

# The architecture of memory Bridging the divided city of Nicosia

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## Keywords:

Nicosia, memory, urban design, Cyprus

## Abstract

*The urban settlement of Nicosia (former Ledra) started in Bronze Age on the two sides of the river Pedieos (Kanlı Dere), along the intersection of the valley route following that river, and the cross-valley route connecting the Pentadaktylos ridge and the Troodos ridge, and developed as an exchange point between the two sides of the river. Only in Byzantine times, the city became the capital of the island and was surrounded by a wall. During the Venetian rule, in 1567, new walls, designed by the Venetian engineers Giulio Savorgnano and Francesco Barbaro, replaced the medieval ones. The construction of the new walls included the infilling of the river within the city so to move its waters into a new moat surrounding the city. A new urban tissue gradually replaced the riverbed, flanked by the sinuous streets that followed its former course inside the ancient city. In Nicosia the three existing bridges, where crossroads connected the two sides of the city, maintained their polar role after the river infilling. The Venetians might have not completed their transformation, hence the Ottoman siege of the city in 1570, but in continuity with the first Venetian urban transformation the general restructuring of the city in Ottoman times, used the areas above the infilled riverbed. Since then, this area became the city centre. It is not a coincidence, according to Saverio Muratori's theory of territorial cycles, that after the 1974 civil war, the UN divided the city in two parts following exactly the same track of the former river Pedieos. According to Muratori, urban settlements, as organisms, follow cycles that are connected to a larger territorial organism. The transition from a river (border/dividing axis) to central urban tissue (centre/acccentration axis) and its further transformation into the buffer zone (again a border/dividing axis) continues the very same cycle. From these simple historical and morphological considerations, it is possible to infer the future of the buffer zone. Following the new phase of bilateral talks recently started in Cyprus, at some point, we cannot predict exactly when, this area will again become the city centre, an acccentration axis. In this future phase, the value of the land will rise exponentially therein, and the speculative appetites will try to build as much as possible. We have to be very careful so to facilitate this process of reunification, safeguarding the urban tissues and the historical buildings of the buffer zone: we should restore and re-activate the urban tissues to keep the memory of the recent past, but not delete them to leave place for a new downtown with skyscrapers. It is therefore a confirmation of Saverio Muratori's theory that the existing Ledra street checkpoint, connecting the two sides of the walled city, is on the site of the old bridge.*

«Towns have a life history.  
Their development,  
together with the cultural  
history of the region in which they lie,  
is written deeply into the outline  
and fabric of their built-up areas»<sup>1</sup>

### The architecture of memory

Greek mythology (Esiod, Theogony, 52) represented Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, as the mother of nine muses: the archaic myth reorganized the genealogy between the arts (muses) and history (memory) showing history as the mother of the arts. It is not until the XX century though that science defined scientifically memory, at least digital memory, with the introduction of the binary bit as a measuring unit. After the development of informatics though, human memory has gradually lost its role in society, as digital memory has gradually took its place. This process is following the reification of human memory, a word translating the German Verdinglichung (Marx, Das Kapital, III). Jacques Le Goff, in his book (Histoire et Mémoire, Paris 1988) outlined the history of memory through different societies, showing its role in the construction of political power. The memory does not survive orally, unless someone does ritualise it within some form of art, such as music, dance, and we should say also architecture. Therefore, only the organisation of a society that transcends the familiar genealogy can keep the memories of the past and transmit them to the future generations. This operation, generally speaking, is the base of the construction of the social aggregation of human beings and of political power. Giordano Bruno wrote a treatise on memory (Ars memoriae, Paris 1582), based essentially on the analogy of architectural spaces and information to be remembered, so we should recall today how important memory is within the architectural education. The paper, focusing on the case study of Nicosia, Cyprus, investigates on the question: are urban tissues a form of collective memory, a collective brain? In addition, if they are, what kind of strategies can we adopt to reconnect the divided parts of the city and its collective memory?

