

THE OTHERS' TRIESTE

ADDRESSING THE OBSCURITY OF THE BORDER CITY OF
TRIESTE THROUGH EMBRACING THE NON-LINEARITY
AND FRAGMENTATION IN MAPPING

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ABSTRACT

Borders & Territories 21/22 | Trieste. A palimpsest obscured by the ones in power, imposing their narrative over the city and its borders. Understanding the complex, ambivalent historical layers Trieste, the imposter, the general theme of Addressing the obscurity through embracing the non-linearity and fragmentation in mapping is being divided into multiple sub-questions which are to be investigated by the different individual students grasping the essence of the different narratives, layers, ideologies in the palimpsest of Trieste.

Theoretically, basing the research at first, the act of mapping is found to be the main medium in understanding Trieste. The city's past is best conceived as a series of flows evolving with different speeds. History is thus not a linear series of events but a multitude of flows differentiated in speed and scale. Forming a layered patchwork, investigating this is done through constructing-deconstructing-reconstructing the subject through mapping while assessing the effect on the research itself. Through the (de) territorialisation, the obscurity of mapping is challenged.

In mapping out Trieste, a forum was created. Two different maps developed independently, a border and a territories map communicating with each other and both (and together) telling a narrative of Trieste. Starting from different scales, the methodological tools became more hybridised as the research developed and the paradox of obscurity showed up.

The border map is based on the idea of fluxes and the forces of ruling powers, Trieste defined by the Others. With the interests of different powers and their clashes, border mapping is done through main border events. The territories map found a vast scale but a variety of aspects and ways to showcase Trieste. A sense of claustrophobia between port and Karst defines Trieste, obscuring the city and tightening its imposition.

Key words:

Trieste, border, territory, obscurity, non-linearity, fragmentation, mapping, fluxes, time-period, Karst, Adriatic sea.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Borders and Territories graduation studio, a collective research plan creates a profound gaze on Trieste. Several points of interest appeared during the first weeks of the research, stemming from the fascination in “obscurity” as a theoretical approach to describe the phenomenon of Trieste. The collective research plan will set the fundamental steps towards the collective mapping process as a method to unveil the obscurity of the city, while the theoretical framework used will guide the mapping process. Nevertheless, the mapping process deals separately with the Border map and the Territory map as two individual bodies with two approaches to deal with Trieste’s obscurity.

The collective mapping and the theoretical framework serve to address our fascination with the contested past, the historically shifting sovereignty of the border city, and what we further term an obscuring effect on the question of its identity.

Trieste—a city at the Adriatic coast—a cosmopolitan port governed for over half a millennia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire—annexed by Italy, later split into two zones, gaining the short-lived status of the Free Territory—and shortly after returned to Italy. This represents a single narration on the border city that, however, in its clarity paradoxically obscures the meaning as Trieste was often put into a role of a symbol for competing ideologies on the notions of territory and identity—whether Italian, Austrian or as the Iron Curtain frontier of Western Europe. Trieste’s border condition stems from its territory at the junction of the everchanging state borders, being rather defined by what it is not. A City of Nowhere—as described by Jan Morris.

Here we describe obscurity in reference to the vagueness of the city as defined by the others—the states in power, individual political movements or global networks. An imposter with a multitude of irreducible subjectivities, consciously taking on the roles that are imposed onto it. That is different

from obscurantism in the sense of a deliberate restriction of knowledge even though deliberate obscurantism is too present as a result of conflicting power tendencies. This is exemplified by Setter’s 1760 panorama painting entitled the *Prospetto Della città del Porto di Trieste*, who intentionally portrayed the prospering city in an architectural style of the Hanseatic port cities Northern Europe—wishful thinking of Imperial Vienna. This has led to our understanding of the problem of linear narration around border and territory that often describes states as self-evident spatial entities, clearly demarcated from each other by territorial boundaries that they patrol and regulate—identifying the binary us-them, domestic-foreign. Categories unfit for the complexity of Trieste.

