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# Visualising the riverbank

Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Cristina Mattiucci

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*Drawing on ethnographic observation of a tract of urban riverbank in the city of Trento, in northern Italy, we attempt to link phenomenological observation of social interaction in public places with larger political concerns about contemporary urban public space. While agreeing with Low et al. (Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space & Cultural Diversity. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005) that in order to foster public spaces it is necessary to accommodate the differences in the ways social classes and ethnic groups use and value urban sites, we also argue that one should be wary of planning hubris—which can occur in even ‘good-willed’ planning, and leads to the creation of domesticated and formalised, but also inherently restricted, spaces for encountering differences.*

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**Key words:** urban waterfronts, riverbank sociality, public space, planning, city of Trento

## Introduction: exploring urban waterfronts

In 2009 and 2010, during the course of a year, we conducted ethnographic observation of a tract of urban riverbank in the city of Trento, in northern Italy. We undertook this research as an opportunity to both, rather classically, visualise the details of interaction in a public place—a ‘small urban space’ (Whyte, 2001 [1980])—and, in a complementary way, advance a reflection on the transformations of contemporary urban space. Our aim was to show how people use the material features of public urban spaces (its ‘furniture’) as affordances for living in and perceiving the environment (Ingold, 2000). Furthermore, the apparently mundane routines of inhabiting a place, with its daily rhythms and encounters, can be seen as expressing a latent stage of what Marcuse has called ‘emancipatory forms of urbanism’ (Brenner, 2009). While some urban theorists have highlighted that a number of classical assumptions

about the relationship between public space and the political domain have become increasingly problematic (Amin, 2008), we suggest that an analysis of living urban territories inspired by phenomenology—that is, a philosophy grounded in the notion of life world—yet, one simultaneously capable of taking into account wider urban associations, dynamics and assemblages, may be helpful in grasping the new scales of human association created by technological and social change, in the context of the historical transformation of the cultural meaning of a place. As we hope to show in this paper, the waterfront area we chose provided a rich case in point.

In many cities around the world, urban waterfronts and waterscapes are contentious and evolving places, where important planning and political stakes are located. Far from being a passive background of urban development, rivers are dynamic elements that interact with human spatiality (Mauch and Zeller, 2008). Waterfronts have always been central to urban social, economic and

cultural life. Indeed, in the typical European city, the waterfront initially determined the settlement of the city itself, in connection with the control and exploitation of transits along waterways such as rivers or seas. During the *ancien régime*, water constituted a private spectacle for aristocrats who secured for themselves a view of the water from their palaces, towers and gardens. Later, in the 19th century the emerging bourgeoisie attempted to appropriate this exclusive relationship by building promenades, bridges with views and other similar facilities. Access to water played an important role for both functional (economic activities, public health, etc.) and recreational reasons. The design of modern urban parks in many 19th-century cities in Europe and America provides evidence of the strategic importance of watery areas.

However, during the first half of the 20th century waterfronts were also spoiled, polluted and 'uglified' by industrial development. The nadir of waterfronts' decadence was perhaps reached with the economic decline that afflicted many European cities in the 1970s, when the industrial engine broke down and no funds could be granted to remove its toxic debris. In turn, the post-industrial conversion has invested intensely in waterfronts. Redevelopment schemes were deployed to help convert the by-then decaying waterfronts into new 'creative' districts, often through iconic and flagship projects that attempted to turn them into high-value lands. At present, this seems to have become a global phenomenon: we can, for instance, see examples of similar waterfront developments in China (Chang and Huang, 2011). As summarised by Hubbard (2006, p. 5):

'there is much contemporary media discussion about the major reinvestment in the heart of cities long regarded as "no-go" areas. Throughout the urban West, under the aegis of urban policies promoting urban "renaissance", former manufacturing districts are being repackaged and resold; derelict

waterfronts have become a locus for gentrified living and working; mega-malls, multiplexes and mega-casinos seek to capture the dollars of the new urban elite.'