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### The UN Buffer zone: from dividing line to accentration axis

The workshop<sup>2</sup> proposed a discussion on the theme of the border, questioning if the border can be transformed from a from a conflict area into a potential for the city. The theme was developed within the walled city of Nicosia, analysing the buffer zone in a diachronic perspective. We considered the territorial cycles underlying the formation process of the urban centre, as the *substratum* of the existing urban condition. The research proposes the understanding of the cyclical phase shift, from dividing line to accentration axis, as a guideline for the design process of a new checkpoint next to the Bandabulya mar-

<sup>1</sup> Conzen M.R.G. (1960), *Alnwick, Northumberland: A Study in Town Planning Analysis*, Institute of British Geographers, London. p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> IAPS Culture and Space Network Symposium + Workshop 5, Borders: Conflict and/or Potential. Experiencing NICOSIA, 28 – 31 October 2015, Nicosia

ket in the centre of Nicosia. Saverio Muratori considered the building, the city and the territory as multi-scalar organisms, each belonging to a different scale, but connected one to the other. "The architectural organism is a complex of structures not separated but integrated over each other so as to condition itself closely and form a functionally coherent reality, in which everything not conspiring ends up being eliminated"<sup>3</sup>. This strong connection between the different scales, together with the application of the historical method, is the main reference for the theoretical premise of the design proposal.

### **The urban scale: Nicosia's formation process**

The urban settlement of Nicosia started as Ledra in Bronze Age on the top of Agios Georgios hill, next to the river Pedeios (Kanli Dere), along the intersection of the valley route following that river, and the cross-valley route connecting the Pentadaktylos ridge and the Troodos ridge, and developed as an exchange point between the two sides of the river. Only in Byzantine times, in the X century, the city became the capital of the island, and a wall surrounding it was added. After becoming archbishopal seat in 1212, the city grew larger. The urban area reached a circumference of nine miles, before the Venetian transformation of the city, reduced it to three miles<sup>4</sup>. In 1567, new walls, designed by the Venetian engineers Giulio Savorgnano and Francesco Barbaro, replaced the medieval ones. The construction of the new walls implied the destruction of many buildings, and the infilling of the river, moving its waters into a new moat surrounding the city wall. A new urban tissue gradually replaced the riverbed, flanked by the sinuous streets that followed its former course inside the ancient city. This approach to urban planning is typical of the Venetian rule: the Venetians accomplished a similar deviation of the urban course of the Padenna river in Ravenna<sup>5</sup> in the XV cent. In Nicosia the three existing bridges, where crossroads connected the two sides of the city, maintained their polar role after the river infilling. The Venetians might have not completed this urban transformation, hence the Ottoman siege of the city in 1570, but in continuity with the precedent administration the Ottoman renovation of the city, used some of the areas above the infilled river. Since then, this area became the city centre. The three bridges disappeared from the urban landscape once the river was infilled, but their trace is still readable in the network of urban routes. The crossing point of a river determined by a bridge or a ford, acts definitely as a point attractor for the surrounding existing routes. What is singular is that the Ledra Street check point, the only crossing point of the buffer zone within the walled city of Nicosia, was opened in the same point where in ancient times one of the three bridges was; so the permanence of urban traces acted as a guide for the modern

3 Muratori S. (1963), *Architettura e civiltà in crisi*, Centro Studi di Storia Urbanistica, Rome. (Author's translation).

4 Mariti, G. (1792), *Travels through Cyprus, Syria, and Palestine; with a general history of the Levant*, Dublin, vol. 1, p. 63.