In the historical research and mapping, we, therefore, embrace a multitude of historical narratives and the non-linearity and fragmentation as integral to approach the obscure nature of Trieste. If we identify obscurity-absence of clarity as a productive force in unfolding the city from a historical and geopolitical perspective rather than a hindrance to precision in spatial representation and mapping. In that case, we can instrumentalise it to further the research better to comprehend this non-linearity of the realities of Trieste. Obscurity as a method to uncover the complex, the conflicted, the multiple, the unknown, requires this problematisation to be accessed to further the research to discover forms of knowing that reveals the non-simplified and the not-digested.

In that sense, it seems valid to interrogate the obscure character of the city and the way it could be mapped out, given both potential of reductionism as well as amplification as a consequence of representational methods.

From this initial collective research that tackles the broader questions of the group stems a set of individual diagrammatic proposals to further frame the theoretical approach to the individual projects as elaborated for the P2 moment of the graduation studio.



Figure 1: Prospetto della città del porto di Trieste by Alberto Carlo Setter (1760) in Gli elementi della città e lo sviluppo di Trieste nei secoli XVIII e XIX (Luciano Semerani, 1969).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the various layers of ideologies overlaid on the palimpsest of Trieste's history, the obscurity of the city has been created under the tug of war of different forces/parties. This results in difficulties in describing the complexity and obscurity of the city and representing Trieste's historical ambivalence without being generalising or simplifying it.

To address this problem further, several sub-questions could be asked. Here we make a distinction between the methodology of the border and territory map, as both address the same problem with different questions.

1. How to instrumentalise non-linearity in mapping as means to address the multitude of historical narratives?

2. What is the potential of patchwork as a methodology to disassemble and reassemble the city's character as a method?

3. How to represent time and fluidity within the concreteness of mapping? (topological).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As exposed in the previous paragraph, we identified a certain disability to grasp the complexity of Trieste, mostly towards its singular histories. Hence, we discuss here how certain concepts can be instrumentalised and re-used in the research in order to bring the discussion further through mapping as the main medium. In the research plan, the theoretical framework mainly revolves around the notions of non-linear thinking as well as assemblages, both anchored in post-structural theory, as a way to overcome simplification or generalisation over the city's obscurity.

First, using the notion of non-linearity, Trieste's history is understood as being shaped by a set of flows, evolving at different speeds, following Delanda's work. Instead of seeing the city as a result of historical periods following one another, a non-linear approach through mapping is conveyed. Focusing on flows of material and energy, the capacity of such an approach can reveal a vision of segmented understanding of the city, thus bringing some light onto what was initially perceived as vague. Different scales, shaping forces, similarities, intensities are isolated and intended to convey a different way of mapping.

To add to this method, Derrida argues that everything can be deconstructed from within, meaning that the disassembling of Trieste is hiding within its own creation. We understand it then as existing in small pieces, a smooth and striated structure that exists through each other. Thus, the patchwork methodology will form the fundamental framework for the research by exploring it through assembling, disassembling, reassembling, or in other words constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing while examining the effect on the research itself.

This would follow an attempt to understand how sharply defined the city's assemblage and identity is.

With territorialisation and deterritorialisation

as two other key concepts, we intend to understand how this oscillation between both of these conditions produced various conflicted border and territorial conditions. Consequently, we look at how sharply defined is the identity of the assemblage (spatially) as well as how homogeneous. Such an approach seems relevant given the city's implications in major 20th-century border conflicts, producing different border and territory conditions. (i.e. deterritorialised ethnic communities, followed by the sharpening of the physicality of the border, progressive territorialisation through various conflicted areas). Furthermore, such a notion is intended to challenge the initial problem of obscurity through mapping.

