



Cornigliano Mon Amour

Urban existences in post-industrial realities.

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CORNIGLIANO MON AMOUR
Urban existences in post-industrial realities.

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All the photos and drawings of the thesis are shot by the author except where noted differently.



Figure 1. Ortofoto 1968, <https://geoportail.regione.liguria.it/>

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A b s t r a c t

The thesis project focused on the area of Cornigliano, a district in the West of Genoa.

This part of the city developed in different phases.

Before the 1930 the coast used to be a milestone of the Grand Tour and was mainly urbanized with villas built by wealthy families of Genoa. After this period an infrastructuring process started first with the railway following the whole Ligurian coast, and then with the industrialization process of Genoa.

Cornigliano's access to the sea was slowly privatized by landfilling the seashore to build the industry; the inhabitants will never have any access to it again and the entire water network flow is made invisible or separated from the urban daily life.

The district rapidly converted into an industrial area and populated by a flow of immigration mainly from the South and other parts of Italy.

The characterizing element was ILVA plant, producing a great part of the steel used in Europe and it was attracting workers which contributed to make Genoa a rich and powerful city in the Mediterranean in combination with its industrial port.

The problems due to air pollution, dust and dirt became significant, concerns about the death rate of the population grew a lot in this area (such

as in the ILVA from Taranto) and a group of workers mobilized by a group called "Women of Cornigliano" made it clear that a change was needed. In 2005 the factory converted a great part of its sheds to cold steel production, which pollutes less and other structures such as the two big gasometers next to the city center were demolished.

From that moment depopulation and marginalization of the district started. The empty spaces left by the industry are the main interest of this thesis, which starts with an overview of similar processes in other parts of Italy, France and other European cities on the Mediterranean sea.

This model of industrial decommissioning left empty spaces that today are attracting our attention being part of our realities everyday. And it is not a rare phenomena.

The analysis continues focusing on the meaning we can give to those spaces.

Where natural flows used to balance a long ago and were destroyed after human intervention, after decommissioning due to lack of interest from institutions and potential investors of huge spaces, abandonment and time passing offer new ground for forms of nature that are occupying those spaces.

There are different mentalities about how to approach and design those spaces. Mine, after a long analysis, lot of reading and extensive surveys, seeing the subtly transforming site in different seasons, is about making those areas accessible in a small percentage, respecting and celebrating how the natural flows of events manipulate the area.

The thesis is for me a way of defining an ethic on planning after five years of studying how to do it, deconstructing it and finding what I think is the designerly way to less impactive solution.

I n t r o d u c t i o n

The purpose of this thesis is to discover those spaces that are for some reasons invisible and so developing without following the rules of human control and planning.

The design part is driven by principles and theories discovered while studying architecture.

At the start of my research, as a human being living in a city I identified with the discourse of reappropriation of spaces in "Droit a la ville" by Henry Lefebvre and all the literature that derives from it (David Harvey, Uneven Growth by MoMa, Insurgent Public Spaces Jeffrey Hou). The focus of reclaiming our cities was modern, in my opinion, due to all the restrictions we experienced in the last two years.

I came to know about a workshop organized by ILAUD (International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design) based in Cornigliano. ILAUD is an association – founded in Italy in 1976 by Giancarlo De Carlo – among Universities, cultural institutions, individual persons and scholars whose interests are focused on the problems of human habitat and environment. (About ILAUD

Archives - Ilaud).

I started being interested in the participatory architecture described by Giancarlo De Carlo (who, being from Genoa, was involved during his life in conducting interventions there). I read about his theories in reclaiming spaces towards powerful private actors and institutions.

Visiting the site I didn't experience a compact front or idea talking with citizens and associations about the future of the area, and not even any will to preserve the new ecosystem.

While reading this bibliography a switch happened in my journey: a category of spaces attracting the famous European architects of the last generation emerged.

It was labeled by the well known Ignasi de Sola Morales in the essay "Terrain Vague", where he marks the borders between those realities and the urban ones.

Another aspect that attracted me in the same essay was the mean of photography as the main one used in cities to transfer information. The most direct one.

I started identifying a big inaccessible area in the district of Cornigliano, with the help of ILAUD. I went there, observed it and photographed it. Photography converted the zone into a fascinating urban reality, the result of impactful transformations, which output today is a huge, flat, vegetated, inaccessible, natural, artificial and invisible corner between the industry, the city and the stream.

While those spaces are not planned, abandoned and forgotten by us, they are still living, developing and being reclaimed by natural species.

The "Manifeste du tiers paysage" by Gilles Clement helped me to identify the invisible - to humans- dynamics existing between natural beings in residual areas, which will be the new focus driving me.

Polvera
Stream

car road not
accessible to
pedestrians.

railway

SEA

Guido Rossi
high speed
road



70

Terminal Erzelli 2
Spinelli

EX
ILVA



Figure 2. Photograph, Cornigliano project area.

~~SEA ACCESS~~



Figure 3. Seafront Cornigliano.

Figure 4. "..."

~~SEA ACCESS~~



Figure 5. "..."
Figure 6. "..."

~~SEA ACCESS~~



Figure 7. Ex Ilva plant.

Figure 8. "..."



~~SEA ACCESS~~

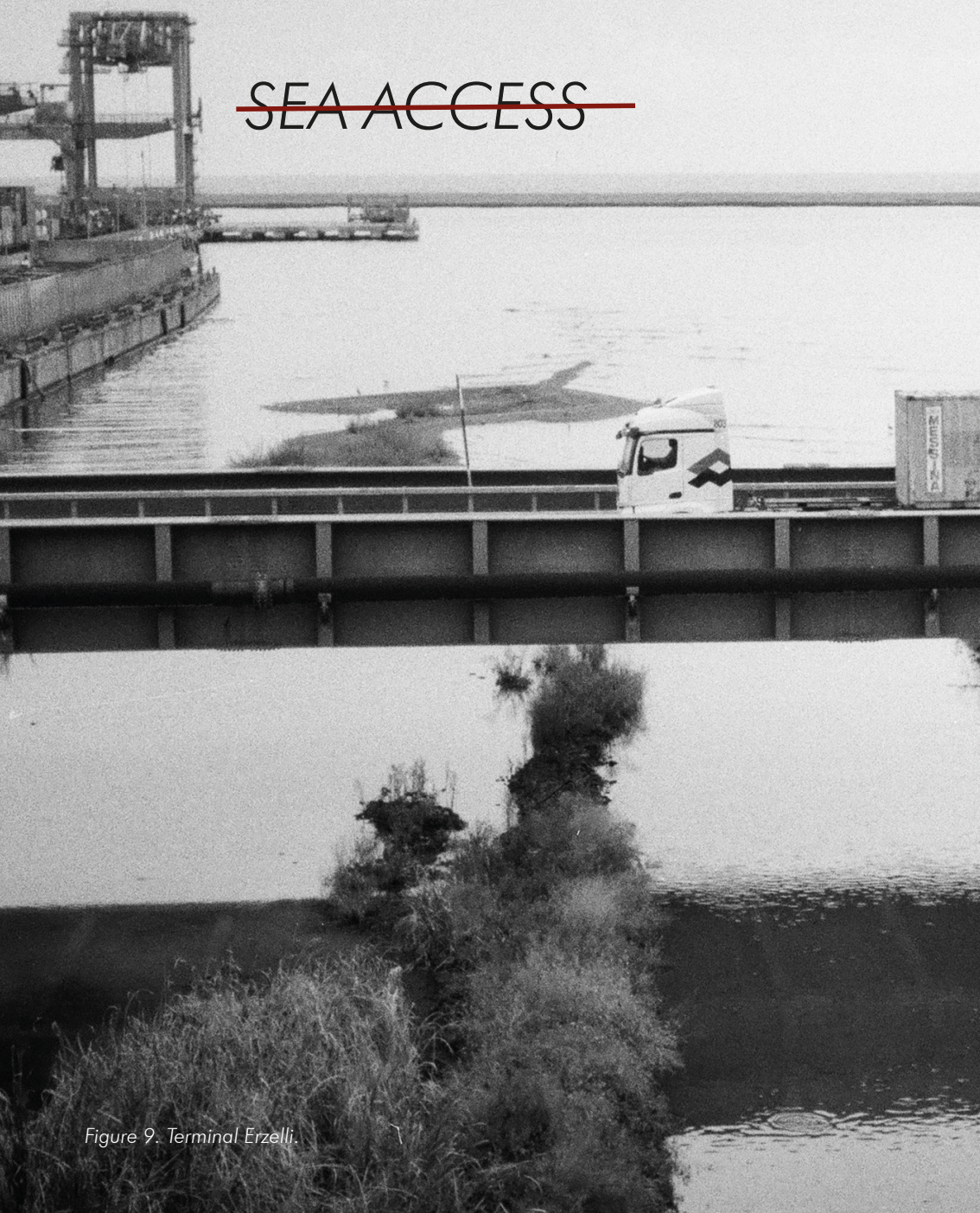


Figure 9. Terminal Erzelli.



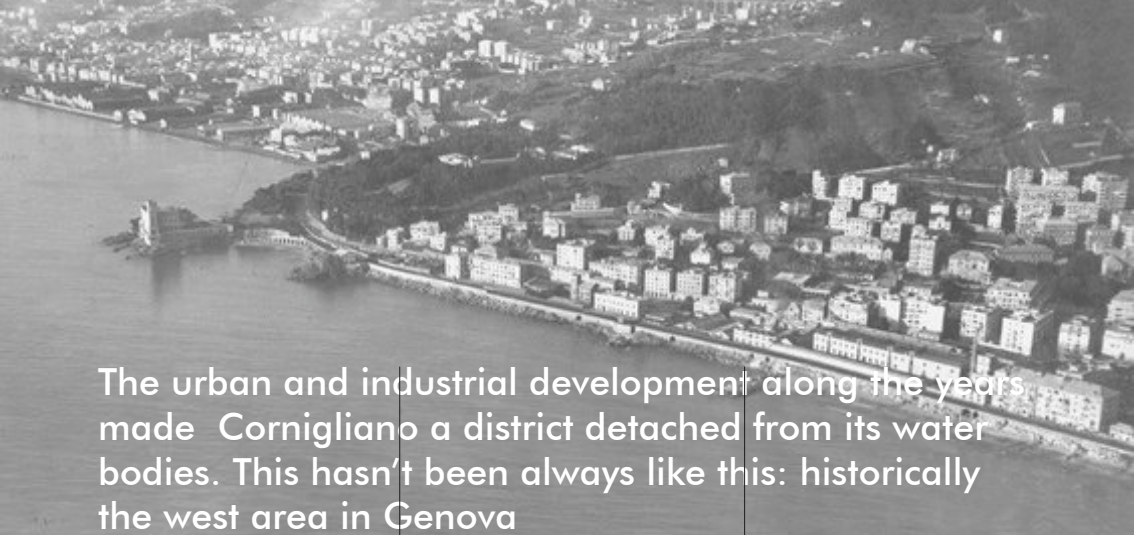


Figure 10. 1930 veduta Cornigliano, from Fondazione Ansaldo archive.

Until the XVIII century the main typology of construction along the central road was constituted by Villas for aristocratic genovese families. In the second half of the century the village was mainly transformed into a small fishing village with remarkable seaside tourist ambitions.



Fig. 11-12 Seaside Cornigliano. C'ERA UNA VOLTA GENOVA.



Fig. 13. Raggio Castel, Cornigliano Coast, "..."

14 April 1951, due to bombing the Raggio Castel was too much degraded to make a restoration intervention. The institutions decide to destroy the symbol of the Cornigliano coast after 70 years of existence, it will follow the plan to build a big steel industry to relaunch the economy.



Fig. 14 Raggio Castel demolition ,Sergio De Nicolai.



was a gorgeous summer residence for rich and nobles, visitors from all over Europe, who were admiring its sea and countryside as it used to be a stop of the Grand Tour

Figure 15. 1952 Polcevera mouth by Alessandro Lombardo.

In the 1926 Cornigliano enters in the project "La Grande Genova", an initiative from Oscar Sinigaglia and Agostino Rocca, and in 1938 it begins the construction of a huge coastal structure that will never enter in function even it will be finished in 1942 because after the armistice the german troops will dismantle it.

After the war Sinigaglia is called to relaunch the italian steel industry and starts to build an infrastructure that will require more than 3 billions of square meters and Cornigliano will definitely lose its space on the sea. A filling of soil is executed in front of the beaches in order to build the industry upon them by excavating the Erzelli hill.

This is common in similar industrial plants in the Mediterranean region: for reasons of space and technical requirements, coastal landfills substitute the original shoreline. The need for space can only be satisfied by adding new pieces of land since the coasts are already urbanized in industrial cities.



Fig. 16 Coast infill , Ansaldo Foundation Archive.



Fig. 17 "..."
Fig. 18. Bird view of the new port.

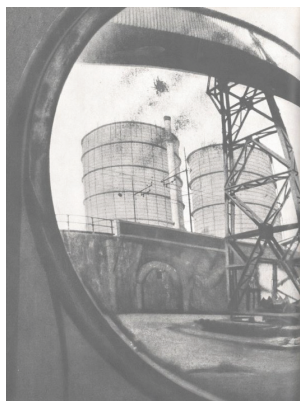


Figure 19. Fondazione Ansaldo archive

In 1953 after several attempts the heavy steel industry became the focus point of the district. The population is now constituted by the working class and the demography increases up to 30.000 inhabitants.



Fig. 20 Gasometers in mirrors, Photo by Kurt Blum



In addition to the loss of contact with the sea, the environmental impact was drastic, with strong emissions – practically in contact with houses – of carbon monoxide, benzene, benzopyrene, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and dust. In the 80s, under the pressure of the local committees, and in particular of the “Women of Cornigliano”, the population started to realize about serious health damages the industry was causing.

Fig. 21-22 Cornigliano industry, Ansaldo Foundation Archive.



Figure 23. ILVA workers protests, Fondazione Ansaldo archive.

In the period between the 90s and the 2005 great part of the sector was converted from warm steelworks to cold ones, less polluting. Nevertheless a great number of workers ended in redundancy.

A great part of the infra-structures have been either demolished or closed. Areas for about 343,000 square meters have been returned to public institutions (265,000 square meters to the Società Per Cornigliano and 78,000 square meters to the aeronautical state property, used by the airport). Most of those areas are still empty today. Not accessible to the public and forgotten. Projects and proposals are coming from citizens and associations, but since 2005 very little has been concluded.



The city west has lost his touristic and leisure appeal and is now an industrial site, this is going to cause crisis and unemployment after the closing of the industry in the post war period until today.

The changing function of wide areas of the district left abandoned and empty spaces.

Figure 24. Coast today.

How did Cornigliano forget the sea?

Cornigliano is one of those districts that represented the city of Genoa for its elegance and refinement. The presence of the sea, hills and castles attracted aristocrats and later bourgeois from all over Northern Europe, as well as fishermen from the city center. So let's imagine all together a delightful village of fishermen and upper middle class tourists with villas and castles, hills and sandy beaches (free and private ones).

With the construction of the first industrial structure in the 1920s,

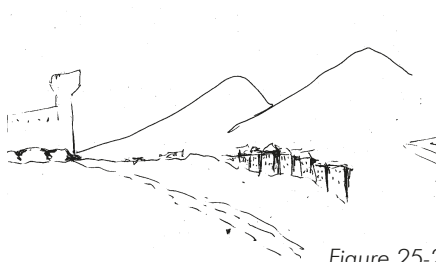


Figure 25-26-27-28-29.
Sketch by the author.

the deterioration of the landscape began.

Twentieth-century urban and industrial planning, which represented the picture of modernization, today is not sustainable anymore.

Both for economical reasons and for pollution damages.

Coming from the center of Genoa and entering Cornigliano (an action that the Genoese of my generation have been carrying out since childhood, as this is an area of large shopping centers like IKEA, Castorama, Leroy Merlin and many other located along the stream Polcevera) what we see today are many construction sites.

Many excavations, many areas left to themselves.

The hot and dusty summer.

Flyovers that go down and up on top of each other, creating interstitial volumes. Their pylons design a long corridor of rooms without walls that house cars, roundabouts, homeless persons and in the first part recently a little but used skatepark; the columns create an infinite rhythm punctuated by the sound of cars passing upon our head on six high speed lanes.

All this between the Cornigliano district and the sea.

The sea is not accessible.

It is there, in front of us, but it cannot be reached.

The coasts where the beaches were located are now almost the city center; a huge intervention of filling of the sea in front of them to build the port area was conducted thanks to the excavations of the Erzelli Hill. Thus the seafront has been privatized over the years and the industry has colonized every centimeter. Not that all this space today is productive and used by its owners. We can

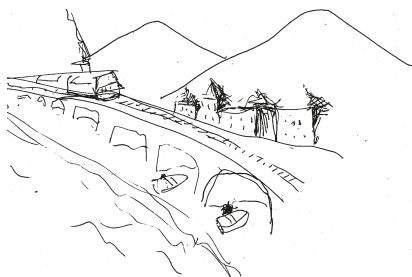


Figure 26

admire, from East to West, so from the city center to the peripheral areas of the city, the Erzelli Terminal with its containers and the former headquarters of the Acciaierie d'Italia (Ex Ilva) today only partly used.

This sweet industrial landscape is observed passing from the Guido Rossa highway if on a private vehicle, the road is opened over the year 2018 to better connect the district to the rest of the city (6 slightly elevated car lanes), otherwise from the railway bridge that passes right next to it, above the Polcevera stream. The bridge is pleasant, colorful (actually the same color of the ILVA compound,

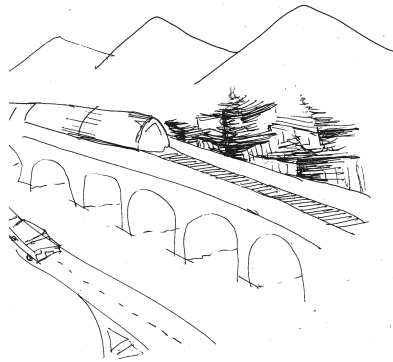


Figure 27

in the first and second image) and in line with the industrial landscape.

Below at ground level, there is currently the large construction site for the expansion of the banks to avoid flooding and problems that have arisen in recent years, and for the future project to move the Cornigliano treatment plant to the mouth of the stream (those works started in 2014 and are closing the whole stream banks). Given the drought this year, the photos taken by me that will accompany the thesis will not portray it in its maximum flow. Finally, here we are in our area. It is about 30.000 m², where

once stood two monumental gasometers, the demolition of which was obtained after struggles by citizens and in particular by the “women for Cornigliano” association.

To the side Villa Bombrini with its luxuriant and green garden, venue for events, conferences, known for having being for some time the home of Fabrizio De Andrè.

The city center conditions improved a lot since the closing of the steel industry and interventions to make it more livable were real-

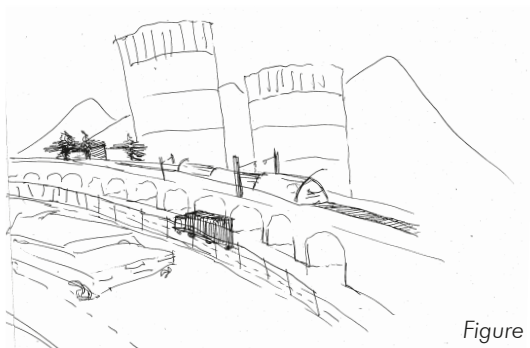


Figure 28

ized (like bike lanes, greenery, benches), but it still lacks a good number of services and job opportunities after the downsizing of the steel sector.

The district is framed by hills that fall into the sea, urbanized by prestigious Villas from the eighteenth century. This part is called “Coronata”, meaning that it embraces the city.

The area is mainly residential (see map and chart on page 65). The inhabitants are composed of the old generation who was working in the metallurgy system, which by closing left a big hole

in the urban and social construct. Those people are looking for spaces and interventions that make their district more livable like the close one of "Sestri Ponente", since the initiatives of social life are lacking. Another necessity are projects that can bring new job opportunities in a way that they won't necessarily need to move to another part of the city every morning.

The photographs of the spaces were taken during april-december, year 2022.

You can see the abandonment of areas that were once all industrial, it is important to understand that this is not a temporary condition that has been going on for a short time.

We are looking at a set of urban planning models that have not worked and have decayed and disappeared, but in place of them there are large urban realities which have been inaccessible and unexplored for years by human beings.

The institutions don't have money nor enough interest for them and the neighborhood is now dotted with spaces that modify the mental map of its inhabitants.

This has been intriguing for me: when inhabitants were asked about the area, a majority of them had no idea what I was talking about. Talking instead about the gasometers that have not existed since more than fifteen years people recalled them clearly.

I would like to suggest that the area of my interest, is just one of the many areas that remained closed in this neighborhood, therefore not accessible to the inhabitants, enigmatic and unseen by humans.

It is located in the initial part of Cornigliano for those arriving from the center, both from the Guido Rossa road and from Via Raffaele Pieragostini.

The area used to host the blast furnaces which were demolished in the year 2005, since then it has quitted any productive function for the community. In the image from maps what we see is a flat surface, today part of it is occupied by hills of earth collected from the stream Polcevera to enlarge it, grass and other plants are growing on those piles of soil and debris. This zone has been identified by the association ILAUD with many other post-industrial or not main-

tained areas in Cornigliano. Most of those could be defined by the term *Terrain Vague* (De Sola Mòrales, 1996) and parts of the third landscape (Clément, 2004).

The first definition is given by Ignasi de Sola Morales, meaning by *Terrain* the “extension of a precisely limited fit for construction, agricultural or geological meanings” and by *Vague* “vacant, empty, unoccupied, free, available, unengaged”. (De Sola Mòrales, 1996).

He sees those areas as opportunities, since there is an absence of use, where we can experiment freely.

The absence of human control dictated by planning allows the development of an alternative, the highest and purest expression of freedom. Where an area used to be dictated by an artificial plan, and by losing that role in the community is not productive anymore, the goal of representing an outstanding reality inside a hectic society is achieved.

Those spaces defined voids in an anthropocentric view, are actually forms of nature, which grew independently and without any need of maintenance .

Those self-sufficient systems are to be preserved in our cities as a natural reserve, not to be planned, but to be considered as a safe area, expression of freedom inside our cities.

The architect's role has to adapt by accepting discontinuities in the urban fabric, by stopping seeing possibilities of a new service to the city, but rather discovering that those urban voids are already full.

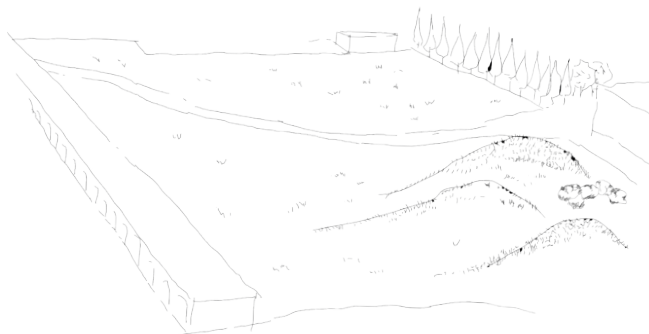


Figure 29

The second definition is declared in the “Manifeste du tiers paysage” by Gilles Clément.

In the introduction he will specify differences inside the category “third landscape”, which is defined by the higher biotic diversity from the surroundings (Gandy, 2010).

He made a distinction dividing abandoned areas which used to be agricultural or industrial (as in Cornigliano case study); areas scarcely modified by human activity because of accessibility or chance and natural reserves which are preserved thanks to legal protection.

The third landscape can be all these things and of different sizes. It can be the thick line of the guardrail in a highway conquered by the vegetation as well as a huge abandoned lot where a steel industry used to be. It can be unexplored areas of the world, inside and outside the urban environment.

Along the Manifesto he tries to put into words the existing rules which developed in an environment which self regulates without human help due to different reasons.



