SHADES OF PUBLIC

Publicness, Accessibility and Spatial Ambiguity in the Via Roma Waterfront, Cagliari

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, waterfront redevelopment has emerged as one of the most visible arenas through which contemporary cities attempt to redefine their relationship with water. Former port infrastructures, traffic corridors, industrial edges, and residual maritime spaces have been transformed into promenades, cultural districts, and pedestrian public realms, often accompanied by a recurring urban promise: to reconnect the city with its waterfront, restore access to previously inaccessible edges, and create civic spaces capable of supporting collective life. Yet this promise is not easily verified through form alone. The physical opening of a waterfront, the redesign of a promenade, or the introduction of pedestrian continuity cannot, in themselves, be taken as sufficient evidence of public urban space. Publicness depends on a broader and more unstable set of spatial, institutional, material, and social conditions, involving accessibility, governance, regulation, comfort, maintenance, economic interests, and the everyday practices through which people move, pause, gather, avoid, or appropriate space. This thesis begins from this ambiguity and asks to what extent contemporary waterfront redevelopment projects actually produce public urban space. More specifically, it investigates how spatial configuration, governance structures, and patterns of use shape the publicness of waterfront environments. This question is particularly relevant in Mediterranean port cities, where the waterfront often operates simultaneously as a symbolic civic frontage, an infrastructural threshold, a mobility corridor, a tourist interface, and a space of everyday urban life. In such contexts, the waterfront is rarely neutral; rather, it is a layered condition in which openness coexists with control, mediation, selective activation, and uneven accessibility. Cagliari's Via Roma pedestrian waterfront provides the main field through which this question is explored. Its recent transformation has been presented as an opportunity to redefine the relationship between the city, the port, Piazza Matteotti, and the maritime edge through a renewed pedestrian and landscaped promenade. The intervention expands pedestrian space, introduces green infrastructure, reorganises mobility, and gives new visibility to a central urban frontage. However, its public character cannot be understood solely through declared objectives or through the visual image of the completed project. It requires a closer reading of the spatial mechanisms that organise access, support or weaken permanence, structure movement, frame thresholds, and regulate the relationship between urban fabric and port edge. For this reason, the research approaches publicness as a relational socio-spatial condition rather than as a fixed, measurable, or self-evident quality. Madanipour's claim that "the public and the private [...] only make sense in relation to each other"[1] and Lefebvre's formulation of social space as "a social product"[2] clarify why publicness cannot be detached from the practices, representations, and relations through which space is produced.The title "Shades of Public" refers

[1] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 3–4.
[2] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 26.

precisely to this condition: the public character of space is not absolute, nor can it be reduced to a simple opposition between public and private. Instead, it is composed of gradations, tensions, partial openings, forms of mediation, and multiple interpretative perspectives. A space may be visually open yet difficult to reach, accessible but poorly equipped for staying, continuous as a route but fragmented as a lived experience, publicly presented yet institutionally regulated. Publicness is therefore interpreted here through the interaction between spatial configuration, material devices, institutional frameworks, and everyday practices, rather than through a single definition or a numerical evaluation. The thesis develops this argument through a sequence that moves from theoretical construction to spatial interpretation, from comparative positioning to critical revision. It begins with a theoretical study of public space and publicness through different scholars, addressing public/private relations, socio-spatial production, architecture's role in structuring public life, thresholds, spatial gradients, the contemporary crisis of public space, and waterfront redevelopment. This framework provides the conceptual ground for reading Via Roma as a complex urban condition rather than as a merely formal project.
The analysis then focuses on the Cagliari waterfront as the primary case study, using spatial and documentary evidence, including plans, sections, project materials, post-opening sources, and direct spatial observations, to examine how the promenade operates under concrete spatial and institutional conditions. Within this reading, the municipal narrative of reconnection and environmental improvement is treated as one component of the evidence, rather than as proof of publicness in itself. The investigation then situates Cagliari within a broader Mediterranean comparative field, using selected waterfront references to clarify recurring mechanisms of access, thresholds, programme, port-city mediation, and public use, while maintaining Cagliari as the centre of the thesis.
The final chapter translates the analytical findings into targeted spatial recalibrations of the Via Roma waterfront, proposing clearer connections, more legible sequences, and stronger material support for everyday use. Through this structure, the thesis argues that the publicness of contemporary waterfronts cannot be assumed from openness, visibility, pedestrian character, or environmental image alone. Via Roma is therefore approached neither as a simple success nor as a failure, but as an uneven and mediated public condition. Cagliari is thus used not only as a local case study, but as a critical lens through which to question how public space is promised, constructed, experienced, and revised along the contemporary Mediterranean waterfront.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.0 THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE IN URBAN SPACE

The distinction between public and private space has long structured the organization of urban societies and the spatial order of cities.[1] Far from being a marginal conceptual divide, it constitutes one of the key principles through which collective life is organized, territorialized, and made visible in the built environment. As Ali Madanipour argues, the division of urban space into public and private is not merely a physical subdivision of the city, but the spatial manifestation of broader relationships between individual and society, self and other, intimacy and exposure.[2] Public and private, in this sense, should not be understood as fixed spatial categories, but as relational conditions through which social life is negotiated.

This point is crucial for any inquiry into contemporary waterfronts. If publicness is treated as a simple attribute of open space, the analysis risks remaining superficial. A promenade, a square, or a pedestrianized seafront may appear public because it is open, accessible, and visually continuous, yet these qualities alone do not explain how that space actually functions socially, politically, or economically. The urban question is therefore not limited to whether a space is open to the public, but extends to the deeper issue of how access, control, and collective relevance are structured within it.[3]

Madanipour's distinction between public space and public sphere is especially useful here. He defines public space as the part of the physical environment associated with public meanings and functions, while the public sphere is a broader social domain composed of places, actors, and activities that constitute the public dimension of collective life.[4] This distinction prevents a reductive identification of publicness with mere physical form. A space can be publicly accessible without necessarily belonging to a robust public sphere; conversely, forms of public life may emerge temporarily or partially even in spaces not conventionally understood as fully public. What matters, therefore, is not only the legal or morphological status of a place, but the degree to which it supports visibility, encounter, exchange, and collective relevance.

A similar insight can be found in Hannah Arendt's reflection on the human condition. For Arendt, the public realm is the realm of appearance, the space in which individuals become visible to one another through speech and action.[5] It is the sphere in which plurality manifests itself and where human beings encounter one another not as isolated biological entities, but as political subjects. The private realm, by contrast, is associated with necessity, with the domain of household life, reproduction, and the maintenance of existence.[6] The distinction is therefore not simply spatial, but deeply political: to move from the private to the public is to move from the sphere of necessity to the sphere of common visibility and shared worldliness.

Arendt's framework remains fundamental because it highlights that the public character of space cannot be reduced to circulation or access. A public space is not public only because many people can pass through it, but because it

[1] Ali Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City (London: Routledge, 2003), 2.
[2] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 2–4.
[3] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 98–99.
[4] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 4.
[5] Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 50–58.
[6] Arendt, The Human Condition, 22–28.

“THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE, HOWEVER, ONLY MAKE SENSE IN RELATION TO EACH OTHER.”

-MADANIPOUR

potentially accommodates forms of appearance, encounter, and shared presence that exceed private interest. At the same time, this classical distinction cannot be adopted uncritically. Contemporary urban conditions are marked by blurred thresholds, mixed uses, commercial mediation, and privatized forms of accessibility that destabilize any rigid separation between public and private. The value of Arendt’s argument lies less in offering a stable typology than in clarifying the political depth of the distinction itself.

Jürgen Habermas similarly frames the public sphere not as a physical container but as a domain of debate and communication emerging historically between state and society.[7] In his account, the bourgeois public sphere developed as a realm in which private individuals came together as a public to discuss matters of common concern. The significance of this formulation for urban analysis lies in its implicit spatial dimension: public life requires arenas of assembly, visibility, and exchange, even if it cannot be reduced to them. Public space, then, is not identical with public sphere, but neither is it irrelevant to it. The square, the street, the promenade, the civic waterfront, and the urban threshold may all operate as spatial supports for forms of publicity, though never in a deterministic way.

This is precisely where the public/private distinction becomes analytically productive. As Madanipour notes, these two realms only make sense in relation to one another, since each is defined through its dynamic interaction with the other.[8] Public and private are therefore not absolute opposites, but interdependent terms whose limits shift across scales, cultures, and institutional arrangements. The city does not simply contain public and private areas as if they were separate compartments; rather, it is constantly shaped by their intersections, frictions, and overlaps. This also explains why ambiguity is not an exception but a constitutive condition of urban space.

The question, then, is not whether the city can be neatly divided into public and private zones, but how this distinction is materially and symbolically produced. Madanipour explicitly argues that urban space is structured through public-private lines while also being fragmented by socio-economic and cultural differentiation.[9] Access, agency, and interest all play a role in determining degrees of publicness and privateness.[10] A place may be physically accessible yet socially exclusive, symbolically open yet institutionally controlled, visually public yet functionally selective. Once this becomes clear, publicness can no longer be understood as a binary property. It must instead be approached as a variable condition produced through the interaction of spatial form, ownership, governance, and use.

This perspective is especially important for the study of waterfront spaces. Waterfront redevelopments are frequently presented as collective urban assets, as spaces returned to the city and opened to public life. Yet such narratives often conceal more ambiguous spatial realities, in which leisure, tourism, consumption, surveil-

[7] Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 27–30.
[8] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 2–4.

[9] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 2–4.
[10] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 98–99.

lance, and selective management are layered over the rhetoric of openness. The public/private distinction, in this context, becomes less a stable opposition than a field of negotiation. The analytical task is therefore to understand how publicness is materially staged, institutionally regulated, and socially experienced.
From this point of view, the public/private divide should not be treated as an abstract theoretical preamble, but as the first conceptual tool for reading space critically. It allows us to move beyond appearances and ask more precise questions: who is a space for, under what conditions is it accessed, what kinds of practices are encouraged or discouraged, and how are boundaries between common use and private control spatially articulated? These questions do not yet provide a full account of publicness, but they establish the terrain on which the rest of the chapter must proceed. If the public and the private are not fixed spatial facts but relational and contested conditions, then publicness itself must be investigated not as a given, but as a problem.

1.1 PUBLIC SPACE AS A SOCIO-SPATIAL CONSTRUCT

If the distinction between public and private space provides a fundamental conceptual entry point for understanding the city, it does not yet explain how urban space is actually produced. The public character of space cannot be understood solely through legal definitions or morphological features. Rather, it emerges through broader social processes that shape the organization, meaning, and use of the built environment. In this perspective, urban space must be interpreted as a socio-spatial construct, produced through the interaction of social relations, economic forces, and institutional structures.[11]
This interpretation was most famously articulated by Henri Lefebvre, who argued that space is not simply a neutral container in which social life unfolds. Instead, space itself is socially produced and continually reshaped through political, economic, and cultural processes.[12] Lefebvre's theory rejects the idea that spatial form can be understood independently from the social relations that generate it. Urban space is therefore neither a passive backdrop nor a purely technical outcome of planning decisions. It is an active medium through which power relations, social hierarchies, and economic interests are materialized and reproduced.[13]
Central to Lefebvre's argument is the idea that space emerges through the interaction of different dimensions: spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces. Spatial practices refer to the everyday routines and movements that structure urban

[11] Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 26.
[12] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 26–30.
[13] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 73–80.

life; representations of space correspond to the conceptual frameworks through which planners, architects, and institutions organize the built environment; representational spaces, finally, relate to the symbolic meanings and lived experiences through which individuals appropriate urban space.[14] These three dimensions interact continuously, generating a dynamic spatial field in which the physical environment, social behavior, and symbolic interpretation influence one another.

From this perspective, the public character of space cannot be determined solely by its formal configuration. A square, a promenade, or a waterfront may be designed as an open civic environment, yet its actual functioning depends on how social practices unfold within it and how institutional frameworks regulate its use. Lefebvre's approach therefore shifts the analytical focus from the physical properties of space to the processes through which spatial relations are produced and contested. Publicness becomes less a fixed attribute and more a condition emerging from complex socio-spatial dynamics.

This argument was later expanded by David Harvey, who interpreted urban space as a terrain of economic and political struggle. Harvey emphasizes that spatial organization is deeply intertwined with processes of capital accumulation and urban development.[15] Cities are continuously reshaped by investment flows, property markets, and development strategies that prioritize certain uses and populations while marginalizing others. In this context, public space often becomes entangled with broader economic agendas, including tourism development, real estate speculation, and urban branding.[16]

Harvey's perspective highlights that the transformation of urban space is rarely neutral. Decisions regarding the design, management, and redevelopment of public environments frequently reflect broader economic priorities and institutional interests. Public spaces may therefore become instruments within wider strategies of urban competitiveness and economic growth. As a result, the boundaries between public benefit and private interest often become blurred, particularly in large-scale redevelopment projects such as waterfront transformations.

Manuel Castells further contributes to this discussion by framing urban space as the material expression of social processes operating at multiple scales. For Castells, the city is not merely a physical settlement but a spatial configuration shaped by networks of economic production, political power, and cultural meaning.[17] Urban space therefore reflects broader structural dynamics, including globalization, technological change, and shifting patterns of governance. The spatial organization of cities cannot be understood independently from these systemic forces.

Within this framework, public space becomes part of a larger socio-spatial system in which different actors, institutions, developers, planners, and users negotiate the use and meaning of urban environments. Publicness is thus continuously constructed and reconstructed

[14] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 33–46.
[15] David Harvey, Social Justice and the City (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 231, 237–39.

[16] David Harvey, Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution (London: Verso, 2012), 11–18, 100–106.
[17] Manuel Castells, The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), 115–17, 126–28, 235–37.

through the interaction between spatial design, regulatory frameworks, and everyday practices. A space that appears publicly accessible may nonetheless operate through implicit forms of control, regulation, or exclusion shaped by broader socio-economic dynamics.

These perspectives collectively suggest that the public character of urban space cannot be explained solely through spatial design or legal status. Instead, it emerges through the intersection of spatial configuration and social processes. Publicness is therefore produced through a complex interplay between physical form, institutional governance, and lived experience. This interpretation is particularly relevant when analyzing contemporary urban transformations, where redevelopment strategies often involve a mixture of public investment, private capital, and hybrid governance structures.

For the purposes of this research, the socio-spatial perspective offers a crucial analytical foundation. If urban space is produced through social processes, then the public character of a place must be investigated through both spatial and institutional lenses. Architectural form, accessibility, and spatial organization remain important, but they must be interpreted alongside broader dynamics of governance, economic development, and social practice. The degree of publicness of a space cannot therefore be inferred solely from its design; it must be examined as the outcome of interacting spatial and social mechanisms.

This understanding becomes especially important in the context of waterfront redevelopment. Over the past decades, waterfront areas have become central sites of urban transformation, frequently promoted as open and accessible public environments. Yet these projects often involve complex constellations of public authorities, private investors, and regulatory frameworks that shape how these spaces are used and experienced. The public image of the waterfront as a civic landscape may therefore coexist with forms of spatial regulation, commercial appropriation, or selective accessibility.

Recognizing space as socially produced allows us to move beyond purely morphological readings of urban form. It enables a more critical investigation of how spatial configurations interact with institutional arrangements and social practices in shaping the public character of urban environments. The question that emerges from this perspective is therefore not simply whether a space is public, but how publicness is produced, negotiated, and experienced within specific spatial contexts. This question will guide the subsequent sections of the chapter, which explore the role of architectural form, spatial thresholds, and urban governance in structuring the relationship between public and private space.

1.2 ARCHITECTURE AND THE STRUCTURING OF PUBLIC LIFE

While the socio-spatial perspective highlights how urban space is produced through social processes, it does not yet fully explain how space is actually experienced and used in everyday life. The functioning of public space cannot be understood solely through abstract theoretical frameworks or institutional structures; it must also be examined through the concrete ways in which individuals perceive, navigate, and appropriate urban environments. In this sense, the analysis of public space requires a closer attention to spatial experience and patterns of use.
William H. Whyte's observations on the social life of urban spaces provide a fundamental contribution in this regard. Through systematic empirical studies of plazas and public environments, Whyte demonstrated that the success of public space is closely related to its capacity to support everyday social practices.[18] Elements such as seating availability, sun exposure, accessibility, and proximity to pedestrian flows play a crucial role in determining whether a space is actively used or remains underutilized. Public space, in this perspective, is not defined solely by its formal design, but by its ability to accommodate and encourage patterns of occupation.
Jan Gehl further develops this approach by emphasizing the relationship between spatial design and human behavior. According to Gehl, urban spaces can support different categories of activities, ranging from necessary activities, such as walking or commuting, to optional and social activities that occur only when environmental conditions are favorable.[19] The quality of public space therefore depends on its capacity to transform necessary movement into opportunities for staying, interacting, and engaging with others. This shift from movement to dwelling represents a key condition for the emergence of public life.
Kevin Lynch offers another complementary perspective by focusing on the perceptual dimension of urban space. In his analysis of the image of the city, Lynch argues that spatial environments are experienced through mental maps that structure how individuals orient themselves and assign meaning to urban form.[20] Elements such as paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks contribute to the legibility of the urban environment, influencing how spaces are perceived, remembered, and navigated. The clarity and coherence of spatial organization can therefore affect not only movement but also the sense of belonging and familiarity associated with a place.
Taken together, these approaches shift the analytical focus from the production of space to its lived experience. Public space is not only shaped by socio-economic processes and institutional frameworks, but also by the ways in which individuals engage with the built environment in everyday life. The presence of people, the duration of their stay, the diversity of activities, and the intensity of social interaction all become indicators of how space actually functions beyond its intended design.
This perspective also reveals that spatial form alone cannot guarantee the emergence of

"ARCHITECTURE IS NEVER AUTONOMOUS, NEVER PURE FORM."

-TSCHUMI

[18] William H. Whyte, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (Washington, DC: Conservation Foundation, 1980), 16–24, 28–43, 54–56.
[19] Jan Gehl, Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011), 9–17.

[20] Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 4–10.

public life. A well-designed square may remain empty if it does not align with patterns of movement or if it lacks the environmental qualities necessary to support prolonged use. Conversely, spaces with relatively modest design features may become highly active if they successfully accommodate everyday practices. The relationship between design and use is therefore not deterministic but contingent, mediated by a range of spatial, social, and environmental factors.

At the same time, the emphasis on use introduces a critical dimension in the analysis of public space. Observing how space is occupied makes it possible to identify forms of inclusion and exclusion that are not immediately visible at the level of design. Who uses a space, at what times, and under what conditions becomes a central question in evaluating its public character. Patterns of use may reveal underlying inequalities, social segmentation, or implicit forms of control that shape access to urban environments.

This approach is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary waterfront developments. These projects are often designed as highly curated environments, where spatial form, material quality, and landscape design aim to create attractive and accessible public spaces. However, the actual functioning of these environments depends on how they are used in practice. The presence of tourists, the distribution of commercial activities, the regulation of behavior, and the temporal rhythms of occupation all contribute to shaping the lived experience of the waterfront. Understanding public space through spatial experience and use therefore allows for a more grounded analysis of urban environments. It shifts attention from abstract definitions of publicness to the concrete ways in which space is inhabited and appropriated. This perspective does not replace the socio-spatial approach discussed in the previous section, but complements it by linking structural conditions with everyday practices. Publicness, in this sense, emerges not only from the production of space, but also from the ways in which it is experienced and used.

This insight provides an essential foundation for the subsequent sections of the chapter, which further explore how spatial configuration, thresholds, and institutional frameworks interact in shaping the public character of urban space.

1.3 THRESHOLDS AND SPATIAL GRADIENTS

The discussion developed so far has shown that public space cannot be understood either as a purely formal condition or as the automatic outcome of legal accessibility. If publicness is produced through socio-spatial processes and materialized through the lived use of space, then the boundary between public and private cannot be conceived as a rigid line. Instead, urban space is often structured through intermediate conditions in which access, visibility, and use are gradually negotiated. It is within this field of transition that the concept of threshold becomes particularly significant.

A threshold is not simply a dividing edge between two separate domains. In architectural and urban terms, it can be understood as a spatial device that mediates between different conditions, allowing passage, delay, encounter, filtering, or control. Thresholds do not merely separate; they also articulate relationships. They produce zones of transition in which the distinction between inside and outside, public and private, collective and individual, becomes more complex and less absolute.

Bernard Tschumi's reflections on the relationship between space, movement, and event provide an important framework for understanding this condition. For Tschumi, architecture cannot be reduced to static form or fixed function, because its meaning emerges through the interaction between spatial sequences and the activities that unfold within them.[21] Space is always experienced through movement, and movement in turn structures the way architectural environments are perceived and used. Thresholds therefore acquire a specific importance, since they are the moments at which different spatial sequences meet and where the transition between distinct regimes of use becomes legible.

This interpretation challenges any stable notion of spatial order. Tschumi insists that architecture is shaped by the encounter between spaces and events rather than by formal coherence alone.[22] In this sense, the threshold is not merely a neutral passage but a site of tension where different programs, movements, and possibilities of occupation intersect. Publicness is therefore not located only in open space itself, but also in the transitions through which access is organized and spatial relations are staged.

A comparable but more explicitly human-centered perspective can be found in the work of Herman Hertzberger. His reflections on architecture emphasize the value of spaces that are not rigidly determined by a single function, but instead allow appropriation and reinterpretation by users.[23] For Hertzberger, architecture should not enforce absolute separations between domains, but rather provide intermediate spaces in which different forms of use and encounter can emerge. Entrances, stairs, arcades, landings, porches, and shared edges are not residual spaces; they are precisely the places where architecture can mediate between private occupation and collective life.

Such spaces are important because they soften the binary distinction between public and private. They create gradients rather than oppositions,

[21] Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 122–126.

[22] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 141–147.

[23] Herman Hertzberger, Lessons for Students in Architecture, 5th rev. ed. (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2005), 32–35.

making it possible for users to inhabit space in multiple ways and with varying degrees of exposure or retreat. Hertzberger's intermediate spaces are therefore especially relevant for the study of urban environments in which public life depends not only on large civic spaces but also on the subtle articulation of access, proximity, and transition.[24]

Aldo van Eyck similarly emphasized the importance of what he described as the in-between realm. Rather than organizing space through strict separations, his work proposed a relational understanding of architecture in which meaning emerges through the articulation of intermediate conditions.[25] The in-between is not a residual zone between fixed categories, but a meaningful spatial field in its own right. In this sense, thresholds are not simply secondary elements of architecture; they are key sites through which human relationships with space are formed.

This broader critique of rigid zoning and functional separation was also central to the reflections of Team 10. Against the reductive abstractions of modernist planning, Team 10 argued for a more nuanced urban order based on association, continuity, and human patterns of inhabitation.[26] Their work reinforced the idea that spatial life unfolds not through isolated compartments but through sequences of relational environments. Thresholds, in this perspective, help structure the continuity of urban experience while still preserving difference.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that public and private should not be treated as mutually exclusive spatial facts. Urban space is more often constituted through degrees of transition, where openness and enclosure, collective use and controlled access, are organized through spatial gradients rather than hard boundaries. This is especially evident in contemporary urban settings, where plazas, sidewalks, terraces, lobbies, porticoes, and commercial edges often operate as hybrid environments that are neither fully public nor entirely private.

Recognizing the importance of thresholds allows for a more precise reading of publicness. It becomes possible to ask not only whether a space is accessible, but how access is staged, delayed, filtered, or framed through architecture. A waterfront promenade, for example, may appear entirely open, yet its relationship with adjacent buildings, commercial structures, or infrastructural limits may produce a series of thresholds that influence how people move, pause, and appropriate the environment.

This perspective is particularly relevant for waterfront spaces, where transitions often carry strong spatial and symbolic weight. The interface between city and sea, between civic promenade and port infrastructure, or between pedestrian continuity and controlled access rarely takes the form of a simple border. More often, it is articulated through a succession of intermediate conditions that regulate the relationship between openness and control. Publicness, in this context, is inseparable from the design of these thresholds.

Understanding thresholds as spatial gradients

[24] Hertzberger, Lessons for Students in Architecture, 38–40.
[25] Peter D. E. Clarke, The Writings of Aldo van Eyck: A Modernist Sensibility Introduced into Architecture (M.Litt. diss., University of Bristol, 1985), 128–142.
[26] Alison Smithson, ed., "Team 10 Primer 1953–62," Ekistics 15, no. 91 (June 1963): 349–360.

“THERE IS NO ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT ACTION, NO ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT EVENTS, NO ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT PROGRAM.”

-TSCHUMI

therefore helps move beyond binary interpretations of urban space. It provides an analytical tool for examining how publicness is materially structured through architecture and urban design, and how spatial transitions shape the lived relationship between collective life and regulated access. This insight prepares the ground for the following section, where the discussion turns to the broader contemporary transformations that have increasingly complicated the meaning and functioning of public space.

1.4 THE CONTEMPORARY CRISIS OF PUBLIC SPACE

While the previous sections have established the theoretical foundations necessary to understand public space as a socio-spatial and architectural construct, contemporary urban conditions have introduced new dynamics that increasingly complicate the traditional understanding of publicness. Over the past decades, many scholars have argued that public space is undergoing a profound transformation, characterized by processes of commercialization, privatization, and intensified forms of spatial regulation.[27] These transformations have raised significant concerns regarding the capacity of urban environments to sustain open, inclusive, and genuinely public forms of collective life.

One of the most influential contributions to this debate comes from Sharon Zukin, who describes how economic restructuring and the rise of consumer-oriented urban development have reshaped the cultural and spatial fabric of cities. According to Zukin, many contemporary urban spaces are increasingly designed around consumption, tourism, and branding strategies rather than civic interaction.[28] Public spaces become stages for curated experiences aimed at attracting investment, visitors, and middle-class consumers, often resulting in environments that appear lively and accessible while simultaneously filtering out certain forms of social presence. Zukin argues that this transformation has produced what she describes as the “pacification” of urban space.[29] Through design strategies, surveillance mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks, public environments are frequently

[27] Sharon Zukin, The Cultures of Cities (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 3–6.
[28] Sharon Zukin, Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2–5.
[29] Zukin, The Cultures of Cities, 28–30.

managed to minimize unpredictability and conflict. The resulting spaces may remain visually open and physically accessible, yet their social dynamics become subtly constrained by implicit expectations regarding behavior, consumption, and appearance. Public space in this context becomes less a domain of political visibility and collective negotiation and more a carefully orchestrated environment optimized for economic activity.

Don Mitchell similarly interprets these developments as part of a broader restructuring of urban governance. For Mitchell, the right to occupy and use public space has historically been central to democratic life in cities.[30] Public spaces have functioned as arenas where marginalized groups could assert visibility and claim political presence. However, contemporary forms of spatial management increasingly restrict these possibilities through regulations that limit activities such as protest, informal gathering, or the presence of vulnerable populations.

Mitchell's analysis highlights the political dimension of public space by emphasizing that access to urban environments is never purely neutral. Decisions regarding who can occupy space, under what conditions, and for what purposes are inherently political. Regulations concerning security, cleanliness, and order often serve to exclude certain users while privileging others. In this sense, the apparent openness of many contemporary public spaces may conceal complex mechanisms of spatial control.

Setha Low's research on urban plazas and public environments further illustrates how these dynamics operate in practice. Through ethnographic studies of urban parks and plazas, Low demonstrates that design interventions, management policies, and security practices can significantly reshape the social composition of public space.[31] In many cases, efforts to improve safety and attractiveness lead to environments that subtly discourage the presence of particular groups, including the homeless, street vendors, or political activists.

These observations collectively suggest that the transformation of public space cannot be understood solely through changes in architectural form. Instead, contemporary public environments are increasingly shaped by hybrid arrangements involving public authorities, private developers, corporate stakeholders, and regulatory frameworks. Such arrangements often produce spaces that remain publicly accessible while being subject to privately defined rules of conduct and management.

One of the most visible manifestations of this transformation is the emergence of privately owned public spaces. These environments, frequently associated with large-scale redevelopment projects, combine public accessibility with private ownership and management structures.[32] Although such spaces are typically open to the public, their use is governed by rules established and enforced by private actors rather than by public institutions. As a result, activities that would normally be associated with traditional public spaces, including dissent, protest,

[30] Don Mitchell, The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 13–18.
[31] Setha Low, "How Private Interests Take Over Public Space: Zoning, Taxes, and Incorporation of Gated Communities," in The Politics of Public Space, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2006), 81–84, 92–100.
[32] Jeremy Németh, "Defining a Public: The Management of Privately Owned Public Space," *Urban Studies* 46, no. 11 (2009): 2463–65, 2467, 2480–81.

political expression, or certain forms of collective gathering, may be restricted or excluded. These developments do not necessarily imply the disappearance of public space, but they do indicate a significant reconfiguration of its institutional and spatial foundations. Publicness increasingly operates through negotiated arrangements between public and private actors, producing environments that blur the boundaries between civic space and commercial territory. The result is a landscape of urban spaces that appear public yet operate through complex systems of regulation and management.

In this context, the concept of publicness itself becomes increasingly difficult to define. A space may be legally public but socially exclusionary; conversely, a privately owned environment may function as an important site of public life. The analytical challenge therefore lies not in classifying spaces as simply public or private, but in understanding the degrees of publicness that emerge from the interaction between spatial design, governance structures, and social practices.

This challenge becomes particularly evident in the redevelopment of waterfront areas. Across many cities, waterfront projects have been presented as opportunities to restore public access to the sea and to create new civic landscapes. However, these developments often involve significant private investment, commercial programming, and management regimes that influence how these spaces operate. The waterfront therefore represents a critical terrain in which the tensions between openness and control, civic space and commercial space, become highly visible.

Understanding these tensions requires moving beyond idealized representations of public space and examining the mechanisms through which publicness is produced and regulated in contemporary urban environments. The next section therefore turns to the specific case of waterfront redevelopment, exploring how these transformations have reshaped the spatial and institutional organization of urban coastal areas.

PUBLIC SPACE MAY BE ABSORBED INTO URBAN COMPETITIVENESS.

-MADANIPOUR

1.5 WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT

Over the past decades, waterfront areas have become one of the most significant laboratories of contemporary urban transformation. Historically, port districts functioned as infrastructural landscapes dedicated to logistics, industry, and maritime trade, often physically and functionally separated from the everyday life of the city.[33] Their spatial organization reflected the operational needs of port economies rather than the social and civic life of urban environments.

During the late twentieth century, however, profound changes in global shipping systems and maritime logistics began to alter this relationship. The introduction of containerization, the relocation of port infrastructures toward larger specialized terminals, and the increasing scale of maritime operations progressively displaced many traditional port activities away from historic urban centers.[34] As a consequence, extensive areas of former docks, warehouses, and industrial waterfronts became obsolete or underutilized within the urban fabric.

These transformations opened new opportunities for cities to rethink the relationship between urban space and the water. Across Europe and North America, numerous waterfront districts were gradually reimagined as sites of urban redevelopment, where former industrial landscapes could be converted into mixed urban environments combining public spaces, cultural institutions, commercial functions, and residential developments.[35]

Waterfront regeneration therefore emerged not merely as a design operation but as a broader urban strategy. In many cities, the redevelopment of port areas has been framed as a way to reconnect the city with its maritime edge while simultaneously supporting economic revitalization, tourism development, and urban restructuring.[36] The waterfront becomes a symbolic interface where the historical identity of the city, contemporary urban life, and new development strategies converge.

Within these projects, the creation of new public spaces frequently occupies a central role. Promenades, squares, parks, and pedestrian infrastructures are often presented as devices capable of restoring public access to the water while reactivating previously inaccessible territories.[37] In this sense, waterfront redevelopment is commonly associated with the promise of producing new civic landscapes in which the city can once again establish a visible and accessible relationship with its coastal environment.

However, waterfront transformations rarely occur within purely architectural frameworks. These projects typically involve complex constellations of actors, including municipal administrations, port authorities, private developers, investment funds, and public-private partnerships. As a result, the redevelopment of waterfront areas often reflects the intersection between spatial design ambitions, governance structures, and broader strategies of urban valorisation.[38]

From this perspective, waterfront redevelopment cannot be understood solely through its architectural form. It must also be interpreted as part of wider processes of urban restructuring

[33] Carola Hein, Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks (London: Routledge, 2011), 3–8.
[34] Brian Hoyle, “Global and Local Change on the Port-City Waterfront,” Geographical Review 90, no. 3 (2000): 395–417.
[35] Richard Marshall, “Contemporary Urban Space-Making at the Water’s Edge,” in Waterfronts in Post-Industrial Cities, ed. Richard Marshall (London and New York: Spon Press, 2001), 4–5, 8

[36] Hein, Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks, 45–48.
[37] Michelangelo Savino, “Città e waterfront tra piani, progetti, politiche ed immancabili retoriche,” in Waterfront d’Italia. Piani politiche progetti, ed. Michelangelo Savino (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2010), 36–42.
[38] Rosario Pavia and Matteo di Venosa, Waterfront: dal conflitto all’integrazione / From Conflict to Integration (Trento: LISt Lab, 2012), 6–9, 82–85, 88–91.

“NOTHING IS EXPERIENCED BY ITSELF.”

-LYNCH

in which spatial transformation, economic investment, and institutional governance interact to redefine the role of the waterfront within the metropolitan landscape.[39]
For this reason, contemporary waterfront projects provide a particularly revealing context in which to investigate the changing conditions of public space. These environments frequently combine ambitious design strategies with complex systems of management, programming, and regulation. The resulting spaces often appear highly open and accessible, yet their functioning is shaped by multiple institutional and economic frameworks that influence how they are used and experienced.[40]
Understanding the public character of these spaces therefore requires moving beyond descriptive accounts of architectural form. Instead, it becomes necessary to examine how spatial configuration, governance arrangements, and patterns of use interact within waterfront environments. This perspective opens the way to a more critical reflection on the conditions under which public space is produced within contemporary urban redevelopment.
The following section addresses this question more directly by examining the problem of publicness in contemporary urban space.

[39] Carola Hein, “Port Cityscapes,” Journal of Urban History 37, no. 1 (2011): 20–35.
[40] Hoyle, “Cities and Ports: Concepts and Issues,” 263-78.

1.6 THE PROBLEM OF PUBLICNESS

The transformations described in the previous section highlight how contemporary waterfront redevelopment projects frequently position themselves as opportunities to produce new forms of urban public space. Promenades, squares, parks, and pedestrian infrastructures are often presented as devices capable of reconnecting the city with the water while simultaneously reinforcing the civic dimension of the urban landscape.[41]
Yet the question of what constitutes public space in contemporary cities remains far from straightforward. Urban scholars have long emphasized that the public character of space cannot be defined solely through its legal status or formal accessibility. Rather, publicness emerges from a complex interaction between spatial configuration, institutional regulation, social practices, and economic interests.[42]
From this perspective, public space cannot be understood as a fixed spatial category but as a condition continuously produced through socio-spatial processes. As Henri Lefebvre famously argued, urban space is not merely a physical container but a social product shaped by the interaction between spatial practices, representations of space, and lived experience.[43]
Ali Madanipour similarly emphasizes that the public character of urban environments depends not only on physical openness but also on the relationships between access, control, and the distribution of interests within the city.[44]
A space may appear accessible and publicly oriented while simultaneously operating throu-

[41] Rinio Bruttomesso and Marta Moretti, “Città-porto e riqualificazione del waterfront: evoluzione e scenario di una strategia vincente,” in Waterfront d’Italia: Piani, politiche, progetti, ed. Michelangelo Savino (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2010), 18–25.
[42] Ali Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City (London: Routledge, 2003), 3–6.
[43] Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 26–33.
[44] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 98–102.

gh mechanisms of governance, programming, or spatial organization that influence who can use it and how it can be appropriated. This perspective becomes particularly relevant in the context of contemporary urban redevelopment. Large-scale transformation projects typically involve multiple institutional actors and overlapping forms of governance, producing spatial environments in which public accessibility, commercial programming, and private investment coexist.[45] Within such contexts, the publicness of space cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between public and private domains. Instead, public space should be understood as a condition that emerges through gradients of accessibility, regulation, and spatial configuration. Architectural thresholds, patterns of circulation, and systems of management all contribute to structuring how individuals move through and appropriate urban environments.[46,47] Publicness therefore becomes less a stable property of space and more a relational condition shaped by spatial, institutional, and social dynamics. This understanding has important implications for the study of waterfront environments. If publicness is not an inherent attribute of space but a condition produced through multiple interacting factors, then its analysis cannot rely solely on the interpretation of architectural intentions or formal qualities. It requires examining how spatial configurations, governance structures, and patterns of use interact within specific urban contexts. For this reason, the investigation developed in this thesis does not attempt to quantify publicness as a measurable attribute. Rather, it approaches publicness as a critical question that must be explored through the observation of spatial conditions and urban dynamics. The objective is to identify the mechanisms through which public life is enabled, structured, or constrained within contemporary waterfront spaces. In order to address this question in a systematic way, the thesis first turns to the Via Roma waterfront as its primary analytical field. Its spatial configuration is read through three interpretative lenses: public/private relations, socio-spatial production, and movement-event sequences. This first step establishes the critical conditions of the Cagliari case, identifying where publicness is supported, where it remains fragile, and where the relation between accessibility, permanence, movement, and control becomes spatially ambiguous. The comparative field is introduced after this reading as a way to situate these mechanisms within a broader Mediterranean context. Starting from an initial group of fourteen waterfront redevelopment projects, the research progressively narrows the field toward a smaller set of reference cases whose spatial and institutional conditions help clarify how analogous waterfronts organize access, thresholds, programme, and public use. This comparison therefore strengthens the interpretation of Via Roma and prepares the transition toward the critical revision developed in the final chapter.

[45] Carola Hein, Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks (London: Routledge, 2011), 65–72.
[46] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 55–59, 96–99
[47] Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 141–146.

