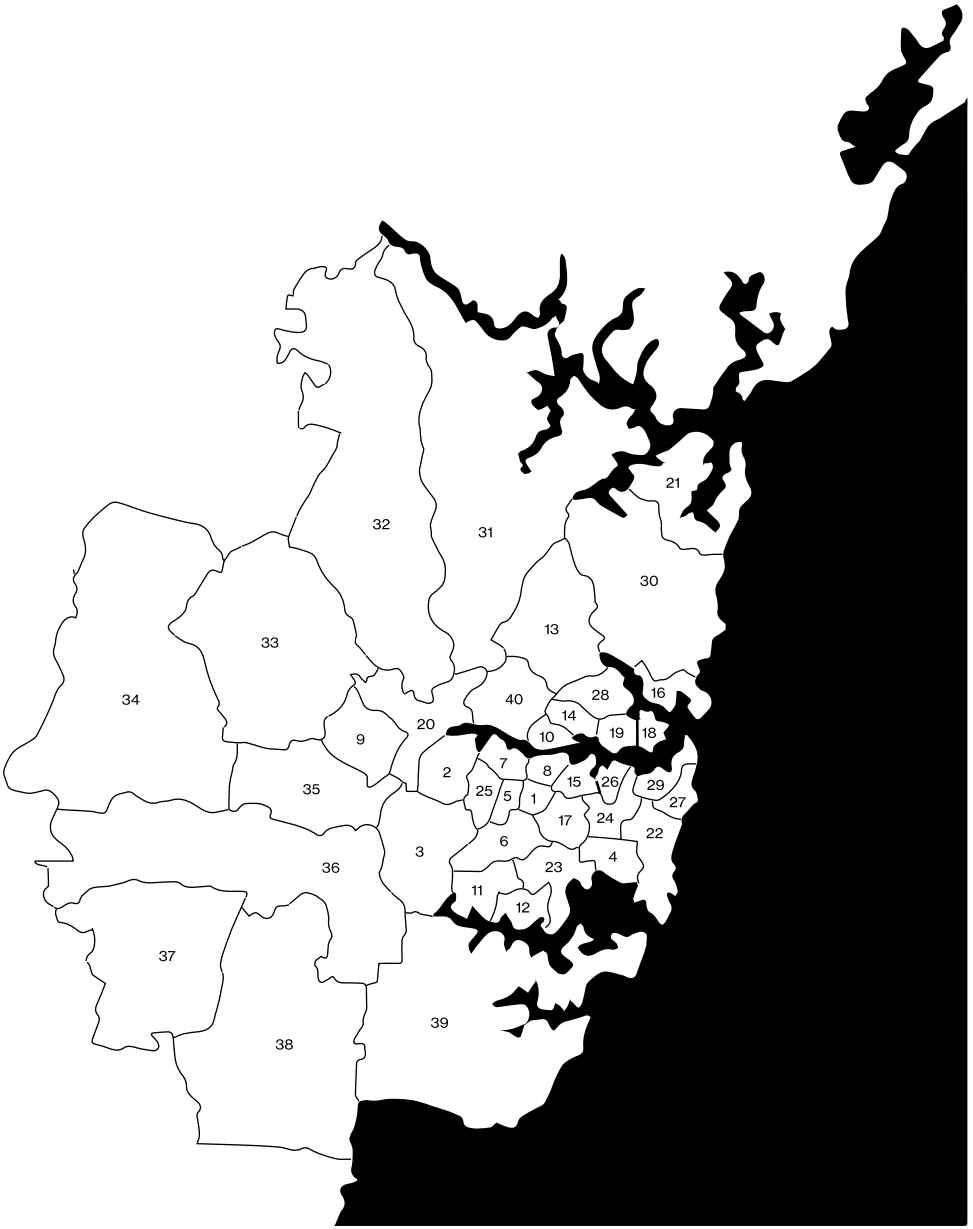
SYDNEY DOES NOT EXIST

Urtzi Grau

Sydney does not exist. Its name is the only glue connecting an urban conglomeration of 658 suburbs organised in 40 independent City Councils and local government areas, hosting five and a half million inhabitants and occupying approximately 12,000 km² within the traditional lands of the Darug, Dharawal and Eora peoples.[1] No government structures, legal frameworks, or urban planning link them together. Public transportation and road management are under the purview of the New South Wales (NSW) State Government. Urban regulations, rubbish collection and park maintenance fall under the supervision of the local councils. Bike paths abruptly end at council limits, and the chances of finding a trash bin on the street vary according to your area's political and economic conditions (Parliament of New South Wales, n.d.).
This is an exception for a city of this size in the Western world. Metropolitan authorities of all sizes, structures and denominations have imposed their logic across all ideologies and contexts. Even the capital of liberalism, London, the colonial mirror against which Sydney likes to measure itself, re-established the Greater London Authority in 1998 after Margaret Thatcher's government abolished it in 1986.[2] Sydney's need for an administrative structure between the local and state levels is often cited as one of the reasons for Sydney's urban dysfunctionality. Larger urban projects require painful negotiations between independent councils and the state government, often governed by opposing political parties. Efforts have been made to remedy the issue. The Greater Sydney Commission, a state government's attempt to establish an independent agency supervising strategic spatial planning across the metropolis, survived for seven years, between 2015 and 2022.[3] The Committee for

1 Due to the lack of legal frameworks and government structures, the number of councils defining Sydney varies according to the sources. Neither the Office for Local Government of the NSW Government (n.d.) nor the Local Government NSW (n.d.) list the councils that define Sydney. The Greater Sydney Commission list 33 (Greater Cities Commission Act, 2022), the Australian Bureau of Statistics list up to 42 Greater Capital City Statistical Areas, or GCCSAs (Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d.) while most of the maps available online list up to 40 after the last mergers.

2 The Greater London Council was abolished by the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher in 1986 and established as the Greater London Authority (GLA) after a referendum in May 1998. For a detailed history of the GLA see Zimmerman, Joseph (28 August 2003). "The Greater London Authority: Devolution or Administrative Decentralization?". *American Political Science Association*: 6.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U. Grau. The 40 local government areas and City Councils that compose Sydney:

1. Ashfield
2. Auburn
3. Bankstown
4. Botany
5. Burwood
6. Canterbury
7. Concord
8. Drummoyne
9. Holroyd
10. Hunters Hill
11. Hurstville
12. Kogarah
13. Ku-ring-gai
14. Lane Cove
15. Leichhardt
16. Manly
17. Marrickville
18. Mosman
19. North Sydney
20. Parramatta
21. Pittwater
22. Randwick
23. Aockdale
24. South Sydney
25. Strathfield
26. Sydney
27. Waverley
28. Willoughby
29. Woollahra
30. Warringah
31. Hornsby
32. Baulkham Hills
33. Blacktown
34. Penrith
35. Fairfield
36. Liverpool
37. Camden
38. Campbelltown
39. Sutherland
40. Ryde

