

JANUS OF THE TWO SEAS

The dual city of Taranto, is a '*città groviera*', a triangular tongue between an outer sea and an inner basin, an atavistic city in the centrality of its ancient fortress – the Island, and at the same time current in its steel expansion on the mainland –.

In this way, the Apulian journalist Alessandro Leogrande suggests for his hometown his own *modus* to observe the capital of the two seas in a such paraphrased and personal reading, through an experiential and critical evaluation. He thus specifies an exclusive methodology for investigating the morphology of a city familiar to him, mixing careful journalistic investigation with a range of subjective and experiential information. In a related vein, in the 1960s, urban planner Kevin Lynch conducts a series of unilateral investigations in U.S. metropolises about the legibility of the urban environment by pointing out analytical categories for better understanding the morphological nature of the city.

If Lynch therefore proposes a subjective methodology of analysis, with the aim of participatory planning – based on the individual perception of each civis – this research wants to re-read that methodology in a transposition completely set in the Ionian sea. The considerations Engineer Giulio Tian in the drafting of the expansion *Master Plan for the city of Taranto* can indeed be considered in a systematic reading similar to those of urban planner Lynch: the systems of analysis proposed by Tian, taken up by Gustavo Giovannoni and Marcello Piacentini, among all¹, find an interesting match in those urban and social reasonings of high national interest. The critical methodology of U.S. 'mind maps' can thus meet the analytical data compiled between 1922 and 1943 by Tian and the spatial planning experiments concluded in 1965 by the engineering firm *TEKNE*². Taranto's urban space can thus be interpreted through those five elements – identified by the Chicago school, for reading urban space –: paths and edges determine, within the urban fabric, areas of social and cultural interest identified by districts. Within these, the nodes and architectural landmarks of historical and artistic interest determine, also in the Ionian case, anthropic landmarks.

Taranto, a city that looks toward two seas, thus has in its territorial conformation a direct application of these principles around the two large water basins. If the Mar Grande, looking toward the Ionian Sea, is studded with architecture capable of creating urban nodes and attractors – real living locus for social life –, the Mar Piccolo instead, a more introverted natural basin, turns out to be less cohesive with the urban fabric, almost creating a territorial caesura with the Ionian urbe itself. In fact, their waterfronts – decipherable at the same time as paths and as margins – are very exemplifying for both, since they highlight the complex urban morphology between the city and the dual seascape. It is in the architectural theme of a double amphitronic that Taranto can thus be seen as an *Ianus Bifrons* capable of catalyzing a multitude of differences not only architectural and territorial, but also social and economic that are reflected within the Ionian morphology itself.

However, this comparative reading finds, in the specific features of the two coastal landscapes, a historical and architectural reconnaissance in those social and anthropic dynamics peculiar to many other coastal urban areas such as Augusta, in Sicily, or in the Ligurian city of La Spezia, which share with the Ionian city this dual relationship between the littoral sphere and the industrial and military vocation.

1. In 1943, engineer Giulio Tian reissued the Technical Report, which he had already published in 1922–23, for the Taranto PRG noting the relevant impact, on a national scale, of his own territorial experimentation. In fact, the Plan becomes, in those years, the forerunner for a series of urban research and surveys for Southern and Central Italy while the national and international sector chronicle praises these territorial experiences at the completion of the same plan in the same 1940s. To corroborate the success of the plan, Tian himself publishes, as an appendix to the report, his own private correspondence where some politicians, journalists and especially architects of the caliber of Piacentini, Giovannoni and Chiodi consider this experimentation a true urban model.

2. The *TEKNE* plan was prepared by Umberto Dragone, Roberto Guiducci, and Paolo Radogna with advice from Giovanni Astengo and Giorgio Fuà. It was proposed as an application experiment in the South for hypotheses on city-region, city-territory with respect to relevant issues of that period such as management efficiency, collective productivity and resource optimization.

