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OF COASTAL LANDSCAPES

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EVOLVING ECOLOGIES ACROSS THE LAND-SEA BORDER

# SETTLEMENTS

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# Sea scape

# 04

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URBANISM AND GEOMORPHOLOGY  
OF COASTAL LANDSCAPES

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in collaboration with Legambiente  
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with the contribution of  
Degree Course in Sustainable Habitat Sciences of Pescara  
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## SETTLEMENTS

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Edited by Lia FEDELE, Silvia SIVO, Silvia TAURO

Impianti per lo stoccaggio di gas liquido e cereali lungo il Margem Sul, Almada, Portogallo. Photo by S. Antoniadis © 2016



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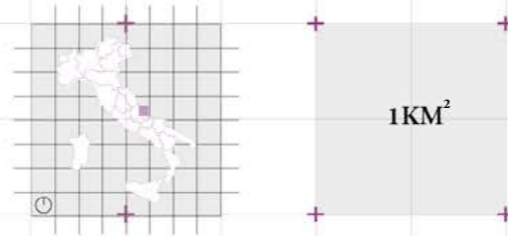
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# OFF-SEASON GAZES UPON ABRUZZO COAST

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## FUORI STAGIONE. Sguardi sulle coste abruzzesi

*L'alternanza delle stagioni contribuisce ai cambiamenti morfologici dei bordi d'acqua sabbiosi. L'arrivo dell'inverno, il progressivo abbassamento delle temperature e la chiusura delle attività turistiche comportano significative alterazioni del paesaggio, alcune dovute all'azione informale, spontanea e fuori controllo di tanti gestori degli stabilimenti balneari, altre di origine naturale. Infatti, solo apparentemente le spiagge d'inverno sono spazi in attesa, dove il tempo sembra essersi fermato... la natura con il suo continuo rigenerarsi, a volte silenzioso, a volte rumoroso, tenta di affermare la propria presenza, tra le pieghe del suolo instabile, tra le attrezzature chiuse e accatastate, nei pochi tratti liberi dal cemento dove fiumi e torrenti incontrano il mare.*

*Questo reportage fotografico, realizzato lungo le spiagge di tre centri abruzzesi, Montesilvano, Pescara e Francavilla al Mare, restituisce i caratteri del fenomeno rispetto a sei temi principali: l'adattamento informale della spiaggia, gli orizzonti di pietra, i fronti urbani, l'edilizia vacante o incompleta, le foci dei corsi d'acqua con vegetazione spontanea. Le osservazioni riportate di seguito sottolineano ancora una volta l'alternanza senza soluzione di continuità di segmenti artificiali intervallati da poche pause naturali lungo la "città lineare" adriatica; indirettamente questo lavoro intende sottolineare le tante mancanze nella gestione delle nostre spiagge e del bisogno che invece abbiamo di prendercene cura, non solo d'estate quando rappresentano interessi ampi, per le vacanze e l'economia, ma anche d'inverno, quando vivono una diversa vulnerabilità.*

**T**his atlas was created to denounce the conditions of the waterfronts of the Abruzzo towns of Montesilvano, Pescara, and Francavilla al Mare, during the winter season. This 20km-long stretch of coast presents a varied morphology of its interface and the materials it consists of alternate long stretches occupied by the city with its facilities with small free fragments where nature still finds space.

Analysing the coast from north to south, starting from Montesilvano and continuing along the waterfronts of Pescara and Francavilla al Mare, the six identified themes allow us to show a particularly fragile and unstable coast, where natural problems overlap with those of anthropic origin. The changes/adaptations primarily concern the beach resorts, which, depending on the needs, provide for the circumscription of their spaces. The sea of umbrellas disappears, giving way to a new landscape made of artificial dunes and large blocks of concrete deposited on the ground for protection. This informal and spontaneous phenomenon of space modelling between land and sea is intended to guarantee protection from