Usually, such processes do not occur without tensions and conflicts (see, for example, the case of Berlin, Scharenberg and Bader, 2009). In the vocabulary of classical urban ecology, contemporary waterfronts would be called 'zones of transition'. Yet, it is not simply a matter of succession of different populations flowing in and out, but also and essentially a matter of stratification and coexistence: waterfronts appear as urban stratified compositions that result from different patterns of interaction between the activities of crossing a space and dwelling in it. For instance, in a study on two urban 'interstices' in Paris, Stéphane Tonnelat (2008) has revealed that leftover spaces, which function as 'margins of manoeuvre' in larger urban cycles, host a whole range of 'out of frame', invisible activities by marginal people (including, for example, Roma settlements). Writing about European Mediterranean cities, Ciarallo and Nocera (2007) have described urban waterfronts as 'sponges' where different 'speeds of flight'—e.g. tourists visiting the city vs. migrants looking for a job as cooks or waiters in restaurants, or as street vendors—meet and intertwine, so that differential speeds merge in a relatively undifferentiated space.

Before they are 'regenerated', and in many cases even after, waterfronts are territories where carefully planned and leftover spaces mix. Such mixes are sometimes juxtaposed, sometimes contradictory, while, at other times, they foster the creation of curious mediations. At the time of our observation, the urban waterfront in Trento was still leaning towards the unstructured and unplanned pole, although a major renewal project was already under way. If, as argued by Conway (2000, p. 117), during the 20th century 'a much broader perception of parks, in all their many forms, as part of the everyday landscape' can be recorded, then

through our case study we seek to show that this consideration should not be confined to officially planned parks, but should also include all those forms of open-access greenery that constitute veritable informal urban parks. Indeed, despite its historical specificity, the territorial and urban context of our site shares significant similarities with the trends that characterise many other urban waterfronts around the world.

### **The city, its river and the coming of iconic architecture**

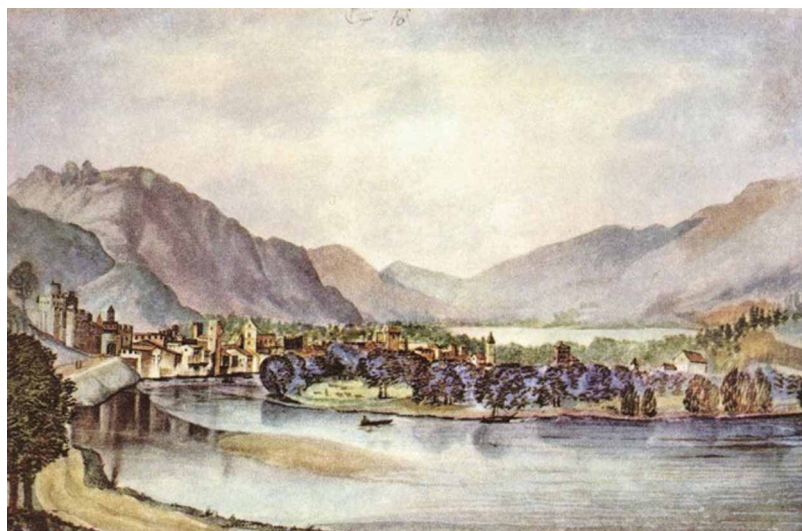
Originally, the city of Trento was a river city, with strategic functions of control of the transits between Italy and Northern Europe along the Brenner axis. Its location amid the Adige valley, which runs in the direction north–south from Bozen to Verona, made it perfect for this task. The city—as it was described by the French traveller Frédéric Mercey in 1835—was walled, except on the northern side, where the river, flowing from east to west (from one side of the valley to the other) provided a natural shelter. Trento also had a harbour, which is clearly visible for instance in a water painting by Albrecht Dürer (see Figure 1), who travelled in the region in 1495 and 1505. At the end of the Napoleonic years, in 1815, the district of Trentino (ruled by a Bishop-Prince since the early 11th century) was united with the County of Tyrol, under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of which it remained part until the end of the First World War. Heavily affected by the war, the region and its capital town were annexed to Italy in 1919. Probably the most significant urban project in the city of Trento was carried out in 1853–58, under the Habsburgs Imperial rule, when the trajectory of the riverbed was changed. The rationale for this major public work was to prevent floods and facilitate the construction of the Brenner railway. According to Renato Bocchi (1989), before the re-routing of the riverbed, three key areas joined the river

Adige and the city: the productive area of the harbour, the picturesque view of the high houses facing the river in the borough of San Martino and the protection gate at the wooden San Lorenzo bridge. A fourth area might be added, represented by the gardens of the aristocratic palaces along Strada Longa (currently, via Mancini) and the granite promenade.

