

IGRA USTVARJALNOSTI  
teorija in praksa urejanja prostora

CREATIVITY GAME  
Theory and Practice of Spatial Planning

THE OLD PORT OF TRIESTE:  
A CENTURY OF PROJECTS AND PROPOSALS  
FOR AN UNRESOLVED ISSUE

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# Maurizio Bradaschia: STARO PRISTANIŠČE MESTA TRST: Stoletje projektov in predlogov za nerešen problem

## *THE OLD PORT OF TRIESTE: A century of projects and proposals for an unresolved issue*

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Two major unresolved issues of the past two centuries for the city of Trieste: "cittavecchia" (the old medieval town) and the old port.

While the first, after more than a hundred years of decay and neglect has finally arrived, thanks to a shared political will to a good start-up phase: many buildings, thanks to European funds, since 1998, have been recovered and, despite the work cannot be regarded concluded, "cittavecchia" returned to be part of the historic center of Trieste, the same cannot be said for the old port.

Built on a single project signed by the French engineer Paulin Talbot, between 1860 and 1900, the old port of Trieste, once completed, immediately showed its inability to perform the functions for which it was designed and built: storage techniques, the size of the store, geometric relationships and, more generally port mode changed very rapidly from the mid '800 to early '900, had necessitated finding new areas for the port facilities in the Habsburg city of Trieste.

It is by the early 1900s, in fact, that begins the construction, southeast of the city center (in diametrically opposite the old port), of the new port.

So, an area of approximately 60 hectares, 42 stores for a volume of about one million cubic meters begins its slow decline.

This is an area close to the historical center of the city, an area of access to the city itself, located along the coastal strip, bounded by walls which enshrine the membership to the State and the regime of free point by excluding it from city life.

Looking from above, it seems almost a fourth neighborhood of the »village of foundation« coming from the nineteenth-century, such as the neighborhood teresiano, giuseppino and franceschino that contribute markedly to mark the image and the face of the city.

Towards the end of the 80s, followed a series of projects for the recovery and redevelopment of the area, with dissimilar approaches and objectives, projects that make a mosaic design of some interest for the city and contemporary architecture.

The first of these (with reference to a contemporary chronicle) is that one processed by **Nicolò Savarese** for FIAT in 1988: the Polis project. This is a project proposal with an example hypothesis of town and infrastructure planning based on a zoning that spends the head of the old port attached to the historic center in the following way: a storage area, a Research Center, an Exhibition Centre, a Financial Centre, an urban park is connected to the Piazza della Libertà, opposite the railway station, a Directional Neighborhood, a Financial Center and a Water Square sessions sloping towards the sea from the arguably circular shape.

It is a project qualitatively mediocre that, if realized, would probably distorted the urban part of the old harbor.

By far the most interesting proposal drafted by **Luciano Semerani** 1990, that starting from a proposal to raise the whole coast area of the Province on behalf of the Company Bonifica Spa (IRI Italstat Group), formulate a draft certainly more compelling, where central element is the header node architecture that links the port facility to the city.

Fascinating and certainly recall Loos building in echelon on the sea with hotel function. A project that fits well into the historic fabric of the city and re interprets skillfully and in a contemporary way, empty and full.

Follows the hypothesis of **Gino Valle**, 1991, that at the time was commissioned by the Generali Insurance Company that would have like to accomplish in that area their »headquarters« and that later, because of the amount of difficulties, preferred to move to the anonymous but certainly less complex, Mogliano Veneto (VE).



The Valle project breaks down the orthogonal grid of the neighborhoods of the nineteenth century and works on perspective axes and cuts on blocks, showing the precise moment in the history of architecture: a real “state of art” project.

From 1997 is the proposal made by the then President of the industrialists of the Province of Trieste, Federico Pacorini, through the association Trieste Futura, which called the architect **Manuel de Solà Morales**.

The Morales project seeks to strengthen together the new port (commercial) of Trieste with the semi retired “timber terminal” to recover the abandoned areas of the old port with different purposes. A reintegration project that attempts to enhance the urban housing stock and the connective spaces to promote a series of social and commercial activities and streamlining of the road infrastructures.