CHAPTER 2

MAPPING THE SHADES OF PUBLICNESS IN THE VIA ROMA WATERFRONT

2.0 METHODOLOGICAL PREMISE

How should the publicness of the Via Roma waterfront be interpreted? In the case of Cagliari, this question cannot be answered by treating the intervention as a neutral urban object whose meaning is exhausted by its visible form. The project is part of the broader redevelopment of Piazza Matteotti and of the central strip of Via Roma.[1] It is publicly presented as an operation involving the requalification of the Via Roma promenade, the intervention on the port front, and the reorganisation of Piazza Matteotti.[2] The official municipal framing describes the project as a green promenade for the waterfront: a linear public space intended to extend pedestrian space towards the sea, reorganise mobility, increase shade, and strengthen the relationship between the city and its maritime edge.[3] The same municipal source states that the intervention covers approximately 24,000 square metres and includes around 5,700 square metres of new green areas, more than 200 new trees, and two additional public-transport stops.[4]

These documents establish the empirical and methodological point of departure of the chapter. The municipal description is not treated here as a definition of the project's publicness, nor as a statement to be accepted or rejected in advance. It is considered as one body of evidence among others: it records the declared ambitions of the intervention and the terms through which Via Roma is represented as a space of reconnection, environmental improvement, pedestrian continuity, and renewed civic orientation towards the sea.[5] The analysis therefore proceeds from spatial and documentary evidence, reads that evidence through three complementary theoretical lenses, and only then returns to the project's declared ambitions as part of a wider critical interpretation.

The theoretical position adopted here is that publicness is not a stable property that can be inferred automatically from formal openness, legal status, visual accessibility, or pedestrian continuity. It must instead be interpreted as a relational socio-spatial condition, produced through the interaction between spatial configuration, institutional mediation, material support, and patterns of use. Madanipour allows the analysis to read publicness through public-private relations, accessibility, openness, boundaries, and control.[6] Lefebvre makes it possible to understand space as socially produced through the relation between conceived, perceived, and lived dimensions.[7] Tschumi shifts the reading towards movement, programme, action, sequence, and event, while avoiding a deterministic relation between form and use.[8] The chapter therefore does not ask simply whether the waterfront is public, but under what spatial, institutional, and social conditions different shades of publicness are produced.

If publicness is produced through relations, mediations, and practices, the waterfront cannot be read through appearance alone. It must be read through access, thresholds, spatial organisation, movement, appropriation, and the institutional and material arrangements that separate, connect, filter, or regulate different domains.

[1] Comune di Cagliari, Documento di indirizzo progettuale: Centro intermodale di scambio e riqualificazione di Piazza Matteotti e della fascia centrale della Via Roma (Cagliari: Comune di Cagliari, 2020), 1–5.
[2] Comune di Cagliari, "Presentazione del progetto per via Roma, il fronte del Porto e la piazza Matteotti," July 16, 2022, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/presentazione_del_progetto_per_via_roma_il_fronte_del_porto_e_la_piazza_matteotti?contentId=NVT113750.
[3] Comune di Cagliari, "Una promenade verde per il waterfront di Cagliari," July 19, 2022, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/una_promenade_verde_per_il_waterfront_di_cagliari.
[4] Comune di Cagliari, "Una promenade verde per il waterfront di Cagliari."
[5] Comune di Cagliari, Documento di indirizzo progettuale, 1–5.

[6] Ali Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 3–4.
[7] Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38–41.
[8] Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 3–5, 121–23.

Madanipour's discussion of boundary-setting is particularly useful because it shifts the analysis from the abstract image of openness to the concrete ways in which openness is spatially organised.[9] In Via Roma, where civic rhetoric, mobility infrastructure, and the port-city edge coexist within the same linear figure, the question is not only what is formally open, but how openness is framed, mediated, and controlled. Madanipour's account of public and private as gradated and partially overlapping conditions allows the waterfront to be approached as a field in which different degrees of openness, control, exposure, exclusion, and mediation are superimposed.[10]

This chapter addresses the problem through three operative lenses derived from the theoretical framework established in Chapter 1. These lenses are not scoring criteria and they are not external themes imposed on the case. They are instruments for reading different dimensions of the same socio-spatial condition. Each lens isolates a specific layer of the waterfront, but none is sufficient on its own.

The first lens is Madanipour's. It makes it possible to read Via Roma as a field of public-private relations in which openness, accessibility, and inclusion cannot be assumed to coincide. Building on this framework, the analysis treats access, agency, and interest as operational questions rather than as measurable criteria: who can physically enter a space, who regulates it, whose interests are supported by its organisation, and how apparent openness may remain structured by unequal forms of control and benefit.[11] This lens is therefore used to examine access, thresholds, regulated openness, and the persistent mediation between the urban front and the port edge.

The second lens is Lefebvre's. It addresses the production of space and prevents the public meaning of the waterfront from being derived from design intention alone. Lefebvre's triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces makes it possible to distinguish between what is conceived by planners and institutions, what is materially organised and routinised in practice, and what is lived, appropriated, or experienced.[12] This lens allows the chapter to treat project discourse as one component in the production of space, rather than as equivalent to urban reality. In the graphic layer, this theoretical frame is narrowed to the material conditions that support or weaken everyday shared permanence, rather than being translated into a complete mapping of the Lefebvrian triad.

The third lens is Tschumi's. It addresses the temporal and programmatic activation of space. Publicness does not unfold as a static condition, but through movement, sequence, programme, pause, and event. Tschumi refuses the reduction of architecture to autonomous form and insists that architecture cannot be separated from action, event, and programme.[13] His perspective also makes it possible to read the relation between bodies and space as reciprocal and unstable, rather than as a simple causal relation between

"MOVING ELEMENTS IN A CITY ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THE STATIONARY PHYSICAL PARTS."

-LYNCH

[9] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 55–57.
[10] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 58–59.
[11] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 96–99.
[12] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–41.
[13] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 3–5.

form and use.[14] This is particularly relevant for Via Roma, where longitudinal continuity, transversal crossings, pause devices, programmed areas, and possible events contribute to the way publicness is activated, dispersed, or constrained along the waterfront.

Taken together, these three lenses make it possible to read the Via Roma waterfront not as a transparent public realm, but as a socio-spatial condition whose publicness must be critically reconstructed. Madanipour clarifies how openness is mediated by boundaries, access regimes, and forms of control. Lefebvre clarifies how conceived intentions may diverge from spatial practice and lived experience, and how the material configuration of the promenade can support or weaken everyday shared permanence. Tschumi clarifies how movement, pause, sequence, programme, and event condition the activation of space. The chapter therefore does not ask whether Via Roma corresponds to an ideal model of successful public space, but where, how, and under what conditions publicness is enabled, constrained, negotiated, or reformulated.

This structure is translated into a set of analytical drawings. Each lens produces a separate graphic layer that can be read independently before being compared in the final synthesis. The Madanipour layer maps the spatial organisation of access, boundaries, and control. The Lefebvre layer maps the material support for everyday shared permanence. The Tschumi layer maps movement, sequence, interruptions, and pause devices. These layers do not function as autonomous proofs, nor do they reduce the three authors to graphic taxonomies. They are interpretative devices used to organise spatial evidence and to make visible the specific dimension of publicness foregrounded by each lens.

The final synthetic drawing is constructed through the comparison and superimposition of the three lens-based layers. Its purpose is not to produce a numerical score, nor to transform publicness into a measurable attribute. Rather, the synthesis tests how the conditions identified by the three lenses intersect, reinforce one another, or enter into tension. In this sense, the final drawing does not simply merge the three analyses into a single graphic result. It makes visible recurrent relations between access, permanence, and movement, while the written synthesis discusses the more specific ambiguities that cannot be fully resolved through graphic overlap alone.

This also means that the final drawing does not exhaust the cross-lens synthesis. A space may be accessible but weak in permanence; another may be spatially conditioned in terms of movement but stronger as a support for staying; another may sustain programme or shared use while remaining delimited by fences, gates, or clear thresholds. These inconsistencies are not methodological failures. They are part of the critical value of the cross-lens reading. The synthesis therefore does not eliminate the autonomy of the three lenses; it uses their partial misalignments to identify the points where the

[14] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 121–23.

“RETAKING PUBLIC SPACE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE”

-SMITH AND LOW

project becomes most ambiguous, and where Chapter 4 can develop a more precise critical revision.
The diagrams are supported by spatial and documentary evidence. Official documents establish declared intentions, institutional frameworks, and project parameters. Project sections make spatial configurations verifiable. The official cross-section drawings for Via Roma, for instance, identify the intervention area, the carriageway limits, the linear park, the sidewalk, and public-transport stops.[15] Material plans make it possible to verify the distribution of pavements, green areas, urban furniture, kiosks, totems, and transport-related elements.[16] Tree-layout drawings make the proposed planting strategy verifiable rather than merely rhetorical.[17] Post-opening sources, where used in the following sections, are treated only as partial and dated evidence of use, friction, maintenance, or public reception. Interpretative drawings are used as analytical tools that organise spatial evidence; they do not constitute autonomous proof without textual argument.
Within the methodological structure, ambiguity is not treated as a weakness to be eliminated. Where evidence supports a factual statement, the chapter presents it as such. Where the analysis derives from plans, sections, or visual material, it is treated as spatial observation. Where the argument connects different sources in order to explain a condition, it is presented as grounded interpretation. Where available evidence remains insufficient, the claim remains provisional.

This approach is necessary because the publicness of Via Roma is not a simple condition that can be confirmed once and for all. It emerges through the relation between declared openness, designed configuration, regulatory mediation, and actual or documented practices of use. The methodological premise also defines the limits of the chapter. The analysis developed here interprets how the Via Roma waterfront operates as a public space under concrete spatial and institutional conditions, preparing the later transition toward comparison and critical revision. It identifies the mechanisms that support public life, the mechanisms that constrain it, and the contradictions that emerge when spatial evidence, practices of use, and project discourse are read together. In this sense, the chapter does not ask whether Via Roma simply succeeds or fails as public space. It asks what kind of publicness it produces, where that publicness becomes effective, and where it remains conditioned, partial, or unresolved.

[15] Comune di Cagliari, 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[16] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[17] Comune di Cagliari, 09 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Nuove alberature, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

2.1 READING THE WATERFRONT THROUGH MADANIPOUR

What does it actually mean to say that Via Roma has been “given back” to the city? Does the project produce a continuous public waterfront, or does it reorganise access to the seafront through a more elaborate system of thresholds, barriers, and controlled openings? Read through Ali Madanipour, these questions define the analytical layer of this section: Access, Boundaries and Control. In Madanipour’s account, public and private are not a simple legal opposition, nor a stable distinction between two clearly separated realms. Their relation is one of the central ways in which urban space and social life are organised.[18] He also distinguishes public space from the broader public sphere, making it necessary to ask not only whether a place is formally open, but what kinds of public relations, encounters, controls, and exclusions it actually supports.[19]

In Via Roma, this distinction is particularly relevant because the Cagliari intervention does not operate on a neutral urban edge. It acts on a city-port interface, that is, on a boundary already charged with spatial, infrastructural, operational, and symbolic distinctions. The official project documentation frames the intervention as part of the requalification of Piazza Matteotti and of the central strip of Via Roma.[20] The municipal framing presents the project as a green promenade intended to reconnect the city with the sea through landscape enhancement, pedestrian continuity, and a reorganisation of mobility.[21] Yet Madanipour’s framework immediately complicates that image. If publicness depends on how boundaries are established, crossed, and governed, then visual openness cannot be taken as proof of full publicness.[22] A space may appear accessible, generous, or visually continuous while remaining shaped by the way movement is organised, thresholds are positioned, and adjacent powers continue to structure its edges. Within this lens, publicness is not a binary condition. It emerges through degrees of accessibility, shades of control, and forms of overlap between public and private realms.[23] Boundaries are therefore not merely devices of separation. They are also sites of contact, mediation, and negotiation.[24] The question becomes more precise: has the project dissolved the old city-port threshold, or has it transformed it into a more permeable but still structured condition? This question is the hinge of the section. The official project sections make it spatially testable. The cross-section at Largo Carlo Felice does not show a single, undivided civic plane extending seamlessly from the city to the waterfront. It shows a lateral sequence of differentiated bands explicitly identified as Parco lineare di Via Roma, Carreggiata, and Marciapiede.[25] Read together with the analytical section drawing prepared for this research, that official section clarifies something that the project image tends to soften: the waterfront is not organised as one continuous public ground, but as a structured transversal system in which the most publicly legible band remains separated from the built urban edge by a persistent infrastructural strip.[26]

[18] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 3–4.
[19] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 4.
[20] Comune di Cagliari, Documento di indirizzo progettuale, 1–5.
[21] Comune di Cagliari, “Una promenade verde per il waterfront di Cagliari.”

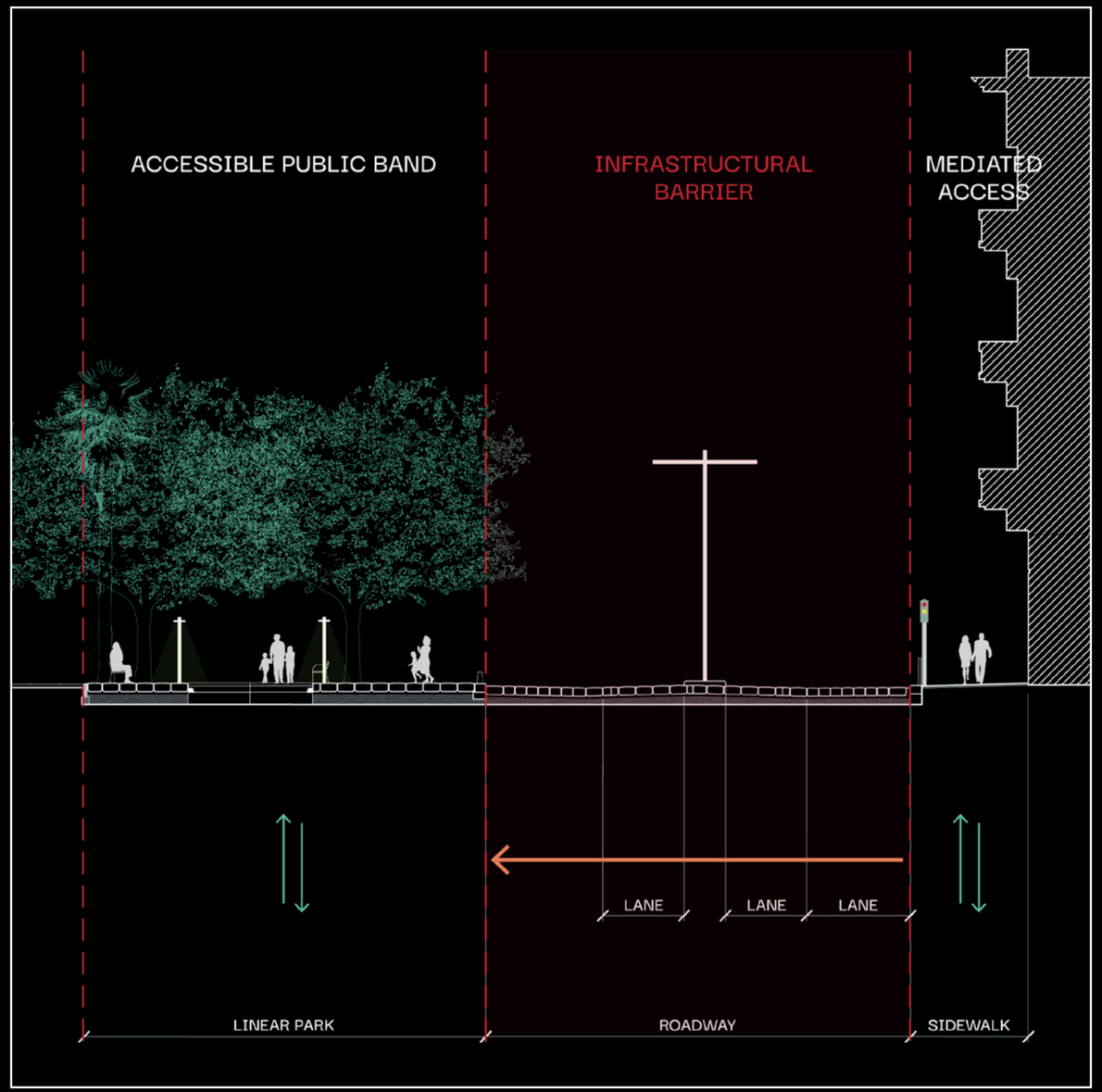
[22] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 55–59.
[23] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 58–59.
[24] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 55–59.
[25] Comune di Cagliari, 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, section “Largo Carlo Felice,” n.p.
[26] Author’s analytical section drawing, “Via Roma Waterfront: Transversal Mediation at Largo Carlo Felice,” based on Comune di Cagliari, 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, section “Largo Carlo Felice,” n.p.

This does not mean that access is denied. It means that access is mediated. On the seaward side, the linear park is widened and materially prepared for pedestrian movement and forms of stay through differentiated pavements, green areas, furnishings, and transport-related elements.[27] On the city side, the sidewalk remains connected to the existing portico frontage and to ordinary urban routines, but the relation between this frontage and the new promenade continues to be filtered by the roadway and by the organisation of crossing points.[28] The city and the sea are therefore not simply reconnected as an uninterrupted civic plane. They are brought into a new relation through a threshold that remains spatially active.

The interpretive plan prepared for this section extends that reading from the selected section to the entire axis of Via Roma. Rather than mapping use intensity or social behaviour, the drawing identifies the spatial devices through which access is opened, concentrated, delimited, or made gradual. Its categories are crossing points, enclosed areas, tram line, and accessibility gradient.[29] These are not evaluative scores and they do not measure publicness directly. They are operational distinctions derived from Madanipour's understanding of publicness as a gradated relation between openness, access, boundary, and control.[30]

The crossing points identify the moments where transversal movement between the urban frontage, the central promenade, and the port side becomes spatially possible and formally legible.

[27] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[28] Comune di Cagliari, 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, section "Largo Carlo Felice," n.p.
[29] Author's interpretive plan, "Access, Boundaries and Control," based on Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, 09 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Nuove alberature, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, and 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024; spatial interpretation by the author.
[30] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 55–59.



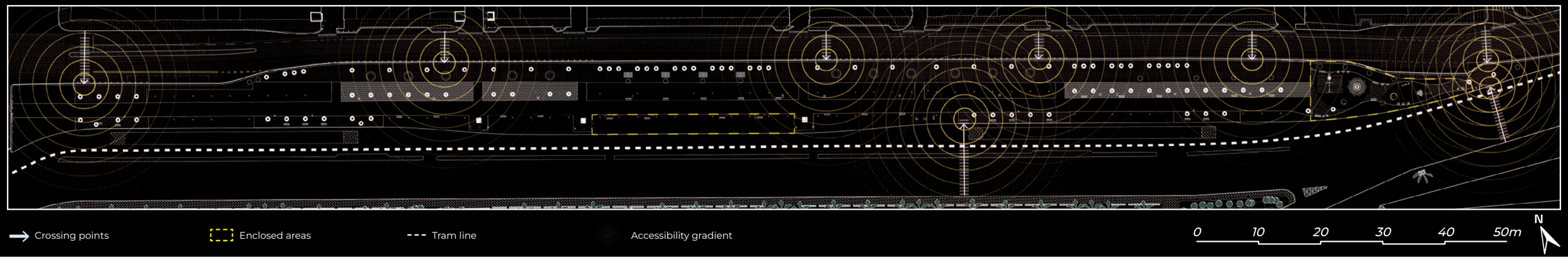
They are crucial because the publicness of the waterfront does not depend only on the existence of a pedestrian strip, but on the possibility of reaching it, crossing it, and relating it to adjacent urban domains. The accessibility gradient makes this condition visible as a field rather than as a simple line: access is strongest around recognised points of entry and crossing, then weakens as distance, infrastructure, or spatial mediation increase. The enclosed areas identify spaces where use may be public or collective, but access is clearly delimited by fences, gates, or thresholds. The tram line marks an infrastructural element that participates in the mediation of movement, reinforcing the fact that openness along Via Roma is crossed by mobility systems rather than existing as an uninterrupted civic surface.

The analytical value of this classification lies in making visible that accessibility along Via Roma is not distributed as a homogeneous field. The promenade may appear open as a continuous civic strip, yet its public availability is intensified around specific crossings, conditioned by mobility infrastructure, and locally delimited by enclosed programmed areas. In this sense, the plan does not claim to measure publicness. It shows how access is spatially composed.

Through Madanipour, the question is never simply whether a space is open, but how that openness is framed, mediated, and made operational. Madanipour's argument is not that a good urban environment abolishes boundaries. On the contrary, he suggests that the articulation of a flexible and elaborate boundary can enrich urbanism by mediating between public and private claims and by managing the risks of mutual encroachment.[31] Via Roma fits this model only partially. The project does not eliminate the dividing line between city and port, nor between pedestrian realm and infrastructural movement. It reformulates that line into a more presentable and more negotiable condition. The roadway and the mobility line are therefore not residual technical elements left behind by the redesign. They are active spatial devices that continue to regulate approach, crossing, and adjacency between the portico frontage, the central promenade, and the port side.

This reading becomes stronger when the spatial material is considered together with the broader city-port condition. The intervention increases civic visibility and pedestrian availability along the waterfront, but it does not dissolve the institutional threshold on which it is built. The municipal tourism portal locates the passenger terminal in the Via Roma area and explicitly distinguishes it from the port's sterile area.[32] The Sardinian Port Authority describes the security service for the Port of Cagliari as involving the guarding of access gates to the sterile area and the security control of passengers, vehicles, baggage, and goods.[33] The same port-security framework includes surveillance and patrol functions, including the use of CCTV systems.[34] This does not mean that the promenade itself is not public. It means that the seafront continues to be shaped by the coexistence of civic visibility

[31] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 209–11.
[32] Cagliari Turismo / Comune di Cagliari, "Port of Cagliari," https://cagliariturismo.comune.cagliari.it/en/port-cagliari.
[33] Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mare di Sardegna, "Bando di gara servizio di security nel porto di Cagliari," July 13, 2022, https://www.adspmaredisardegna.it/2022/07/13/bando-di-gara-servizio-di-security-nel-porto-di-cagliari/.
[34] Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mare di Sardegna, Capitolato speciale d'appalto per il servizio di presidio dei varchi di accesso all'area sterile, controllo di sicurezza dei passeggeri, dei veicoli, dei bagagli al seguito e della merce, con ausilio di sistemi TVCC e ronda nel porto di Cagliari (Cagliari: Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mare di Sardegna, 2022), n.p.



and operational control.
Building on Madanipour's public/private framework, the operational questions of access, agency, and interest make this condition more explicit.[35] Access concerns who can enter a space and what kinds of activities are available within it. Agency concerns who controls, manages, and regulates that space. Interest concerns who benefits from the way the space is structured and activated. Applied to Via Roma, these questions complicate any simplistic celebration of openness. Access is widened because the waterfront gains a more legible pedestrian strip. Agency remains distributed among municipal regulation, mobility infrastructure, and port-security conditions. Interest is not neutral, because the space is also shaped by tourist-cultural programming, event regulation, mobility management, and the redistribution of visibility along the urban section.
The concessionary framework is relevant within this same reading. If the section and the interpretive plan show that openness is spatially stratified, the municipal regulation of the passeggiata scoperta shows that it has also been institutionally filtered. The municipal service page presents the passeggiata scoperta as public land available only for short-term or time-limited use through a defined concession procedure.[36] Deliberation no. 95 establishes that proposed activities must be compatible with the specific urban context.[37] The same deliberation privileges tourist-cultural promotion and local productive activities as the prevalent vocation of admissible initiatives.[38] It also limits authorised activities to no more than seven consecutive days and requires alternation among proposing subjects.[39] Finally, it excludes the occupation or use of green areas by exhibition stands.[40] Deliberation no. 96 adds an economic mechanism to the same regime of controlled openness. It allows a reduction of the occupation fee for events on the passeggiata scoperta, but links this benefit to conditions of public interest.[41] It identifies openness to all and free access as one of the parameters through which public interest may be recognised.[42] At the same time, the deliberation explicitly states that, in the absence of adequate social and territorial oversight, the area could become attractive to social-order

[35] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 96–99.

[36] Comune di Cagliari, "Concessione 'Passeggiata Scoperta' via Roma," June 29, 2022, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/concessione_passeggiata_scoperta_via_roma_it_1?contentId=NVT112512.
[37] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 95/2022, "Indirizzi sull'utilizzo della passeggiata scoperta della Via Roma," June 21, 2022, 2–3, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/protected/112415/0/def/ref/SRV112404/.
[38] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 95/2022, 2–3.
[39] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 95/2022, 3.
[40] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 95/2022, 3.
[41] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 96/2022, "Valorizzazione della passeggiata scoperta di via Roma (corsia centrale ex parcheggi residenti) - Riduzione del canone patrimoniale di occupazione del suolo pubblico e di esposizione pubblicitaria sulle pubbliche affissioni e del canone mercatale per manifestazioni, eventi e attività," June 24, 2022, 2–3, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/protected/112416/0/def/ref/SRV112404/.
[42] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 96/2022, 2.

difficulties.[43] What emerges here is not the negation of publicness, but its curation. The promenade is open, yet selectively governable. It is public, yet under conditions. It is available, yet through a regime of controlled openness rather than unrestricted civic equivalence.

If the space is open but curated, how does that condition translate into actual use? The post-completion evidence is relevant, but it must be treated with caution. The available material does not amount to a systematic post-occupancy study, and it should therefore not be treated as conclusive evidence. Even so, the collected evidence shows that the publicness of Via Roma is neither fictitious nor fully stabilised. L'Unione Sarda describes the new Via Roma as frequented in the evening by young people, families, elderly users, residents, and tourists, while also reporting that the promenade is broadly appreciated despite traffic-related problems.[44] This prevents the argument from collapsing into an abstract critique detached from actual occupation.

At the same time, other sources document friction precisely where the section and the interpretive plan suggest it should occur: in crossing, approach, and environmental comfort. A report on pedestrian crossings describes long detours, protests, and the use of informal "ghost crossings" by pedestrians trying to shorten the route between the port side and the portico side.[45] These informal practices are not included in the Madanipour plan, which records formal crossing points and accessibility gradients. They indicate that formal accessibility and effective accessibility do not automatically coincide. Public access exists, but it is mediated by crossing regimes, waiting times, and the legibility of permitted passages. Another report documents the reactivation of the traffic light and pedestrian crossing in the middle of Via Roma on the seaward side, explicitly connecting it to the need to allow pedestrians to cross safely.[46] These reports do not prove, in any definitive behavioural sense, that the promenade fails. They indicate something more precise: public access exists, but it remains conditioned by the spatial and regulatory organisation of crossing.

A similar caution applies to comfort and maintenance. Casteddu Online reports the early perception of insufficient shade in parts of the new promenade during hot weather.[47] A later article documents the replacement of dried trees and the restoration of vandalised furniture in Via Roma and Piazza Matteotti.[48] These sources are not neutral scientific measurements of environmental performance, and they should not be treated as such. Yet they are relevant to the Madanipour reading because publicness depends not only on formal access, but on the practical conditions that make staying, crossing, and ordinary occupation possible. Maintenance, shade, safety, and legibility are not secondary amenities. Within this lens, they help explain how accessible space can become more or less effectively public depending on the conditions through which it is experienced and maintained. The same ambivalence appears in relation to the

[43] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 96/2022, 2.
[44] Mauro Madeddu, "Cagliari, la nuova via Roma convince residenti e turisti: 'Promossa al netto del traffico,'" L'Unione Sarda, August 12, 2025, https://www.unionesarda.it/news-sardegna/cagliari/cagliari-la-nuova-via-roma-convince-residenti-e-turisti-promossa-al-netto-del-traffico-a-ox45iwc.
[45] L'Unione Sarda, "Cagliari, via Roma: la beffa per i pedoni continua. Disagi e proteste," August 4, 2025, https://www.unionesarda.it/news-sardegna/cagliari-via-roma-la-beffa-per-i-pedoni-continua-disagi-e-proteste-sc-ntv5hk.
[46] Riccardo Spignesi, "Cagliari, riattivato il semaforo a metà di via Roma lato mare," L'Unione Sarda, August 11, 2025, https://www.unionesarda.it/news-sardegna/cagliari/cagliari-riattivato-il-semaforo-a-meta-di-via-roma-lato-mare-uujy5r58.
[47] Carolina Mocci, "Cagliari, il 'bosco verticale' di Boeri sotto il sole cocente: ombra cercasi in via Roma, con i turisti stremati dal caldo," Casteddu Online, May 4, 2025, https://www.castedduonline.it/cagliari-il-bosco-verticale-di-boeri-sotto-il-sole-cocente-ombra-cercasi-in-via-roma-con-i-turisti-stremati-dal-caldo/.
[48] Valeria Putzolu, "Cagliari, la nuova passeggiata di via Roma già pronta a rifarsi il trucco: ecco le nuove piante messe a dimora," Casteddu Online, February 25, 2026, https://www.castedduonline.it/cagliari-la-nuova-passeggiata-di-via-roma-gia-pronta-a-rifarsi-il-trucco-ecco-le-nuove-piante-messe-a-dimora/.

commercial edge. Local reporting from early 2026 records complaints from shopkeepers under the porticoes, who describe reduced takings and weakened commercial activity despite the visual improvement of the waterfront.[49] This evidence should not be used to claim a direct causal relation between the project and commercial decline. However, it does indicate a tension that is central to the Madanipour reading. The new promenade increases the visibility and attractiveness of the seafront band, but it may also redistribute pedestrian attention away from the older urban frontage. Publicness is therefore not only a matter of opening a new space. It also concerns how access, visibility, movement, and benefit are redistributed between adjacent urban domains. For this reason, Via Roma should not be read as a simple success story of reconnection. Through Madanipour, it is better understood as a field of stratified accessibility and mediated publicness. The intervention certainly enlarges pedestrian space, increases the civic visibility of the waterfront, and provides a more articulated public band along the seafront. At the same time, its publicness remains structured by mobility infrastructure, formal crossing points, accessibility gradients, enclosed areas, port-related thresholds, and institutional regimes of use, security, and programming. The result of this lens is therefore a clear analytical layer: Access, Boundaries and Control. Via Roma is accessible, but mediated; open, but structured by thresholds; civically legible, but still organised through gradients of access and control. This layer does not conclude the interpretation of Via Roma as a public space. It defines one specific dimension of that interpretation: the way access, boundaries, and control structure the public availability of the waterfront.

[49] Michela Meloni, “Cagliari, la nuova via Roma è da cartolina, ma i commercianti lanciano l’allarme: senza parcheggi e iniziative incassi dimezzati,” La Nuova Sardegna, February 17, 2026.

2.2 READING THE WATERFRONT THROUGH LEFEBVRE

If the previous section asked how the Cagliari waterfront is filtered through boundaries, access regimes, and institutional mediation, a Lefebvrian reading shifts the question elsewhere. The issue is no longer primarily whether Via Roma appears open, but what kind of space is actually being produced there. For Lefebvre, space is not a neutral container waiting to be filled by design, activity, or representation. Social space is produced through relations between knowledge, power, representation, material organisation, and everyday practice.[50] The waterfront must therefore be read through the unstable relation between spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces: in other words, between perceived, conceived, and lived space.[51] Lefebvre's own warning is important here: the triad loses analytical force if it is treated as an abstract model detached from concrete conditions.[52]

For this reason, the analytical drawing associated with this section does not attempt to map the whole Lefebvrian triad. Such an operation would risk turning conceived, perceived, and lived space into overly generic labels. Instead, the Lefebvrian layer isolates one operative and mappable dimension: Shared Permanence Potential. This is not a literal category in Lefebvre's terminology, but an interpretative category derived from his understanding of space as socially produced through material configurations, bodily practices, everyday use, and possible appropriation. The map therefore does not measure real sociability, nor does it treat urban furniture as automatic proof of use. It maps the degree to which the material configuration of the promenade supports or weakens the possibility of ordinary shared staying.

This reduction is methodological rather than theoretical. The Lefebvrian triad remains the conceptual framework of the section, while Shared Permanence Potential translates one spatially verifiable implication of that framework: the way material arrangements can mediate between conceived organisation, everyday spatial practice, and possible lived appropriation. It should therefore be read as an operative bridge between Lefebvre's theory of social space and the specific evidence available in Via Roma, not as a replacement for the broader triad. This operative narrowing also prevents the Lefebvrian layer from overlapping with the other readings. Unlike the Madanipour layer, it does not map access, boundaries, or control as its primary object. It reads furniture, surfaces, shade, tables, play areas, and other spatial devices as material supports that may enable different degrees of everyday shared permanence. As can be seen in the photographic material associated with this section, the same linear waterfront contains spaces dominated by longitudinal movement, seating conditions that support brief pause, and more structured devices that can host small-group occupation.[53] A ping-pong table, for example, is not evidence that public life necessarily occurs around it. It is a spatial device that may support reciprocal use, shared attention, and small-group occupation. Similarly, a play-

Fig.1) Central promenade, characterized by predominantly longitudinal movement and limited material support for extended staying.

[50] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 26–30
[51] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–41.
[52] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 39–40.

[53] Author's photographic documentation and project observation, 2025–2026.

Fig.2) Play area in use, with ground-based occupation complementing designed equipment.

ground is not mapped simply as an activity node, but as a condition that can require simultaneous presence, care, waiting, observation, and interaction.
This distinction is essential because Via Roma is not only a built project. It is also a projected image, a municipal programme, a mobility operation, a port-city interface, a landscape narrative, and an everyday route that is walked, crossed, waited through, occupied, photographed, criticised, and adjusted. A Lefebvrian interpretation therefore asks how those intentions enter into the production of space, how they are translated into material arrangements, and how they are then confirmed, displaced, or contradicted by spatial practices and lived experience.
Read from this angle, Via Roma emerges first as a strongly conceived space, but not as a single or internally coherent one. Municipal discourse constructs the waterfront as a promenade verde, a linear botanical garden, a continuous pedestrian and shaded public space, and a renewed relation between the city, the sea, Piazza Matteotti, and the intermodal node.[54] Another municipal presentation frames the project as an intervention involving the Via Roma promenade, the port front, and Piazza Matteotti.[55] MIC-HUB presents the project through the language of sustainable mobility, public-space reconnection, and the transformation of the seafront into a new pedestrian and landscaped spine.[56] Stefano Boeri Architetti describes the intervention as a redevelopment of the Cagliari waterfront from Via Roma to Piazza Matteotti, centred on the construction of a green promenade.[57] These representations matter because they actively produce expectations about what kind of public space Via Roma should become.
Yet this conceived space is already layered before everyday occupation begins. The technical integration drawings of 2024 show a more discretised and infrastructurally hybrid scheme than the smooth image of a continuous green waterfront might suggest. The official cross-section drawings identify the coexistence of the linear park, roadway, sidewalk, carriageway limits, and public-transport stops.[58] The furniture plan documents a differentiated system of spatial supports, including benches, circular seating, picnic tables, ping-pong tables, playground equipment, public-transport shelters, fountains, bike racks, kiosks, totems, and other urban furniture.[59] The material plan documents a differentiated system of pavements, green areas, calcestre, anti-trauma surfaces, granite paving, reused stone paving, and architectural concrete.[60] The tree-layout plan documents the intended planting structure and species distribution, turning the green narrative into a verifiable technical arrangement rather than a purely rhetorical promise.[61] Publicness is therefore not produced directly from the concept image. It is produced through the translation of that image into a more complex spatial and material field.
The Lefebvrian graphic layer makes this translation spatially legible through three degrees of

[54] Comune di Cagliari, “Una promenade verde per il waterfront di Cagliari.”
[55] Comune di Cagliari, “Presentazione del progetto per via Roma, il fronte del Porto e la piazza Matteotti.”
[56] MIC-HUB, “A Green Promenade for Cagliari’s Waterfront,” https://www.mic-hub.com/a-green-promenade-for-cagliaris-waterfront/.

[57] Stefano Boeri Architetti, “Una Promenade Verde | Lungomare di Cagliari,” n.d., https://www.stefanoboeriarchitetti.net/project/una-promenade-verde-per-il-lungomare-di-cagliari/
[58] Comune di Cagliari, 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[59] Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[60] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[61] Comune di Cagliari, 09 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Nuove alberature, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

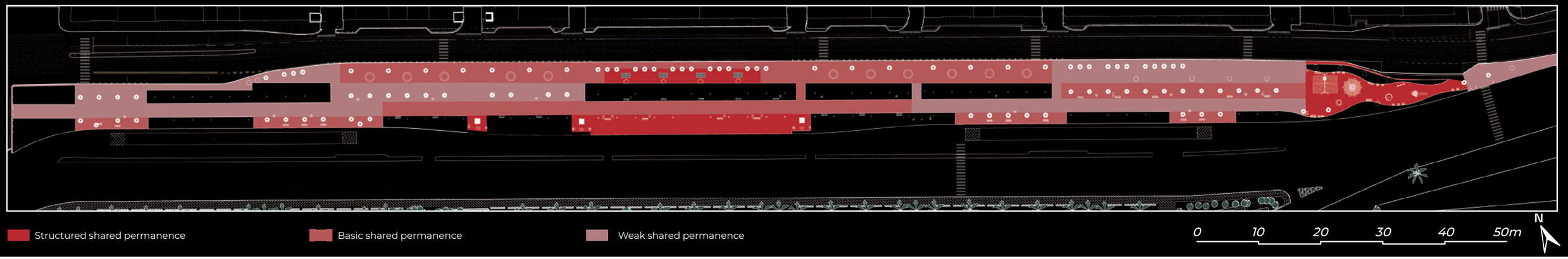
Fig.3) Circular seating around trees, configured to support shared sitting and observed informal eating practices.

