
The new urban paradigms: Valparaíso. From crystallization to reactivation

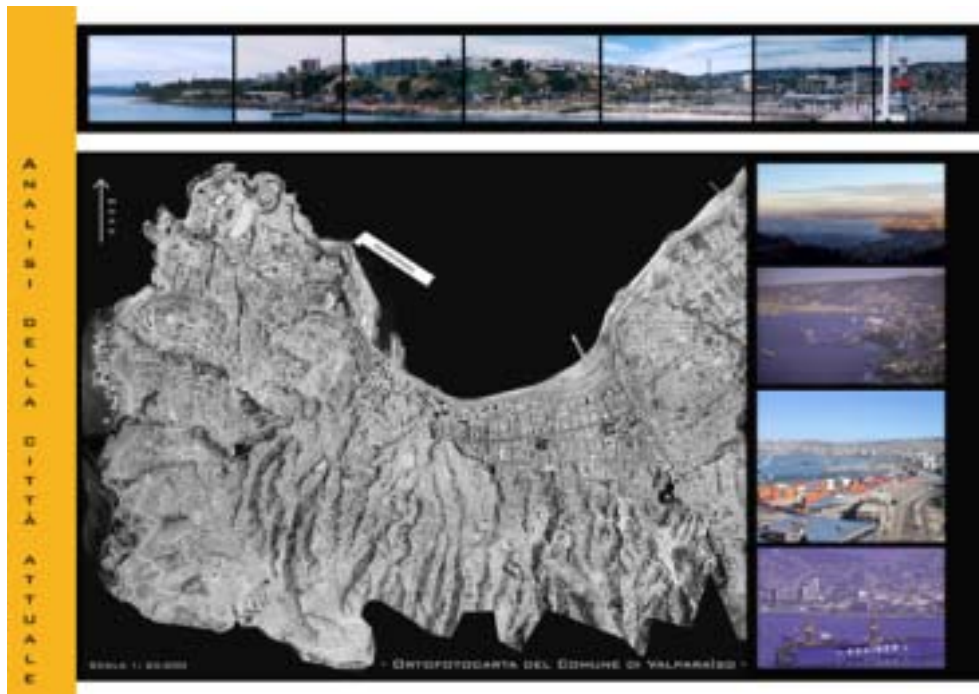
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Valparaíso, city of the Chile middle coast, doesn't show the typical South American structure of the Spanish "*quadra*", because its uneven morphological configuration: in fact it grew randomly, along the hills sides and valleys, in unplanned suburbs called "*cerros*".

The natural "amphitheatre" was, since the origin, the harbor of Santiago until the late XVIII century, when it became the main Chilean harbor, the "*perla del Pacífico*", thanks to the new open ship road of Cape Horn. Relevant fluxes of high varieties of goods, people and cultures transform Valparaíso in a very active center for more than one century. In spite of the continuous natural treads of hearth squashes, fires, storms and floodings, the city had an interrupted urban and architectural growth.

When in the early XX century the Panama channel was opened, the economic power of the city expired and from then a **CRYSTALLIZATION** phenomenon appeared: the present Valparaíso is just the decaying worse copy of the previous city, being unable till now to identify the renaissance impulses and to renew the now obsolete peculiar identity.



New national and local inputs force Valparaíso towards a new role: Valparaíso tourist city? Valparaíso University city? Valparaíso center of technological research? Incubator of enterprises? Patrimony of humanity? Or again main harbor of Chile?

Today Valparaíso is faced with a new phase of architectural fervour, thanks to several converging factors: the opening of the new South entrance of the city, enabling the creation of the “*porto secco*” located in the inner area and the consequent availability of the containers-free area along the “*area costiera*”; the “*plan bicentenario*” allocating important public investments for city renewing by 2010; and the designation of Valparaíso as “patrimony of humanity” propelling the inhabitants awareness.

Almost all the already presented projects suggest the realization of the “waterfront” as in the US models adopted in the eighties and the nineties. According to the territorial strategies and the present laws, we instead suggest an alternative approach, based on the dissemination of the several functions inside the urban network, in order to promote its global **REACTIVATION**, protecting the “*borde costero*” from the tread of the estate speculations envisaged by the above mentioned projects.



They, in fact, present at least two main weak points: a single wide public area would transform this “free area” into a suburb not-integrated into the city; and the massive buildings construction wouldn’t reach the goal of interconnecting the city with its “*borde*”.

It’s not a question of “quantitative” problems, but of “identity” ones: because of its peculiarity, this area can be defined as an environment; and the “lunapark effect” of such projects, with its recreational commercial approach, would convert it into an area without any peculiarity and relationship with the urban context.

As a consequence, without its identity this area wouldn’t be anymore defined an “environment”: it could be more likely defined as a “non-environment”.

The driving idea is to deal between these two extreme positions, in order to better integrate the “*borde*” into the complexity of the urban network, by means of the interaction of the three city entities (“*borde*”, “*plan*” and “*cerros*”), although maintaining its character of transition area between the city and the see, a form of “water stage” of the city amphitheatre. This boundary will be restored by the same inhabitants of the “*borde*”.



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