Even this great project cannot find the fortune deserved, probably due to different orientations of the Port Authority that relies, through the company Portovecchio Srl, a project of transformation of the same area made by **Stefano Boeri**.

It is, then, the time of the attempt of Boeri, called by Maurizio Maresca, the President of the Port Authority. Boeri project is grafted on the assumption of P.R.U.S.S.T. (an urban program of renovation and urban transformation based on sustainability, then definitely changed later by the Administration and funded by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport) prepared by the “Illy administration” since the end of the 90s, which provided the bypass of the historic center and the connection between the two ports (the old port and the new port) via an underwater tunnel.

With regard to the old port, Boeri expected, abolished the fences of the harbor, the creation of a green space of relationship between the old harbor and the teresiano neighborhood, a system of entrances, from both the station and the old city, and a pedestrian link between the old port and the town banks.

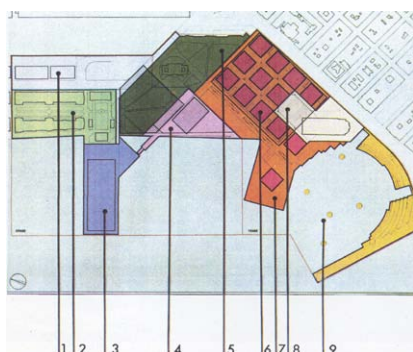
The project also included a receptive tourist attraction, with an hotel, a large conference space, a city of children, an exhibition space linked to the sea, a multiplex cinema, shopping areas, a great area for boating. The intention of Boeri was to ensure a strong relationship with the city center by locating functions in strong gravitation. The project also included a center for research, development and training.

The years immediately following are characterized by two additional projects that in some way affect the old port. One by **Aires Mateus** and another one by **Mario Botta**. Neither of great importance for several reasons: first, because commissioned by private individuals, by some manufacturers to Mateus and by the Company Greensesam to Botta, apparently under the suggestion of Vittorio Sgarbi.

Secondly, because if the project Mateus mainly affects areas north of the old port (the embankment of Barcola), the project by Botta refers only to the creation of a single office building.



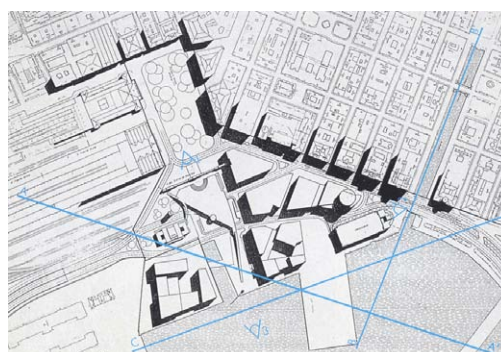




1988 Project by Nicolò Savarese



1990 Project by Luciano Semerani



1991 Project by Gino Valle



1997 Project by Manuel de Solà Morales

In the early 2000s, during the first post "Illy Administration", something new happens: the Port Authority and the City Council approve similar guidelines to change the structure of the old harbor. We are in the year 2003. The idea is to expand and enlarge the potentiality of the old port to allow the settlement of functions also of a «city center».

About this, in particular, also from the political point of view, I have already mentioned in other writings. What is important, however, is that the hole city will there was a consensus shared and expanded: the City Council voted unanimously to approve the resolution to address the variation of the Mater Plan of the old port (now in force), which was assigned to the undersigned (**Maurizio Bradaschia**) and **Alberto Cecchetto**.

The variation of the Master Plan relative to the areas of the Old Port covers an area of approximately 60 acres located north of the historic center of Trieste.

This is an area directly administrated by the public administration system in the maritime domain, which is, however, expected to be used, under the rules of the public uses of the sea.

With reference to Resolution No. 18 of 16.4.03 containing the guidelines issued by the City Council in the preparation of the variant itself, this has been set considering the totality of the area as a «part» of the historic city center, given the characteristics morphological and typological that characterize the Old Port. A sort of «fourth» neighborhood of the nineteenth-century foundation, coupled with the teresiano, giuseppino and franceschino; a piece of historical city to conquer following the logic of urban progress, identifying new goals and new activities that will give to the city the existing assets.