METHODOLOGY

1. COLLECTIVE METHODOLOGY

In the initial approach to addressing the problematised obscurity-of Trieste, and in the cartographic representation of it--the decision was made to differentiate between the methodological approach in respect to 'the border and the territory individually. The intention was to achieve a level of autonomy of the two maps that would later feed into a collective discussion and act as complementaries.

The reference of the scale was utilised as a categorising tool. As a means to comprehend the border as defined by the others, a paradoxically global scale was chosen to address the border, not in terms of the physical line but through fluxes and geopolitical dependencies on the others--the neighbouring and the global. Contrary to the global border, the territory concerned the immediate context defined within the frame of the Adriatic Sea and the Karst. In that, the concerned scale of the methodological approach would resolve which of the two maps it belongs to.

The scale as a categorical tool proved effective in the initial mapping phases but later proved less definitive. The methodological tools became hybridised between the two maps once the problem of cartographic representation came to question and the paradoxical problem of obscurity was discussed for both the border and the territory.

2. METHODOLOGY BORDER MAP

The border map aims to provide “another” perspective on the legibility of the Triestine border, which traces the interfering forces of ‘the Others’ through fluxes.

We begin investigating Trieste’s complex past with its neighbouring countries. Italy, Slovenia (previously Yugoslavia), Austria (previously Hapsburg Empire) and various treaty participants are what we define as the otherness in Trieste and hence ‘The Others’. As these political entities possess contrasting interests, Trieste has become the ground for a multitude of differing proposals for the physical border favouring the respective country. Therefore, to understand the city’s contested history, the review of the article ‘The Border Within’ inhabiting the border in Trieste’ serves as a broader lens to explore the forces that shaped the physicality of the Triestine borders. Therefore, the intentions behind each proposal multiply the readings of Trieste, making it a pluralistic city. Hence, Trieste’s contested past and the multitude of its narration problematises a linear reading of its past and thus understanding the formation of the border.

In order to trace the physical border, we have been investigating the intensification of various infrastructural flows on a global scale and cross-border flows. Fluxes are military forces, commercial shipping, migration, railway, traffic. Due to the intensified flows in certain periods, the map can draw on changes - for instance, economic trade and cross-border negotiations contributing to the border-status. Therefore, we understand that (human)-infrastructural flows produce borders and vice versa. Thus, the flows’ multiplicity frames Trieste into the bigger global scale and how The Others affect the formation of Triestine borders.

To simplify the complexity of the forces throughout linear history, we introduce the method of presenting historical moments as snapshots. Accordingly, we assemble various border-zones of

Trieste, having key-events and infrastructural fluxes that define the physical borders as a principle. The density of key-events and conflicts straddling the border serves us to select a total of eight time zones. According to the identified time periods, we isolate 20 fragments of different scales. Within them, specific fragments occur twice and differ solely by the fluxes.

Fluxes become implicit relations between border-zones and the acting forces shaping the physical border. For instance, the intensity of the flow reveals the degree of its porosity. Hence, we apply them as the organising principle to reassemble the fragments. Due to the permanence of infrastructures throughout varying time periods, we are able to reassemble the fragments according to specific connections rather than chronological time sequences. Therefore, the map implies fragmentation and assembling and reconnection and reassembling (Derrida & Deleuze) and embraces the non-linear reading of Trieste. The non-linearity of time is read as the non-linear narration of its contested past, as well as it also stands for the obscure identity produced by those forces.

As the scale of the chosen fragments varies in each time period, we adapt a constant grid system with a fixed size of 250m x 250m to unify the juxtaposed fragments into one coherent reading of the scale. Thus the fragments’ extent of the specific border-zone becomes evident.

Approaching the map, the fragments allow multiple readings from either side as well as reading from distances. Thus the readability frames our response to the non-linearity of the time as well as the type of the border- topological or physical. The contrast of the type of border resolves into a monochromatic composition with flows linking in between. The physicality of the border is actual and influenced by the movements. Fluxes are thus overcoming geographical borders.