The re-routing of the riverbed produced a rotation of the city by 90°. In contemporary Trento, the river no longer flows from east to west but from north to south. Curiously, a similar 90° rotation of the imagined axis of the city also occurred, with major impact on urban development and the dwellers' mental maps, in New York in the late 18th–early 19th century, as detailed by urban historian Thomas Bender (2002). Since this major transformation, the city of Trento lost touch with its river, which was confined to a marginal position and surrounded by higher embankments. The flow became quicker and the look slightly similar to that of a canal; concurrently, several economic and social activities, which were previously carried on along the river, waned. The new location of the river was described as lacking historical meaning and 'personality' (Salvotti, quoted in Bocchi, 1989). In short, it was a process of double 'deterritorialisation': the river was deterritorialised from the city while, at the same time, the city was deterritorialised from its river.

Since that original rupture between the city and its river, a number of attempts have been made to 'reweave' the lost relationship, or at least to symbolically redress it. To take a minor but perhaps revealing anecdote: every year, during the Saint Patron's celebrations (Saint Vigil) a fake, plastic tower is placed on the riverside (see Figure 2). This tower is shaped like the actually existing 15th-century Green Tower, which is in a different part of the city. The tower was indeed located along the ancient river trace, but is far from its present location. Another important and problematic moment in the relationship between the city of Trento and its river was





**Figure 1** Dürer's view of Trento (1495)



**Figure 2** Fake Green Tower (June 2010)

the flood of 1966. As the whole city was flooded with the water taking back its old trace, the river became associated with collective trauma. After the flood, awkward additional barriers were built quickly. It looks as if the city wanted, in some sense, to bury its river. A sort of collective amnesia about the river followed, and indeed the river disappears from both official and private visual documentation: very few publicly accessible pictures of the river were taken during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Perhaps as a long-term effect of the 19th-century deterritorialisation and the 20th-century flood is that the city of Trento, unlike many other European riverfront cities, has no facilities, shops, bars or clubs located along the river. The appearance of the riverbank as an informal space, a 'not (yet) planned' territory is thus accentuated. The lack of an overall vision or a definite plan for the tract of urban waterfront lasted until a project for redevelopment of a site formerly occupied by a large industrial establishment was launched. This occurred in connection with major transformations of the city's built environment since the late 1990s, including the conversion of former industrial sites, former military installations

and other abandoned sites (Winterle and Franceschini, 2010). The occasion soon turned into a veritable launch pad for the discourse of 're-urbanising' areas regarded as 'void', 'vacant' and 'marginal'—a discourse heralded by the municipality and, above all, the province administration. The project for the renewal of the district, signed by the *archistar* Renzo Piano is currently under construction. It was commissioned by a private group of developers, and mainly promoted by local banks, with only a formal participation by the public administration. The project has become the major iconic investment made by the city over the last 50 years and it foresees a mixed-use area, which is mainly residential, yet also inclusive of commercial activities, a green park and a new Science Museum (Bocchi, 2006).

Despite various controversies, the project by Piano Workshop has been saluted by leading politicians, as well as several local observers, as an unmistakable opportunity to redress the relationship of the city with both its river and a district that had been severed from the city centre by the railway line. By means of iconic architecture (Sklair, 2006), the Piano project can be said to be part of the contemporary trend denounced by Brenner *et al.* (2009, p. 176) as 'profit-driven urbanization and its relentless commodification and re-commodification of urban spaces'. A discourse of urban 'quality' through capitalisation strategies has dominated the public presentations of most of these projects, which has practically corresponded to the spatial removal of subjects regarded as inappropriate and problematic. Questioning such politics of visibility, we have sought to explore what is left out of the picture of the new master narrative.

