

Forms of the Void: Gorizia and the Border that No Longer Exists

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For almost 60 years, the city of Gorizia has been divided by the state border separating Italy and Slovenia, where on the other side, the twin city of Nova Gorica has developed. In the past, these two urban realities have not been communicating on the urban and architectonic levels, negating each other's existence, but are now a continuous entity and must find new ways to grow and develop together, even if they belong to two different nations. The University of Trieste, along with the Comune di Gorizia (Gorizia municipality), has developed a laboratory called the RRR lab, with the objective to redevelop and regenerate those urban spaces and buildings that have been put back in play after the fall of the border and the new urban geography that it has created. It is a landscape made up of areas and structures without use or significance, generated by the Dadaist collage of the two cities, that together were, at the time of the laboratory, candidates for the 2025 European Capital of Culture. Starting from this specific case, a more general theme of the research deals with the void. This aspect is easily recognizable in its architecture, where for the purpose of the quality of the work, the single parts that make up a building are not as important as the spaces that are indirectly determined by them. The void, then, can assume an architectonic quality and become the element on which to base the opening principle, "where there is nothing, everything is possible".

Introduction

For almost forty years, the Iron Curtain has divided the European continent. From 1947 the Muro di Gorizia (Gorizia's Wall) has been part of this system. It separated the city, situated on the edge between Italy and what at that time was Yugoslavia, divided into two, with the city center of around 35,000 people on one side, and outskirts and Transalpina Station on the other (Figure 1).

With the laying of the first stone on June 13th 1948, the city of Nova Gorica was born and its role was to become an administrative center for the territory annexed to Yugoslavia. It is a new town of almost 13,000 inhabitants and was drawn up from a modernist design elaborated by the Slovenian architect Edo Ravnikar.

With the Slovenian entrance into the European Union in 2004, the state line that divided the two cities has disappeared and a new urban condition worth studying was born.

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Figure 1. *Gorizia and Nova Gorica*

It is not an isolated case; the Iron Curtain had developed over 12,500 km from the Baltic Sea to the north, all the way to the Black Sea in the south. Starting from 1990 this border area, which was actually just an empty strip of land, has gone from impenetrable to a permeable edge, and instead of dividing, it has begun to connect different realities.

What are the theoretic and disciplinary basis needed in order to study this special condition?

The Iron Curtain today has drawn up a new system, the European Green Belt, a green infrastructure of continental scale where nature has taken over and re-appropriated these areas previously neglected by men.

An initial investigation made for the environmental and landscape sciences can already spark interesting ideas before concentrating on the specific aspects linked to the architectonic spaces and the urban dimension.

Edge lines interpreted as limitations along the Iron Curtain don't exist anymore or are progressively disappearing; these spaces are being replaced by other, more ambiguous, forms of spaces.

The biologist Stephen Jay Gould has based his research on indeterminism as a premise to the majority of innovative biologic processes.¹ Gould distinguishes within the natural ecologies two types of edges: limits and borders. The limit is where things end; the border is where different groups interact.

On the borders, the organisms become more interactive because of the meeting with different species and physical conditions. This is a concept also expressed by

1. S. J. Gould, *The Panda's Thumb* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1980).

Gilles Clément in the *Third Landscape*² where he recognizes the margins abandoned by men as residues that form groups of rich biologic diversity. Typical examples include all the resulting spaces directly linked to the organization of the territory and also, but not exclusively, the edges, portions of territory, and in some undetermined cases, on the limit of national states.

These marginal spaces also correspond to edges of infrastructure or rivers, to borders of fields, to residues of planned areas. They are not only natural places to protect the environment, these are places marked by imperfections, where evolution and development, not only biological, can be accelerated. They are places where the mixture between heterogeneous elements can be more frequent, where the imbalances can be emphasized, and where indecision rules (at the beginning). They are sites that do not completely belong to the city nor to the natural environment.

These analogies of biologic and environmental nature tell us that the areas on the edge, of any kind, can be the most stimulating from the design point of view, and for this reason must be investigated in order to understand their potential and development. This is where the use of the architectural design artifice can slow or accelerate the evolution processes of the city, knowingly orienting the transformation.

The first part of the following study is an analysis of the relationship between built objects and surrounding emptiness, a reconstruction of a disciplinary and theoretical image in order to individuate some architectonic strategies, functional to the operative interventions on these edge urban areas, which are empty, abandoned and marginal, not only geographically.

