

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
FIRST SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture (Urban and Territorial Design)
Honors theses

THE TRAIN ENTERS THE CITY: perception and representation of the urban landscape, and design pathways

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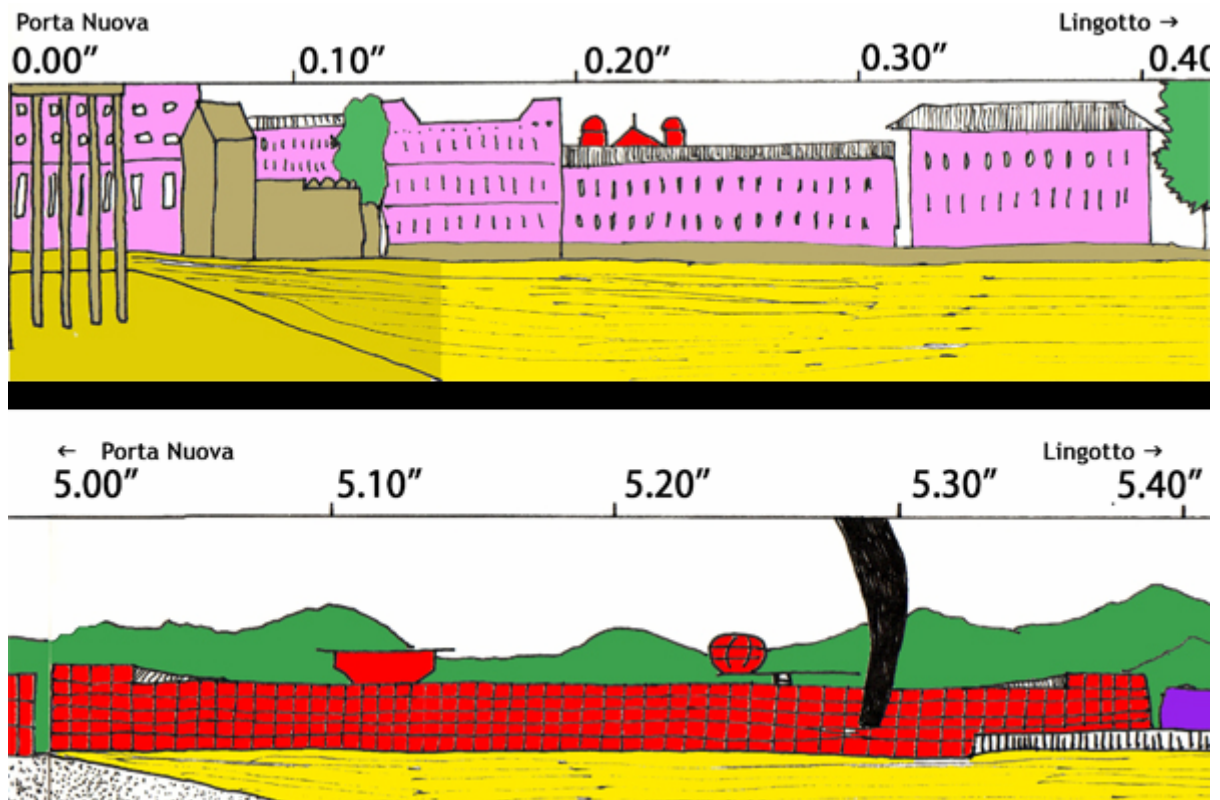
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How do cities appear to train passengers, after a long-distance journey? Which elements, seen through the window, tell them that the train is entering a large city and that the journey is about to finish? The images of cities that are perceived by the passengers are sometimes marked by elements of deterioration; other times, instead, travellers may be welcomed by symbolic images, very meaningful and representative of the city they are arriving at, or they are suddenly faced with interesting urban portraits. At all times, however, the face that towns turn towards railways is not designed because, neither urban administrations, nor railway companies, or any territorial planning instruments generally take into account what the passengers see from the train. This is the result of an on going contradictory, almost paradoxical dialogue occurring between cities and railways. In fact cities want station but, at the same time, they loathe railways. The latter, since the nineteenth century, have been sited at the borders of dense cities, causing urban areas to be surrounded by railway belts, soon doomed to collide with the fast growth of the cities. In addition, borderline zones, located between urban areas and railways, were often neglected, due to the fact that those areas were controlled by authorities with structures, goals and competences very different one from the other: those being municipalities and railway authorities. For this reason citizens and travellers, do not perceive railway areas inside cities as urban zones, but as a totally different world, strongly disconnected from urban life.

