

Reclaiming or excluding?
The evolution of waterfront redevelopment and public space in Genoa

Necdet Ayik

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano

necdet.ayik@polimi.it

Abstract

This research revolves around how the waterfront redevelopment paradigm has chronologically shifted and its direct impact on public grounds. Increased influence of the market, changing involvement weights of stakeholders, the underlying rationale for waterfront regeneration, and their reflection on the hinterland's spatial and programmatic development of the waterfront projects from the emergence of the phenomenon to the current timespan are discussed by addressing back to the main idea of the "reclaiming waterfronts for the public". This issue is comparatively examined in terms of the redevelopment process of Genoa's urban waterfront to evaluate the public nature of the transformed spaces, from the Porto Antico's regeneration to the ongoing Waterfront di Levante redevelopment project.

Keywords: Urban waterfront redevelopment, publicness, public space

1. Introduction

Waterfronts have long been recognised as an essential component of a city's identity, and they have become heavily influential for cities' economic, social, and environmental improvement. Historically, these areas have created an expanded surface for the interaction of different urban actors and functions, where everyday activities intertwine with the maritime operations. However, the intense spatial occupation of port infrastructure has significantly disrupted this open nature of waterfronts, once enabling fluid interaction between the water and the city. Maritime activities that revolve around the industrial, trade, and transportation functions suppressed the ordinary utilisation that led to the rupture of public life and urban waterfronts.

Following the mid-20th century, the traditional maritime activities experienced a notable decline that decreased spatial needs for maritime operations (Kostopoulou, 2013; Taufen and Yocom, 2021). Particularly, the progress in the naval technologies that require advanced technical infrastructure and the introduction of containerisation to the maritime transportation resulted in the relocation of ports outside the perimeters of the urban areas (Kokot, 2008). While forming the contemporary port infrastructure, the inner-city waterfronts and historical port areas became "ghost districts" suffering from industrial structures, refineries, wastes, and pollutants (Hein, 2016). As a result of this circumstance, waterfronts became vacant spaces inside the city. This phenomenon spread to port cities worldwide, signalling the beginning of waterfront rehabilitation projects. In other words, urban planning projects have focused on waterfront restructuring, also referred to in the literature as waterfront "redevelopment", "regeneration", "revitalisation", "renaissance", or "rehabilitation" with the primary goal of converting underutilised or abandoned port and industrial areas into vibrant, mixed-use districts that integrate residential, commercial, recreational, and cultural amenities (Kostopoulou, 2013).

Beyond the initial port models that focused on the port development such as "anyport" by Bird (1963), Hoyle (1989) introduced the model of "Stages in the evolution of port-city interrelationship" that included "redevelopment of waterfront" as a stage in between 1970s-1990s when urban renewal is situated in the original core. Hoyle (2000) expanded the model by introducing the next stage, "renewal of port/city links," from the 1980s, where he emphasised the spatial integration/new connections between port and city via the influence of globalisation and intermodalism, and how port roles are transformed. Subsequently, Schubert (2008) summarised the typical trajectory waterfront regeneration in different stages: initial derelict and disuse of former ports, the relocation of ports outside of urban centres, idle areas and buildings in the former port areas, visioning the potentials of waterfront for reallocation, implementation and re-functioning the area by introduction of new urban/architectural program and revitalisation. It remarks on the importance of waterfront redevelopment as a crucial

step while examining the port-city relationship.

The early examples of waterfront redevelopment emerged in the North American context, particularly through well-known and highly influential projects that shaped subsequent initiatives. As cities such as Baltimore, Boston, and San Francisco became widespread, waterfront redevelopment projects also gained interest in Europe and later spread to Australia and Asia (Hoyle, 2000). Furthermore, the earlier projects' substantial impact also influenced how the waterfront redevelopment projects would be realised in the upcoming decades, especially with similar urban programs, design approaches, and planning strategies, widely considered in the literature as "*Baltimore syndrome*". The early waterfront redevelopment initiatives primarily aimed to recontextualise the underutilised port areas by introducing various urban functions, including predominantly residential, commercial, recreational, and cultural, mixed-use purposes for reclaiming the edge of the city (Breen & Rigby, 1996). Urban waterfronts have undergone a paradigm shift, moving from being centres of production and transition to spaces mainly focused on consumption and experiences.