Figure 30.
Collages realized
with photographs
upon cited.

Analogies between steel industries: redrawn of gasometers, blast furnaces, industrial sheds in different parts of the coast.

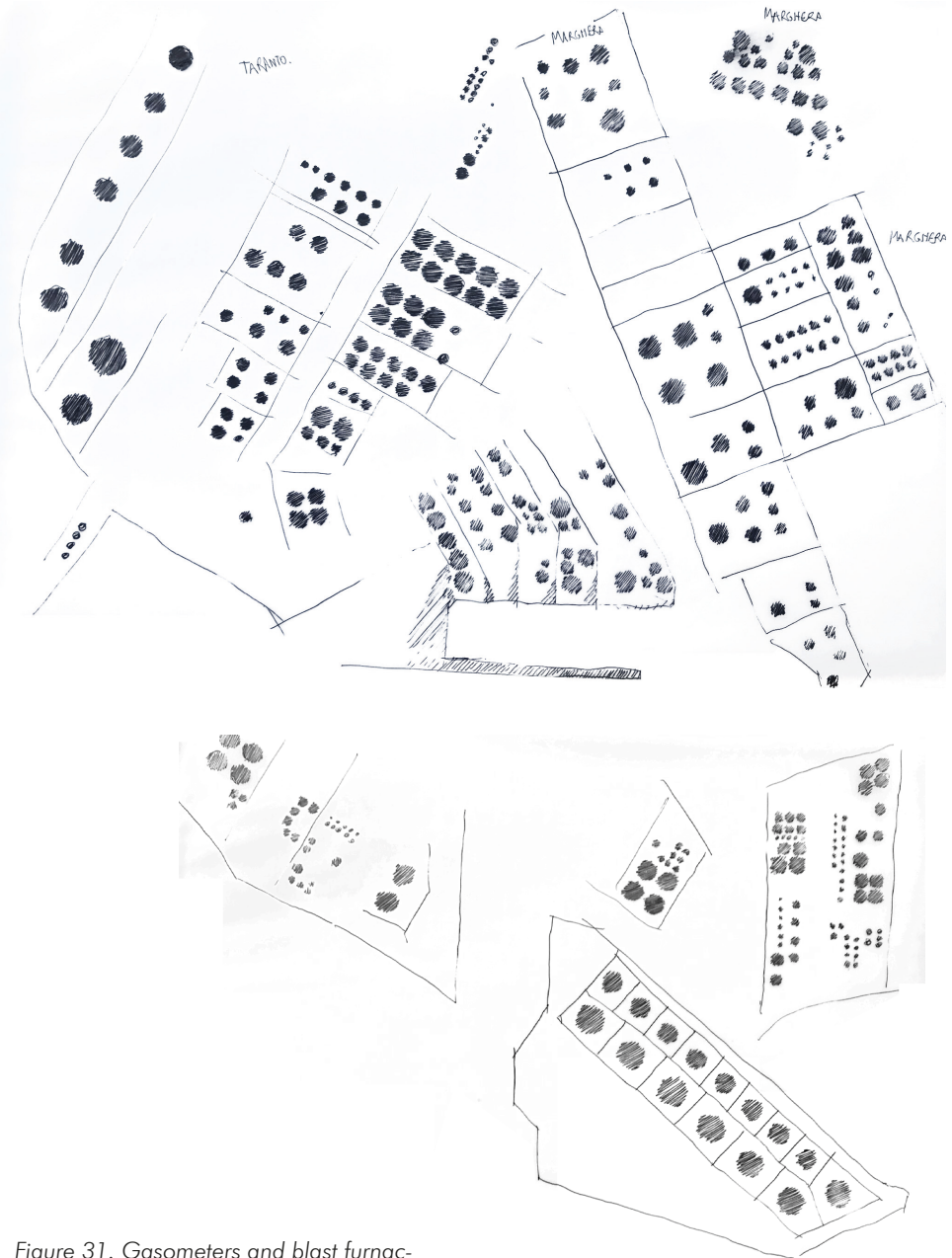


Figure 31. Gasometers and blast furnaces dispose of different steel industries.

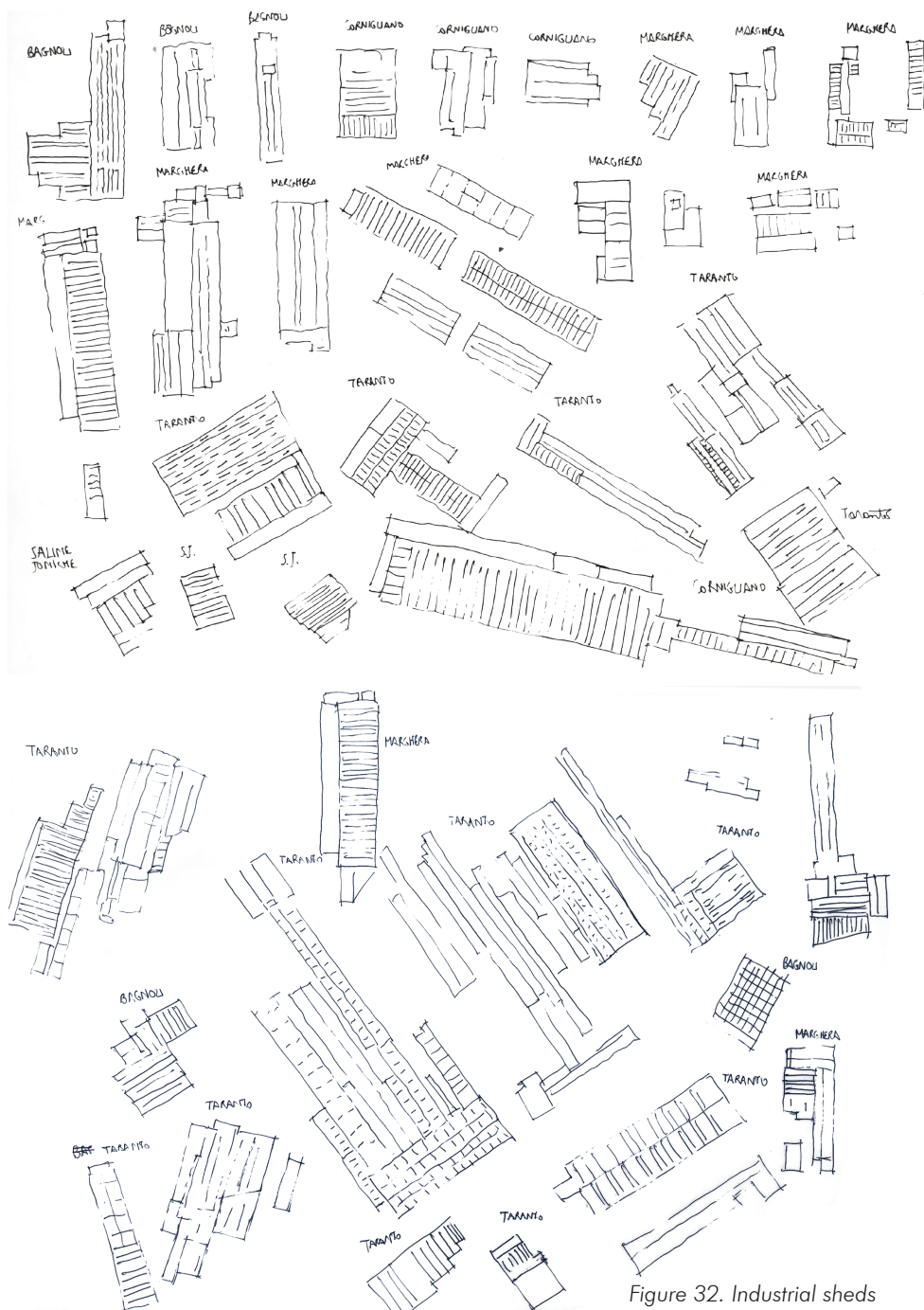


Figure 32. Industrial sheds from different steel industry.

Cornigliano in the broader framework of Mediterranean sea

What happened in Cornigliano is not unique and replicates in some other European Mediterranean cities. What I mean by this definition are cities which are part of Europe that face the Mediterranean with a significant industrial and commercial port connecting them to other cities on the sea.

Among the literature I would like to report here a piece that I found reading a book from Vins Gallico, an analysis of the work of Jean-Claude Izzo, a famous writer from Marseille ("Essere per, essere contro").

Izzo before being a writer tried to be a film director, documentary director and militant journalist without success. The same issues he tried to express in an explicit way in the first part of his career are reflected in his novels, which made him famous. The way he talks about the city of Marseille and her redevelopment are strictly connected to dynamics in Genoa.

He was interested in what was happening to Marseille, his city, which was suspended between being a city of import-export, business and touristic port appearance and a chaotic aesthetic (still

being a commercially important port).

He worked and investigated for years on the project Fos-Sur-Mer, which was intended in the previous scenario I described.

The construction site and the promise of new job places will attract families from Loire, he follows fights of the Algerian workers to obtain water in the prefabricated modules in which they live, he sees firefighters rescuing people during the construction works.

Everyone is hoping anyway for a better lifestyle and work conditions after the project Fos-Sur-Mer will be realized.

But the government will reconsider the investment and the project of a port and steel center will become an "empty monster of steel industry" (Vins Gallico, 2022).

The steel factories, the moving of huge cargos, the second great port of the Mediterranean sea, all closed and firm.

A disaster happens, people are desperate and a chain of suicide will take place among people that suddenly loose the hope and everything else with it.

Depression, severe stress-related trauma, that Mediterranean Izzo is describing in his books, a dirty and troubled Mediterranean. The steel industry and port will never be realized, but this event will have sociological, ecological, political and climatic consequences on the city.

Vins Gallico, the writer of this analysis of Izzo's work, is from Reggio Calabria. While describing this phenomena in Marseille he tells us how a very similar event happened in the same years close to his birthplace.

"At the time, a great factory of the chemical industry had to be built in Sicily.

[...]. So at Saline Joniche they built a factory and a port, same schema from Fos. The only thing is that the port is badly constructed, it soon will be filled by sand and the sea will incorporate the coast. The factory has great infrastructure, a chimney of almost two hundred meters stands in front of the sea, and there is a large water intake to cool the systems. Next to it the power unit that produces energy, and the tanks, silos, laboratories and piers to get

to the port. Great part of this was concluded in 1973, the factory opened as a trial, it produces a quantity of citric acid, but never the bio proteins for which it has been built. The Health Institute will close everything immediately, how can animals be fed by bio proteins produced from petrol? It would affect the whole food chain. No one thought about this question before burning one thousand three hundred billions of lire in one of the most poor regions of Italy.

So workers entered in the longest redundancy fund of the history of Italy, 23 years that costed the state 2 billions of lire”

“I never saw Fos-Sur-Mer in person, but I think about that chimney in the Saline, that white and red tube.

I think about the factories that have been active, I think about the Ilva of Taranto.

For those born in the XIX century the chimneys are golem that immediately recalls the other face of the Mediterranean sea.

The trash of the Mediterranean”.

Vins Gallico, 2022.

When I read it I couldn't avoid thinking about Cornigliano as part of a category of industrial districts.

There has been a model in the XX century that we couldn't identify as a recurrent phenomena, but that now we can see and label, promising to bring up the economy of some sea-port cities through heavy industry. This model worked and had very strong consequences on cities' development and where it failed it left huge empty spaces, not only in Italy.

The sea is the solution to the crisis and source of money for sea-port cities, but the incredible outcome after years of transformations in Cornigliano is that the city forgot the sea.

The idea of modernization was to build industry, to increase the import-export relations in those areas by building ports that could host huge cargos. And for this reason the same schema was applied in different cities. Planning and designing the gasometers, the

furnaces, the industrial sheds, is of course very similar everywhere. That is the argument I focused on to group case studies.

The reasons this model failed are multiple.

After a big economic growth the sector had adapted to pollution regulations, switching from the hot steel industry to the cold one. The world changed and there wasn't the need for the same amount of steel industries in European countries, reason for what happened in Fos-Sur-Mer.

The production of steel, which in the seventies was mainly produced in Europe and the United States, moved to the East world, first the Soviet Union became the main producers and then China won the supremacy on the market and it is the main producer still today.

In some cases the industry failed because of mistakes in the construction like in the Saline Joniche case study. Much more funds were spent for corruption or delay in construction works.

Anyway the actual situation in Cornigliano is the result of those processes, and leaves us with the possibility to make a change in the conception of filling urban "voids" left by the industry.

Another compelling fact of this industrial model that didn't work in the case studies I found (see the "Analogie Acciaierie" part, pag. 27) is the bibliography about the attempt by "developed" nations (looking only at Europe) to "modernize" the "Mediterranean cities".

"La Méditerranée... ce sont des routes. Routes par mer et par terre. Connected. Routes et villes. Grand, petit. Ils se tiennent tous la main. Le Caire et Marseille, Gênes et Beyrouth, Istanbul et Tanger, Tunis et Naples, Barcelone et Alexandrie, Palerme... "

Les Marins perdus, Jean-Claude Izzo, 1997.

The real fight for Izzo is the changing of Marseilles in a direction he doesn't consider appropriate to the place he comes from. The same opinion that can be heard today among a little per-

centage of the Genovese population facing the new Waterfront modifications and the aesthetic followed for designing it. When Izzo is comparing Paris to Marseille, in Genoa we see a re-generation following a "Milanese" look, which is considered more internationally appealing.

The enemy is the northern culture that finds a solution for cases like the one of his city in the standardization, starting from the port appearance.

According to Izzo Europe was born at the borders of the Mediterranean sea where culture was ancient and deep-rooted. It is a hybrid that has to stay like it is. This concept is at the base: without the origins, there wouldn't be a Mediterranean culture, the poetry, the sociality, the fights that characterize our area.

I don't totally agree with his vision of Mediterranean, being scared of becoming nationalistic in a nation that doesn't even exist, like the Mediterranean region, fragmented and not unified under many aspects.

Nevertheless reading his novels I recall life in Genoa and the skepticism towards the requalification interventions gaining ground today.

It is true that the city of Genoa already experienced changes in the spaces of her port. Between 1992 and 2002 Renzo Piano designed the waterfront of the East part of the city harbor.

The project is today fully integrated in our city. Before it (not so long ago) the sea was not accessible at all from the city center, there used to be a barrier of sheds misused or abandoned.

The success and utility of the project as it is one of the biggest spaces close to the historic center, is not questionable. The port gives spaces to different communities thanks to areas designed to be frequented without necessarily consuming.

Anyway besides this part most of the port is not accessible even if not active as it used to be.

The fear of people towards regeneration projects is connected to the raising of rents in buildings close to the interventions. The aesthetic of those design proposals are often connected to the

presence of bars, terraces, the absence of real public services, the scope of attracting tourists which isn't the main interest for people living there (and not owning any commercial activity). The problem now is that those plans for the city have all the same look. The city's historic center is already losing important parts of its population and authentic appearance. The same is happening to Marseille, of course with another scale.

A seaport city has a certain fascination, and by standardizing all at once to make it a place of leisure and holidays, which is not what it was meant for, can destroy that romance.

The theories expressed in Izzo's noir novels for which he became very famous are reflected in the same period by researchers in France and Italy in what are called "the Mediterranean studies", examining the Mediterranean as a post-colonial sea.

Those studies try to identify the concept of the Mediterranean, which is much more complicated than it looks.

First of all I personally have a European knowledge and consequently an European idea of the Mediterranean sea. Secondly, even inside a possible European Mediterranean sub-group, there are stereotypes characterizing us (first of all describing Italy), in a comparison with Anglophone countries.

But I can feel a strong bond among seaport cities on this sea only by reading noir novels from a french writer describing Marseille.

"[...] the Mediterranean remains a key referent for those who, from its shores, learn to define themselves through the experience of its uncontainable liquidity".

Paolo Giaccaria, Claudio Minca, *"The Mediterranean alternative"*.

The inclusion of Cornigliano in a series of Mediterranean case studies risks a generalization.

The points of connection among very fragmented territories is not always visible.

As Giaccaria and Minca noted there are stereotypes and historical facts that connect cities on the Mediterranean, but the configura-

tion that would come out accumulating all the Mediterranean cities in a region would be paradoxical and impossible. (Giaccaria and Minca, 2010).

The uniformity is given by climate and cultural reasons.

Some past literature refers to the Mediterranean perspective as a still developing reality, due to stereotypes.

If we consider Italy, or even inside Italy the city of Genoa, it will be seen as not-yet modernized reality compared to Milan.

My point is not to make Cornigliano a modern and high-tech, clean energy, self-sufficient and economically appealing district.

A smart city. The statement by Franco Cassano who calls to stop thinking about the South in light of modernity, but rather re-think modernity in light of the South (Giaccaria and Minca, 2010) is great advice the moment we change our goal. Cornigliano doesn't need to become a modern and international district, but rather give space to alternative opportunities in planning our cities.

Another reason to not think of a requalification project in Cornigliano as if it had to reach a certain "modernization" standard is for a very simple reason, Cornigliano isn't Milan, and it won't have naturally the same development, so the same project in Milan suburbs and Cornigliano won't work out the same.

What happened in the 70's with the expansion of those Mediterranean cities due to construction sites of big ports, steel mills, chemical factories close to containers better connect northern Europe to the sea, has been a modernization and enrichment phenomena of Mediterranean industrial countries.

This happened for several reasons and my aim is not to judge if it was a good or a bad expansion. The outcome generated those big factories that today failed developing residual spaces in our cities. On the one hand limiting the use of land by citizens and creating a not pleasant landscape, on the other I see opportunities and fascinating realities to be explored. This is an opportunity for us to start working together for the care of those urban parts and reflection

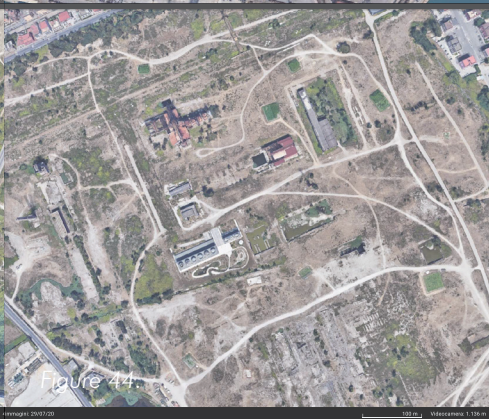
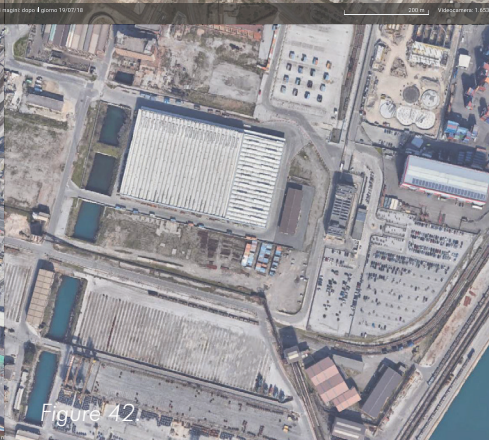
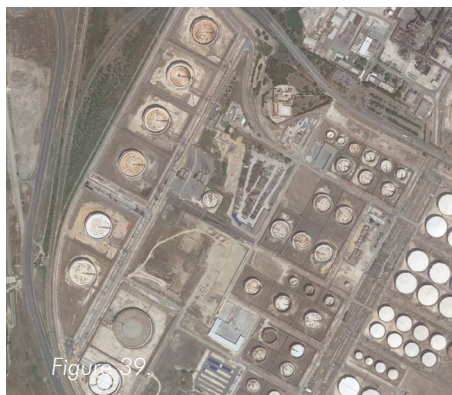
on the role of designers.

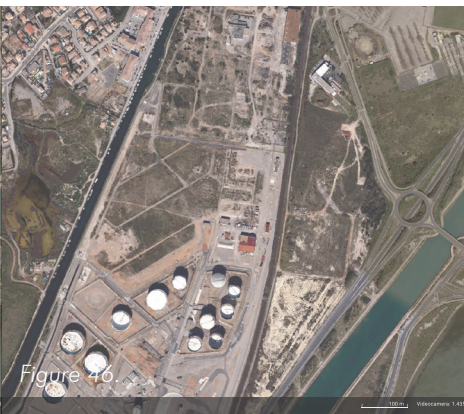
Walking for Cornigliano we see a lot of empty areas. The population of the district isn't allowed to go there. The port is barely used, compared to the period before reducing the industry size in the years 2005, but the access to the sea is still undeniable. So this thesis won't look at that part of the district, even if it exists and it has been discussed.

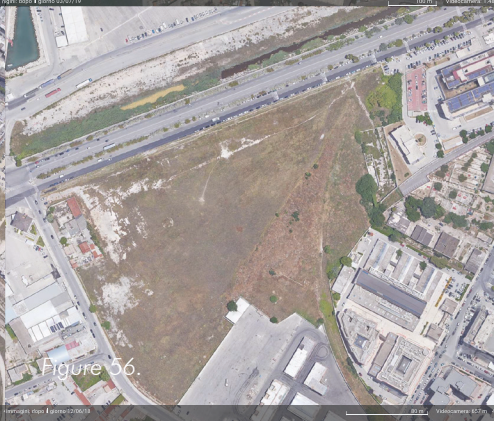
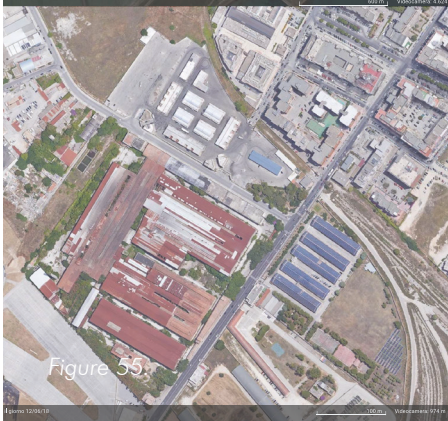
The project will forget about the sea dimension and will look at the Ex-gasometer area, called by the Società per Cornigliano (who are in charge of the requalification project) "Area A5" and the close riverbanks.

Talking with some inhabitants, the projects for the areas in the district have been a lot over the years, from a truck parking lot, to an athletic field. The city council would like to build here a huge sport building, enormous, covering the whole parcel, with a track at the top. Other people I talked with, in particular the two directors from the "Corniglianese", a journal written by a non profit organization, would like a project with more job places creation and touristically appealing. What they came up with talking to me is a project for the camper area, in this way tourists can leave their camper here and go to the city center. So it is not a project for the district, but still putting it at the service of the city. An interesting initiative was explored in 2012, the title was HOMBRE (HOListic Management of Brownfield REgeneration). The idea is to regenerate brownfields in the area of Cornigliano, with the operation "Zero Brownfields" by encouraging the land-use life cycle, so re-establishing an ecosystem and maintaining it thanks to the smart use of technologies and the collaboration of stakeholders. The project regarded the mouth of the Polcevera.









(from left to right)

- Saline Joniche, chemical industry for nitric acid and bioproteins. Riqua-
lification slowly occurring.
- Fos-Sur-Mer, Marseilles, steel industry.
- SAVA (Società Anonima Veneta Alluminio) abandoned aluminium facto-
ry Marghera Port, Venice. Built in 1964, abandoned in 1993, demolished
in 2013.
- ILVA from Taranto, steel industry. 1965- 2012- 2023 downsizing due to
health problems.
- ILVA from Cornigliano, steel industry. 1953 -2005- 2023 downsizing
due to health problems.
- ILVA from Bagnoli, Naples. 1977-1992- almost completely dismantled
and waiting for requalification.
- Mobil refinery of Frontignan, Sète, France. 1880-1986 crisis and
closing of an industry whose traffic was close to eight million tonnes and
suddenly diminished to just over four million tonnes. The port expansion
projects were abruptly interrupted.
- Lucchini Siderurgica, Acciaierie e Ferriere di Piombino, 1963 -1992-
2014, closing due to debts and pollution causes. Requalification pro-
gram going on.
- Raffineria di Roma SPA, Ostia. Closing in 2012 due to rising of fuel
price and to a competitive business with the entry of China and US in the
market.
- Trieste, downsizing and concertion to cold steel industry.
- Porto industriale di Cagliari, downsizing.
- Bari Acciaierie Scianatico, closed.

