

# AR3U105 GRADUATION ORIENTATION Deliverables

## AR3U105 Graduation Orientation form

DEADLINE:28/10 17:30

Student Name

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Preliminary graduation  
project title

**The sea as island: borderscaping the Mediterranean basin**

Key words (4-7)

#transitional\_territories #sea\_urbanization  
#extended\_urbanization #borderscapes #borderscaping

Key images (min. 3)

Border as method, Border as process

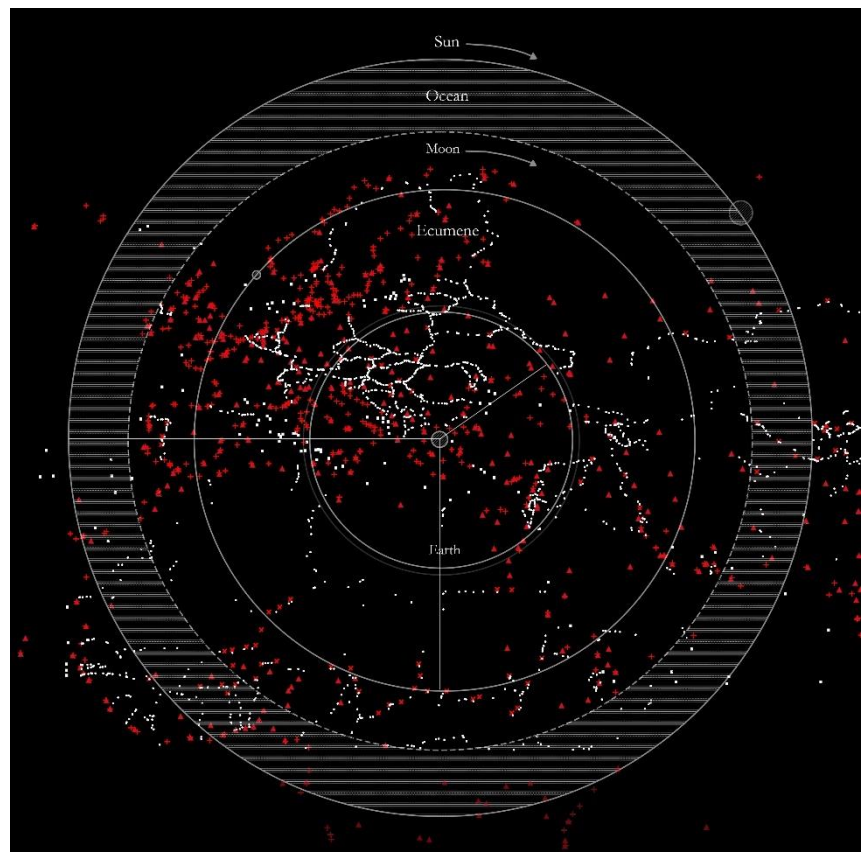


Figure 1: The different types of borders' cross-points projected in the Anaximander's planetary model of the known world