Imagine by the author

Sydney, a private think-tank advocating for metropolitan management and lobbying for particular projects, seems more successful in promoting discussions at the government level around pedestrianisation, densification, heat-island effect and urban mobility, yet lacks executive power or public control (The Committee for Sydney, n.d.). The most recent effort to set up a metropolitan authority was in 2022 (The Greater Cities Commission Act, 2022). Called the Greater Cities Commission and organised by the NSW government, this authority extended beyond Sydney to include its neighbouring cities, Newcastle and Wollongong. It lasted less than a year and was dissolved after the election brought a different party to power (The Greater Cities Commission Repeal Bill, 2023). Sydney's coastline is its most iconic feature and the area where the lack of an intermediate government level is most apparent. Historically called Crown land and held and managed in the 'right of the Crown' by the NSW State Government, it is home to many obsolete industrial facilities and has been the site of recent large-scale urban redevelopments (NSW Government, n.d.). Sydney has a history of transformative planning operations. The Royal Commission for the Improvement of the City of Sydney and its Suburbs from 1909 might have been the first (albeit after-the-fact) attempt to plan the city (Royal Commission, 1909). The post-war expansion of the train network and the brutal introduction of urban highways produced some of the more extensive and enduring scars and after the 1960s urban renewal plans threatening entire neighbourhoods, often involving sites by the water, which combined publicly owned land and private real estate pressures (Antrill and Thalis, 2013). Three cases around the city's central business district (CBD) illustrate this case. Firstly, since the mid-1960s, various unsuccessful attempts have been made to raze the Rocks, Sydney's oldest neighbourhood, in order to extend the CBD.[4] The initial schemes by architect and town planner John Overall included combinations of office towers and housing blocks hovering over a new cruise terminal overlooking the Opera House, which

3 The Greater Sydney Commission was formally empowered with the passing of the Greater Sydney Commission Act 2015 and dissolved through the *Greater Cities Commission Act 2022*.

4 The 'Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority' was established on 12 January 1970 under the *Sydney Cove Redevelopment Act 1968* and its functions were taken over by the 'Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority' on 1 February 1999.

was under construction at the time (Overall, 1999). The appeal of Utzon's building is already evident in the few elements that were implemented in the 1990s, including the terminal and several sites adjacent to the water, now occupied by high-end hotels and condominiums.[5] The redevelopment plans also triggered a widespread reaction in the 1970s led by the Rocks Residents Group and a two-year-long Green Ban by the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF), which saw construction workers blocking access to sites or refusing to demolish to prevent the destruction of the neighbourhood green and historical sections (Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998).

Alongside these events, in 1971, a consortium of developers led by Sidney Londish's Gateway Developments/Regional Landholdings promoted a similar plan to raze Woolloomooloo, a working-class neighbourhood blocks away from the city centre, which was received with equal resistance by the local inhabitants and the BLF. Their plans to build a second CBD East of the Sydney Botanical Gardens were eventually abandoned, substituted by an infill medium-density public housing plan developed by the NSW Housing Commission that was finally built in the 1990s following designs by Cox Architecture. The 1971 plan had also included the demolition of the historical Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf, the longest timbered-piled wharf in the world, which the protest saved. In the 1990s, the wharf was renovated to host a high-end hotel, private apartments, and a marina, including luxury terraced houses, which prevented the public housing plan from directly accessing the water edge (Duncan Parry, 2019).

Finally, the redevelopment of Barangaroo (the discontinued harbour West of Sydney's CBD) in the 2000s followed a different pattern. Following an international competition launched in 2004 by the Barangaroo Delivery Authority, the winning plans by Hill Thalis Architecture suffered an endless series of readjustments. By 2009, the NSW Government abandoned it in favour of a Richard Rogers/Land Lease plan that exponentially increased the *Floor Area Ratio* (FAR) and blocked the waterside walkway with a new casino tower. The scandal that followed, which included the resignation of the Sydney Lord Mayor and various commission members in disagreement with the proposed plan, did not prevent its implementation (Pham, 2017). Rogers' office buildings, Renzo Piano's recently completed residential

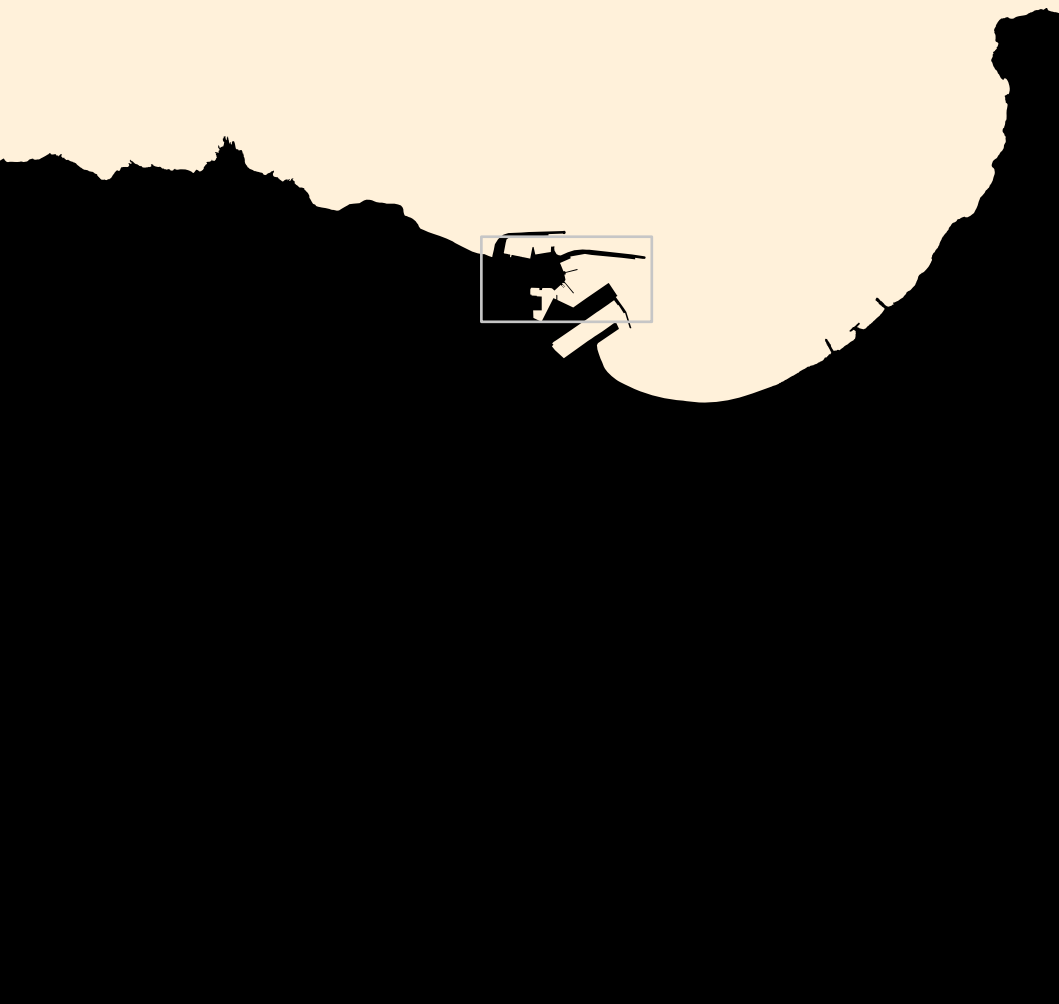
5 The plans for the Rocks are available at 'AGY-440 | Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority (1970-1991) / Sydney Cove Authority (1991- 1999)' in the *NSW State Archives and Records*

G. Lipman. The NSW Premier, Mr Askin, unveils a model of the $400 million Woollomooloo redevelopment project, 15 October 1971

tower, and especially the only recently opened Wilkinson Eyre Architects' Crown Tower (delayed by the fact that the owner Crown Casinos lost its licence to operate it due to corruption charges) are testament to the latest wave of neoliberal politics in a city already prone to laissez-faire urbanism. This time, widespread outrage and weakened unions did not halt the most extensive privatisation of Sydney's waterfront so far.

Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners. Lend Lease's master plan for Barangaroo, including Richard Rogers Partnership's office buildings, Renzo Piano Workshop's residential towers and Wilkinson Eyre-designed Crown Hotel tower. Image Land Lease.

Tangier, Morocco

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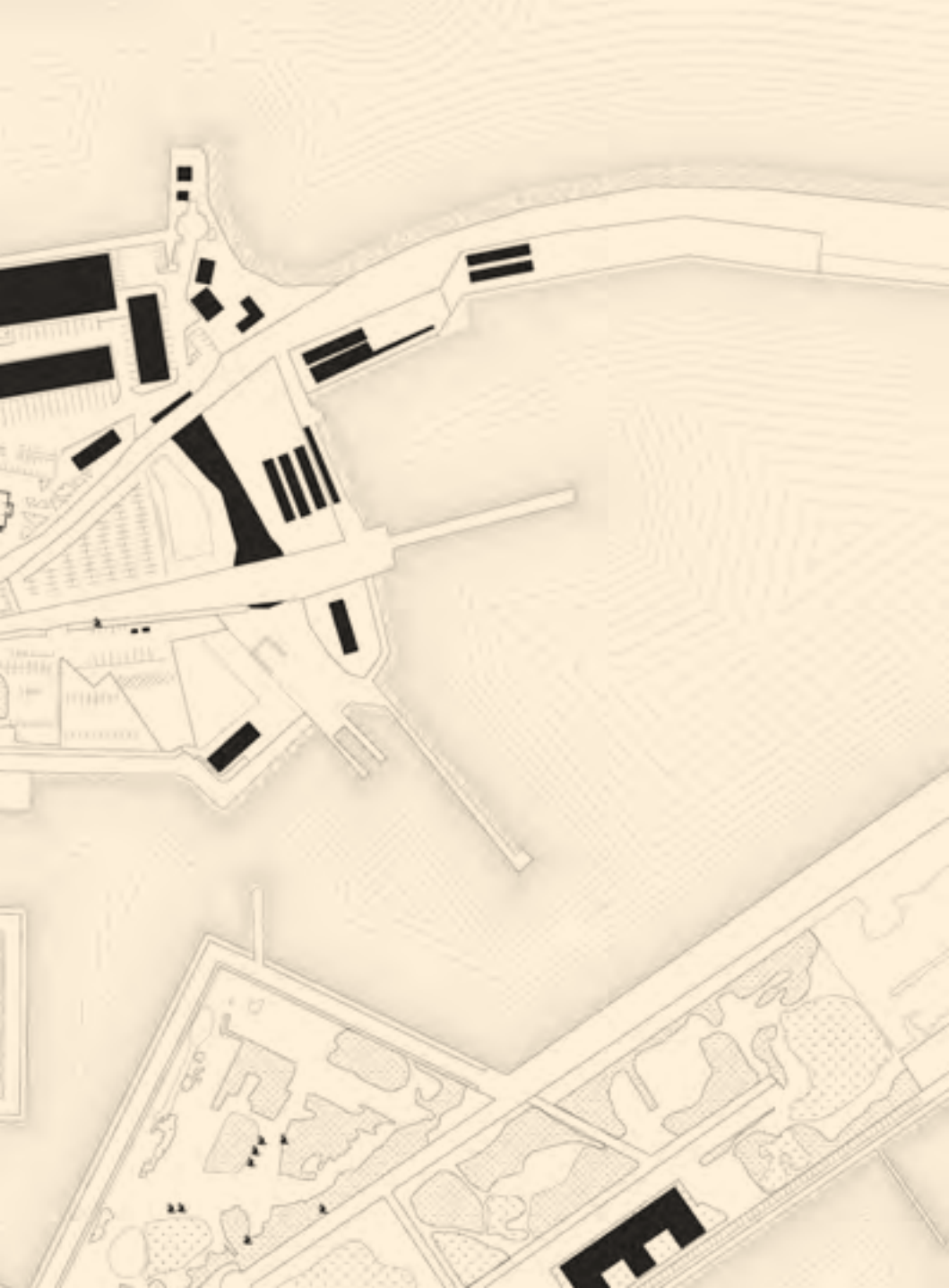


W. Hollar, *Map of the City of Tangier with the Strait of Gibraltar*, Tangier, 1664.

E. Fernandez, Tangier after D. Domingo Meseguer S. Section chief of the Tangier-Fez railway, 1921. Instituto Geografico Nacional, Spain

Anonymous, *Palace of Justice*, ca. 1890. Library of Congress

Tangier

PUBLIC SPACE IN TANGIER BETWEEN INVENTION AND RECONQUEST

Hakim Cherkaoui

Since the 2000s, the city of Tangier, like other large Moroccan cities, has been reborn thanks to a policy of beautification and enhancement of public space, which for a long time had been considered only from a functionalist perspective. Recently, the city has become a showcase (Choplin and Gatin, 2012, p. 23) for urban economic growth in Morocco. Once associated with wandering and transit, Tangier has become symbolic of the country's development. This conception of public space is designed to seduce investors and tourists from industrialized countries in order to convey a new image of urbanity on a par with modern countries. In this transformation of public space, modernity and tradition coexist; open, legible space and planimetric configurations provide visual perspectives characterized by traditional signs (*ibid*., p. 29).

All this not only governs the production of new spaces in juxtaposition with ancient spaces, but also concerns spaces inherited from other historical periods. The question is whether ancient spaces are also experiencing a mutation that affects their nature and essence by inserting them into an idea of a new "modern" public space? Does this design approach lead the users of these spaces to propose new uses and modes of spatial appropriation? Using some of our fieldwork, carried out in the architectural laboratory at the Schools of Architecture of Tetouan and Rabat, this chapter focuses with particular attention on the city of Tangier.