### Inside urban interstices

An urban interstice is usually defined as a functionless leftover space, which results from heterogeneous elements in the built environment or from discontinuous planning

acts (Tonnelat, 2008). The fact that a space is indicated as an 'in-between' presupposes that it is regarded as 'minor' vis-à-vis other spaces that surround or encircle it. Its 'in-betweenness' refers to the fact of being surrounded by other spaces that are either more institutional, and therefore economically and legally more powerful, or endowed with a stronger identity, and therefore more recognisable or typical. Traditionally, interstices have been associated with wastelands and leftover spaces, as by-products of urban planning, sheer unplanned margins (*spazi di risulta*). While this is certainly the case, we also suggest that such an image does not exhaust the notion of interstitiality. The latter cannot be reduced to its morphological characters, but also needs to take into account the type of urban events and the register of social interaction unfolding in these spaces.

Our observation has led us to believe that everyday urban practices in informal public spaces contain an element of demand and aspiration that forms a sort of substratum of urban expression, work-through and resistance. While, admittedly, our ethnographic observation was not sufficiently extended to support definitive conclusions or claims, we advance the hypothesis that social interaction in everyday locales can be read as expression of an *urban desire* that manifests and materialises in the public domain. Far from being empty, unplanned urban spaces do constitute a domain for imagination, reveries, subtraction, events and encounters. Their relatively unstructured nature represents a crucial preserve of informal sociality and an important place for the experience of socio-cultural diversity. Urbanity—the nurturing of civic respect and the emergence of solidarity among strangers—is facilitated rather than hampered by the loose nature of unplanned urban spaces. From this point of view, vacant spaces like an urban riverbank and other similar relatively low-tech environments can also be understood in terms of Walter Benjamin's 'urban pores', which connect private, communal and public territories in the city. While we agree with

Amin (2008) that the classical values of urbanity were forged in a historical context that is deeply different from our own—a time of increased mediatization and urban dispersal—we argue that the contemporary city is characterised by a persistent significance of immanent territorialities.

In our study, we attempted to understand the material, physical and corporeal nature of urban interstices by immersing ourselves into one of them, in order to outline a sensory phenomenology of ‘being on the riverbank’. By doing so, we have attempted to frame social interaction within its most immediate materiality and its sensorial *plenum*. The urban environment is made up of a combination of light, atmosphere, weather, mood and affect; it is a sensuous environment made of concentrations, colours, noises, smells and a certain ‘air’. The riverbank appears as a small world, which looks somehow isolated and ‘apart’ from the rest of the city, even while it is right in the middle of it. An interstice is, in fact, a sort of ‘periphery in the middle’. The first thing that one finds are small paths (see Figure 3), trails made by the footsteps of those who walked there before us. One cannot but follow the trail, which gives a strong directionality—a trajectory. Directionality is the very peculiarity of riverfronts, in comparison, for example, with seafronts. In this sense, Canetti (1960, §I, 24, 4) reflected on the river as an ‘imperfect’ crowd symbol:

‘Rivers are especially a symbol for the time when the crowd is forming, the time before it has attained what it will attain. Rivers lack the contagiousness of fire and the universality of the sea. But, in place of these, they have an impetus which seems inexhaustible and which, because there is never a time when it is not being fed, is present from the beginning.’ (83)

Sansot (2009 [1983], p. 148) observed that rivers escape the usual dualism between mobility and immobility that dominates our understanding of the relationship between landscape and action. Similar places could thus be venues for what Chatterton (2010) has recently called the ‘urban impossible’,



**Figure 3** The path (October 2009)

an aspiration to the city that, to our mind, expresses itself not only through consciously claimed visions advocated by social movements, but also through the largely dispersed, uncoordinated and in most cases unconscious practices of everyday encounter.