A logic and an approach marked by appropriate and flexible functions,

correct, more specifically urban, and integrated into the surrounding historic city in a vision of the overall functioning of the entire city of Trieste.

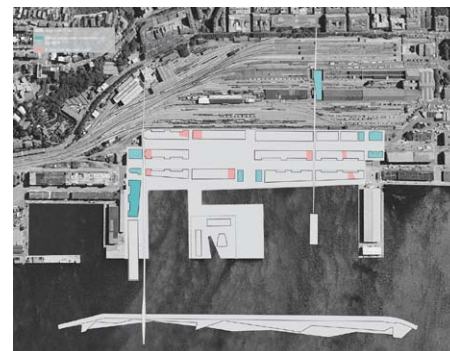
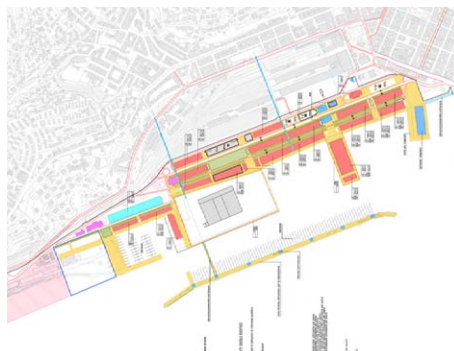
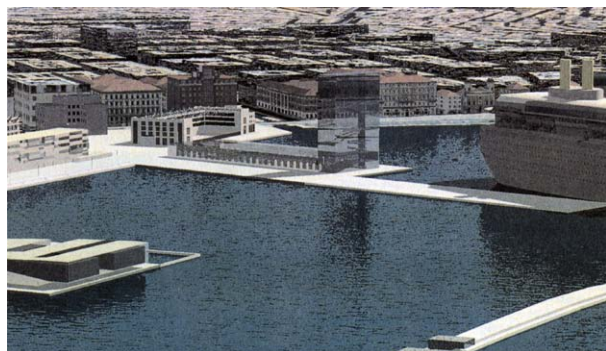
The variant of the **Master Plan** also started from the note received on 10/28/02, prot. 140842 with which the Port Authority of Trieste broadcast »for all matters pertaining to« Resolution 23/2002 of the Port Committee with which the Committee established for the areas of Porto Vecchio: »The maintenance of the terminal functions within the Old Port only while supplies last, or until the insured would have been an arrangement similar to that in place - under the operational continuity - in the areas of the new Port or inclusion of industrial and other support activities like residential (lofts, residences of support, university guest houses, boats, etc.).«

The result is a variant of a transformation of the set of uses which involves the disposal, in some cases, over time, the prevailing port functions for the benefit of other activities that more properly urban and cultural activities, research, education and training, management and service, commercial, hospitality, exhibition and entertainment and limited residential functions of service and support, complementary to new uses as defined above, including, among other things, the maintenance of port terminal functions in the Old Port, temporarily, in the area of the so called Adriaterminal.

Simultaneously with the preparation of the **new Master Plan** of the site, after several years of preparation, Trieste Expo Challenge Spa (a mixed company comprising various government) candidate the city to the »recognized« (specialized) Expo in 2008.

Two competing cities: Zaragoza and Thessaloniki.

The mandate for the preparation of the Master Plan was assigned to the writer (**Maurizio Bradaschia**) and **Alberto Cecchetto**.



1997 Project by Stefano Boeri

Project by Maurizio Bradaschia and Alberto Cecchetto

Project by Maurizio Bradaschia and Alberto Cecchetto

"Mobility of knowledge" was the theme chosen by a group of scientists and scholars to represent the Expo 2008 in Trieste.

The potentialities of Trieste were and remain indisputable and the theme, that of mobility, as it seemed very apt for the Italian situation and condition, and Trieste, and the international relationships that has itself among many countries, and that these (the mobility of knowledge, first), in turn, entertained and entertain with the scientific reality of Trieste.

It was estimated that a total number of 90 participants would come to Trieste for Trieste EXPO 2008 ITALY. Divided among 60 exhibitors, the Italian Government, 3 National Bodies, 1 "Piazza Trieste", 25 international organizations.

