



## Multasking infrastructures and public space

*Alessandra de Cesaris*

The rupture between the design of infrastructures and the planning of the city, between infrastructures and the quality of public spaces, is a recent event. Prior to the end of the 1800s it was the street, the mobility infrastructure *par excellence* that constituted the spatial matrix of settlement; throughout the entire nineteenth century the modernisation of the city occurred above all through the design of infrastructures; the city was provided with necessary new services while simultaneously reinventing its form and public spaces.

**In recent years the search for a greater integration between transport infrastructures and public space**, and thus urban life, has led a number of designers to re-examine and re-invent the rigid typologies once codified exclusively by transportation engineering criteria, indispensable though not exhaustive, such as traffic flows, parameters of speed and safety and turning radii.

**Many proposals** – in the search for new figurations and more consonant modalities of utilising so-called "spaces of mobility" – are characterised by a reduction in the typological clarity of the individual construction, which is hybridised with other functions and other typologies, or fragments of these latter.

**The use of methods of inclusive design** attempts to unite the needs of transportation with the city, the spaces of mobility with the spaces of leisure, to jointly define technical and morphological solutions, to model the rigidity of technical infrastructures and respond to the complexity of the city and its layers, abandoning the dogma of mono-functionality.

**In this sense, a parking lot may be configured as something different than the sum of square metres of parking stalls separated by fire protection barriers**; an underpass can be freed from the claustrophobic technical form of the conduit; a bridge or viaduct can be configured as something more than the indispensable technical need to overcome an obstacle; the interchange, so often intercluded and inaccessible, can host a range of leisure and sport activities, as well as systems for the production of energy, the management of waste and the collection of rainwater.

**Moreover, the underground stations** along with the descents to reach the iron quota can be configured as a system of new generation public spaces. The basic idea is that these places

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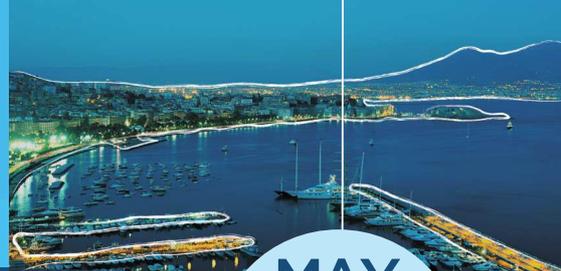
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should be considered not only as places of mobility and fast crossing but also as places of the city.

**In this vision, the articulation and duplication of the ground** - in a three-dimensional vision of the urban project - can be considered a valid and sustainable planning strategy; in fact, it will be able to make up for the lack of free areas in the central, hyper-urban areas, characterized by a high value of the land.

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