INFORMAL ADAPTATIONS TO WINTER



BOULDER HORIZONS



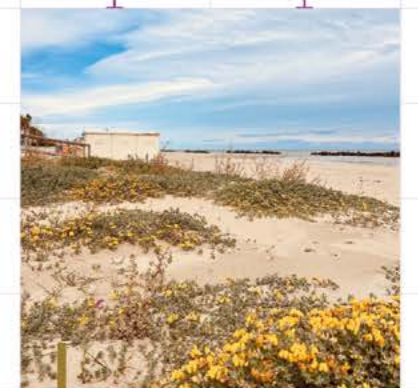
URBAN WALL



DECOMMISSIONS INCOMPLETE



HYDROGRAPHY



GREEN RESTORATION





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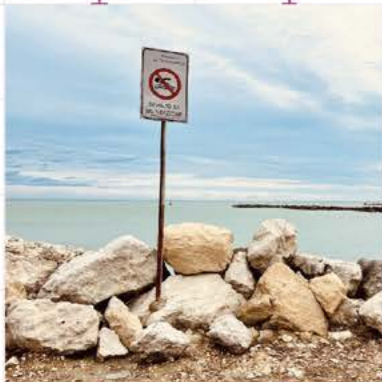
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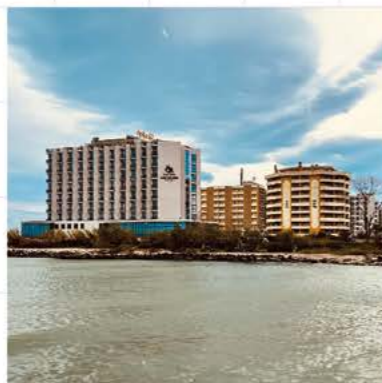
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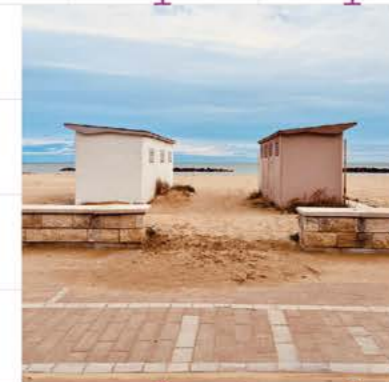


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strong storms and consequent flooding. The wooden panelling and temporary fences made with various materials to protect themselves not only from possible storms but also from possible vandalism, actually, construct an even more unstable landscape, contributing to increasing the sense of uncertainty and mutability

of a context by its nature in continuous movement. Walking along these beaches, the horizon has disappeared. In other words, the natural line where the sky meets the sea has been replaced by a "stone horizon," namely barriers parallel to the coast and transversal groynes that aim to mitigate the erosion phenomenon but actually move the problem downstream, and with a domino effect, the view continues to be modified. These are outdated systems that science attacks because the costs incurred are much higher than the benefits recorded. Furthermore, these systems slow down the water circulation, which stagnating promotes the proliferation of toxic algae and a whole series of other negative effects.

The urban interface developed over the years is quite



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MONTESILVANO

PESCARA



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heterogeneous. Not only is the interface of settlement fabrics rather continuous and massive (especially in Montesilvano and Pescara), but in many stretches, the unscrupulous consumption of soil and the attractiveness of occupying the beaches for tourist activities have separated the coastline from the beaches: both perceptually and



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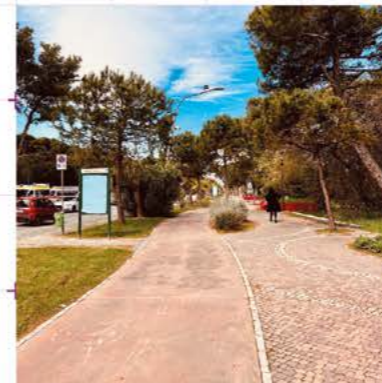
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functionally, because most of the beaches are privatised. From Montesilvano to Francavilla, one encounters hotels invading the beach, resorts defacing the existing vegetation, and what was once the back of many buildings has now become the new front of the seafont. And then the vacant buildings, in an advanced state of decay,

PESCARA

constitute a danger to public safety, as well as significantly damaging the perception of this space. Decayed structures can collapse, causing damage to people and property; moreover, these buildings often become refuges for illegal activities and are subject to continuous vandalism and fires, further aggravating the degradation of the surrounding areas.

But there is not only the abandonment of buildings that have concluded their "life cycle", but also lifeless bodies: buildings whose construction has never been completed. These "skeletons" of unfinished constructions, often the result of failed investments or interrupted projects, not only deface the landscape but also represent a waste of economic resources, a potential danger to public safety, and contribute to worsening



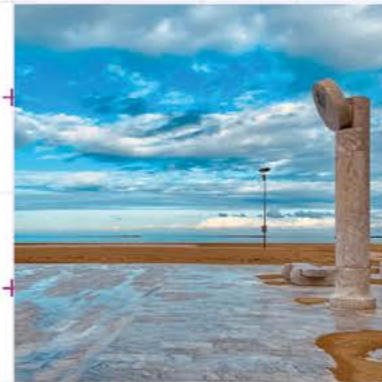
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the micro-climatic conditions on hot summer days, especially because most are "concrete behemoths" strongly heat-absorbing. Anthropogenic pressure is not only registered through muscular building structures, active or abandoned, but also in the degraded conditions of the river and stream mouths.



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The almost total absence of management, maintenance, and cleaning of these spaces is evident, few natural stretches that pause the "long concrete walls" of the city facing the sea: illegal dumps along the banks create a disturbing postcard, testimony to the deep inaction by administrations and the lack of attention and care by citizens and tourists. Yet, it is possible



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to glimpse a natural reaction to all this. A reaction that should make one reflect.

