

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

Infinite Broadway. The long square

by Stefania Toso

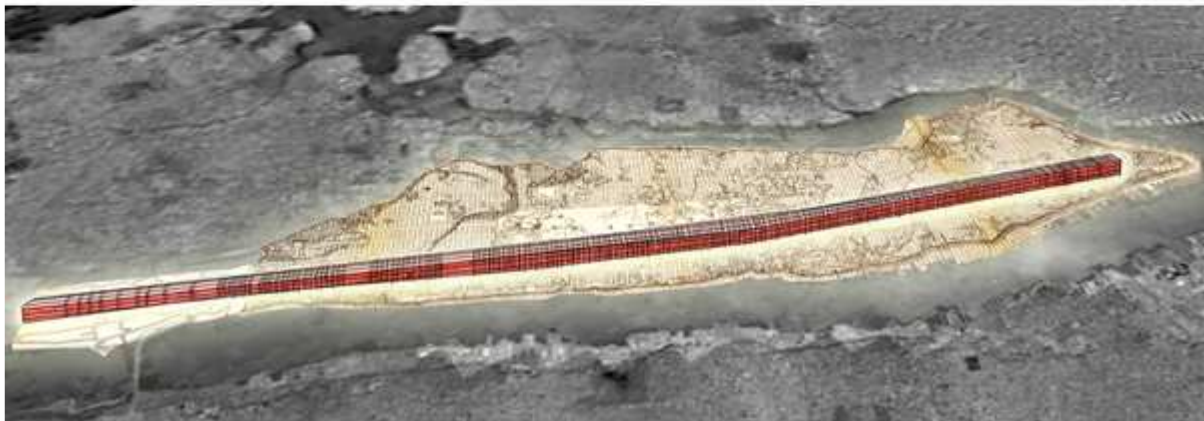
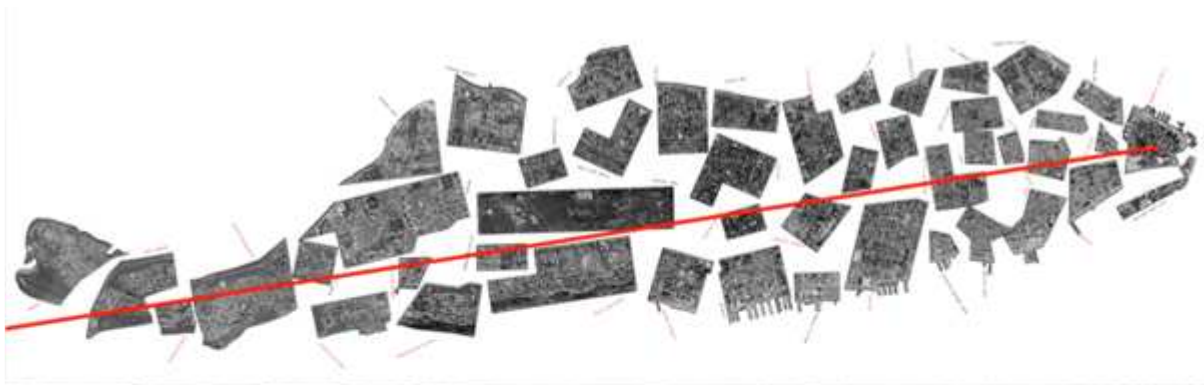
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Thinking and designing a public space is nowadays one of the most important issues and, at the same time, one of the most attractive challenges for contemporary society in large cities, sometimes overwhelmed by the quickness of daily flows.

New York, in particular the island of Manhattan, one of the most frenetic cities in the world today expresses the need to save the last unbuilt areas in the city, responding to several demands from citizenship, which for decades has implemented forms of association for the construction of public space. Many forms of partnership between public and private -for examples the logic of POPS- clearly prove the need for new strategies of development for the collective sphere, in order to give rebirth to the American public space.

After having studied the concept of public space and its identity in America, this thesis proposes a design for a new type of public space: a long pedestrian plaza, thanks to the pedestrianization of the Broadway, the only diagonal breaking the grid in New York and crossing the island from northeast point to southeast one, with its 13 miles. The volume that this street creates represents a big linear and continuum void, that lies between all the districts of the city - which are very similar to islands, with a strong cultural and social identity- and constitutes a sort of backbone to a new city slow.