Inspirations

I. Vito Acconci, security zone Sensory deprivation in pace exploration, 1971

"1. A person is chosen as my guard and opposition party. Someone about whom my feelings are ambiguous. Someone whose moves I don't fully trust.

2. We are walking on the pike. I am blindfolded, my ears are plugged, my hands are tight behind my back, I spin around a few times to lose ground orientation.

*3 I walk around the pike, I attempt to gain sureness in walking around the pike, putting myself in the other person's control.
I am a non swimmer, learning to trust and control, trying now whether I should trust in that control. The other person determines how he wants to use the trust I am forced to have in him.*

4. This piece is designed for our particular relationship, it has the relationship, works on it, can possibly improve it."

(Vito Acconci, 1971)

Experimenting an empty space without one or more of our senses is a possibility to learn more about it.

Besides all the trust and strong bonds you build with the person you are making this experience with.

The place of Vito Acconci's performance is New York City's Pier 18, near the site of the future Whitney.

He wasn't meaning the performance as a different way of living space, but the location and the gesture connects the past topics and places in my head.

Verso un possibile padiglione Italia alla Biennale di Venezia 2022

"He tells details of a truth that erodes the castle of our innocence and makes it collapse on itself. There is a picture in which one can see the Lido of Bagnoli, with thousands of families swimming and enjoying the day under the sun. In the while on their back there is the huge, enormous, black steel, which draws clouds in the sky. That's the Italsider."

[...]

"They didn't realize, and I couldn't understand how it could be possible. But I was taking pictures, because, maybe, in the sharpness of a photograph, this contrast could emerge with greater evidence. These pictures were showing a reality that back then was impossible to look at."

[...]

Ermanno Rea - La dismissione - 2002

We see our dreams breaking in the moment in which they become dust, in that moment in which, maybe, they are more dangerous. Today we know and we see it, so what?"

[...]

"There are faces of who, in that uniform, had found his "alimentary job", who had gained the key of a house, the possibility of growing a family, and there are the looks of those exploited, those who were dying in the factories, day by day. Everything mixed up. Because the industrial dream isn't made only by dust. It isn't only a story of suffering and deaths.

It is ambition and courage, weakness and desire, genius and fatigue, loneliness and class struggle, it is children education and coloured wallpaper, it is Olivetti and Marghera. And everything is lightened up by Christmas lights bought thanks to the Tredicesima."

[...]

"I would like to talk about the night that opened at the end of the dream. I am thinking of doing it by the Italian industry, its warehouses, all the

same, from Ragusa to Cremona. Cement, bricks, metal sheets, streets with stressed asphalt, trucks, storages, they cross it, from North to South. In Veneto and in Brianza, the sheds have on one facade the windows of apartments. The owners are living there, prisoners of their dream even more than workers.

[...]

"In a picture from 2002, the factory disappeared, packed and sold to the other side of the world. Bagnoli is what we can see today: a bright field of inaccessible vegetation, closed by a wall. A prohibited Eden. It looks like Chernobyl, where I have been and where I learned a lot about the night and the destiny of the Comete. I learned, for example, that nature heals. In a short time, thirty years, it regrows, but it does not forgive us. In Chernobyl, where streets are woods, plants are strong and robust, animals disappeared from centuries have come back to build their den, to run, to fly, but us, we can't come back. Like for an ancient malediction, like for the original sin."

From "VITE DOPO VITE DOPO VITA"

Perché lo scenario di questa tragedia lo ha dipinto Mimmo Jodice - Gian
Maria Tosatti

III. Stalker, collective from Rome

STALKER is a subject which acts on the territory, with particular care to the marginal areas and urban voids, abandoned spaces or in a phase of transformation.

Those research developments on different levels, on the practicability to the representation and the project of those spaces called "Territori attuali".

STALKER with different members with a range of understanding and skills face the contradictions and the possibilities given by those spaces. The topics are safeguarding by abandoning, representing through sensorial perception and taking knowledge of the instability and mutability of spaces.

The "Territori Attuali" (actual territories) are the negative of the built up city, interstitial areas, in the margins, abandoned spaces or in transformation. They are spaces of removed memories, in the becoming of the unconscious urban system, the dark side of cities, spaces of comparing and of contamination between organic and inorganic, between nature and artificiality.

Here the metabolization of the leftovers of men, from nature, produces a new horizon of unexplored territories, changing and virgin, which STALKER called "Territory Attuali" meaning the "becoming something else of those spaces".

Those territories are difficult to understand and not designable, since they are not located in our present, and so are strangers to languages of contemporary society.

Their knowledge can only happen from direct experience and they can be demonstrated more than represented, the archive of such experiences is the only possible map of those actual territories.









Figure 57-58-59. *Stalker*, Andrej Tarkovskij (Film, 1979). Screenshots from the movie about the Zone.

Exploring new urban ecosystems



Figure 60. Prati di Caprara, Bologna.

**"Public and politicians are not yet ready to accept abandoned areas or wastelands as a part of public space"
(Sonia Keravel, 2008)**



Figure 61. Prati di Caprara, Bologna.

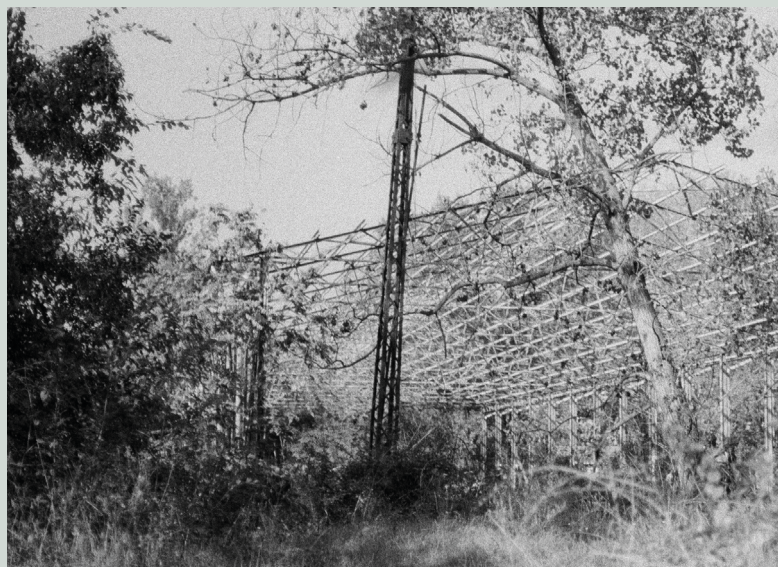


Figure 62. Prati di Caprara, Bologna.



Figure 63. Prati di Caprara, Bologna.



Figure 64. Prati di Caprara, Bologna.



Figure 65. Prati di Caprara, Bologna.



Figure 66.
Prati di
Caprara,
Bologna.



Figure 67. Non-project area, survey photo, Cornigliano.
Figure 68. "...".





Figure 69. "..."
Figure 70. "..."



Urban existences and their presence in Cornigliano

During the weekend between 8-9 October 2023, during my research thesis with so many doubts in mind, I dedicated part of my thesis research to explore ways to approach a more grounded site analysis.

I was offered to take part in a workshop organized by the association "Exit" from Bologna. I decided to dedicate time to this initiative since I thought it would help me in understanding the direction I wanted to project in post-industrial/ residual areas. For the leftover spaces.

The workshop was located in an area not really well known, not even by people living in Bologna. The place is called "Prati di Caprara", and as our case study in Cornigliano it is completely invisible to its citizens.

The area, whose surface is 27 hectares, is nowadays completely covered by vegetation, but it is not officially or legally open to the public. Nevertheless there are some people still exercising their right to the city here. The latter by going running along the path created by the association which takes care of it, or by living in

tents in the center of the area, where communities were formed, among trees.

The association that takes care of the space is composed by a small group of people cleaning, maintaining and mapping the space. They created 5 main ways to reach the most "urbanized" area: an ex-military pavilion. Today we can see only the skeleton. It is the most "open" space in the park, meaning the absence of vegetation, the ground has been smoothed and cemented. The exit to the "parking" area is on the side, that's probably why those communities preferred to develop in the internal core.

The absence of vegetation, the open space, the cemented soil consequences are less mosquitos, visibility until far from you, the feeling of being in a sort of house but still open air given by the skeleton of the military structure.

This is where the workshop was held.

The days were divided among different artists who inhabited, explored and manipulated the area, without bringing any significant modification to the environment.

The experience I had was something outstanding from all the other workshops I took part in my life.

I think I can talk the same for the other participants.

We started with practices of exploration being each time deprived of any of our senses, questioning our perceptions. The first walk I had with those girls was completely blind, we walked in a train for those paths, not straight ones, among the vegetation.

I knew the road, but by walking without seeing all I could feel were the person in front and the one behind me.

I was touched by stinging brambles, then coddled by soft and high plants. I could see where the trees and the infesting plants were closing the sky upon my head and where the light was stronger, as the heat. In some parts of the "forest" I felt the wind, the wet of the soft soil, and the presence of mosquitos.

The sound of the city was very strong even if we were far away from the main road, the close railway, the plane starting from the airport, the helicopters and the depurator of the hospital. Then you were hearing the footsteps of the others, their breath, the birds,

other people moving around.

When we passed by the camping of the community I could feel it. I felt scared in some way because I couldn't see.

It has been one of the most strong practices I ever did exploring a territory.

During another workshop held by an artist who studied edible plants and mapping, we explored for a moment the area alone. The objects of the place started to have stronger meanings. The clothes and the shoes, that small bag on the floor started to annoy us, what had happened to the person who was wearing that? Why would you leave your shoes, your bag with glasses and phone inside abandoned in this place?

Something really interesting was said by Marco, the first artist I followed the workshop with, about this feeling when later we were comparing our emotions and physical maps; you know at that moment, even if you don't see the others, that you are in a wood surrounded by people who would take care of you, in a safe situation, but still when alone you don't feel comfortable.

Something I really appreciated about this experience was the horizontal organization of the workshop, and the consequent strong dialog and debate that came out.

Some points I would like to bring here, to express how they are important for me and for this thesis in approaching a residual space. There was Olimpia for example, a girl who studies natural science in Rome, who was talking about those spaces defying them "the spaces of the future"; "from abandoned headquarter to hospital of life; everywhere we are focusing on these kinds of areas".

Damiana talked about a post-apocalyptic landscape: "we are now dealing with what we left free in itself".

Even if this space is completely covered by vegetation, Marco showed us that on the schema of google map it was not coloured of green, like it was the very tiny-little and non-accessibile green area next to it, but not abandoned.

Spaces like this one and like Cornigliano are taking up space for a very long time, since the degradation of our infrastructure started, and what some of us (like those people present during the activities) are realizing is that this is a new nature.



Figure 71. Abandoned cement plant, Carrara.

Redefining a responsible project

The reflections highlighted during the workshop and the debate part are very pertinent to better explain the direction I want my thesis to go.

Reading literature from another generation of architects and researchers, I could better understand what I can still share about their vision.

DISCONTINUITIES ARE POSITIVE

Something was taught during the degree in architecture while projecting was to look at the surroundings to make our interventions more continuous.

This is, in my opinion, a correct way of thinking while building something new in a city, but in case studies that have been abandoned and where natural and artificial actions have changed over time the landscape, like in Area A5 in Cornigliano, maybe the change should start considering what we have now.

So discontinuities in the urban map are not to be seen as a nega-

tive presence.

"The project doesn't get suggestions or does not invite to follow one or the other surrounding textile. Not even to weld them with their styleme. Nevertheless it imposes itself with its own schema". (La Pietra, 1986)

The area adopted a proper position, which is very different from the surroundings: from Villa Bombrini tidy garden from the eighteenth century, to industrial infrastructures of the harbor.

"As a landscape, one has massive industrial infrastructures, which are suddenly stopping in correspondence with the valley of Cavatiggio on one side, and against the wall of the railway on the other". (La Pietra, 1986)

ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY

At the same time, I would like by preserving a landscape to be able to introduce functions, to give services to people who may decide to cross the area. To make humans feel secure and confident while crossing it. Accessibility and inclusiveness are one of the main goals. It is true that those spaces for the future need to be reconsidered as natural reserves, and since they were once modified by human beings, we need to be careful introducing functions. I don't want to "attract" or "drive" people to the area, but I want it to be a safe place and to dedicate a small space to inhabitants to observe it. Since most of the zone will be vegetated I will introduce artificial paths, connecting, including more entries, still respecting the natural part. I will introduce "human" functions only in the old infrastructure from the railway present in the area, the only building which remained.

The rest of the space will be left to the already existing vegetation, constituted mainly by a yellow flower called "Inula Viscosa", growing also in other abandoned spaces next to rivers in Genoa.

The functions the Zone will offer to those who will desire to cross it will be the most common and basic ones open air (to walk, to isolate oneself, to organize a reunion, to meet, to play, to make

culture together). While in the inside part of the building there will be services for everyone.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Another important point we debated about during the workshop and highlighted both from La Pietra and Clement is the work in progress. We need to revisit the model of closing spaces for deeply modifying them.

With light interventions we can avoid closing entire areas for a long period of time to the community, as it happens especially in Italy. In this way the community will get used to that space and start to experiment with different functions it can possibly have.

"Seeing the realization of the park as a work in progress where the animation is at the same speed with the proceedings to complete it, means to extend the capacity of social service (...). There won't be just a big shipyard that once concluded will produce the final product, which will be unalterable and will need maintenance, but a series of progressive interventions, parallel to a work of animation and modification, while the biggest trees, in the meantime, will grow silent". (La Pietra, 1968)

I reported this citation because of the concept of the final product. Already La Pietra and Clement realized that when talking about vegetated areas there shouldn't be a "final product", something imagined before that is going to become exactly what we planned and it's going to remain in that way.

We need to reconsider natural elements.

NATURAL VEGETATION

Both the Prati di Caprara in Bologna and the area A5 I focus on in Genova, if we observe them with the satellite image from maps, their vegetation is not considered as natural. Of course the natural environment, meaning the original state of things, has not been visible since more than two centuries ago. We need to reconsider this kind of vegetation as the new nature in cities, since it is every-

where and contributes to ecosystems.

If one gets any train in Italy, looking outside, along the railways, there is vegetation everywhere filling old infrastructures, abandoned lots. Railways and their surroundings are an optimal environment for the development of abandoned areas.

Focusing on the present natural elements and their different configurations is unavoidable to start a project.

"This is not a countryside park, or a natural park. Those are false design categories used to cover the sloppiness of the project and the carelessness in the maintenance of the urban green areas, of gardens and of parks". (La Pietra, 1968)

Already existing parks in Cornigliano lack continuous maintenance, talking with citizens and associations on site, they proposed that I conduct a project also there. The truth is that Cornigliano doesn't need another garden or a perfect grass that won't be well-kept as the others, for funds scarcity or staff shortages.

"Urban biodiversity: Clement's novel synthesis of culture is different from prevailing discourses of landscape design and it is best interpreted as a form of site-specific art. (...) Waste spaces in contemporary cities and the widening scope of utilitarian approaches to landscape design"(Matthew Gandy,, 2010).

POSSIBILITIES

Let's connect Ugo La Pietra's suggestions for a not realized project in Bologna to the "Parc Henri Matisse" from Clement in the city of Lille, in northern France. The park is constituted by a "standard" part, short grass and trees, and at its core "an inaccessible concrete plateau (...) often mistaken for a huge bunker, (...). An experimental structure designed to emulate an inaccessible fragment of primary forest now created as the centerpiece of an urban park (...) without any human interference" (Gandy, 2010). In a city like Lille, a post-industrial city, where unemployment and

social inequality are at very high levels, a requalification was needed, and a green solution is the most sustainably appealing.

Same situation as Genoa, empty spaces and the need of requalification processes after a strong industrial period and a slow post industrial recovery.

Residual areas are to be filled and privatized, to make it a popular place, “re-brand a post-industrial city” (Gandy, 2010).

The solution for a residual area in Ugo La Pietra’s proposal for Bologna was a park.

The difference is that in this case study the park was actually designed, considering the already existing site, but also introducing other parts, new vegetation different from the original one.

While in Clement’s project the solution lets biodiversity and nature develop by themselves, in a natural way, this is possible thanks to a

seven meters high barrier.

With the proliferation of anomalous or “empty” spaces, spontaneous urban nature raised the attention in fields such as architecture, art, urban ecology (Gandy, 2010).

“Growing interest in the intrinsic aesthetic qualities of abandoned, interstitial or uncultivated spaces that have proliferated through processes of industrial decline and demographic change (Mabey, 1973).

The word “wild”, especially in urban context, is not yet officially referred to this kind of space, but usually “represents the point of departure, or state of nature, that existed after the last Ice-Age, before the accelerated human impact of the last century” (Heau, 2010).

“In Northern European countries like Britain or Germany, for example, the effects of deindustrialization, and at an earlier stage war-time destruction, were significant spurs to the study of disturbed or newly created sites. While the pattern in France, a more “Mediterranean state” has encompassed a more diffuse definition of the ‘rural’ and the ‘urban’, with particular emphasis on the term ‘friche’, meaning fallow or unused land” (Jakob, 2008).

“Unlike the word ‘wasteland’ — which predominates in An-

glo-American literature — the use of the term *friche* denotes a sense of connection between past use and possible productive use in the future” (Gandy, 2012).

In Italy the rapid development of “wasteland” is taking ground everywhere due to the state’s economic conditions and the lack of maintenance. Infrastructures in Cornigliano are abandoned before being even completed, illegal building sites are common and their slow construction lets vegetation and spontaneous communities grow.

In the long term, in an utopian scenario, green cores are becoming stronger and stronger around and inside cities. The real problem for inhabitants is the accessibility limitation. Following the ideals of reclaiming the right to the city and of her spaces those areas are taken from citizens. But closing them and tearing them down to build a new private space doesn’t give the same result? One of the last proposals for the Area of Cornigliano will be a huge sports palace, public, but accessible on payment. Is an enormous building dedicated to sports more respectable compared to a vegetated area?



Figure 72. Montage réalisé par Empreinte pour figurer le projet au moment du concours. On voit l’île Derborence elle-même qui, d’emblée, apparaît comme un lieu magique, sacré...

The industrial legacy of Pol

Liguria is known for the absence of a flat surface, if not in front of the sea.

The mountains become hills and fall directly in the sea, so the city developed on the coast and along rivers in narrow valleys, creating linear relations among districts.

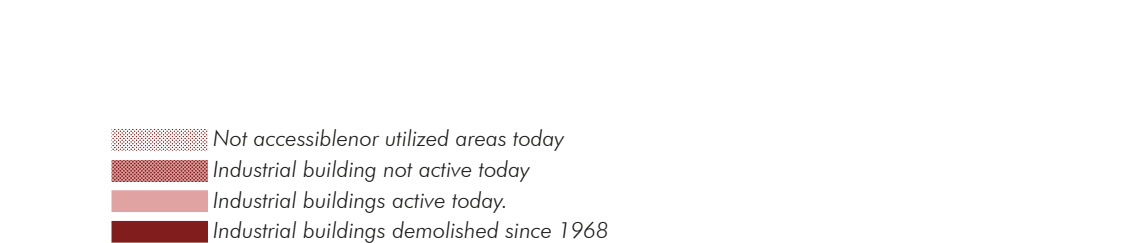
Subsequently the interaction with water, either determined by the presence of a stream or of the sea, is always present in urban settlements of a certain dimension.

Cornigliano is a district that used to overlook both the Polcevera stream and the sea coast, but today the life of inhabitants takes place without facing them.

This reality affects not only the Polcevera valley but also the Bisagno one and others in the region. Due to the flat space they offer, the river banks have been inhabited, expanding more than to the hills.

Cementification of river banks in Liguria became a serious issue since the eighties and in 2011 and 2014 dangerous flooding events occurred.

Figure 73. Map realized by the author. Industrial infrastructures.Home - geoportal Regione Liguria



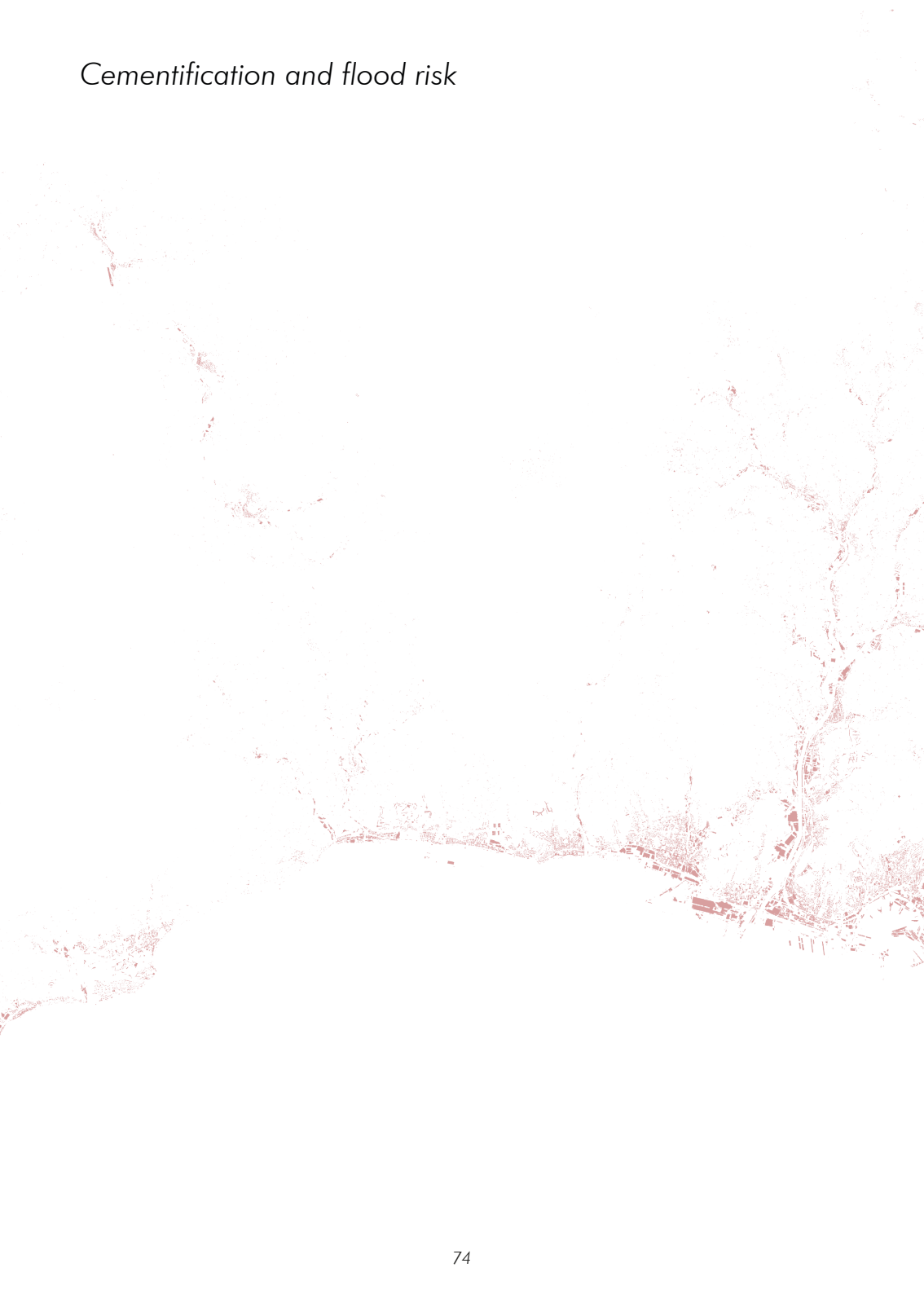




Figure 74. Map realized by the author. Urbanization along coast and stream valleys. Home - geoportal Regione Liguria



Figure 75. Map realized by the author. Hydrographic reticle and main streams. Home - geo-portal Regione Liguria





Figure 76. Map realized by the author. Cementification and flooding areas.