As one walks along the riverbank, one can gradually discover and absorb the environment. The experience of being in a unique place—in fact, the unique place of the here-and-now—possesses an immersive nature; it is an experience that Tim Ingold (2000), drawing from phenomenology, has proposed to capture through his ‘dwelling perspective’. Ingold (2005) employs the notion of ‘illumination’ to explain that the sky, the light and the weather are not surfaces *that* we can see but rather mediums *in which* we see. The riverbank forms an immersive environment:

before forming any type of bounded territory, it is a zone of *intensity*, a world made of canes, wind and water reflexes, in a continuity of heterogeneous connections. While planners have treated the riverbank merely as an object, we cannot really understand it without appreciating its 'immersiveness'. In a calm afternoon of September, one musingly saunters on crisp leaves, in the sweet smell of fermentation; then, on a sunny day in April, one scrambles against the fresh gusts of wind, blinking in the light that fills the scene. At an uncertain hour of the day, the livid light of twilight becomes chilling.

As a landscape—better, a waterscape—the riverbank is not a mere 'surrounding' but also endowed with its specific *temporality* (Ingold, 2000, §11). It has its pace and rhythm, its breath and heartbeat, its way of unfolding and becoming. One finds traces in the grass, holes, nests and dens of little animals. The fluidity of water, the whirls in its flow, have the same dynamic of daytime reveries. For Bachelard (1985 [1942]), even before *extension*, water is characterised by *depth*. On the riverbank, the eye always ends up meeting some unexpected, scattered find; turning around, one may be surprised by the length of one's own shadow on the ground. Thus, walking along the river predisposes us—in measure proportional to the length and 'depth' of our stroll—to the dreamlike encounters of childhood, like those of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908).

In addition, the riverbank is a stream of regional territory (along with its original rural activities: pastures, agriculture, wildlife) that enters the city and pierces it from end to end. The river enters urban space and shapes it as a landscape. It will be no surprise to find seasonal passages of flocks during the Alpine transhumance, that is, the ancient practice moving the livestock to highlands in summer and back to lowlands in winter. Yet, such a space is not detached from the rest of everyday urban space: observing how inhabitants actually make use of it, we soon realised that the riverbank is an *espace*

*souple*, a loose or floating space, sometimes even a precarious one.

### Everyday encounters

As every other urban territory, the riverbank follows daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms. As for seasonal cycles in Trento, remarkable events include the annual 'traditionalist–revivalist' festival, the *Celebrazioni Vigiliante*, and the more locally based and popular *Festa di Sant'Apollinare* in the Piedadestello borough, located on the side of the river opposite the city centre (see Figure 4). During these celebrations, people throng to enjoy canoe and towboat races: the riverbank is transformed into an official public place for celebration and, possibly, more people visit it in a single day than during the rest of the year. Alongside the two major scheduled celebrations, the riverbank is the scene for a number of activities, ranging from sports to promenading. Documentation of historical uses suggests that in the past the range of uses was even wider than today and encompassed practical daily duties such as laundry drying (see Figure 5). Today, after most household activities have been moved into private spaces, the use of the riverbank territory has become mainly recreational: people with dogs and children are the most common presence as are those engaging in sporting activities such as jogging, cycling and occasionally even horse-riding. These activities follow seasonal rhythms, as does fishing, which on certain Sundays of April may turn into group entertainment (see Figure 6).

Another rather classic yet interesting observation concerns how people use public places' *equipment*, such as benches, in non-conventional ways. Looking back at pictures taken by the great French humanist photographer Willy Ronis on the embankment of the Seine in Paris during the 1940s and 1950s, we were struck by the similarities between the 'improper' or creative uses of public furniture in two such different places: in both