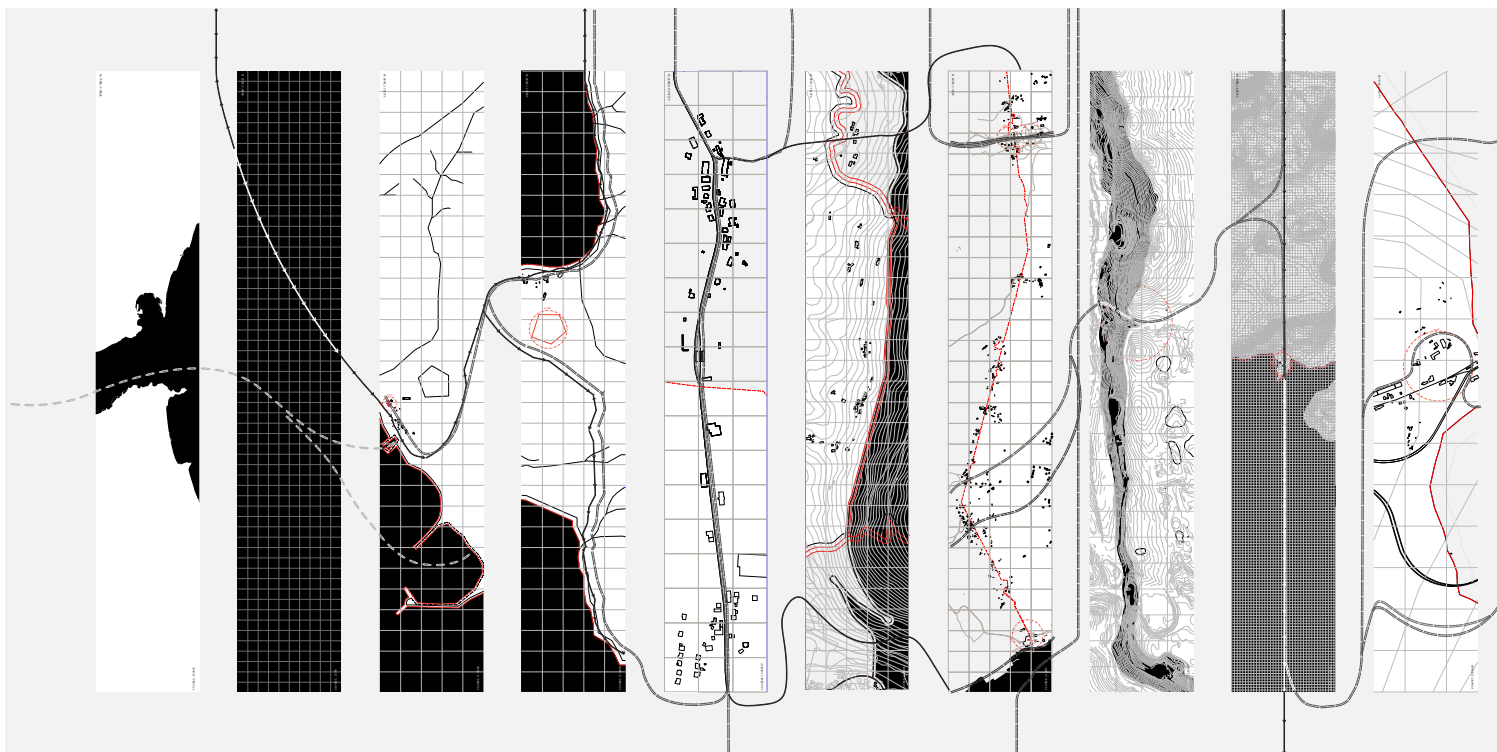