Because of the morphology of the territory, streams are nurtured by tributaries coming down from the hills surrounding the valley. Lack of permeable soil in the valley and the cementification of river banks, make the stream flow violent on its way to the sea.

Streams are in some parts completely closed in a cement tunnel to gain space to build roads; they are confined among two high walls, like in the case of Polcevera valley.

In Cornigliano the industry needed to use the flat space along the stream to build its infrastructure. In addition, with the filling of soil on the coast to construct the ILVA plant, the way of the stream is even longer.

This represented a risk in the past considering that the district is mainly a residential one.

Since the industrial phenomena has grown close to the population one, they will be compared, tied together by the Polcevera Stream and valley they are both occupying.



Cementification



Floodable areas

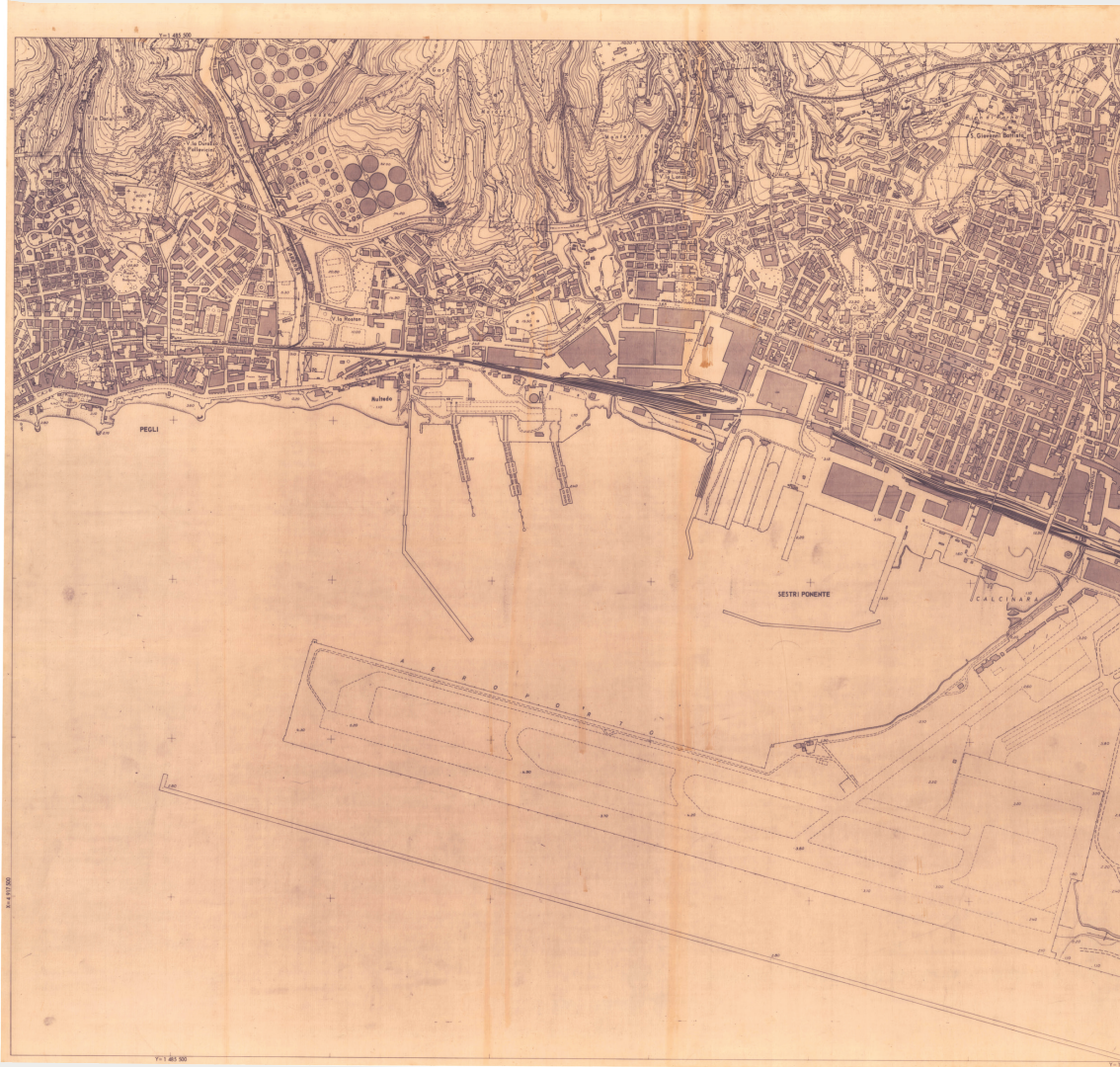


Figure 71. Sestri-Pegli-Cornigliano- Baciono Sampierdarena map, 1965. Comune_5000- 26/27/32. Datas from the Geomorfolab of the faculty of Architecture and Design of Genova.

Figure 77. Map realized by the author. Industrial infrastructure.



Cementification matters

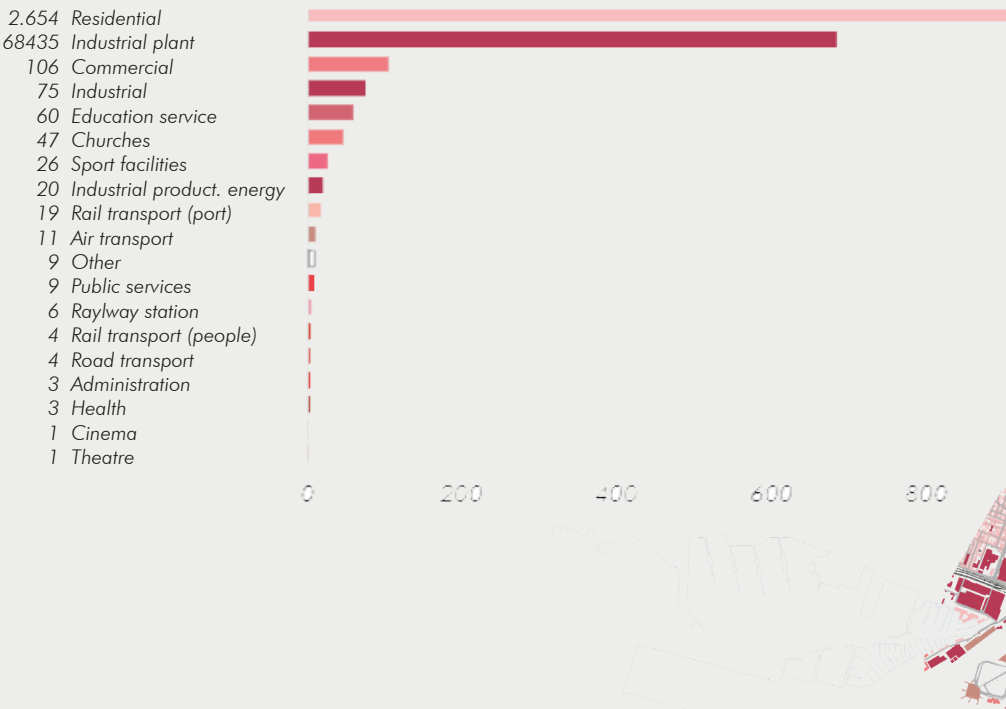
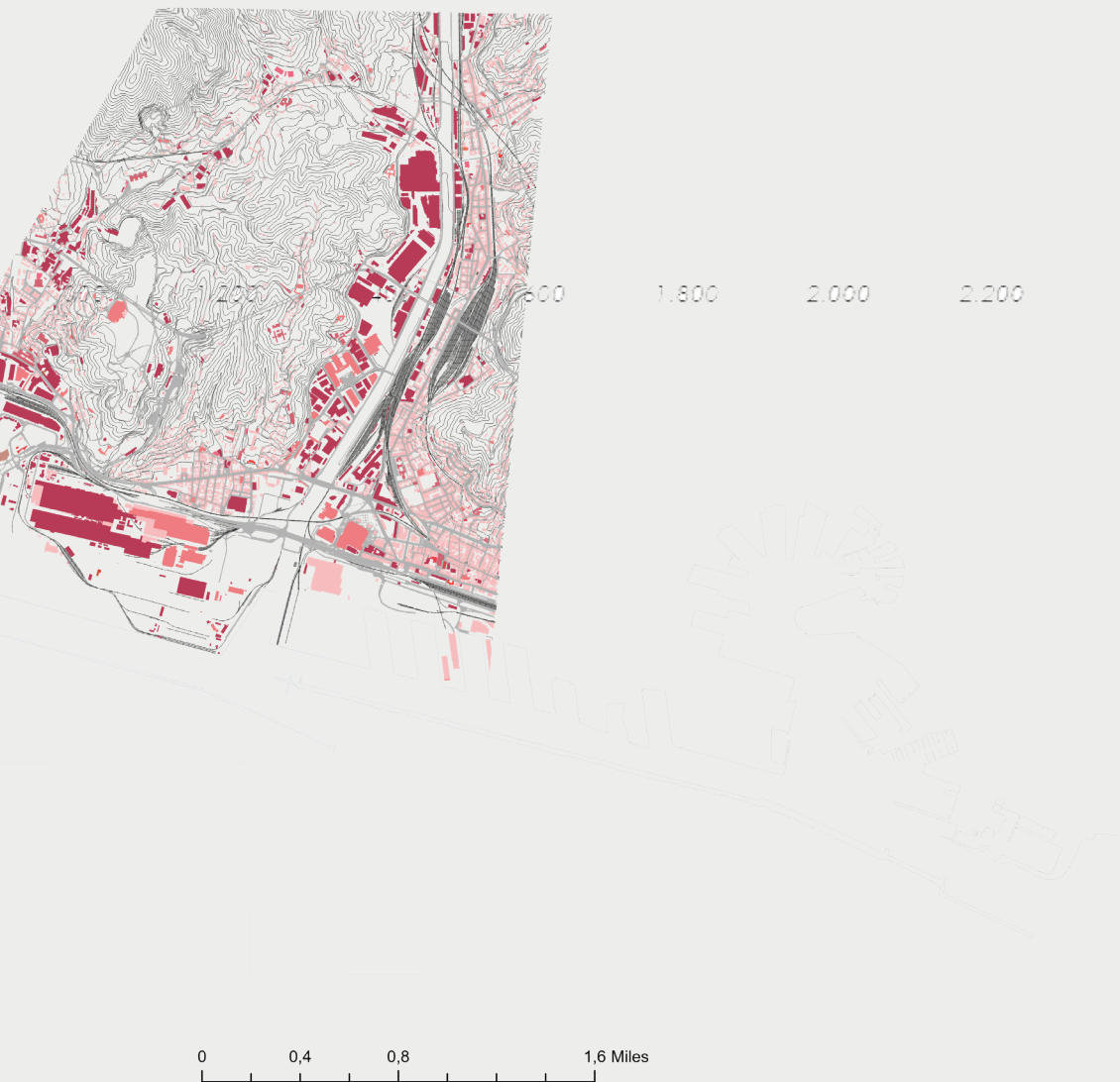
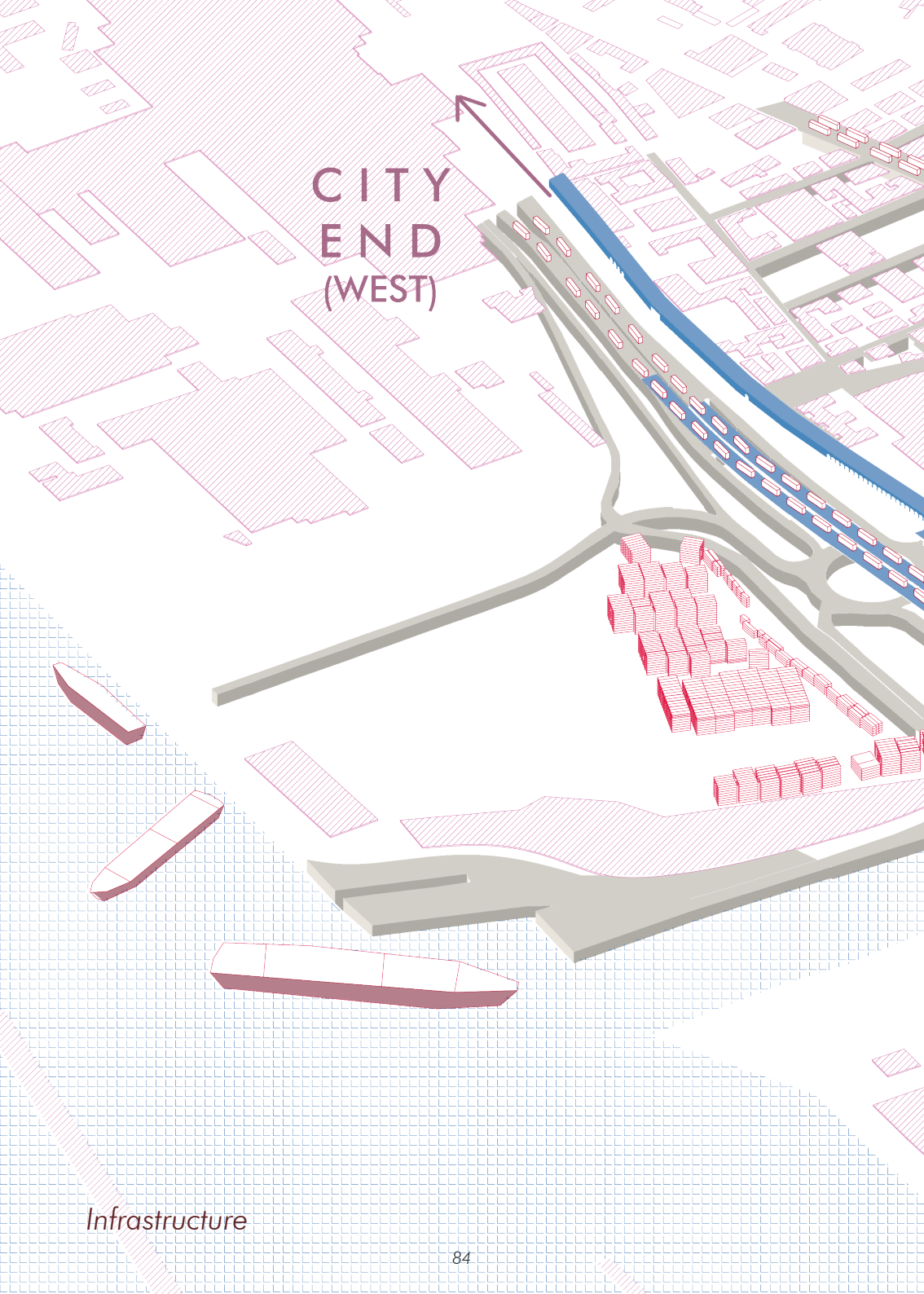
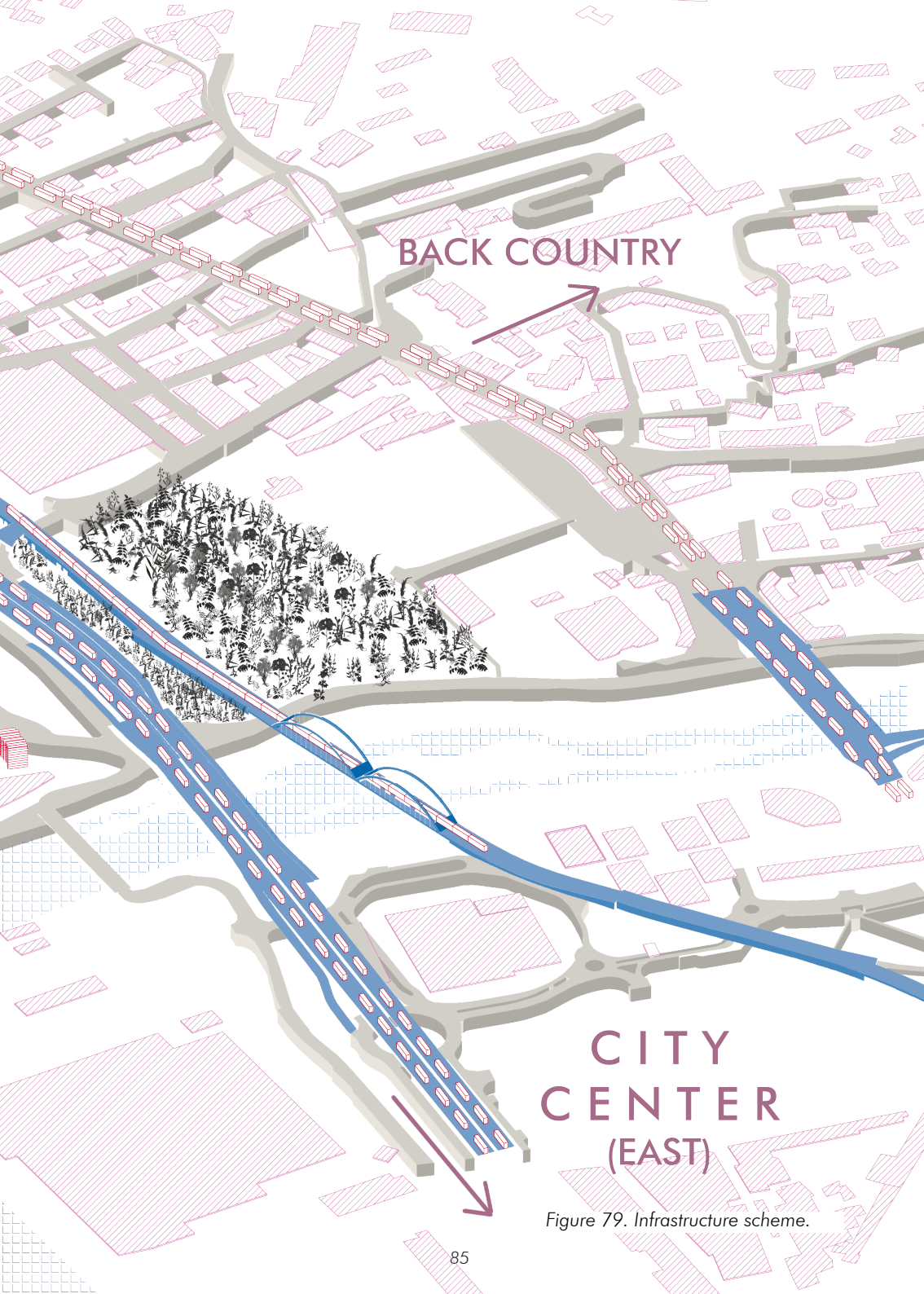


Figure 78. Map realized by the author, building use.





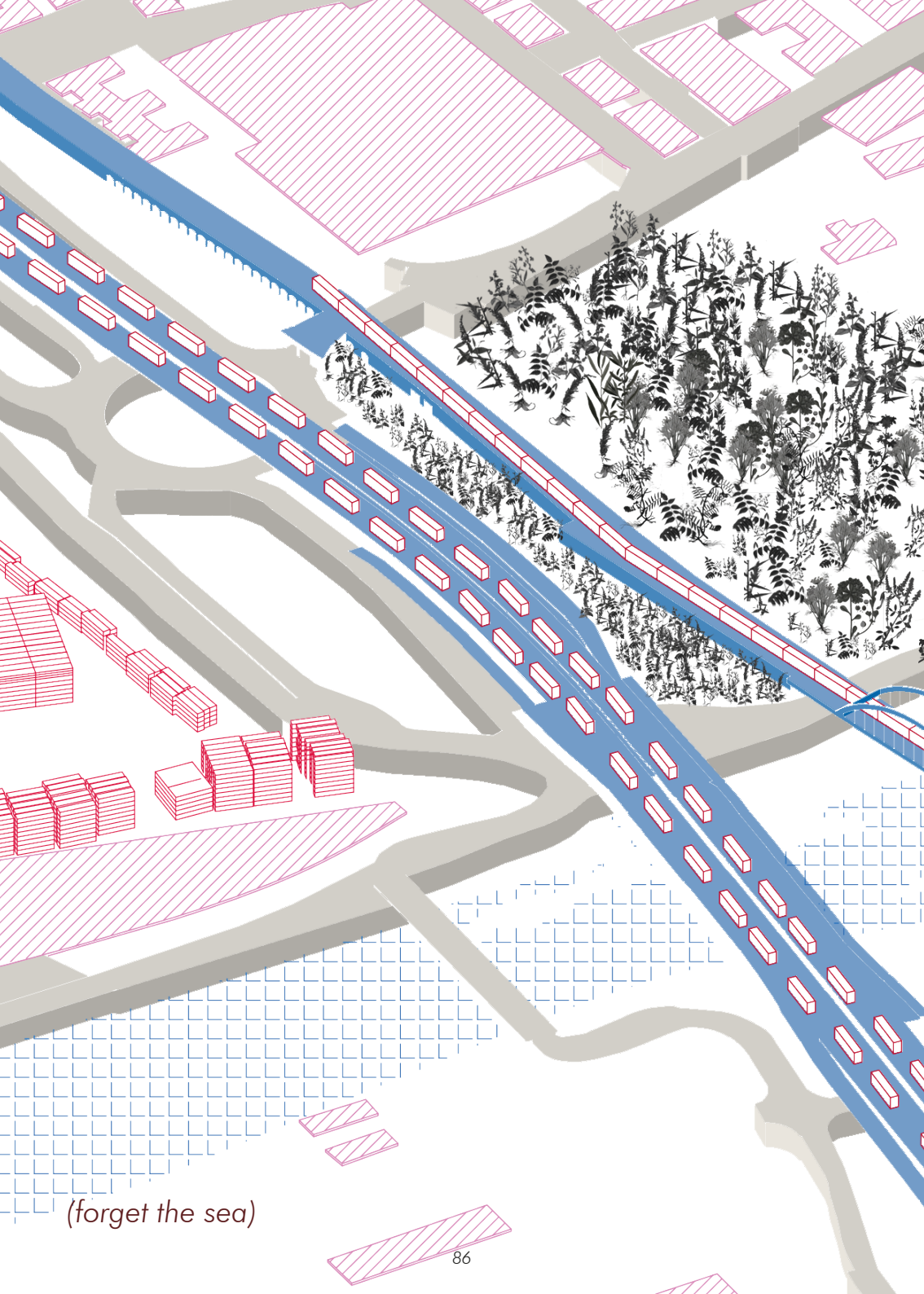
CITY
END
(WEST)



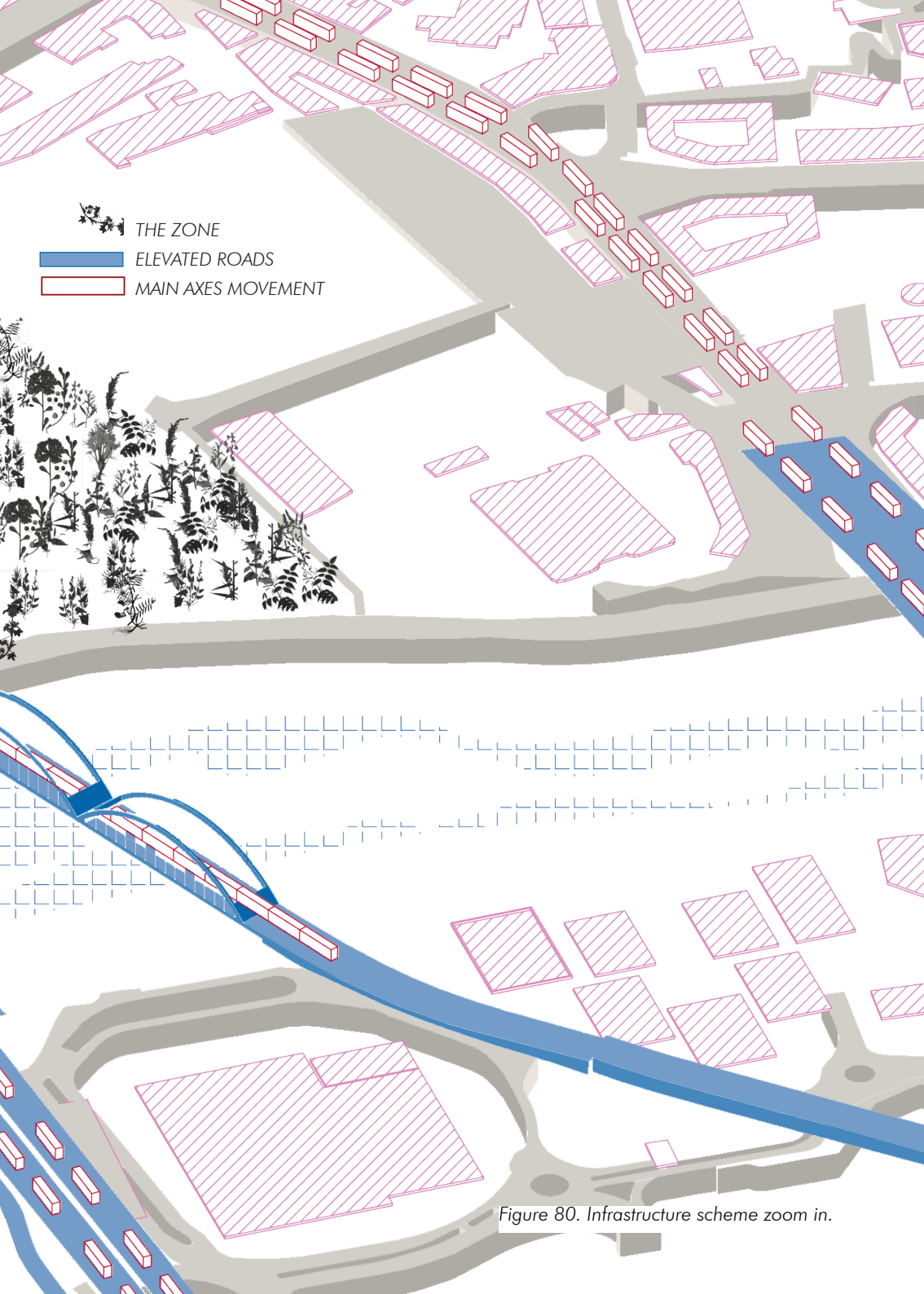
BACK COUNTRY

CITY
CENTER
(EAST)

Figure 79. Infrastructure scheme.