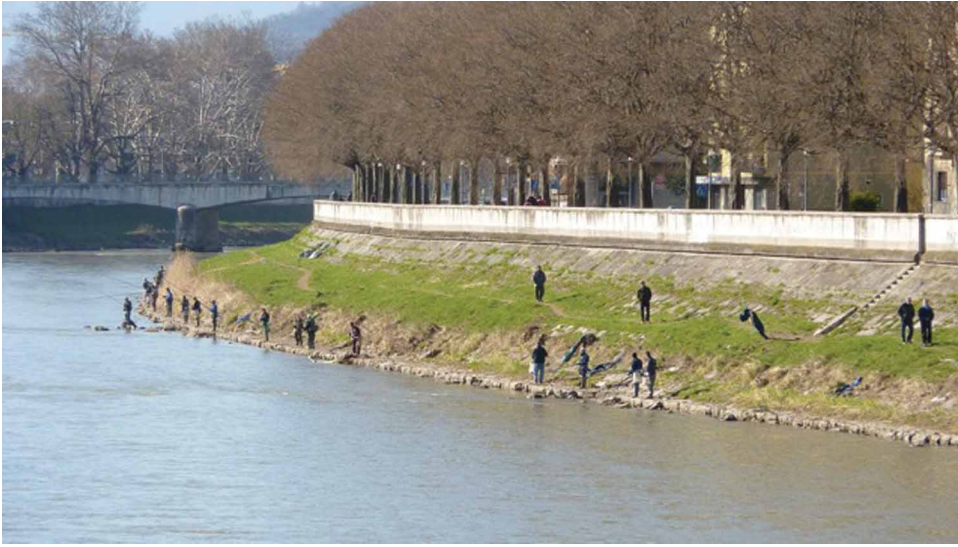
**Figure 4** St Vigil's celebrations (June 2010)



**Figure 5** Drying laundry  
(Photo: F.lli Pedrotti, 1930s)

contexts we found elderly people sitting on benches on the 'reverse' side, that is, facing the waterfront (see Figures 7 and 8). Similarly, we observed how young people appropriate public space in a variety of creative ways, not the least because they have to circumvent controls and official rules over the permitted

uses of space set by adults (see Figures 9 and 10). These small and apparently trivial improvisations, to our mind, reveal something about the very nature of public space and the presence in it of a multiplicity of minorities, as we will see in the concluding section.



**Figure 6** Fishing (April 2010)



**Figure 7** Sitting on the bench on the Seine  
(Photo: Willy Ronis, 1950s)

Walking along the riverbank, we met many different types of people. Since Trento is a small city and one in which both of us have worked for several years, we expected that

sooner or later we would bump into someone we knew. In fact, such meetings did not occur so frequently. More interesting, however, were our meetings with the type of people social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1977) once called the ‘familiar strangers’, that is, people you don’t personally know but whose face is familiar due to recurrent crossings-by. The familiar stranger is famous for creating the embarrassing situation in which people look elsewhere because they do not know how to behave with each other—Milgram even hypothesised that only in the exceptional case of a catastrophe would familiar strangers finally admit that they know each other, start talking and taking care of each other. However, even without the help of catastrophes, on the riverbank the familiar stranger finally felt like saying *hallo*, albeit at a distance (see Figure 11).

The familiar stranger provides an illustration of riverbank sociality, but in fact, most important is the case of the *unfamiliar* stranger. It has been clear since classical sociology that, as an outsider to the private and parochial realms, the stranger is a crucial figure of the urban public realm (Brighenti, 2010). Following Jacobs, Goffman and