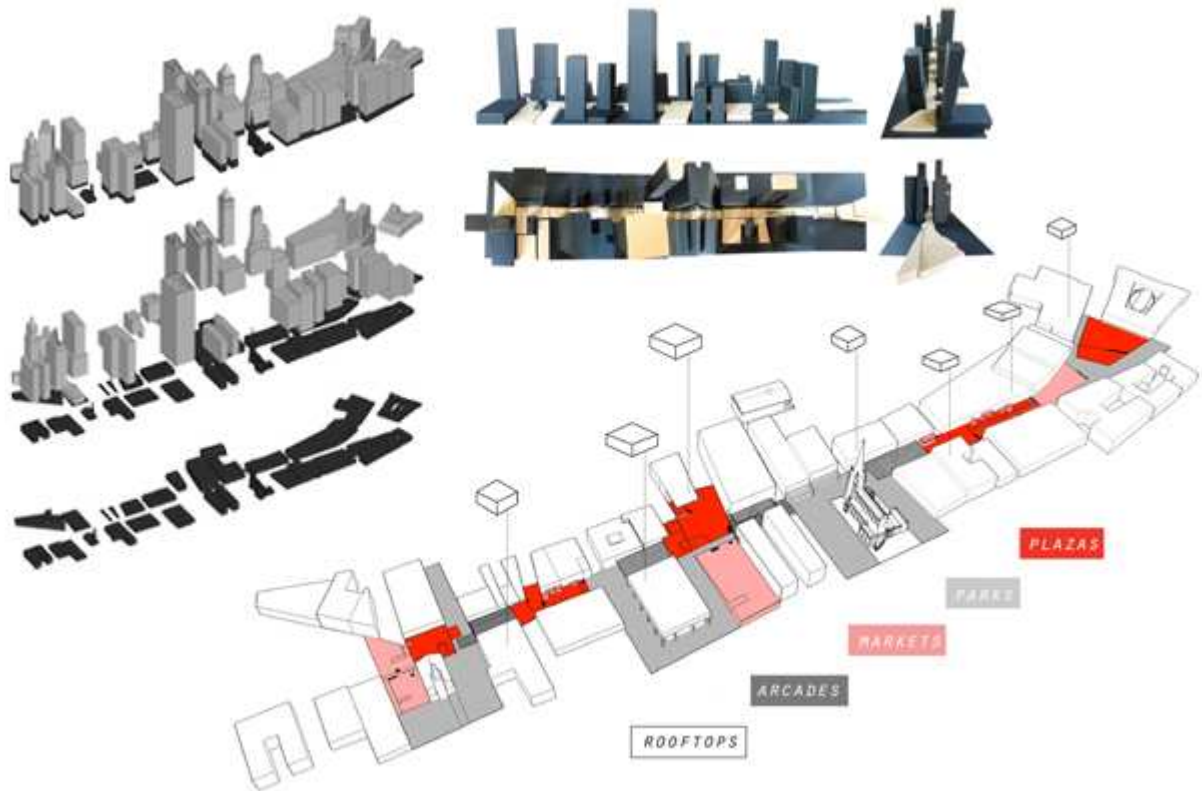
Manhattan as a 'island of islands', held together by the Broadway diagonal, which is designed as a true horizontal volume

Broadway, linked with the shoreline system and the great empty space of Central Park, could provide the town with a large public space, not only important on a regional scale, but in continuous interaction with the different neighborhoods, that influence sidewalks and activities.

The volume of the street may be imagined as 'sculpture' and its 'sides' are shaped by the activities of the ground floor, so-called buildings' 'basements', different in each neighborhood, while its soil is outlined by a movement of the level 0, which is sometimes carved and sometimes has been raised.

The Financial District has been chosen as the district for the exploration of the Broadway pedestrianization results, a construction of a slow public space, not only because it represents the image of financial role that New York plays in the global economy, but also because it's itself the symbol of a capitalistic model that has been questioned by the attacks of 9/11 and by the recent economic crisis.

The high density of this neighborhood makes more evident the meaning of the operation of 'lifting' buildings, an act aimed at the radical design of a new public horizontal city landscape, in which the void is referred not only to all Broadway, in a territorial scale, but it is also drawn starting from activities, in a dynamic and continuous dialogue with the context of the city.