Starting from this image, in the scope of the didactic laboratory RRR lab, seven projects have been developed. The results, commented and then organized into two categories, have allowed for the development of some final considerations on possible intervention strategies in these particular disused urban areas.

Literature Review

There are two main types of spatial structures: the space made up from the contraposition of architectonic objects that look to one another but are separated by vast voids, and from the opposite condition, where the shape of the established volumes is not autonomous but is determined by the empty space that is subtracted or dug from a built fabric, understood as homogeneous.

It is the classic contraposition between fullness and void traceable to the models of the Greek Acropolis³ and of the Roman Forum.⁴ Starting from these two extremes, it is possible to develop an infinite series of possibilities.

In 1748, Giovanni Battista Nolli designs the *Nuova pianta di Roma* (the new Plan of Rome), where the void is not only represented for the first time as a structural element of urban space, but the logic of the two spatial structures start to become a hybrid. The reading of the city through a sequence of “empty” spaces brings Nolli to represent the streets and squares in continuity with the large internal

2. G. Clément, *Manifesto del Terzo Paesaggio* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018).

3. K. A. Doxiadis, *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1972).

4. G. Corbellini, *Grande e Veloce* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 2000).

spaces of the churches and major Roman palaces, while the rest of the built fabric becomes an indistinctive mass of edifices. The derivative is a fabric with porous margins, where the difference between the void of the outdoors and the indoor space of some buildings is continuous.

A few years later, *Campo Marzio* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi is understood as an assembly of fragments extracted from the typological repertoires of the antiquity, creating a short circuit between these two originating spatial structures as a demonstration of the possibilities of evolution of these two concepts.

In the iconography of *Campii Martii*, in fact, the ancient models, taken singularly as recognizable and identifiable objects and through their specific geometries and the internal composite logics, also determine the rules of their over-all assembly to the point of constituting a continuous and homogeneous fabric that contradicts the originating identity and uniqueness of every single manufacture.

The modernist movement of the 20th century, in its dogmatic and ideologic declinations, will recognize both models. The first will birth the concept for which buildings generate, in analogy with the principle on the relationship between figure/background of the artistic compositions and the empty spaces around them; for example, in the case of the project for the competition of the Soviet building by Le Corbusier.⁵

The second model will find application in the isotropic and homogenous grids that regulate and dimension the space within which the architectonic objects are systematically repeated or are adequate formally; for example, *Ville Radieuse* also by Le Corbusier.⁶

In 1960, Kevin Lynch publishes *The Image of the City*,⁷ a different approach of perceptive character, to question the spatial models that put the observer and the mental image of the urban space at the center of reasoning, with particular attention to the architecture of movement, a new parameter that characterizes the modern space.

Lynch recognizes five elements that concur to define the mental image of the cities, the landmarks and the districts refer to two originating spatial structures; to these, edges, paths and nodes are added. They are all elements of linear characteristics—in some cases closer to the world of infrastructure than that of architecture—with which our cities were being developed in those years. In particular, the edges are elements that the observer perceives as linear interruptions of continuity, elements of separation between areas, zones, contexts, like riverbeds, railway paths, urban walls, rows of trees, limits of districts.

The paths are the “passageways”, the different “fluxes” along which the observer moves (habitually or occasionally). For many individuals, the paths are the prominent elements of the personal urban image (structural elements), streets, pedestrian ways, water ways, lines of public transportation. People observe cities moving along them, relating its image to the routes utilized through sequences and

5. Ibid.

6. M. Gandelonias, M. *X-Urbanism: Architecture and the American City* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1999).

7. K. Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1960).

narrations. The ends of the paths are the nodes, punctual places from which and toward which the observer moves.

On the architectonic value of linear infrastructure, contemporary or ancient, Costantino Dardi⁸ also goes back to the same aspects, when he talks about the Roman aqueduct, the Great Wall of China, the Maginot line or Le Corbusier's Plan Obus for Algiers and how they assume, on the landscape, a specific role as distinguishing elements, division thresholds, rupture lines and so, based on the paradoxical ambiguity between background/figure, even as in meeting places, relation spaces and suture lines.

In *Die Stadt in der Stadt. Berlin: ein grünen Archipel*⁹ Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas propose an urban and special structure formed of large parts, a city archipelago of coherent and recognizable architectonic units, isolated in a large green connective element. The question of dimension comes to play, the architectonic objects are being substituted by larger and more complex elements where entire parts of urban fabric are disconnected and isolated.