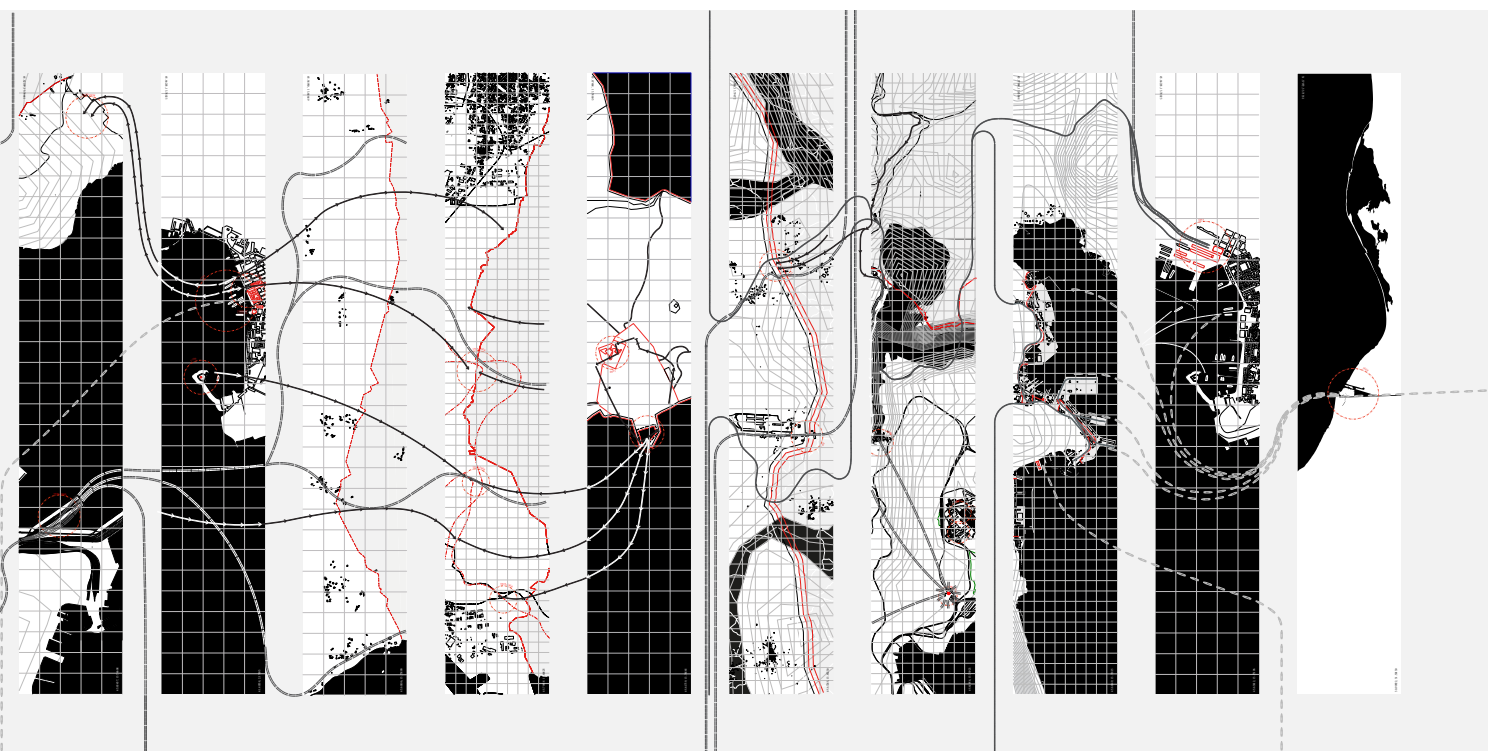