5 Camiz, A., (2009), *Storia dell'urbanistica di Ravenna nel Medioevo*, in Bollettino del Centro di Studi per la storia dell'architettura. Gli studi di storia dell'architettura nelle ricerche dei dottorati italiani, a cura di S. Benedetti, vol. 42-43-44 numero unico, Gangemi editore, Roma, pp. 301-304.

design process. From these simple historical and morphological considerations, it is possible to infer the future of the buffer zone. Following the new phase of bilateral talks recently started in Cyprus, at some point, we cannot predict exactly when, this area will again become the city centre, an accentration axis. In this future phase, the value of the land will rise exponentially therein, and the speculative appetites will try to build as much as possible. We have to be very careful so to facilitate this process of reunification, safeguarding the urban tissues and the historical buildings of the buffer zone. We should restore and reactivate the urban tissues, so to keep the memory of the recent past, but we should not delete them to leave place for a new downtown with skyscrapers.

### **Methodologies: the territorial scale, ridge theory, territorial cycles**

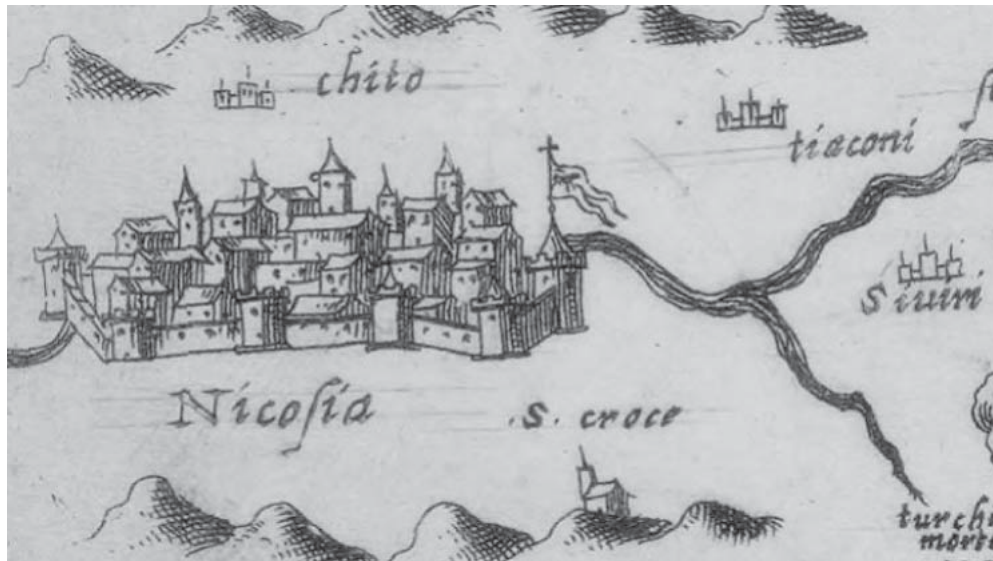
It is not a coincidence, according to Saverio Muratori's theory of territorial cycles, that following the civil war, the city was divided in two parts following for the most part the same track of the former river Pedeios. First with the Mason-Dixon Line 1956, and then with the buffer zone in 1974. According to Muratori, urban settlements, as organisms, follow cycles that are connected to a larger territorial organism. The transition from a river, which acts as a border, or with the Muratorian term a dividing line, to a polarised urban tissue, is thus cyclical. The same place became from peripheral to central<sup>6</sup>. When this area was established as a buffer zone, it became once again a dividing axis, continuing the very same cycle. It is therefore a confirmation of Saverio Muratori's theory that the existing Ledra street checkpoint, connecting the two sides of the walled city, is on the site of the old bridge. We therefore proposed during the workshop a new checkpoint in the position of the second bridge, after understating the diachronic evolution of the urban tissue within the buffer zone, which appears to be well preserved. So new "bridges" should be designed to connect the two sides, as public open spaces, squares or parks, preserving as much as possible the existing urban tissues, the roads' network, and the historical buildings. The theory of territorial cycles as defined by Saverio Muratori, Gianfranco Caniggia and the Italian school of urban morphology, together with the role of point attractors in urban tissues is the base for the development of a design oriented analysis, providing the design as the further transformation of a developing organism, the city. The territorial formation phases according to Muratori are<sup>7</sup>:

1. Spontaneous plantation Cycle (pre-Roman formation process)
2. Planned consolidation Cycle (Romanization process)
3. Spontaneous reuse Cycle (post-Roman, medievalisation process)
4. Planned consumption Cycle (Modernization process)

Within this cycle, the establishment of a buffer zone as dividing line, brings back the formation process of the city of Nicosia to phase 1. The

<sup>6</sup> Camiz, A. (2014). *Urban Morphology and Architectural Design of City Edges and Vertical Connections in Historical Contexts*, in *New Urban Configurations*, Cavallo, R., Komossa, S., Marzot, N., Berghauser Pont, M., Kuijper, J. (eds.), Delft University Press/IOSPress, Amsterdam, 227 – 234.

<sup>7</sup> Cataldi, G., Maffei L., Vaccaro P. (2002), *Saverio Muratori and the Italian school of planning typology*, «Urban Morphology», 6, 1, pp. 3-14.



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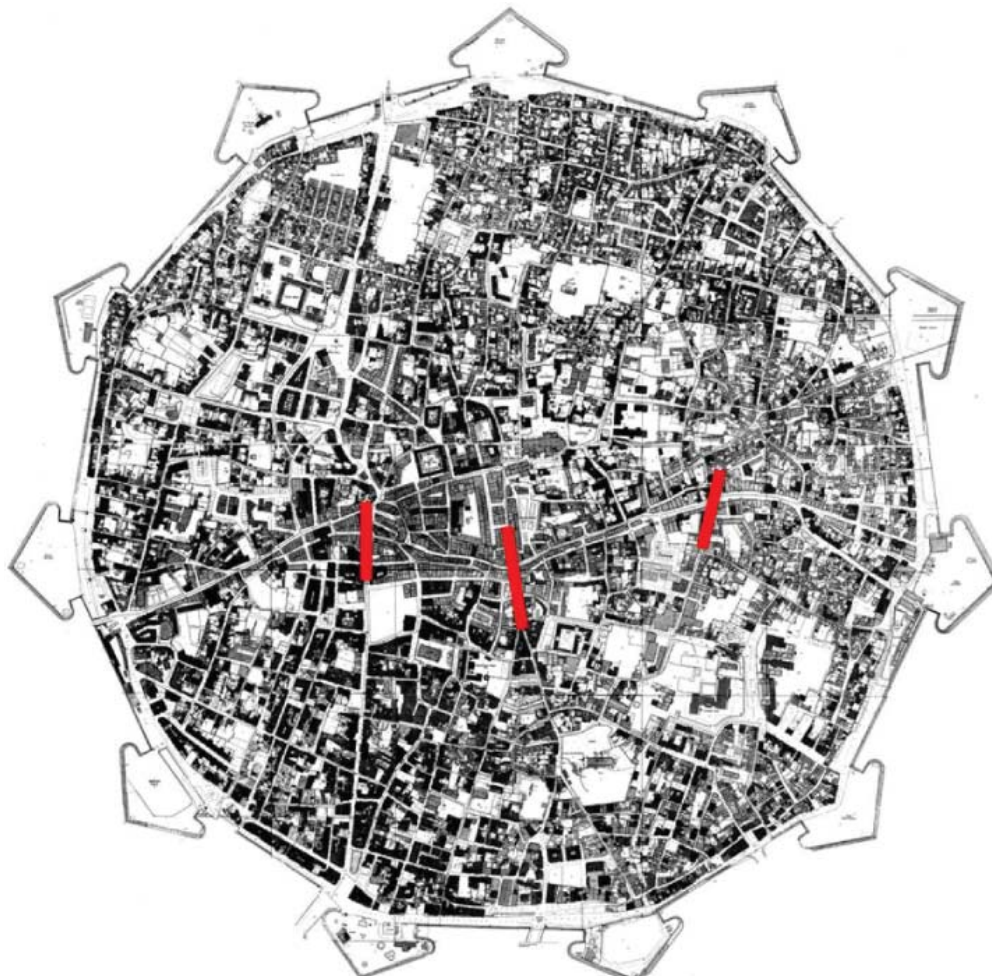


Fig. 1 F. Bertelli, J. F. Camotii, *Partie orientale de Chypre, Venetiis, Romae 1562-1570*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département Cartes et plans, GE D-13952, detail.