Shared Permanence Potential: weak shared permanence, basic shared permanence, and structured shared permanence. These categories do not classify social behaviour. They classify the degree to which the material configuration of the promenade supports ordinary forms of shared staying. Weak shared permanence identifies areas where staying remains possible but marginal, fragile, or poorly supported by dedicated devices. Basic shared permanence refers to areas where ordinary pause is possible through limited spatial support, such as benches, shaded edges, or linear seating conditions. Structured shared permanence identifies configurations such as tables, picnic tables, ping-pong tables, playgrounds, enclosed programmed areas, circular seating, or aggregated seating devices, where the spatial arrangement can support small-group occupation, shared use, care, waiting, conversation, or informal appropriation.[62]
As can be seen in the photographic documentation, these devices do not support permanence in the same way: some stabilise collective occupation, while others only allow lighter and more temporary forms of pause.[63]
Nor is this conceived space merely visual. It is also administratively scripted. Municipal deliberation no. 95 regulates the use of the passeggiata scoperta, establishing compatibility with the urban context, limits on duration, alternation among applicants, and restrictions on the occupation of green areas.[64] Municipal deliberation no. 96 introduces a reduction of the occupation fee for events and activities, but links this benefit to conditions of public interest, including openness and free access.[65] These documents are not the central object of the Lefebvrian map, since the graphic layer focuses on material support for shared permanence. They remain relevant because they show that the everyday production of Via Roma is not generated by material design alone, but also by permitted uses, temporary activities, maintenance obligations, and institutional expectations.
This point is important because Lefebvre does not allow the analysis to stop at the level of representation. Representations of space may dominate the language of planners, technicians, and institutions, but they do not exhaust social space.[66] The question is what happens when the spatial code of the project meets everyday routines. The Municipality records the reopening of the first tract between Piazza Ingrao and Via Dei Mille on 31 January 2025, including the new promenade and the associated traffic arrangements.[67] It later records the completion of works and the reopening of Via Roma to traffic and pedestrians from 1 August 2025.[68] These facts establish the operational frame within which use begins. But the Lefebvrian question is not limited to circulation. It concerns how movement can turn into staying, and under what material conditions staying can become shared.
The strongest evidence of friction concerns transversal movement. A local report from August 2025 describes pedestrian detours, repeated traffic-light waits, informal shortcuts, and the difficulty of reaching the porticoes from the port

[62] Author's analytical drawing, "Shared Permanence Potential," based on project documentation and spatial interpretation.
[63] Author's photographic documentation and project observation, 2025–2026.
[64] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 95/2022, "Indirizzi sull'utilizzo della passeggiata scoperta della Via Roma," June 21, 2022, 2–3.

Fig.4) Bench occupation along Via Roma, showing extended use for rest and informal reclining.

[65] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 96/2022, 2–3.
[66] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–39.
[67] Comune di Cagliari, "Riaperto da venerdì 31 gennaio 2025 il primo tratto della Via Roma," January 31, 2025, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/riaperto_da_venerdi_31_gennaio_2025_il_primo_tratto_della_via_roma?contentId=NVT210824.
[68] Comune di Cagliari, "Terminati i lavori di via Roma," August 1, 2025, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/terminati_i_lavori_di_via_roma?contentId=NVT224801.



side despite the short physical distance between them.[69] A later report documents the reactivation of the traffic light and pedestrian crossing in the middle of Via Roma on the seaward side, after it had been inactive during the works.[70] In Lefebvrian terms, this is where conceived reconnection meets spatial practice. The project may represent the waterfront as a continuous civic field, but everyday movement reveals a more fragmented reality in which pedestrians negotiate traffic systems, signals, residual barriers, and informal desire lines. This matters for Shared Permanence Potential because interrupted access and uncomfortable crossing conditions influence the possibility of reaching, using, and remaining within the spaces that the promenade provides.

This does not mean that Via Roma fails to produce public life. The available evidence also shows that the space has begun to function as a destination and not only as a corridor. Casteddu Online reported heavy Sunday attendance in February 2025, with citizens visiting the new promenade out of curiosity and children using the newly opened play areas.[71] L'Unione Sarda reported children using the playground in the central strip shortly after the first reopening.[72] Later, L'Unione Sarda described the completed Via Roma as used by residents and tourists, including young people, families, and elderly users, while also noting persistent traffic-related problems.[73] These traces are not systematic ethnographic data and must not be inflated into a complete behavioural study. Still, they show that the project does generate forms of occupation. The question is how that occupation relates to the material and representational order that has been produced.

The answer appears ambivalent. On the one hand, the promenade supports practices that align with the project's conceived image: walking, pausing, family use, visual enjoyment, and renewed attention to the seafront. On the other hand, the available use-related evidence also shows that occupation depends on conditions that the project image tends to simplify. Comfort is one of them. In May 2025, Casteddu Online reported complaints about insufficient shade in parts of the promenade during hot weather, explicitly contrasting the green promise

[69] L'Unione Sarda, "Cagliari, via Roma: la beffa per i pedoni continua. Disagi e proteste," August 4, 2025.
[70] Spignesi, "Cagliari, riattivato il semaforo a metà di via Roma lato mare."
[71] Jacopo Norfo, "Cagliari, boom della nuova passeggiata di via Roma: centinaia di cagliaritani in fila per riscoprirla," Casteddu Online, February 9, 2025, https://www.casteddu online.it/cagliari-boom-della-nuova-passeggiata-di-via-roma-centinaia-di-cagliaritani-in-fila-per-riscoprirla/.

[72] L'Unione Sarda, "Cagliari, i bambini prendono d'assalto il parco giochi sulla strada in via Roma," February 16, 2025, https://www.unionesarda.it/news-sardegna/cagliari/cagliari-i-bambini-prendono-dassalto-il-parco-giochi-sulla-strada-in-via-roma-i58c9s8o.
[73] Madeddu, "Cagliari, la nuova via Roma convince residenti e turisti."

Fig.5) Picnic tables occupied by small groups, configured to support collective use and observed informal gathering.

of the project with the experience of users under the sun.[74] Maintenance is another. In February 2026, the same outlet reported the replacement of dried trees and the restoration of furniture damaged by vandalism along the waterfront and Piazza Matteotti.[75] These reports do not invalidate the project's green narrative by themselves. They show that this narrative is materially fragile. Shade, planting, furniture, and care are not decorative supplements to publicness. They are part of the practical conditions through which space becomes usable, habitable, and socially sustained.

This is where representational space becomes relevant. Lived space is not simply the spontaneous use of what has been designed. For Lefebvre, representational spaces are directly lived through images, symbols, bodily experience, and appropriation.[76] In Via Roma, the emerging lived dimension does not simply repeat the official representation of a green civic promenade. It translates it into ordinary practices: walking after reopening, testing the playground, waiting at crossings, seeking shade, gathering around furniture, reacting to maintenance failures, and using the waterfront as a newly recognisable place in the city. As can be seen in the photographic documentation, permanence also appears in ordinary and sometimes opportunistic forms: circular benches may support shared sitting, linear benches may support extended rest, picnic tables may gather small groups, and bollards near waiting areas may be adapted as informal seats.[77] Some practices also displace the intended use of the furniture. Local reporting has described benches used as beds and ping-pong tables used as seats or improvised resting surfaces.[78] These observations must be treated carefully. They do not allow general conclusions about stable patterns of occupation, but they show that material supports for permanence can be appropriated in ways not anticipated by the project's civic image.

The project certainly produces a new civic visibility and a renewed capacity for occupation along the waterfront, introducing a spatial figure through which the seafront can be walked, seen, used, and socially recognised in ways that were less available in the previous traffic-dominated condition. Yet this publicness remains unstable because the conceived space of reconnection is only partially aligned with spatial practice and lived experience. The waterfront is represented as continuous, but practiced through crossings, waits, detours, and adjustments. It is represented as green and shaded, but lived through the delayed effectiveness of planting and the fragility of maintenance. It is presented as public, but reproduced through regulation, upkeep, and operational control.[79]

The central conclusion of this section is therefore not that Via Roma's publicness is false. The evidence suggests something more complex: Via Roma produces a public space whose meaning is still being assembled. Its publicness emerges from the tension between project discourse, material configuration, governance, maintenance, and everyday practice. The Shared

Fig.6) Bus-stop space, where bollards are observed as informal seating during waiting.

[74] Mocci, "Cagliari, il 'bosco verticale' di Boeri sotto il sole cocente."
[75] Putzolu, "Cagliari, la nuova passeggiata di via Roma già pronta a rifarsi il trucco."
[76] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 39.
[77] Author's photographic documentation and project observation, 2025–2026.
[78] Casteddu Online, "Via Roma, panchine trasformate in letti e tavoli da ping pong usati come sedute: 'Così Cagliari si evolve,'" September 9, 2025, https://www.casteddu online.it/via-roma-panchine-trasformate-in-letti-e-tavoli-da-ping-pong-usati-come-sedute-cosi-cagliari-si-evolve/.
[79] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 46–49.

Permanence Potential layer makes this tension visible in spatial terms. It shows that the promenade does not support shared staying evenly along its entire length. Some areas provide only basic support for ordinary pause; others offer more structured conditions for shared permanence, small-group occupation, care, play, or informal appropriation. Through Lefebvre, the waterfront cannot be read as the direct realisation of a concept image. It must be read as a socially produced space in which representation, use, and experience coincide only partially. This partial coincidence is precisely what makes the case critical. Via Roma does not simply reconnect the city to the sea. It stages, organises, and exposes the difficulty of producing public urban space at the contemporary Mediterranean waterfront.

“ARCHITECTURE IMPLIES A CONSTANT REDISCOVERY OF CONSTANT HUMAN QUALITIES TRANSLATED INTO SPACE.”

-SMITHSON / TEAM 10

2.3 READING THE WATERFRONT THROUGH TSCHUMI

Read through Bernard Tschumi, Via Roma should not be interpreted simply as an opened waterfront, but as a spatial sequence whose public significance depends on how it relates space to movement, interruption, pause, and localized forms of use. Tschumi's relevance lies precisely in refusing the reduction of architecture to autonomous form: architecture, in his terms, cannot be separated from programme, action, and event.[80] At the same time, his work rejects a deterministic relation between form and use. Space does not simply cause behaviour, and programme does not automatically produce public life.[81] What architecture can do, instead, is construct spatial conditions through which bodies, movements, pauses, and temporary occupations may intersect.[82]

This lens is particularly useful for Via Roma because the intervention was officially conceived not as a single bounded urban room, but as the redefinition of an axis. In the executive approval of November 2022, the Municipality describes the project as an operation intended to redefine, reinterpret, and redesign the layout of the Via Roma axis, including the central strip between Piazza Matteotti and Piazza Amendola, through restoration, landscape design, environmental upgrading, and transport reorganisation.[83] A parallel municipal presentation describes the intervention as a green promenade and a linear botanical garden intended to restore the relation between the city and the sea through a continuous public strip.[84] Via Roma is therefore conceived less as a civic room than as an urban sequence: a longitudinal field in which movement, pause, crossings, and localized spatial episodes reorganise the public experience of the waterfront.

For Tschumi, this distinction matters because architectural meaning does not reside in form alone. It emerges from the relation between spaces, movements, and actions.[85] In Architecture and Disjunction, Tschumi insists that architecture is not simply a matter of form or style, and that the movement of bodies, actions, and events belongs to the social and political dimension of architecture.[86] Yet this relation is neither stable nor causal. The fact that a promenade is drawn as continuous does not mean that public life will unfold continuously. The fact that benches, playgrounds, tables, or planted areas are inserted does not mean that a stable programme of events is produced. The task of the analysis is therefore more precise: to identify how the spatial organisation of Via Roma structures movement, pause, interruption, and localized occupation along the promenade.

The official project documents support this reading because they do not represent the waterfront as one homogeneous field. The executive package is not organised around one undifferentiated representation of the waterfront, but through quadrants, thematic planimetries, dedicated sections, a longitudinal profile, and specific zooms for Via Roma.[87] This documentary structure is already significant. It indicates that the project was conceived through successive portions and localised episodes rather

[80] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 3–5.
[81] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 121–23.
[82] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 141–43.
[83] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 252/2022, "Piano Sviluppo e Coesione della Città Metropolitana di Cagliari - Centro intermodale di scambio e riqualificazione della Piazza Matteotti e della fascia centrale della Via Roma - CUP G23H20000040006 - Approvazione del progetto esecutivo," November 25, 2022.
[84] Comune di Cagliari, "Una promenade verde per il waterfront di Cagliari."

[85] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 141–43.
[86] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 3–5.
[87] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, 09 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Nuove alberature, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, and 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_ Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

“WHAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE MOST, IT WOULD APPEAR, IS OTHER PEOPLE.”

-WHYTE

than through a single continuous surface. The analytical base-plan and zoom diagram prepared for this research makes this structure legible by isolating four notable points along the sequence: the beginning of the promenade, the dog area, the ping-pong area, and the playground.[88] These zooms are not treated here as autonomous proof of use, nor as evidence of stable event programming. They are used as spatial observations derived from project material, through which the internal differentiation of the promenade can be interpreted.

The second analytical diagram developed for this section translates that internal differentiation into three spatial conditions: continuous movement, conditioned movement, and non-walkable areas, while seating elements are marked as punctual pause devices.[89] These are not functional categories and they do not record actual behaviour. They are interpretative conditions derived from Tschumi’s understanding of architecture as the relation between space, movement, programme, and action. Continuous movement identifies the central longitudinal band where pedestrian movement can unfold with the least spatial interference. Its classification depends on the relative absence of furniture, planted elements, or fixed devices within the main walking line. Conditioned movement identifies walkable surfaces where movement remains possible but is spatially negotiated through benches, circular seating, tables, play equipment, planting, or other elements that slow, redirect, fragment, or locally thicken the sequence. Non-walkable areas identify planted, grassed, or otherwise unavailable surfaces that interrupt ordinary pedestrian movement and operate as visual, ecological, or spatial pauses rather than as walkable ground.

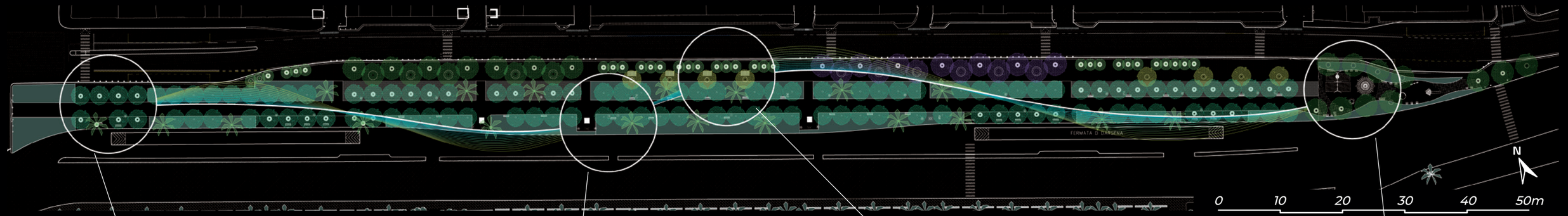
This distinction is central to the diagram because it prevents the Tschumi layer from repeating the Madanipour layer under another name. In the Madanipour reading, furniture and planting can appear as filters because they mediate access and openness. In the Lefebvrian reading, the same elements can appear as supports for shared permanence because they stabilise possible staying. In the Tschumi reading, they are interpreted according to their effect on the sequence of bodily movement. A circular bench, for example, is not mapped here primarily because it supports social co-presence, but because it modifies the trajectory: it introduces a local episode around which movement can slow, turn, pause, or become concentrated. A ping-pong table is not treated as proof that an event occurs; it is read as a fixed device that modifies the linear sequence and introduces the possibility of temporary occupation within it.

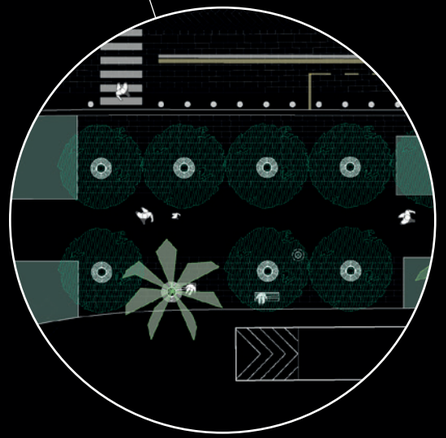
The central walking band can therefore be interpreted as the clearest instance of continuous movement. It functions as the main longitudinal script of the promenade. In the project drawings, this reading is supported by the organisation of the central strip, where the main walking surface is kept relatively free while seating devices, planted areas, and programmed elements tend to occupy lateral or adjacent portions.[90] In Tschu-

[88] Author’s analytical base-plan and zoom diagram, based on Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, Integrazione progettuale, February 2024; Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, Integrazione progettuale, February 2024; and spatial interpretation by the author.

[89] Author’s analytical drawing, “Movement, Sequence and Pause Devices,” based on Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, Integrazione progettuale, February 2024; Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, Integrazione progettuale, February 2024; and spatial interpretation by the author.

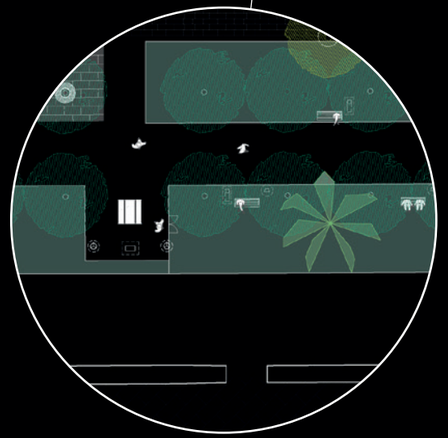
[90] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.





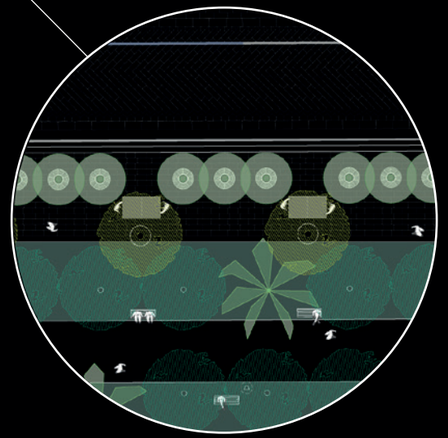
1. BEGINNING OF THE PROMENADE

This point marks the beginning of the promenade and, with it, the beginning of the sequence of uses. Here the strip is read primarily as a longitudinal public trajectory, where movement establishes the initial spatial condition.



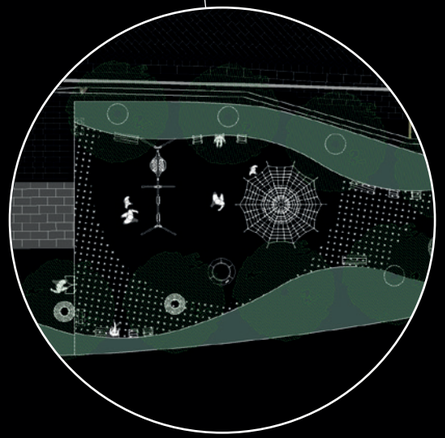
2. DOG AREA

The dog area marks a first localized articulation within the linear strip. Its enclosure introduces a bounded condition of occupation that punctuates, rather than dissolves, the continuity of the promenade.



3. PING-PONG AREA

The ping-pong area identifies a nodal point where the promenade shifts from passage to possible reciprocal activity. It is a localized interruption of the linear strip, where use becomes more explicitly concentrated without breaking continuity altogether.



4. PLAYGROUND + FITNESS

The playground marks the strongest programmed point of the sequence, but also its most evident interruption. Because the area is fenced, it acts less as an open extension of the promenade than as a bounded programmed enclave that marks a strong interruption within its continuous progression.

mi's terms, this is not simply a path. It is the spatial support of a sequence. It allows the promenade to be experienced as a continuous movement along the waterfront, connecting successive portions of the intervention and giving the project its basic temporal structure. Conditioned movement modifies the linear sequence without cancelling it. It occurs where walkable ground remains available, but the body no longer moves through a neutral corridor. Furniture, benches, circular seating, tables, dog-area edges, playground equipment, and planted elements introduce local conditions that require negotiation. They may slow the pedestrian, shift the walking line, create local concentrations, or produce moments where movement becomes entangled with pause and temporary occupation. The usefulness of the category lies precisely here: it does not classify these areas as inaccessible. It identifies them as spaces where movement is possible but no longer purely linear. The sequence becomes thicker, less neutral, and more exposed to localized spatial conditions.

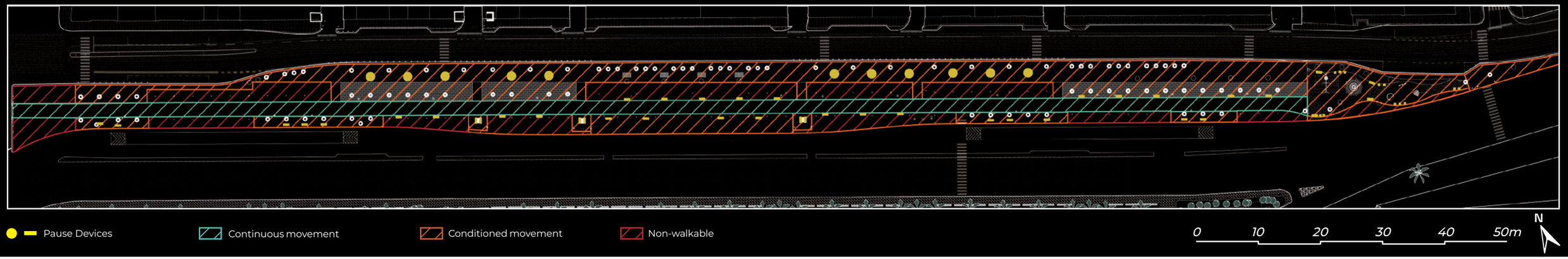
The non-walkable category identifies a third spatial condition. It does not imply that every planted surface is physically impossible to cross. Rather, it identifies areas that are not designed as ordinary pedestrian trajectories: planted bands, grassed areas, denser vegetation, or surfaces whose role is ecological, visual, or separating rather than directly walkable.[91] For the Tschumi reading, planted and unavailable surfaces matter because they interrupt the sequence and contribute to its rhythm. They prevent the promenade from becoming a fully open and indifferent field. The waterfront is instead organised through an alternation of movement, lateral conditioning, pause, and interruption.

The official furniture and material plans make these categories verifiable. The furniture plan documents the distribution of benches, circular seating, tables, dog-area elements, ping-pong tables, playground equipment, fountains, bike racks, kiosks, totems, and transport-related devices.[92] The material plan identifies the alternation of reused stone paving, calcestre, anti-trauma surfaces, architectural concrete, granite paving, and green areas.[93] The tree-layout plan further clarifies the planting structure and species distribution along the central strip.[94] These documents do not prove how users behave, but they allow the analysis to justify why certain areas are classified as continuous, conditioned, or non-walkable. The criterion is spatial: the classification depends on the presence, absence, or density of devices that either leave movement relatively free, condition it, or interrupt it.

The role of localized programmed elements can therefore be defined more precisely. Dog areas, ping-pong tables, playgrounds, and table clusters are not treated as evidence of stable event programming. They are read as spatial devices that alter the relation between movement, pause, and action. Tschumi's concept of event remains useful here because it does not require a monumental or exceptional occurrence. It

[91] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

[92] Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[93] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[94] Comune di Cagliari, 09 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Nuove alberature, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.



indicates the encounter between space, action, and programme.[95] In the case of Via Roma, however, the drawing does not map events as such. It maps the spatial conditions through which movement can be slowed, redirected, interrupted, or temporarily suspended by pause devices and localized programmed elements. The dog area is a clear example. Spatially, it interrupts the neutral continuity of the promenade through enclosure, edge, and specific use. It is not simply a place to pass through. It creates a local condition in which movement slows or stops, bodies may gather around a defined function, and the linear sequence acquires a punctual episode. The ping-pong tables operate differently. They remain small-scale devices, but they introduce a shared activity that may involve players, spectators, or informal appropriation. The playground introduces another condition, linking play, supervision, waiting, and movement around equipment. None of these devices automatically produces public life. Yet each modifies the promenade's script and makes the relation between movement, pause, and localized action more explicit.

Tschumi's refusal of determinism becomes important at this point. If the analysis simply claimed that the presence of programme equals publicness, it would contradict the theoretical basis of the section. Tschumi's work is useful precisely because it separates programme from predictable use.[96] Architecture may construct conditions for events, but it cannot ensure that those events will occur. Via Roma therefore does not make event automatic, nor does the diagram claim to record a stable calendar of activities. It organises spatial situations in which movement, pause, fixed devices, and temporary occupation can intersect. The distinction is methodologically essential. The diagram maps spatial relations between movement, interruption, and pause devices; it does not record behavioural outcomes.
Read together, the mapped conditions define Via Roma as a differentiated spatial sequence rather than as a continuous promenade in the generic sense. The diagram does not claim that the strip is fragmented into autonomous zones, nor does it imply a rigid functional division. On

[95] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 141–43.

[96] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 3–5.

the contrary, its analytical value lies precisely in showing that the sequence is continuous but internally uneven. Continuous movement remains the structural background condition. Conditioned movement modifies its rhythm along the vegetated, furnished, and equipped portions of the strip. Non-walkable areas modulate direct passage and introduce interruptions that shape the promenade's spatial tempo. The base plan, the zooms, and the sequence diagram operate as complementary tools: the base plan locates the sequence, the zooms isolate notable nodes, and the diagram interprets the recurring spatial conditions through which movement is slowed, redirected, paused, or interrupted.

At the level of conceived space, then, the project proposes a script of passages, pauses, thresholds, and differentiated spatial episodes. Post-opening evidence suggests that the script is already being tested through actual occupation, although it remains only partially stabilised. When the first reopened segment entered into use on 31 January 2025, the Municipality presented the reopening not simply as a traffic adjustment, but as the return of a new promenade tied to a reorganisation of circulation, pedestrian access, and the Marina interface.[97] By August 2025, L'Unione Sarda described the completed space as frequented by residents and tourists, including young people, families, and elderly users.[98] These are verified facts about what the sources report, not systematic measurements of use. Yet they support a cautious interpretation: Via Roma does not function only as a corridor. Some portions of the linear strip already sustain small episodes of occupation and temporary concentration.

What remains unstable is the articulation of that sequence. The strongest evidence concerns transversal movement. L'Unione Sarda described long pedestrian detours, risky informal crossings, and the perception that the relation between the port side and the portico side remained unnecessarily complicated despite the short distance between them.[99] A later report documented the reactivation of the traffic light and pedestrian crossing in the middle of Via Roma on the seaward side.[100] Through Tschumi, crossings are not minor technical details placed outside the architectural reading. They are thresholds within the sequence itself. When access from one side to the other becomes difficult, the continuity promised by the promenade is interrupted and redistributed into moments of friction. Via Roma therefore produces sequence, but not as smooth or resolved continuity. Its rhythm is repeatedly broken by the still problematic relation between movement along the waterfront and movement across it.

A second issue concerns the relation between movement, pause, and adjacent activation. The new promenade creates a stronger pedestrian field than the previous road-dominated condition, but the persistence of vehicular movement and the separation from the portico frontage mean that the sequence does not yet operate as a fully integrated urban stage. Local reports from

[97] Comune di Cagliari, "Riaperto da venerdì 31 gennaio 2025 il primo tratto della Via Roma."
[98] Madeddu, "Cagliari, la nuova via Roma convince residenti e turisti."

[99] L'Unione Sarda, "Cagliari, via Roma: la beffa per i pedoni continua. Disagi e proteste."
[100] Spignesi, "Cagliari, riattivato il semaforo a metà di via Roma lato mare."

2026 record complaints from shopkeepers under the porticoes, who describe reduced commercial activation despite the attractiveness of the new promenade.[101] This evidence cannot establish a direct causal relation between the redesign and commercial decline. It does, however, reinforce a spatial point: the promenade may concentrate pedestrian movement and pause within the central strip while leaving the adjacent urban edge less directly activated. In Tschumi's terms, the sequence remains linear and somewhat detached, rather than fully distributed across the transversal section.

Exceptional uses offer a further, but distinct, indication. The Sant'Efisio evidence does not prove that the redesigned promenade functions as a stable event platform. It shows something narrower: Via Roma remains part of a broader urban sequence in which movement, gathering, circulation control, and temporary occupation can be reorganised during exceptional circumstances.[102] The point is not to celebrate programmability as publicness. It is to observe that the waterfront's spatial sequence can be temporarily reconfigured, even if stable event programming is not demonstrated by the drawing.

Through Tschumi, the Via Roma waterfront therefore appears as a linear script rather than as a unified public room. Its strongest spatial mechanism is continuous longitudinal movement. Its most relevant public condition appears where this movement is conditioned by pause devices, seating, play areas, table elements, or informal occupation. Its weakest or most ambiguous condition appears where movement is interrupted by planted surfaces, infrastructural thresholds, difficult crossings, or weak transversal activation. The result is not a seamless promenade, but a sequence of differentiated movement conditions.

The outcome of this lens is therefore the analytical layer Movement, Sequence, and Pause Devices. It shows where movement is continuous, where it is conditioned, and where it becomes non-walkable or interrupted. The layer does not measure publicness directly, nor does it prove that programmed activity necessarily produces urban life. Rather, it identifies how the spatial sequence of Via Roma organises the relation between bodies, movement, interruption, and pause. In this sense, the waterfront's publicness does not emerge from continuity alone. It emerges from the unstable relation between movement, interruption, fixed devices, programmed nodes, and the ways users may activate or bypass them over time.

[101] Meloni, "Cagliari, la nuova via Roma è da cartolina."
[102] Comune di Cagliari, "Modifiche alla viabilità in occasione della 369^ Festa di Sant'Efisio," April 30, 2025, https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/modifiche_alla_viabilita_in_occasione_della_369_festa_di_santefisio?contentId=NVT216883.

2.4 CROSS-LENS SYNTHESIS

After the three lens-based readings, Via Roma can no longer be interpreted as a single homogeneous promenade. Its public condition emerges through the relation between three dimensions that do not always coincide: the possibility of reaching the space, the possibility of remaining within it, and the way bodies are guided, slowed down, redirected, or gathered along the waterfront. The cross-lens synthesis starts from this intersection. It does not repeat the three analyses, but places their results in relation to one another in order to understand where these dimensions reinforce each other, and where they remain only partially aligned.

This approach follows from the theoretical premises already used throughout the chapter. The Madanipour reading has shown that accessibility cannot be reduced to formal openness, since public and private relations are produced through thresholds, boundaries, crossings, and different degrees of mediation.[103] The Lefebvrian section has then clarified that benches, trees, paved surfaces, and recreational equipment do not automatically generate lived public space; they become relevant only insofar as they support spatial practices, shared permanence, and forms of ordinary appropriation.[104] Tschumi's lens further complicates this reading by refusing a stable correspondence between form and use: if architecture is inseparable from programme, action, movement, and event, then Via Roma must be read as a sequence of possible movements, pauses, frictions, and programmatic intensities rather than as a fixed arrangement of functions.[105] The final diagram should therefore be understood as an interpretative device, not as a measurement of publicness. It does not transform the three lenses into a score, nor does it assign a definitive value to each portion of the waterfront. Its role is to make visible the spatial conditions that appear when the previous layers are overlaid. In this sense, the drawing maps not publicness as an abstract attribute, but the different ways in which the promenade spatially supports, weakens, filters, or redirects public use. The resulting shades do not form a linear hierarchy from "more public" to "less public." They indicate combinations of accessibility, permanence, movement, programme, enclosure, and environmental qualification.[106]

The first condition made visible by the synthesis is the asymmetry between longitudinal continuity and transversal permeability. Via Roma constructs a recognisable pedestrian sequence along the waterfront: the central strip gives the project its most immediate legibility as a promenade, allowing the space to be followed, crossed, and perceived as a continuous urban trajectory. Yet the access layer shows that this linear continuity does not produce an equally clear relation between the city and the port edge. Entry into the pedestrian strip remains dependent on crossing points, regulated thresholds, traffic arrangements, public transport stops, and the different spatial conditions of the two sides. The promenade is therefore continuous as a linear field, but more uneven as a transversal interface.[107] This unevenness also changes along the

[103] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 55–59.
[104] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–41.
[105] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 3–5, 121–23.

[106] Author's analytical synthesis drawing, based on the overlay of the Madanipour, Lefebvre, and Tschumi analytical layers.
[107] Author's analytical drawing, "Access, Boundaries and Control," based on project documentation and spatial interpretation.

axis. The area towards Piazza Ingrao appears as the most legible access condition, partly because two pedestrian crossings converge towards the same entry sequence. By contrast, the Piazza Matteotti / Rinascente frontage offers a weaker and more unilateral form of entrance, despite its proximity to a major urban and intermodal node. This distinction should not be read as a simple hierarchy between an accessible end and an inaccessible one. Both belong to the same linear project, and both are connected to mobility infrastructures. The difference lies instead in the morphology of access: proximity to public transport and urban centrality does not automatically produce a balanced or equally readable entrance into the pedestrian strip.[108]

This point refines the result of the Madanipour reading. The project opens a new civic sequence along the waterfront, but the space it produces is not available in the same way from every direction. It works strongly as a linear promenade, more selectively as a place of staying, and more unevenly as a city-port connection. Crossings, stops, enclosed areas, green surfaces, and pause devices do not simply accumulate into a generic public space. They produce different conditions of availability: some more continuous and open, others more mediated, programmed, delimited, or only indirectly appropriable.

The same issue appears when the movement layer is read against the permanence layer. The Tschumian diagram has shown that Via Roma is structured by a continuous sequence, but that this sequence is locally modified by furniture, vegetation, programmed equipment, and non-walkable surfaces. The Lefebvrian diagram has shown that shared permanence is not distributed uniformly, but depends on the material capacity of each portion of the promenade to support staying, co-presence, and ordinary appropriation.[109] When the two readings are overlaid, the central walking band emerges as the clearest condition of publicness as passage: it is legible, accessible, and continuous, but only weakly equipped for shared permanence. It allows the waterfront to operate as an urban trajectory, without turning the whole strip into a stable place of collective occupation.

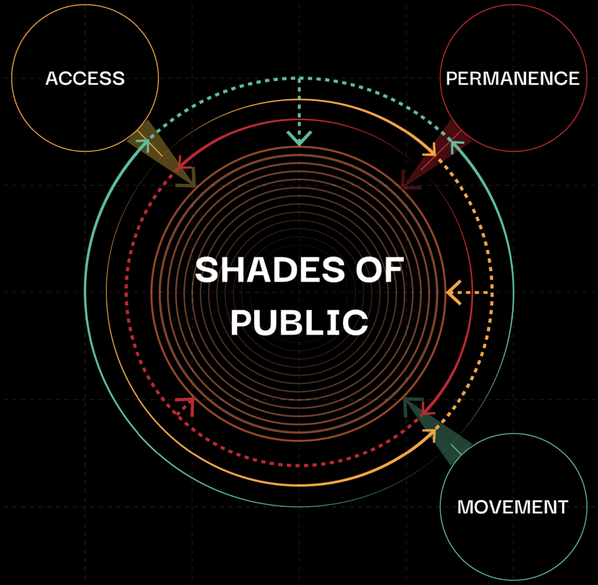
Permanence is therefore selective rather than absent. Along some portions of the promenade, lateral benches and pause devices introduce limited opportunities for rest without substantially altering the central flow. In these cases, stopping remains secondary to movement: one can wait, observe, or briefly occupy the edge, while the spatial structure continues to privilege passage. The condition changes where seating, vegetation, tables, or spatial margins become denser. Here walking is not blocked, but it becomes conditioned by a thicker section in which stopping, turning, waiting, looking, and informal interaction may overlap. This is why the synthesis cannot treat all equipped areas in the same way. A bench along the edge of a path, a curvilinear seat, a table, a planted margin, and a recreational device do not produce the same relation between movement and permanence. They all support public use, but with different degrees of

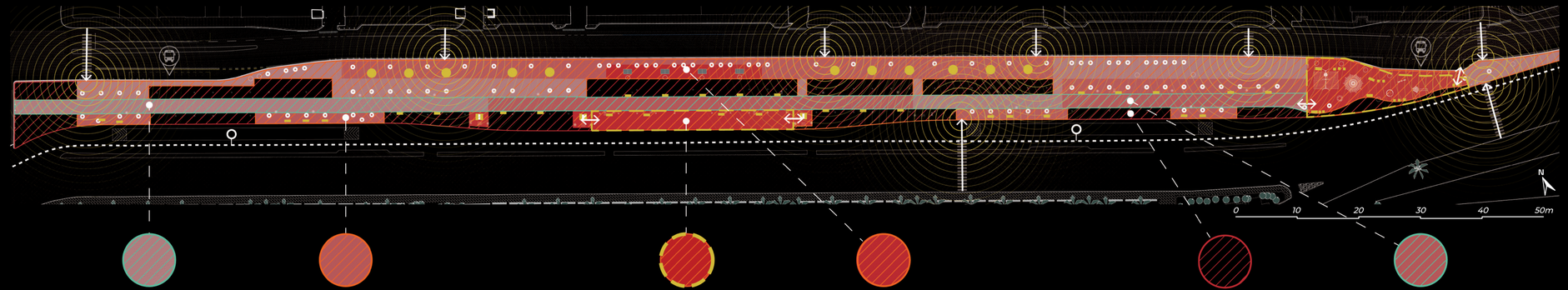
“INTEGRATION BETWEEN THE PORT AND THE CITY.”

PAVIA / DI VENOSA

[108] Author’s analytical drawing, “Access, Boundaries and Control,” based on project documentation and spatial interpretation.

[109] Author’s analytical synthesis drawing, based on the overlay of the Madanipour, Lefebvre, and Tschumi analytical layers.





CONTINUOUS MOVEMENT WITH WEAK PERMANENCE

AREAS WHERE PEDESTRIAN CONTINUITY PREVAILS. THE SPACE MAINLY SUPPORTS CROSSING AND LINEAR MOVEMENT, WHILE PERMANENCE REMAINS MINIMAL AND WEAKLY EQUIPPED.