Figure 2: Border map of Trieste (90cm x 360cm), by Dominika Kopiarova, Hechen Qu, Léa alapin, Jacky Hiu Yeung Lee, Janel Osmankulova, Saja Al Khamissi



METHODOLOGY

3. METHODOLOGY TERRITORY MAP

The territory map aims to represent the characteristics and experience of the city. Working in conjunction with the border map, it shows contrastingly to the international, the city on a local scale.

The patchwork as a method is used in understanding the territory while examining the potential in disassembling, reassembling, deconstructing, and reconstructing the city's elements. In his book *Invisible Paris* (Latour, Hermant & Carey-Libbrecht, 2006), Bruno Latour explores the city through the concept of an oligopticon: seeing the entity through particular fragments while creating a greater patchwork. Seeing the city as a collection of fragments, each needs to be viewed from a valid lens and scale, resulting in constant play with the different lenses and zooming into different fragments. We practice decontextualising and recontextualising to gain an understanding of the territory through its elements.

The initial fragments of Trieste include; the Karst Plateau, the urban fabric, and the port. Trieste is marked by overlapping territories and many in-betweens. As a natural territory, the Karst correlates with it being an ethnographic one, a Slavic hinterland, while the city is cosmopolitan. The urban fabric disassembles further into fragments like strict Austrian urban fabric, medieval city, and sub-urban fringes adapted to the contours of the landscape. The port, on the other side, is defined as a strategic territory. During the process of mapping, these fragments are disconnected and decontextualised from each other, allowing examination of the proper scale and representation - after which they are again evaluated by weaving them together by the infrastructural flows.

Trieste's role under the Habsburg empire was to be a port for Vienna. Before this era, Trieste was a provincial sea-town. Austrians' willingness in creating a port resulted in overcoming the

difficult terrain of the Karst plateau, and a railway connecting Trieste to Austria was created. Trieste became a cosmopolitan port, and by the end of the 1800s, it was the third-largest city of the empire (Bialasiewicz & Minca, 2010). It was built ad hoc – to be the principal port of a continental empire, however, handed over to Italy, Trieste had no organic purpose. Centuries later, Jan Morris describes the city as having “declined into torpor”, the streets “half-empty”, or as the demise of a “cosmopolitan project” (Morris, 2001).

In the process of mapping and fragmentation, besides the excursion in the city, it becomes more evident how Trieste is a reflection of others. A city confined by its surroundings, the Karst and the Adriatic, between the Balkans and Italy. Finally, this leads to a decision to leave out the fragments of the urban fabric, resulting in a suggestive mapping of Trieste only displaying the Karst and the harbour, leaving the city as a void only readable by its surrounding fragments.

Disassembling and eliminating the city itself as a fragment is followed by reassembly and recontextualisation of Karst and harbour. These elements defining the city's surroundings are transformed into a round continuous panoramic view as seen from the city. The mapping gradually moves from the Karst to the port and back.

The representational technique is hand-drawing in order to capture the characteristics of the territory. In the process of fragmentation, different lenses are tested for the elements. The Karst is drawn in elevation, revealing it as an important geographical border. The port is drawn as a plan view in order to emphasise it as a territory of its own, a zone rather than a line. The differences in representation are linked by a gradual change from a planar view to a perspective and further into the elevation.

In further stages of the research and design development, the territory map should be used as a capsule of information on the local experience of the city. One should look at the map and understand the sense of claustrophobia, obscurity and the impending presence of the Karst and Adriatic, continuously tightening its political and industrial imposition on the city.