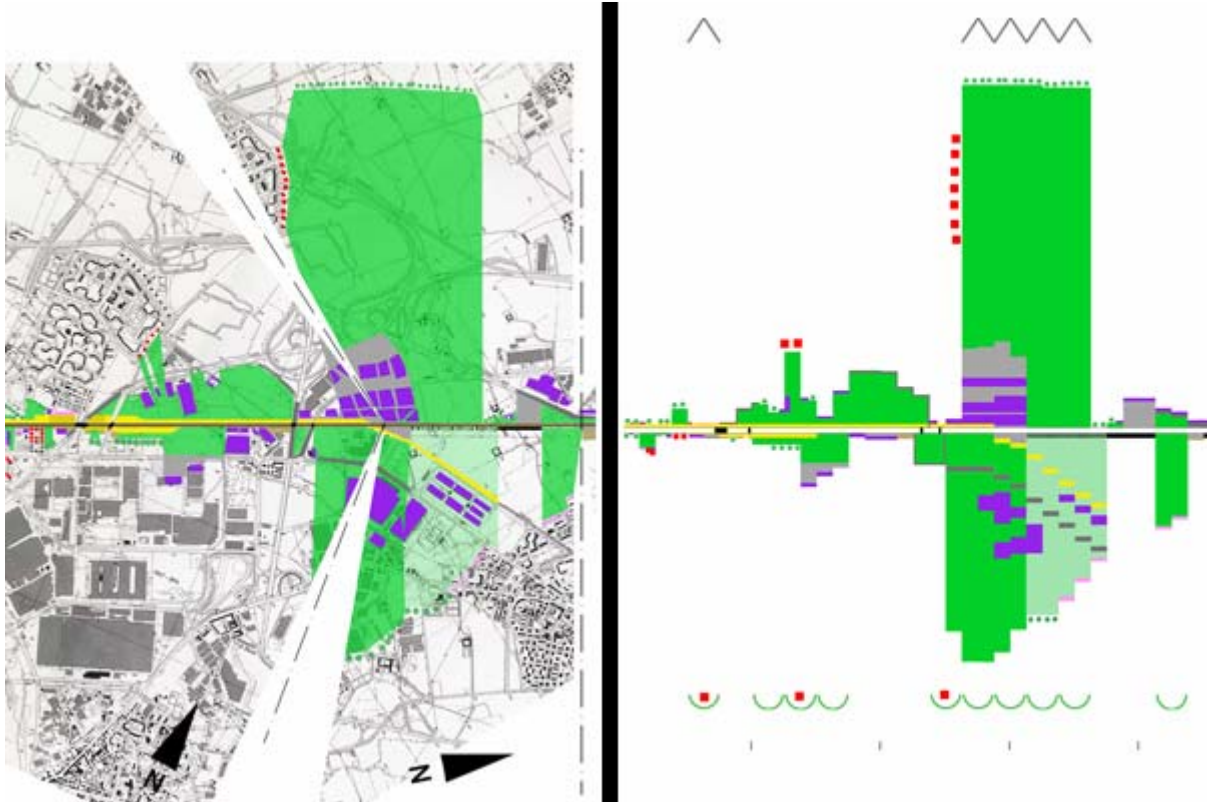
The contradictions and criticalities that we have identified so far, have served as a springboard enabling us to claim that railway areas, placed inside cities, need to be felt and looked at as proper urban areas. Besides, travellers ought to be encouraged to regard as an “urban gate” the whole way, travelled on board the train, from the moment when the train enters the city until its arrival at the station and not the just the station where they are to get off. For this reason, this work aims to show some analysis methods and representation systems of landscape seen from the train. Owing to the lack of specific studies, we have made reference to the bibliography of works relating to perception through vehicles, and we have adapted it to the domain of railways so as to study the differences.

We have analyzed the case of Turin railway junction paying specific attention to the two main entries into the city for domestic traffic. As far as the entry from South, on the line from Asti, we have analyzed the route from Trofarello to Turin Porta Nuova and with regards to the entry from North, on the high speed line from Milan, we have taken into consideration the route way from Chivasso area to Torino Porta Susa.



Two examples of graphic representations of window sight for the railway Torino Porta Nuova – Torino Lingotto

For both ways, some perception schemes have been carried out attempting to show how the city appears to passengers arriving by train, and studying its characteristic features which mark travellers's sight. Different colours have been used to identify different items: for instance we have differentiated buildings that appear to travellers with a front designed from decay elements, from elements connected to the railway world and from symbolic elements of the city.



Two examples of different perceptive schemes of the same railway (Stura High Speed line junction – Torino Stura)

It is important to understand what train passengers see when they travel along urban railway routes, as we believe that by carrying out specifically designed projects along railways we may qualify train entry in the city. In a similar way cities roads are being taken into consideration by the municipalities , as, routes dividing high speed lines by central station should be experienced by train passengers as a factor enhancing both the value of the city and the journey, as well as enabling the exchange of information between city and travellers. This point has been recently focused on as, over the past few years, cities have invested huge sums of money in marketing operation geared at relaunching their image toward the outside world.

At last, we have identified some average landscape situations inside Turin railway junction, which are typically find within urban European railway landscapes. For each of them we have proposed some future projects that may qualify the image of the cities arrived at by train travelers, as well as realize an interesting and instructive route, allowing passengers to feel they are actually in the city, even before they get off the train.



Example of one suggestion proposed for qualifying railway square

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