At the same time, in *Collage City*,¹⁰ Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter develop a new and creative vision of a city, linked to the poetic of the fragment. The book cover, from this point of view, is significative; it shows the plan of Wiesbaden in Germany where the two special models are juxtaposed: the compact historic city and the modern one, made up of groups of isolated buildings.

Through reading the urban form as a collage or as a collection of fragments, Rowe overcomes both the logic of the classic models and the modernist inventions, allowing access to a vast repertoire of architectonic figures as base materials for design, regardless of their historic or ideologic collocation. At the same time as Colin Rowe's studies, in 1978 twelve internationally-acclaimed architects including Rowe himself and Dardi, are invited to participate to the project *Roma Interrotta* (Interrupted Rome).

Two-thousand-fifty years after Nolli's *Nuova Pianta di Roma* (New Plan of Rome), which is considered the last coherent urban plan of the city, it is taken as base for twelve design interventions, juxtaposed like a collage, through the manipulation of its urban fabric from the inside. The result is the image of an unreal city, fantastic and suggestive.¹¹

Rem Koolhaas with *Urbanisme: Imaginer le Néant* (Imagine the Nothingness)¹² starts to describe a new approach to the structuring of space. The starting concept is the unequivocal: where there is void, every design option is possible. This vision is very closely related to the oriental one¹³ that frees large quantities of creative energy and invites experimentation.

8. C. Dardi, *Semplice, Lineare, Complesso* (Roma: Edizioni Kappa, 1987).

9. O. M. Ungers, R. Koolhaas, P. Riemann, H. Kollhoff., and A. Ovaska, *The City in the City. Berlin: a Green Archipelago* (Zurich: Lars Muller Publisher, 1977).

10. C. Rowe, and F. Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1978).

11. P. Sartogo, "Il Progetto," in *Roma Interrotta. Dodici interventi sulla Pianta di Roma del Nolli* (Roma: Johan & Levi Editore, 2014).

12. R. Koolhaas, "Immaginare il Nulla," in *Oma. Rem Koolhaas* (Milano: Electa, 1991).

13. G. Pasqualotto, *Estetica del Vuoto. Arte E Mediazione nelle Culture d'Oriente* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1992).

Starting from a disappointing misjudgment on the quality of the contemporary built fabric and the incapacity to be incisive with architectonic projects, in 1987 Koolhaas develops a plan for La Ville Nouvelle Melun Sénart, formally defining only a system of great linear voids, the only elements worth preserving, and on which to invest design resources, abandoning the surrounding built fabric to its doom.

According to Ludovico Romagni,¹⁴ mankind has always used existing parts in order to repurpose them into new forms. The artistic technique of the collage, similar to music being remixed, is based on this principle. These techniques, like assembly, montage and juxtaposition, require a possibly painful concept: the selection of the necessary parts to the new composition requires a sacrifice, the destruction of the original.

These recovered parts, usually leftover, hold their own origin, a past that makes them recognizable. In any case, this past cannot be completely recovered, the attempt to preserve memory always results in a selection of fragmentation and modification.

In architecture, the presence of unaccomplished, interrupted or abandoned areas push us to rethink the manipulation devices of the existing, besides the typical categories of restoration and renovation. In *Remix Theory*,¹⁵ Eduardo Navas individuates four categories, four actions to manipulate the existing.

The first category is the extension of the original, by punctual manipulations in its growing areas. The second is to subtract or to add elements with the objective of culminating the originative element, integrating new functions or removing crisis elements, without losing overall recognizability of the base object. Deconstruction is the third; disassembly of the significative parts and re-composition of the same in a new organism, giving up on the maintenance of all the other parts. Last is regeneration, which is a selection of the existing elements based on their functionality, and a re-composition with the loss of any link to the origin. This logic acquires value if applied circularly, a dynamic form in continuous evolution.

A final study on specific themes and references of authors that have studied the area of the Italian-Slovenian border, and in particular of Gorizia and Nova Gorica, of the cross-border concept as space and as separation of space, as a bridge where cross connections become layers of a border spatial concept.¹⁶

Piero Zanini¹⁷ reconstructs a complete path for the meaning of the border. From the initial trace, from the furrow dug in the ground to recognize what is “inside” and what is “outside”, a series of significant passages are identified. The border can be understood as a clear, recognizable border, at which the contents expelled from space defined by the border itself, tend to accumulate, as they are considered extraneous to it. Where the border does not divide two contiguous,

14. L. Romagni, “Remix,” in *Recycled Theory: Illustrated Dictionary* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016).