CONDITIONED MOVEMENT WITH BASIC PERMANENCE

AREAS WHERE FURNITURE, VEGETATION, OR SPATIAL MARGINS SLOW MOVEMENT, BUT ONLY SUPPORT OCCASIONAL OR WEAK FORMS OF STAYING.

DELIMITED ACCESS WITH STRUCTURED PERMANENCE

ENCLOSED PROGRAMMED AREAS, SUCH AS THE DOG AREA AND PLAYGROUND, WHERE STRUCTURED SOCIAL USE IS SUPPORTED BUT MEDIATED BY FENCES, GATES, OR CLEAR THRESHOLDS.

CONDITIONED MOVEMENT WITH STRUCTURED PERMANENCE

PROGRAMMED AREAS, SUCH AS PING-PONG TABLES, WHERE EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS A MORE STRUCTURED FORM OF PERMANENCE WHILE ALSO SLOWING AND REDIRECTING MOVEMENT.

NON-PRACTICABLE GREEN / NO DIRECT PERMANENCE

PLANTED AREAS THAT CONTRIBUTE VISUALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY TO THE PROMENADE, BUT DO NOT DIRECTLY SUPPORT WALKABLE ACCESS OR SHARED PERMANENCE.

CONTINUOUS MOVEMENT WITH BASIC LATERAL PERMANENCE

SEGMENTS WHERE THE CENTRAL PATH REMAINS OPEN, WHILE BENCHES ALONG THE EDGES INTRODUCE LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAUSE WITHOUT INTERRUPTING MOVEMENT.

intensity and stability.
The programmed nodes make this distinction sharper. The ping-pong area, already identified in the Tschumian reading as a point where the linear sequence becomes locally concentrated, introduces a form of structured permanence without relying on physical enclosure.[110] Its public relevance is not produced by openness alone, nor by programme alone, but by the way a fixed device can attract temporary activity while remaining part of the pedestrian sequence. It interrupts the linear rhythm of the promenade without becoming a closed enclave. The dog area and the playground work differently. As the access layer has made visible, they belong to the category of enclosed or delimited spaces: they can support recognisable collective uses, but they do so through fences, gates, or clear thresholds. Their capacity to sustain permanence is stronger, but also more spatially regulated. The overlay therefore prevents a simplified equivalence between programme and publicness. In Via Roma, some of the most clearly supported forms of staying are also the most clearly bounded.
This produces another shade of publicness, distinct from the one generated by access. The question is not only whether the promenade can be reached, but what kind of occupation it can sustain once reached. The freer and more continuous portions of the strip tend to support movement more than co-presence. The more equipped parts can sustain ordinary forms of pause, especially where furniture, shade, visibility, and proximity to other devices make staying plausible rather than merely possible. The programmed nodes intensify this condition, while also exposing a tension between shared use and spatial regulation. The waterfront therefore shifts between different balances: continuous movement with weak permanence, continuous movement with weak lateral permanence, conditioned movement with basic permanence, conditioned movement with structured permanence, and delimited access with structured permanence.
The green areas must be read through the same logic. Planted and grassed surfaces are not residual parts of the plan: they modify the rhythm of the promenade by interrupting direct trajectories, introducing visual pauses, and supporting the environmental identity of the project.[111] At the same time, the Lefebvrian reading prevents them from being interpreted automatically as supports for shared permanence. A green surface can improve the perceptual quality of the waterfront, contribute to microclimatic ambition, and reinforce the image of a civic landscape, without becoming directly inhabitable public ground. Where planted areas are not designed as ordinary walkable surfaces, they qualify the setting in which public life may occur, but they do not provide the ground on which that life can necessarily take place. This distinction is central to the synthesis. Much of Via Roma's identity depends on the environmental thickening of the central strip, yet the overlay shows that environmental qualification and

[110] Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

[111] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

public occupation are not the same condition. The green infrastructure strengthens the visual and climatic ambition of the promenade, while the walkable and equipped surfaces define where bodies can actually move, stop, gather, or use the space. The question is therefore not only how much redesigned surface or vegetation the project provides, but which parts of that surface can become socially durable. Publicness, in this sense, depends less on the quantity of new public ground than on the relation between accessible surfaces, usable devices, comfort, and the capacity to maintain these supports over time.

The synthesis also makes clear that Via Roma cannot be understood only through its designed configuration. The promenade is shaped by the operational conditions that allow that configuration to remain usable: pedestrian crossings, traffic regulation, public transport, temporary occupations, maintenance, shade, and the management of planted and equipped areas. This does not move the analysis away from space. Rather, it shows that spatial publicness is operationally sustained. A bench, a crossing, a tree, or a playground does not remain public simply because it appears in the project drawing. It becomes part of public life only if it continues to support access, comfort, legibility, and use under changing everyday conditions.

The post-opening evidence confirms that Via Roma entered into use through successive adjustments rather than through a single settled condition. The first reopened section between Piazza Ingrao and Via Dei Mille was accompanied by a new circulation regime for the Marina district, with defined entries, exits, pedestrian areas, and loading and unloading windows.[112] Later ordinances introduced further seasonal pedestrianisation in the surrounding streets, again combining pedestrian accessibility with service access, commercial logistics, and time-based regulation.[113] These facts do not contradict the project's public character. They show instead that its public dimension depends on a continuing negotiation between openness and regulation.

Temporary events reveal the same condition in a more concentrated form. The ordinances linked to Sant'Efisio 2025 show how the Via Roma section can be reconfigured through restrictions, closures, stands, and commercial occupations.[114] During such moments, the waterfront is no longer only a linear space of walking or resting. It becomes part of a broader civic apparatus, where visibility, crowding, movement, and temporary programme are reorganised. This confirms the relevance of the Tschumian reading, because programme acts as a way of activating, interrupting, and re-scripting space over time. At the same time, it complicates a purely spontaneous understanding of lived space: public use here also depends on planned temporal arrangements, permissions, closures, and institutional coordination.

Maintenance introduces a more fragile dimension of the same problem. Reports after the opening describe the replacement of dried trees,

"ACCESS, AGENCY AND INTEREST"

-MADANIPOUR

[112] Comune di Cagliari, "Riaperto da venerdì 31 gennaio 2025 il primo tratto della Via Roma."
[113] Comune di Cagliari. "Istituzione aree pedonali nel quartiere Marina." March 11, 2026. https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/istituzione_aree_pedonali_nel_quartiere_marina.
[114] Comune di Cagliari. "Modifiche alla viabilità in occasione della 369ª Festa di Sant'Efisio." April 30, 2025. https://www.comune.cagliari.it/portale/page/it/modifiche_alla_viabilita_in_occasione_della_369_festa_di_santefisio?contentId=NVT216883.

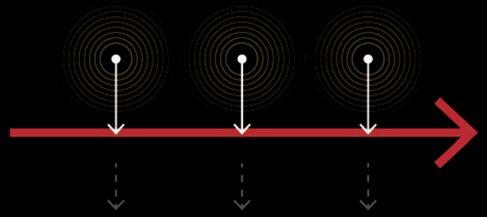
interventions on damaged furniture, and signs of vandalism or waste in the area of Piazza Matteotti.[115] Other local reports also questioned the effectiveness of shade during the first phases of use, when the planted system was still recent and not yet fully mature.[116] These elements should not be treated as anecdotal defects detached from the spatial argument. If the Lefebvrian lens has shown that public space is produced through the relation between conceived form and spatial practice, maintenance is part of that production. It determines whether the supports for permanence remain usable, whether green infrastructure can contribute to comfort, and whether equipment still invites ordinary use rather than avoidance. Care, growth, and repair are therefore not external to publicness; they are among the conditions through which it is stabilised or weakened over time.

For this reason, the synthesis cannot stop at the distinction between designed space and used space. The more precise distinction is between spatial provision and spatial support. Via Roma provides pedestrian surfaces, planted areas, equipment, crossings, and programmed nodes. Yet these elements support publicness only when they are connected by legible access, usable ground, sufficient comfort, maintained equipment, and operational arrangements that do not over-fragment the experience of the waterfront. The promenade's weakness is not that it lacks public space. It is that different components of its public condition are often present but not fully synchronised: movement is stronger than permanence; environmental qualification is stronger than direct appropriation; programme is more evident in delimited or punctual nodes than in the ordinary continuity of the strip; access exists, but remains dependent on regulated thresholds.

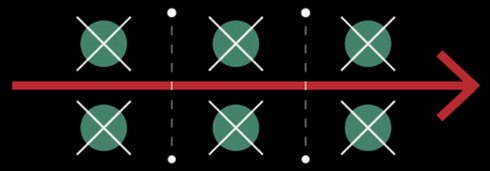
The final diagram should therefore be read as a map of uneven supports, fragile continuities, and mediated conditions of publicness. It shows that some areas accumulate several supports for public use, while others remain dependent on a single dominant condition. Where entry, pause devices, shade, and programme come together, the promenade can support more stable forms of occupation. Where movement is the strongest component, the space remains closer to passage than to dwelling. Where green surfaces are present but not directly inhabitable, environmental quality does not immediately become shared public ground. Where programmed areas are enclosed, permanence becomes stronger but more spatially regulated. The value of the synthesis lies precisely in making these differences visible within the same project.

This does not reduce the significance of Via Roma. It makes its public dimension more precise. The project does not create public space merely by pedestrianising a strip and adding green infrastructure. It reorganises a complex urban threshold in which the city, the port, mobility systems, public transport, planted surfaces, recreational devices, and everyday practices coexist within a narrow linear field. As

[115] Putzolu, "Cagliari, la nuova passeggiata di via Roma già pronta a rifarsi il trucco."
[116] Mocci, "Cagliari, il 'bosco verticale' di Boeri sotto il sole cocente."

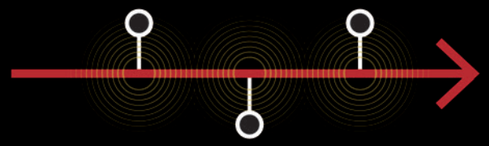


ACCESS VS CONTINUITY



NON-PRACTICABLE GREEN

PROGRAMMED PERMANENCE



MOVEMENT THROUGH PAUSE

Madanipour argues, public and private are not isolated domains, but interdependent conditions articulated through degrees of openness, exclusivity, and mediation.[117] As Lefebvre shows, space is not a passive container but a social product shaped through the relation between conceived order and spatial practice.[118] As Tschumi insists, architecture cannot be separated from movement, action, programme, and event, but neither can it determine them mechanically.[119] Read through these three positions, the publicness of Via Roma appears as a relational condition rather than as a completed spatial attribute.

The central outcome of the chapter can therefore be stated directly. Via Roma is public, but not in a homogeneous way. It is strongest where the spatial sequence supports both movement and temporary occupation; weaker where the promenade remains mainly a corridor; more ambiguous where environmental qualification is visually strong but directly usable ground is limited; and more controlled where structured uses depend on enclosure or specific programme. Its publicness is continuous as an urban image and as a route, but discontinuous as a lived and operational condition.

This conclusion opens the transition toward the comparative field. The issue that emerges from the cross-lens synthesis is to understand which spatial mechanisms already support public life, which ones only partially sustain it, and which ones require further recalibration because they leave access, permanence, and movement insufficiently connected. The comparative chapter therefore situates these mechanisms within a broader Mediterranean field, using selected references to clarify how analogous waterfronts organise access, thresholds, programme, and public use before the thesis moves toward critical revision.

[117] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 2–4, 96–99.
[118] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–41.
[119] Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 3–5, 121–23.

CHAPTER 3

SETTING THE COMPARATIVE FIELD OF REFERENCE

3.1 MEDITERRANEAN WATERFRONTS AS A COMPARATIVE FIELD

The redevelopment of waterfront areas has become one of the most recurrent forms of urban transformation in contemporary cities. Across Europe and the Mediterranean basin, former port infrastructures, industrial docks, and maritime landscapes have progressively been reconfigured as urban environments combining public space, cultural facilities, commercial activities, and tourism-oriented development.[1] These transformations are frequently presented as opportunities to reconnect cities with their waterfronts while simultaneously generating new civic landscapes accessible to urban life. Despite the widespread diffusion of waterfront regeneration projects, the spatial and institutional conditions through which these environments operate vary significantly from one context to another. Differences in governance structures, investment models, spatial configuration, and the relationship between urban fabric and port infrastructure often produce distinct forms of urban space. For this reason, understanding the spatial mechanisms through which public life is structured along the waterfront requires moving beyond the analysis of a single project and situating individual cases within a broader comparative field. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to position the spatial interpretation of Cagliari within a controlled comparative framework, using selected Mediterranean waterfronts to clarify how analogous spatial and institutional mechanisms operate in other contexts. Rather than attempting to establish a comprehensive catalogue of waterfront projects, the analysis focuses on a selected group of Mediterranean waterfront transformations that share comparable spatial and institutional characteristics. The objective of this comparison is not to evaluate the degree of publicness of each project, but to identify a field of reference within which different spatial strategies and redevelopment models can be observed. The comparative framework is structured around fourteen waterfront redevelopment projects located in different Mediterranean cities. These cases have been selected because they represent significant examples of contemporary urban interventions along coastal edges where former port or infrastructural landscapes have been reconfigured as urban public environments. Although each project emerges from specific historical and institutional contexts, they collectively illustrate broader tendencies in the transformation of port–city interfaces across the Mediterranean region. In order to maintain analytical consistency, the comparison focuses on a limited set of structural criteria that describe the conditions under which these waterfront projects have been developed. These criteria do not attempt to measure publicness directly; rather, they identify key factors that shape the spatial and institutional configuration of waterfront redevelopment. Four aspects are considered particularly relevant for this purpose: the type of intervention, the economic scale of the project, the governance and management structure, and the spatial relationship between the urban redevelopment and the operational

[1] Carola Hein, “Port Cityscapes: Conference and Research Contributions on Port Cities,” Planning Perspectives 31, no. 2 (2016): 314–321.

“PRIVATE PEOPLE COME TOGETHER AS A PUBLIC.”

-HABERMAS

port infrastructure. The type of intervention describes the general strategy adopted in the transformation of the waterfront area, distinguishing between projects that primarily involve the spatial redesign of existing urban fabrics and those that correspond to more extensive processes of redevelopment. This distinction reflects broader debates within urban theory concerning the production of space, where spatial transformation cannot be understood independently from the social and economic processes that generate it.[2] The economic scale of the project provides an indication of the level of investment associated with each transformation. Large-scale redevelopment projects often involve significant financial resources and complex development structures, frequently combining public investment with private capital. The scale of investment can therefore influence both the architectural ambition of the intervention and the broader economic strategies associated with waterfront regeneration.[3] The governance and management structure represents another key dimension in the analysis of waterfront transformations. Contemporary urban redevelopment frequently emerges from hybrid institutional arrangements involving municipal administrations, port authorities, private developers, and public–private partnerships. Such governance configurations often shape not only the development process itself but also the long-term management and regulation of the resulting urban spaces.[4] Finally, the spatial relationship between the redevelopment project and the operational port infrastructure constitutes a significant variable in waterfront environments. In some cities, redevelopment occurs in areas where port activities have been relocated, allowing a clear separation between maritime logistics and urban public space. In other contexts, waterfront regeneration takes place in direct proximity to active port infrastructures, producing more complex spatial relationships between urban life and maritime operations.[5] These four criteria allow the comparative analysis to remain focused on structural conditions rather than stylistic or purely architectural characteristics. The objective is not to classify projects according to aesthetic qualities but to identify recurring patterns in the ways Mediterranean cities restructure their waterfronts through spatial transformation, economic investment, and institutional governance. The comparative matrix constructed through this framework makes it possible to observe how different projects position themselves within this field of transformation. Some waterfront interventions appear primarily as urban design operations focused on improving public accessibility and spatial continuity along the coastal edge. Others correspond to broader redevelopment strategies involving significant real estate development, commercial programming, and tourism infrastructure. These variations illustrate the diverse ways in which waterfront spaces are integrated into contemporary urban economies and spatial strategies. At the same time, the comparative framework allows the research to progressively narrow the field of investigation.

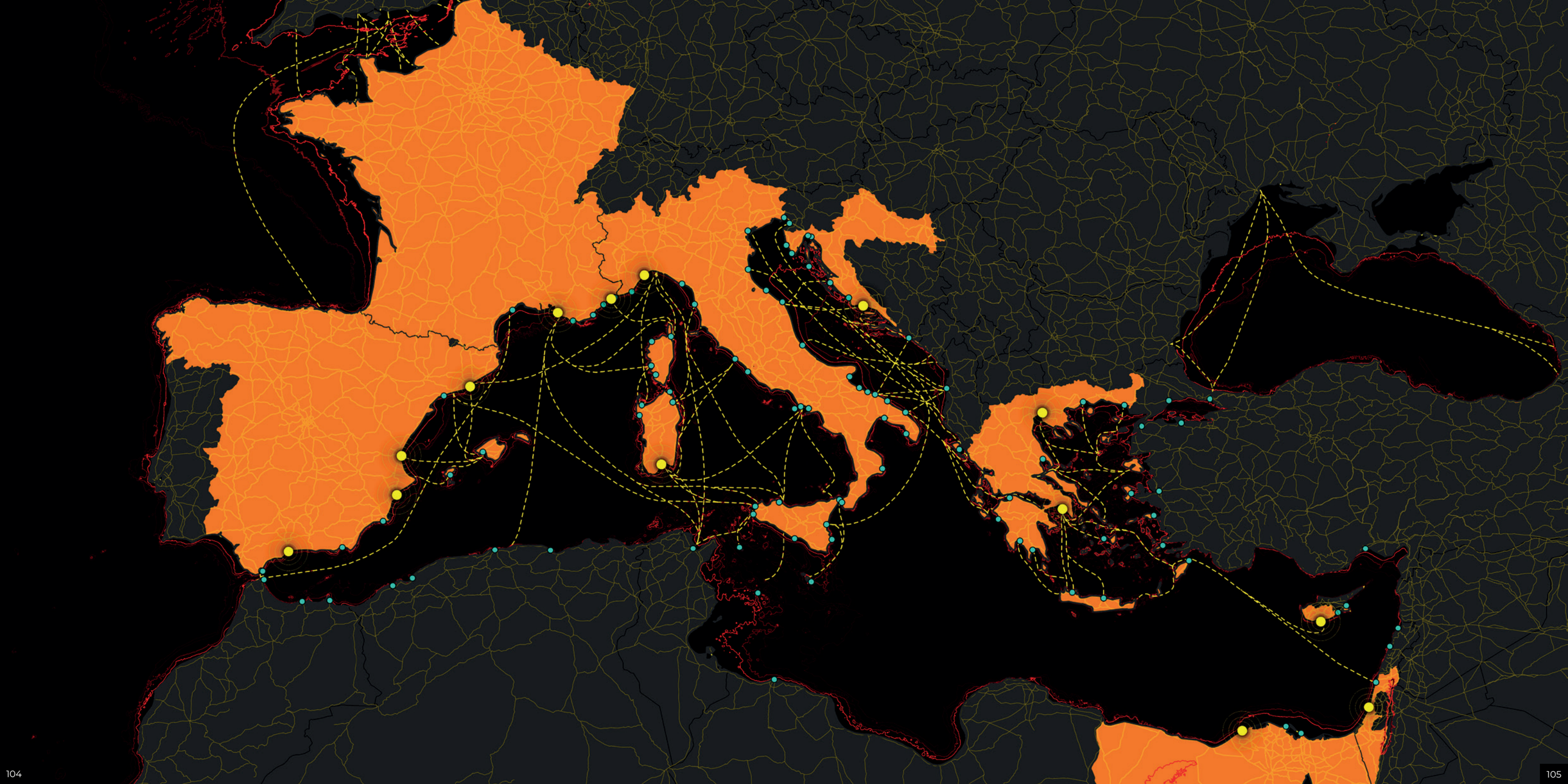
[2] Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 26–33.
[3] David Harvey, Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution (London: Verso, 2012), 11–18.
[4] Ali Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City (London: Routledge, 2003), 188-90.

[5] Brian S. Hoyle, “Cities and Ports: Concepts and Issues,” Vegueta: Anuario de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia, no. 3 (1997–1998): 263–278.

While the initial group of fourteen projects provides a broad overview of contemporary Mediterranean waterfront redevelopment, the analytical focus of the thesis requires a more concentrated field of observation .The comparative matrices developed in this chapter function as selective tools through which the mechanisms identified in Via Roma can be related to a narrower field of structurally comparable waterfronts.. Rather than functioning as a ranking system, the matrix operates as an interpretative instrument that highlights similarities and differences between projects in terms of spatial configuration, economic scale, governance structures, and the relationship between urban redevelopment and port infrastructure. Through this process, it becomes possible to identify a limited number of reference cases that share structural conditions comparable to those observed in the Cagliari waterfront project. The objective of this reduction is methodological clarity. The following sections therefore present the selected waterfront projects and the comparative matrices through which their structural characteristics are examined.

“PUBLIC SPACE IS THE SPACE OF ANARCHY.”

-MITCHELL



3.1.1

ALEXANDRIA

BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina is a waterfront cultural complex located on the Eastern Harbor of Alexandria, facing the sea to the north and the University of Alexandria complex to the south. Its public realm is organized around a large open plaza that structures access to the main library building, the planetarium, and the conference center, establishing the project as a civic landmark on the city's maritime edge.[6]

A deliberate connective logic links the intervention both to the waterfront and to the surrounding urban fabric. As described in the project documentation, the complex is traversed by a slim pedestrian bridge at second-floor level, crossing from the university campus in the southeast toward the sea in the northwest. Rather than functioning as an isolated object, the project is therefore configured as a hinge between the seafront and the institutional city.[7]

From the standpoint of intervention typology, the project is more accurately understood as a new-build cultural and educational assemblage than as a single building object. Law No. 1 of 2001 defines the Library of Alexandria as comprising the Library, the Planetarium, and the Conference Center, while also providing for the establishment of additional cultural and scientific centers by presidential decree.[8]

The enabling phase of the project combined national and international support. Bibliotheca Alexandrina documentation records a UNDP grant of US$ 1.2 million for preparatory activities, while the Aswan meeting of 1990 secured US$ 65 million in Arab-state pledges and payments toward implementation. Construction work began on 15 May 1995, and the complex was officially inaugurated on 16 October 2002. In terms of estimated investment scale, the project is widely reported as having required an investment of over US$ 200 million.[9] [10]

In institutional terms, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina is constituted as a public juridical person headquartered in Alexandria and attached to the President. Its mission is framed as cultural, scientific, and educational, while its financial structure is defined through an independent budget supported by state allocations, donations and contributions, service revenues, and other legally assigned sources.[11]

Its governance is articulated through a three-part structure established by Presidential Decree No. 76 of 2001: a Council of Patrons, including the Director-General of UNESCO; a Board of Trustees composed of Egyptian and non-Egyptian members, including ex officio representatives of key state and local institutions; and a Director appointed by the Board as chief executive officer. This framework gives the Library a management structure specifically tailored to its institutional mission rather than to ordinary administrative procedures.[12]

[6] Mohsen Zahran, The New Bibliotheca Alexandrina: Reflections on a Journey of Achievements (Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2007), 12, 22, 256.
[7] Snøhetta, "Bibliotheca Alexandrina," n.d.
[8] Arab Republic of Egypt, Law No. 1 of 2001 Concerning the Library of Alexandria (Cairo, 2001).

[9] Zahran, The New Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 45–46, 87, 120, 256.
[10] Snøhetta, "Bibliotheca Alexandrina."
[11] Arab Republic of Egypt, Law No. 1 of 2001 Concerning the Library of Alexandria.
[12] Presidential Decree No. 76 for the Year 2001, Arab Republic of Egypt (2001).

SCALE
1: 50.000

N

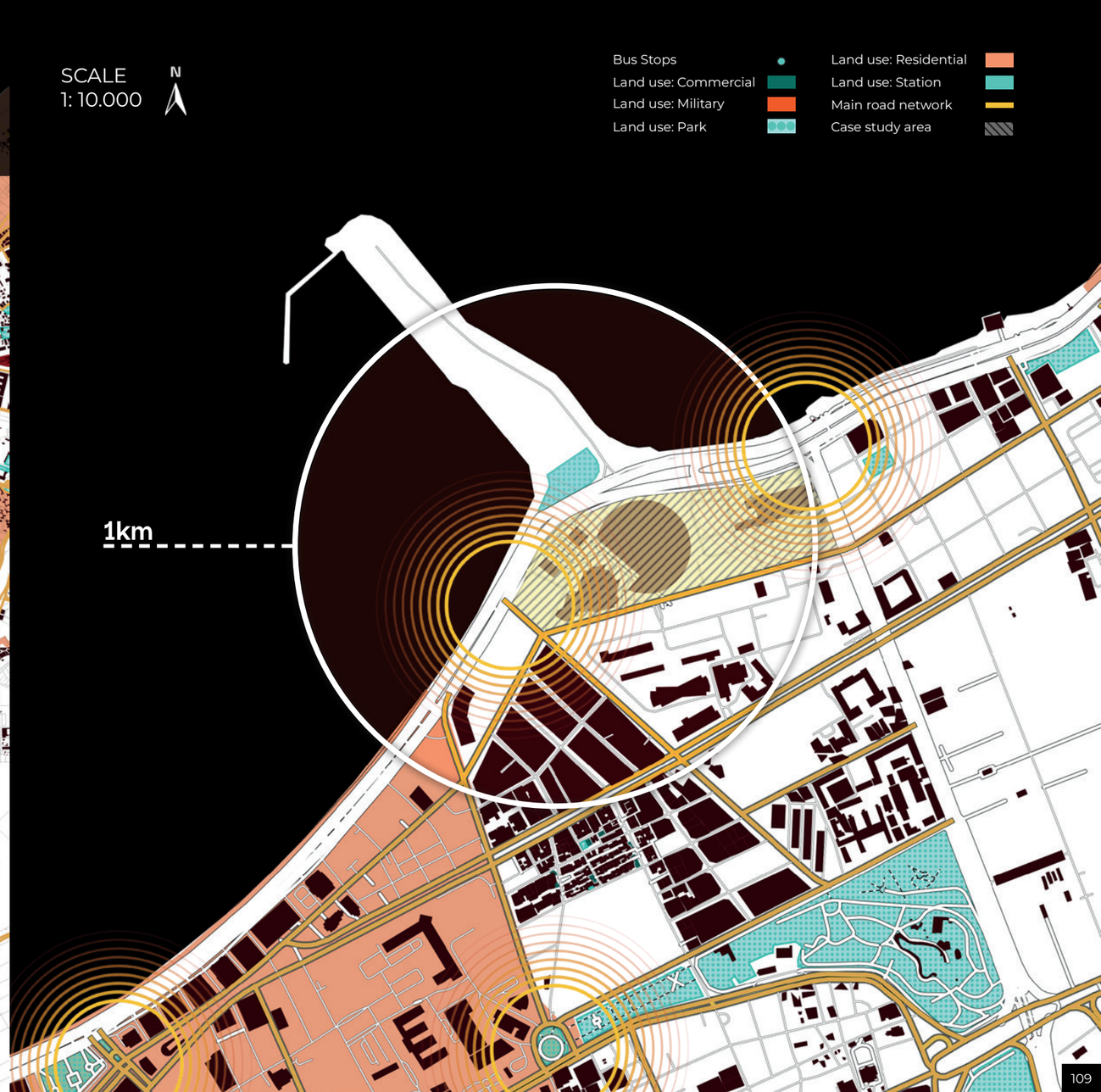
5km

SCALE
1: 10.000

N

Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

1km



3.1.2

ALICANT

EXPLANADA DE ESPAÑA

Within Alicante's urban maritime façade, the Explanada de España operates as a historic civic promenade directly adjacent to the port. In morphological terms, it should not be read as an isolated urban object but as part of the longer Gómiz-Explanada-Canalejas sequence, approximately two kilometres in length, whose formation reflects the gradual reconfiguration of the seafront from a defensive and service-related edge into a representative civic frontage.[13]

The "proximity to the port" variable is therefore not an interpretative exaggeration but a documented spatial condition. Port authority cartography identifies the Explanada immediately alongside the port basins and access system, making clear that the promenade operates on the city side of an active port boundary rather than in a detached coastal setting.[14]

The reference intervention considered here is the third and final phase of the recent reurbanisation project, institutionally defined as the "Reurbanización del Paseo de la Explanada, Fase III (Calle Bilbao-Rambla)". Municipal documentation describes this phase as the removal of the existing fondo de saco in order to restore pedestrian continuity between the Rambla and the maritime front, extending the promenade for approximately 650 linear metres and reconnecting the stretch historically occupied by licensed outdoor seating.[15]

From the standpoint of intervention typology, Phase III is best understood as a pedestrianisation and reurbanisation operation on an existing urban coastal axis rather than as a port redevelopment project. The works include the suppression of through traffic in the central section, the enlargement of the pedestrian platform, the integration of a continuous cycle lane, the renewal of lighting, and hydraulic adjustments for stormwater drainage.[16]

In governance terms, the management model is fully public. The contracting authority is the Junta de Gobierno Local of the Ayuntamiento de Alicante, acting through formal public procurement procedures.[17] The contract was awarded to TIZOR Hormigones y Asfaltos, S.L. for €3,124,784.10 including VAT, with an initial execution period of eight months. In methodological terms, this figure is used here as the estimated investment scale of the documented municipal phase rather than as the total cost of the broader maritime-front transformation.[18]

The administrative sequence is also traceable. The contract was formalised in September 2022, works effectively began in January 2023, and the intervention remained embedded in the PRTR framework for low-emission zones and sustainable urban mobility. Municipal communication in March 2024 confirms the opening to the public of the new pedestrian space connecting the Rambla to the Explanada, after approved extensions to the original execution period.[19]

[13] Olga Grao-Gil, "El paseo de la explanada de Alicante: la consolidación de un paisaje histórico urbano frente al mar," 2020.
[14] Autoridad Portuaria de Alicante, Plano General / General Map: APA-General 2023 (Alicante: Autoridad Portuaria de Alicante, 2023), https://www.puertoalicante.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-darsenas-puerto-de-Alicante.pdf.
[15] Ayuntamiento de Alicante, "Reurbanización del Paseo de la Explanada, Fase III (Calle Bilbao-Rambla)," June 18, 2021.
[16] Ayuntamiento de Alicante, "Alicante destina cerca de ocho millones de euros a la reurbanización del frente litoral," August 30, 2022.
[17] Plataforma de Contratación del Sector Público, "Anuncio de licitación: Obras de Reurbanización del Paseo de la Explanada, Fase III (Calle Bilbao-Rambla), enmarcado en el programa de ayudas a municipios para la implantación de zonas de bajas emisiones y la transformación digital y sostenible del transporte urbano, en el marco del PRTR," June 17, 2022.
[18] Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Alicante (Junta de Gobierno Local), "Adjudicación de las obras de reurbanización del Paseo de la Explanada, Fase III (Calle Bilbao-Rambla)," August 23, 2022.
[19] Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Alicante (Junta de Gobierno Local), "Prórroga / actualización administrativa relativa a la reurbanización del Paseo de la Explanada, Fase III (Calle Bilbao-Rambla)," September 12, 2023.

SCALE
1: 50.000

N

5km

SCALE
1: 10.000

N

Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

1km

3.1.3

ATHENS

PIRAEUS PASSENGER TERMINAL

Piraeus enters the comparative field not as an urban promenade intervention but as a cruise-port case located within an active operational harbour. This distinction is analytically relevant because the Piraeus case makes visible a condition in which access, circulation, and the urban effects of cruise activity are mediated by port operations, security rules, and transport pressure rather than by municipal public-space design.[20]

The reference intervention considered here is the Passenger Port Expansion (Southern Zone, Phase A), promoted by PPA S.A. as the southern expansion of the passenger port. Official project material defines it as an infrastructure upgrade intended to create two new berthing positions for new-generation cruise ships over 280 metres long, with a 32-month implementation schedule.[21]

In terms of estimated investment scale, the project is reported through more than one traceable figure. PPA's 2020 launch communication refers to an initial budget of €120 million, while PPA investor material and procurement reporting indicate a budgeted amount of about €136.3 million and an awarded construction contract of €103 million plus VAT. In methodological terms, this thesis adopts the awarded contract amount as the operational cost reference for the documented construction phase, while the higher figures are treated as the broader budget envelope of the scheme.[22] [23]

In governance terms, the intervention is not municipal but port-authority led. It is promoted by PPA S.A., whose corporate object is tied to the concession agreement with the Greek State, and the cruise expansion is explicitly framed by the company as one of the mandatory investments connected to COSCO's overall development plan for the port.[24]

At the funding and policy layer, the project sits within a wider European support framework. The European Commission approved Greek public support for cruise-related port infrastructure at Piraeus in 2013, and PPA later stated that the southern expansion was co-financed through the Regional Operational Programme for Attica 2014-2020.[25]

The implementation sequence also clarifies that this is a structurally port-internal intervention rather than a conventional waterfront public-space project. PPA's cruise-terminal information presents the passenger terminals, gates, customs, coach parking, shuttle circulation, and ISPS-compliant security regime as parts of the port's internal service system; at the same time, the wider Piraeus investment programme received EIB backing in 2019, while PPA acknowledged in March 2022 that construction operations on the cruise expansion had been temporarily paused following a Supreme Court decision concerning earlier master-plan approvals.[26]

[20] International Transport Forum, Cruise Shipping and Urban Development: The Case of Piraeus (Paris: OECD / International Transport Forum, 2017); Piraeus Port Authority, "Cruise Terminal," n.d., https://olp.gr/en/services/cruise-terminal.
[21] Piraeus Port Authority, "Cruise Terminal Expansion Project, Southern Zone, Phase A," 2020, https://olp.gr/en/.
[22] Piraeus Port Authority, "Cruise Terminal Expansion Project, Southern Zone, Phase A"; Piraeus Port Authority S.A., "Three Mandatory Investments on the Way to Implementation - Contract Total over 32 Million Euro," October 1, 2021.
[23] PPA S.A., Annual Financial Report 2019 (Piraeus, 2019).
[24] European Investment Bank, "Greece: EIB Financing for Transformation of the Port of Piraeus," November 11, 2019, https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2019-294-eib-financing-for-transformation-of-the-port-of-piraeus.
[25] European Commission, "State Aid SA.35418 (2012/N) – Greece: Extension of Piraeus Port," July 1, 2013, https://competition-cases.ec.europa.eu/cases/SA.35418; Piraeus Port Authority, "Cruise Terminal Expansion Project, Southern Zone, Phase A."
[26] European Investment Bank, "Financing for the Transformation of the Port of Piraeus," November 11, 2019; PPA S.A., "Announcement regarding the Supreme Court Decisions," March 22, 2022.