Starting from the beginning of the 21st century till the current timeframe in waterfront redevelopment projects points to another important milestone. Alongside the common challenges of urban regeneration under neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2002), the most recent instances of waterfront redevelopment initiatives reflect the significant influence of market pressure and dominance over the primary goals observed in the earlier stages (Bassett, Griffiths and Smith, 2002; Pinto and Kondolf, 2020). In many waterfront redevelopments, the orientation shifted towards economic development to attract investment. Gradually, this augmented influence of the private sector in the current period led to a prioritisation of economic returns over broader community interests, resulting in the development of waterfront spaces that primarily cater to affluent residents, tourists, and consumers (Oakley, 2009; Cheung and Tang, 2015; Avni and Teschner, 2019). These have affected the involvement of private and public sectors, governance, and funding models, which are fundamentally related to waterfront redevelopment projects' spatial, social, and economic outcomes.

The commodification of waterfront spaces has given rise to concerns regarding the accessibility and inclusivity of these areas for all segments of society (Chan, 2020). Especially the discussions around the community ownership and public access rights (Sairinen and Kumpulainen, 2006; Huang et al., 2007; Attia and Ibrahim, 2017) have been the topic of planning conflicts in the waterfront redevelopment projects. Even though waterfronts have been widely considered and experienced as collective areas of the cities, as urban commons (Iovino, 2016), the role of a community in the course of transformation has been overlooked (Cheung and Tang, 2015; Iovino, 2018). This illustrates the significance of examining the public space and the dimensions of publicness in the scope of waterfront regeneration processes to understand shifting paradigms and dynamics for evaluating increased capital pressure and its spatial and programmatic reflections. Such assessment offers insight into the extent to which these spaces serve the needs and interests of the public, promote social equity, and contribute to the overall quality of urban life, and how the assessment could offer insight into the social equity and contribute to the overall development of the urban waterfront and the city.

This paper examines the shifting dynamics in the waterfront redevelopment under the influence of economic priorities and commodification of space, which necessitates an examination of the notion of publicness and the qualities of public space in the context urban waterfronts to understand better the social, spatial, and programmatic implications of waterfront regeneration in the longitudinal term dating back from the first applications till the ongoing projects. Genoa Waterfront is a prime case study investigating these transformations and examining challenges and opportunities associated with balancing economic development and public interests. The issue is assessed through the lens of publicness and the dimensions of publicness to provide a comprehensive analysis of the waterfront redevelopments in different terms but in the same context, as well as their impact on public spaces created and considered in the hinterland of the waterfronts. While investigating the inter-generational implementations, particular attention is given to the narrative, actors, and stakeholders, the process of the projects, and the physical, social, and programmatic outcomes in the selected case study to draw broader conclusions about the nature of waterfront redevelopment and public space.

2. Scope and Context

Genoa's case study was selected because of the multi-layered trajectory of waterfront redevelopment initiatives. The context displays rich examples of different governance and management strategies and the economic infrastructure, representing various public-led and private-led redevelopment schemes. Furthermore, interventions realised in different periods also allowed for the longitudinal study. The temporal scope of the project spans from the Genoa Urban Regulatory Plan in the 1980s to the current time. Similarly, the spatial scope of the project includes Porto Antico, Darsena, Ponte Parodi and the eastern section of Genoa's waterfront in the boundaries of Waterfront di Levante redevelopment -Genoa's former fair area (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Genoa's waterfront in the spatial scope of the research, edited by the author over the satellite image from Google Earth (February 2025)

This study is grounded in the qualitative framework for examining the contested evolution of Genoa's urban waterfront. The analysis was conducted by reviewing archival documents, policy analysis, interpretive mapping, and spatial assessment based on the ownership, management, accessibility and inclusivity model to investigate the dimensions of publicness more deeply and reveal the patterns of the paradigmatic shift. A wide range of sources, including urban plans (starting from 1980), port plans, design proposals, competition entries, municipal documents, secondary literature and news articles, have been consulted to contextualise the research. Moreover, the mapping process of the different timeframes and diagrammatic representation has been completed via digitalisation of the historic orthophotographies and maps using GIS tools.