15. E. Navas, *Remix Theory. The Aesthetics of Sampling* (New York: Springer Wein New York Press, 2012).

16. P. Gabrijelčič, *Internationalisation of the Border: The Place of Global Initiative. Development of Border Region in View of European Integration Efforts* (Borderlink_Newsletter, 2004).

17. P. Zanini, *Significati del Confine* (Milano: Edizioni Scolastiche Bruno Mondadori, 1997).

diverse but known spaces, they become frontier. It turns toward the unknown; it has an unstable character, it goes from a sharp edge to a wide margin with a depth, where “to give a place to differences”. A third place is a threshold to be inhabited and constructed. Natural borders are a specific category in which mountain ranges or rivers are examples. Ideally impassable, they are activated as margins of exchange and meeting places as soon as they are “violated” by paths, passages, crossings. These original dimensions of the construction of borders today can generate a phenomenon that Zanini defines as “ecological borders”, citing the cases of Mexico/United States and Gorizia/Nova Gorica borders, in correspondence with which, almost naturally, those parts of urban settlements accumulate, judged as most inopportune, unhealthy and harmful.

Similarly, Sara Basso¹⁸ adds that the threshold represents the synthesis of the border construction process. However, this figure also refers to the idea of transition, of passage. It is the “in-between”; a sign in the space that separates and “tends towards” at the same time, a conceptualization that allows to think about the border as something that places two different realities in communication, an interface between two distinct universes. This shows the ability of the “spaces between” to foster exchanges and encounters, assuming the role of “generators of innovation” of the identities that constitute them. The border can therefore be understood as a place of suspension, but also of the constructive and non-conflictual mixture of identities.

These disciplinary references have been the theoretical basis for the development of the design experimentation established as a didactic laboratory according to the methodology described in the next section.

Methodology

The objective of the architectural design laboratory is to individuate and redesign strategic spaces of the city by intervening on the areas that need re-qualification or regeneration in order to reactivate life cycles through the redistribution of functions, resources and architectural fabrics not yet efficient, that is, individuating new solutions for deconstructed places, left without residual values.

As it is an integrated architectural design laboratory of architecture and of the built environment, other disciplinary modules are part of the curricula. Some include: Architectonic Composition, Advanced Survey Techniques and Plastic Modeling, Requalification of the Built Environment, Architecture of Big Infrastructures and Infrastructural Complexes along with numerous seminars and workshops, all taught by different professors.

The didactic activities have been divided into two semesters, the first is more lecture-based where the students experience a combination of multidisciplinary lessons and its focus is to provide a theoretical basis for the more hands-on

18. S. Basso, *Nel confine. Riletture del Territorio Transfrontaliero Italo-Sloveno* (Trieste: EUT - Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2010).

approach of the second semester, the students are divided into small groups and are asked to propose a design solution to an area of their choosing. The two semesters have been further broken down into lectures, seminars and workshops.

The first exercise has been titled “Atlante”. The titan Atlante, after the defeat of Cronus in the Theomachy has been obligated by Zeus to withstand the weight of the globe.

Because every project begins with the elaboration of information, it is at this stage that the students have been asked to begin to recognize the possible themes of the project they will be developing through the collection of useful examples and theoretical references for which they were instructed to create and organize a collection of materials. The assembly of this Atlas is the first act on which they will be sustaining their project. The Atlas will be constructed by the thematic collections of significative projects selected by the groups of students and the editorial and graphics aspects will be determined by a coordination group.

On the final day of the first seminary, a presentation will be organized, defined and directed by the coordination group where each group of students will present their collection of projects.

The second exercise, “Filling Voids”, sees the void as a content, objective and design instrument. The students are asked to design the void between abstraction and figuration. The outcome will be a first theoretical-design “synthesis”, an urban-architectonic morpheme, a pre-dimensioning and a first review of the functional program. Practically the students are expected to produce a model of the voids for each study area of Gorizia, highlighting the existing and design condition along with a general planimetry of the seven study areas of Gorizia/Nova Gorica showing where every project is located.

To mark the end of the first semester, the summary workshop “Laboratorio Gorizia: Masterplan” will be organized by the students. There is only one defined assignment: to elaborate a synthesis masterplan that foresees the overlap of Antonio Lasciac’s 1913 plan for Gorizia and the seven new study areas developed, along with a critical selection of parts of the city added or removed after the First World War (Figure 2).



Figure 2. *Development of the Urban System of Gorizia in Three Phases, 1797, 1915 and 1947*

Note: The last phase includes the institution of the state line border and the foundation of the city of Nova Gorica to the North-East.