SCALE
1: 50.000
N
5km

SCALE
1: 10.000
N
Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area
1km

3.1.4

BARCELONA

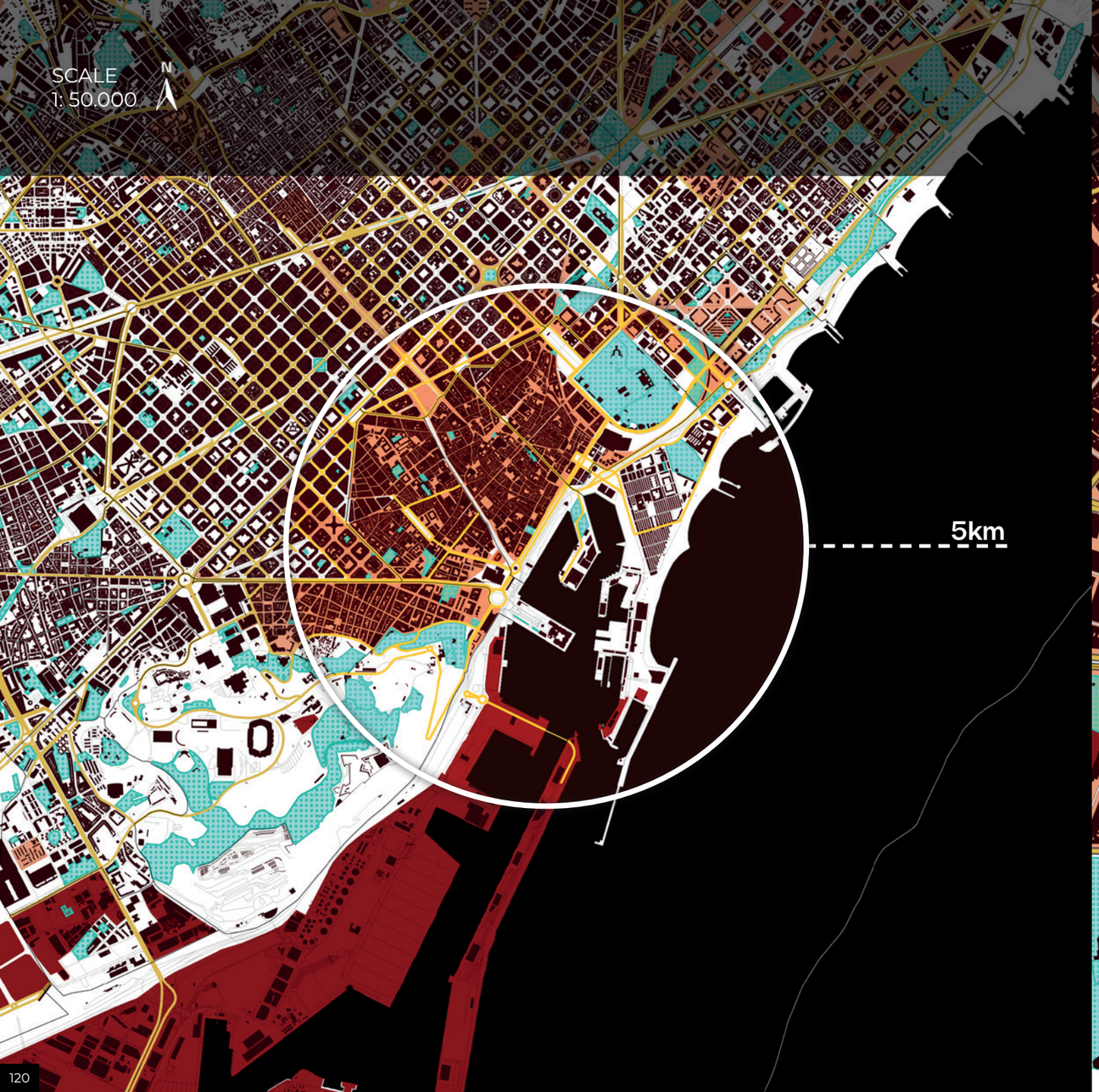
PORT VELL

Port Vell is the citizen-oriented area of the Port of Barcelona, located within the port precinct and characterised by a coexistence of spaces open to the public and others dedicated to commercial, leisure, sports, and cultural uses.[27]
In the context of the 37th America's Cup, the Port of Barcelona framed a concentrated cycle of works in Port Vell as the initial phase of a broader transformation, with more than €86 million in public-private investments distributed across 17 actions scheduled for 2023-2024 and to be completed before the event began on 22 August 2024.[28]
In terms of intervention type, this package combines new public-realm works, building refurbishments, and operational reorganisations rather than a single urban-design action. Official project communication includes the Nova Bocana promenade and the new Mirador building, the refurbishment of Portal de la Pau and other existing structures, the remodelling of the fishing area, and the transfer of activities from the Barcelona Nord and Drassanes wharves to the Adossat wharf.[29]
In governance terms, the intervention is led by the Barcelona Port Authority, the public body responsible for the administration, management, and operation of the port. To accelerate delivery, the Port assigned new planning and concession powers, together with additional financial and human resources, to the Gerència Urbanística Port Vell, described as the fundamental management tool of Port Vell.[30] [31]

In methodological terms, the figure of more than €86 million is used here as the estimated investment scale of the 2023-2024 implementation cycle rather than as the total cost of the long-term transformation of Port Vell.[32]
Finally, proximity to the port is direct and structural: Port Vell is part of the port's own territory and functions as its public-facing edge rather than as a detached waterfront redevelopment area. America's Cup documentation confirms this condition by presenting Port Vell as the central off-water venue of the event, with the Race Village located along Moll de la Fusta.[33] [34]

[27] Port of Barcelona, "Port Vell," n.d.
[28] Port of Barcelona, "Work Begins on the Top-to-Bottom Transformation of Barcelona's Old Port, the Port Vell, with an Investment of over €86 Million," March 15, 2023.
[29] Port of Barcelona, "Work Begins on the Top-to-Bottom Transformation of Barcelona's Old Port, the Port Vell, with an Investment of over €86 Million."
[30] Port of Barcelona, "Port Vell."
[31] Port of Barcelona, "Work Begins on the Top-to-Bottom Transformation of Barcelona's Old Port, the Port Vell, with an Investment of over €86 Million."

[32] Port of Barcelona, "Work Begins on the Top-to-Bottom Transformation of Barcelona's Old Port, the Port Vell, with an Investment of over €86 Million."
[33] Port of Barcelona, "Port Vell."
[34] America's Cup, "Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain," October 24, 2023.


SCALE
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Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area
1km

3.1.5

CAGLIARI

VIA ROMA WATERFRONT

Within the comparative framework of this chapter, Cagliari (Via Roma) functions as the benchmark case against which the other Mediterranean waterfront interventions are read. Its centrality derives from its role as the core case of the thesis and from the fact that the intervention condenses, in a particularly explicit form, the tensions between urban public space, intermodality, and direct adjacency to active port infrastructure. The municipal presentation of the project explicitly framed the operation as a strategic attempt to restore a public and environmental relationship between the city and the sea.[35]

The reference intervention considered here is the most recent redevelopment phase associated with the municipal project Una promenade verde per il waterfront di Cagliari, presented in 2022 and described as a “linear botanical garden” intended to requalify Via Roma’s promenade, intervene along the port front, and reorganise Piazza Matteotti. The project documentation defines an intervention area of 24,000 m², including 5,700 m² of new green space and more than 200 new trees, with the aim of producing a continuous, shaded, and publicly accessible waterfront axis.[36]

The project is linked to the competition won by the temporary consortium including Stefano Boeri Architetti and is framed as an environmental and mobility-driven reconfiguration rather than as a simple landscape upgrade. According to the official presentation, public space is enlarged through the reduction of the main carriageway to two lanes, while the station-Marina-waterfront node is redefined as a strategic hinge for intermodality and for renewed transverse connections between the historic city and the port edge.[37]

From the standpoint of governance, the intervention is structured as a public-led project embedded within the FSC 2014-2020 / Piano Sviluppo e Coesione framework of the Cagliari metropolitan area, under municipal responsibility. The executive project approved by the City Council defines a total investment framework of €10,943,000.00, of which €7,000,000.00 are covered by FSC resources and €3,375,000.00 by municipal resources. In methodological terms, this amount is used here as the estimated investment scale of the intervention, while the awarded amount for the works contract, equal to €6,875,775.05, remains the most directly traceable procurement figure for the construction phase.[38] [39]

In terms of proximity to the port, Via Roma operates not simply as a waterfront boulevard but as the urban frontage of the historic port. This condition is confirmed both by the temporary reorganisation of bus stops during the 2025 works, which directly affected the stops facing Molo Sanità and Molo Dogana, and by the Port Authority’s description of passenger services in the Via Roma area, where the passenger terminal is located approximately 400 metres from the sterile port zone.[40] [41]

[35] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 252/2022. “Piano Sviluppo e Coesione della Città Metropolitana di Cagliari - Centro intermodale di scambio e riqualificazione della Piazza Matteotti e della fascia centrale della Via Roma - CUP G23H20000040006 - Approvazione del progetto esecutivo,” November 25, 2022.
[36] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 252/2022.

[37] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 252/2022.
[38] Comune di Cagliari, Deliberazione della Giunta Comunale n. 252/2022.
[39] Comune di Cagliari, “Affidamento / aggiudicazione dei lavori relativi al waterfront di Via Roma e Piazza Matteotti,” 2023.
[40] Comune di Cagliari, “Fermate CTM temporaneamente inattive nella corsia centrale della Via Roma dal 6 febbraio,” February 5, 2025.
[41] Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mare di Sardegna, “Cagliari,” n.d.

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1km
Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

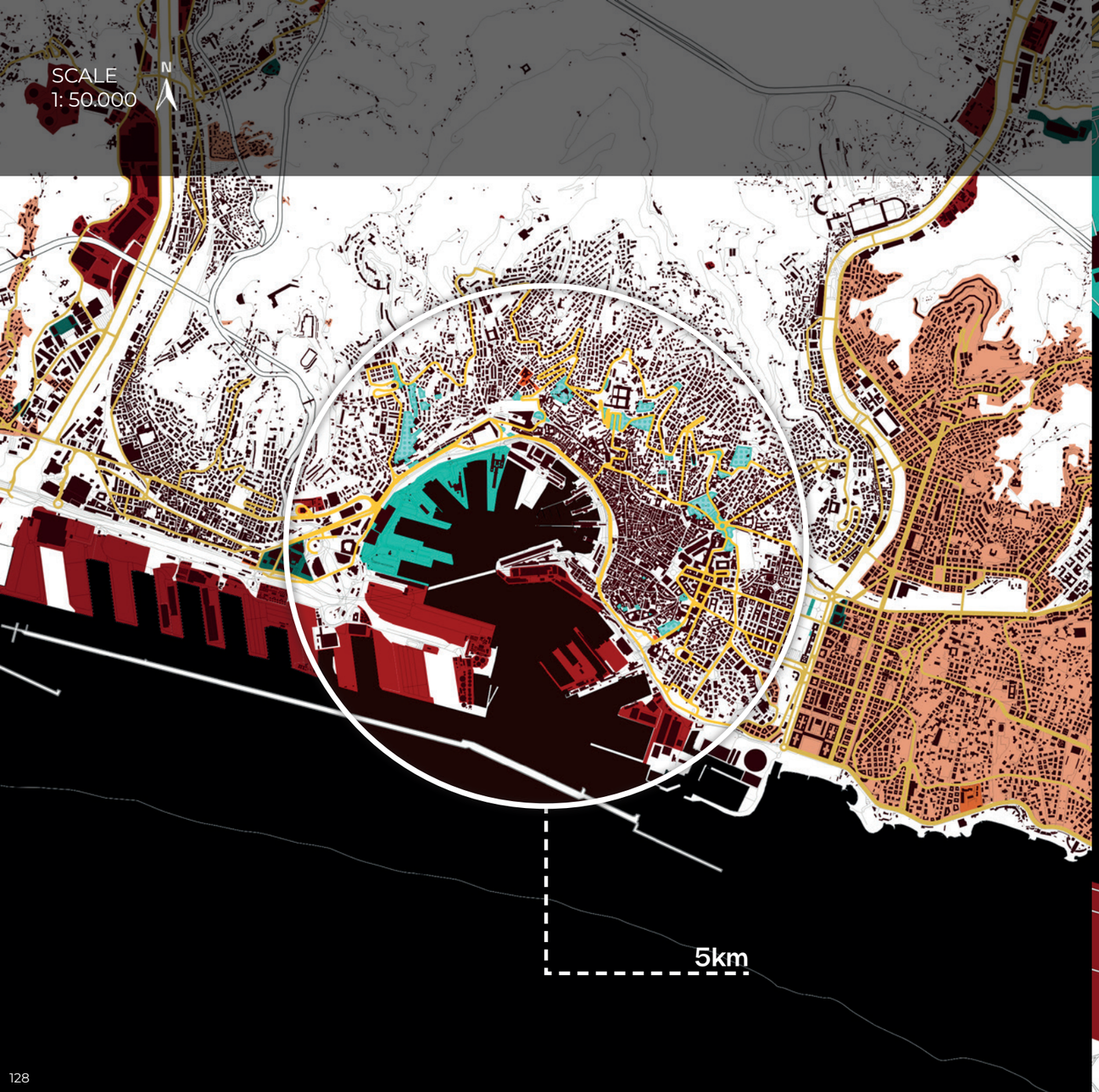
3.1.6

GENOVA
PORTO ANTICO

The redevelopment of Genoa's Porto Antico originated within the framework of the 1992 Columbus Celebrations, transforming the old harbour from a port back-of-house condition into a civic waterfront intended to reconnect the historic centre with the sea. Rather than remaining a temporary exhibition setting, the intervention evolved into a long-term urban renewal strategy.[42] From the standpoint of intervention type, Porto Antico is therefore best understood as an urban-port redevelopment rather than a linear promenade project. The operation combined the adaptive reuse of existing port structures, including the Magazzini del Cotone, the Millo, the Magazzini Doganali, and Porta Siberia, with new constructions such as the Aquarium, the Bigo, and the Piazza delle Feste. This mixed strategy extended the programme beyond the event cycle and consolidated the area as a permanent public destination.[43] The documented project timeline confirms this scale and complexity: Fondazione Renzo Piano reports design activity from 1985 to 1988 and construction from 1988 to 2001, with a site area of 116,500 m² and a total built area of 90,000 m². These dimensions place the intervention within large-scale waterfront redevelopment rather than limited streetscape requalification.[44]
In governance terms, the post-event consolidation of the area is institutionally tied to Porto Antico di Genova S.p.A., established on 30 December 1994 and operative from January 1995. According to its institutional profile, the company received in concession until 2050 all the spaces of the Porto Antico area, amounting to over 130,000 m², and today manages and develops the district through cultural, congress, leisure, and event-related functions.[45] [46] The City of Genoa defines Porto Antico di Genova S.p.A. as the entity that "manages, enhances and promotes" a space intended to be lived throughout the day, every day, describing the area as the contemporary point of conjunction between the sea and the historic centre. This confirms that the transformed waterfront is not an episodic event venue but a continuously accessible and institutionally managed urban environment.[47] In methodological terms, the most traceable financial datum concerns the post-1996 consolidation phase rather than the original total cost of the 1992 transformation. A municipal retrospective published for the twentieth anniversary of Porto Antico states that the area, structures, and buildings had been enhanced through cumulative investments amounting to €89 million. This figure is therefore used here as the estimated investment scale of the long-term valorisation and upgrading of the redeveloped district, not as a precise total cost of the entire project cycle.[48] Finally, proximity to the port is direct and constitutive: the case represents a condition in which port space is not displaced elsewhere, but selectively restructured into an urban waterfront while maintaining its identity as part of the harbour landscape.

[42] Renzo Piano Building Workshop, "Porto Antico di Genova," n.d.
[43] Fondazione Renzo Piano, "Porto Antico di Genova," n.d.; Renzo Piano Building Workshop, "Porto Antico di Genova."
[44] Fondazione Renzo Piano, "Porto Antico di Genova."

[45] Porto Antico di Genova S.p.A., "The Company," n.d.
[46] Porto Antico di Genova S.p.A., "The Company."
[47] Comune di Genova, "Porto Antico di Genova S.p.A.," September 8, 2025.
[48] Comune di Genova, "Vent'anni di Porto Antico. Vent'anni di storia di Genova," 2012.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Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

3.1.7

LIMASSOL

MOLOS PROMENADE

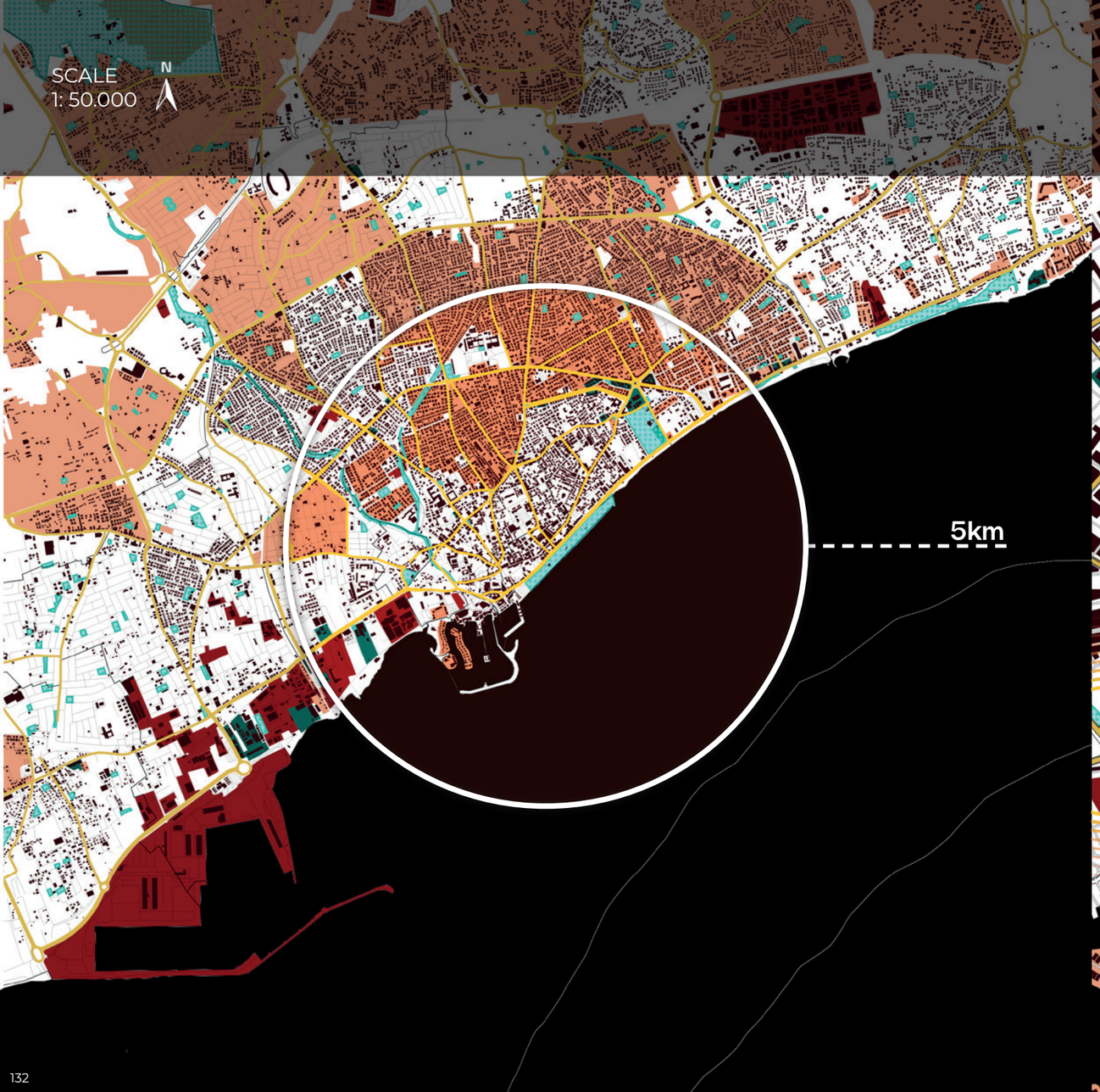
The Molos Promenade in Limassol is documented by Limassol Municipality as the reconstruction and reconfiguration of the western section of the city's seafront promenade, commonly referred to as the "mole" or reclaimed seafront, developed as a continuation of the coastal works inaugurated at Akti Olympion in 2006.[49] The intervention is framed as a corrective adjustment to a pre-existing seafront condition generated by earlier planning operations, requiring modifications capable of integrating the waterfront into an "integrated, unified design" aligned with the contemporary image of central Limassol.[50]

In terms of intervention type, the project is best understood as an urban promenade and landscape reorganisation intended to restore the functional relationship between the town centre and the sea through access points, spatial continuity, and the integration of existing public amenities, including fountains, sculptures, green areas, and play areas.[51] This positions the seafront as an infrastructural public-space system rather than as a port-logistics or terminal-expansion project.[52]

From a governance standpoint, the available institutional description places the intervention within a clearly public framework under municipal responsibility and explicitly states co-funding by the European Regional Development Fund within the 2007-2013 programming period of the Operational Programme "Competitiveness and Sustainable Development," oriented toward urban regeneration objectives.[53] In methodological terms, the figure of €12 million is used here as the estimated investment scale of the intervention, and the same municipal source records completion in February 2015.[54]

Finally, in terms of proximity to the port, the intervention is described as part of a wider seafront corridor that includes the widening of the Old Port area and, to the west, the Marina, while also referencing the planning of the Coastal Road (Aktaia Odos) toward the Limassol new port.[55] A complementary official tourism source describes the promenade and sculpture park as located next to the old Port of Limassol, reinforcing the reading of the project as structurally embedded in the city's port-edge waterfront rather than detached from port geographies.[56]

[49] Limassol Municipality, "Sea side Multi-functional Park," n.d.
[50] Limassol Municipality, "Sea side Multi-functional Park."
[51] Limassol Municipality, "Sea side Multi-functional Park."
[52] Visit Cyprus, "Multifunctional Seaside Park," n.d., https://www.visitcyprus.com/discover-cyprus/culture/sites-and-monuments/multifunctional-seaside-park/.
[53] Limassol Municipality, "Sea side Multi-functional Park."
[54] Limassol Municipality, "Sea side Multi-functional Park."
[55] Limassol Municipality, "Sea side Multi-functional Park."
[56] Visit Cyprus, "Multifunctional Seaside Park."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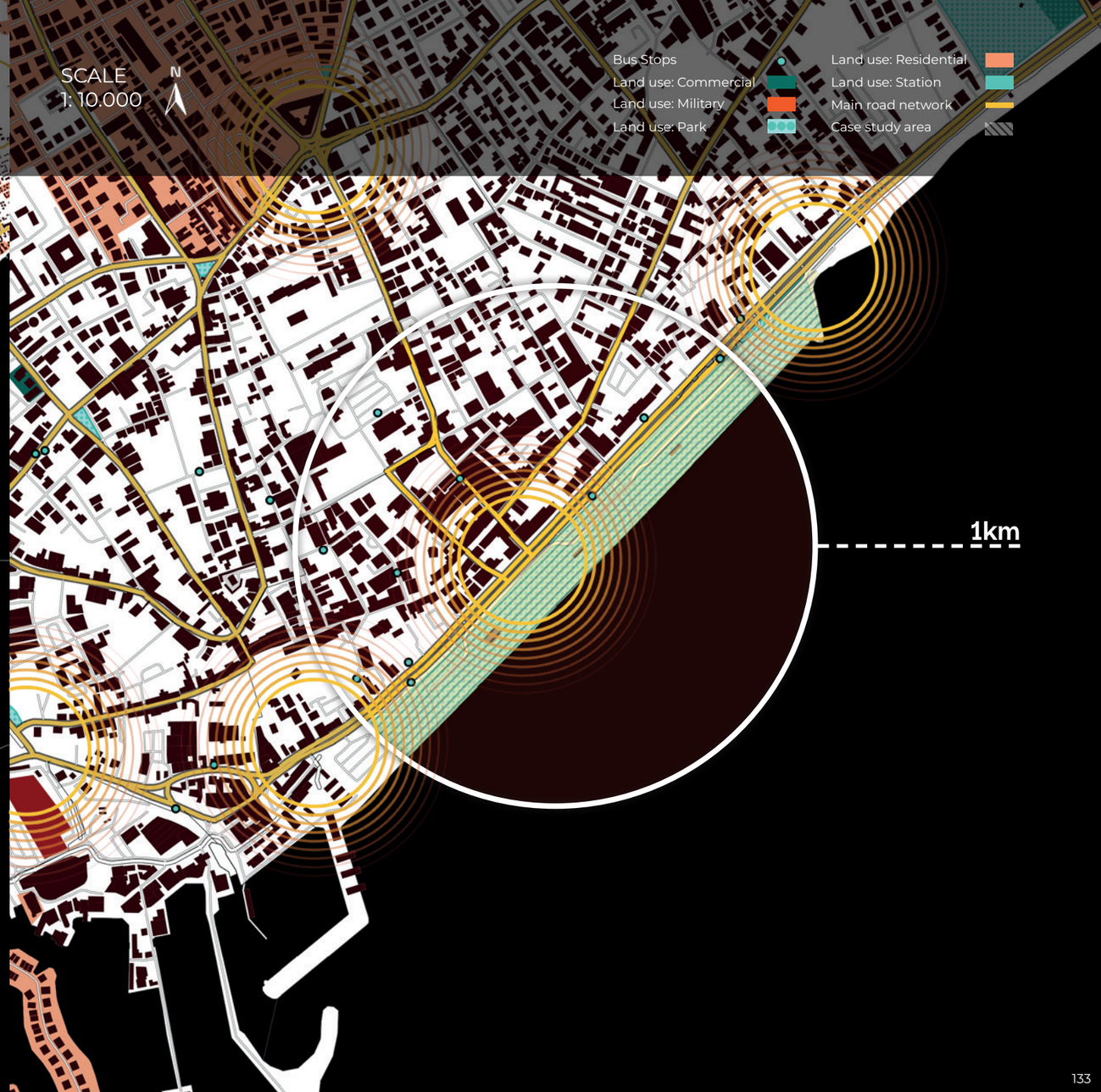
SCALE
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Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area
1km

3.1.8

MÁLAGA

PALMERAL DE LAS SORPRESAS

The redevelopment known as El Palmeral de las Sorpresas is the port-city interface intervention located on Málaga's Muelle 2, running parallel to Paseo de los Curas and opened to the public in 2011. As framed by the Port's own Puerto-Ciudad narrative, the project should not be understood as a detached waterfront park, but as the deliberate conversion of a port-edge quay into an urban promenade system. It consists of a walkable sequence beneath a palm grid and a linear pergola aligned with the dock, together with three pavilion-like buildings designed to preserve visual permeability between the city and the port frontage.[57] [58]

From the standpoint of governance, the intervention is explicitly anchored in inter-institutional agreement. The Port Authority states that the 2005 convenio between the Empresa Pública de Suelo de Andalucía and the Autoridad Portuaria de Málaga provided the administrative basis for the works on Muelle 2, and it identifies the Agencia de Vivienda y Rehabilitación de Andalucía as the body responsible for managing the Palmeral. This institutional setting is significant because the resulting space is hybrid by definition: while opened for civic use, it remains embedded within an operational port environment.[59]

This hybrid condition is also spatially and functionally explicit. Official port documentation states that the Palmeral contains one building for cruise-passenger traffic and two buildings for cultural or educational use, while the cruise information page further confirms that the area includes a dedicated berth for smaller cruise ships and a terminal located in the puerto-ciudad zone.[60]

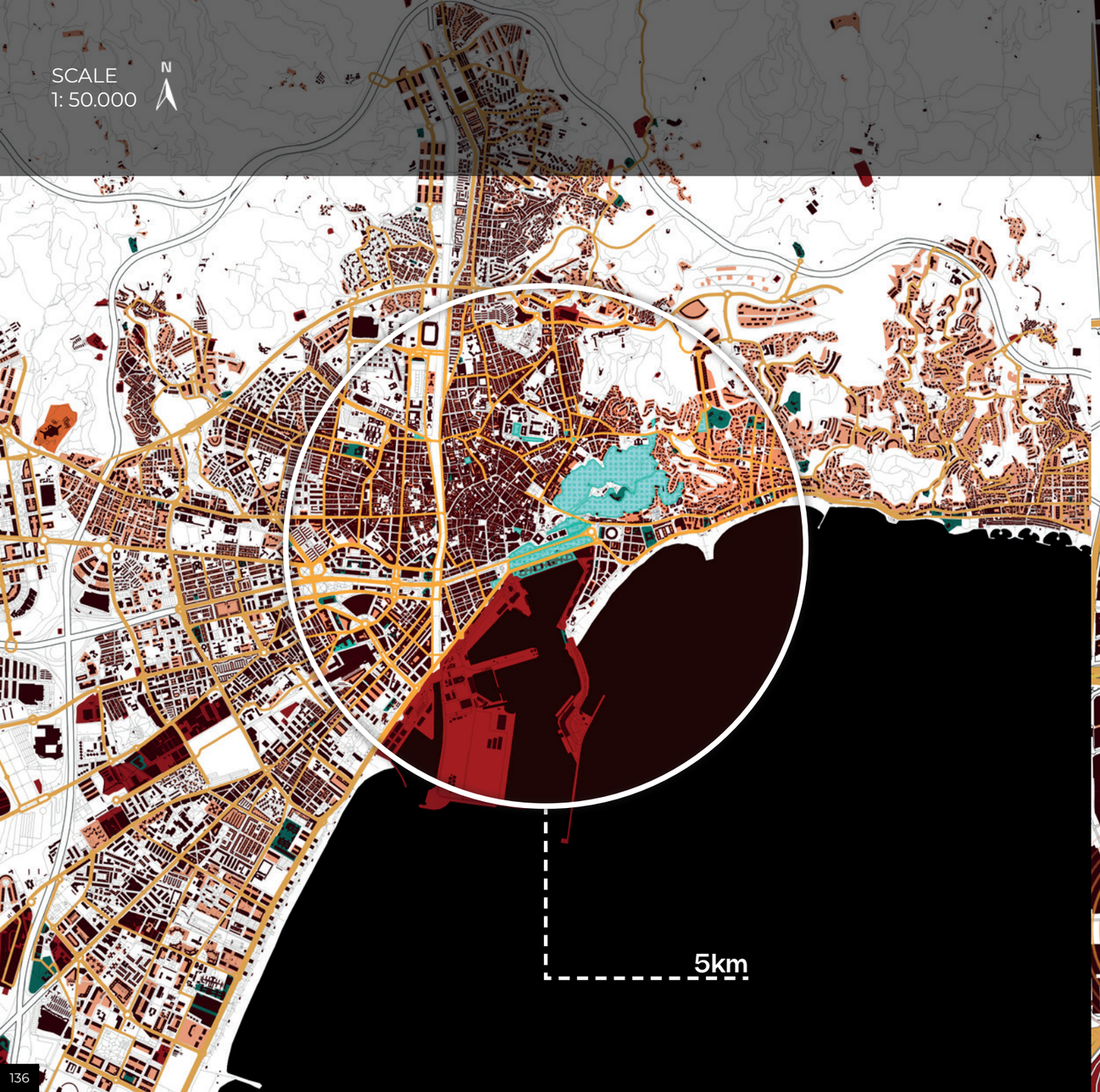
In methodological terms, the intervention is treated here as a medium-scale public-space investment within the port perimeter. Contemporaneous accounts of the 2011 opening reported an investment of €32.15 million. This figure is therefore used as the estimated investment scale of the intervention rather than as a claim of exact financial comparability with other cases in the matrix.[61]

In spatial terms, the dimensional structure of the intervention confirms the coexistence of civic and port functions. The Port Authority describes the Palmeral itself as approximately 26,700 m², while a Junta/EPSA document reports a total intervention area of 33,034 m², of which 26,700 m² correspond to the Palmeral de las Sorpresas and 6,334 m² remain allocated to operative port use.[62] This makes proximity to the port not a contextual condition but a constitutive one: the promenade is literally situated within the port perimeter and designed as a controlled coexistence between public accessibility and port security and operations.[63]

Finally, the project should not be reduced to a purely landscape action. Both port and cultural documentation describe the intervention as a coordinated package that combines the civic promenade with specific buildings and programmatic uses, including the cruise terminal, cultural space, and marine-education functions.[64]

[57] Autoridad Portuaria de Málaga, "Puerto-Ciudad," n.d.
[58] Autoridad Portuaria de Málaga, "Palmeral de las Sorpresas," n.d.
[59] Autoridad Portuaria de Málaga, "Puerto-Ciudad."

[60] Autoridad Portuaria de Málaga, "Cruceros," n.d.
[61] Junta de Andalucía, "El Palmeral de las Sorpresas / apertura al público e inversión del Muelle 2," March 18, 2011.
[62] Junta de Andalucía, "El Palmeral de las Sorpresas / apertura al público e inversión del Muelle 2."
[63] Autoridad Portuaria de Málaga, "Puerto-Ciudad."
[64] Junta de Andalucía, "Adjudicación de las obras de urbanización y edificación del Muelle 2 del Puerto de Málaga," October 4, 2006.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Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area
1km

3.1.9

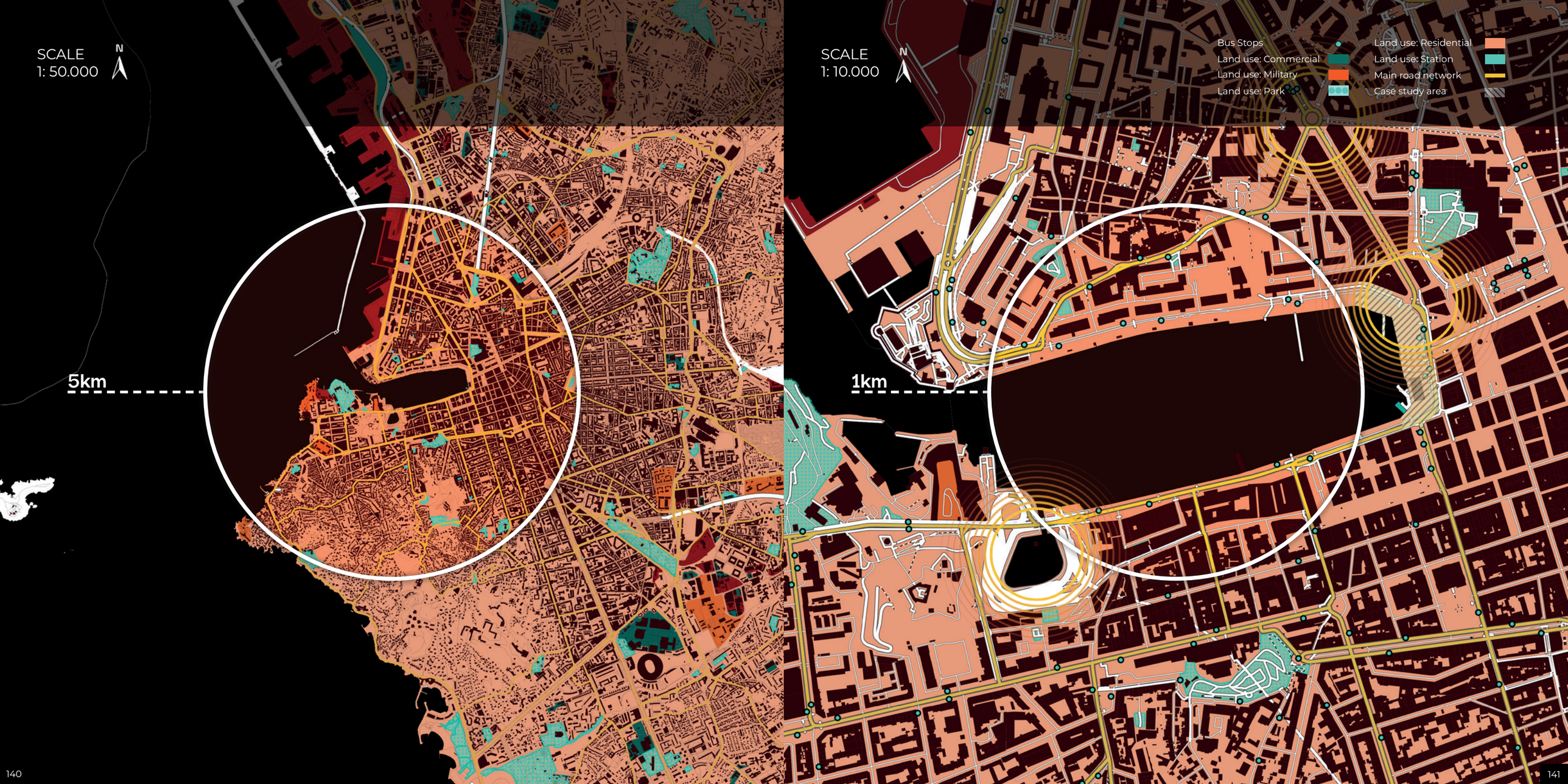
MARSEILLE

VIEUX-PORT

The reference intervention in Marseille is the redevelopment of the public realm of the Vieux-Port, delivered between 2011 and 2013 as a completed first phase structured around the requalification of the quaysides as a continuous civic promenade within the historic harbour basin.[65] The project is credited to a multidisciplinary team led by Michel Desvigne, with Foster + Partners and associated engineering and design consultants, and is explicitly framed as a transformation of the port-edge public realm rather than as an expansion of port infrastructure.[66]
In typological terms, the intervention is defined by semi-pedestrianisation and by the reorganisation of the waterfront surface. Project descriptions emphasise the drastic reduction of traffic, the clearing of the quays from obstacles and visual barriers, and the creation of a vast mineral public ground capable of making leisure boats compatible with unrestricted civic use and pedestrian enjoyment.[67]
The most recognisable architectural device within this public-space framework is the Ombrière at Quai de la Fraternité, a reflective stainless-steel canopy described by Foster + Partners as 46 by 22 metres and held at 6 metres above the ground. It functions as an open shelter and event surface within the reconfigured promenade and has been presented in local tourism documentation as inaugurated in March 2013, becoming a daily point of encounter within the semi-pedestrianised Vieux-Port.[68] [69]
In methodological terms, the technical record associated with the European Prize for Urban Public Space reports a total cost of €45,000,000 for the completed 2011-2013 phase, over an intervention area of 12,000 m². This figure is therefore used here as the estimated investment scale of the completed metropolitan public-space requalification phase, rather than as a claim of exact financial comparability with other projects in the matrix.[70]
Governance is documented as public. The same technical record identifies the developer as MPM Communauté urbaine Marseille Provence Métropole, Direction des Infrastructures, confirming a metropolitan authority-led delivery model rather than a private concession framework.[71]
Finally, proximity to the port is structural rather than contextual. The intervention operates within the Vieux-Port basin itself, since the promenade is produced by transforming the immediate quay surfaces of the old harbour into civic public space rather than by creating a separate waterfront park detached from port geographies.[72]

[65] Topos Magazine, “Winners of European Prize for Urban Public Space 2014,” April 2014, https://toposmagazine.com/winners-european-prize-urban-public-space-2014/.
[66] Topos Magazine, “Winners of European Prize for Urban Public Space 2014.”
[67] Foster + Partners, “Marseille Vieux Port,” April 29, 2014.
[68] Foster + Partners, “Marseille Vieux Port.”
[69] Office de Tourisme et des Congrès de Marseille, “Ombrière du Vieux Port,” n.d., https://www.marseille-tourisme.com/decouvrez-marseille/culture-et-patrimoine/ombriere-du-vieux-port-marseille-1er-fr-2799687/.