Sedimentation is the genesis of public space of Tangier; a palimpsest, to use André Corboz's expression (Corboz, 1983), made up of traces of various urban projects dating back to ancient periods marked by the presence the Phoenicians on the Marshan plateau, then of the Carthaginians and the Romans. From the Roman Empire, Tangier also inherited part of the cardo and the forum where, from the end of the 8th century, construction on the medina began. Even today, emblematic public spaces exist in the same places. The construction of the Arab city erased the clarity of the Roman layout to the point that the ancient forum, known as *petit socco*, almost assumes the character of an anecdote of Rome within the labyrinth of the Arab city. Unlike in ancient Rome, where public space was first and foremost a means of political expression of the city, the public space of the Arab city, heir to the Byzantine city, is a space of commerce and circulation. Business takes place in pre-established places: mosques, palaces and other closed spaces. The Roman cardo has become one of the liveliest shopping streets in the medina. This axis of the ancient city, rue Siaghine, currently leads to what was once a public

Street in the ancient medina of Tangier. Courtesy H. Cherkaoui, 2024

square and today is known as the *grand socco*. It is worth remembering that the main public places of the old medina were located outside the ramparts and served primarily as centres for trade.
Since 2000, the external public spaces of the medina have been the subject of particular attention. The installation of floor coverings and interventions to enhance the facades of some heritage buildingshas benefited residents and other users such as bar owners. Residents have greened some alleys with the installation of flowerpots and have also painted the white facades in an array of colours. Bar owners do not hesitate to set up terraces in front of their premises in spaces not usually intended for this purpose. All these actions contribute to a real metamorphosis of the space outside the medina, contributing in part to its modernization.
However, this is not the first substantial change to have occurred in these places. The arrival of European populations from the mid-nineteenth century onwards caused the first expansion of the medina of Tangier. Rue d'Italie, which features Spanish-style architecture, is an example of this. Furthermore, the relationship with the sea began to change, marking a further development of the city. An area long limited to a simple boarding area and customs, the seafront was transformed through the construction of hotels, villas and the development of the so-called *corniche*. With these interventions the seafront went from being a space with a strictly functional use to a place for walking, shows and free time. By the 20th century, Tangier had acquired the status of an international city managed by France, England, Spain and Germany (*ibid*, 2012). Since then, the scale of the city's expansion has increased and each nation has marked its territory over time with designs and symbols, distinguishing areas of public space. Even today these signs are still visible. European in design, public space in these neighbourhoods is a theatrical and ceremonial, created for traffic, but also to encourage meetings between strangers or group, giving space to pedestrians. In this way, these areas differ greatly from the space of the medina which was designed strictly according to a monofunctional logic. During this period, the introduction of parks and green spaces resulted in the appearance of landscape elements that had previously been absent even in the space of the medina. Subsequently, in the mid-20th century, a functionalist approach governed the territorial development of Tangier and the reign of the automobile began in conjunction of a new wave of city dwellers. Alongside operations planned according to the principles of the

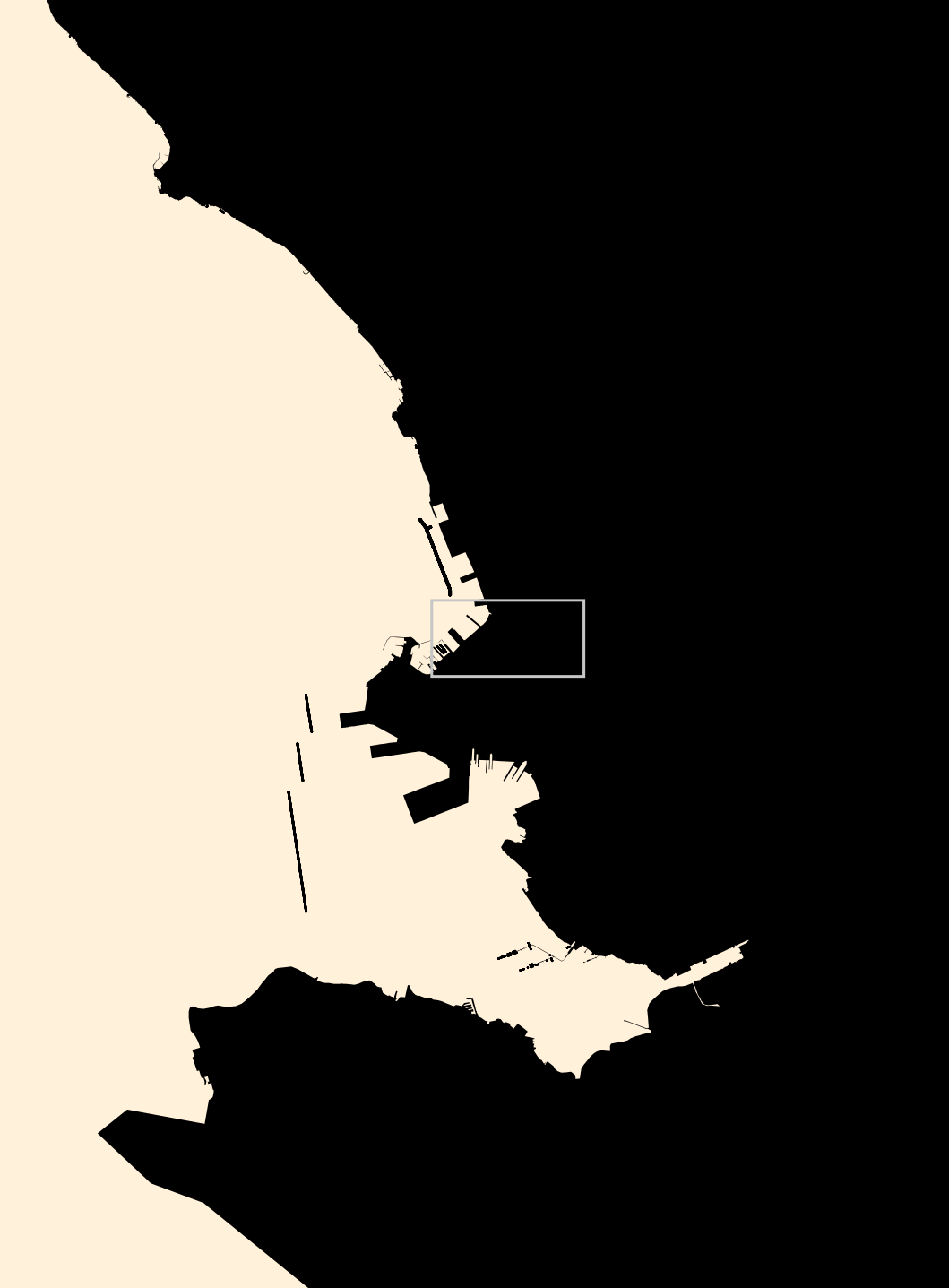
Public space between use and neglect in modern neighbourhoods of Tangier. Courtesy H. Cherkaoui, 2024

Athens Charter, informal neighbourhoods constitute another common form of urban growth within Moroccan cities. Already embryonic during the colonial period, these neighbourhoods experienced significant growth during the 1970s and 1980s. In these spontaneous fabrics, public spaces are reminiscent of medinas with their labyrinthine shapes and narrow streets which are densely populated by residents. Since the 2000s, public spaces in Tangier have been subject to a restyling through beautification operations, as well as an attempt to regain identity, materialized through traditional signs.