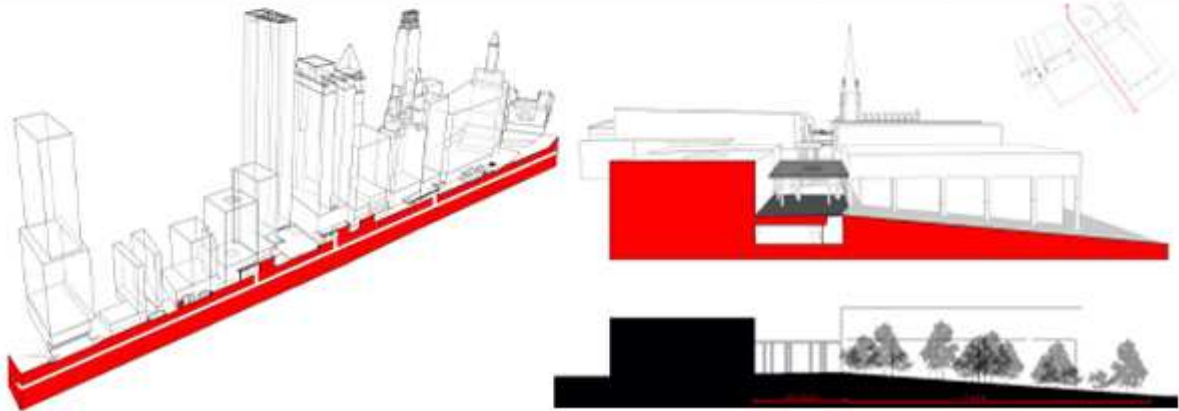
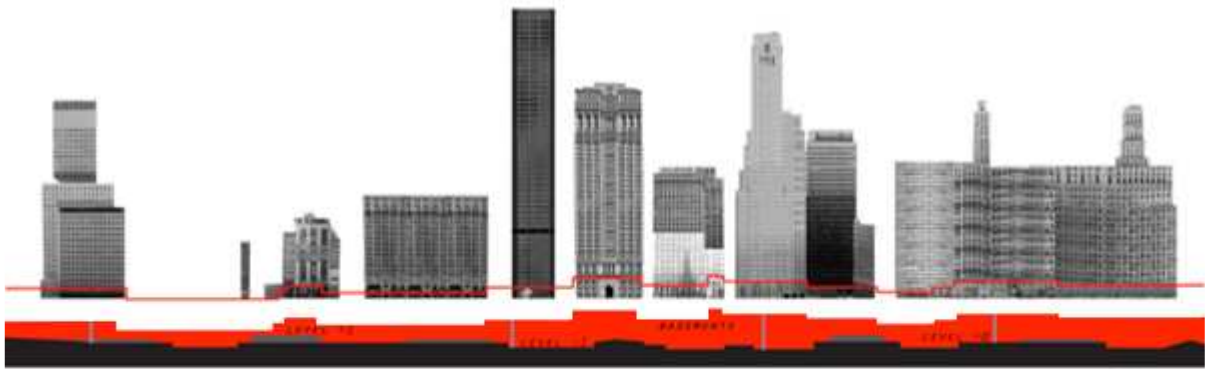


The operation of 'lifting buildings' for the construction of a horizontal city, made of building 'basements'

The New Broadway, as a public space, consists of a series of urban 'rooms', each one different in cultural identity and activities, depending on the neighborhood that is bordering on the Broadway diagonal street along its 13 miles.

The public space of the new slow Broadway is determined, in particular, by 5 different typologies of public spaces, almost like archetypes, inspired by the current New York public space: 'plazas', squares excavated at a neighborhood scale; 'parks', consisting of green areas both traditional and innovative spaces such as collective gardens, playgrounds and 'pocket parks'; 'green markets', a network of markets that deliver fresh goods throughout the city, raised as the ancient greek agora; 'arcades', covered passageways and tunnels stations near the metropolitan transport system; and finally 'rooftops', public spaces in most privatized level of the city, roofs above Manhattan.

The open space of the three-dimensional Broadway, conceived in that way, can provide a piece of a real slow city, more sustainable and livable, human-scale based, able to interact at the same time both locally, with the different 'islands', and at the metropolis scale, with the city 'that never sleeps'.



The new horizontal 'landscape' determined by the activities with a movement of the soil of Broadway itself

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