[70] Topos Magazine, “Winners of European Prize for Urban Public Space 2014.”
[71] Topos Magazine, “Winners of European Prize for Urban Public Space 2014.”
[72] Topos Magazine, “Winners of European Prize for Urban Public Space 2014.”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Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

3.1.10

NICE

PROMENADE DU PAILLON

In a Mediterranean coastal city such as Nice, the Promenade du Paillon is a deliberately atypical case within a waterfront-oriented comparative framework: it is not a redevelopment of the quay itself, yet it operates as a large-scale urban connector that re-stitches the historic centre to the seafront through a continuous public ground plane.[73] Rather than transforming the port edge, the project reorganises the inner city's relationship to the coast by means of a walkable, landscape-driven corridor explicitly described by the municipality as extending "to the sea."[74] This makes it relevant to the thesis as an infrastructural public-space operation that produces an intermediate condition between city centre and coastal frontage, while remaining predominantly non-commercial and institutionally framed as open civic landscape.[75] "Saison 1," inaugurated in 2013, established the Promenade du Paillon as a 12-hectare public landscape in the heart of Nice.[76] Municipal documentation states that the park occupies the sites of former infrastructural and vehicular spaces, including the ex-bus station, parking areas, square Leclerc, Espace Masséna, and Jardin Albert Ier, recomposed into a continuous green system between Vieux-Nice, the nineteenth-century city, and the contemporary centre.[77] The same institutional presentation emphasises a high-environmental-quality approach, with lawns, planted areas, water features, misting devices, playgrounds, and resting spaces set within a configuration deliberately removed from ordinary traffic conditions.[78] "Promenade du Paillon saison 2," publicly inaugurated on 18-19 October 2025, extends the system by an additional 8 hectares.[79] The extension consolidates the corridor logic at a metropolitan scale, reinforcing the project's role as everyday civic infrastructure rather than purely touristic spectacle.[80] From a typological standpoint, the overall operation is best described as a central-city landscape regeneration and ground-plane conversion project.[81] Although the port itself is not physically restructured, the corridor is explicitly framed through its continuity toward the sea.[82] The management model is public-sector led. The municipality presents the Promenade du Paillon as a major civic public-space operation, while the financial documentation for the extension confirms implementation through public budgeting and inter-institutional coordination, including a Convention de Maîtrise d'Ouvrage with the Métropole.[83] [84] In methodological terms, the amount documented for the prolongation works in the 2024 financial reporting is treated here as the traceable investment scale of the extension phase, while Région Sud reports an overall cost of approximately €94 million for the enlarged operation, including more than €33 million financed by the Region.[85] [86] Finally, in terms of proximity to the port, the Promenade du Paillon must be understood as a strong central-city public-space transformation with coastal continuity rather than as a project operating inside port territory.[87] It extends toward the seafront and contributes to the civic reconnection of central Nice with the coast, yet it does not function within the port perimeter itself.[88]

[73] Ville de Nice, "La Promenade du Paillon," n.d.
[74] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024 (Nice: Ville de Nice, 2025), n.p.
[75] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[76] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[77] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[78] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[79] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[80] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[81] Ville de Nice, "La Promenade du Paillon."
[82] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[83] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[84] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[85] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.
[86] Région Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, "La Région Sud accompagne la transformation durable du territoire niçois," n.d.
[87] Ville de Nice, "La Promenade du Paillon."
[88] Ville de Nice, Rapport de présentation du Compte financier unique 2024.

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Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

3.1.11

SPLIT

RIVA WATERFRONT

The reference intervention in Split corresponds to the reconstruction of the Riva waterfront promenade, completed in 2007 and credited to 3LHD, as documented by both the EUmies archive and the project's own architectural record.[89] The intervention does not constitute a port-infrastructure upgrade or a port-district redevelopment; rather, it is a civic ground-plane reconfiguration of an already established urban waterfront frontage directly facing the harbour basin.

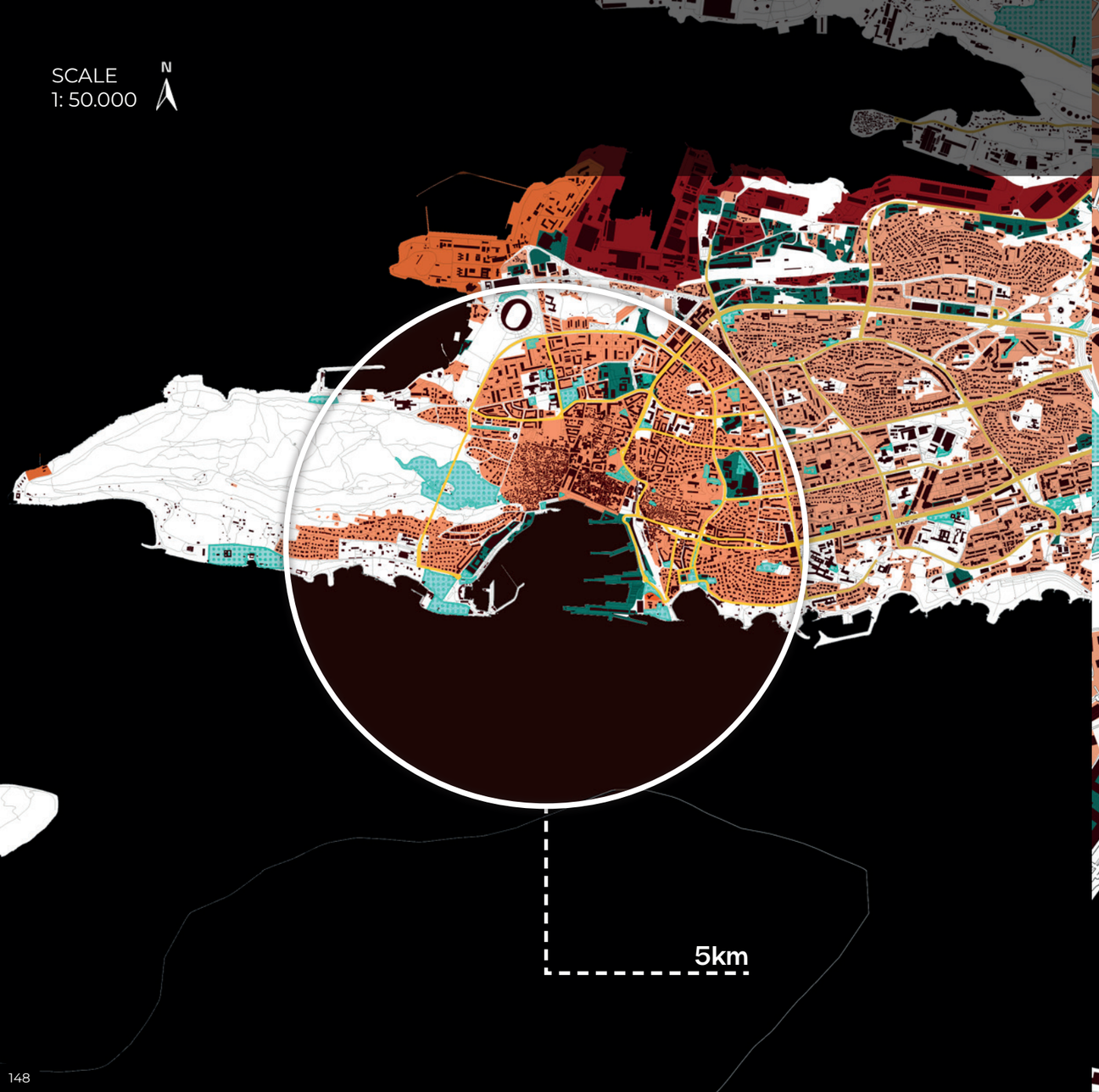
Developed between 2005 and 2007, with construction carried out between 2006 and 2007, the project is located along Obala hrvatskog narodnog preporoda and is defined by a site area of 25,972 m² and a built footprint of 14,053 m². The same project documentation identifies the City of Split as the client, confirming the intervention as a clearly delimited public-realm operation delivered under municipal governance.[90]

From the standpoint of intervention type, the project is best understood as the pedestrian reconfiguration of an existing urban coastal axis. The architectural strategy operates through the redesign of the promenade surface and the renewal of the underlying infrastructure, consolidating the Riva as a continuous pedestrian platform directly facing the harbour basin and capable of accommodating everyday use as well as processions, festivals, celebrations, and political gatherings.[91]

In methodological terms, the figure reported by 3LHD for the completed project amounts to 62 million kuna. For comparability within the euro-based matrix of this chapter, this corresponds to approximately €8.23 million when converted using the fixed rate of 1 EUR = 7.53450 HRK. This amount is therefore used here as the estimated investment scale of the intervention rather than as a claim of financial precision beyond the available project record.[92]

Finally, in terms of proximity to the port, the relationship is direct and constitutive. The legal delimitation of the Port of Split includes the land section of the city port basin up to the junction of Obala Lazareta and Obala hrvatskog narodnog preporoda, which places the Riva within the immediate coastal perimeter of the port basin itself.[93]

[89] Fundació Mies van der Rohe, "Riva Waterfront Split," 2009.
[90] 3LHD, "Riva Split – New Look," May 7, 2007, https://www.3lhd.com/en/news/riva-split---new-look/.
[91] 3LHD, "Riva Split – New Look"; Fundació Mies van der Rohe, "Riva Waterfront Split," 2009.
[92] 3LHD, "Riva Split – New Look"; European Central Bank, "Croatia to Join the Euro Area on 1 January 2023," July 12, 2022.
[93] Lučka uprava Split, Legal Definition and Delimitation of the Port Area of Split (Split: Lučka uprava Split, 1997).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Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area
1km

3.1.12

TEL-AVIV

TEL-AVIV PORT

Tel Aviv Port occupies a coastal site at the northern edge of the historic urban shoreline and today functions as a mixed-use public waterfront within the broader Tel Aviv-Yafo coastline. In institutional terms, the port currently falls within the urban coastal system managed and developed by the Atarim Group, the municipal corporation responsible for the Tel Aviv-Yafo coastline and its major seafront sites.[94]

The reference intervention considered here is the Tel Aviv Port Public Space Regeneration, developed through an open competition held in 2003 and completed in 2008. Architectural documentation describes the project as the transformation of a former working-port surface, neglected since the port's operational docking role had been abandoned in 1965, into a continuous public platform.[95]

Rather than operating through volumetric redevelopment or port-infrastructure expansion, the intervention restructures the former port ground into a deliberately non-hierarchical pedestrian surface. The project record repeatedly defines this surface through an extensive undulating timber deck, conceived both as a reference to the site's dune-like topography and as an open framework able to accommodate unstructured collective use, informal gathering, and public activity.[96]

From a typological standpoint, the intervention is best understood as a port-ground conversion into public realm. It does not reorganise an existing civic boulevard, nor does it correspond to a landmark-led marina redevelopment of the kind associated with large event-driven waterfront cycles. Instead, it consolidates a former port surface as a continuous public waterfront platform. From a governance perspective, the case reflects an institutionally mixed condition: while the port now forms part of the coastline managed by Atarim, project documentation identifies Marine Trust Ltd. as the client of the regeneration works.[97]

In methodological terms, the most consistent project record reports a site area of approximately 55,000 m² and a budget of €4,000,000 for the public-space regeneration works. This amount is therefore used here as the estimated investment scale of the intervention itself, rather than as a claim about the wider commercial redevelopment cycle of the port.[98]

Finally, proximity to the port is direct and constitutive. The intervention operates within the former port domain itself, directly on the waterfront line, meaning that public space is produced through the reprogramming of port territory rather than through adjacency to an active civic street-fronting edge. In comparative terms, Tel Aviv is therefore classified as a port-domain public conversion under mixed governance, at moderate investment scale, and in immediate coastal contact.

[94] Atarim Group, "The Tel Aviv-Yafo Coastline," n.d.
[95] Mayslits Kassif Architects, "Tel Aviv Port Public Space Regeneration," n.d.
[96] Landezine, "Tel Aviv Port Public Space Regeneration by Mayslits Kassif Architects," n.d.

[97] proHolz Austria, "Tel-Aviv Port," n.d.
[98] Landezine, "Tel Aviv Port Public Space Regeneration by Mayslits Kassif Architects."

SCALE
1: 50.000

N

5km

SCALE
1: 10.000

N

1km

Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

3.1.13

THESSALONIKI

NEA PARALIA WATERFRONT

The regeneration of Thessaloniki's Nea Paralia represents one of the most substantial municipality-led waterfront transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean during the early twenty-first century. Unlike port-district redevelopments structured around logistics conversion or cruise-infrastructure expansion, the project operates as a large-scale urban landscape intervention focused on consolidating civic continuity along an already urbanised coastal frontage. The process originated in an international architectural competition launched by the Municipality of Thessaloniki in 2000, establishing from the outset a governance framework rooted in public initiative and design quality rather than speculative development mechanisms.[99]
Construction began in 2006 and the redevelopment was completed in 2013, resulting in the restructuring of approximately 238,800 m² of seafront public space. The technical project record also reports a unit cost of €146.56 per m² for the intervention, corresponding to an overall estimated investment scale of approximately €35 million when applied to the documented surface. The intervention articulates the waterfront as a continuous pedestrian and cycling promenade structured through a sequence of thematic gardens and open-air civic rooms. Rather than introducing iconic buildings or reprogramming port basins, the project operates primarily at ground-plane level through planting systems, shading devices, surface continuity, and programmed nodes that recalibrate the interface between city and sea.[100]

The governance model remains explicitly public. The competition origin, the implementation framework, and the current municipal presentation of the waterfront confirm a public commissioning structure and a civic management regime consistent with a non-ticketed, everyday public realm.[101]
Spatially, Nea Paralia develops east of the historic centre, while the Port of Thessaloniki extends westward along the Thermaic Gulf. Using the White Tower as the conventional hinge of the city's seafront and the port installations as the operational reference, the intervention lies in clear urban adjacency to the port system while remaining outside its active operational perimeter.[102]

[99] Municipality of Thessaloniki, competition documentation for the New Waterfront of Thessaloniki, 2000.
[100] Biennial of Public Space, "New Waterfront of Thessaloniki," n.d.

[101] Municipality of Thessaloniki, "The Waterfront of Thessaloniki," n.d.
[102] Port of Thessaloniki, "About ThPA S.A.," n.d.

SCALE
1: 50.000

N

5km

SCALE
1: 10.000

N

1km

Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area

3.1.14

VALENCIA

LA MARINA / VELES E VENTS

Valencia's waterfront transformation within La Marina de València is structured around the conversion of the former America's Cup inner harbour into a publicly accessible port basin regulated through urban-planning instruments. The planning framework was formalised through the Plan Especial de la Marina Real Juan Carlos I, placed on public display by the City of Valencia in 2013 in order to reorganise uses and intensities within the transferred port land.[103]

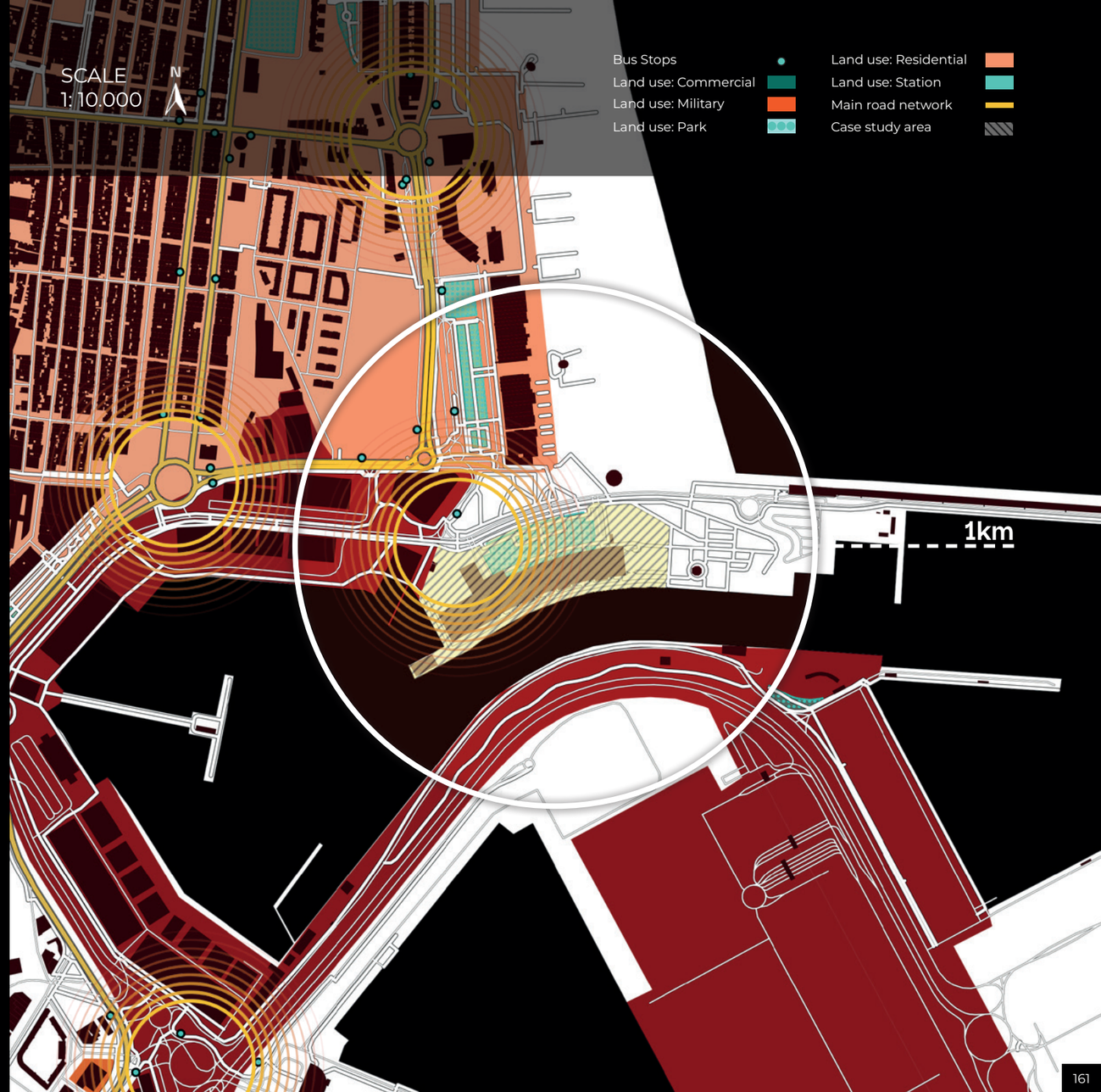
Within this system, Veles e Vents functions as the architectural hinge of the marina. Official project documentation identifies the building as a commission for Consorcio Valencia 2007, completed in 2006 after the 2005 competition, and conceived as a public-facing landmark linking elevated decks, event functions, and the water basin.[104]

The governance model reflects a public-institutional structure rather than a conventional municipal public-space regime. La Marina operates within port public domain under the authority of Valenciaport, and official port documentation confirms that the occupation and management of spaces are regulated through concessions and administrative authorisations embedded in port governance. This also confirms that proximity to the port is constitutive rather than contextual: La Marina is not a detached waterfront redevelopment outside the harbour system, but a public-facing transformation operating within port territory and under port-authority jurisdiction.[105]

In methodological terms, the most traceable figure directly associated with the reference intervention is the €42,186,393.05 budget reported for the Foredeck / Veles e Vents works commissioned by Consorcio Valencia 2007. This amount is therefore used here as the estimated investment scale of the landmark-plus-public-realm intervention associated with the America's Cup cycle, rather than as the total cost of the long-term transformation of La Marina as a whole.[106]

[103] Ajuntament de València, "Información pública del Plan Especial de la Marina Real Juan Carlos I y su Estudio de Integración Paisajística (octubre 2013)," 2013.
[104] David Chipperfield Architects, "America's Cup Building 'Veles e Vents,'" n.d.; Consorcio Valencia 2007, "Foredeck / Veles e Vents," n.d.
[105] Valenciaport, "Marina Port Valencia S.L.," n.d.
[106] Consorcio Valencia 2007, "Foredeck / Veles e Vents."

SCALE
1: 50.000
N
5km


SCALE
1: 10.000
N
Bus Stops
Land use: Commercial
Land use: Military
Land use: Park
Land use: Residential
Land use: Station
Main road network
Case study area
1km

3.2 SCORING CRITERIA AND COMPARATIVE READING

The fourteen case studies presented in the previous section define a broad comparative field through which different Mediterranean waterfront transformations can be read in relation to the Cagliari benchmark. At this stage, the aim is not yet to interpret publicness directly, nor to establish a hierarchy of “better” or “worse” projects. Rather, the purpose is to consolidate the descriptive evidence gathered across the cases into a common analytical framework structured by the four variables already introduced in Section 3.1: type of intervention, estimated investment scale, governance and management structure, and spatial relationship to the operational port infrastructure.

This choice is necessary because waterfront projects that may appear similar at the level of image, promenade design, or civic rhetoric often operate under very different structural conditions. In port cities, the waterfront rarely functions as a neutral urban edge; more often, it acts as an interface where aspirations for accessibility and public use encounter port logics of operational control, security, and institutional separation.[107] Spaces that may appear equally open in formal terms can therefore be produced, regulated, and accessed through very different spatial and administrative arrangements.[108]

More broadly, these interventions should be understood as episodes within longer processes of port-city transformation, layered onto pre-existing urban, infrastructural, and maritime structures.[109]

The matrices introduced below are intended to clarify these differences rather than to flatten them. Matrix 1 functions as a descriptive comparative grid, placing all fourteen projects within the same interpretative field and making their position visible in relation to the four selected variables. Matrix 2 introduces a simplified ordinal scoring system in order to measure the degree of structural similarity between each project and the benchmark case of Cagliari. The scoring logic is intentionally simple and transparent: for each criterion, 1 indicates the condition furthest from the benchmark logic, 3 an intermediate condition, and 5 the condition most closely aligned with it. The maximum possible score is therefore 20. The four criteria are scored as follows. For type of intervention, 1 corresponds to port redevelopment or large-scale waterfront / landmark intervention, 3 to urban promenade and public space along the coastline, and 5 to pedestrianisation and reorganisation of an existing urban coastal axis. For estimated investment scale, 1 corresponds to interventions above €60 million, 3 to interventions between €20 and €60 million, and 5 to interventions between €5 and €20 million. For governance and management structure, 1 corresponds to private governance, 3 to mixed or semi-public governance, and 5 to public governance. For port proximity, 1 corresponds to distant or no functional relationship with the port, 3 to urban coastal proximity to the port, and 5 to direct adjacency to or location within the port area.

The role of this scoring system is not evaluative. It does not measure publicness directly, nor does

“SOCIAL SPACE IS A SOCIAL PRODUCT.”

-LEFEBVRE

[107] Hoyle, “Cities and Ports: Concepts and Issues,” 263-78.
[108] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 188-90.
[109] Carola Hein, “Port Cityscapes: Conference and Research Contributions on Port Cities,” Planning Perspectives 31, no. 2 (2016): 314–321.

it express a judgement of architectural quality. Its function is to make structural similarities and divergences more explicit across cases that might otherwise appear comparable only at the level of urban image.[110] In this sense, the comparison privileges the institutional and spatial conditions through which accessibility, use, and regulation are produced, rather than formal resemblance alone.[111] As discussed in Section 3.1, the investment variable is used here in an estimative sense, as an indicator of the scale and complexity of the reference intervention adopted in each case rather than as a claim of exact financial comparability.

Likewise, port proximity is understood not simply as a geographic condition, but as an indicator of the extent to which public space remains shaped by active port regimes, operational requirements, and institutional boundaries.[112] Waterfront interventions may therefore share comparable formal features while occupying very different positions within the historical and spatial restructuring of the port-city interface.[113] Read in this way, the matrices do not reduce the complexity of the cases; they make that complexity comparable. Their role is methodological and selective: they establish a commensurable field of comparison through which the initial cluster of projects can later be narrowed without confusing visual resemblance with structural similarity.[114]

With Matrix 2, the chapter moves from descriptive comparison to an explicit assessment of structural similarity. The scoring system is intentionally simple (1-3-5) and directly tied to the four variables introduced earlier in the chapter, so that similarity is not asserted rhetorically but made legible through transparent criteria. Within this framework, Cagliari remains the benchmark reference and is not itself “selected” by the matrix; rather, the matrix is used to identify the cases that most closely align with the benchmark condition.

The results reveal a clear clustering. Cagliari reaches the reference maximum of 20. Two comparative cases match that same level of structural alignment: Split - Riva Waterfront (20) and Alicante - Explanada de España (20). These are followed by a second tier of high alignment, including Marseille - Vieux-Port (18), Málaga - Palmeral de las Sorpresas (18), and Limassol - Molos Promenade (18). Together, these results confirm that the most comparable cases are those in which the intervention primarily reconfigures the urban seafront as civic public space, while the relationship to the port remains active as a spatial and institutional conditioning factor rather than disappearing through full detachment or large-scale redevelopment.[115]

From a methodological standpoint, this confirms the usefulness of the four-variable grid. The matrix does not function as a ranking of quality, nor does it measure publicness directly. Its role is to clarify why certain waterfronts are structurally comparable to the benchmark condition and why others are not. In this sense, the comparison identifies a field of cases in which publicness is not assumed as an automatic property of

[110] Hoyle, “Cities and Ports: Concepts and Issues,” 263-78.
[111] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 188-90.
[112] Hoyle, “Cities and Ports: Concepts and Issues,” 263-78.
[113] Carola Hein, “Port Cityscapes: Conference and Research Contributions on Port Cities,” Planning Perspectives 31, no. 2 (2016): 314–321.
[114] Hoyle, “Cities and Ports: Concepts and Issues,” 263-78.
[115] Hoyle, “Cities and Ports: Concepts and Issues,” 263-78.

ALEXANDRIA

PROJECT NAME: Bibliotheca Alexandrina
YEAR OF PROJECT: 1995–2001
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Port redevelopment or large-scale waterfront or landmark intervention
COST ESTIMATION: approx. US$200 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public / institutional (Egyptian State and UNESCO)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: approx. 1 km – historic harbour

ATHENS

PROJECT NAME: Piraeus Passenger Port and Cruise Terminal Expansion
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2013–2020
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Port redevelopment or large-scale waterfront or infrastructure intervention
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €120 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (Piraeus Port Authority)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – port infrastructure

CAGLIARI

PROJECT NAME: Waterfront Redevelopment of Via Roma
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2022–ongoing
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Pedestrianisation and reorganisation of an existing urban coastal axis
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €10.9 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (Municipality of Cagliari)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – directly adjacent to the port

LIMASSOL

PROJECT NAME: Molos Seaside Promenade
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2010–2015
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Urban promenade and public space along the coastline
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €12 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (Municipality of Limassol, EU co-funded)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0–300 m – adjacent to port areas

MALAGA

PROJECT NAME: Palmeral de las Sorpresas (Muelle 2)
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2008–2011
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Pedestrianisation and reorganisation of an existing urban coastal axis
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €32 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (Port Authority of Málaga)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – port area

MARSEILLE

PROJECT NAME: Vieux-Port Redevelopment
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2010–2013
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Pedestrianisation and reconfiguration of the historic port waterfront
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €45 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (City of Marseille / State agencies)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – historic port basin

SPLIT

PROJECT NAME: Riva Waterfront Redevelopment
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2005–2007
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Pedestrianisation and reorganisation of an existing urban coastal axis
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €8 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (City of Split)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – directly facing the port basin

TEL-AVIV

PROJECT NAME: Tel Aviv Port Redevelopment (Namal Tel Aviv)
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2003–2011
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Conversion of an obsolete port into a public waterfront and leisure district
COST ESTIMATION: approx. 4 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Semi-public dedicated management company
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – former port area

ALICANTE

PROJECT NAME: Explanada de España – Recent Redevelopment Phase
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2023
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Pedestrianisation and reorganisation of an existing urban coastal axis
COST ESTIMATION : approx. €3.1 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (Municipality of Alicante)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – directly adjacent to the port

BARCELONA

PROJECT NAME: Port Vell / Moll de la Fusta Redevelopment
YEAR OF PROJECT: 1988–1992
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Port redevelopment or large-scale waterfront intervention
COST ESTIMATION : approx. €86 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public, Port Authority–led consortium
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – historic port

GENOVA

PROJECT NAME: Porto Antico Redevelopment (Expo '92)
YEAR OF PROJECT: 1988–1992
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Port redevelopment or large-scale waterfront intervention
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €89 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public / semi-public (Port Authority and municipal company)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – inside the historic port

NICE

PROJECT NAME: Promenade du Paillon
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2011–2013 (Phase 1), 2016–2022 (extensions)
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Urban promenade and public space along the coastline
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €94 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (City of Nice)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: approx. 1.5–2 km – not port-related

THESSALONIKI

PROJECT NAME: New Waterfront of Thessaloniki (Nea Paralia)
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2008–2013
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Linear urban waterfront promenade and public space system
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €335 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public (Municipality of Thessaloniki)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: approx. 3 km – no direct port relationship

VALENCIA

PROJECT NAME: La Marina de València / America's Cup Waterfront
YEAR OF PROJECT: 2004–2007
TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Port redevelopment or large-scale waterfront intervention
COST ESTIMATION: approx. €42 million
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT: Public consortium (Port Authority with local and regional government)
DISTANCE FROM THE PORT: 0 m – port and marina

ALEXANDRIA

PROJECT NAME:
Bibliotheca Alexandrina

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	1
COST SCORE:	1
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	3
TOTAL:	10

ATHENS

PROJECT NAME:
Piraeus Passenger Port and Cruise Terminal Expansion

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	1
COST SCORE:	1
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	12

CAGLIARI

PROJECT NAME:
Waterfront Redevelopment of Via Roma

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	5
COST SCORE:	5
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	20

LIMASSOL

PROJECT NAME:
Molos Seaside Promenade

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	3
COST SCORE:	5
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	18

MALAGA

PROJECT NAME:
Palmeral de las Sorpresas (Muelle 2)

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	5
COST SCORE:	3
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	18

MARSEILLE

PROJECT NAME:
Vieux-Port Redevelopment

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	5
COST SCORE:	3
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	18

SPLIT

PROJECT NAME:
Riva Waterfront Redevelopment

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	5
COST SCORE:	5
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	20

TEL-AVIV

PROJECT NAME:
Tel Aviv Port Redevelopment (Namal Tel Aviv)

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	1
COST SCORE:	5
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	3
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	14

ALICANT

PROJECT NAME:
Explanada de España – Recent Redevelopment

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	5
COST SCORE:	5
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	20

BARCELONA

PROJECT NAME:
Port Vell / Moll de la Fusta Redevelopment

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	1
COST SCORE:	1
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	3
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	10

GENOVA

PROJECT NAME:
Porto Antico Redevelopment (Expo '92)

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	1
TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	1
TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	3
TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	10

NICE

PROJECT NAME:
Promenade du Paillon

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	3
COST SCORE:	1
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	1
TOTAL:	10

THESSALONIKI

PROJECT NAME:
New Waterfront of Thessaloniki (Nea Paralia)

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	3
COST SCORE:	3
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	5
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	1
TOTAL:	12

VALENCIA

PROJECT NAME:
La Marina de València / America's Cup Waterfront

TYPE OF INTERVENTION SCORE:	1
COST SCORE:	3
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT SCORE:	3
PORT PROXIMITY SCORE:	5
TOTAL:	12

“NO SPACE EVER VANISHES UTTERLY, LEAVING NO TRACE.”

-LEFEBVRE

open-looking waterfront form, but is instead negotiated under specific conditions of governance, access, and port-city interface.
The final selection for the thesis therefore follows a two-step logic consistent with the method established in this chapter. The first filter is structural similarity to the benchmark, as demonstrated by Matrix 2. The second filter is analytical feasibility and information and documentation availability. On this basis, the thesis proceeds with three cases: Cagliari as benchmark, Split as the case of highest structural coherence, and Málaga as a case of high coherence. The exclusion of Alicante, despite its maximum score, is not an interpretative judgement against the case itself; it is a methodological decision based on the need to maintain homogeneous analytical conditions across the selected cases. Where equivalent mapping, documentation, and reconstruction cannot be guaranteed with sufficient stability, comparison risks becoming uneven and descriptive rather than genuinely interpretative.
This comparative selection prepares the critical revision developed in Chapter 4. Split and Málaga are therefore not introduced as parallel case studies to be analysed at the same level as Via Roma, but as selective references through which specific spatial mechanisms observed in Cagliari can be clarified. Their role is to support the transition from analytical diagnosis to strategic recalibration, helping to situate Via Roma within a broader Mediterranean field without displacing it as the central object of the thesis.

3.3 FROM COMPARATIVE READING TO OPERATIVE REFERENCES

Building on the shades of publicness identified in Chapter 2, this section returns to Split[116] and Málaga[117] through a focused comparative reading. Their historical, dimensional, institutional, and spatial conditions have already been introduced in the case profiles; here, the comparison is used to clarify how the two projects help refine the questions raised by Via Roma. For this reason, Split and Málaga are not treated as equivalent case studies, nor as models to be transferred directly to Cagliari. They operate instead as selective references through which specific spatial mechanisms can be observed more clearly: access and thresholds, permanence and material support, movement and programme.
From this perspective, the comparative reading remains close to the interpretative concerns developed in Chapter 2 and examines how publicness becomes operative through access, staying, commercial activity, climatic comfort, visual openness, and everyday use.
Split’s Riva foregrounds a condition of civic immediacy. The narrow streets of the historic fabric open directly onto a continuous waterfront ground, where the transition between city and sea is direct, visible, and spatially legible.
This condition strengthens the perception of the harbour as part of everyday urban life and allows movement, pause, commercial frontage, event space, and collective exposure to overlap within the same civic surface. Permanence is supported through material devices such as benches, café terraces, sunscreens, paving, and vegetation, which stabilise occupation without fragmenting

[116] Domagoj Blažević, photograph of Riva Split Waterfront, in 3LHD, “Riva Split Waterfront,” Archinect, https://archinect.com/3LHD/project/riva-split-waterfront.
[117] Arquitectura Viva, “Promenade and Palm Grove, Málaga - Junquera Arquitectos,” https://arquitecturaviva.com/works/el-palmeral-de-las-sorpresas-0.

the promenade into isolated functional zones.[118] In this sense, the Riva clarifies how publicness can be reinforced when access, spatial openness, programme, and ordinary occupation converge on a shared urban ground.[119]

Málaga's Palmeral de las Sorpresas articulates a different condition. Rather than concentrating access, permanence, and programme within a single civic surface, it organises them through a more mediated and sequential waterfront structure. As part of the wider port-city transformation of Málaga, the Palmeral contributes to the reorganisation of the relationship between the urban fabric and the port edge.[120] Access is lateral and progressive, supported by visual permeability and by the continuity of the pedestrian route. Permanence is produced through the repeated coordination of spatial devices: the pergola, palm grid, seating areas, planted surfaces, and commercial edges provide climatic comfort and give consistency to the linear promenade. Movement and programme unfold as a sequence, where walking, pausing, consuming, and observing are distributed along the waterfront rather than concentrated in a single field.[121]

Read together, Split and Málaga clarify two complementary ways in which Mediterranean waterfronts can support public life. Split shows the value of civic immediacy, where the waterfront becomes publicly legible through the direct reinforcement between city access, maritime visibility, commercial frontage, pause devices, and event space. Málaga shows the value of sequential support, where a more mediated waterfront becomes inhabitable through recurring devices that accompany movement and sustain permanence, comfort, activity, and visual relation with the port. These two conditions are particularly useful when returning to Via Roma. The Cagliari waterfront already possesses strong longitudinal continuity, yet its transversal relation with the city remains less direct; it includes programmed and landscaped areas, yet the rhythm between movement, pause, support, and use remains uneven; it is visually open and pedestrian, yet ordinary permanence depends on material devices that require clearer spatial coordination.[122]

The operative value of the comparison lies in the questions it makes possible for the critical revision of Via Roma. How can a waterfront that already functions as a promenade strengthen its legibility as civic ground between the portico side, the central strip, and the maritime edge? How can movement along the promenade become a clearer sequence of public episodes? Which devices can support more stable forms of publicness by combining access, seating, climatic comfort, commercial activity, vegetation, visual openness, and small-scale infrastructure? The following matrix synthesises these questions by relating the spatial issues identified in Via Roma to the comparative mechanisms observed in Split and Málaga, and by translating them into operative implications for the project revision developed in Chapter 4.

[118] 3LHD, "Riva Split Waterfront," https://www.3lhd.com/en/project/riva-split-waterfront/.
[119] Analytical observation by the author based on available visual documentation and comparative drawing of Split's Riva Waterfront.
[120] Autoridad Portuaria de Málaga, "Puerto-Ciudad," n.d., https://www.puertomalaga.com/en/port-city/.
[121] Arquitectura Viva, "Promenade and Palm Grove, Málaga - Junquera Arquitectos."

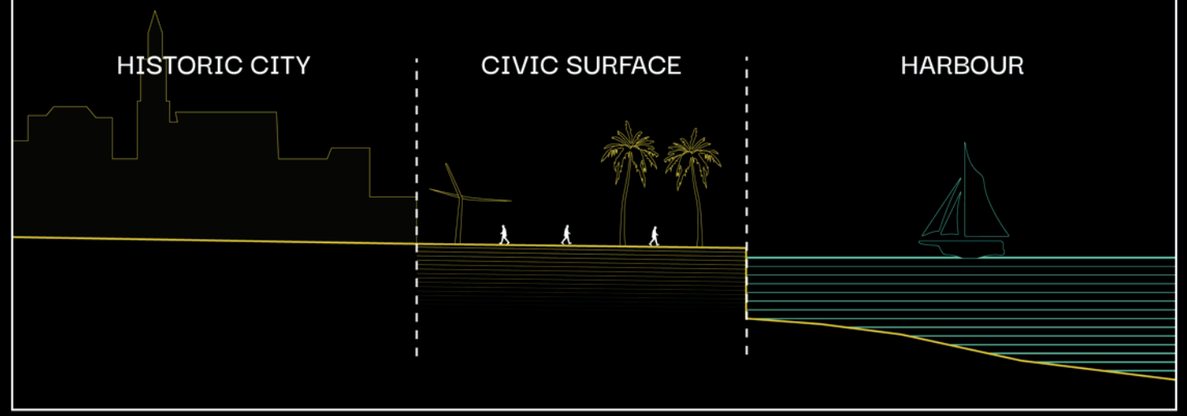
[122] Analytical synthesis by the author based on Chapter 2 cross-lens findings and the comparative interpretation developed in Chapter 3.