This way a new map will be developed, able to highlight the contact points, able to resolve interferences, able to recognize and make most of the shared elements, constructing a unified and coherent design, starting from the way each project area relates to its context. The students have set up one of the classrooms as an interactive “museum” where the materials from the previous seminars will also be shown, creating a coherent narration for the birth of each individual project while still maintaining a united image. The Comune di Gorizia (Municipality of Gorizia) was also invited to participate.

The second semester was highly characterized by the beginning of the pandemic and Italian lockdown from March 2020. As a consequence, all the activities planned underwent some changes in order to adapt the curricula to the impossibility of classroom work. Each group of students was asked to keep developing their project and each week an online group revision was held with all the students and all the teachers in order to guide each project in a good direction. At the end of the semester an online workshop was organized alternating lectures open to the public via streaming, working hours and revisions. On the final day, the students organized an online presentation of all seven projects. Sometime later the students were asked to represent their projects. After some minor adjustments, “Outcomes”, a one-day seminary was planned and would be evaluated as the final exam where the Comune di Gorizia was also invited.

Findings

Here are the seven projects developed during the course of the laboratory:

Group 1, Transport Interchange

The project is located where Gorizia’s tram depot once was. It is infrastructure-based and connects the modern-day Italian railway station, the public transport system and the hospital. A pedestrian passageway directly connects the station with the building of the hospital along with a series of new constructions (Figure 3). These include car parking, bicycle parking and a hybrid building that hosts a series of services and facilities in support of travelers along with study and reading area dedicated to student commuters. The bicycle parking is designed as a ribbon with two levels and covered by a large canopy.



Figure 3. *Group 1, Transport Interchange, General Plan*

Source: Elaboration by Collenz, M., Di Ferro, S., and Lauricella, L.

Group 2, Casa Rossa

The Casa Rossa project fills the large void of the forecourt of the old checkpoint, born as service to the Slovenian border crossing of Casa Rossa.

The new park is made of many open spaces and elements.

On one side, a large terracing along the hill of the university overlooking the state line, as a sort of land art piece that takes direct inspiration from the Cretto di Gibellina by Burri.

At the center, it is possible to see a large covered area dedicated to open air markets or other events.

The abandoned building of the Casa Rossa border breach is being monumentalized by a large slit that connects the two sides of the state line and it is transformed into a museum of itself (Figure 4).

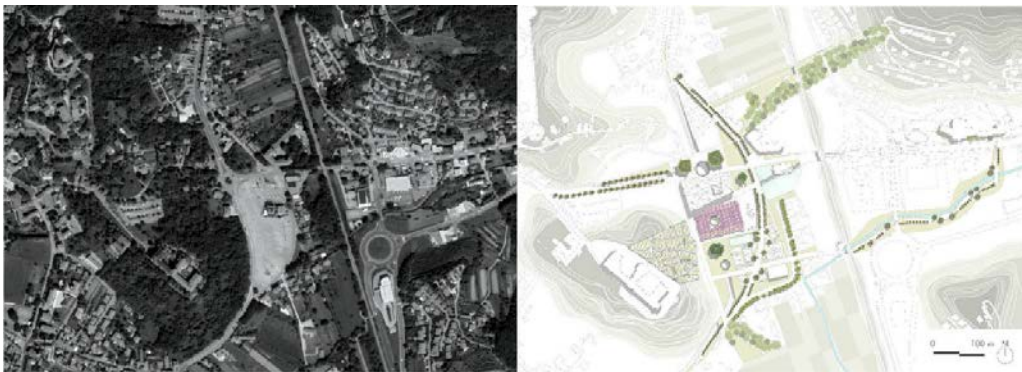


Figure 4. *Group 2, Casa Rossa, General Plan*

Source: Elaboration by Barbiani, P., Ladrero, M., and Morgera, I.

The project is designed by slots and phases, adding a layer of feasibility where the construction stages have also been developed.

Group 3, Points, Lines And Volumes

Points, lines and volumes is the title of this project and is located on the Piazzale della Transalpina.

It takes into consideration the scenario of Gorizia/Nova Gorica as the European Culture Capital for 2025 which is why the infrastructure along the border line is constructed by functional architectural elements used as support for the events.

Useful connections are added, able to take the user across the two cities and all the way to Piazzale Transalpina (Figure 5).



Figure 5. *Group 3, Points, Lines and Volumes, General Plan*

Source: Elaboration by De Conz, G., Lippiello, T., and Pigat, N.