In conclusion, we must consider the value of the heterogeneity and identity of these spaces next to new policy which seems to be driven more by concerns relating to hygiene conditions and public order, and to the functionality and openness of the space: “an approach that would no longer identify public spaces based on their historical past –the public space of the medina is defined in opposition to the new city– but based on their accessibility and their visibility by the tourist” (*ibid.*, p. 24, auth. trans.).

Nations Square in Tangier. Courtesy H. Cherkaoui, 2024

Trieste, Italy

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C. Dini, Plan of the city of Trieste, 1782. Biblioteca Civica A. Hortis

Page 261
Municipal Technical Office, Master plan of the city of Trieste, 1934.
Archivio Tecnico Disegni Comune di Trieste


ANNO XI
PIANO REGOLATORE
DELLA
CITTÀ DI TRIESTE
ANNO MCMXXXI
SCALA 1:5000

A. Rieger, Trieste from a bird's eye view, 1862. Photographic archive of the Revoltella Museum – Gallery of Modern Art, Trieste, inv. 920

Anonymous, View of the port of Trieste, 1851-1900. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

THE MARITIME STATION OF TRIESTE. TOPICALITY OF A STORY

Francesco Krecic

Eighteenth-century Trieste was a city in full economic development, after the establishment of the free port regime in 1719 by will of Habsburg Emperor Charles VI. The development of port activities required new rules and new structures. First, the *Lazzaretto di San Carlo* (a lazaret, or quarantine house) was built, then the Maritime Health Office was established and put in charge of controlling the access of ships coming from safe places, in order to verify that they did not need to be quarantined. This office was located in a building on the city's seafront, near the main square, near what would become the Borgo Giuseppino neighbourhood. In 1788 a small pier was built and on it, overlooking the Maritime Health Office, the *Casino di Sanità* was constructed to house the offices responsible for checking ships docking in Trieste. As time went by, this institution lost its importance and other needs arose. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Habsburg administration decided to widen the width of quayside by moving the edge towards the sea. Following massive landfills, a new large pier was also built that, after the First World War, was eventually named *Molo Bersaglieri.*
1901 ushered in the construction of three new buildings on the expanded quayside; a new customs building located nearer the city (subsequently demolished in 1965) and two port warehouses to be used in the wine trade, called *Magazzino 41* and *42*, similar to those that still exist today in the *Porto Vecchio*. The development of trade and the evolution of industrial technology meant that the site was soon modified. Port activities, characterized by the presence of increasingly large vessels and the need for cranes to lift goods, were transferred to the *Porto Nuovo*, which developed on the stretch of coast south of the city centre at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the same time, maritime passenger traffic was growing rapidly, so much so that a building was erected to manage this activity; a maritime station. In 1924, architects Giacomo Zammattio and Umberto Nordio developed designs for the maritime station, which was inaugurated in 1930.
The station resulted from the elevation of *Magazzino 41,* connected to *Magazzino 42* by means of an extension of the portico on the ground floor which was aesthetically in keeping with the new building. The building, spanning two floors and boasting a monumental main façade directed towards the city, fulfilled passenger disembarkation and embarkation operations for large ships traveling towards the Mediterranean and the Americas. Passengers had to cross to or from the maritime station by

means of large metal stairways which ran along the length of the pier, adapting to the various boats without obstructing the railway traffic below. The building was used as a location for offices and support structures for passenger traffic, and thanks to the provision of large internal spaces, it could host events, such as the *Mostra del Mare* set up in the mid-1930s. Following World War II, the so-called "white ships" (*navi bianche)* set sail from the maritime station and for several decades transported thousands of passengers, including *Giuliani* – in large part Istrian and Dalmatian exiles – emigrating to Australia. Following the progressive reduction of traffic, new use was sought for the building in the 1980s. Architect Giovanni Paolo Bartoli was behind designs which partially converted the maritime station into a conference centre, which housed a large foyer on the first floor and conference rooms of different sizes. The structure thus modified would be the city's main event centre for the next two decades. In the 2000s, the first modern cruise ships began to arrive in Trieste. The transformation of *Magazzino 42* was entrusted to architect Ugo Camerino, who envisaged the continuation of the maritime station towards the sea, with an arrivals hall to welcome cruise passengers.

The project inserted a new form with contemporary shapes between the two historic buildings, creating a glass volume to house the technical systems and a stairwell to reach the flat roof of the building. This intervention, carried

Anonymous. *The maritime station in the 1930s*. Private collection

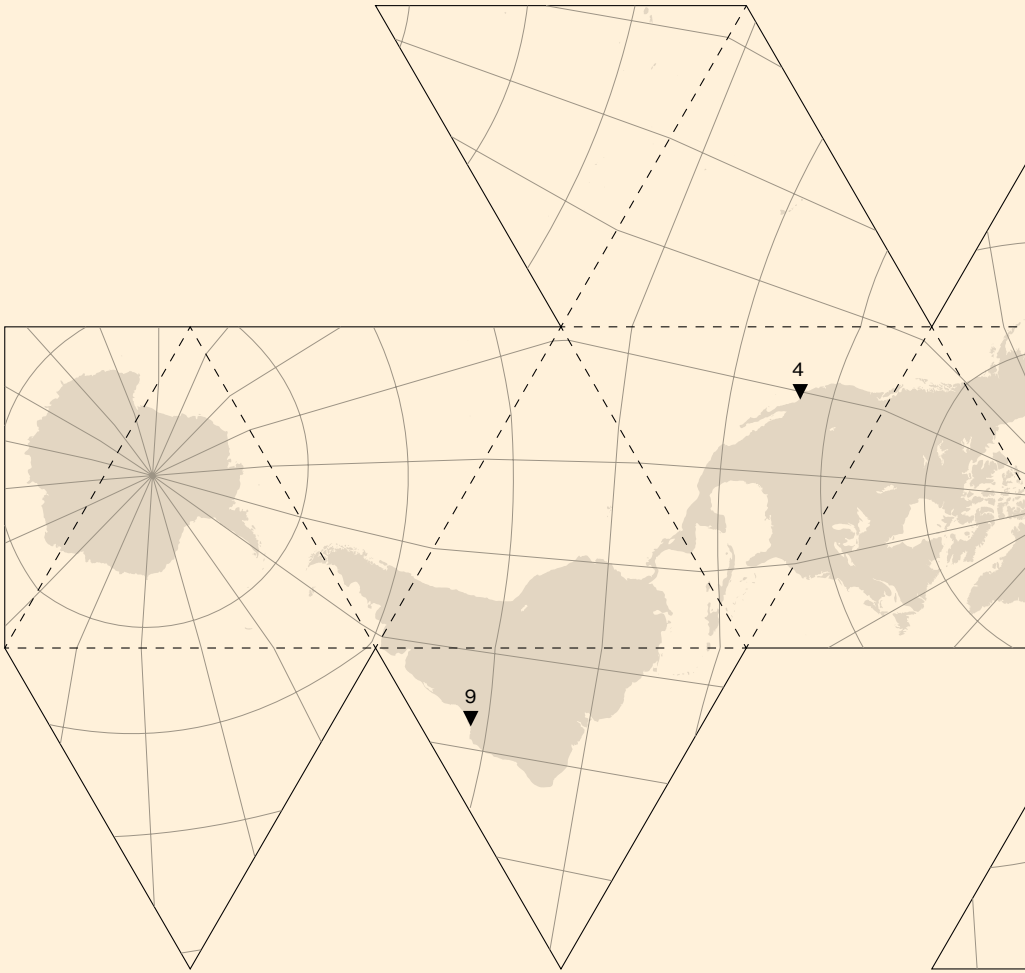
out between 2010 and 2012, was almost never used for the purpose for which it was designed, instead being used sporadically for temporary events. Within a few years, the change in the type of cruises and the arrival of increasingly larger boats made the spaces insufficient and unsuitable. The new cruise ships have also made it necessary to remove the historic metal staircases that once channelled passengers from the boats to the galleries on the first floor of the maritime station. These characteristic elements, after being moved to Porto Vecchio, were abandoned and today await restoration. The tracks that once ran along the pier have suffered an even worse fate because they have been completely removed.
At the same time, the length of the twentieth-century pier was no longer sufficient to guarantee safe docking for increasingly large ships, so much so that a partial extension of the pier was planned, then resized into a small platform out at sea for mooring longer boats. To solve the problems related to the flow of cruise passengers and the need to monitor thousands of people during disembarkation and embarkation, over the last decade temporary structures have been set up on the quayside located next to the historic buildings with turnstiles and baggage control equipment located under white gazebos. With a similar attitude, the parking spaces on the Trieste quayside near the maritime station have been