3. The Evolution of Genoa's Urban Waterfront Redevelopment

3.1. The Prologue

The emergence of the first waterfront redevelopment attempts can be traced back to "*Il Piano Regolatore Generale della Città di Genova (PRG) 1980*", which can be regarded as the initial blueprint for the transformation of Genoa's waterfront. This regulatory plan framework followed the municipal approval in 1976 and its subsequent

ratification by the regional authorities in 1980. Considering the neglected waterfronts of the city, Darsena was identified as a place for introducing various urban functions alongside the maritime functions in the city's historic port. The plan aimed to facilitate technological areas, sports areas, and educational activities in the port area (Gastaldi, 2010). This master plan was followed by the "*Studio organico d'insieme del Centro storico*" studies in 1983 by the municipality, with the emphasis on the recovery of the port and the increased interest in the connection of the historic city with its waterfront (Gastaldi, 2010).

Simultaneously, the municipality of Genoa appointed six different architects in the different sections of the waterfront, and the architect Renzo Piano's engagement in the regeneration of the Molo district in the scope of 2.2 hectares of urban area (Tasso, 2015) marked a significant turning point for the urban waterfront of Genoa. Central interventions revolved around the two important topics: recovery of the Molo district and the newly introduced service hub; furthermore, the design included the large square at Via Turati by re-locating the street in subterranean level and introducing three main buildings longitudinal towards the sea that house hotel and conference centre at the docks (Tasso, 2015; Gastaldi and Camerin, 2020). However, the project has not been implemented due to the lack of a financial plan, the issue of scale, and operational struggles (Gastaldi and Camerin, 2020). In summary, this period can be considered the starting point in identifying the waterfront's potential.

3.2. Early Initiatives and Porto Antico Redevelopment

The rest of the 1980s witnessed a growing awareness of the necessity to revitalise the city's waterfront areas, and two different initiatives came to the fore in the historic port. Genoese entrepreneurs introduced the first set of proposals for redeveloping the historic port into a tourist port that accommodates marina and touristic functions. The second set of initiatives was promoted by public administrations, highlighting the creation of a large exhibition area for the Genoa Expo 92' and the enhancement of port activities; even though the primary plans for the exhibition were to locate the exhibition areas outside of the city centre perimeters or introduction of a platform on the sea (Gastaldi and Camerin, 2020). Moreover, it is important to note that both proposed projects shared the exact location and were developed in the same timeframe at the initial stage.

These entrepreneurial plans started with the Newport project designed by P. Gambacciani in 1984, and the project scope included the areas of the historic port from Darsena to Magazzini del Cotone, where Renzo Piano's first proposal was also located. The key element of the project was the programmatic conversion of the docks and elongation of the docks towards the sea that form the marina. The project's program aimed to enhance commercial identity in the historic port by introducing a marina, a hotel, a shopping centre, and entertainment facilities heavily influenced by North American instances (Tasso, 2015). The first scheme was followed by the updated version of the project in 1986, which was predominantly concerned with the economic parameters of the project. The revision was proposed to include reduced boat capacity in the marina, a multifunctional building with a conference centre in Ponte Spinola, and restoration of the Magazzini del Cotone. Although the project had not been realised in the exact location, this created a groundwork for the upcoming development of the Marina Porto Antico at the beginning of the 1990s. The main decision in terms of relocating this development plan arose from the administration's intention to allocate the area for the Expo'92, following the decisions suggested in the "*Triporto*" commission, which was composed of members from regional, municipal, and port authorities in 1986 and later approved in 1988. The tourist port project has been realised in the Ponte Morosini-Ponte Spinola area, accommodating the initially proposed similar functions such as hotel, residences, and commercial services, and designed with a complex connection of piers and four interconnected buildings during the period spanning from 1991 to 1995. The project has been realised with private investment alongside the limited contribution of public funds.

However, at the same year, private bodies and investors suggested the "Portman Project" consist of the famous cone with 262 meter high designed to accommodate hotel functions, the artificial island in the heart of the Porto Antico served as a triangular base for the cone and designed in four different levels with commercial, tertiary, touristic functions. In the following period, due to the increased criticism of the public and concerns regarding the conflict it represents with the port and city plans, the plan was rejected and not realised.