These passageways are particularly symbolic as the Transalpina station is a place of great symbolism as it is a half Italian and half Slovenian square that physically connects the two cities.

It used to be a stop for the trainway line that connected Vienna to Trieste.

After the new border definition for both Slovenia and Italy, the Transalpina station itself remained on the Slovenian side while the Piazzale right in front of it is in Italy.

Group 4, A New Boulevard

This project revolves around traces. It deals with a primary connection axis between the city of Gorizia and the access to the highway, that passes across the state line and reaches the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana.

Besides its relationship with the highway, the area is intersected by the sediment of the railway and individualizes a series of areas, in-between these two traces that are underdeveloped. In particular, a large ex-military area that is now in the process of disposal (Figure 6).



Figure 6. *Group 4, A New Boulevard, General Plan*

Source: Elaboration by D'Onofrio, L., Ridolfi, P., and Zei, G.

The project foresees a series of new architectonic interventions and, at the same time, a series of new open-air spaces and parks of different nature. Its objective is to overcome the limit of the railway tracks with pedestrian walkways and to redevelop these bands of unqualified terrain with the insertion of new buildings, characterized by a variety of uses, residential, commercial, and all the necessary facilities to serve both.

These spaces, bands, stripes, are in some cases very narrow and the project develops them as an opportunity to modulate their transversal section and create spaces of different qualities dedicated to traffic fluxes and pedestrians along with slow mobility, in order to transform them into linear parks.

Group 5, via Terza Armata

In correspondence of an empty area next to the state line, along with via Terza Armata, axis of commercial and industrial development in Gorizia, the project presents the hypothesis of the realization of a new commercial center integrated in the landscape (Figure 7).



Figure 7. *Group 5, via Terza Armata, General Plan*

Source: Elaboration by Brun, L., Tomasin, G., and Zotti, F.

A large commercial building that in a way reinterprets and respects the characteristic void of the area. The building is mainly developed underground, under an artificial hill that is at some point dug up by the central distribution

devices of the building. It is almost invisible from the outside and it is only possible to see it once inside. The access to the building happens through a system of overhead pedestrian walkways that pass over the main roadways that arrive at the commercial center.

Group 6, Vision of Equilibrium

Vision of equilibrium is developed over Gorizia's ex Fiera and next to one of the main traces of the territory, the Isonzo river.

This location is particularly symbolic because the river crosses the border and joins the territories of Slovenia and Italy. In this case the strategy is to rethink and redesign this area by creating a connection between an existing sports center and the Isonzo, interpreted as a privileged area for free time and sports.

The project foresees the development of a park that, through a system of passageways, physically connects the existing sports facilities with the river along with a series of buildings in order to enhance the sportive vocation of the area (Figure 8). The buildings host different uses: a sports hall for volleyball, a sports medic center, a rock-climbing gym, and a series of commercial activities in support. The project is presented as a large park with a series of emerging architectonic objects with a strong sculptural connotation. In this case as well, part of the project has been developed on a schedule in order to answer to the demands of the city administration, along with a program for the management and maintenance of the park.

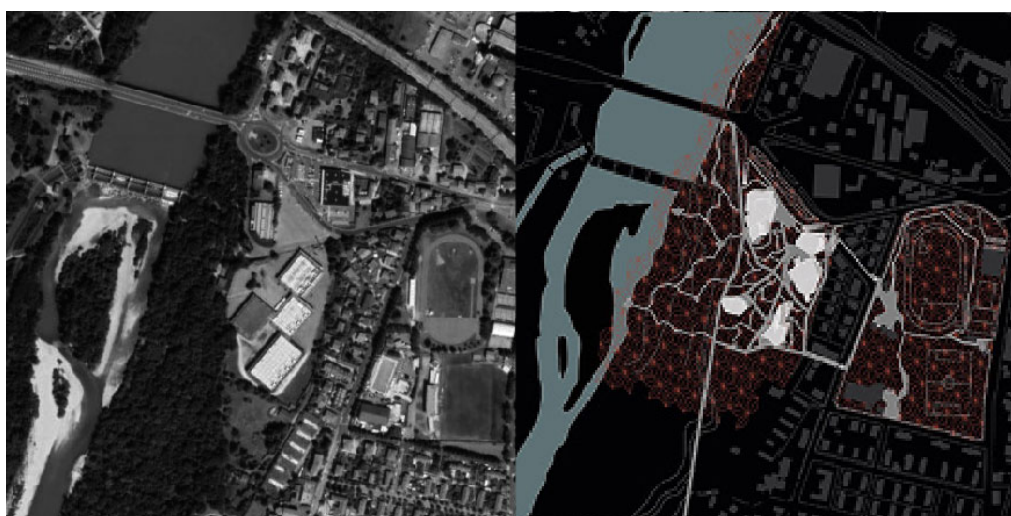


Figure 8. Group 6, Vision of Equilibrium, General Plan

Source: Elaboration by Buccino, D., Requena, L., and Romanzin, A.