off-limits every other day for some years to make room for buses and taxis waiting for travellers. A stable solution for the area has not yet been found. The events linked to the use and transformation of this area, and the alternation of interventions historical elements provide little interest from a historical-architectural point of view. The maritime station, given its position and even though it is among the most visible buildings in the city, is not an object of attention within the community and does not arouse great interest from tourists. It is not among the emblematic monuments of Trieste and is not particularly appreciated by its citizens. At the same time, it offers perhaps one of the most emblematic cases of the city's historic relationship with the sea and its economy. It has been present through all the phases of Trieste's recent history; emerging from the sea to be transformed into an area of land. It first hosted a small support pier and then a fundamental institution for the trade of the emporium-city, subsequently evolving from a nineteenth-century port warehouse into a modern passenger hub in the 1930s. It was a strategic place of

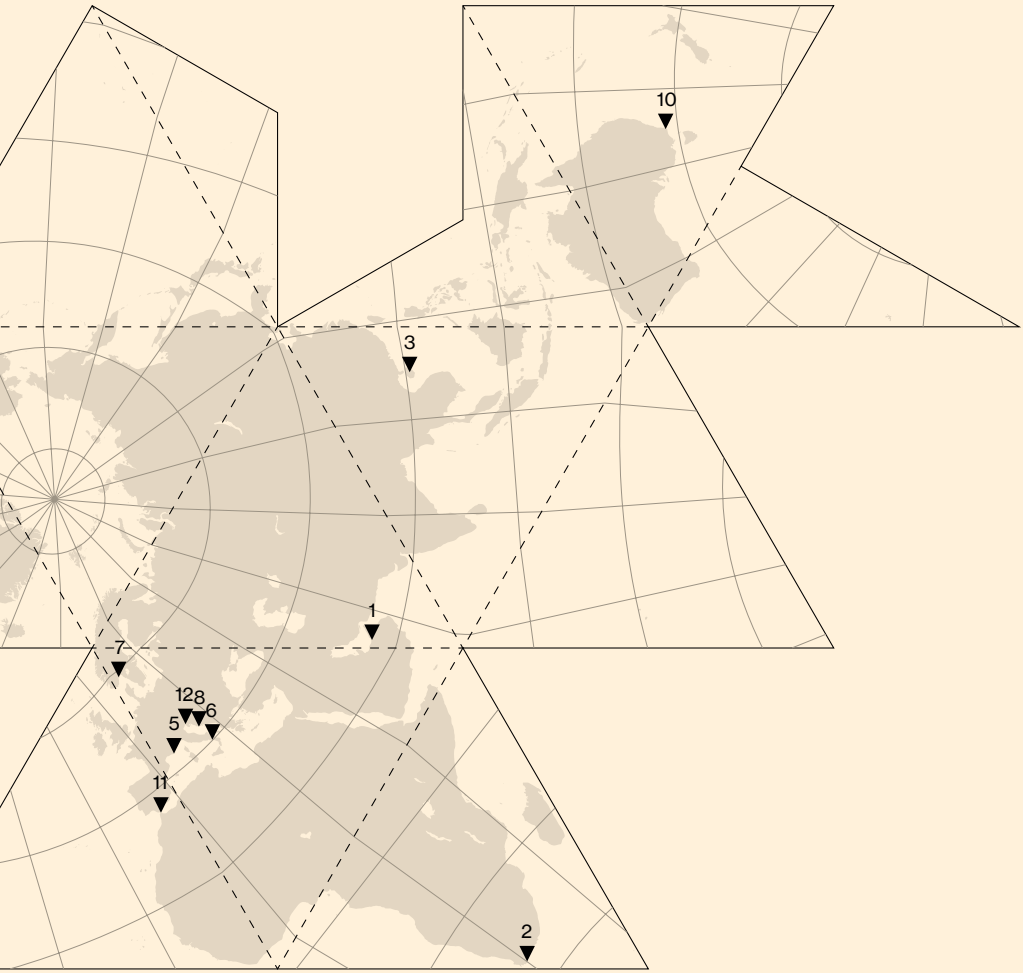
transit that saw travellers and migrants arrive and depart, before attempts were made to convert it into a meeting space for the city. This re-functionalization process seems not to have been fully accomplished, and where it has succeeded, it appears this has happened accidentally. The current state is emblematic of the overall situation on the Trieste waterfront: a space on a coastline of notable beauty that can only be partially enjoyed by citizens and visitors, with buildings that, though they have a fascinating history, are by no means sublime. Overall, the conspicuous absence of planning has deprived the existing waterfront of its dignity and meaning.

View from the Pescheria Pier of the south-west elevation of the maritime station. Courtesy F. Krecic, 2024

Map of the 12 global cities inspired by
R. B. Fuller, S. Sadao, Dymaxion Airocean World Map, 1954



1. Abu Dhabi, 2. Cape Town, 3. Hong Kong, 4. Los Angeles, 5. Marseille, 6. Naples, 7. Oslo, 8. Rijeka, 9. Rio de Janeiro, 10. Sydney, 11. Tangier, 12. Trieste



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Biographies

Giorgia Aquilar, lecturer at Berlin International University of Applied Sciences - is an architect and postdoctoral researcher at the Technical University of Munich. She currently holds a fellowship awarded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Her research stands at the intersection of architectural theory, urban design and historic preservation, with a special focus on evolutionary taxonomies and strategies for heritage futures. She has published a number of articles and essays on related themes. She has been the recipient of grants and fellowships for her scholarly work, including from the Harvard Research Center Dumbarton Oaks, the Stuckeman School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at The Pennsylvania State University.