Fig. 2 The position of the three bridges on the plan of the walled city, author's drawing on the plan from Department of Lands and Survey, *Map of Nicosia, Nicosia 1927*.

choice of the area of Bandabulya, where once was the silversmiths street, for the design of a new checkpoint, is the consequence of the understanding of the formation process of the urban centre of Nicosia through time, where the buffer zone is not considered as an external phenomenon but as part of the genetic formation of the city. The buffer zone is the materialization of a dividing line, through the territorial cycle of the city<sup>8</sup>.

### Applying theory to design

As historians, and even more as architects, should we describe the divided cities, with a merely sociological approach, without proposing anything to do therein? This rhetorical question, which I already proposed as a discussant of the international workshop in Rome<sup>9</sup>, suggests a design answer to the division of the city of Nicosia. Following the same master plan proposed during the workshop Urban Tactics<sup>10</sup>, we decided to design a new checkpoint in the position of one of the three bridges over the river Pedeios. The project developed the architecture of a checkpoint, recognizing typical features in many examples<sup>11</sup> of modern and contemporary design of border crossing points: the box and the overhanging roof. The box is the place to host the control function, the overhanging roof is instead to protect the people waiting in a cue from the sun and the rain. The project established a minimal measure for a small office to be placed within the urban tissue of the buffer zone, without demolishing the existing buildings. The space of the fluxus of people crossing the border was then separated in two parts, entering and exiting, with two opposite directions. Each direction has therefore two different offices, to control the exit from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and to enter the Republic of Cyprus, and viceversa. This parametric model determines a variation of four versions of the pavilion with a double inversion, configuring the archetype of the gate. Therein, four different versions of the overhanging roof protect and direct visually the border crossers. We designed the floor of the public urban space of the gate as a public square, with stones of different colours, within an iso-oriented grid, so to indicate the identity of the space in-between the borders. Within this grid, nature finds its place of expression within newly designed small gardens and old trees growing in the abandoned area. It is possible to restore the buildings within this public space in-between the borders, so to host some bicommunal functions, as in the other crossing point at Ledra Palace where the Home for Cooperation is now operating. The electronic passport check-in operation that is now available in the airports was taken as an element of the composition, determining the raising lines of the floor to become the support for the electronic scanner, introduced for an easier operation of the passport control and quicker transits through the border. The proposed

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8 Strappa, G. (2013), *Territorial organism and urban knotting. Design methods for minor centers of Lazio*, «FA magazine», 23, July-August, 19-23.

9 International graduate workshop, *Metamorphoses of the contemporary city. De-Ritualizing Urban Topography?* Rome 28-30 2014, University of Cambridge, "Sapienza" Università di Roma.

10 M. Kinnear, P. Newton, S. Morley, B. Flinn, URBAN TACTICS, Nicosia 2014.

11 J. Schulz, *Übergang, abandoned checkpoint architecture across Europe*.

design is made of a steel structure with a Corten and African red marble cladding. The landmark provided by the cluster of four checkpoint buildings, each designed as a meaningful fragment, is transformed into an urban icon<sup>12</sup>, expressing the connection between the two sides of Nicosia. The analytical methodology was applied to the design process of a checkpoint showing the possibilities of urban morphology for the urban design.