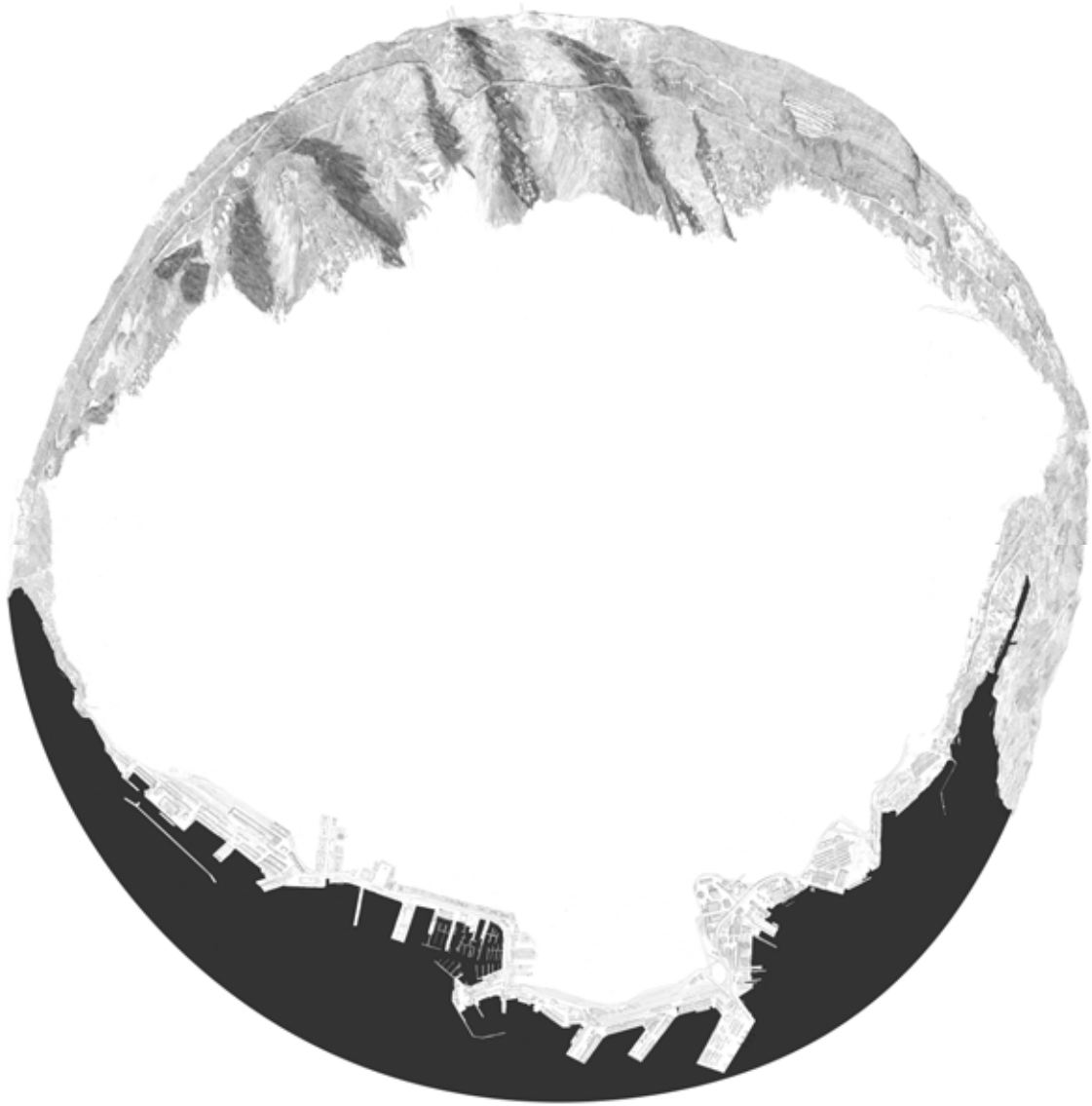


Figure 3: Territory map of Trieste (180cm x 180cm), by Benas Vencevičius, Luuk Dehing, Juulia Jääskeläinen, Niek van der gughten, Taija Love

CONCLISON

The theoretical framework and the methodologies were implemented in the iterative process of collectively producing the two maps, one depicting the border and one of the territory. These maps serve to further the understanding of the problem statement and the subquestions. This collective research plan is continued in the further iterations of the collective map in the P2 moment of the graduation.

More importantly, from our common research into the obscurity of the border city in the question stems the initial individual research plans. Those are suggested in the diagrammatic research designs that will be elaborated into research plans during the P2 moment by each group member individually, dealing with a diverse set of themes and problem statements.