**Figure 8** Sitting on the bench on the Adige (November 2009)



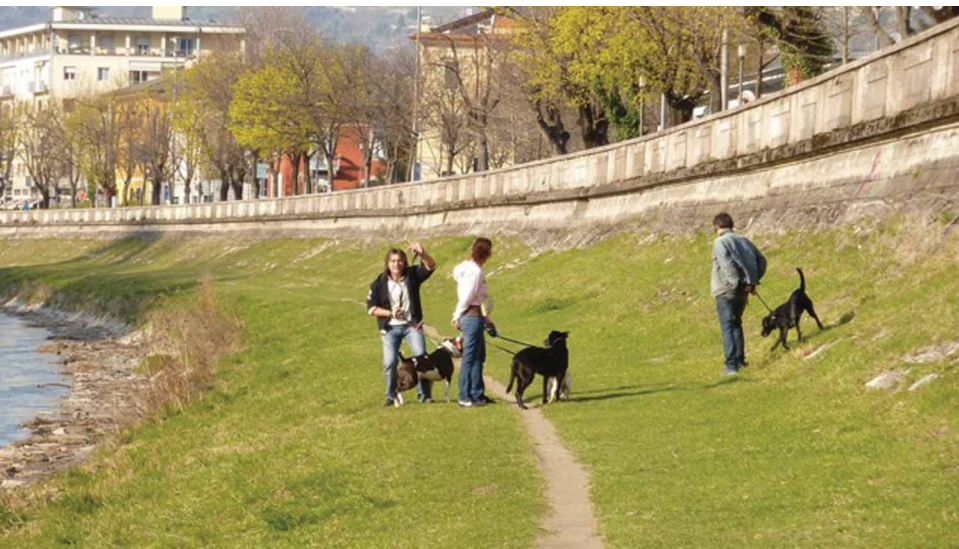
**Figure 9** Lovers on the Seine  
(Photo: Willy Ronis, 1950s)

others, urban scholars like Richard Sennett (1977) have explained that the public realm is founded precisely on the capacity of people to interact with strangers, to accept

and understand them despite, or even by virtue of, the fact that they are not personal acquaintances, correlative members of the same ethnic community. More recently, in the North-American context, Low *et al.* (2005) have showed how the unrestrained quest for urban security has led to the exclusion of ‘unwanted’ subjects and to the consequent reduction of social and cultural diversity tolerated in public places. Similar trends have also been amply documented in Europe (see, e.g. Delgado Ruiz, 2011). In our study, we observed that migrants and minority populations in general are amongst the most active and creative users of this public space. Minority groups’ outdoor sociality might be due to a number of causes that we have not specifically investigated here—ranging, for instance, from worse lodging conditions and lack of private meeting places, through weaker local social networks, a much more positive, confident and less paranoid way of being in an ‘exposed’ situation, as well as a desire to assert their right to the city. We noticed migrant and minority group members sitting on the riverbank after work, talking to each other, having a drink together (bringing bottles they bought in supermarkets) and



**Figure 10** Lovers on the Adige (November 2009)



**Figure 11** Greetings from the familiar stranger (April 2010)

sometimes having picnics with friends or their family as a crucial presence in this space.

Finally, the riverbank is also a place where homeless people, who are increasingly removed from the sanitised historic centre of the city, can find shelter and temporarily settle (especially during spring and summer). An entire politics of visibility and

invisibility (i.e. invisibilisation) unfolds with regards to marginal subjects, classified as 'undesirable' and 'problematic' by politicians and the media. As the historic centre is increasingly sterilised and discursively represented as a 'sacred' space, the rhetoric of a threatened urban decay is deployed as a tool to justify exclusion and removal of



subjects classified as a 'danger' to the public space.

## Conclusions

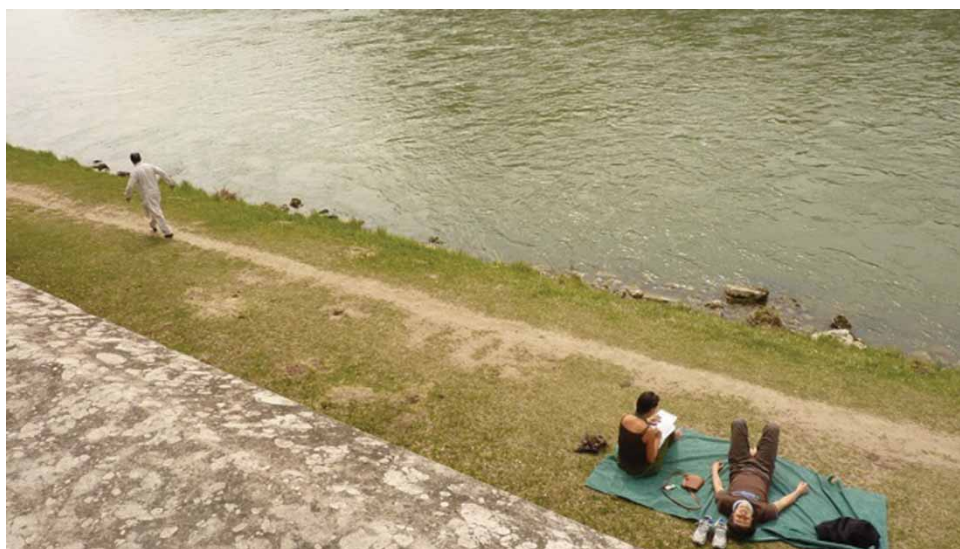
In our exploration of the riverbank, we observed a number of instances of what Mattias Kärholm (2007) has called 'territorial associations':