PATULCIUS. THE VITTORIO EMANUELE III PROMENADE ON THE MAR GRANDE

In the III Book de *Aeneis*, Publius Virgilius Maron tells the journey to Italy of the young Aeneas and the sighting of the Temple of Hera Lacinia in the Tarantine Mar Grande. Indeed, these verses extol the width of the Herculean gulf and the city's opening onto the same inlet, alluding to the openness – cultural as well as geographical – of the Ionian urbe.

It is precisely the waterfront of the greater basin, in Virgil's gaze, that is interpreted as a threshold, as that boundary of exchange and encounter capable of being an element of connection between different parts of the city, between different urban fabrics and converging social matrices.

Therefore, through the readings of Bernardo Secchi³ and Richard Sennett⁴, the Vittorio Emanuele III waterfront, an exemplary stretch of the landscape on the Mar Grande, becomes a place of social and spatial interaction, a public space of sharing where communities can relate to each other creating opportunities for contact and dialogue. On the same coastal stretch, it is possible to make an equipollent reflection since both architectural and spatial factors emerge clearly, too: if the coastline, at a significantly lower elevation than the urban one, becomes a porous boundary element with the Ionian Sea, the Umbertine urban fabric favors the clustering of numerous works of architecture with a preponderant historical and artistic value.

Although the city then finds the strength to expand beyond the Island's borders, through urban propagation, during the reign of Umberto I of Savoy, it is in the industrial policies of the 1930s and in the imperialistic expansion – with the wars of Africa of a Littoria nature –, that this urban stretch acquires an incidental architectural front on the Mar Grande.

The orthogonal paths, from the republican toponymy, in fact connect the two seas by identifying within the city center a series of urban and relational nodes that make the *Borgo locus* alive and inclusive. In fact, those Ionian urban facts are located, not surprisingly, internally compared to the most relevant crucial cores along the same coastal stretch. It is in the encounter between urban paths and the greater coastline that the spaces of the *cives* find a remarkable usability and spatial connection, greatly influencing interactional and social factors. Also the morphological approach of Hillier and Hanson's *Space Syntax*⁵, is thus reflected in the Taranto re-proposition of the five Lynchian elements: these nodal factors identify, on the Mar Grande, a series of architectural landmarks capable of being simultaneously urban facts and social catalysts.

Indeed, the construction of the new Military Arsenal and the drafting of the Calza-Bini plan in 1936 welded the island's historic architecture with the navy's administrative buildings⁶, while the policies of Fascism incentivized the construction, at the waterfront, of the representative architecture of the *littorio*. Armando Brasini, between 1933 and 1935, built the monumental Government Palace on the ruins of the Alhambra polytheater as propaganda architecture for the Royal Navy, engaged in the conquest of the Horn of Africa. In a propagandistic habitus, the Palace of the Province – of Castrensian memory in red brick and bronze decorative elements – relates to the rotunda in front of it, an interconnection node between the Mar

3. The author rethinks urban and anthropic configuration by referring to the reasoning of Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin through connectivity, permeability and accessibility making an advocate of a networked development and no longer functionalist and hierarchical.

4. The sociologist and architectural critic interprets the concept of borders in terms of social and architectural barriers. This advocates the design of open and porous margins capable of accommodating a plurality of inclusive and flexible spatial realms for greater cohesion between social and cultural differences. Through its denunciation of closed borders, creators of alienation and separation, it relies instead on the design of accessible, fluid and inclusive public spaces.

5. Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, reworking Kevin Lynch's urban studies, formulate an analytical methodology that studies the relationship between spatial configuration and human behavior. Through digital mapping tools, this study easily relates the civic relationships between landmark architectures, routes and focal cores to the human behaviors and urban users' movement flows.

6. Noteworthy among them is the 1869 Palazzo Savino Amelio where the Sovereign Military Order of Malta currently has its headquarters. Besides being an interesting representative architecture, this is also a considerable center of research and marine studies for the same chivalric order.

