



HONORS THESIS

COURSE OF: *Architecture Construction City*



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• FROM STONE TO SEA - The future of memory •

ABSTRACT

Taranto is a city with a fascinating and complex history: city on the border between East and West, the scene of power upheavals, of great wealth and of poverty, of ceaseless blending of landscapes, of different civilizations and cultures; so nowadays contradictions seem to be the perpetuation of an eternal sequence of events.

Its original urban nucleus today is an island, "Tàrde vecchè"; which, like the tower clock in its biggest square, has stopped and remains motionless as if to deny the passage of time. This portion of the city is marked by its two main elements.

STONE •

The city of stone has its scaffoldings, its houses sealed by crossed wood planks, that inside are eaten by lichens and outside are marked by human neglect. From time to time a wall crumbles in one place, while in another a building is moldering under the rain.



Observing the wounds and the scars of the “city of stone” some feel the fascination of its important past, others feel the bitterness of uncertainty about its future that now can exist only as a conjecture.

SEA •

Taranto is “the city built between two seas” as it is watered and saturated by the Mar Grande and the Mar Piccolo. The sea is the common denominator for this land of stone; it broadens its segments and crashes against the cliffs, dying the eyes of the beholder an intense blue.

The project breaks, mends, erases, merges, works among the spatial corrugations, investigates different relations among the parts, calibrates the land-use intensity on the island, explores the forms of the old and contemporary living.

The “steadfast centre of gravity” of this effort is to restore meaning and role to the urban – architectural project, so that, it is possible to glimpse a new map of the connections among the entangled, crossed and broken designs of the fragments of this living nucleus of stone and sea.

TO SEARCH
TO OBSERVE
TO IMAGINE
TO RECREATE

These, more or less, were the steps of my journey, synthesized in my thesis paper.

I started my journey alone, but then it changed shape and substance, thanks to an invaluable experience in which I was fully involved: the international contest for the Old City "OpenTaranto". This was an enhancement not only for me, but also for my home town to which I had decided, since I was young, to devote the culmination of my university studies.

During the work carried out by our team and by the other competitors to the contest; and also by the numerous contacts found in Taranto to visit the Old City and many of its buildings, churches and underground graves, brought the confirmation that the beauty I remembered and which I was able to find in the ruins which kept me company during my journey, was not only inspired by my filial love, but was a reality. It is a reality, deteriorate but of clear high value.

The proposal I tried to design in this paper is based on three pillars: feasibility, participation and sustainable evolution. I did not suggest one or more spectacular landmarks or some modernist twists or, probably worst, nostalgic imitation of the past. The idea, supported by the advisors who reviewed my thesis work, was to suggest a practicable and gradual modification of the Old City which would permit to repopulate the island, to revive different cultural and business activities, continuing what has already been done during the last years and to promote a respectful tourist development.

All this gives me the strength to believe that this city will shine one more time!

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