(forget the sea)



THE ZONE



ELEVATED ROADS



MAIN AXES MOVEMENT

Figure 80. Infrastructure scheme zoom in.

Rooted presence in Polcevera bed



Figure 113. Herbarium riverbeds in Liguria, datas from the video “<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axSQBxao-T8>”.

Figure 81. Herbarium.



21. Pioppo nero
22. Piscialetto
23. Platano
24. Psolarea bituminosa

25. Ravanella selvatica
26. Reseda lutea
27. Robinia
Pseudoacacia
28. Rorippa austriaca

29. Rovi
30. Salice bianco
31. Sambuco
32. Scrofolaria

33. Sherardia arvensis
34. Smirium olusatrum
35. Sonchus oleraceus
36. Symphytum tuberosum

37. Tasso barbasso
38. Topinanbur
39. Verbena
40. Vite canadese

Transitorial presence in Polcevera Valley

AVERAGE AGE_
CORNIGLIANO

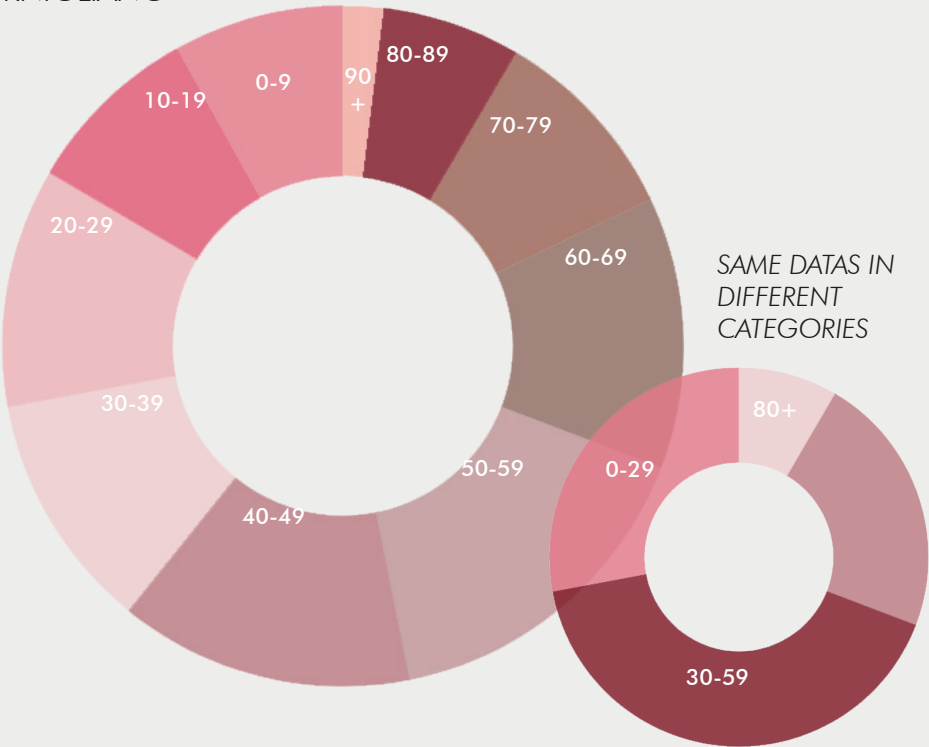


Figure 82-83, Draft realized by the author, datas from Geoportale Regione Liguria and Statistica Genova.

Visiting Cornigliano district during the day we will mainly see around old and very young people like kids with families. The area is mostly residential and parents usually work in other parts of the city, outside the district they live in.

Considering the main functions of built up areas (fig. 75) the main one remains the residential. Immediately followed by the strong presence of industry.

Because of lack of services and convenient job opportunities, young people try to move out of the district, in most of the cases to leave Genoa.

The average age in Liguria is among the highest ones in Europe, and especially out of the city center this is visible (Fig. 75-76).

The graphs referred to the first period of industrial expansion demonstrate a higher rate of immigration from the south and the island. This phenomena stopped almost in 1990 when the main provenience of immigrants changed.

If we analyze the data of the migratory movement from 2010 in the geographic area of origin and destination, we will notice that from 2005 a great part of this flow is constituted by the citizens from abroad and this percentage overcomes the one of those coming from the south which was the highest one in the 70s. This group of incoming people are lowering the average age of the district, being usually under 34 years old. The immigration and migration rate is positive under fifty years old, in the migratory flows the highest percentage is among 35 and 45 but in immigrations the average is referred to a younger class.

So if we look at the charts in a chronological order from the 1975 to 2020 (data were taken from "Department of Statistics" of Genoa) we can notice that after the closing of the hot steel industry and the reduction of the sector to the cold one the population had a degrowth.

Nevertheless the air quality has improved significantly in the past years and the district of Cornigliano is changing, several interventions took place (the insertion of a bike lane, the closing of the

stinky sewage treatment plan outside of the residential area, the opening of new green spaces,...). The district is, in my opinion, fertile and still not expensive compared to the rest of the city. I think that could explain the recent stop of the degrowth of inhabitants. That is why it is important to choose the less impactful way of intervening on this mistreated territory, without disrupting the slowly recovering conditions.

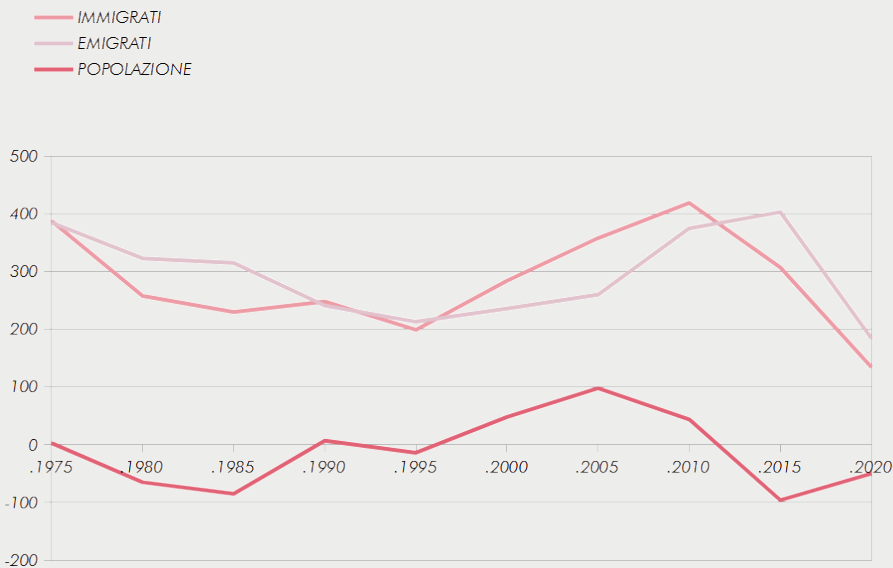


Fig. 84

Fig. 84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91 Drafts realized by the author about population development and migration flows. Datas from Dipartimento Statistica Genova.
Figure 92. The Zone.

1975

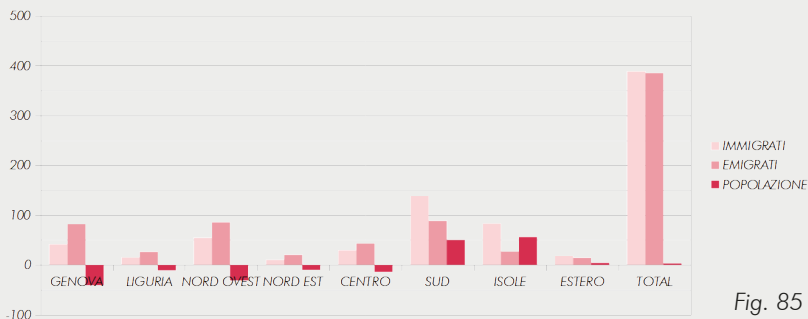


Fig. 85

1990

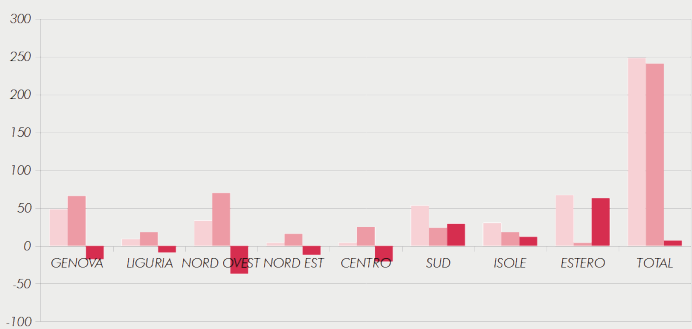


Fig. 86

2000

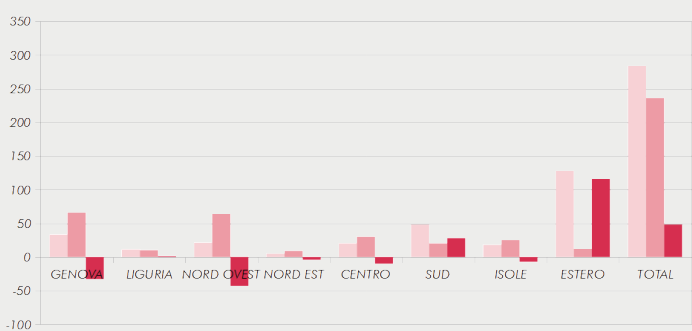


Fig. 87

2005

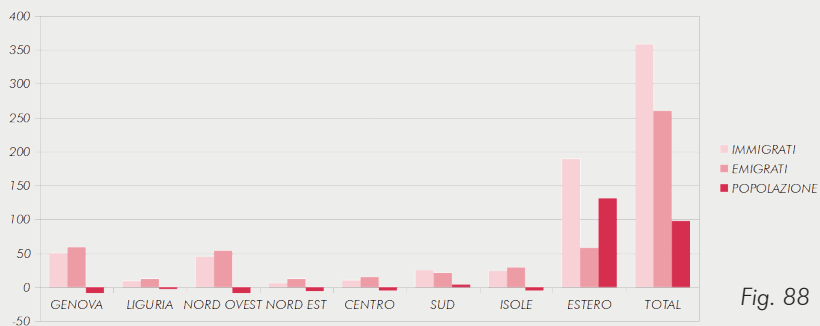


Fig. 88

2010

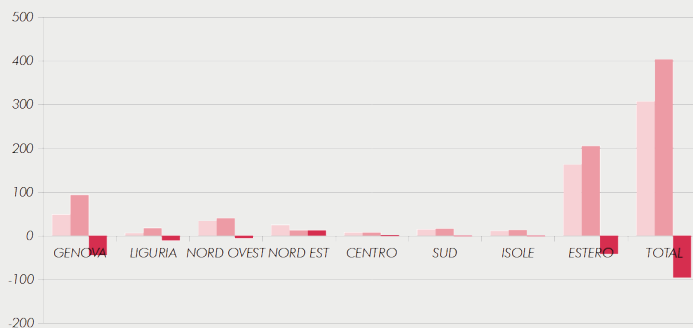


Fig. 89

2020

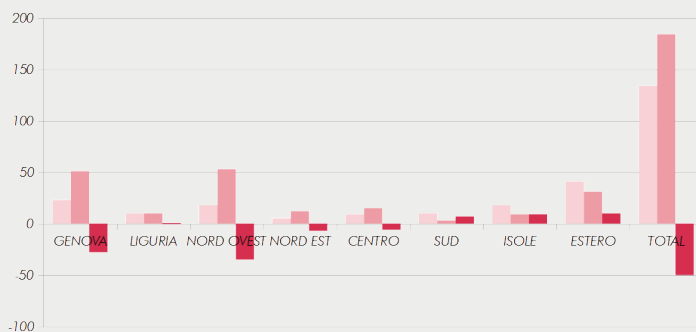


Fig. 90

Foreign residents in Cornigliano
divided for the most
present nationalities
_Year 2020

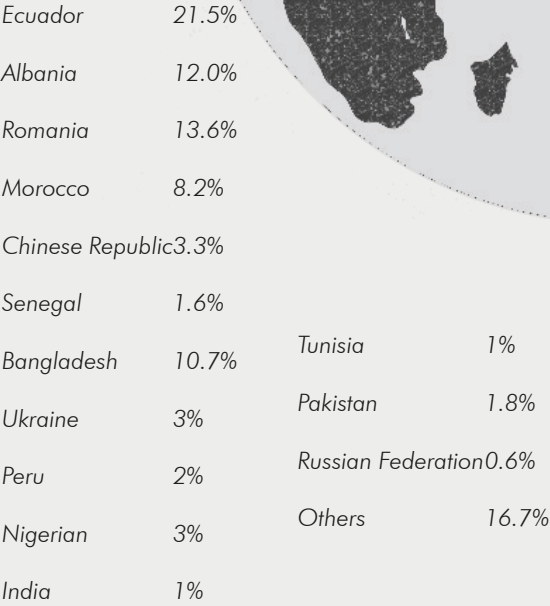


Fig. 91

Introducing the ecosystems

The thesis approach is strictly linked with an activity of survey which went on for some months.

The non-project area changed, flourishing and then discoloring in the autumn period.

By seeing manifestations of change I realized the case study area was alive and part of a category not present in the whole urbanized reality.

The area I am talking about is composed of the riverbanks, the close A5 Area (or ex gasometers area) and the back of the railway. Those constitute all together a huge space of more than 30.000 square meters which haven't been considered in the last 15 years. The mental map of inhabitants in Cornigliano forgot them, they are invisible, even if a train passes on it everyday full of people going to work to the east or west of the city.

This condition of abandonment and carelessness was honored with the reappropriation of the place by vegetation. There has been a short period in which the reclaiming was coming from a small group of roofless living there, but it didn't last much.



Figure 92.



Figure 93.



Figure 94.





Fig. 95.
The Zone and Marco.



Figure 96. The zone, 2018. Data from Geomorfolab.

100

100

Area A5 (Ex gasometers area)

In the following pages, the different projects which were proposed for the area along the years, which weren't realized.

2006 A truck parking zone as extension of the present one, the Erzelli Terminal, under the Guido Rossa road and the one in the port. (Figure ...)

2007 Project from the "Società per Cornigliano" for a park with sport facilities and parkings. The project is not still detailed, but it will be by the end of the construction works of Polcevera banks walls to contain water better during strong flooding events. From the Masterplan they did, it is possible to see a new pedestrian bridge that will connect the close Fiumara shopping mall area to the Zone (Figure ...)

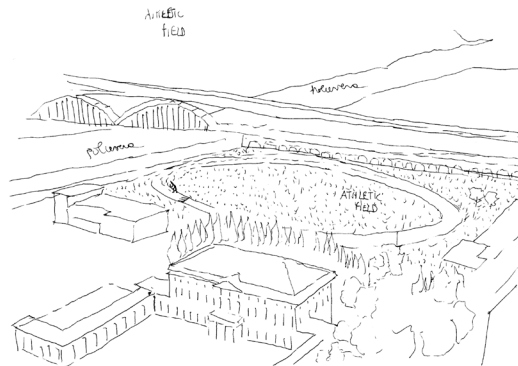
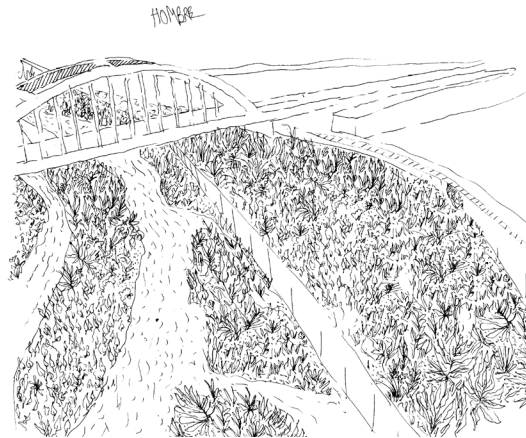
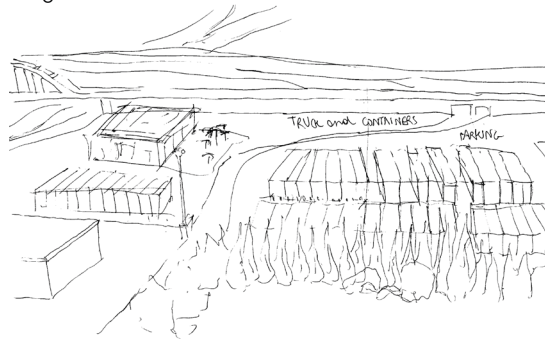
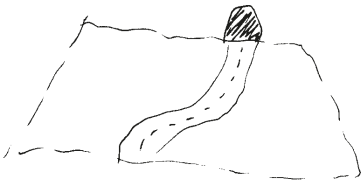
2010 An athletic field with a grass(park) in the middle. (Figure ...)

2012 HOMBRE (HOlistic Management of Brownfield REgeneration Urban redevelopment), an attempt of regeneration of the Polcevera riverbanks with the introduction of "smart" systems powered by stakeholders to trace and study the developing ecosystem. (Figure ...)

2020 A camper area proposed by the association "Corniglianese", a non profit newspaper which tells about the news in the district. (Figure ...)

2021 Sports Palace, proposed by the M.O.S. srl Mall of Sports association and approved by the municipal council, an infrastructure which will include volleyball, basketball, handball and five-a-side football fields; a spectacular 20-meters transparent climbing wall, areas for ski simulation, martial arts, boxing, dance, wellness, fitness and swimming pool and a rugby field on the roof of the building with 3.500 seats. (Figure ...)

Slowly passing of time and changes in the Zone.
Proposals for the Zone (never realized)- on the right.