Grande and the routes of the bimar city. Oppositively to this convex space, Ebalia Square with its sculptural Rosa del Venti expresses its essence as a concave core through the landmark architectures of the Bank of Italy – Casa del Fascio until the outbreak of World War II – and the Palazzo delle Poste e dei Telegrafi, built in 1937 by Cesare Bazzani. The two landmarks, with their neoclassical limestone facades, finally relate to the neo-liberty Palazzo Magnini. The Byzantine building, also from the Fascist era, becomes physically and perceptually the final destination of the Vittorio Emanuele III waterfront, identifying yet another nodal element within the urban fabric.

This review of architecture demonstrates how the porous margin of the shoreline is capable of becoming a territory of social inclusion: the boundary between land and water is thus conceived, in the matrix of the American Sennett, as an open frontier capable of accommodating, at the same time, the social and cultural spheres generated by the overwriting between paths, nodal points and architectural landmarks.

CLUSIVIUS. THE ROUTE OF THE FORNACI ON THE MAR PICCOLO

After the great development of Taranto in the Fascist era by which the waterfront toward the Mar Grande denoted representation and prestige, the post-war Ionian period saw the development of the other coastal face. Unemployment and urbanization propped up the Ionian city, and economic revitalization shifted the nature of the Mar Piccolo coast from an agricultural and natural vocation to industry-centered planning.

This dichotomous structure of Taranto is narrated by writer Alessandro Leogrande, who in his book *From the Rubble. Chronicles on the Southern Front* states:

"Arriving in Taranto by train, the gaze is inevitably led to follow the degradation of the landscape toward the coast. The fields planted with wheat, olive trees and vines slowly give way to Mediterranean scrub [...] Then all of a sudden, the first signs of the factory appear: that impressive pile of steel, cement and smoke that devastates the land on which it stands".

The birth of the second face of Janus, now closed waterfront and seaward edge, is thus controversial and nonlinear.

In 1954, the development of the earlier Calza-Bini plan adjusts to the lines of the time to articulate a greater concentration of tertiary and productive areas along the Ionian coast, with the aim of uplifting the labor situation in the South. These economic operations, however, continue to demonstrate a synergistic vision with a focus on housing issues and spatial planning dynamics by reasoning on the five Lynchian elements.

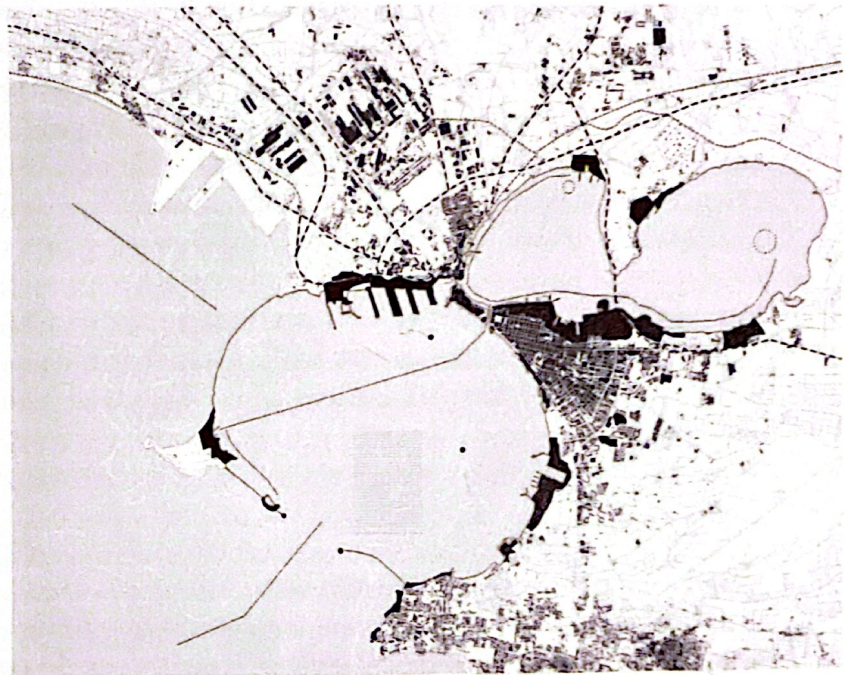
Therefore, during the expansion of the Tamburi district, now unified with that of Lido Azzurro to the north of Taranto's historic suburb, the Gesù Divin Lavoratore church, INA-Casa architectures such as those built by architects Franco Minissi, Eugenio Montuori, Nello Enea and Achille Vitellozzi, maintain typical Mediterranean characters, such as the alternation of full and empty spaces and the use of loggias. The presence of balconies in housing complexes, now distorted by squatting, marks a rhythm on the facade made of accentuated chiaroscuro, reminiscent of Mediterranean features. At the same time, a major infrastructural policy marks relevant nodes and routes such as the Punta Penna Pizzone Bridge⁸, the fulcrum of linear development between the cities of Massafra-Taranto-Grottaglie. The magazine of *Italsider* in 1963 chronicles this new ferment:

7. LEOGRANDE, Alessandro; ROMEO, Salvatore (edited by). *Dalle macerie. Cronache sul fronte meridionale*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2018, p. 173.

8. The work was designed by engineer Giorgio Belloni in prestressed concrete. The infrastructure was and still is considered essential for urban mobility because it connects the northern and southern suburbs. This design action makes it a threshold element and not an edge element. Recently, Alfredo Foresta's Architettura study center proposed the Q.45 Dna of the Two Seas project for a bicycle-pedestrian passage under the bridge.

Fig. 1. Francesco Masiello, Chiudere il Cratere. Taranto's Masterplan, Roma, 2020

Fig. 2. Alberto e Giorgio Calza-Bini, Taranto territorial plan, Taranto, 1953
[RAPu, Rete Archivi Piani urbanistici, Archivio RAPu - Taranto023, 1953, Taranto (Comune). Ufficio tecnico, 15TAC4]



"Studies partially completed and partially in progress have ascertained that the population of the new Taranto at the north of Mar Piccolo will amount to about 100,000 people. They propose to characterize already the first residential cores intended for industrial workers [...] with high social integration. [...] In particular, vast green areas will be organized, inside and outside the city afforested and equipped with playgrounds".

The urban fabric is thus articulated according to layouts that still look to the Tarantine sea but also to the expansion of the city towards a system of green networks, nodes and infrastructure.

During the following years, starting in 1959, these operations were no longer taken into consideration and the change of course was definitive: the construction of Italsider, an Italian steel group factory, formerly Ilva and today ArcelorMittal, marks this process of alteration of the waterfront on the Mar Piccolo. Despite the subsequent TEKNE plan by mainly Giovanni Astengo, the doubling of steel plants, the total absence of a landscape-conscious strategy has consecrated what Bernardo Secchi called the city of the rich and the city of the poor¹⁰.

In fact, the weight of living, today, on the Mar Grande and the Mar Piccolo is different and diametrically opposed.

The urban planner dwells on the extent to which social inequalities point to a 'new urban question' that in the Western city has disproportionately increased the distance between rich and poor leading to spatial injustice. The separation between these two worlds gives rise to two different settlement patterns, housing sprawl on the one hand and concentration in specific areas on the other, which for Secchi can only be stemmed through a *renovatio urbis*, that is, a rethinking of urban design in which new issues emerge that highlight conflicts, needs and resources. So the so-called "perceived space" and "lived space" – in the interpretation of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre – coexist dichotomously in these dual coastal strips, determining a process of social relations that influence their tarantine territoriality and which, if well considered, could lead to urban improvement in terms of everyday practice.

Reflecting, therefore, on the terms of Lefebvre and his student Edward W. Soja, the Ionian situation falls into a spatial and social reading of the morphological elements marked by Lynch, in a profound split in the economic and political spheres.

The waterfront that is articulated on Via delle Fornaci is an edge, made no longer by thresholds and crossings but by geographic and social margins. The urban structure after the 1970s therefore denies any accessibility to the coast without taking into account the orographic gradients and views between land and sea. An indistinct series of buildings punctuates a waterfront without becoming a recognizable and iconic sign on the territory.