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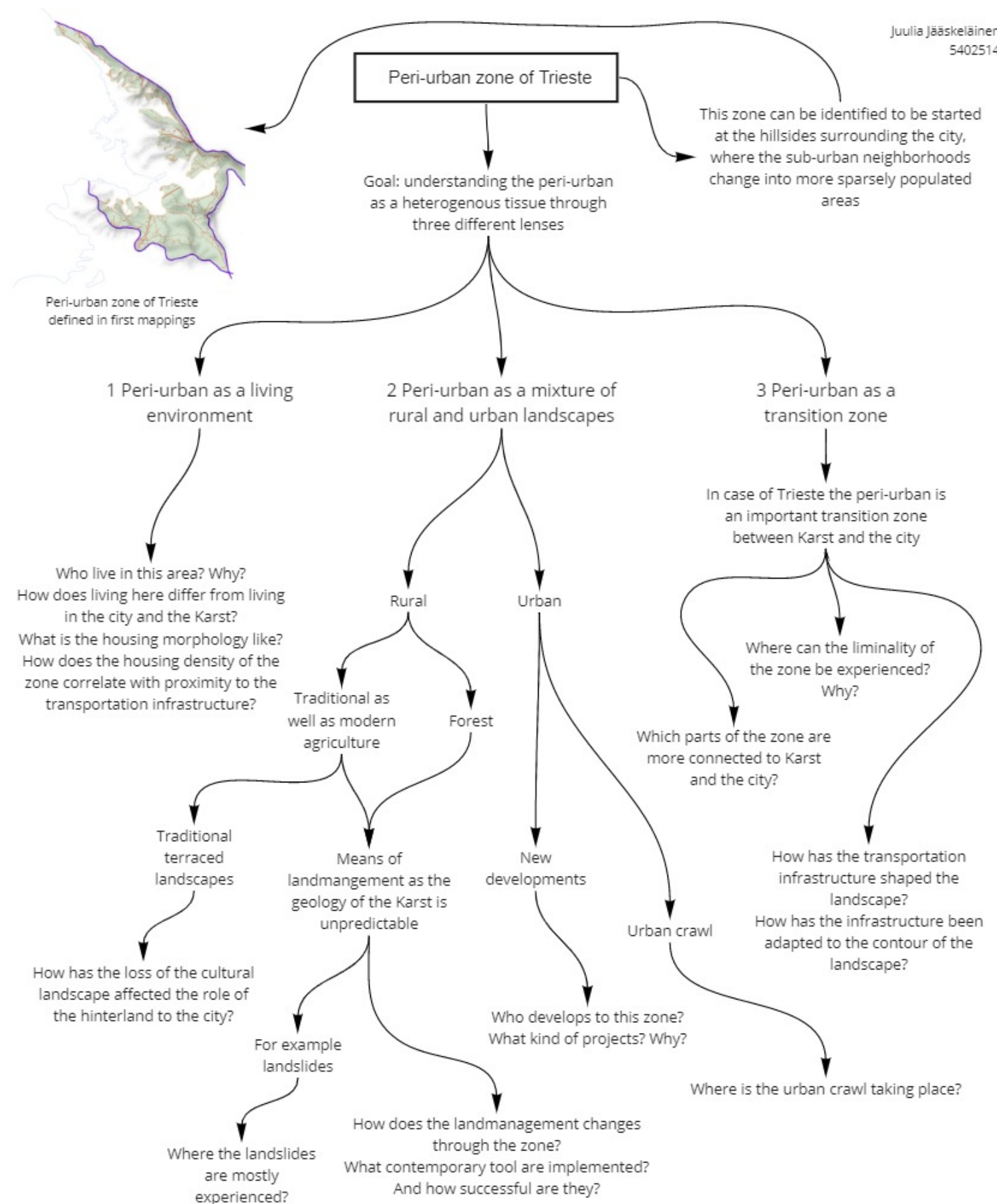
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PROCESS

Methods used so far:
collective and individual mappings, site visit, secondary data collection

Current state:
further mapping, theoretical writing, modelling, data collection

Goal:
Problematisation of findings in creating a design proposal