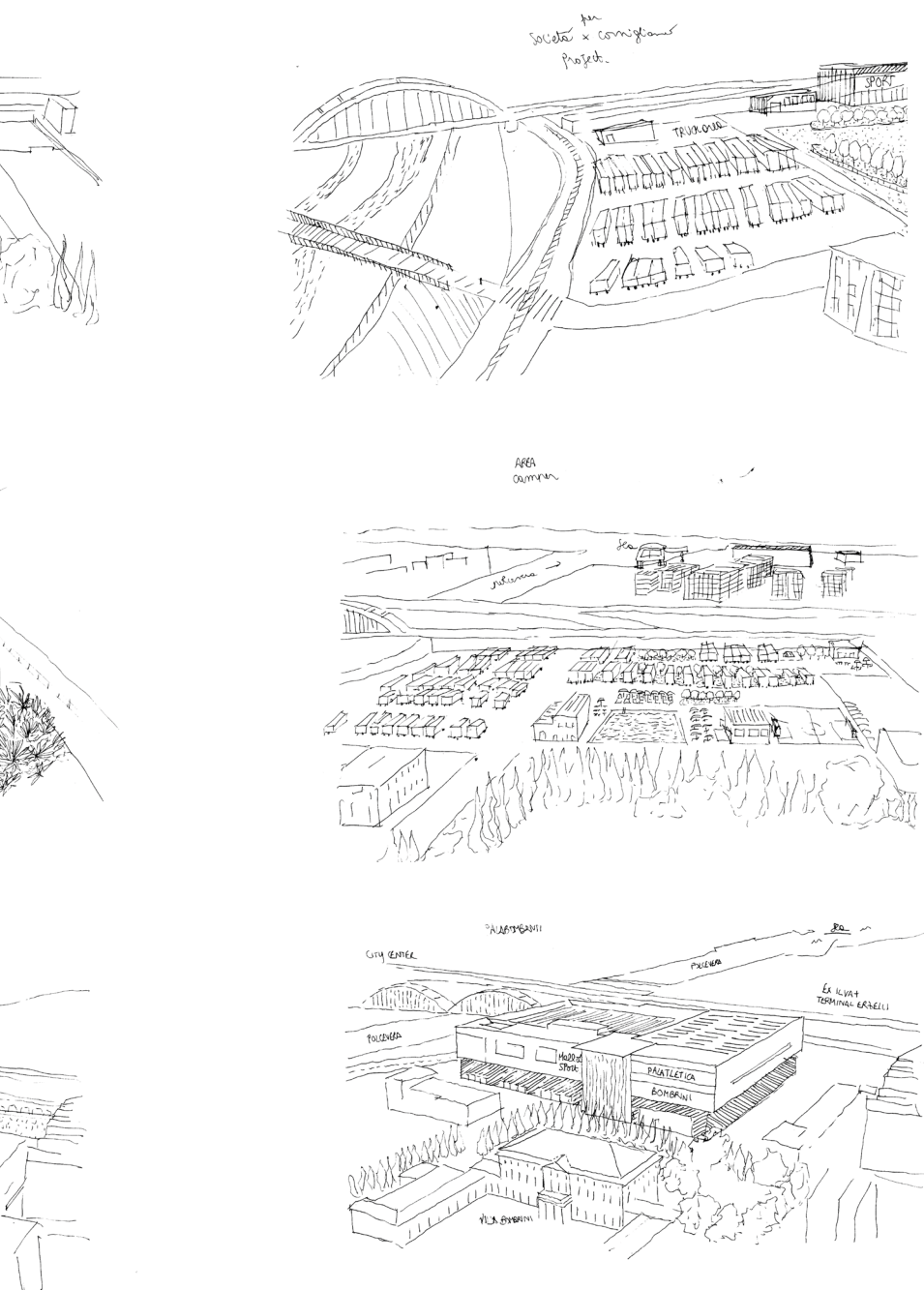
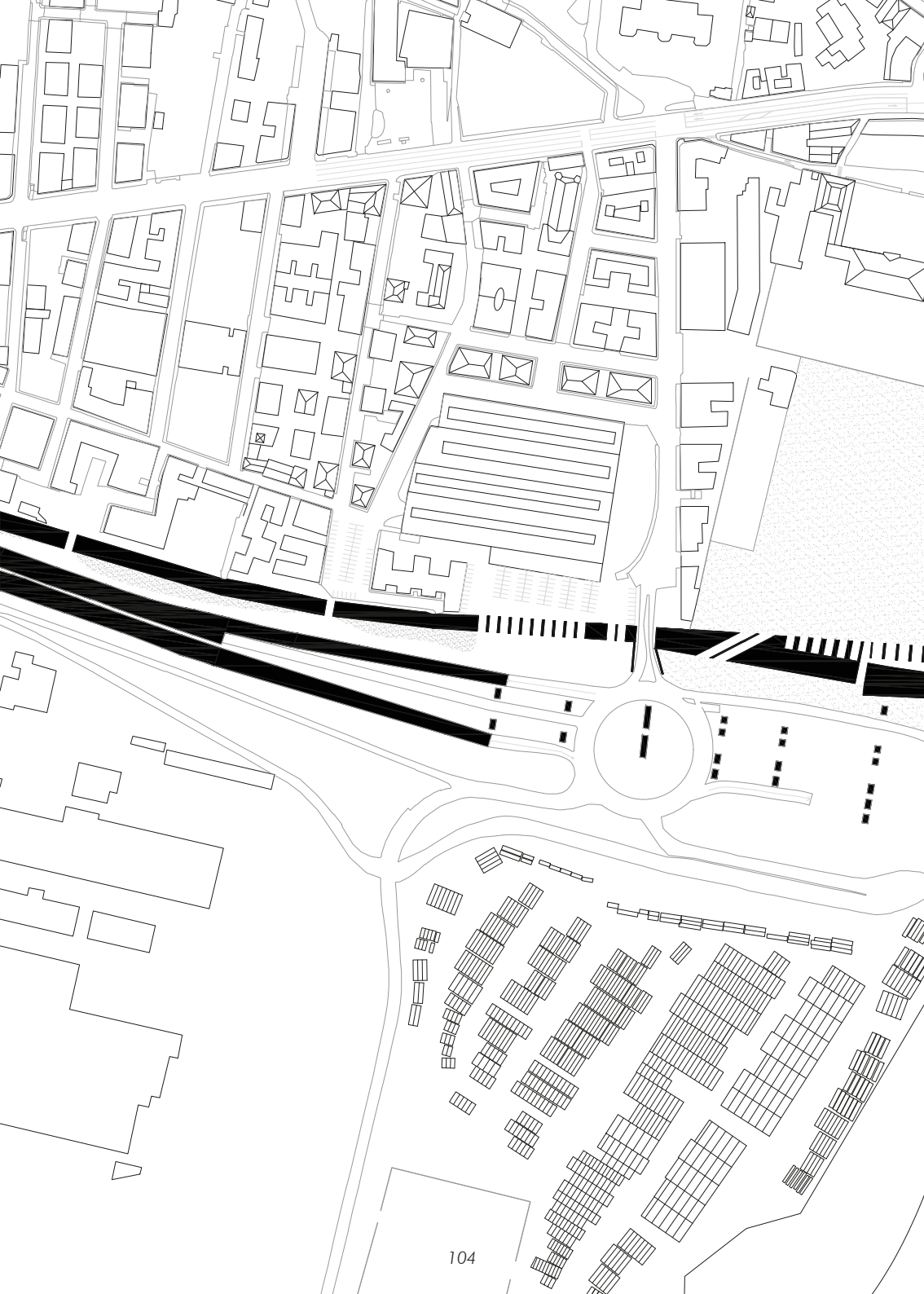
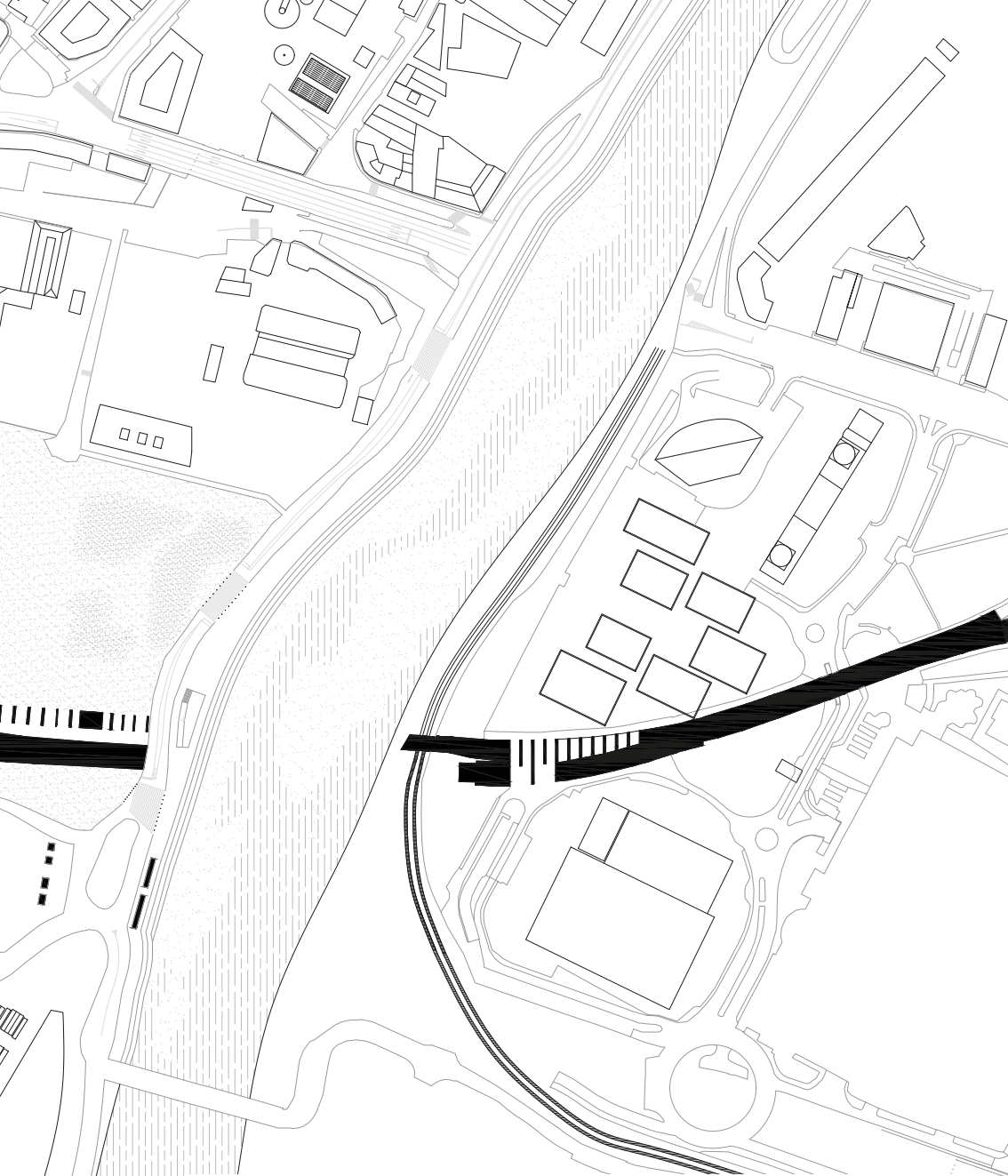


Figure 97-103. Sketches.





In the map the interstices created by the railway and the high speed road Guido Rossa on the ground.
Their footprint originate spaces which today are not considered.

Figure 104. Generic plan. Ground.



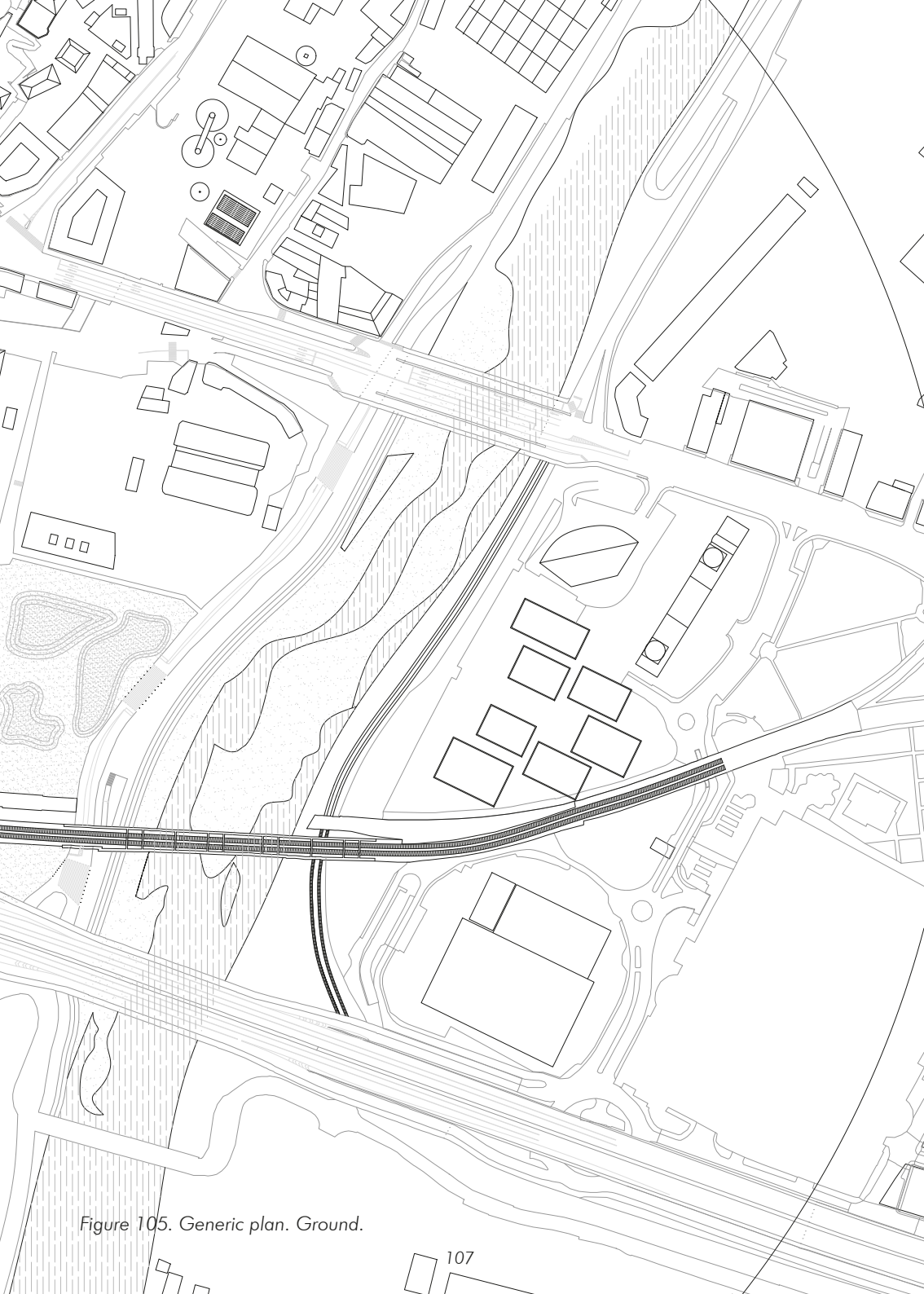


Figure 105. Generic plan. Ground.



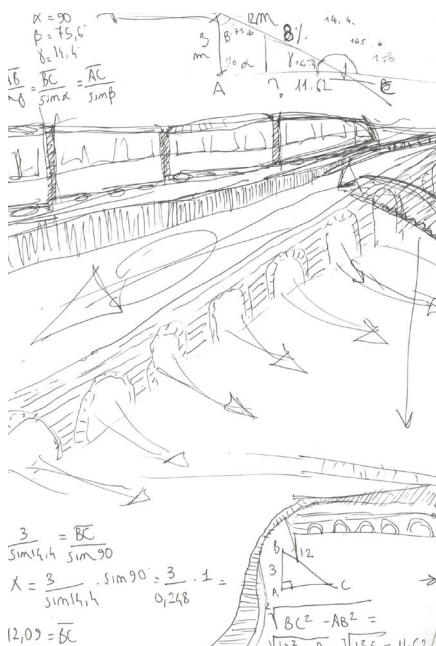


Figure 106. Ex railway building interstice.
 Figure 107. Sketch old railway building.
 Figure 108. Ex railway building arches.



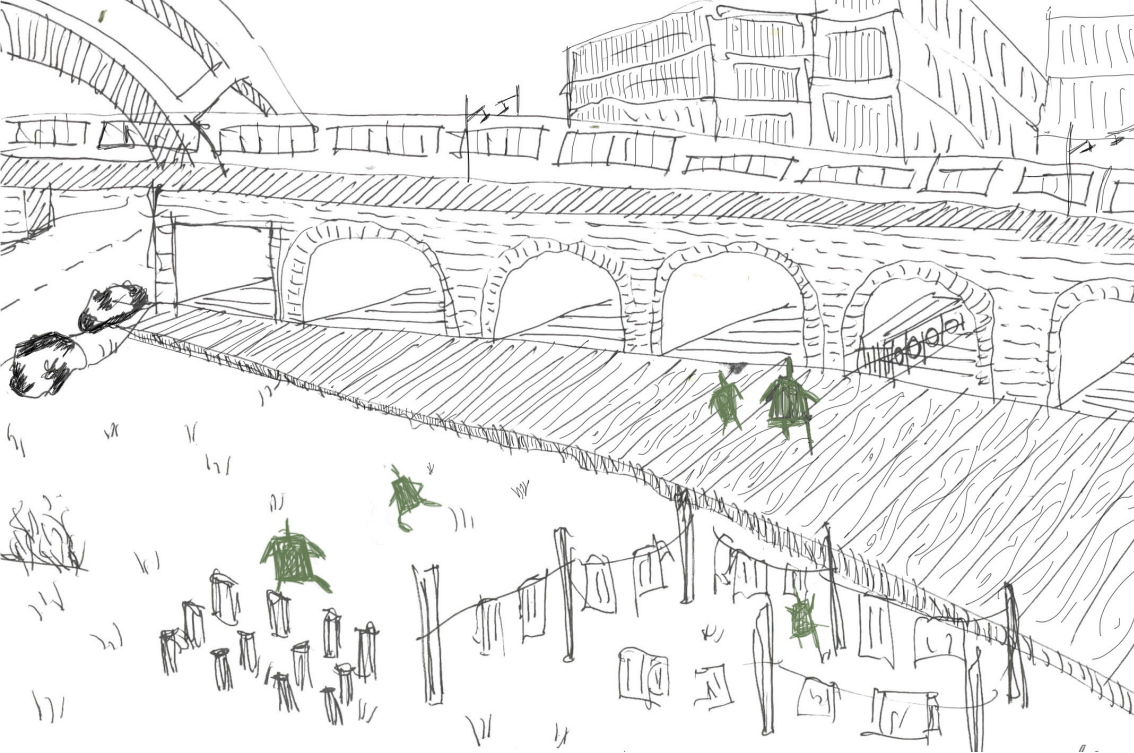
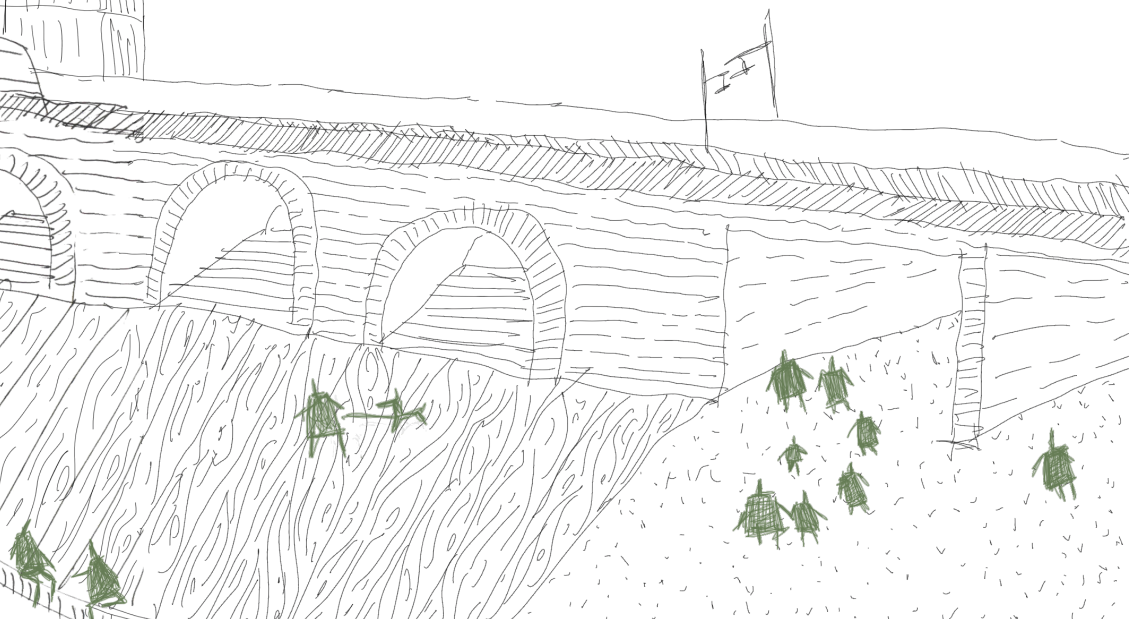


Figure 109. Sketch old railway building.
Figure 110- 112. Ex railway building arches.





Along the Polcevera stream there are excavations to enlarge the mouth on the seaport and to avoid flooding phenomena (the last one occurred in 2014). The materials collected during the excavations are temporarily deposited in our area of interest, but during the summer new organisms have grown upon those hills. Some of those “soil groups” contain rocks, the origin of which is not very clear still, it would be a useful tool among hills of earth with vegetation and hills composed by rocks. The latter reminded me of the spontaneous monument that is hosted under the Guido Rossa next to the skatepark at the entrance of Cornigliano (photos on page 90-91). Those hills and the monument in the photos are objects generated by works of expansion of the stream and of the port area. They are abandoned residuals that absorbed by those empty spaces, but they generate interesting starting points for our project.

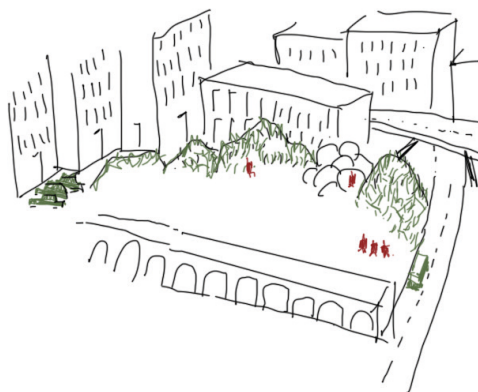


Figure 113.. The Zone from the “VideoPorto” Roof.
Figure 114. Sketch.



Figure 115. The zone, 13 July 2022.

Figure 116. Sketch, possible uses of detritus present in the Zone.

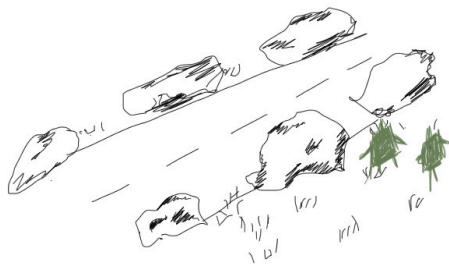
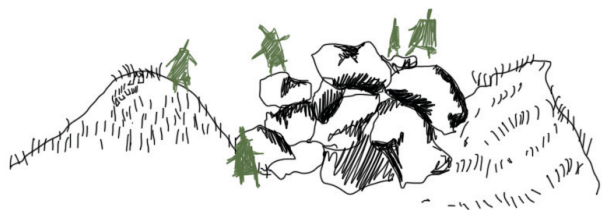
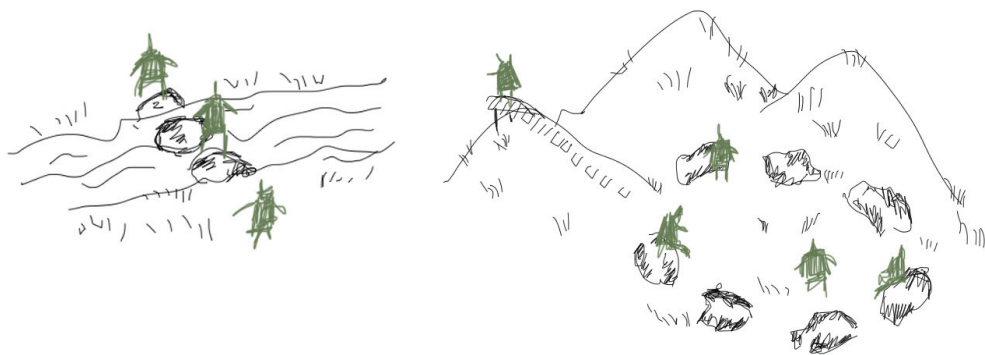




Figure 117. The Zone, 26 September 2022.





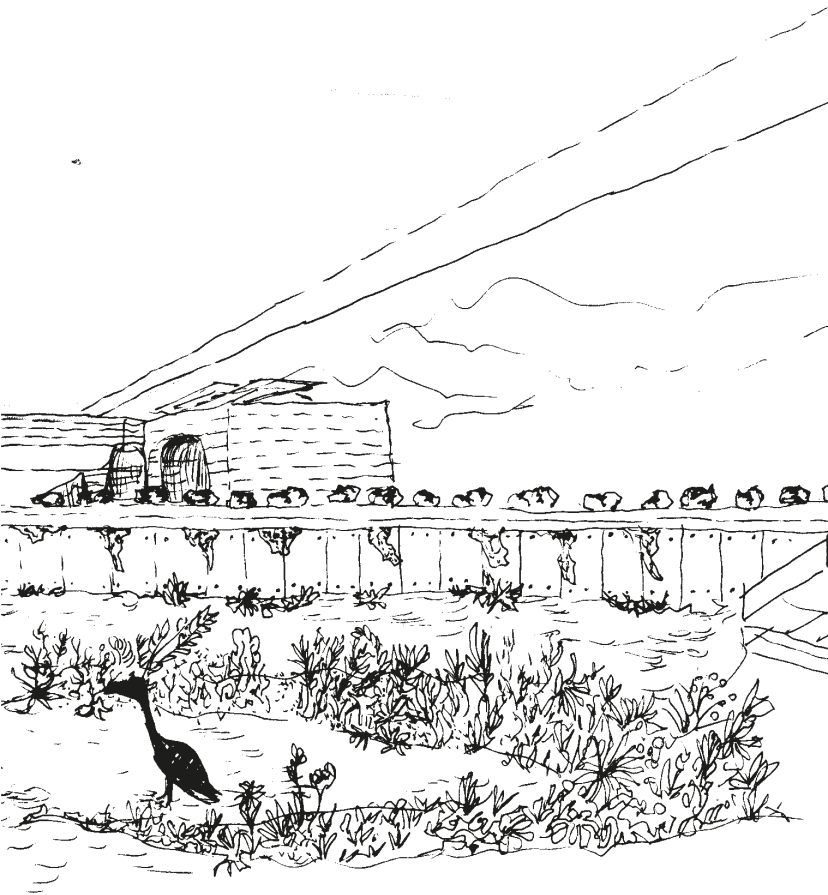


Figure 118. Polcevera bed, 26 September 2022.