Participants would be made available to a covered area of 500 square meters. Area that would have been obtained in the warehouse of the Old Port and equipped with all the facilities for receiving plant composition of the individual participants. The Italian Government, the National Bodies, "Piazza Trieste" and 25 international organizations would have benefited from their dedicated spaces.

Would have been set up, in addition, thematic pavilions.

The functional organization of the Expo, the draft Master Plan sought congruence with the original layout of the Old Port of Trieste in the interests of consequential logic with the urban structure of the entire historic city of Trieste.

It sought the wider sustainability, respect for the values and preexisting present in port without affecting urban equilibrium.

The Expo project was seen as a function of the re-use of an urban area of the

town center abandoned, recovery that saw, in the Expo, its main engine.

It was also conceived as a place of explication of the theme and its meaning, in the invention of the accesses, of course (it was a unique and continuous thought out with extreme clarity and rigor, in unequivocal lead the visitor through the space and composition both internal and external), especially in the construction and installation of the thematic pavilions.

The project was organized in a main enclosure, covering an area of 25 hectares, where to existing buildings that housed mainly the 60 pavilions of countries exhibitors were joined by new structures, both permanent and temporary, hosting services, fun recreational activities, an outdoor theater, outdoor exhibition areas, pavilions for sponsors and, in the central beach-front, a conference center which was matched to a structure called the »Palace of Inter Cultural«. It was the realization of a multi-Convention Center aims to meet the needs of the Expo, and more generally the entire city; tangible sign of future memory and experience Expo.

An underground car park on three levels located in the center of the area was capable of 3,000 parking spaces.

The breakwater area overlooking the Expo area was reused as services and hosts for bathing areas on two different levels towards the sea, a »promenade« with services for the receptivity to a higher level, and a dock with a distribution box and small stores serving the yachting activities of which are based here.

Unfortunately, despite these efforts, the Expo was given to the city of Zaragoza and the investment did not take off.

The next master plan by **Norman Foster** (actually drafted by the Company Systematica SpA, remained, despite the prestige of the designer, rather mu-



Project by Norman Foster

2006 Portocittà

ted) provided in the area of the old port are basically two macro areas:

- The first urban park at the embankment of Barcola and the current area of the sea baths;
- The second urban area of the bank at the side of the old port closest to the city.

*The project was characterized by the plausibility of the changes in the short, medium and long term, considering the area of the old port is the port area as that part of the city waterfront.*

Although this hypothesis after 2006, did not hesitate lucky.

Finally, a project of little interest from the design point of view, I would call speculative in nature, prepared by two giants such as building contractors Rizzani de Eccher and Maltauro through the company "Portocittà" mainly oriented to a pension rather than a careful transformation of areas, also dropped last month of March 2013, thanks to the housing crisis and the usual objective difficulties due to the presence / validity of the free port and the state property that is certainly not easy and I doubt facilitate short reuse and transformation of this area, born old and remained in a sort of limbo for over a century.

This article from the magazine "Edilizia e Territorio" dated March 1, 2013 well explained the situation:

»03/01/2013 - redevelopment

*Trieste, hangs the restoration project of the Old Port*

*The recovery of the Old Port of Trieste, age-old question that has been going on for decades, it crashes. Portocittà, »for factors beyond their control - assured - is forced to stop the activities covered by the grant for the redevelopment of the old port of Trieste«. The Board of "Portocittà", a consortium of banks and entrepreneurs, has informed the Port Authority last February 22 and announced that it will protect the material interests and reputation of the company by initiating legal proceedings in the competent "Regional Administrative Court". The decision to leave is accrued, the company said, »as a result of the acknowledgment of the impossibility of continuing the development of the project due to the continuation of the regime of general uncertainty that has characterized the recovery of the Old Port«. In particular, Portocittà states that the problem of free port regime has not been addressed with the determination needed to ensure the development of a project so challenging and important for the revitalization of the entire city of Trieste. Portocittà recalls having invested in the project about 10 million euro to develop the project. Ten million euro that the consortium intends to recover through the appeals. The Port Authority of Trieste has ensured battle«.*

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