Along with Newport and Portman's project proposals, public initiatives were being discussed for the Molo Vecchio and Magazzini del Cotone area for the international exposition of Genoa in 1992. As mentioned following the approval of the plan that includes the decisions in the commission, situating the exhibition areas in "*Porto Antico*" -the historic port of Genoa- was a result of Renzo Piano's preliminary studies and the proposal of "*Via San Lorenzo al Mare*" connecting the city to the sea in 1984 (Gastaldi, 2010; Gastaldi and Camerin, 2020). The project was designed by considering the San Lorenzo street elongation towards the sea as a new pier to create the central axis from the historic centre to the city's old port with newly introduced commercial and public functions. The project evolved further by changing the axis from via San Lorenzo to via Ponte Reale, modest filling in the docks, and adaptive reuse strategies for the historic warehouse of the "*Magazzini del Cotone*" to house the exposition in 1985. During this period, the officials visited Baltimore to analyse the port redevelopment. They were particularly inspired by the aquarium as a typology for future intervention in the historic port of Genoa (Tasso, 2015). Following the updates of the project in 1987 and the delivery-approval period in 1989, the design of the project was completed with the adaptive reuse of the Magazzini del Cotone as an exhibition centre and conference facility, the construction of the aquarium, and the introduction of commercial activities to the area. Moreover, the total intervention area was 90.000 square meters by considering the transformation of the existing volumes and new structures; the main functions were defined as exhibition spaces for the Expo, conference centre, commercial facilities, aquarium, cinema, and service spaces (Renzo Piano Foundation, n.d). The project has been completed with a public-private partnership, with a predominant share of funding provided by public authorities by the consortium between the Municipality of Genoa, the Liguria Region, and the Genoa Chamber of Commerce under Porto Antico SpA.

Simultaneously, minor interventions were also completed in the Darsena area by the Faculty of Economics's construction and the Maritime Station's renovation at the beginning of the 1990s.

3.3. Strategic Shifts and Unrealised Visions

The designation of Genoa to host the G8 Summit influenced the city's overall development in 2001. The construction of the Biosphere as the last addition to the historic port of Genoa coincided with the time of the event, again designed by Renzo Piano. In the same year, Ponte Parodi was opened for the architectural design competition to evaluate the possibilities for the under-utilised area in the historic port. The competition aimed to redefine the relationship between the city and the port by regenerating the Ponte Parodi area (Ferrari, 2008). The competition was organised by Porto Antico SpA and resulted in the selection of the UNStudio's proposal. The project was designed with a mixed-use approach, including spaces for leisure, culture, commerce, and entertainment, designed like a public square that is formed from a series of surfaces expanding towards the sea and covers the dock area with a total of 23.000 square meters of intervention; however, the project has not been realised because of the planning and financial issues.

The Darsena area, the land-side of Ponte Parodi, has also been undergoing considerations for redevelopment. The Darsena redevelopment project was approved in 2001, as part of the broader Porto Antico plan, to improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the area in the scope of the regeneration plan, thanks to the designation of Genoa as European Capital of Culture in 2004 (Ferrari, 2008). The total intervention covered more than 10.000 square meters of area and involved constructing new buildings, renovating existing structures, and demolishing the selected structures. The most prominent intervention within the project's scope was the Museum of the Sea, designed by Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra, completed in 2004. Among the other interventions, commercial, service, and office spaces have been introduced to the area with private investment.

Another important work in this era, Affresco, designed by Renzo Piano, reconsidered the entire Genoa waterfront in 2004. Piano's design includes several interventions, the most notable of which is constructing an artificial island in front of the city to house the airport and the continuous seafront promenade for enhancing the connection of the waterfront with the city (Ferrari, 2008). The following part of the proposal included new waterfront solutions for maritime and civil functions. This ambitious master plan with a broad vision of waterfront-city connections has gone through two further modifications in the following each year: the second version proposed the

relocation of the airport even further than the previous position towards to sea, the third version enhanced the urban functions in the waterfront over maritime-related program (Gastaldi, 2010). Due to the estimated budget of the project and lack of financial groundwork, the master plan has not been implemented.