Figure 119. Polcevera possibile bed and riverside.

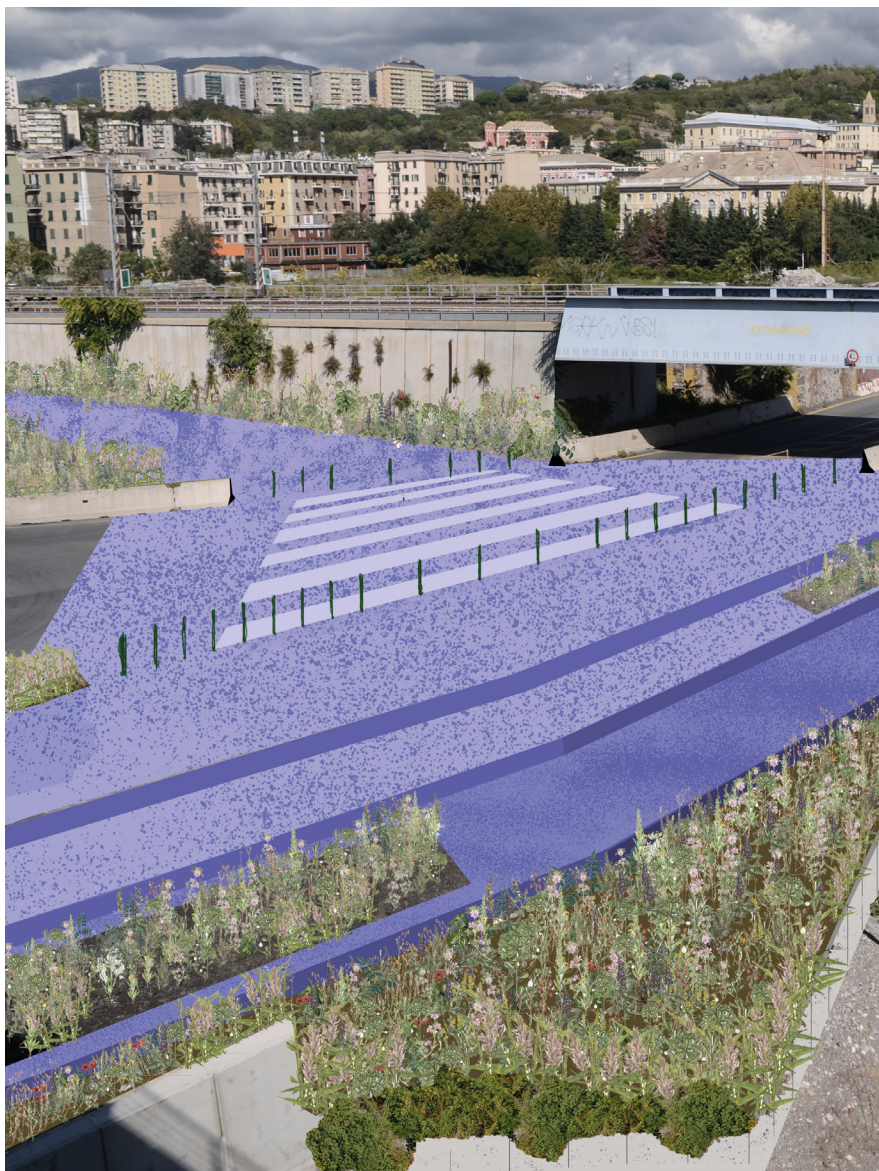


Figure 120. Polcevera banks, 26 September 2022.

Figure 121. Polcevera possibile banks collage.



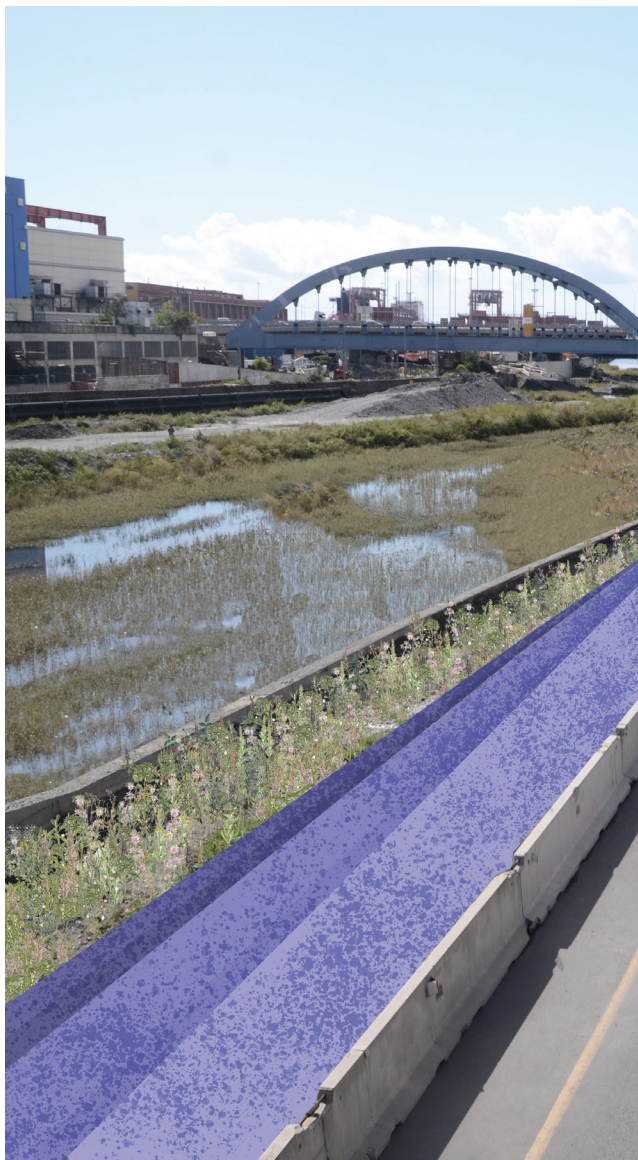


Figure 122. Polcevera banks, 26 September 2022.
Figure 123. Polcevera possible banks collage.



*Interstices created by infrastructures
(Guido rossa road and railways)*

*Figure 124 -125. Interstice under the high speed road Guido Rossa
Figure 126. Sketch realized by the author.*







An impression of a fragmented future







Abandonment of a human control



led use in favour of natural flows.







Figure 127-128-129-130. Collages realized by the author, photos used shot by the author.

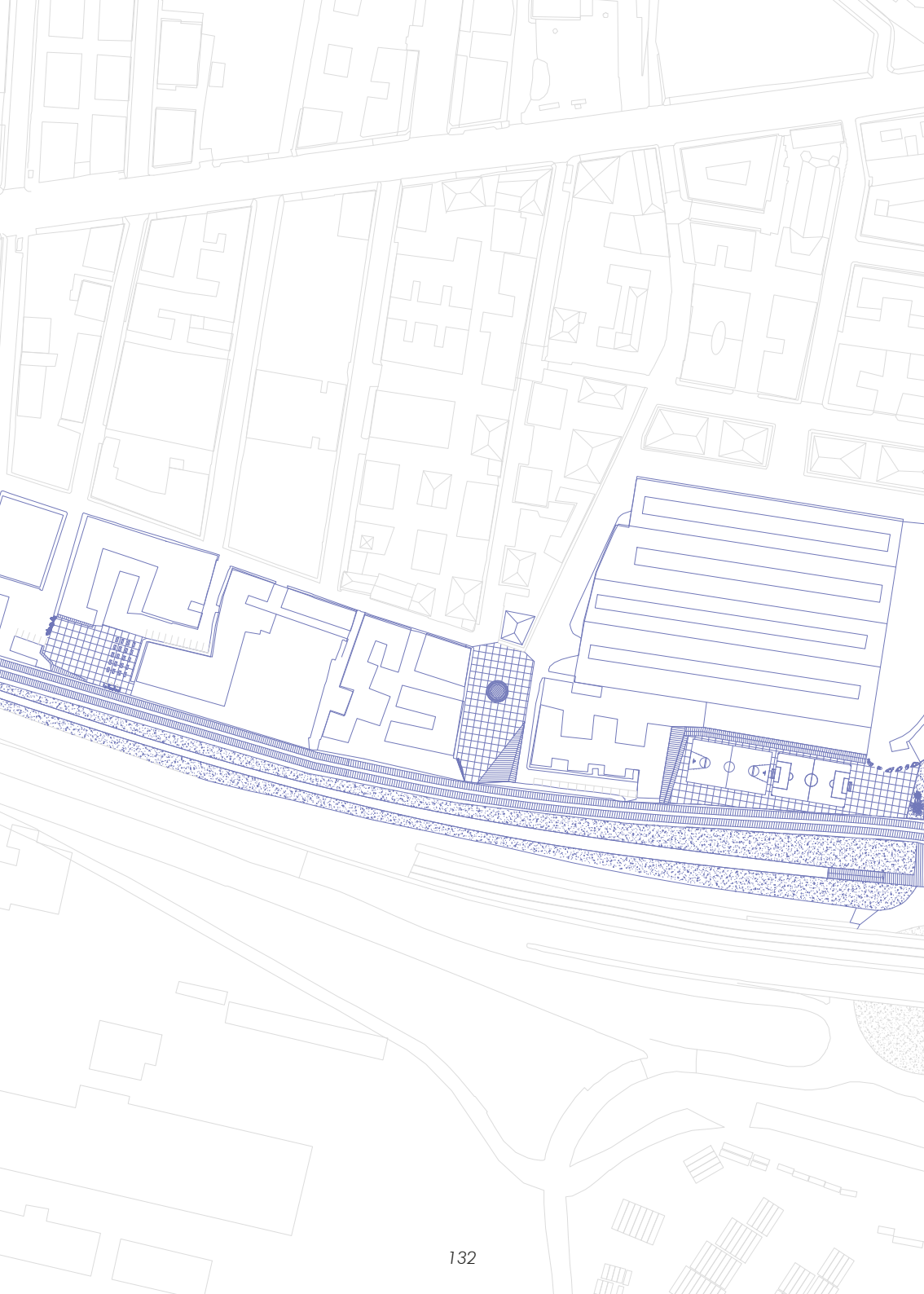
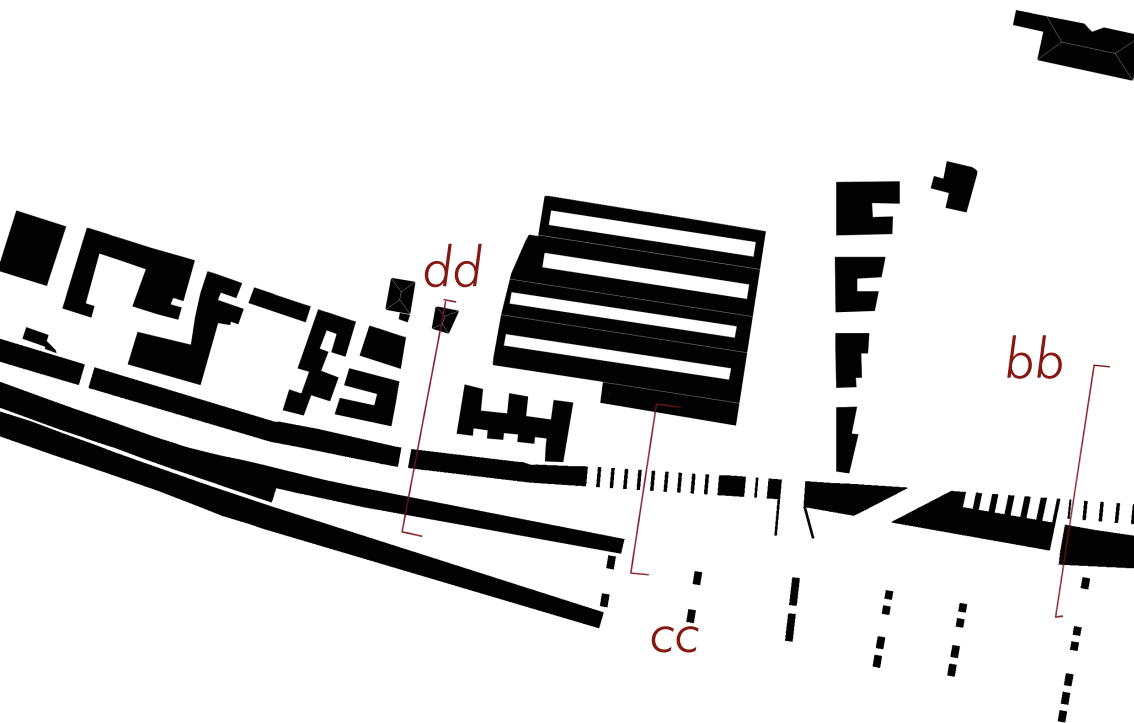




Figure 131. Site map.



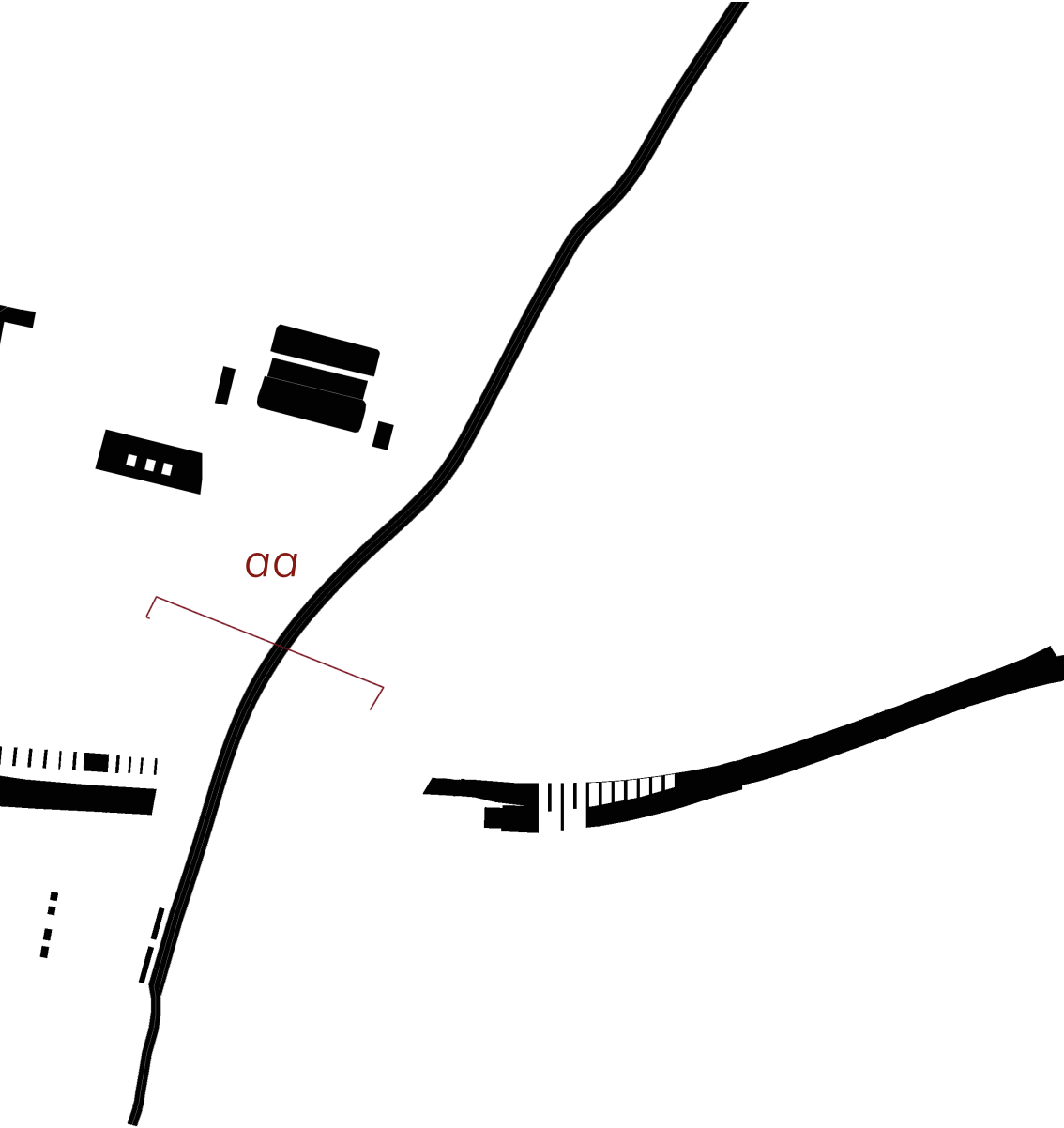
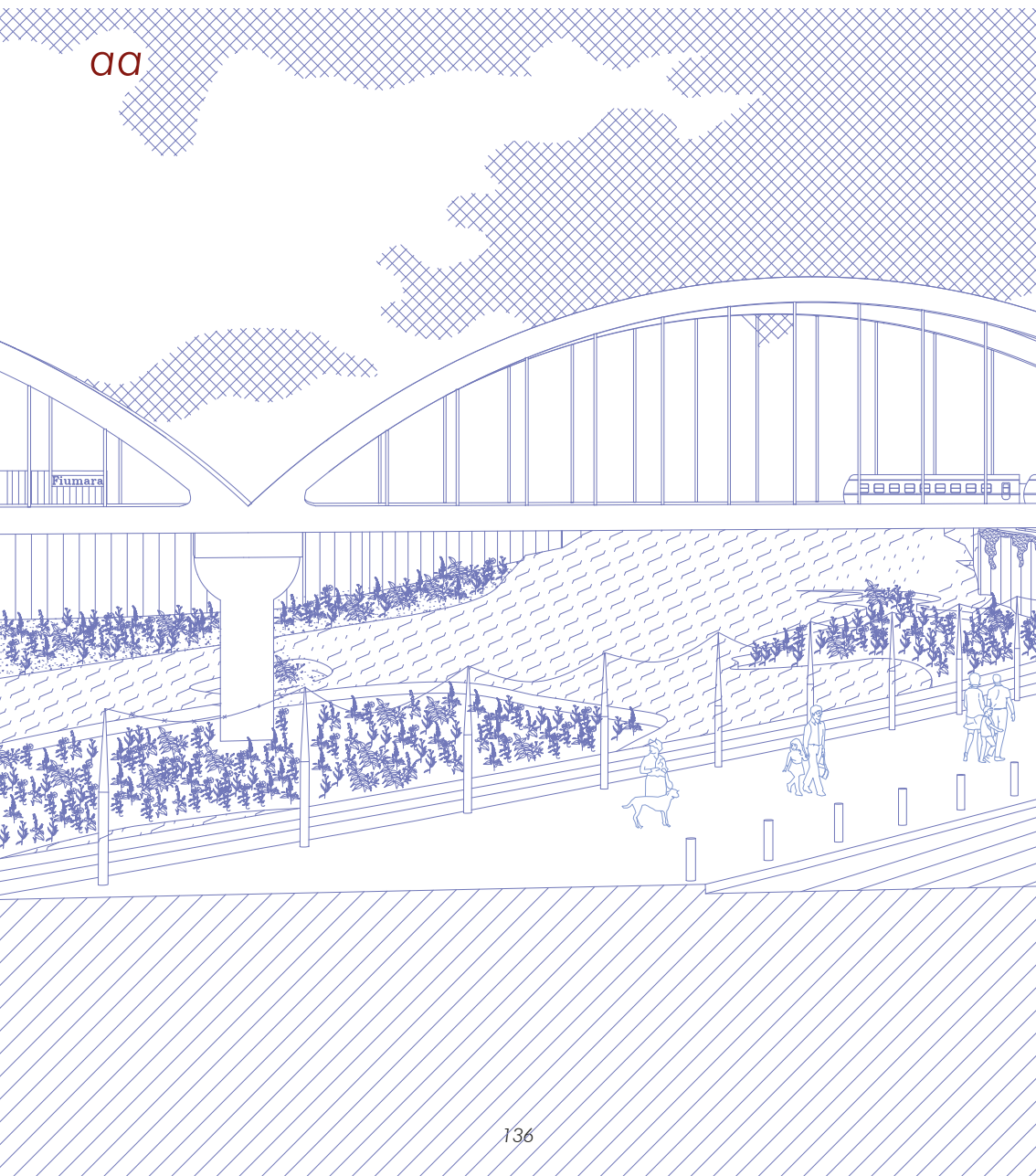


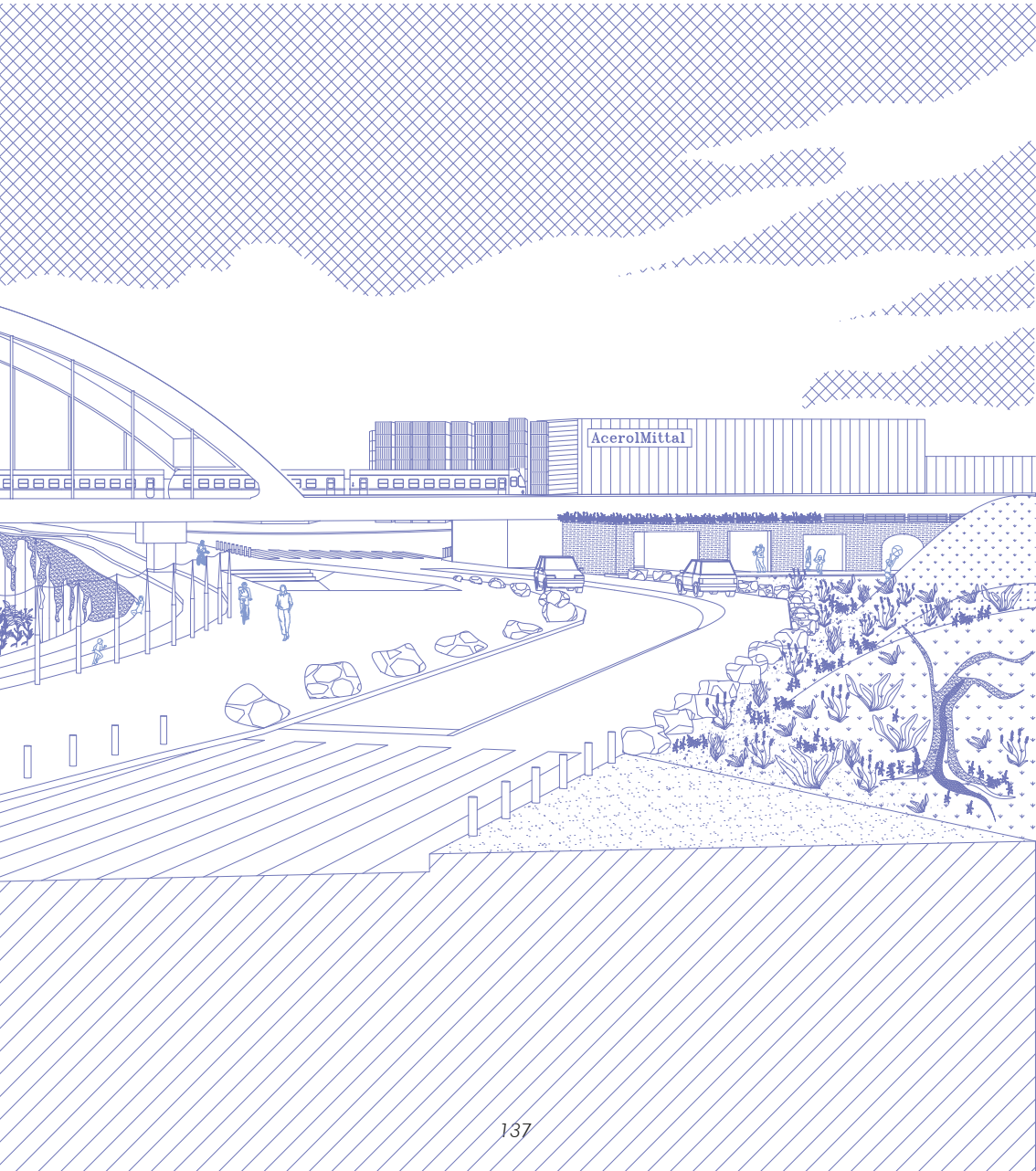
Figure 132. Cut-away section scheme.

