

# ANAPLISIS OF A COASTAL HORIZON

POLITECNICO DI MILANO  
MASTERS IN SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE  
OF MULTI-SCALE PROJECT

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## ABSTRACT

### THE TOWN OF HERAKLION

#### LOCATION

Located between the prefectures of Rethymno and Lassithi, on the eastern side of Crete, Heraklion is the largest urban centre in Crete, the capital of the region and the economic centre of the island. According to the census in 2011 the population of heraklion reached to 173,993 inhabitants. Its geographical importance is based on the fact that is located in the crossroad of the 3 continents : Europe, Africa, Middle East (Asia). Thanks to this, the town succeeded in trade and tourism which is the main source of its economy nowadays.

#### CHARACTER

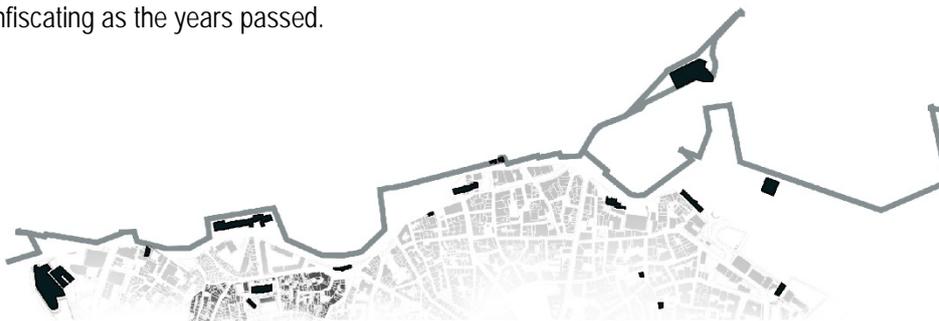
Heraklion has a history of approximately 3.000 years and the buildings and its monuments illustrate this history. A history teeming with structurally and aesthetically admirable buildings, monuments, tradition and the spirit of Roman, Arabic, Byzantine, Venetian and Turkish as well as neoclassic and modern period. Nowadays, the so-called "historic center" or the old city, that is basically the area within the Venetian walls, is always the core around which Heraklion is expanding. In fact, within the city walls the majority of its administrative, business and cultural activities are developed.

In order to achieve a better reading of the town, it is divided in four sectors according to the character of each:

- ALICARNASSOS COAST
- COMMERCIAL PORT
- VENETIAN PORT
- INDUSTRIAL COAST

#### URBAN ISSUES

One of the major problems that the town is facing nowadays is the fact that it lost its contact with the sea. Due to the huge walls surrounding the town, after the 1930s Heraklion carried on developing its urban realm internally, forcing even more functions on the main city. Almost all private and public services, commerce, recreation, tourism, and business are located in the inner city walls. As a result, it has become quite of a cramped urban environment that offers neither open nor green space for the citizens that walk in a hectic ambiance that became confiscating as the years passed.



The problem of space appears also in the urban modes of circulation both by the citizens and vehicles. On that note, by generally insisting on the use of cars in conjunction with the tight size of the streets there is an inevitable lack of pedestrian walkways, cycle paths, facilities for the mobility of disabled people, and even sidewalks on roads. By all means, due to the distance and the limited routes and points of access for the pedestrians it is quite difficult for one that arrives to heraklion to navigate. The heavy traffic that occurs on the main road that separates the city from the waterfront as well as the other central boulevards that lead to the centre is also another barrier to navigation. All this results in an anarchic way of living in a realm of traffic and urban noise pollution, thus, the need for a space of tranquillity and contact with nature is constantly increasing.

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Furthermore, the distortion of the traditional fabric of the old town, which stemmed from the implementation of the urban plan of 1936. Inevitably this led to the destruction of various traditional and remarkable buildings, historical monuments of the city or landmarks such as the 'Arsenali Antichi' constructed during Venetian occupation that became quite damaged after the Great Wars, were demolished to host services and municipality administration buildings and even in some cases arbitrary housing. The problem of neglect deteriorates while the lack of respect for the size of the old historical buildings since tall multi-storey ones were created and changed the old urban grid.