3.4. The Blueprint and the Rise of Waterfront di Levante

Following the Affresco proposal, Renzo Piano prepared another master plan, the Blueprint, which focused entirely on the eastern section of the city's waterfront from Porta Siberia to Punta Vagno in 2014. The initial plan proposed the construction of a new navigable canal near the ancient city walls, adjacent to the raised road, obtained through excavating portions of the existing quays and demolishing some abandoned buildings (Rosasco and Lombardini, 2020). The final version of the master plan highlighted ten important considerations that had been discussed during the project phase, and it included a new urban park, improving the connections between the city and the sea, and introducing new residential, commercial, and recreational facilities to the area (Gastaldi and Camerin, 2020). The Blueprint guidelines evolved as a design competition by Genoese local authorities for the municipality-owned areas, predominantly focused on the marina as a former fair area on the city's east coast. However, despite more than seventy international participants, the competition resulted in no selection of the winning proposal in 2016. Nevertheless, Piano's initial design -the Blueprint- was rethought and adopted for the former fair area that created the framework of the project.

The "Waterfront di Levante" project emerged as the following phase of the Blueprint masterplan, spurred by the competition's outcome and the city's evolving urban dynamics (Rosasco and Lombardini, 2020). This updated iteration maintained the core concept of integrating water into the urban fabric, albeit with a reduced building footprint. The project was once again appointed to the Renzo Piano Building Workshop, which further developed the scheme and proposed an integrated approach for the regeneration of the area by addressing the need for open public spaces, improving accessibility, enhancing the marine environment, and creating new economic opportunities (Moretti et al., 2019).

The integration of private investment into the project was coordinated by SPIM SpA, a publicly owned municipal company. Its primary function was to promote the sale and assess proposals related to publicly owned land. The demolition of the existing structures in the former fair area -Pavilion C, Office Building, Pavilion M, Pavilion D-, and excavation for the proposed canal appointed to the developer as additional tasks besides the area's overall development (SPIM Genova, 2018). It has also been stressed that Pavillion B, designed by Jean Nouvel and completed in 2009, was excluded from the sale and the public funds to be allocated for the reorganisation of the transportation infrastructure, demolition of the former NIRA, excavation for the main canal entrance and completion of the urban park that was mentioned at that time as a possible intervention for the upcoming period (SPIM Genova, 2018). Following the sale of the fair area with the conditions outlined, the involvement of private capital makes approximately three-fourths of the redevelopment budget, and the rest of the approximately one-fourth would be covered by the various public investment programmes planned within a legislative term. Overall, this process seems founded chiefly on speculation and the privatisation of public areas: tenders for the concession and/or sale of state property will be issued, risking depleting the public bodies' role (Moretti et al., 2019).

The master plan program includes developing residential, commercial, and cultural facilities and public spaces designed primarily to attract residents and visitors. The project is composed of five different functional lots that include the restoration of the existing sport hall for hosting the indoor sport activities in the first lot, the hotel and student housing approximately 8,900 m² in the second lot, residences approximately 15,500 m² in the third lot, offices approximately 10,000 m² in the fourth lot, and the fifth lot got characterised with the linear urban park nearly covers 16,500 m² area; the total intervention area was defined as approximately 115,000 m² (Comune di Genova, 2021).

4. Discussion

Genoa's waterfront transformation from the first implementations until now highlights the challenges of balancing urban waterfront enhancement with the preservation of publicness and assurance of public benefits, particularly considering the shifting dynamics between the involvement of public and private sectors. This shift reframes the norm of waterfront redevelopment that started as a waterfront renaissance that aimed to reclaim the waterfronts for the city and resulted in the form of privately developed and managed waterfronts. Therefore, the central concern revolves around who these spaces are for and to what extent they are truly public.

4.1. Narrative and Process

The redevelopment process of Genoa's urban waterfront unfolds a long and complex narrative. The earlier instances in the scope of Porto Antico redevelopment were primarily catalysed by the international exhibition Expo 1992, aimed to promote the activities that respond to the growing tourism demands, overall enhancement of the city's image, improvement of the waterfront usage, and connection of the waterfront with the city. It has been conceived not only as a singular project, but as part of a broader urban regeneration strategy, designed to elevate the city's historic centre and the waterfront. These interventions focused mainly on reclaiming former industrial and port areas for public use. Alongside the waterfront's functional transformation, the port heritage's integration and recovery to host the new functions have formed a maritime collective memory. Therefore, the discourse was centred around the urban reconnection and civic recovery of the port as an integral part of Genoa's urban identity.