Ila Bêka e Louise Lemoine. Artists filmmakers working at the crossroads of visual arts and non fiction cinema. For the past twenty years, Bêka & Lemoine's work has been exploring a critical perspective on architecture as a subtle instrument of social control. Through an observational and often humorous perspective, their cinematic approach foregrounds the frictions between design and daily life, revealing how people experience, adapt to, resist, or reinterpret architectural intentions. Their work emphasize how architecture governs not only movement and behaviour, but also emotions and social dynamics. Together they have made over forty films, among which 'Koolhaas HouseLife' (2008), 'Barbicania' (2014), 'The Infinite Happiness' (2015), 'Moriyama San' (2017), 'Tokyo Ride' (2020) and the city-matographic odyssey in 14 films 'Homo Urbanus' (2017-ongoing). In 2023, they published the book *The Emotional Power of Space* (B&P ed.). Their films have been widely presented in international film festivals and leading art and architecture museums, including Fondation Beyeler (Basel), Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain (Paris), Fondation Prada (Milan), MAXXI (Rome), La Biennale di Venezia (Venice), and the Barbican Art Gallery (London), among others.

Giuseppe Biasi graduated under Professor Franco Purini from the Venice Institute of Architecture in 2002. He combined teaching with professional architecture, investigating spatial and relational systems. Founding partner of BBV Architetti, a planning and design studio founded in 2002 in Padova, he works in the public and private construction sector, developing residential, tourism, office and commercial projects, as well as public spaces, sports facilities and rural planning. He holds a PhD in Urban Planning from the IUAV University of Venice with Bernardo Secchi. As a contract professor of architectural design he taught at the IUAV University of Venice, Faculty of Architecture, and the Polytechnic of Milan, Faculty of Architecture. He has edited and participated in publications, exploring themes of architecture, urban planning, and contemporary art and received mentions in international design competitions. He lives and works in Marseille and Padova.

Ludovico Centis is an architect, founder of office The Empire and co-founder and editor of San Rocco magazine. He has been a partner at the architectural office Salottobuono from 2007 to 2012. Centis holds a PhD in urbanism (Università Iuav di Venezia) and is currently assistant professor in urbanism at the University of Trieste. His research focuses on the ways in which individuals and institutions, as well as desires and power, shape cities and landscapes. Centis has published numerous essays and scientific articles in Italian and international journals, including Domus, Town Planning Review, Landscape Journal, Log, OASE, San Rocco, Topos, Arch+, AA Files, Harvard Design

Magazine. Recent monographs and edited volumes include *Reyner Banham: A set of actual tracks* (2024), *The Lake of Venice. A scenario for Venice and its lagoon* (2022, with Lorenzo Fabian) and *A parallel of ruins and landscapes* (2019).

Hakim Cherkaoui is an architect and responsible for the DESA *Le logement marocain chez l'architecte, rôle et place de l'architecte*. He has held positions of responsibility within the Ministry of Urban Planning, Construction and Planning of the Kingdom of Morocco. Between 2009 and 2015 he was coordinator of the National Architecture Institute of Tetouan, and between 2015 and 2020 director of the same institution. He teaches at the Ecole Nationale d'Architecture of Rabat since 1999 courses related to architectural design, history and theory, and architectural workshops. In 2020 he was coordinator of the research *Civil society and territorial urban transitions in the Mediterranean*, while between 2021-2023 he was responsible for the Moroccan chapter of the MeLiMed project. In the years 2020-2021 Cherkaoui was part of the board of the PhD *La fabrique de la ville, cas des neighborhoods informels* at Laboratoire LIEU, Institut of urbanism and regional development in Aix-en-Provence.

Matteo D'Ambros is an architect with a PhD in urbanism (Università Iuav di Venezia) and is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Trieste. He has previously taught at the Iuav University of Venice and the Polytechnic University of Turin. His academic and professional trajectory unfolds within the field of urban and landscape design, where his research and practice focus on the maintenance, transformation, and adaptive reuse of open spaces. Since 2008, he has been investigating the work of Roberto Burle Marx, editing with Barbara Boifava the books *Roberto Burle Marx. Verso un moderno paesaggio tropicale* (2014) and *Roberto Burle Marx. Un progetto per il paesaggio* (2009, 2010). He co-curated the exhibition *Up! Marghera on Stage* at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016 and is founder of the environmental action group Ground Action.

Davide di Martino is an architect and Director of Unagru Architecture Urbanism, a London-based practice. He studied architecture in Naples, Barcelona and Venice, and earned a PhD in Urbanism from the University of Naples Federico II, with a thesis on ecologies and pollution in Campania. He was a visiting PhD student at The New School in New York and at KU Copenhagen. From 2020 to 2023, he co-directed a unit of the Master's in Architectural Design at Cardiff University. In 2018, he founded Unagru Architecture Urbanism, a practice that balances private work, research and activism. Its projects range from small-scale interventions to mixed-use developments, with a focus on heritage, water and sustainability.

Sabina Favaro is an architect, urbanist, and researcher at the Responsible Mining Lab (University of the Witwatersrand), critically engaging with socio-ecological regeneration in extractive landscapes. Sabina also co-teaches Landscape Architecture Design Studio with Tarna Klitzner at the University of Cape Town. She holds advanced degrees in Architecture and a PhD in Urbanism. Her research focuses on socio-spatial justice, ecological design, and inclusive urbanism in the Global South. Employing thick mapping, counter-mapping, and co-design methodologies, she investigates cities, landscapes, and territories to reimagine collective futures. Her work emphasizes practical outcomes for communities impacted by mining and urban inequality. She led the Co-Design for Spatial Justice team in the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading project, focusing on co-design, crime prevention, and integrated governance.

Urtzi Grau is an architect and academic at the School of Architecture at the University of

Technology Sydney and has recently been appointed Editor-in-Chief of *Quaderns*. He is the founder of Urtzi Grau / Fake Industries, an architectural office that explores replicas – both as literal reproductions of existing works and as responses to prior statements, in the sense conveyed by Romance languages – to produce architectural. His recent projects include the Biblioteca de Lorenteggio in Milan, the Murrin Bridge Preschool and the Bass Hill Community Centre in New South Wales, and the OE House in Tarragona. Grau's work has been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, the Lisbon Triennale, the Istanbul Design Biennial, and the Seoul Biennale. His projects are part of the permanent collections of the Centre Pompidou and the Art Institute of Chicago. He is the author of several books, including *Analogue Images* (Perimeter, 2024), *Folk Costumes Indo Pacific Air* (APE, 2022), *Better Together: Stories of Contemporary Documents* (URO, 2022), and *Learning to Live Together: Humans, Cars, and Kerbs in Solidarity* (Bartlebooth, 2021). Grau holds a Distinguished Visiting Professorship at Portland State University's School of Architecture and a Cullinan Visiting Professorship at Rice University School of Architecture.