THEORETICAL LENS	SPATIAL ISSUE IN VIA ROMA	SPLIT – RIVA WATERFRONT	MÁLAGA – PALMERAL DE LAS SORPRESAS	OPERATIVE IMPLICATION FOR CAGLIARI
MADANIPOUR	Via Roma is longitudinally continuous, but its transversal accessibility is uneven. Access depends on crossing points, thresholds, traffic mediation, and the relationship between the city frontage and the port edge.	Split clarifies the value of a waterfront that works as a continuous civic frontage directly connected to the historic urban fabric. Its publicness depends on the intensity of lateral access and on the overlap between promenade, everyday movement, and urban frontage.	Málaga shows a more controlled waterfront condition, where access is structured through a designed threshold between city, port infrastructure, and programmed public space. The promenade is public, but its openness is mediated by a clear spatial and institutional frame.	Cagliari should strengthen transversal access and threshold legibility, especially where the promenade remains spatially isolated between the urban frontage, traffic corridor, tram line, and port edge.
LEFEBVRE	Pedestrianisation creates continuity, but ordinary permanence is uneven. Some areas support staying, pause, and co-presence, while others remain mainly movement-oriented.	Split demonstrates how a waterfront can sustain everyday permanence through a broad, flexible, and socially appropriable surface. Public use is supported less by fixed devices than by spatial openness, shade, frontage, and continuous urban presence.	Málaga demonstrates how permanence can be materially supported through shade, seating, kiosks, programmed edges, and recognizable spatial episodes. Use is more structured, but also more dependent on designed supports.	Cagliari should reinforce material supports for shared permanence without over-programming the promenade. The aim is to intensify ordinary occupation in weak areas, especially around Piazza Matteotti and along under-supported stretches.
TSCHUMI	Via Roma functions as a linear sequence, but the rhythm of movement, pause, and event remains discontinuous. The promenade risks operating mainly as a corridor unless spatial episodes interrupt and thicken the sequence.	Split offers a model of event-based publicness produced by the overlap between movement, pause, gathering, and civic exposure along a continuous waterfront stage.	Málaga offers a more articulated sequence, where the canopy, kiosks, seating, and programmed areas produce recognizable episodes along the linear promenade.	Cagliari should recalibrate the sequence through light devices that create pauses, programmatic anchors, and moments of spatial intensity without interrupting longitudinal movement.

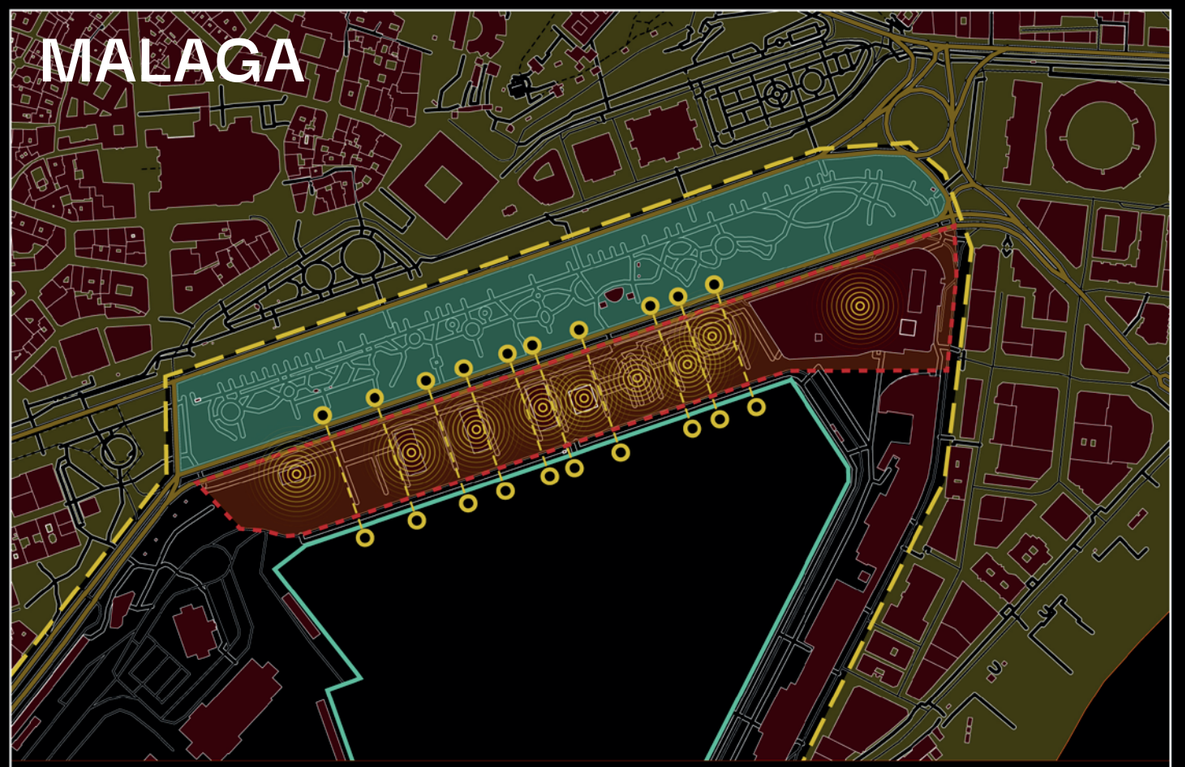
Figure 1. Split — Riva Waterfront. 3LHD. Photo: Domagoj Blažević. Source: Archinect / e-architect / 3LHD.

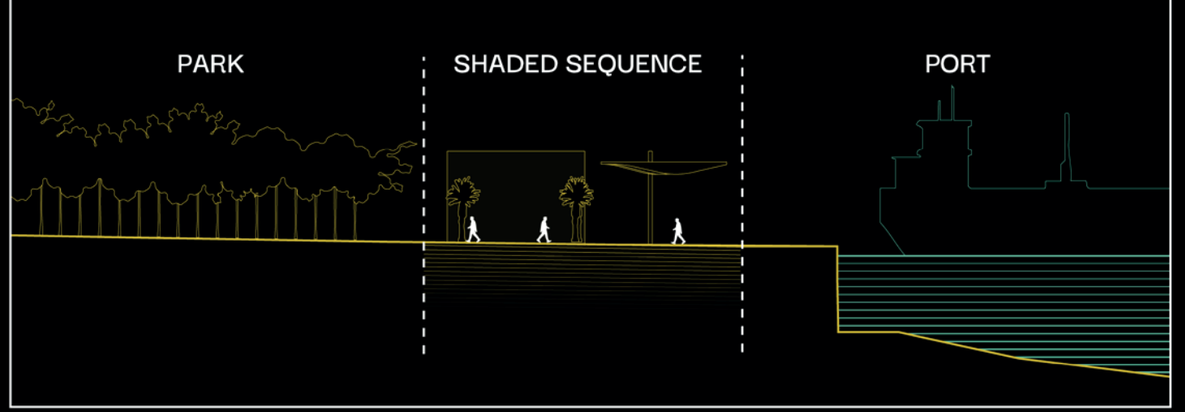
Figure 2. Málaga — Palmeral de las Sorpresas. Junquera Arquitectos. Photo: Jesús Granada. Source: ArchDaily / Arquitectura Viva

SPLIT



MALAGA





CHAPTER 4

RECALIBRATING THE SHADES OF PUBLICNESS

A CRITICAL REVISION OF THE VIA ROMA WATERFRONT

4.0 METHODOLOGICAL PREMISE

Chapter 4 develops a targeted critical revision of the Via Roma waterfront by translating the uneven publicness identified in the spatial interpretation of Chapter 2 into three coordinated strategies: Re-connect, Re-sequence, and Re-support. The starting point is the cross-lens reading of Via Roma, where publicness emerged as a relational condition shaped by access, thresholds, movement, programme, material support, and everyday possibilities of use.[1] Through Madanipour's lens, the promenade appeared as formally open and longitudinally continuous, yet still marked by uneven transversal accessibility and by different degrees of threshold legibility between the city frontage and the seaward edge.[2] Through Lefebvre's lens, the waterfront was read through the material conditions that support or weaken shared permanence, showing that the capacity to stay, pause, wait, observe, or appropriate space is distributed with different intensities along the promenade.[3] Through Tschumi's lens, Via Roma emerged as a spatial sequence in which continuous movement, conditioned movement, pause devices, programmed areas, and non-practicable green surfaces produce a public experience based on rhythm, interruption, and localised activation.[4] These analytical findings establish the ground from which the revision proceeds. Via Roma already operates as a public promenade, yet its publicness remains uneven: it is stronger where movement, visibility, and short-term occupation overlap; more fragile where the promenade functions primarily as a corridor; more ambiguous where environmental quality is visually present but weakly available for use; and more mediated where collective activities depend on enclosed or highly defined programme.[5] For this reason, the strategies developed in this chapter work on three interrelated dimensions of publicness. Re-connect addresses the asymmetry between the promenade's longitudinal continuity and its weaker transversal relation with the city. Re-sequence reorganises the waterfront as a clearer succession of public episodes, where programme, pause, and movement can support one another rather than remaining isolated along the route. Re-support strengthens the material and civic conditions that allow ordinary permanence, including seating, climatic comfort, services, water, maintenance, and reversible forms of light activation.

The final reflections of Chapter 3 refine this transition from analysis to strategy. Split and Málaga are not used here as solutions to be transferred onto Cagliari, but as comparative references that clarify how Mediterranean waterfronts can make publicness operative through access, staying, programme, commercial activity, climatic comfort, visual openness, and everyday use.[6] In Split, public life is supported by the direct overlap between historic urban fabric, civic ground, promenade, commercial frontage, and temporary occupation.[7] In Málaga, by contrast, publicness is organised through a more mediated sequence, where port-city transition, pedestrian continuity, shading structures, and programmatic supports are composed as part of

[1] See Chapter 2, "Cross-Lens Synthesis."
[2] See Chapter 2, "Reading the Waterfront through Madanipour," and the related Madanipour lens diagram, especially the analysis of access, thresholds, and accessibility gradients.
[3] See Chapter 2, "Reading the Waterfront through Lefebvre," and the related Shared Permanence Potential diagram.
[4] See Chapter 2, "Reading the Waterfront through Tschumi," and the related Movement, Sequence and Pause Devices diagram.
[5] See Chapter 2, "Cross-Lens Synthesis."
[6] See Chapter 3, "From Comparative Reading to Operative References."
[7] See Chapter 3, "Split — Riva Waterfront," and "From Comparative Reading to Operative References."

a controlled waterfront experience.[8] These two references help specify the operative problem of Via Roma: rather than compensating for an absence of public space, the revision aims to thicken, clarify, and stabilise its public condition across access, sequence, and permanence.
Chapter 4 therefore translates the thesis argument into spatial recalibration. The entrance from Piazza Ingrao, the sequence of programmed activities along the promenade, and the terminal edge towards Rinascente / Piazza Matteotti are among the areas considered, as they condense key tensions identified through the previous chapters: access without full transversal clarity, movement without a sufficiently articulated sequence, and permanence without adequate environmental and infrastructural support.[9] The revision measures its relevance through the same interpretative dimensions used in the analysis: clearer access legibility, stronger sequencing of public episodes, and more stable material support for ordinary use.[10]

[8] See Chapter 3, “Málaga — Palmeral de las Sorpresas,” and “From Comparative Reading to Operative References.”
[9] See Chapter 2, “Cross-Lens Synthesis.”

4.1 RE-CONNECT

Via Roma already works as a longitudinal promenade, but its relation with the city remains less immediate than its linear continuity suggests. The pedestrian strip runs parallel to the sea, while the passage from the porticoes and the urban frontage towards the waterfront is still mediated by traffic infrastructure, public transport, the planned tram corridor, and the broader city-port threshold.[11] As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the issue concerns transversal legibility: the promenade can be read quite easily as a linear destination, while it is less immediately experienced as a natural extension of the urban fabric behind it. This condition affects how people approach the waterfront, orient themselves within it, and incorporate the promenade into daily urban routines.[12]
Against this background, Re-connect translates an analytical observation into a spatial strategy. The planned tram corridor is treated as the main infrastructural mediation between the urban frontage and the waterfront, while the transversal street axes are made more legible within the central pedestrian strip through differentiated paving. The strategy works through two registers of connection. Real permeability remains tied to the existing or planned crossing points, where city-to-sea movement can physically take place. Perceptual continuity is reinforced through material bands that carry the logic of the urban grid into the promenade, making the direction towards the sea more readable even where a direct crossing is not possible. This distinction is essential to the Re-connect drawings: actual

[10] See Chapter 4.4, “Publicness Shift Verification”.
[11] Comune di Cagliari, 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[12] See Chapter 2, “Reading the Waterfront through Madanipour.”

crossings operate as moments of physical permeability, while transversal alignments operate as visual and material continuities that strengthen orientation without erasing the infrastructural section. In this way, Via Roma can be understood as both a route running parallel to the waterfront and a sequence of transversal encounters with the city.

Looking at the two selected Mediterranean references, this operation positions Via Roma between Split and Málaga. Split demonstrates the strength of a frontage where the historic city edge, the civic promenade, and the harbour remain directly connected within the same public surface; Málaga, by contrast, shows how a port-related edge can become publicly usable through a mediated sequence of access, environmental support, visual openness, and regulated continuity.[13] Re-connect uses this comparison to clarify the specific problem of Cagliari: the promenade is already continuous along the waterfront, but its transversal relation with the porticoes, the mobility corridor, and the seaward edge still requires greater spatial legibility.

This approach is grounded in the reading of publicness through access, openness, boundary, and control.[14] In Via Roma, formal accessibility and visual openness alone do not resolve the practical relation between the pedestrian surface and the surrounding urban fabric. The official project sections describe the waterfront as a differentiated spatial field, where linear park, carriageway, sidewalk, public-transport elements, and infrastructural limits coexist.[15]

The material drawings also show a promenade organised through pavements, green areas, and different surface treatments.[16] Building on this existing structure, Re-connect makes the transversal relation more evident within the lived experience of movement, rather than only in plan. This issue is reinforced by post-opening evidence: municipal communications document the staged reopening and the operational conditions of access and circulation, while local reports record both the strong initial use of the promenade and the persistence of crossings, traffic, public transport, waiting times, and detours between the port side and the urban frontage.[17]

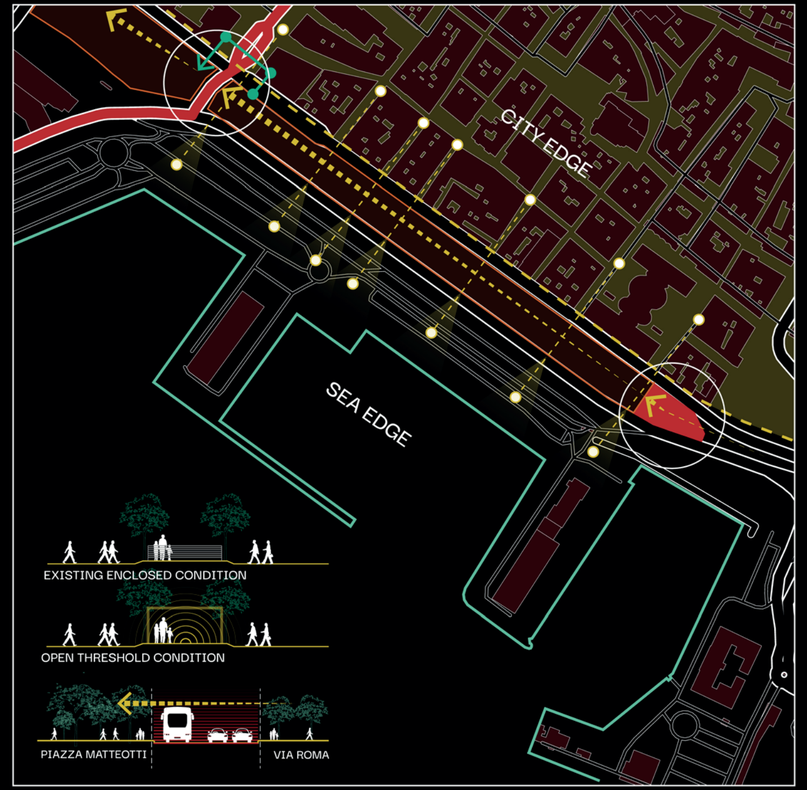
Seen from this perspective, paving becomes a material device through which a fragmented city-to-sea relation can be made more intelligible, reducing the perceptual distance between the city and the waterfront and supporting a more intuitive use of the promenade as part of the everyday public realm. The drawings associated with Re-connect clarify this translation from analysis to design. The general diagram abstracts the relation between transversal urban axes, promenade, and waterfront; the Re-connect plan then applies the same logic to the proposed spatial strategy, indicating how crossing points, paving extensions, the planned tram corridor, the central walking spine, the main entrance canopy, and the terminal support node operate within one coherent system. Together these drawings make visible five elements:

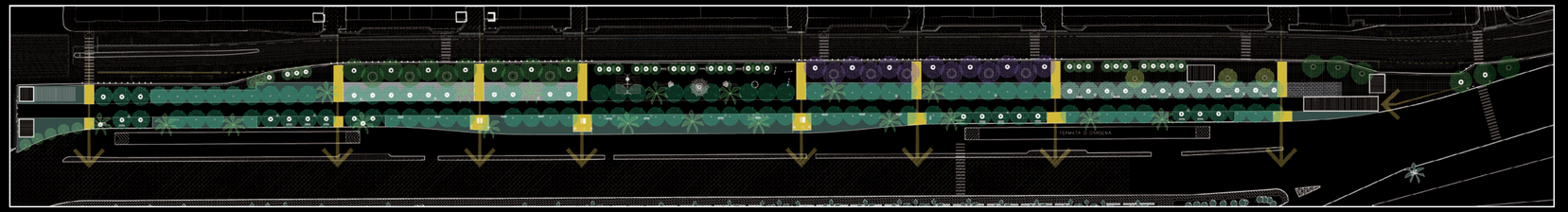
[13] See Chapter 3, “From Comparative Reading to Operative References.”
[14] Ali Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 55–59.

[15] Comune di Cagliari, 12 - PROG_ROMA - Sez_Sezioni, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[16] Comune di Cagliari, 07 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Finiture e materiali, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[17] L’Unione Sarda, “Cagliari, via Roma: la beffa per i pedoni continua. Disagi e proteste,” August 4, 2025, https://www.unionesarda.it/news-sardegna/cagliari-via-roma-la-beffa-per-i-pedoni-continua-disagi-e-proteste-sc-ntv5hk.

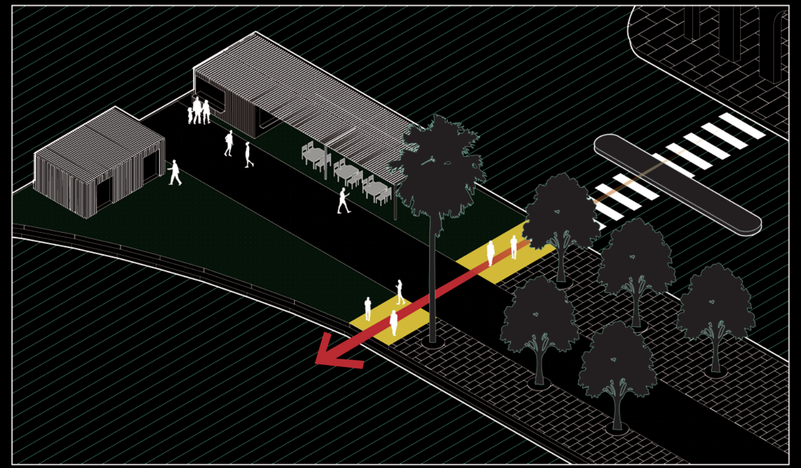
crossing points as moments of real transversal permeability, the planned tram corridor as infrastructural mediation, paving extensions as devices of perceptual continuity, the central walking spine as the longitudinal support of the promenade, and the two end conditions as recognisable thresholds within the sequence.[18]
Within this system, Piazza Ingrao becomes the main entrance threshold. Here the strategy moves from ground treatment to architectural definition: the transverse canopy marks the beginning of the promenade, frames the walking spine, and gives spatial thickness to the transition between city frontage and waterfront sequence. From the city side, it announces the entrance to the promenade; from within the promenade, it frames the continuity of the route and gives the beginning of the sequence a recognisable figure. The canopy therefore works as an orientation device and threshold marker, giving the arrival point a clearer spatial role within the broader public sequence.
At the opposite end, the Rinascente / Piazza Matteotti edge is given the role of terminal threshold. Chapter 2 identified this portion as a weaker condition within the transversal structure of Via Roma, despite the importance of Piazza Matteotti as an urban and intermodal node.[19] The problem lies in the mismatch between urban centrality and pedestrian access: the square is relevant within the city, but this relevance is not automatically translated into a strong threshold towards the waterfront.
Re-connect therefore clarifies the end of the promenade as the point where the linear route reaches its urban limit and acquires a recognisable conclusion. In the drawings, this area is identified as a terminal support node; within Re-connect, this label is read primarily through its spatial role as the final threshold of the promenade, while its material support for longer stays is developed later through Re-support.
Taken together, the differentiated paving, the entrance canopy, and the terminal threshold bring access, movement, and urban orientation into a more explicit relationship, recalibrating the spatial logic of Via Roma by making existing connections more visible, more intuitive, and more capable of supporting everyday public use.

[18] Author's analytical drawing, "Re-connect," based on project documentation and spatial interpretation.
[19] See Chapter 2, "Cross-Lens Synthesis."

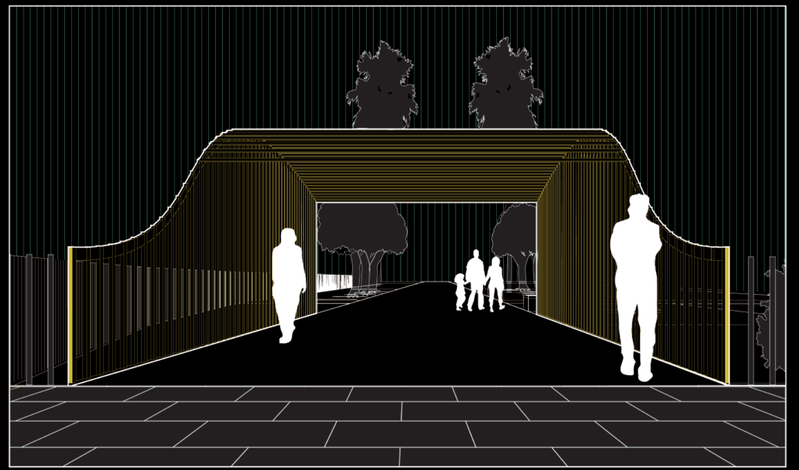




TERMINAL SUPPORT NODE



MAIN ENTRANCE CANOPY



4.2 RE-SEQUENCE

Once the transversal relation has been clarified, the promenade must also be read as a sequence of movement, pauses, and programmes. As discussed in Chapter 2, the central strip of Via Roma operates primarily as a longitudinal promenade, yet its publicness is constantly modified by programmed elements, pause devices, enclosed areas, and non-walkable surfaces.[20] The public condition of the waterfront therefore depends on how these elements meet the act of walking: whether they support intervals along the route, whether they allow activity to emerge without blocking continuity, and whether moments of pause become part of a coherent spatial sequence rather than isolated fragments. This is where Tschumi's relation between space, movement, programme, and event becomes operative, since architectural space acquires meaning through the actions it hosts and through the sequences it is able to produce.[21] In Via Roma, the playground, fitness equipment, ping-pong tables, dog area, and terminal support node are therefore treated as spatial agents rather than as separate facilities, because their position affects how people slow down, gather, wait, supervise, exercise, play, or continue walking.[22]

Re-sequence reorganises these elements along the promenade. The walking spine remains the main support for movement, while programmes are arranged as differentiated episodes along its edges and intervals. Their redistribution gives the route a clearer rhythm, transforming linear continuity into a progression of public situations. The accompanying drawing compares the existing arrangement with the proposed configuration: in the existing condition, programme appears distributed with limited hierarchy; in the revised sequence, the route develops from the entrance at Piazza Ingrao to the ping-pong micro-node, then to the fitness field, the playground field, the unchanged dog area, and finally the terminal support node. This diagrammatic reading is translated into a spatial decision: movement remains continuous where the walking spine needs to stay open, becomes locally conditioned where a pause is introduced, and gains thickness where programme supports occupation.[23]

In this sense, Málaga offers a useful reference, as the Palmeral de las Sorpresas organises access, movement, environmental support, and programme as a sequence of coordinated episodes along the port edge, rather than as isolated objects placed beside a promenade.[24] For Via Roma, the reference confirms that publicness can be strengthened when programme is distributed along the route and made legible as part of a wider spatial progression.

The sequence begins at Piazza Ingrao, where Re-sequence overlaps with Re-connect. This point was identified in Chapter 2 as the strongest and most legible access to the promenade, but its role is more complex than that of a simple beginning. Because it concentrates arrival, orientation, and transition from the city side into the linear waterfront, the entrance requires spatial clarity.[25] The revision therefore

[20] See Chapter 2, "Reading the Waterfront through Tschumi."
[21] Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 141–43.
[22] Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

[23] Author's analytical drawing, "Re-sequence," based on project documentation and spatial interpretation.
[24] See Chapter 3, "Málaga — Palmeral de las Sorpresas," and "From Comparative Reading to Operative References."
[25] See Chapter 2, "Reading the Waterfront through Madanipour."

keeps the threshold readable as a space of arrival and orientation, while recalibrating the most active programmes away from the immediate entrance. The beginning of the promenade becomes a legible first moment in the sequence: access is established, orientation is supported, and programme begins after arrival.

The ping-pong area forms the first light programmatic episode beyond this threshold. It remains close enough to Piazza Ingrao to benefit from the intensity of access, but it is positioned outside the main entrance and outside the principal walking line. Its role corresponds to the areas that Chapter 2 associated with conditioned movement and weaker shared permanence.[26] A light recreational programme responds to this condition by supporting short stays while preserving circulation. The ping-pong table works as a micro-node: a small programmed pause that activates the early part of the route without becoming the main active centre of the waterfront. This hierarchy matters, since not every programme needs to produce the same intensity and not every pause should become a centrality. The micro-node introduces a recognisable interval between entrance and active fields, while leaving the stronger programmatic weight to the middle of the promenade.

The sequence then moves towards the central portion, where fitness and playground become two coordinated but distinct programme fields. Their proximity creates a stronger intermediate condition, capable of supporting exercise, children's play, waiting, supervision, informal observation, and short pauses around the programmed areas. This intermediate episode gives spatial weight to the middle of the promenade and turns movement into a more articulated public experience. The playground remains delimited, giving the activity a clear edge in relation to adjacent flows and to the roadway side. Its boundary clarifies its public role: it supports occupation, but within a defined spatial limit that manages its relation with surrounding movement. The fitness field completes the node by extending the range of bodily and recreational uses while remaining outside the central walking spine.[27]

After this central active field, the dog area remains in its current position. Its location corresponds to the spatial requirements of a delimited programme that needs width and a degree of separation from the main walking flow. Within the revised sequence, it continues to operate as a stable enclosed activity and introduces a specific bounded form of use.[28] Its enclosure does not remove it from the public sequence; it makes visible one of the regulated forms through which publicness is produced along Via Roma. The dog area supports collective use through a defined edge, specific rules of access, and a controlled relation with the surrounding promenade. Keeping it in place preserves this bounded episode while allowing the more general active programmes to be redistributed.

At the Rinascente / Piazza Matteotti end, the terminal support node introduces the final episode of the sequence. Chapter 2 identified

[26] See Chapter 2, "Reading the Waterfront through Tschumi," and "Cross-Lens Synthesis."

[27] Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.

[28] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 55–59.

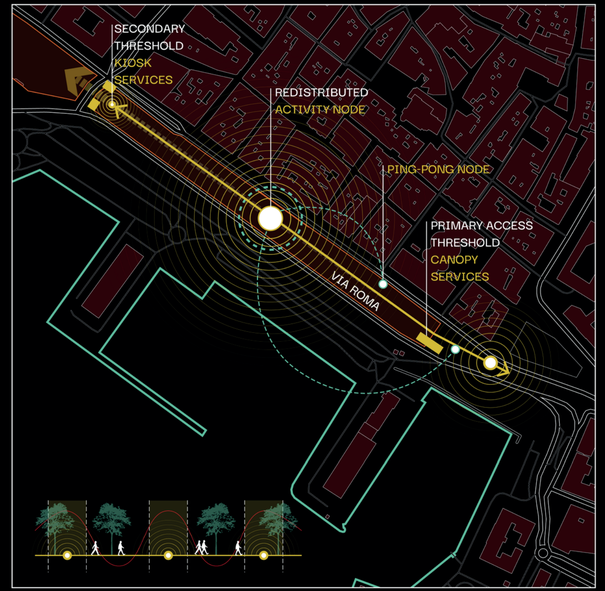
this portion as a weaker condition within the transversal and programmatic structure of Via Roma, despite the importance of Piazza Matteotti as an urban and intermodal node.[29] In Re-sequence, this terminal condition is read primarily through rhythm and spatial order: it gives the promenade a clearer conclusion and prevents the route from dissolving into a weak edge. Its material capacity to support longer stays will be developed through Re-support, while here its role is to hold the end of the promenade within the same public sequence that begins at Piazza Ingrao. It differs from the central active fields because it does not concentrate recreational activities; instead, it gives the terminal edge a recognisable spatial role within the progression of the route.

From Piazza Ingrao to Rinascente / Piazza Matteotti, the revised promenade is structured as a progression of differentiated public episodes. The entrance orients; the ping-pong micro-node introduces a light pause; the fitness field and playground field form the central active sequence; the dog area maintains a stable delimited programme; the terminal support node gives the route a clearer conclusion. Each episode assigns a specific spatial role to one of the public conditions made visible in Chapter 2. Re-sequence clarifies the relation between movement and programme: the promenade remains continuous, but its internal rhythm becomes more readable. Programmed activities are no longer isolated pieces of equipment; they become ordered episodes along the route, producing a waterfront sequence in which publicness emerges through walking, pause, active use, enclosure, and terminal occupation.

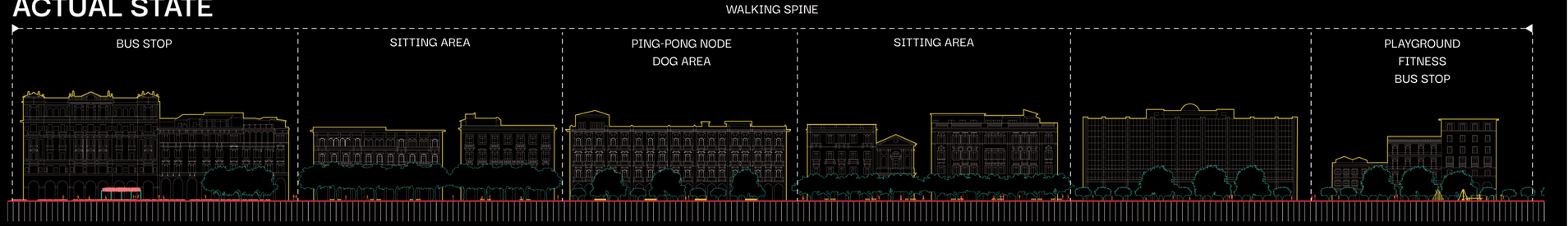
[29] See Chapter 2, “Cross-Lens Synthesis.”

“CITIES ARE MADE BY PEOPLE.”

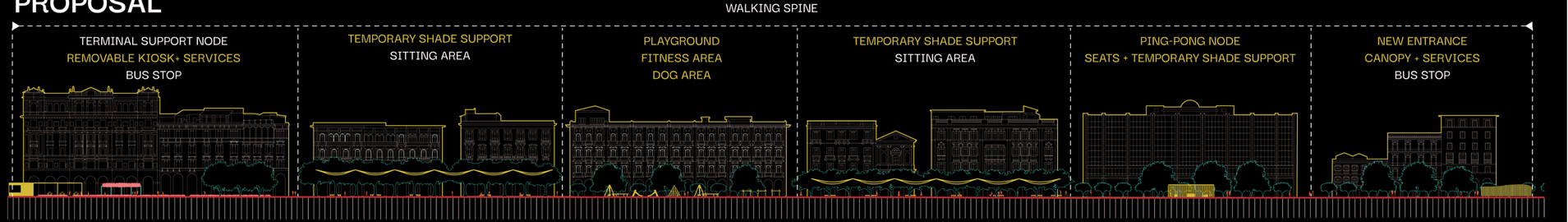
-CASTELLS



ACTUAL STATE



PROPOSAL



“NO SPACE EVER VANISHES UTTERLY, LEAVING NO TRACE.”

-LEFEBVRE

4.3 RE-SUPPORT

The most fragile dimension of Via Roma is not the possibility of moving through it, but the possibility of remaining there with comfort, autonomy, and continuity. The promenade is accessible, equipped, and visually open, yet these qualities do not automatically produce stable forms of occupation. Several parts of the central strip already allow people to sit, wait, observe the waterfront, or pause briefly along the route, but longer use depends on ordinary material conditions: climatic comfort, seating, services, water, maintenance, and support around existing pause devices. This is the field of Re-support. It begins from the overlap between basic permanence and continuous movement identified in the Cross-Lens Synthesis, where publicness is present but fragile.[30] The issue becomes less one of access than of duration: what allows a body to stay, to rest, to wait, to supervise, to watch, or to use the promenade beyond the act of crossing it. Public space depends on the possibility of staying as much as on movement, since optional and social activities emerge when spatial and environmental conditions make occupation possible.[31] This also extends the Lefebvrian reading developed earlier: publicness is produced through the relation between conceived space, spatial practice, and lived experience, rather than through designed form alone.[32]
Within this framework, the reference board clearly defines the family of spatial devices through which Re-support operates. The examples function as operative references that establish scale, reversibility, civic function, and material support. They are organised into four families: civic service units, threshold canopies, climatic support devices, and public support kiosks. Read together, these references demonstrate how ordinary permanence is strengthened through small-scale infrastructures: services that enable longer stays, canopies that mark arrival and orientation, climatic devices that extend the duration of pause, and kiosks or light pavilions that sustain reversible everyday activation.
Applied to Via Roma, these four families correspond to specific weaknesses identified in the previous analysis. Civic service units respond to the lack of basic infrastructure for longer occupation. Threshold canopies reinforce arrival points and make the transition between city and promenade more legible. Climatic support devices address the exposed condition of pauses, seating areas, and light programmed nodes. Public support kiosks introduce reversible activation at the terminal edge, where the promenade currently risks losing intensity. In this sense, the reference board does not expand the project into a catalogue of objects; it defines the material vocabulary through which Re-support translates fragile permanence into a more stable public condition.
Climatic comfort is one of the first material conditions through which this fragility becomes concrete. The Chapter 2 diagram identified several points where basic permanence overlaps with continuous movement, especially along the central pedestrian band where individual seating devices punctuate the route. These points

[30] See Chapter 2, “Cross-Lens Synthesis,” especially the overlap between basic shared permanence and continuous movement along the central pedestrian band.
[31] Jan Gehl, Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space, trans. Jo Koch (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011), 9–17.
[32] Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38–41.

already suggest waiting, observation, short pauses, and informal rest. Their weakness lies in the limited environmental support that allows these uses to last. The project drawings show a promenade equipped with seating devices, programmed elements, and urban furniture, yet the presence of equipment does not guarantee comfort or duration of use.[33] Post-opening evidence reinforces this point, since local reporting documented complaints about insufficient shade during hot weather and linked the use of the new promenade to conditions of microclimatic exposure.[34] Shade is therefore treated as one component of a broader support system that directly influences who can stay, when, and for how long.

Re-support introduces removable shade structures where seating and light programmed activities already invite pause, concentrating them around points where bodies tend to slow down: seating devices along the central band, areas adjacent to programmed activities, and the ping-pong micro-node. Their placement follows the rhythm of the promenade rather than covering the pedestrian strip continuously, strengthening existing tendencies of use while preserving openness and walkability. The ping-pong node gives this logic a more specific social dimension. In Re-sequence, it operates as a light programmatic episode near the beginning of the promenade; in Re-support, it becomes a small supported social device. The table alone has limited capacity to generate stable use if it remains exposed and isolated. With shade and additional seating around it, the node can host a wider range of ordinary situations: playing, waiting, watching, commenting, resting, or using the area informally. Whyte's observations on small urban spaces are useful here because they show how sitting, watching, food, shade, and small points of attraction can concentrate public life without requiring large-scale programme.[35] In Via Roma, the importance of the ping-pong node depends less on the scale of the object than on its capacity to concentrate social attention along the route. Post-opening evidence documenting informal uses of benches and ping-pong tables suggests that users already adapt available furniture beyond its strictly programmed function.[36] Around this point, basic permanence becomes thicker: the promenade is briefly inhabited, not simply crossed.

The temporary character of the shade structures reinforces this objective. Via Roma is an exposed waterfront space, and its use changes with season, heat, time of day, and patterns of occupation. Reversible devices allow the promenade to respond to these variations through light infrastructure that can be adjusted, removed, maintained, or intensified according to need. Temporary urban devices can strengthen public life precisely because they introduce flexibility, operational lightness, and the possibility of recalibration over time.[37]

The same concern for everyday use defines the distribution of services. Longer occupation depends on basic facilities, because they influence who can remain in the space, how long peo-

"PUBLIC SPACES ENABLE PEOPLE TO ENCOUNTER THOSE THEY WOULD NOT NORMALLY COME ACROSS."

-LOW

[33] Comune di Cagliari, 10 - PROG_ROMA - Plan_Arredi, in Integrazione progettuale, February 2024, n.p.
[34] Carolina Mocci, "Cagliari, il 'bosco verticale' di Boeri sotto il sole cocente: ombra cercasi in via Roma, con i turisti stremati dal caldo," Casteddu Online, May 4, 2025, https://www.castedduonline.it/cagliari-il-bosco-verticale-di-boeri-sotto-il-sole-cocente-ombra-cercasi-in-via-roma-con-i-turisti-stremati-dal-caldo/.