Group 7, Archipelago Park

Archipelago Park is the title of the project placed in the area of the former, now abandoned, civil hospital, situated close to the border. It is characterized by a series of buildings, distributed over a large green area as if they were islands that

make an archipelago. The project foresees the substantial demolition of these buildings with the exception of the sanatorium, the building with the most history and architectonic value and prestige. The area's scope is completely dedicated to mental and physical wellness.

The park is re-qualified, and a series of new buildings are added in order to repurpose the area. The sanatorium becomes a hotel, in place of the ex-hospital, a wellness and spa center is designed, and the area closest to the state line becomes an exposition center (Figure 9). The project deals with three different interventions, all alternative to one another. On one side, a scientific restoration of the existing building and on the other the insertion of new architectures with a contemporary aesthetic. The spa and wellness center are based on a system of aggregating buildings guided by a growth matrix that can be modulated based on the functional program and realization phases. Additionally, the element of water gets re-introduced as was historically significant, the area had humid characteristics, documented by the dried fluvial traces. This distinguishing feature gets re-interpreted to connote the entire area, starting from the creation of an artificial lake in the center of the park.



Figure 9. *Group 7, Archipelago Park, General Plan*

Source: Elaboration by Bearzotti, G, Cepach, D., and Ferletti, A.

Conclusions

There are more than seventy state line walls in the world, from the Hungarian barrier against migrants, to the barbed wire line between India and Bangladesh, to the border line between North and South Korea, to the separation between the United States and Mexico, or between Israel and West Bank. In the last thirty years their number has quadrupled.

Similarly, the boarder that divided Gorizia that was believed to be definitively removed, has been quickly re-established during the pandemic. A new fence made from metallic grids and cement prefabricated elements has once again divided for many months the two cities for sanitary reasons.

The results of this laboratory have been appreciated by the Municipality of Gorizia that has decided to finance a new laboratory in order to enlarge the acquired outcomes.

The final presentation of the projects underwent an evaluation by an enlarged group composed of the laboratory teachers, guest teachers from the University of Ljubljana, councilors, executive and civil servants from the Municipality of Gorizia.

The aesthetic of the void and residue as a design material to be used in projects, its way of reading the study areas, and its declination through the technique of composite collage, of the remix, mash-up and the found footage, have been stimuli that have allowed the groups of students to release their creativity, obtaining projects different from one another, with great biodiversity of forms and content.

Voids and residues are typical materials of the city and of the contemporary landscape. The original relation between the parts, that historically used to make up the territory, has progressively been put into crisis by the industrial revolutions. The objects, clues of these relationships over time have shrunk, have grown apart, have moved, and have also disappeared in some cases. In their place it is possible to find gaps and fractures, only ruins and residues remain. This phenomenon is even more significant in communication with the “ecological border” mentioned in the literature review. In correspondence with the borders, the accumulation of objects, spaces and heterogeneous functions, confused and discarded, is even more evident. This condition on one hand clarifies the necessity for a project, and on the other, offers fertile soil for its development, with less limitations and greater potential, and so with a more significant impact on the architectonic quality.

The discussion has allowed, on the basis of the themes and principles illustrated in the literature review, to categorize the seven projects into two groups: Fragments and Traces.

The fragments are those projects that are developed over a clearly marked area that have internal constructive rules, like a sort of DNA, allowing possible expansions and growth. The projects of groups 1,2,5,6 and 7 are part of this category.

The fragment is a contemporary figure of the composition that contains a form of dynamism. The fragment can be part of an originally whole system, that has fractured and can aspire to re-compose itself in the future in the lost unity or accept its current condition as a residue. The fragment can also be the origin of something new, that can potentially grow and complete itself. In any case the fragment, exactly because it is incomplete, contains a tension, a strong design charge, towards other possible spatial configurations, which the static nature of the unitary and integral form cannot have.