The following process encompasses the broader vision of redeveloping Genoa's urban waterfront. The emergence of several master planning initiatives, such as Affresco and Blueprint, primarily reveals the intention for growing interest in the transformation of the overall urban waterfront, from the water towards the land, harmonised with the large-scale interventions. They remained unrealised mainly due to financial constraints.

The Waterfront di Levante initiative illustrates the increasing economisation of the redevelopment narrative in the present era. The main objective is to attract private capital, as evidenced by the increasing emphasis on revenue generation. The outcome is a hybrid narrative that rhetorically emphasises public benefit and connectivity, while spatial outcomes increasingly align with the priorities of private capital and real estate markets.

4.2. Governance, Management, and Actors

Genoa's waterfront redevelopment trajectory illustrates a significant transition from state-led initiatives to complex arrangements involving public-private partnerships, private developers, and semi-autonomous bodies. Initially, local, regional, and port authorities were in charge of planning and funding in the form of public-private partnerships. Yet, the dominance of the investment was mainly over the public, and in carrying out the projects. This term reveals redevelopment attempts in favour of public functions, creating accessible waterfronts and enhancing the maritime heritage with public-oriented approaches. Over time, as priorities shifted towards attracting private investment and promoting economic growth, the public benefits were overlooked, and the primary concern was creating a real estate market in the waterfront. The change can be observed from the state-led Porto Antico redevelopment program to the property-led strategy of the Waterfront di Levante project, even though the initiations of both projects introduced by the public authorities, augmented involvement of the private capital deeply affected, especially the process of transformation and the results. Moreover, rather than creating a balanced relationship between public and private funds, the decision to privatise the process also illustrates the changing vision into an asset management strategy.

The repeated engagement of Renzo Piano as a prime actor for drawing a vision and designing the interventions in the urban waterfront redevelopment plans and projects demonstrates the important role of architecture while re-shaping the contemporary scene in Genoa's waterfront. While the involvement of international firms signals ambitions to create high-profile waterfronts, it also implies the potential risk of homogenising architectural and urban design, potentially marginalising local or regional specificities. However, as a local to the same geography, Renzo Piano contributes a lot to the process of identity-making and maintaining the sense of place in Genoa's

waterfront redevelopment in the redevelopment process of Porto Antico. On the other hand, the Waterfront di Levante project reveals patterns more similar to those in global instances by introducing the high-end design and lacking sensitivity to the existing context. Furthermore, this technocratic approach that dominates recent projects appears to be a retreat from broader civic engagement.

4.3. Contextual Considerations

The contextual considerations start from the selection of the intervention site. The distinct relationships established by the redevelopment of the Porto Antico project, located in the historic port area, were achieved by being part of the broader regeneration plan from both sides of the historic centre and the historic port. A contextually sensitive and spatially integrative approach could be traced from the approach that waterfront was not treated as an isolated intervention, but as a catalyst for the broader revitalisation of the historic urban core, which had suffered from long-term physical and socio-economic decline. The project fosters a dynamic relationship, extending the publicness of the city's historic centre towards the waterfront. This has been achieved by establishing a strong connection between the city's public infrastructure and the public areas introduced within the intervention site to maximise continuity between the waterfront and its hinterland. Intervention partially engages with the urban context constrained to specific parts of the inner urban fabric and responds to the needs of the limited surrounding area (see Figure 2). The project thus exemplifies a market-led regeneration paradigm in which the pursuit of economic optimisation supersedes the imperative for social and territorial cohesion.