Francesco Krecic is an architect and graduated from the Post-Graduate Specialisation School in Architectural and Landscape Heritage at Politecnico di Milano. Following several collaborations with architectural offices in Trieste, since 2010 he has been enrolled in the public administration, initially as an assistant at the Superintendence of Fine Arts and Landscape of Friuli Venezia Giulia region and later as an officer of the Ministry of Culture at the Historical Museum and Park of the Miramare Castle, where he has curated various restoration projects. Currently he is an officer of the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape of Friuli Venezia Giulia. Krecic has lectured widely in national and international conferences and is the author of various publications on topics related to the history of architecture and heritage restoration.

Ilaria Mazzoleni is an architect, biomimicist, educator and the founder of IM Studio Milano/Los Angeles (www.imstudio.us) and of Nature, Art & Habitat (www.nahr.it). She lives and works between Italy and California. Her research focuses on sustainability and biomimicry, where innovation in planning, architecture and design is inspired by the processes and functions of nature. Her built and conceptual work in the fields of sustainable architecture and biomimicry has been published internationally. Mazzoleni has been a faculty member at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), CalPoly Pomona, and CalArts in Los Angeles. Mazzoleni has authored and published the book *Architecture Follows Nature - Biomimetic Principles for Innovative Design* (CRC Press, 2013). She is the main editor and Introduction author of the book *Transect of Coexistence: Inquiry into Nature, Art & Habitat* (ListLab, 2024). Ilaria holds a Laurea in Architecture (Milan Polytechnic,) and a Master of Building Science (USC, Los Angeles).

Oorvi Sharma is a Canadian architect, curator, expert advisor, and academic. Oorvi presently holds the position of Assistant Professor of Architecture at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi, while concurrently serving as Curatorial-Project Management Lead and Acquisitions Lead for the Qasr Al Hosn in Abu Dhabi with the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi. She is an alumna of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, where she studied as an Irving Fellow. Her work on material culture in built environments, climate change, global shifts, and modern conservation movements has been profiled by the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, ICON Magazine, SVSA Magazine, and other international media. Oorvi has curated and produced a range of important

exhibitions, notably the Parisian presentation of LVMH Métiers d'Art's 9th Résidence Artistique in 2025. She also realized the Miqnaṣ Pavilion for ADIHEX 2025, a modular installation uniting local craft with contemporary construction, which was presented to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and widely featured in national newspapers. Oorvi has lectured internationally, sharing her knowledge of the UAE, the Western Canadian region, and the Indian Himalayan region. She is often invited to speak on the advancement of culture-based climate action and the future of public space at events including the Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennale, talks at the Fiker Institute, and the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. Her writing has been widely published and translated into Spanish, Catalan, French, Hindi, Italian, and Arabic. She has over ten years of global professional experience across Tokyo, San Francisco, Boston, Abu Dhabi, and Mumbai.

Luka Skansi is an architectural historian, associate professor at Politecnico di Milano (DASTU – Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani). His research ranges across different geographical and temporal contexts of the 20th century, and focuses on the themes of spatiality in architecture, construction or its relationship with geopolitics. Awarded with the Plečnik medal in 2018 (for the exhibition+catalogue *Streets and Neghbourhoods*, MAO Ljubljana, 2016) and Neven Šegvić prize (for *Dobrolet*, a book series in architectural history and theory, 2025). He was a member of the curatorial committee of the exhibitions *Toward a Concrete Utopia. Architecture in Socialist Yugoslavia 1948-1980* (MoMA – NY, 2018), *Fiume Fantastika. Phenomena of the City* (Rijeka – ECC 2020), and *Affinità confinanti/Bordering Affinities/Sosedske afinitete* (with Paolo Nicoloso, Trieste, Magazzino delle Idee, 2025).

Gianni Talamini, PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the City University of Hong Kong. He earned his PhD in Urbanism from IUAV University of Venice under Professor Bernardo Secchi. Previously, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Harbin Institute of Technology in Shenzhen. Gianni's research focuses on the synergy between the built environment and landscape, aiming for an environmentally innocuous, culturally leavened, and spatially just society.

Giambattista Zaccariotto is associate professor at the Institute of Urbanism and Landscape of the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO). He holds a European Doctorate in Urbanism from the Iuav University of Venice, undertaken in collaboration with Delft University of Technology (TU Delft). His scholarly and practice work explore the interrelations among landscape architecture, urban design, and territorial planning, focusing on contemporary transformations of the built environment and design methodologies in European contexts. He has contributed to international academic programmes such as the *European Masters in Urbanism* (Iuav) and the *International Master in Landscape Architecture* (AHO).

Dr. Zaccariotto has collaborated on numerous urban and landscape design projects throughout Europe with leading design practices, including West 8 (Rotterdam), H+N+S (Amsterdam), Studio Secchi–Viganò (Milan), and Studio Bua (London).

His academic and professional work has also engaged with European research frameworks such as *Interreg Europe* and *Horizon Europe*.

He is co-author of *Landscape of Water* (Risma, 2009), *Scarcity in Excess: The Built Environment and the Economic Crisis in Iceland* (Actar, 2014), and *Urbanistic Projects. Next Generational Paths: A European Perspective* (Quodlibet, 2024).

Colophon

Speculations on the image of beauty
Public space and global coastal cities
Volume 2
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This volume proposes a reasoned and critical reading of open space in its various aspects, investigating some notable urban experiences chosen among global twelve coastal cities – Abu Dhabi, Cape Town, Rijeka, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Marseille, Naples, Oslo, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Tangier and Trieste –, and illustrated through original drawings and historical maps, iconographic images and a thematic critical text, specifically developed by a guest contributor invited for the occasion. In such cities, the challenges caused by climate change and by the search for an increasingly fragile balance between economic development, justice and social inclusion manifest themselves in a more explicit and paradigmatic way. The starting point for observing ongoing phenomena and defining new research trajectories is not only physical or geographical but also concerns the complex socio-ecological and systemic dimension of coastal territories, where nature, infrastructure, and settlements interact in an interdependent way.

Current configurations of the twelve cities are studied revealing the relationship between solids and voids along the coastal edge. Within the iconographic section of the volume, a Nolli-style mapping is used as a tool to explore significant portions of the cities. The *New Map of Rome* completed in 1748 by Giovan Battista Nolli – one of the most famous and most lastingly influential cartographic representations – seemed to be the most suitable conceptual and operational reference for bringing to light the value of open spaces in the contemporary city and to uncover some of its inherent contradictions.

By investigating the forms, meanings and spatial devices that shape the open space, and by identifying the semantic values of inclusion and exclusion embedded in its use and occupation, we develop diverse perspectives and a critical understanding of its potential as a project.

All these elements are the starting point for advancing a reasoned interpretation and critical reading of open space in its various aspects, assuming that global coastal cities are the places most affected by the challenges caused by climate change, and that it is precisely here that reflection on the quality and meaning of contemporary urban planning and design can be encouraged.

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