The utopian project of the Sea Fair¹¹ of 1951, which would have represented a collective landmark on the grand scale, is shattered by overbuilding and speculative interests.

9. ITALSIDER, "Il piano di Taranto", *Rivista Italsider*, 2, 1963, p. 41.

10. In a lucid analysis, Secchi studies the modern city in its urban and social fragmentation, denouncing how urban planning can help address social and spatial inequalities by fostering an increasingly inclusive and just city. An integrated strategy that fosters inclusive policies and reconnects these socio-spatial fragments thus encourages the construction of a cohesive and open city.

11. The Taranto Sea Fair, established in 1946, promoted the local maritime industry. In 1951, the Fair Authority was granted legal recognition by Presidential Decree No. 1139. On June 10, Nicola d'Ammacco was appointed president. The event attracted architects such as Cesare Ligini and Augusto Baccin to design the new fair complex, which, however, was never built. The project was published in many national magazines such as *Urbanism* in issue 7 of 1951.

CROSSING THE IANUA GATE: RETHINKING TARANTO BEYOND THE DICHOTOMY

An analysis of the urban evolution of Taranto, 'Giano dei due Mari', reveals a profound dichotomy that manifests itself not only in the city's geographic configuration, but also in its socio-economic evolution and in the urban planning policies that have marked its destiny. While on the one hand the Vittorio Emanuele III waterfront on the Mar Grande stands as a space of openness, connection and social interaction, on the other hand the Mar Piccolo waterfront assumes the role of the margin that excludes, a place of physical and symbolic separation from the surrounding urban fabric.

The reinterpretation of the neuralgic elements in Kevin Lynch's maps and their application to the Taranto context made it possible to highlight how the structure of the city can be interpreted through these five key elements by precisely highlighting a disparity of living. In the case of the Mar Grande, elements such as neighborhoods, margins, routes, nodes and architectural references are manifested through the presence of a cohesive urban fabric, rich in connections between the city center and the waterfront, characterized by architectural landmarks of great historical and artistic value. Armando Brasini's Palazzo del Governo, Cesare Bazzani's Palazzo delle Poste e dei Telegrafi, and Ebalia Square with its Rosa dei Venti in fact represent clear emblematic examples of a desire for monumentalization of public space and attention to the Mediterranean context. On the other hand, the Mar Piccolo embodies the other side of this urban history. Its transformation from an agricultural and natural basin to an industrial and manufacturing hub has resulted in a radical alteration of the relationship between the city and the sea. The Tamburi district, the emblem of this reconfiguration, is the most striking example of how industrial expansion has sacrificed the quality of living in response to economic development. Urban interventions related to the Calza-Bini plan and later the TEKNE plan could have ensured greater harmonization between manufacturing and housing needs, but the absence of a landscape-conscious strategy, building chaos and social fracture between peripheral points has instead generated a sharp caesura between the city and its eastern waterfront.

Fig. 3. TEKNE, Model of Territorial planning of the city of Taranto. Taranto, 1963 [ITALSIDER, "Il piano di Taranto", Rivista Italsider, 2, 1963, p. 41]