The spontaneous regeneration of vegetation, deprived of its life during the summer season, claims every space momentarily deserted. Among the lowered umbrellas and empty chairs of the resorts, the vegetation makes its way with determination. The urban spaces, neglected by the distracted gaze of the authorities, become theatres of an unstoppable rebirth. The artificial dunes, improperly shaped by human hand, are reconquered by nature with surprising power. Here, between the folds of sand and bare rocks, courageous plants sprout, ready to challenge wind and sun to claim their place. And it is not only the flora that benefits from this rebirth... the revived dunes transform into



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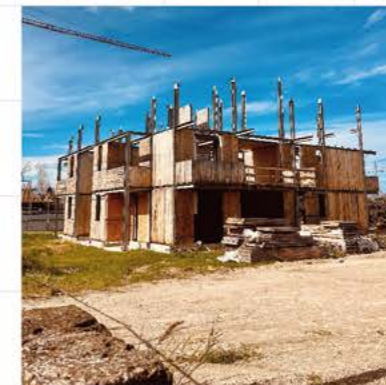
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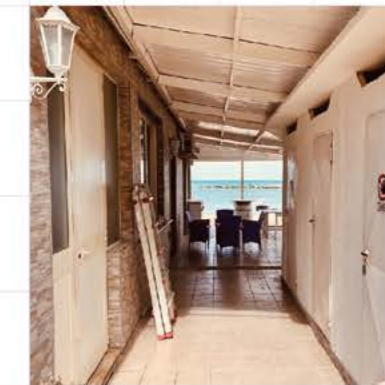
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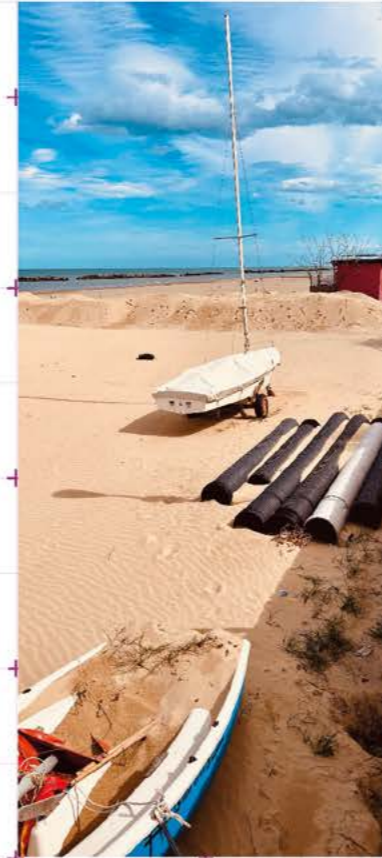
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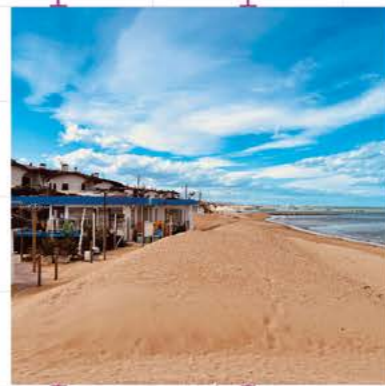
a silent celebration of the power of nature, of its healing and renewal power that should make everyone reflect: those who plan, those who design, those who manage, those who maintain, those who inhabit this wonderful coastal landscape, which is beauty and fragility in constant movement.



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sanctuaries for a varied local fauna, seabirds glide among the tufts of grass, while small animals find refuge among the roots of the shrubs. The beaches, dominated by humans during the beautiful season, become a lush and vibrant habitat, pulsing with life and energy. The spontaneous regeneration along the coast is a process of rebirth,



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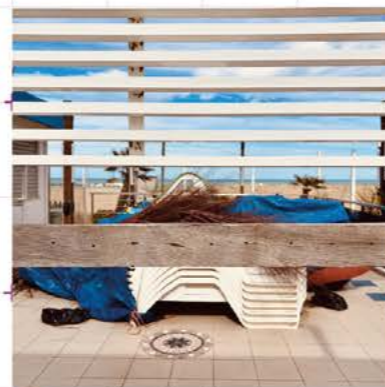
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# SETTLEMENTS

## EVOLVING ECOLOGIES ACROSS THE LAND-SEA BORDER

This issue closes the first cycle of Seascope dedicated to the main phenomena affecting and shaping the coasts of the world. The journal wanted to turn the spotlight on the contribution that human actions are having with respect to the erosive phenomena accelerated by climate change, to the many forms of sustainable and unsustainable tourism, to the decommissioning and abandonment of heritage, and to legitimate or abusive margin occupation processes.

In the first four issues, critical reflections were presented often accompanied by action programs, plans and projects, drawing from the research carried out (or being carried out) by the authors, sometimes even through educational experiments useful as a test bench for testing possible innovations. Involving a plurality of different knowledge, Seascope observed these phenomena and possible approaches to mitigate or to correct them, sometimes to enhance them and operational methods to trigger processes useful for building better conditions to inhabit fragile coastal landscapes.

The selected contributions for this issue document the multiple facets of coastal settlement processes, restoring their stratified nature towards both land and water, and providing design and applied research examples to recognise and define new balances.

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