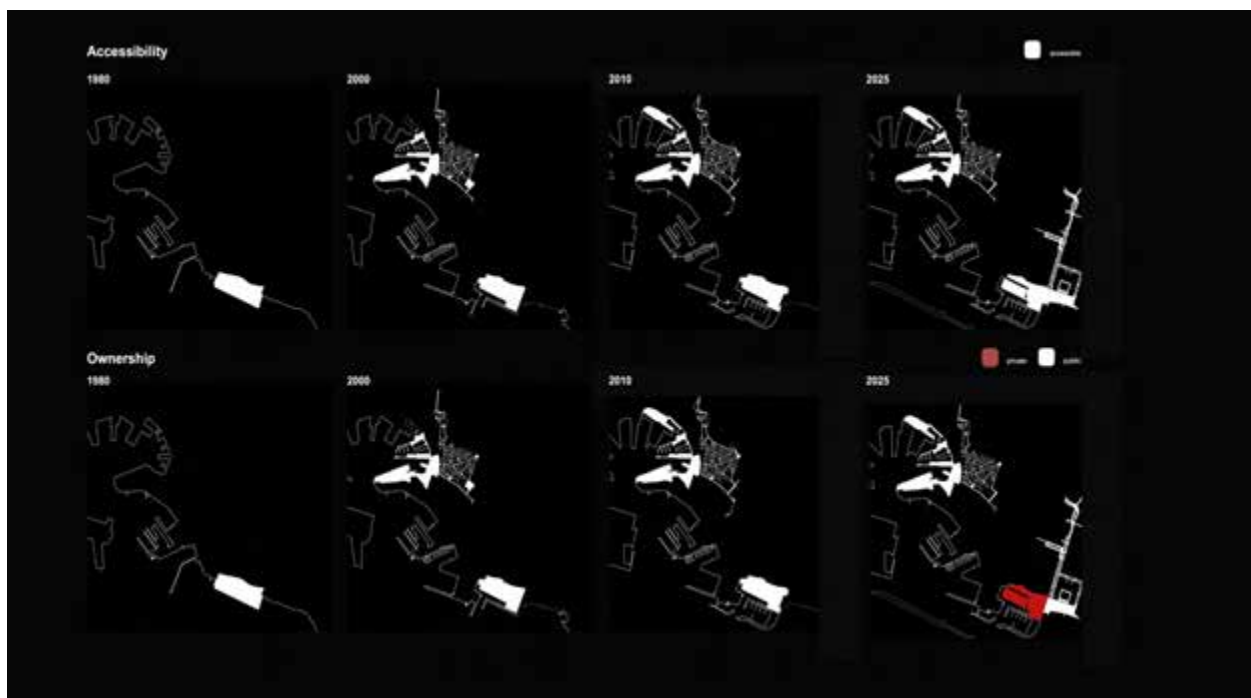


Figure 2: Spatio-temporal shift in Genoa's urban waterfront public ground in terms of accessibility (above), and ownership (below)

4.4. Spatial and Programmatic Outcomes

The physical outcomes of the earlier period applications, realised predominantly with the Porto Antico redevelopment project, were defined by a series of newly constructed or renovated public spaces, including promenades, parks, and cultural amenities. The spatial logic of these interventions generally prioritised public access and connectivity, aiming to create spaces of encounter that broad segments of the population could freely access. The design decision of including the mixture of renovation of the existing historic buildings, harmonised by the new structures that accommodate new typologies and functions, and the arrangement of these components

in the public realm contributed to the success of the early redevelopments on Genoa's waterfront. On the other hand, even though the program was centred on public functions, it is essential to underscore the criticality of the event-led nature of the project, which brings further questions regarding sustaining public engagement in the long term by their limited capacity to generate durable patterns of integration. This reflects a broader tendency characteristic of waterfront redevelopment during that period, leisure-oriented programming, and the prevailing "port-out, city-in" approach (Tommarchi, 2025), which was often questionable regarding the depth and permanence of public engagement.

However, as exemplified by the Waterfront di Levante project, the spatial and programmatic logic is powerfully shaped by commercial imperatives, emphasising attracting private investment and an exclusive user profile. With the introduction of the retail and residential functions, the access and use of spaces are implicitly regulated by market mechanisms. The spatial enclosure and exclusion through high-end residential enclaves, controlled access zones, and commercial programming that privileges affluent users represent the prominent issues in the waterfront redevelopment implementations during late neoliberalism—not only in the architecture of the built environment but also in the carefully curated image of the waterfront as a space of consumption and leisure, further reinforcing the patterns of socio-spatial segregation (see Figure 3).