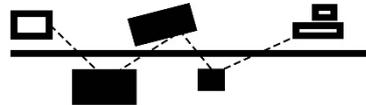
In other words, the neglected spaces among the monuments cast a shadow on their quality and cannot receive the amount of appreciation, attention and respect that they deserve .

Thus, a reasonable concern is how to recover these issues by giving to the citizens and visitors those navigating forces to explore in a safe environment one of the oldest towns of European history. A town full of landmarks that are hidden in the shadow of neglect, unable to be appreciated in the cramped urban pattern of Heraklion. This is an urge to have the modes and infrastructures to explore authenticity and quality space for tranquility in the corners of a contemporary industrial town. All the above, in parallel with the purpose of bringing in contact again the waterfronts with the historical centre of the town that are impudently disconnected by a big boulevard.

## URBAN STRATEGY

The project is based on series of urban interventions that are connected with a promenade which is a continuous urban link of three main areas.

### A) Promenade – The 'Horizontal' Link



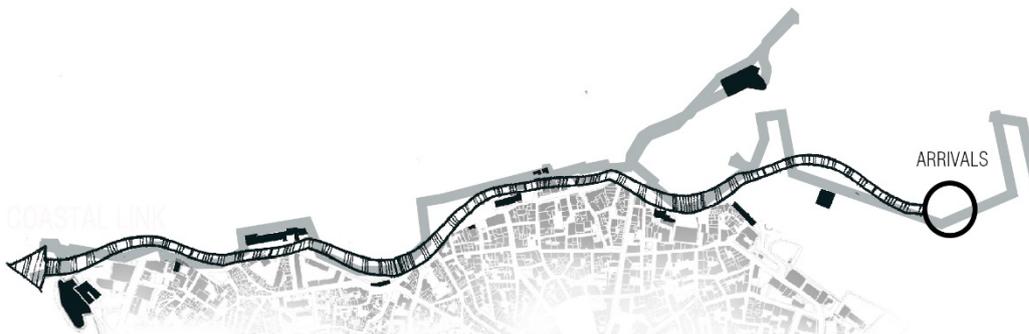
The promenade is an urban linear navigator that will give a solution to the problem of the disconnected landmarks. In particular it is a route that begins from the commercial port on the sector of the arrivals of the passenger ships and touristic ferries, and gives the proper direction to the various sites to those who embark on the land. It has three main stations that differ in function and character :

*AREA\_01 – RECREATION AND CULTURE*

*AREA\_02 – SEA FOOD & MARKET*

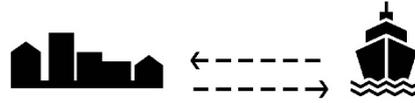
*AREA\_03- PRODUCTION& ATMOSPHERE*

This urban connector along with its stations, is developed across the waterfront in order to revitalise this essential part of the town in a continuous manner and give the opportunity to always enjoy strolling and spending quality time next to the water.



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### B) Urban Paths- The 'Vertical' Links



These paths stem from the promenade and link the waterfront with specific areas of the city that are specifically selected by the municipality for future restoration due to their architectural interest. They can be considered as particular stops of the journey that under usual circumstances they would pass easily unnoticed because of their neglected quality. Specifically:

*'Sami-Bey Mansion' (Cultural Memorial of Ottoman Architecture)*

*'Dermata Gate' (Venetian gate to the Dermata Golf of the 17<sup>th</sup> century)*

*'Chronaki' Mansion (Ministry of Culture- Typical Mansion of Balkan Architectue)*

*St. Trinity Temple (typical Orthodox Temple)*

*Urban Village of St. Trinity (Local Community that functions as a hidden village of architectural interest)*

*Old Flour Mills (Selected Building of the early 1920s for restoration)*

The urban links that connect primarily the promenade with specific focal points and to a further extend the city with the waterfronts vary in function and character (underground, existing, bridging, new paths , architectural consistency) always following the organic form of the town.



Following the routes the project unlocks the qualities of the 3 Areas of revitalisation that act like basic stations of the journey.

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