In order to better explain the different levels of the project I will now illustrate 4 cut-away sections which will show the project and hopefully clarify doubts about the infrastructures dispositions and superpositions. The first one (first image below) cuts the riverside and the main road running now along the area A5.



In front of us we can see the containers from the commercial harbor and the Ex ILVA building. The railway passes on the Polcevera stream thanks to the bridge and closer to us on the right side the start of the old train building. The intervention on the riverside consists of rain gardens and steps of different levels, a bike lane and a space accessible to pedestrians.

Figure 133. Cut-away section aa.

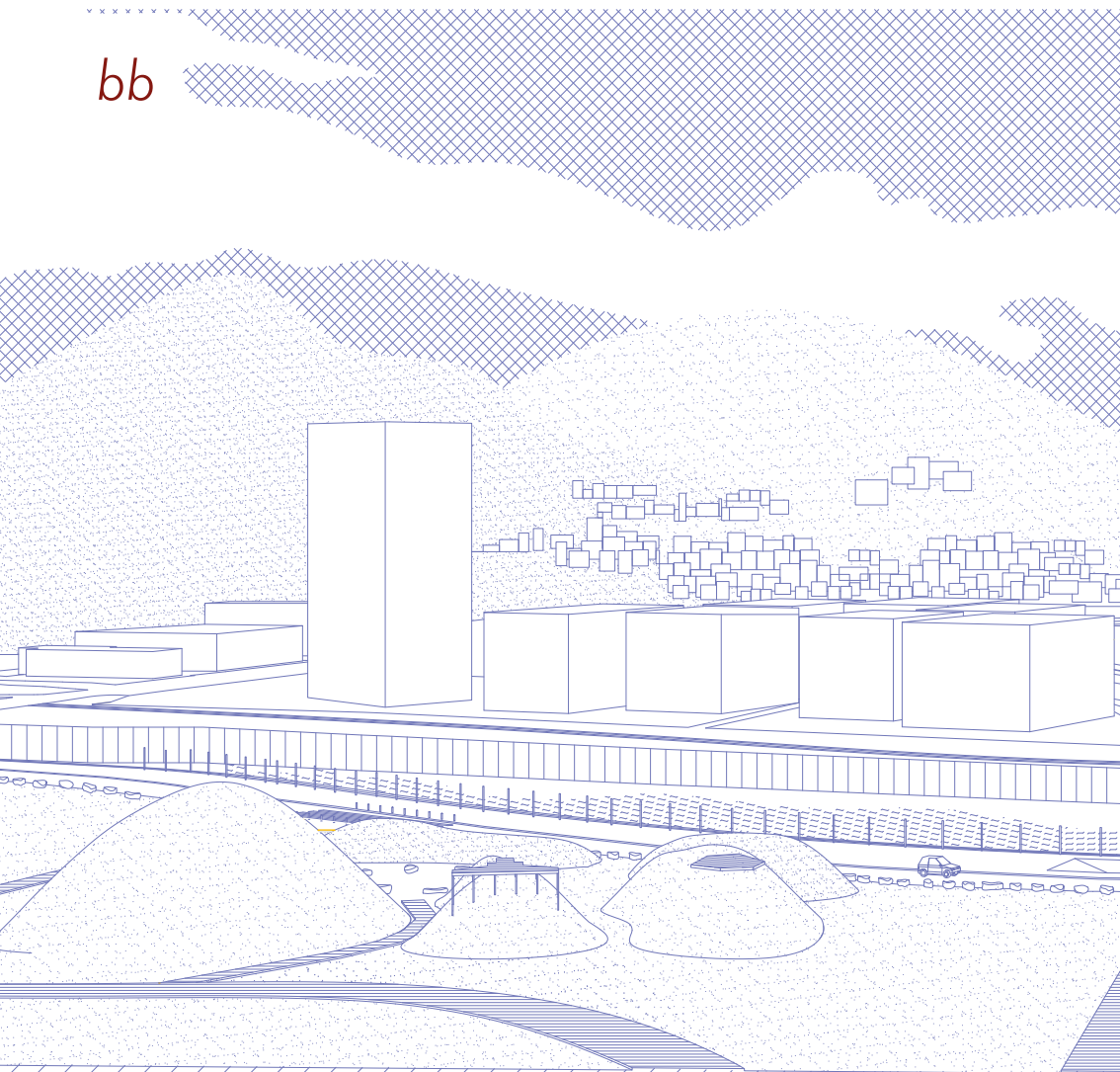


The second section is taken looking at the city center, which is 10 kilometers looking East.

The infrastructures connecting to it are the railway, running along the whole Ligurian coast and the bridge on the Polcevera Stream of the Guido Rossa, a new high speed road built in 2018 under request of the “Women of Cornigliano association”.

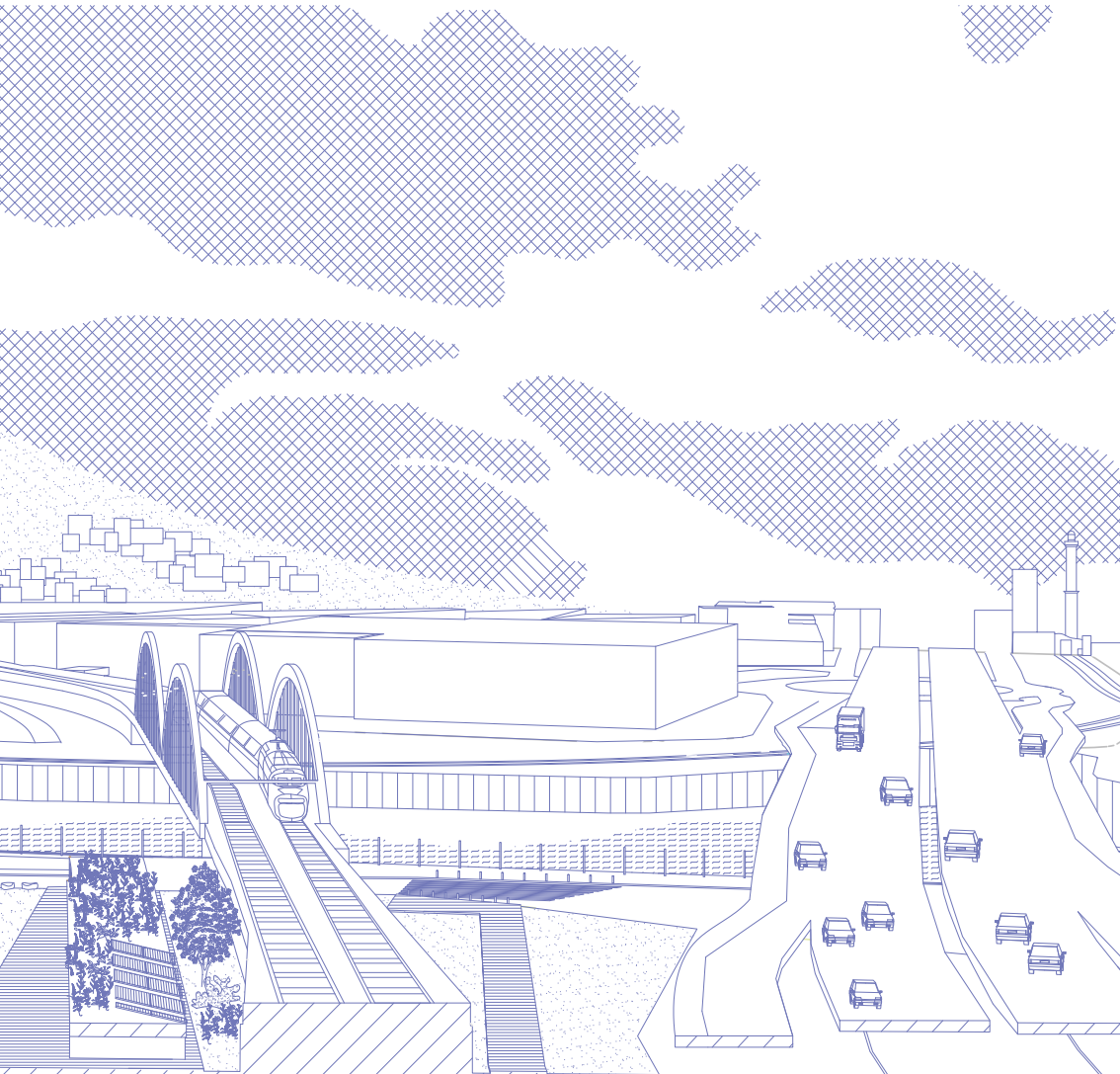
The hills on the left of the image are formatted by recent excavation of the Polcevera mouth to enlarge it in case of flooding. They have been left there for more than one year and now they are covered by vegetation. To not remove the latter is part of our scope, so wooden platforms have been built on them.

bb



The old railway building in the center is the only 100% human inhabited area. The interstice between the latter and the actual railway infrastructure has been filled with plants due to abandonment and we will maintain them as they provide dust filtering and sound proofing the inside part. On the roof, already vegetated today, solar and thermal panels will be introduced to sustain the inside public kitchen, toilets, showers and washing machines available for inhabitants and visitors.

Figure 134. Cut-away section bb.

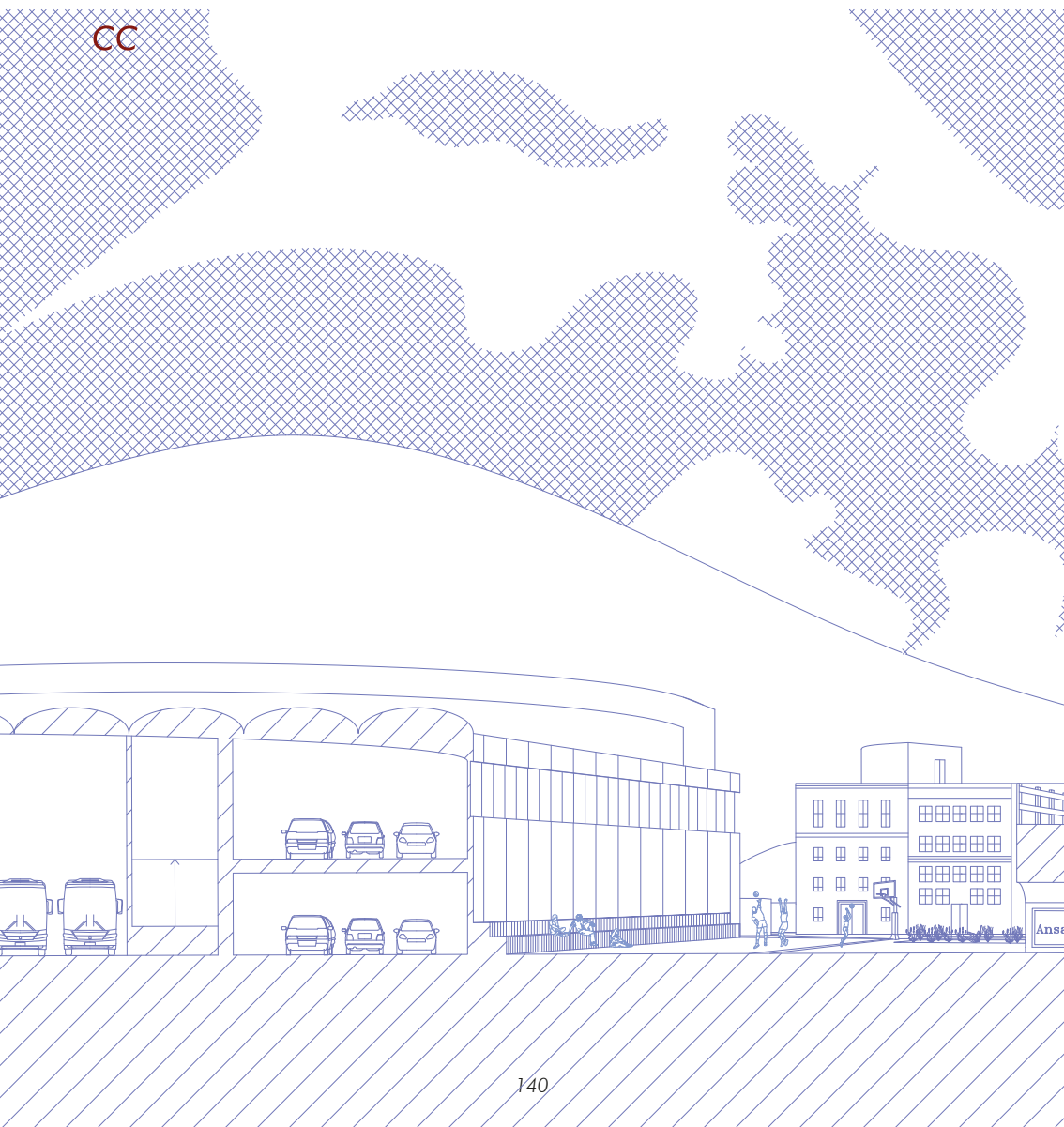


The first square I represented among the three involved in the project is the ex-stadium "Bacigalupo" area.

Today in its place there is the bus yard of AMT Genova (not used in its whole space) and parkings.

As the picture from Ansaldo Foundation shows, there used to be the football stadium (demolished in 1958), the second of the city of Genoa for dimensions, it could host 15.000 visitors. Next to it there used to be a roller rink.

By moving the parkings from this square, the ones from Piazza Battelli (the ex-market



square) and from Piazza Pietro Metastasio inside the bus yard (a total of 200 parkings), I will reintroduce the old functions in those plazas, creating common spaces and connections along the path to reach the main area. The interventions are light and leave space to creativity and future needs of inhabitants. I will push by drawing lines on the asphalt and adding the necessary devices for the function of football, basketball or whatever field.

Figure 135. Cut-away section cc.

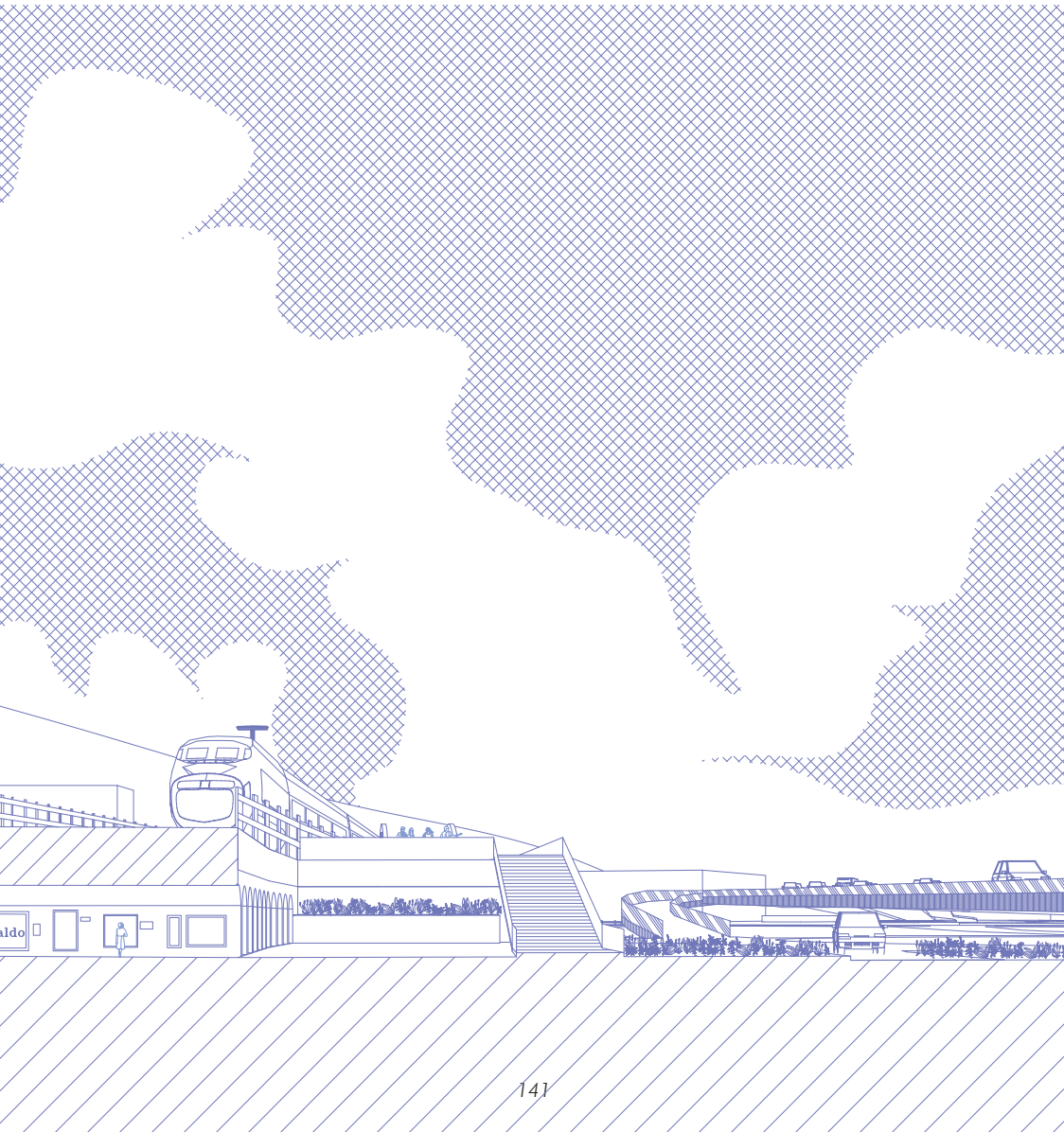


Figure 136.
<https://www.prolococornigliano.it/stadio-littorio/>. Ansaldo Foundation. 1927.



Figure 137. Google Earth screenshot. 2022.

Here we are in Piazza Pietro Metastasio.

The square used to be a parking lot for boats, and the tunnel under the railway was conducting directly to the sea. Making space and leaving the square "empty" besides some sitting devices is my strategy here.

This space is relevant since going along the linear garden for the women of Cornigliano is the second exit or entrance. My aim is to create a network of free public

dd



spaces along the linear garden to avoid leaving it disconnected from the district. Right now there are only parkings, the path is just the linear one, but my impression is that by expanding it to the surroundings it will be more safe and accessible.

Figure 138. Cut-away section dd.

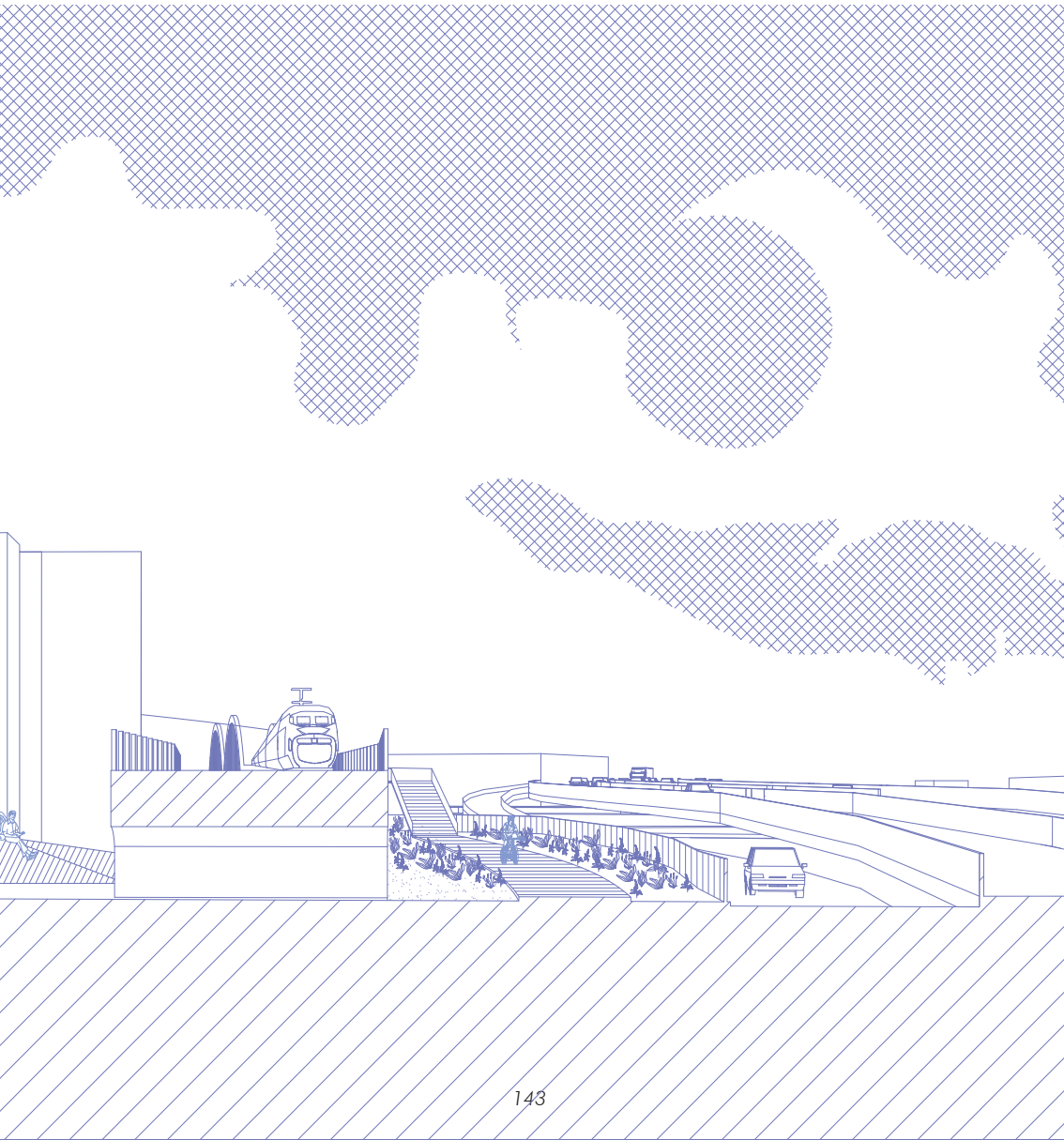










Figure 139. Collages realized by the author. The zone.

Figure 140. Collages realized by the author. The market square.

Conclusion

Why is there someone paid to go on the traffic islands on the highway to cut the grass?

No one will ever step on it and vegetation isn't harmful.

Looking at cities today one can see them as an archipelago of voids. Those can be industrial, agricultural, obtained by building demolitions, by an abandoned site, by a not maintained area. Zooming in those voids, one will notice nature growing on them in most of the cases and depending on the time they have been forgotten there.

Instead of planning to fill the space and obtain a compact and continuous city, a designer's approach towards them could be driven by the research on the natural spaces and the development of his/her needs respecting them.

Why are they there? Where did they come from, are they "native"?

The result as Matthew Gandy declared during an interview is that in most of the situations, those accidental gardens are global gar-

dens, bringing the traces of historical changes on the territory. Not only do those realities carry information about the past, they are constituting a new kind of urban nature in the present. Taking a city full of discontinuities, meaning urban ecosystems not designed intentionally by anyone, imagine the result we would obtain, in a close future, by accepting them in the urban textile. A strengthening of urban ecosystems with spontaneous naturalization, requiring the least maintenance energy and money, the multiplication of flora and fauna, which could be also used for education and research purposes. The air quality and health conditions improved, the skyline of our cities defined by skyscrapers and important stadiums, but interrupted by low urban forests. The design approach I applied to Cornigliano post-industrial realities is part of an already existing debate about the nature/non nature in wastelands and can be used elsewhere where we have the same conditions.

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