The traces on the other hand, are linearly developed projects; they are born in correspondence to physical limits of the city, made up of the state line, but also of the limits of the existing infrastructure. The projects of groups 3 and 4 are part of this family.

The traces, born as borders strongly rooted to the earth, are natural or anthropic signs. They are also margins with depth, bands more or less wide. In correspondence with the traces, communities are formed. They are barriers until, trying to cross

them, thresholds, portals, crossings and paths are introduced that allow a recognition of the value of the differences.

Traces are at the same time elements of distinction of the different spaces and places of contact.

Fragments and traces that have been individuated, have then been re-composed into a unitary drawing, that has allowed to reconstruct the identity of a complex urban system (Figure 10).

On the basis of these first encouraging results, the University of Ljubljana has also decided to embark on a twin study on the other side of the state line, in order to share and compare the obtained results with a cross-border collaboration.

Gorizia and Nova Gorica, even if they belong to two different states, continue to imagine themselves as a single city. The scenario speculated by group 5 is an example, and since December 2020, the allocation of the title of European Capital of Culture 2025 has been shared by the two cities.

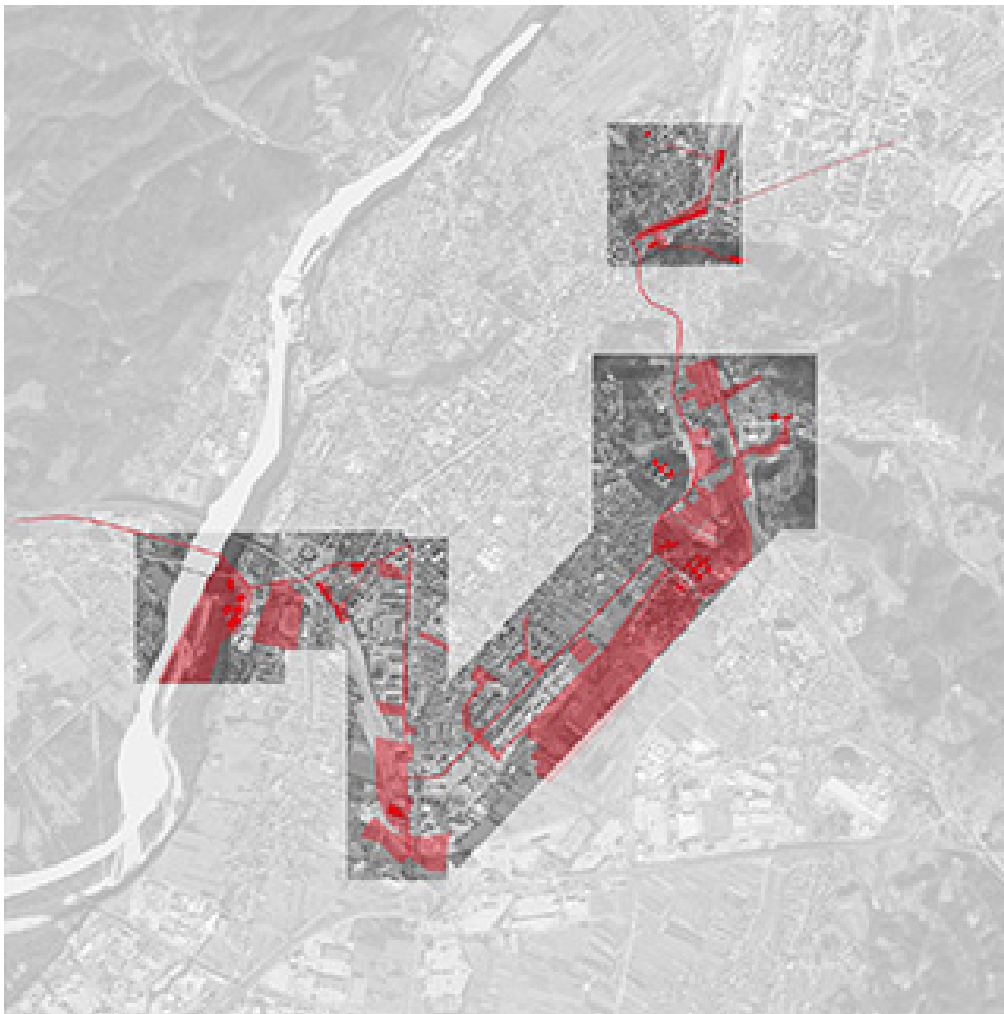


Figure 10. *General Map of the Seven Projects Joined*

Source: Elaboration by RRR lab.

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