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12 Camiz, A. (2012), *Redesigning suburban public spaces with the transect theory*, in *Abitare il nuovo/abitare di nuovo ai tempi della crisi*, M. Bellomo et al. (ed.), Clean, Naples 2012, pp. 111-121.



Fig. 3 The area of the project as seen from the South side of the buffer zone (Photo Erman Berkay 2015).

Fig. 4 The area of the project as seen from the North side of the buffer zone (Photo Erman Berkay 2015).



Fig. 5 Design for a new checkpoint at Bandabulya market, Nicosia, Plan. Tutor Alessandro Camiz, students Main Abu-Shaikha, Paul Adeleye Dipe, Hirou Karimi, Niloofar Safaei, Gökalp Öcal, Erman Berkay, Petunia Gaoalafe, Mozhan Sabzizad.

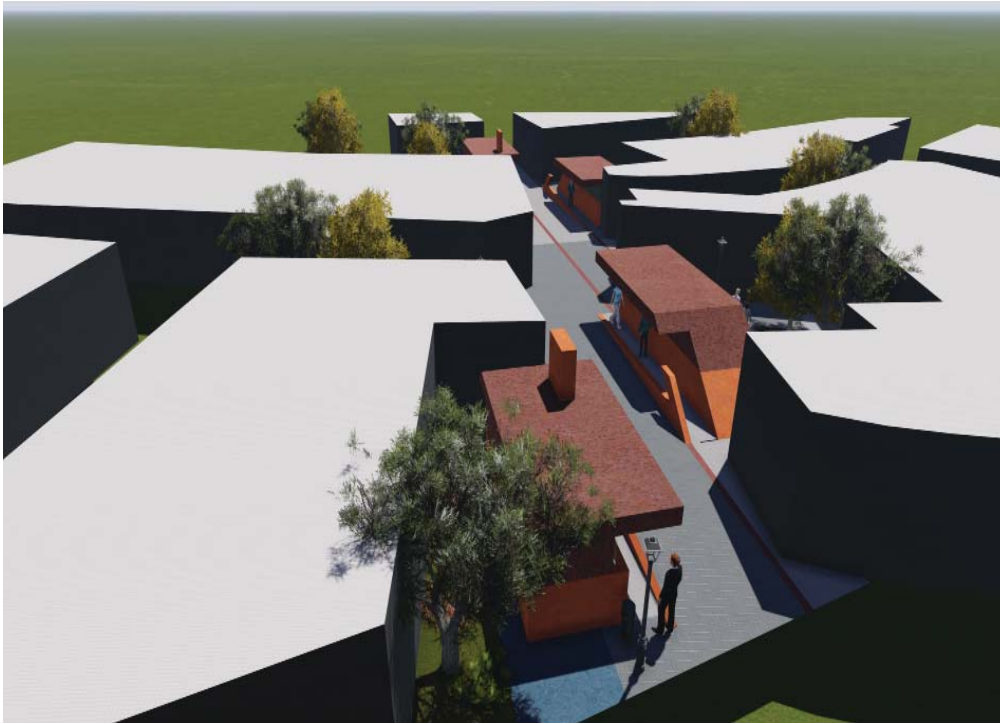


Fig. 6 Design for a new checkpoint at Bandabulya market, Nicosia, view from above. Tutor Alessandro Camiz, students Main Abu-Shaikha, Paul Adeleye Dipe, Hirou Karimi, Niloofar Safaei, Gökalp Öcal, Erman Berkay, Petunia Gaoalafe, Mozhan Sabzizad.

Fig. 7 Frederic Leighton, Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses, oil on canvas, 1882, private collection.

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He has participated in numerous national and international competitions, receiving awards and mentions. His projects have been exhibited at the "X International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice" and other national exhibitions. His drawings were published in important digital magazines including The Architectural Review Folio, AND, Industriarchitettura. critical connections.