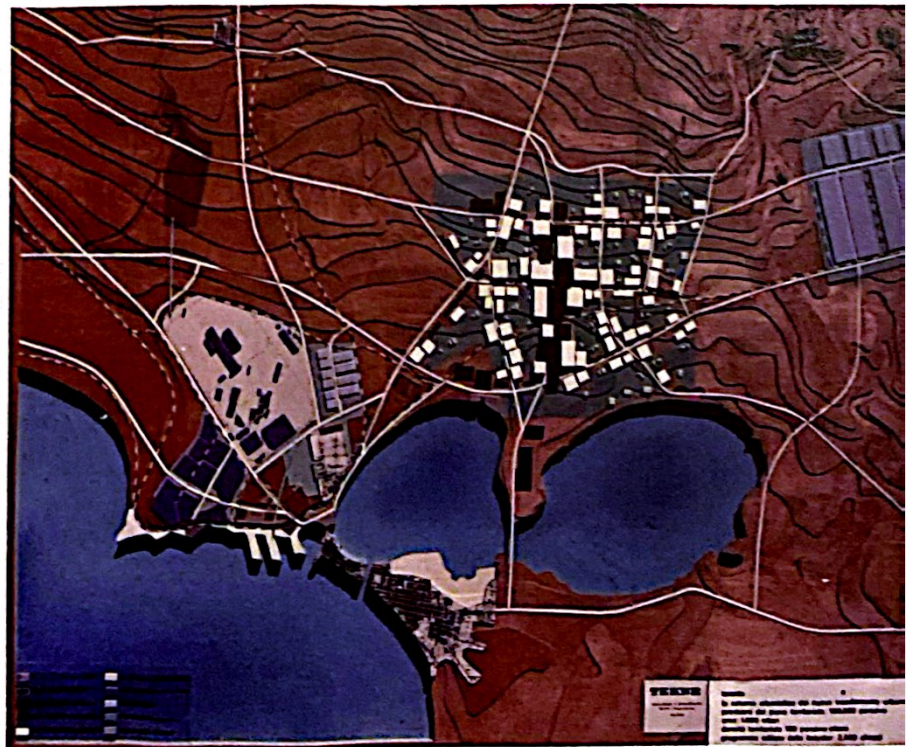




Fig. 4. Manuela Ciangola, Francesco Masiello. Januis waterfronts (from left, top)
 Palazzo delle Poste e dei Telegrafi, Banco d'Italia,
 Palazzo del Governo, Palazzo Magnini,
 ILVA's towers, church of Gesù Divin Lavoratore, INA-CASA model building, Roma, 2025

Taranto's historical evolution, marked by alternating moments of openness and closure, reflects an unresolved tension between maritime vocation and industrial needs. In the Umbertine period the city expands toward the sea with an orthogonal layout that favors the connection between the two basins, while in the postwar period the logic of production and building speculation penalizes the Mar Piccolo coast. The waterfront issue, then, is not only a matter of urban planning, but also a problem of social equity and accessibility to collective spaces. The development strategies adopted during the 20th century have produced a fragmented city in which the right to the city, so affirmed by Lefebvre, is unevenly distributed. It can be inferred that spatial analysis of a physical, but more importantly mental and lived space can become the first, if not the most immediate, tool for spatial and social revenge that is particularly valuable in an area such as the Ionian coast.

Embedded in this narrative, both historical and architectural, is the powerful metaphor of *Giano*, Janus, god of passage and thresholds, a crossing that is always accomplished through an *ianua* gate that marks beginning and end, past and future. This is precisely why the god is represented through two faces with opposite directions that are reflected in the dual nature of Tarentum. Janus' epithets, *Patulcius*, (open passage) and *Clusivius* (closed passage), represent the inherent duplicity in the deity and at the same time in the Ionian city. Taranto finds itself suspended between past and future, between a rich historical legacy and a present marked by fractures and contradictions. Alessandro Leogrande emphasizes precisely that concept:

"One cannot plan one's future if one is unable to read one's past. [...] Taranto has never been an 'unknown object', as many hastened to say after the Ilva explosion in the summer of 2012 [...], and only by elaborating a past will it be possible to get out of the systemic crisis that today grips the Ionian capital. A systemic crisis not only environmental"¹².

The future challenge will be to transform *Clusivius* into a new *Patulcius*, configuring the waterfront of the Mar Piccolo as a space of connection and no longer of discontinuity, so that the city can finally overcome its dichotomy and reunite its two souls in a single vision of sustainable and democratic urban development.

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12. LEOGRANDE, Alessandro; ROMEO, Salvatore (edited by). *Dalle macerie. Cronache sul fronte meridionale*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2018, p 298.