The book, published in 2020, is the PhD path result of the author Beatrice Moretti at the Department Architecture and Design – DAD, University of Genoa, Polytechnic School between 2015 and 2018. The intention at the basis of this publication is to investigate the specific condition of “portuality” paying particular attention to the description and study of the port-city interface. This “liminal space” contested between the two realities presents itself as a set of points where forces and flows converge and diverge, and the identity and characters of communities and places are condensed.

The space thus described becomes a “dynamic threshold” that can be crossed and explored, acting as a filter and becoming a privileged space for urban and architectural experiments. In direct connection with the objectives set by the AIVP in support of those of the 2030 Agenda, the author’s main objective is to investigate the heritage that falls within this variable-thickness boundary and to place it at the center of a regeneration process able of connecting two realities that until now have scrutinized each other without ever really interfacing.

The word to the Author

Benedetta Ettorre – ***Within the book, the word that is used most often to define the city-port interface is “threshold”, why this choice and what are the main characteristics of this concept?***

Beatrice Moretti – The definition of “threshold” was born during the research for different reasons: the first of which, more didactic, is related to the need for a lexical change capable of bringing with it also changes of instrumental and conceptual type. The term chosen adds movement and dynamism with respect to those usually used to describe the port-city interface, such as limit and margin. The threshold has the possibility to be crossed, exceeded, to relate with uncertainty.
In order to approach this issue, the book examines various case studies that explore the concept of “coexistence”. In these places, city and port coexist, dialogue and interface, succeeding in going beyond their dichotomy deriving from twentieth-century theories and practices and allowing the barrier to become a “threshold”.

Benedetta Ettorre – ***How important is the citizens' participation in a project of such a large scale and how could it integrate with the top down plans of the port authority, the superintendence and the other bodies working on the port areas?***

Beatrice Moretti – The citizens' participation is very critical: the participatory process is regulated and provided by law but is still rather ineffective and weak. In particular, it is complex to get the administrations to acknowledge requests from below and translate them into policies and operational plans. It should be recalled that the interests of not only public bodies such as the Region, the Superintendency and citizenship converge on the port areas, but also private bodies such as the concessionaires, who are the real operators moving the market. This aspect tends to further complicate the development of participatory processes.
It is the responsibility of the planner to carry out a project that allows the city to merge with the port and its activities. It is necessary to design spaces and filters to shape the border so that even those who live in the city are enriched by the reality of the port and recognize it as a piece of landscape and not only as a disturbing element.

Benedetta Ettorre – ***Another recurring concept in the book is that of "palimpsest". In a context like that of the port where the time variable is, by its very nature, accelerated and unpredictable, what could be the projects capable of guaranteeing respect for the palimpsest and therefore for the port's identity?***

Beatrice Moretti – The type of palimpsest referred to in the book is that of writing: a text made up of corrections and progressive revisions. Just as in a written work, in a port area there are superimpositions and stratifications that narrate its evolution. One of the keys to understanding this is offered by maritime geography. The evolution of port cities is, in fact, a subject studied by maritime geographers. Among these, we can cite James Bird with his "Anyport model", in an attempt to outline the evolution of ports, he ends up creating a universal model. On this basic model, the need to adapt to technological updates has forced all ports to adopt the same elements in order to respond to global phenomena such as containerization,

naval gigantism, clusterization, etc. It is precisely from this superimposition of new elements on the “old” port substrate that the concept of palimpsest was born, a physical chronology of the functions assumed by the border during the life of each port. In this heterogeneous but compact system, warehouses, silos, bunkers and port equipment become the crucial ingredients of a strategic map in which their regeneration triggers a coordinated and comprehensive modernization project.

Benedetta Ettorre – ***The challenge derived from COVID has exploded with even greater force the environmental issue that has involved our cities for years. How can we pursue a process of energy efficiency in port areas and those at the interface between port and city that is sustainable from all points of view?***

Beatrice Moretti – The port has an undeniable polluting nature that can be partly dampened by the increasingly frequent use of LNG and electrification. The threshold could become a filtering space that takes on functions related to environmental rebalancing. This area could be transformed into a park, a water channel or any element able of acting as a buffer between the two realities, between the two environments. The most sustainable solution is therefore not moving the port away from the city, but to allow the two realities to coexist peacefully.

Table of contents

FOREWARD

Oltre. Metabolisms at th City/Port border

by Carmen Andriani

THE PORT CITY

Infrastructure, Landscape, Borderscape

PORTUALITY

Concept and Condition

Backgrounds

Global Phenomena

Container and Clusters

Criteria and Contexts

THRESHOLD

Nature and Potential

Backgrounds

The Concept of Thresholds

The Threshold Heritage

From Integration to Coexistence

ATLASES

Six Factsheets

Six Maps

BEYOND THE PORT CITY

Models, Strategies, Features, Recurrences

NEW HORIZONS

Port Clustering and Governance Patterns

The Emergence of the Port City of the Cluster

AFTERWORLD

Designing Thresholds in the Port Cityscapes

by Carola Hein

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Since 2015 she has been a teaching assistant at DAD, especially within the Coastal Design Lab, an

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