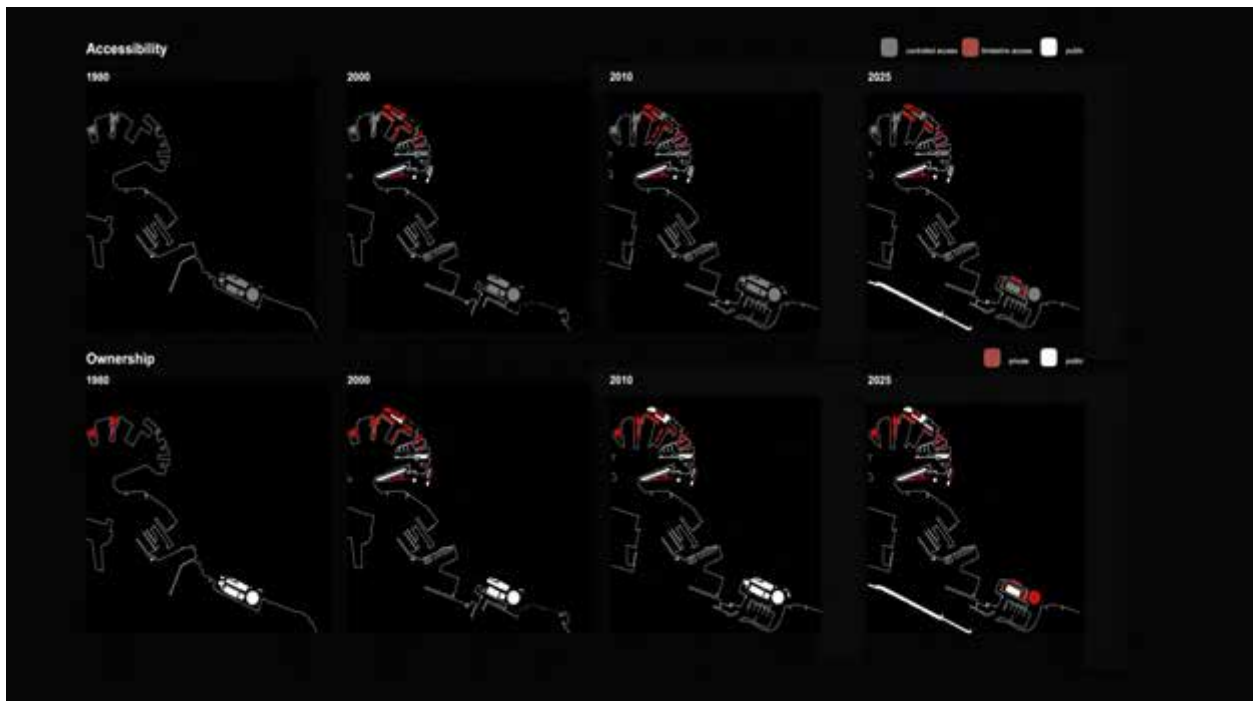


Figure 3: Spatio-temporal change in the built environment in the scope of waterfront redevelopment projects in terms of accessibility (above), and ownership (below)

5. Conclusion

Renzo Piano defines the process of the Waterfront di Levante project by referring to his former project of Porto Antico, and emphasising that Genoa once again "re-conquers the sea" (Minella, 2023). However, the process and results do not reveal similar patterns or attempt to address similar concerns as they were in the initial phases. Prioritising urban reconnection and public engagement with the waterfront has been replaced with market dynamics that eventually lead to spatial and social segregation of waterfronts from urban life and public actors. Therefore, the main motto of the waterfront redevelopment programs was identified with the attempts to reclaim the waterfront for the city and reshape it according to the developer's priorities. All in all, this reveals the dramatic shift in the paradigm of waterfront redevelopment.

The case of Genoa's waterfront reveals how the objectives of such initiatives have transformed in the near history, raising concern over the publicness of the waterfront, and the growing issue of spatial and social exclusion. Even though the recency of the project limits further impact studies in the current timeframe, it sheds light on this global trend of enclaving the waterfronts via exclusive spaces and selected user profiles, illustrating how the phenomenon of waterfront redevelopment has shifted from a public-oriented direction to the opposite.

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