'the object of territorial association represents an identifiable area, characterised by a certain usage and those specific conventions and regularities that underpin this usage. These areas do not necessarily have to be considered by any person or group as "their own", but are nevertheless associated by others as pertaining to a certain function or category of users.' (p. 441)

The lack of major landmarks such as monuments or other symbolic territorial markers along the riverbank we observed, has left a scope for implicit and soft territorial associations, through which different types of populations come close to each other, while leaving space for the unfolding of others' activities (see Figure 12).

Such a fluid practical territorial production through use does not indicate an absence of local, unwritten rules for the use of space. Informal social control is, after all, an integral part of what constitutes the feeling of safety in public. However, in general, the riverbank appears as an everyday space that is neither privatised nor communitarian, or 'parochial' (Lofland, 1998). So while, as argued by Low *et al.* (2005), to foster urban spaces, it is necessary to accommodate the differences in the ways social classes and ethnic groups use and value public sites, our observation of a tract of loose and largely unplanned urban riverbank suggests that one should also be wary of the danger of the planning hubris leading to the creation of domesticated and formalised spaces for the encountering of differences. On the contrary, the 'modest', largely unequipped and unfurnished territory we have observed reminds us that all place making and all territory making begins 'in the middle of things', in an interstitial situation.

Complementarily, this also suggests that, during major processes of urban transformation such as waterfront renewal projects, the presence of planning and architectural



**Figure 12** Territorial associations (April 2010)



direction (in French, *maîtrise d'œuvre*) and project management (*maîtrise d'ouvrage*) alone is not sufficient. Rather, something like a *maîtrise d'œuvre sociologique*, a notion developed in particular by Tonnelat and Renaud (2008), could provide a useful tool to reveal the *public* (which in a restrictive and distorted sense is usually referred to as the 'stakeholders') that will be affected by ongoing projects, helping to produce a social subject capable of imagining shared space. In turn, this could lead, as Tonnelat and Renaud argue, to the recognition of a veritable *maîtrise d'usage*, which refers to the capacity of users themselves to *constitute territories* and the necessity of fully recognising them as a third active pole of territorial transformation beyond designers and project managers.

Urban public space cannot be adequately understood if studied in abstraction. Its idiographic characteristics, its contingent, material, historical and phenomenological aspects make it understandable as a common *public domain* (Brighenti, 2010). Our sensory exploration of a small tract of urban riverbank, and our focused attention to its rhythms, uses, rituals, adjustments and meanings, seems to suggest that the public domain always entails a coefficient of 'deterritorialisation' that sets in motion the private and parochial realms. In fact, such a deterritorialisation is not the negation of territories; rather, it represents a crucial component that multiplies and pluralises territories. Urban territories are constantly created by such acts in which an *address* to a non-intimate public is made (Iveson, 2007). In this context, we have recalled above the crucial presence of the familiar and the unfamiliar stranger. Planning has extremely powerful effects in shaping the possibilities and impossibilities of the encounter, that is, of making the public address actual. But, as a caveat against the perils of the planning hubris, we invite to look *below the threshold of visibility* of new master narratives in order to fully appreciate the sensory, populated (peopled), dense life of urban interstices. Far from being a rejection of planning, ours is essentially an invitation to acknowledge the

richness of modest territories and their phenomenal qualities for the potentially unfinished nature of the public domain, that is, as potential reservoirs of emancipatory forms of urbanism.

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