Among the major monographic publications concerning the architectural design and landscape include: *Shining Dark Territories. 100 thoughts of architecture* (with A. Melis, Pisa 2015), Saverio Muratori. *Architetture interrotte/Unbuilt Masterworks*, (Pisa, 2012), *Disegni d'architettura e di paesaggi. Appunti del Corso di Rappresentazione della città, del territorio e del paesaggio*, (Pisa, 2010).

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Member of the editorial board of "VLC arquitectura" Research Journal and editorial advisor at UPV University Press. Author of several books on these fields and papers in peer-reviewed research journals. Last papers: 'Water-sensitive strategies in the new urban parks in Valencia: the agricultural Mediterranean paradigm as a pattern for landscape design and management' (2016) and 'Landscape is not an agronomy, it is an architecture. A conversation with Kathryn Gustafson' (2017).

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Strappa G., Ieva M., Dimatteo M. A., 2003: La città come organismo - Lettura di Trani alle diverse scale, Bari

Ieva M., 2016: The problem of subjective individualism in the future of European cities in the 21st century. Dialectic synthesis between urban aisthesis and linguistic-architectural identity. Proceedings City as organism. New visions for urban life 22nd ISUF | International Seminar on Urban

Prizes and awards for his scientific activity:

2006, Winner of "Leone di Pietra" International prize - 10. "Biennale di Venezia"

2009, In line house for residences and offices in Canosa of Puglia, in: PROGETTI N.3 Bari, QUID Ed.

Research primarily addressed in the architectural and urban design

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For her researches on Mediterranean - Islamic cities and landscape she has received scholarships from international and national research centers such as: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, DAAD, Max van Berchem Foundation, MIUR, East-West Nexus / PROTA Institute, and Polytechnic University of Bari.

An author of 3 monographs on Islamic cities and landscapes and more than 70 articles and essays in books, proceedings of international conferences and peer-reviewed journals, her interest covers basic research, applied research, theory and methodology, spanning from sustainable design, to analytical work on typo-morphology of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean landscapes, cities and housing, history of Islamic architecture, and cultural heritage preservation.

**ANTONIO RIONDINO:** Aggregate Professor in Architectural design, Polytechnic University of Bari, (1961). Student of Franco Purini, teaches Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture of the Polytechnic of Bari. And 'member-founder of the Scientific Society Ludovico Quaroni; member of the Scientific Committee of ISFI-taly; co-editor of the book series: The Architecture of the City.

He has published scientific books including:

- Ludovico Quaroni and architecture teaching in the Faculty of Rome between the years 60 and 70;

- The Seminar Experimental Urban of Arezzo;

- From Salapia in Margherita di Savoia - from the lagoon to the forma urbis. History of the settlement processes of the city of salt.

Awarded the "Stone Lion" at the Venice Biennale of 2006, its theoretical and project interests are mainly targeting the updating of the contemporary project operated through the phenomena that relate to architecture and the city and the potential of historicised characters in the reformulation of a different Modernity.

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His studies investigate the critical relationship among analysis, design and identity, with particular reference to the characters of cities and landscapes of the Mediterranean. He carries out research in Italy and abroad, including national and international programs.

He is author of articles and essays.

He wrote books, the last of which is: Rociola G (2016). Dal borgo di fondazione al potere abitato : La pianura ionico-tarantina occidentale e la costruzione di un nuovo spazio agrario-insediativo [From the new town to the inhabited farmland: The Ionian western plain and the building of a new agrarian-settlement space]. Foggia: Claudio Grenzi Editore

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To further strengthen her knowledge of the relation between the city and the citizen, in 2014 she undertook the IUAV course: "Participatory in local action and sustainable urban transformation". In the same period, she started working for Architetti di Strada Association of Bologna. The association works on urban regeneration with participatory project. This working experience has led her to test the effectiveness of architectural issues from different perspectives, and to develop a multidisciplinary methodology for addressing urban-related issues. Actually she's working at the same themes at the University of Ferrara.

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