[35] William H. Whyte, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (Washington, DC: Conservation Foundation, 1980), 28–43, 50–54, 94–96.
[36] Casteddu Online, "Via Roma, panchine trasformate in letti e tavoli da ping pong usati come sedute: 'Così Cagliari si evolve,'" September 9, 2025, https://www.castedduonline.it/via-roma-panchine-trasformate-in-letti-e-tavoli-da-ping-pong-usati-come-sedute-cosi-cagliari-si-evolve/.
[37] Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, The Temporary City (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 3–13.

ple can stay, and whether the waterfront can support uses beyond short passage. Re-support places services at both extremities of Via Roma. One facility is located near the Piazza Ingrao canopy, reinforcing the entrance as a supported point of arrival; the other is placed at the Rinascente / Piazza Matteotti terminal node. At Piazza Ingrao, the service facility works with the canopy. The canopy gives architectural form to the entrance threshold, marking the meeting point between transversal approach and longitudinal movement, while the adjacent service gives this threshold everyday usability. Arrival is supported visually, spatially, and practically: users entering from this side encounter orientation, shade, water, and basic facilities at the first public node of the route. This double placement gives Via Roma a more balanced civic infrastructure and introduces a managerial dimension into the strategy.

Comfort, shade, furniture, planting, and services require maintenance over time, as post-opening reports on tree replacement and damaged furniture already suggest.[38] Maintenance therefore becomes part of the material continuity through which public space remains usable. The Rinascente / Piazza Matteotti edge requires a different form of support. The Cross-Lens Synthesis identified this portion as a weak terminal condition, where permanence is limited and adjacent green surfaces remain visually present but functionally underused.[39] This edge has the potential to conclude the promenade, yet its current spatial condition offers limited support for occupation. Re-support places basic services and a removable kiosk in relation to these residual areas, transforming the terminal edge into a more usable public node. The kiosk introduces a light form of everyday activity along the waterfront sequence and complements the commercial activities located under the porticoes. It gives the terminal edge a reason to hold attention, creating a point where people can stop, wait, or consume informally without leaving the promenade or depending entirely on the older commercial frontage. Its role must remain carefully regulated: it supports permanence while preserving non-consuming use, openness, and movement continuity around it. In this sense, it functions as a reversible support device within a public environment.

Public-space quality depends on design provision, but also on how spaces are managed, maintained, and kept open to different patterns of use.[40] The removable character of the kiosk keeps this activation adaptable to daily rhythms, seasonal demand, and temporary intensification through a limited spatial footprint. In Re-sequence, the kiosk gives the promenade a final episode; in Re-support, it gives that episode the material capacity to sustain staying.

Public toilets form the essential civic component of this support system. Their presence at both extremities affects who can remain in public

[38] Valeria Putzolu, “Cagliari, la nuova passeggiata di via Roma già pronta a rifarsi il trucco: ecco le nuove piante messe a dimora,” Casteddu Online, February 25, 2026, https://www.castedduonline.it/cagliari-la-nuova-passeggiata-di-via-roma-gia-pronta-a-rifarsi-il-trucco-ecco-le-nuove-piante-messe-a-dimora/.

[39] See Chapter 2, “Cross-Lens Synthesis.”

[40] Matthew Carmona, “Principles for Public Space Design, Planning to Do Better,” Urban Design International 24, no. 1 (2019): 47–59.

[41] Clara Greed, Inclusive Urban Design: Public Toilets (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003), 3–15.

space and for how long, supporting children, elderly users, families, people exercising, tourists, workers, and users whose mobility depends more directly on basic bodily infrastructure. Sanitary facilities are part of the minimum infrastructure of inclusive public space.[41] More recent research on on-street toilets also frames sanitation access as indispensable for safe, accessible, and inclusive public spaces, especially for groups whose mobility is conditioned by the availability of facilities.[42] Their double placement strengthens the autonomy of the promenade as a civic environment: longer occupation is supported by public infrastructure within the waterfront itself, while remaining complementary to the commercial life of the porticoes. At Piazza Ingrao, services reinforce the entrance node; at Rinascente / Piazza Matteotti, they help transform a weak terminal edge into a usable public condition.

Re-support therefore acts as a single system rather than as a collection of furniture: climatic comfort extends the duration of pauses, seating supports observation and waiting, the ping-pong node becomes a small social pause, water and sanitary facilities make longer use possible, maintenance sustains usability over time, and the kiosk supports the terminal edge through a light and reversible form of occupation.

[42] Fernanda Deister Moreira, Sonaly Rezende, and Flávia Passos, "On-Street Toilets for Sanitation Access in Urban Public Spaces: A Systematic Review," Utilities Policy 70 (2021): 101186, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jup.2021.101186.

"FIRST LIFE, THEN SPACES, THEN BUILDINGS."

— GEHL

REFERENCE BOARD

CIVIC SERVICE UNITS

Kiosks and Public Toilets — LANZA Atelier. Photo: Camila Cossío, via Divisare.

Ecological Public Restrooms — MOL Arquitectura. Photo: Héctor Santos-Díez, via ArchDaily.

Public Toilets — Piotr Musiałowski + Łukasz Przybyłowicz. Photo: Maciej Gąsienica Giewont, via ArchDaily.

THRESHOLD CANOPIES

Riva Split Waterfront — 3LHD. Photo: Domagoj Blažević, via e-architect / Archinect.

Glass Canopy at Princes Mall, Edinburgh — Image source: John Desmond Ltd.

Palmeral de las Sorpresas — Junquera Arquitectos. Photo: Jesús Granada, via ArchDaily / Arquitectura Viva.

CLIMATIC SUPPORT DEVICES

Cable Grids and Shades — Lastra & Zorrilla. Image source: ArchDaily catalogue.

Temporary Tiger - Covid Classroom — Murray Legge Architecture. Photo: Leonid Furmansky, via ArchDaily.

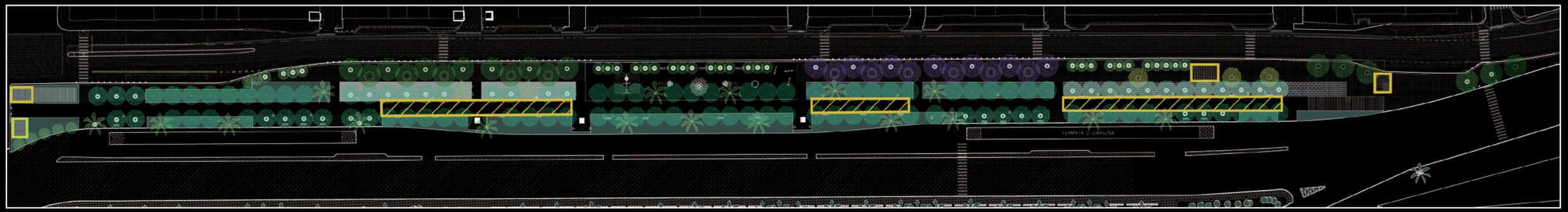
Umbral Crudo / Raw Threshold — Al Borde, Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Sharjah, UAE, 2023. Photo: Ahmed Osama and Danko Stjepanovic, via Metalocus.

PUBLIC SUPPORT KIOSKS

7 Kiosques — Heams & Michel Architectes. Photo: Aldo Amoretti, via Divisare.

The Royal Parks Kiosks Fleet — Mizzi Studio. Photo: Luke Hayes Photography, via Archello / Metalocus.

River View Service Kiosk — Atelier Z+. Image source: ArchDaily.

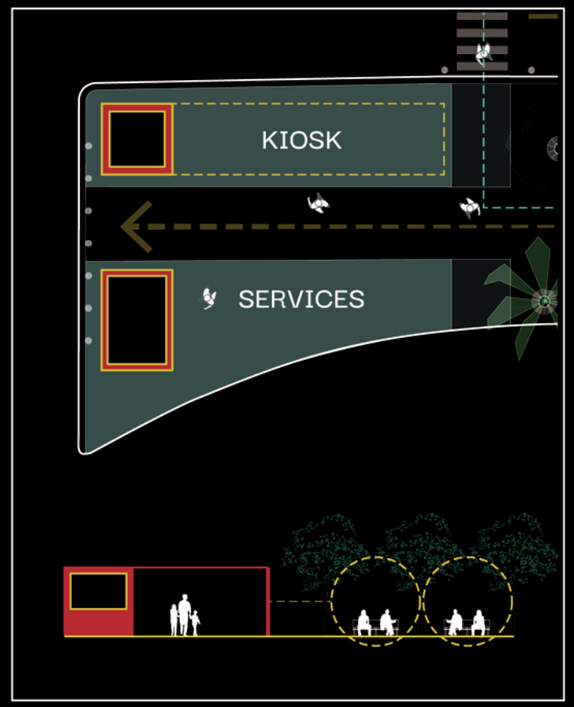


Support intervention

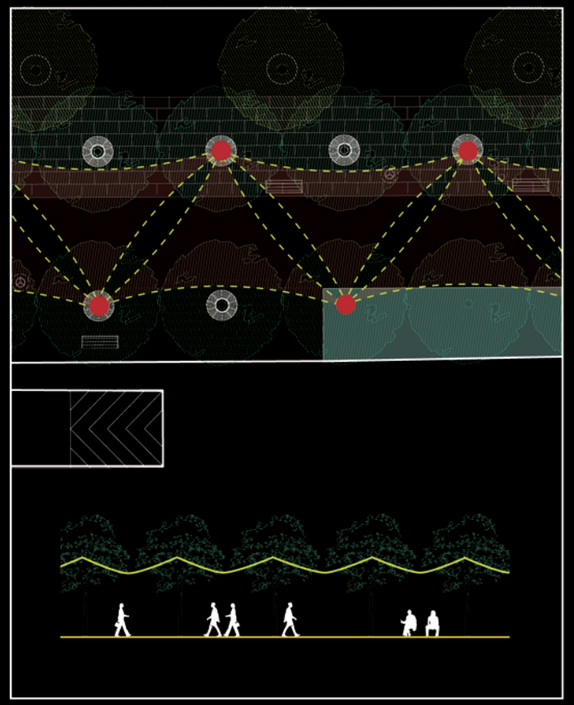
0 10 20 30 40 50m

N

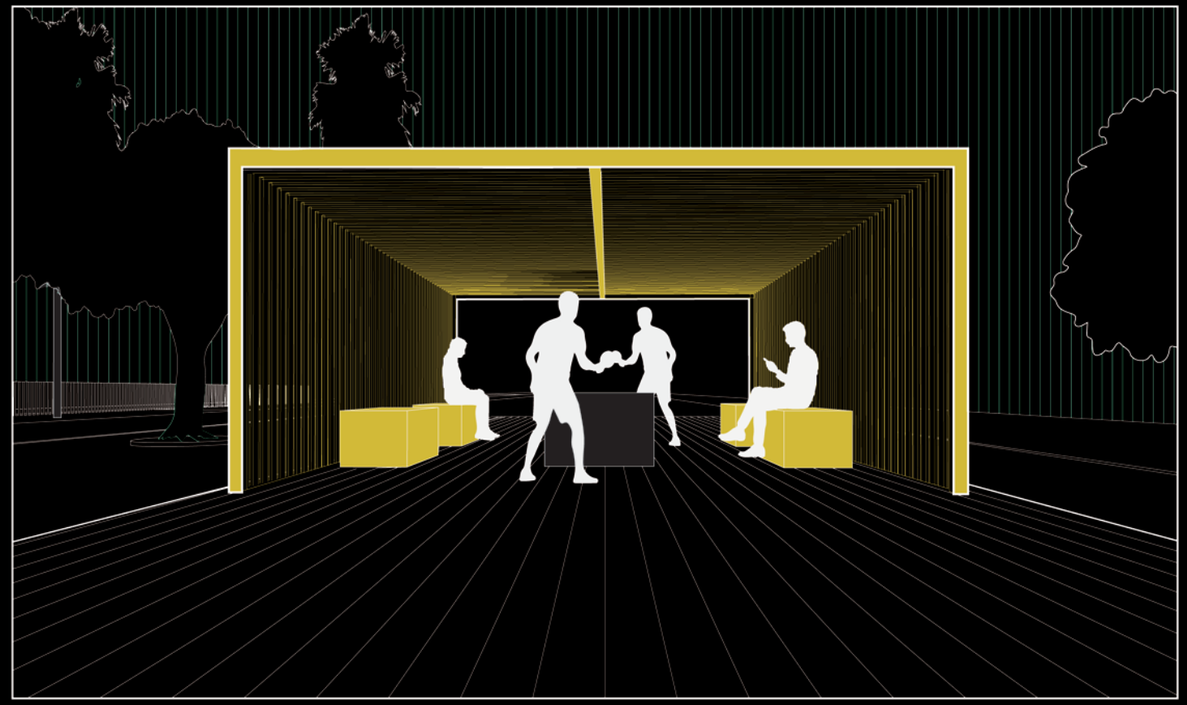
KIOSK AS PUBLIC SUPPORT



CLIMATE SUPPORT



SUPPORTED PING-PONG NODE



4.4 PUBLICNESS SHIFT VERIFICATION

The strategic revision developed through Re-connect, Re-sequence, and Re-support can be understood as a qualitative verification of the effects expected from the proposed recalibration. Rather than introducing a numerical evaluation of publicness, this synthesis returns to the interpretative categories used in Chapter 2 and observes how accessibility, thresholds, shared permanence, movement, programme, and support are redistributed in the revised condition.[43] The Pre-Intervention / Intervention / Post-Intervention drawing sequence, makes this shift visible by keeping the same analytical language of the previous diagrams while showing how the spatial configuration is recalibrated. Via Roma remains a linear promenade, still mediated by the mobility corridor and by the planned tram line, but its public structure becomes thicker, more legible, and more supported in specific points.[44]

The first visible effect concerns the relation between access and movement. The Piazza Ingrao side, already identified in Chapter 2 as the strongest threshold to the promenade, becomes more explicit in the revised drawing.[45] The free pedestrian band channels the flow arriving from the city side and gives the beginning of the waterfront a clearer spatial direction. At the same time, the crossing points continue to organise the relation between the porticoes, the infrastructural corridor, and the seaward edge, so the proposal works with the existing conditions rather than assuming an abstract permeability across the whole section. The tram line remains a mediation, yet the alignment between access points, transversal bands, and the central walking spine makes the city-to-sea relation easier to recognise and use. In this sense, the intervention strengthens spatial openness without flattening the complexity of the site: access becomes clearer because thresholds, crossings, and directional traces begin to reinforce one another.

This clearer access structure also changes the way movement operates along the promenade. In the analytical reading of Chapter 2, continuous movement was concentrated mainly along the longitudinal pedestrian spine, while the transversal relation with the city appeared weaker and less immediate.[46] In the revised configuration, continuous movement extends into the transversal bands, allowing the promenade to function less as a single linear corridor and more as a field of connected directions. This does not interrupt the main walking spine; rather, it gives it a stronger relation with the city-facing side. Movement remains longitudinal where the promenade needs to stay open, but it becomes thicker around the points where crossings, pauses, and programmes intersect. The result is a more articulated public sequence, in which the waterfront is experienced through arrival, orientation, walking, slowing down, and re-entering the urban fabric.

The same logic appears in the distribution of permanence. The central portion of the promenade becomes more strongly supported by the concentration of the fitness field and

[43] See Chapter 2, “Cross-Lens Synthesis.”
[44] Author’s analytical drawing, Pre-Post Intervention.
[45] See Chapter 2, “Reading the Waterfront through Madanipour.”

[46] See Chapter 2, “Reading the Waterfront through Tschumi.”

PRE-INTERVENTION

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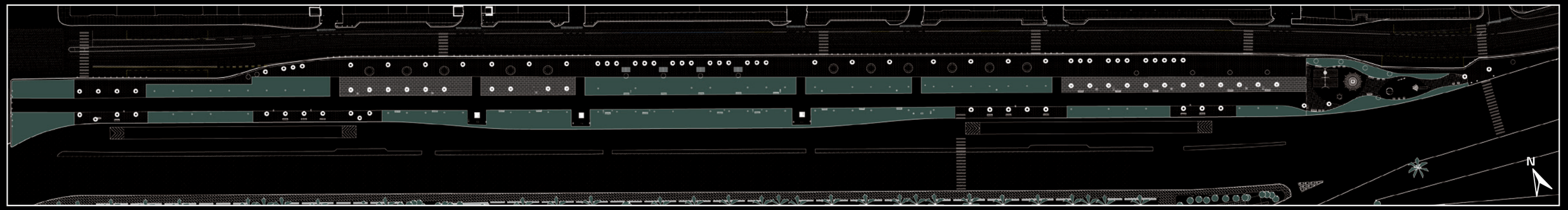
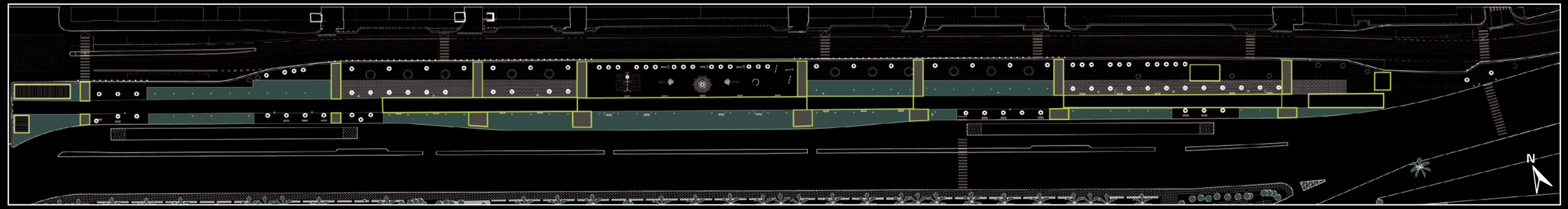
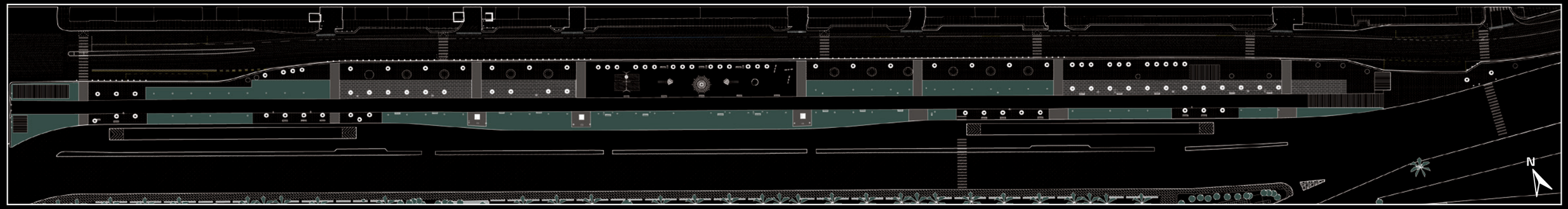


INTERVENTION



POST-INTERVENTION



PRE-INTERVENTION

Crossing points

Enclosed areas

Tram line

Accessibility gradient

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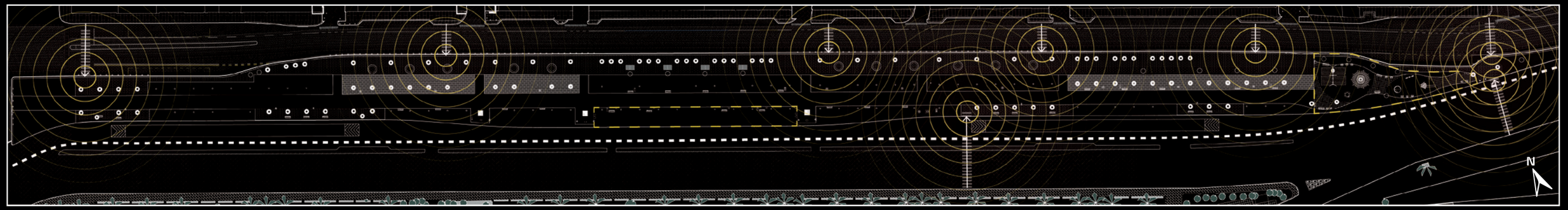
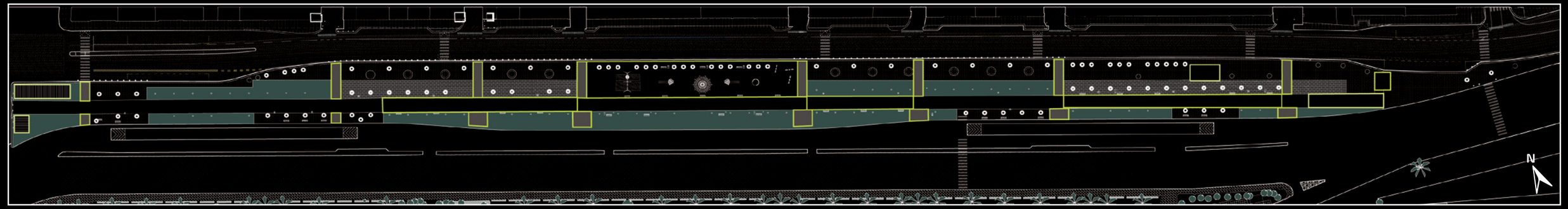
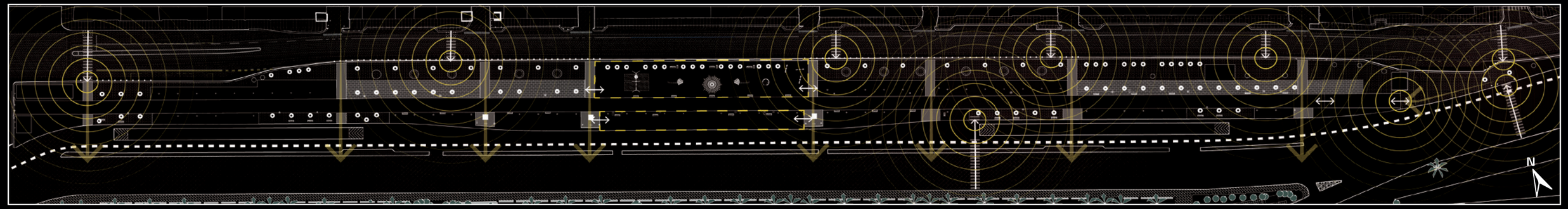


INTERVENTION



POST-INTERVENTION



PRE-INTERVENTION

Structured shared permanence

Basic shared permanence

Weak shared permanence

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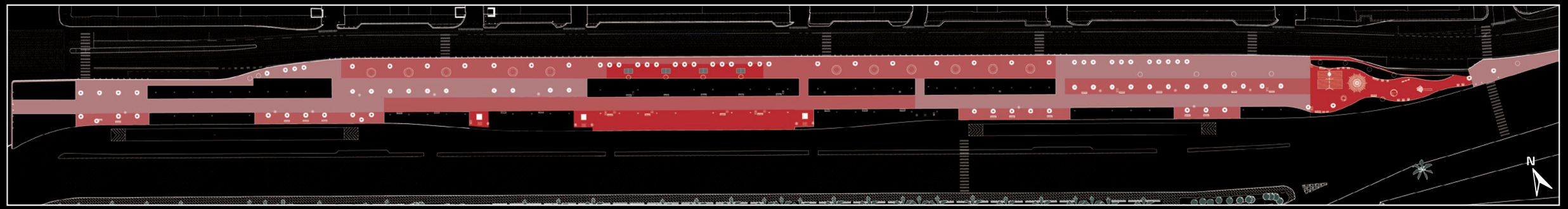
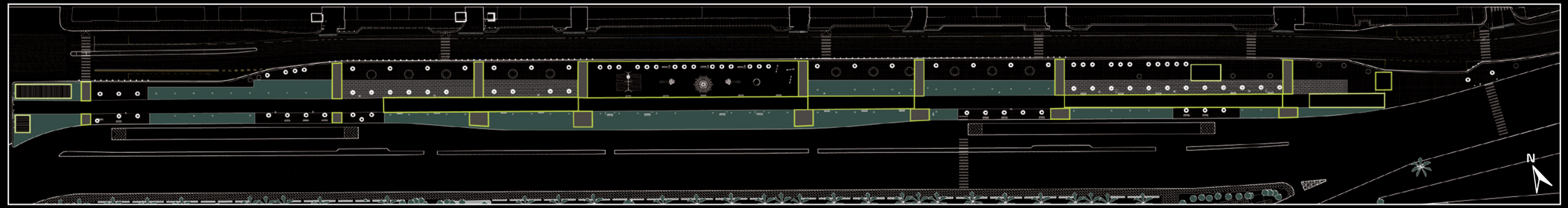
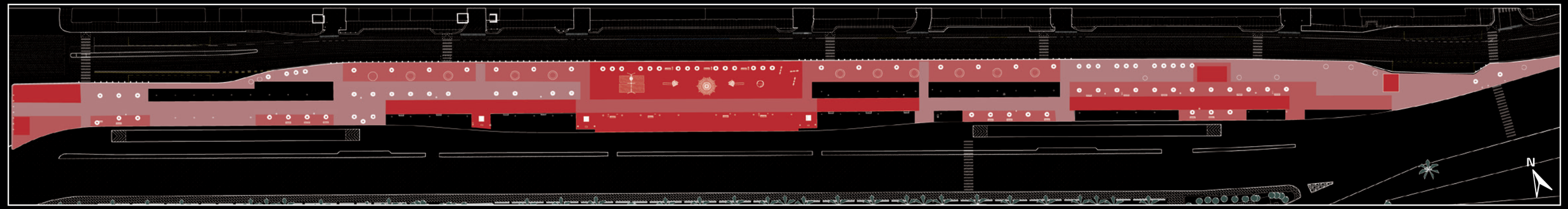


INTERVENTION



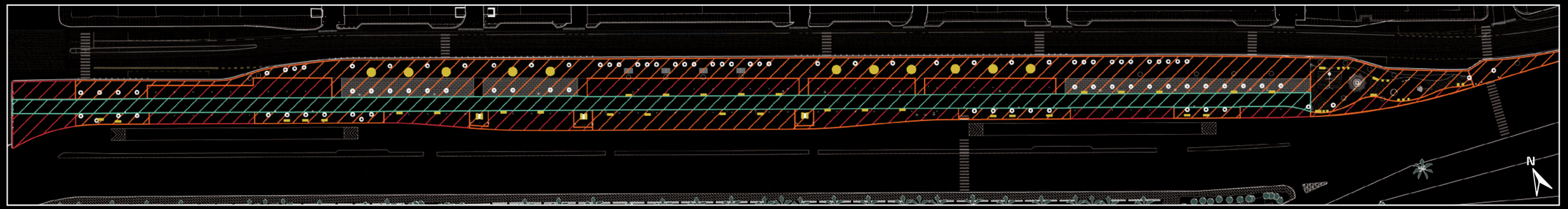
POST-INTERVENTION



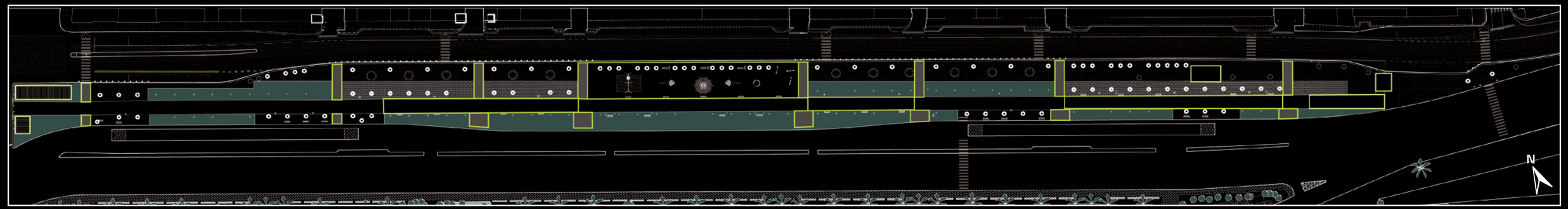
PRE-INTERVENTION

Pause Devices | Continuous movement | Conditioned movement | Non-walkable

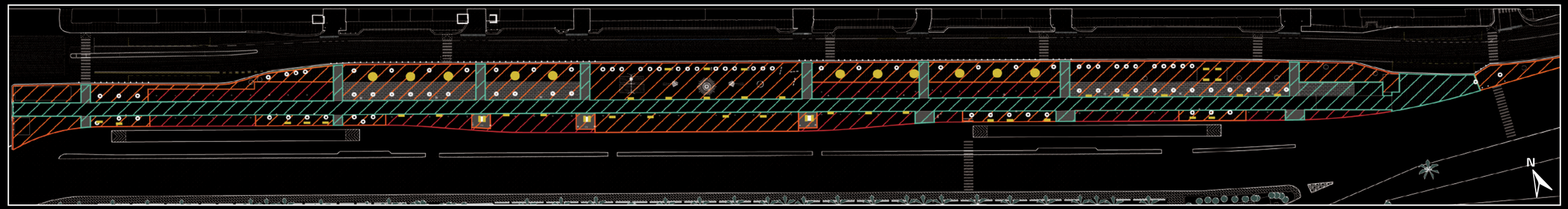
0 10 20 30 40 50m



INTERVENTION



POST-INTERVENTION



playground field into a coordinated intermediate node. In the revised drawing, this area moves towards structured shared permanence because it brings together different forms of ordinary use: bodily activity, children's play, supervision, waiting, informal observation, and short pauses.[47] This concentration gives the middle of the promenade a clearer public role and avoids leaving programme as a set of isolated devices along the route. Permanence is also reinforced in the points where temporary climatic supports are placed in relation to existing seating. These supports are not distributed as a continuous layer across the whole promenade; they intensify the places where pause was already possible, making sitting, waiting, and short stays more durable without saturating the walking spine.
The smaller nodes help clarify this shift. Near the Piazza Ingrao canopy, the ping-pong table remains a light recreational device, but the addition of seating and climatic support turns it into a more stable social pause. It becomes a first supported interval after the entrance rather than an isolated object placed beside the route. At the opposite end, the Piazza Matteotti / Rinascente node gains a stronger public role through the kiosk and services, which give the terminal edge a more usable civic condition. This point is important because the analysis had identified the terminal condition as weaker despite the urban importance of Piazza Matteotti. The proposal therefore gives the end of the promenade a clearer spatial and functional role, supporting longer stays and preventing the route from dissolving into a residual edge.
Read as a whole, the revised promenade becomes a sequence of differentiated public episodes. Piazza Ingrao frames arrival; the adjacent ping-pong node introduces a supported pause; the central fitness and playground fields form the strongest active node; the dog area remains a bounded and regulated programme; the Piazza Matteotti / Rinascente node gives the route a recognisable conclusion. Each episode modifies the relation between movement and occupation without cancelling the linear continuity of the promenade. Conditioned movement appears where programme thickens the route, while continuous movement remains readable along the main spine and extends into the transversal bands. In this way, the intervention shifts Via Roma from a primarily linear promenade towards a more articulated system of movement, pause, activity, enclosure, and terminal occupation.[48]
The expected effect of the proposal is therefore a more precise redistribution of publicness across the waterfront. The revised condition remains differentiated, and this differentiation is consistent with the thesis argument. Some areas become stronger access thresholds, others become supported permanence nodes, others remain open movement corridors, and others operate as regulated or bounded programmes. What changes is the relation between these conditions: access becomes more legible where the threshold was already present but weakly articulated; permanence becomes more durable

"A SPACE IS NOT A THING BUT RATHER A SET OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THINGS."

-LEFEBVRE

[47] See Chapter 2, "Reading the Waterfront through Lefebvre."

[48] Author's analytical drawing in "Publicness Shift Verification".

where staying was possible but insufficiently supported; movement becomes more complex where the promenade previously depended mainly on longitudinal continuity. Re-connect, Re-sequence, and Re-support work together by clarifying thresholds, ordering the rhythm of public episodes, and giving material consistency to ordinary permanence. The post-intervention synthesis therefore confirms a targeted shift in the shades of publicness of Via Roma: a more coherent relation between accessibility, sequence, and supported use.[49]

[49] See Chapter 4.4, "Publicness Shift Verification", especially the related cross-lens verification drawing"

4.5 CONCLUSIONS

Looking back at Via Roma brings the thesis again to its starting question: what does it really mean for a waterfront to become public space? Is publicness produced simply by opening an infrastructural edge to pedestrians, by making the sea visible, or by creating a continuous promenade? The research developed throughout the thesis suggests a more complex answer.
A waterfront becomes public when different conditions—access, governance, programme, comfort, and everyday use—are able to reinforce one another over time.[50] Publicness, in this sense, is not something that can be designed once and for all, nor can it be guaranteed by formal accessibility alone; it emerges through the ways in which people enter, cross, occupy, regulate, maintain, and appropriate space.[51] This is why the thesis has treated the waterfront not as a finished urban object, but as a relational field, where spatial configuration, institutional mediation, economic dynamics, and social practices constantly shape the degree to which a place can be experienced as public.[52]
The comparative study of Mediterranean waterfronts helps to clarify this point. Even within a shared geographical and cultural context, waterfronts do not produce publicness in the same way. Some rely on a direct continuity between city fabric and harbour edge, while others depend on more articulated sequences of access, programme, environmental comfort, commercial activity, and institutional regulation.[53] The broader set of cases analysed in the thesis shows that publicness is never the automatic result

[50] Madanipour, Public and Private Spaces of the City, 96–99.
[51] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–41.
[52] See Chapter 1, "The Problem of Publicness."
[53] See Chapter 3, "Scoring Criteria and Comparative Reading."

“THE WATERFRONT UNDERSTOOD AS A SPACE IN-BETWEEN.”

-PAVIA / DI VENOSA

of waterfront renewal. It can be strengthened by pedestrian continuity, visual openness, civic programming, and everyday accessibility, yet it can also be weakened by infrastructural mediation, commercial over-definition, weak transversal connections, insufficient support for staying, or governance arrangements that limit ordinary appropriation. Split and Málaga make this distinction especially clear. Split demonstrates the civic strength of a waterfront where city, promenade, and harbour remain closely connected within the same public surface, while Málaga shows how a port-related edge can become publicly usable through a more mediated sequence of movement, climate support, programme, and managed transition.[54]
These references do not define models to reproduce; rather, they confirm that each waterfront constructs its public condition through a specific relation between spatial configuration, institutional mediation, and everyday practice.
Within this wider field, Via Roma occupies a distinct and intermediate position. It is already accessible, already continuous, and already represents an important transformation of the city-port edge of Cagliari; at the same time, its publicness remains uneven, because continuity alone does not necessarily produce strong thresholds, clear transversal relations, durable permanence, or a coherent sequence of public episodes. As shown in Chapter 2, the waterfront works most effectively where access, visibility, movement, and material support overlap, while it becomes more fragile where it functions mainly as a passage or where staying is weakly supported.[55] This condition makes Via Roma particularly relevant for the argument of the thesis. It is neither a failed public space nor a fully resolved civic waterfront. It is a promenade whose public potential is already visible, but whose effectiveness depends on the way its spatial mechanisms are clarified, connected, and supported.
This is the condition addressed by Chapter 4. The strategic revision consolidates Via Roma’s own identity rather than aligning it with Split, Málaga, or any other waterfront studied in the thesis. It uses the comparative reading to clarify what Via Roma itself requires: clearer thresholds, a more legible sequence of public activities, and stronger material support for ordinary use. More specifically, the intervention relocates, redistributes, and reinforces the different shades of publicness already present along the waterfront, making them more legible and more effectively supported in space. Re-connect, Re-sequence, and Re-support act on these conditions by strengthening the spatial mechanisms through which publicness becomes more operative.[56]
Their relevance lies less in the individual devices they introduce than in the relations they recalibrate: between city and sea, between walking and pausing, between programme and openness, between temporary activation and everyday use.
The expected result is not a homogeneous public space, but a more coherent one, where different portions of the promenade can sustain

[54] See Chapter 3, “From Comparative Reading to Operative References.”

[55] See Chapter 2, “Cross-Lens Synthesis”.
[56] See Chapter 4.1, “Re-connect”; Chapter 4.2, “Re-sequence”; and Chapter 4.3, “Re-support.”

different public roles: some as access thresholds, others as open corridors of movement, others as supported nodes of staying, and others as bounded or regulated programmes. This differentiation is essential, because publicness is not the same everywhere and does not need to be. A waterfront can support public life through intensity in some points, openness in others, and regulated uses elsewhere, as long as these conditions remain legible, accessible, and socially available. The question, then, is not whether Via Roma succeeds or fails as public space in absolute terms, but whether its existing promise of openness can become more legible, more usable, and more durable. The post-intervention synthesis suggests that this is precisely where the value of the revision lies: in making access easier to read, movement more articulated, programme more coordinated, and permanence more materially supported.[57]

More broadly, the thesis shows that contemporary waterfronts do not become public simply by replacing infrastructure with pedestrian space, or by transforming former port edges into attractive urban images. The production of public space requires more than access and visibility. It requires conditions that allow different users to arrive, orient themselves, stay, interact, pass through, rest, wait, play, observe, and return. It also requires governance and maintenance capable of sustaining these possibilities over time, because publicness is not only produced at the moment of design, but continuously negotiated through use, regulation, care, and adaptation. In this sense, the case of Via Roma points beyond Cagliari. It suggests that the public value of Mediterranean waterfronts should be assessed not by how convincingly they appear open, but by how effectively their openness becomes usable in everyday life.

The final answer of the thesis is therefore necessarily critical rather than definitive. Via Roma demonstrates that publicness is a promise, but also a test: a promise made through pedestrianisation, visibility, continuity, and civic ambition; a test carried out through thresholds, movement, programme, comfort, governance, and use. The strategic revision does not close this test, but makes its conditions more explicit. It shows that the waterfront can become more public when its existing qualities are reorganised into clearer relations of access, sequence, and support. In this sense, the value of Via Roma lies precisely in these unresolved shades of publicness: not in becoming a finished image of public space, but in transforming the waterfront from a line of passage into a condition for shared urban life.

“COMPLEX TERRITORIES AT THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN SEA AND LAND.”

-HEIN

[57] See Chapter 4.4, “Publicness Shift Verification”.

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