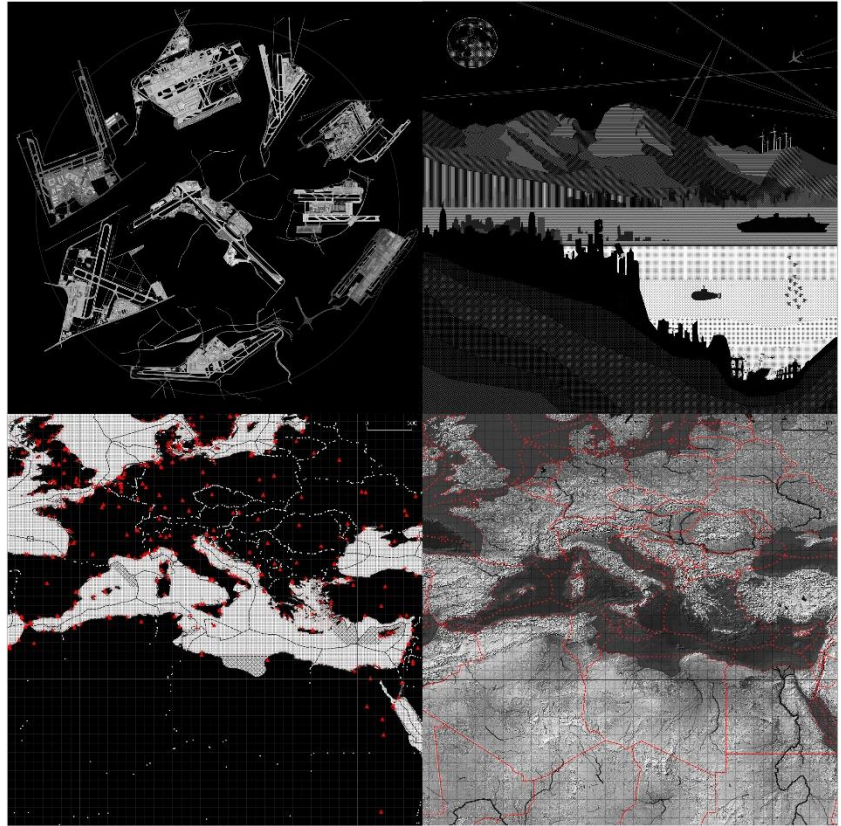


Figure 2: Investigation on Borders and Cross-points



Figure 3: CITY & HUMAN Inclusive Borders



Figure 5: CITY & MORE-THAN-HUMAN Permeable water borders during sea level rise

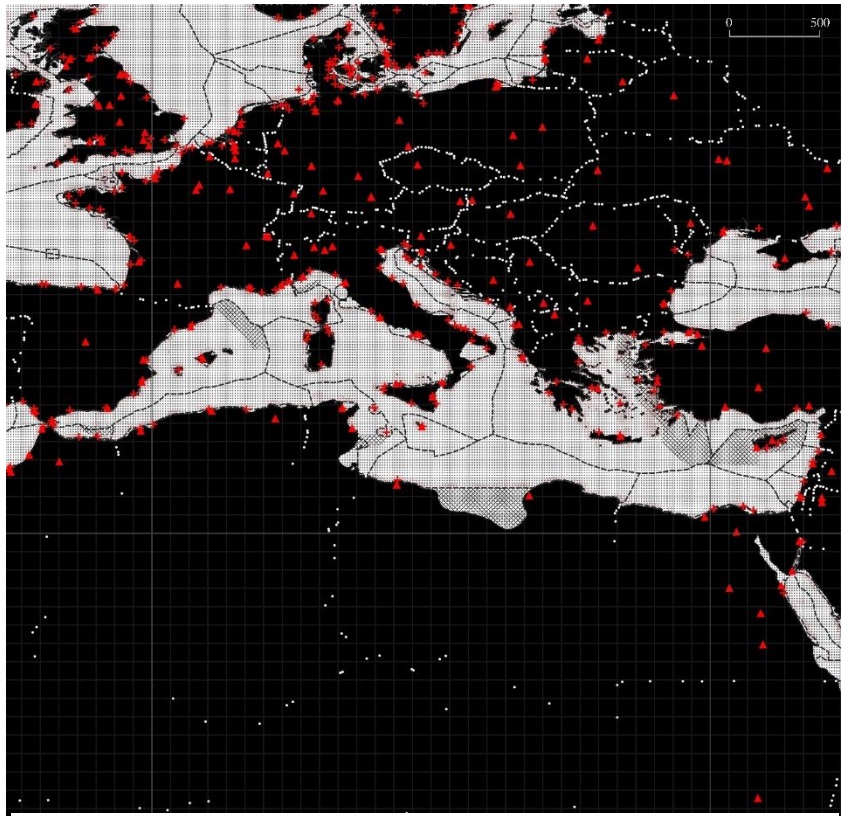


Figure 4: MORE-THAN-CITY HUMAN Statal borders and cross-points

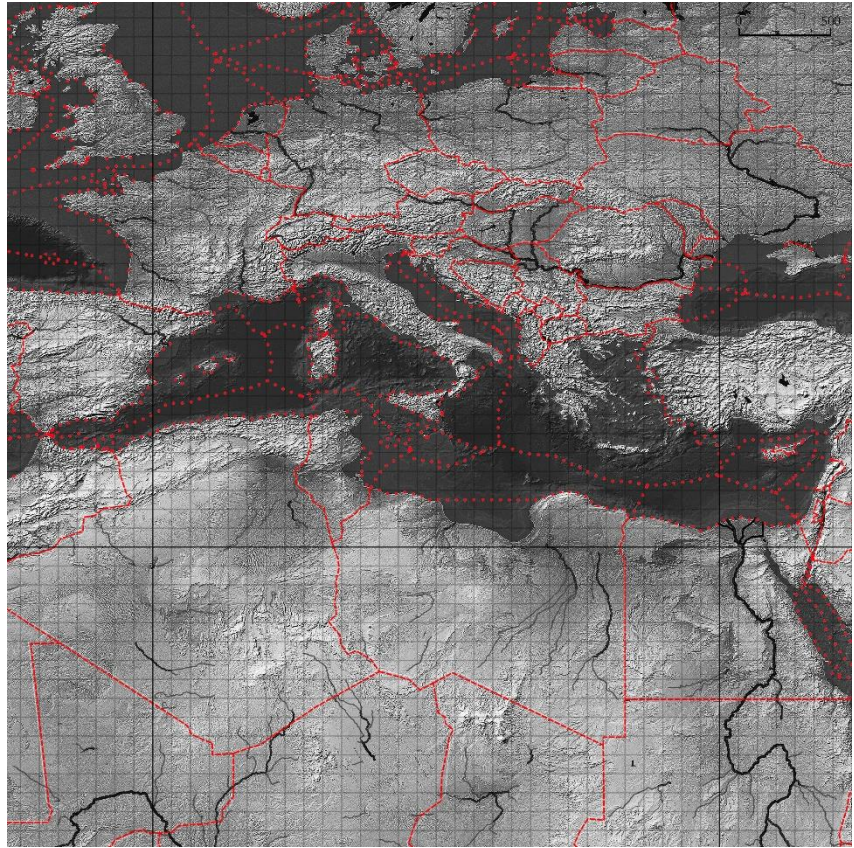


Figure 6: MORE-THAN-CITY MORE-THAN-HUMAN Borders as lines, milieus & outer reaches

## Key literature

- Braudel, F., Coarelli, F., & Aymard, M. (1990). *The Mediterranean: Space and history*, Champs Flammarion
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- Daou, D., & Pérez-Ramos. P. (2016). *New Geographies: Island* (Vol.08). Harvard University Press
- Eker, M., Houtum, H. van, Cock, H., Clercq, P. le, Middleton, D., & Haan, J. den. (2013). *Grensland : [atlas, essays en ontwerp : geschiedenis en toekomst van het grenslandschap] = borderland : [atlas, essays and design : history and future of the border landscape*. Blauwdruk.
- Horden, P. & Purcell, N. (2000) *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Wiley Blackwell
- Mezzandra S. & Neilson B. (2013), *Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor*, Duke University Press
- Petrov A. (2013). *New Geographies: Mediterranean* (Vol.05). Harvard University Press

Selected Graduation trajectory (argumentation)

The beginning of my graduation was marked by the understanding that the inability to offer significant solutions to the earth pose urgencies as urban designers is primarily the result of conventional delimitations of knowledge. Starting, then, to challenge these cognitive delimitations requires the courage to ask questions about subjects that are not necessarily associated with conventional land-based approaches to urbanism and that lead to unexplored paths and scales. In this context, then, my own trajectory moves the focus from the land to the sea in terms of urbanization processes and strives to create counter-mappings and alternative readings of the sealand continuum. Beyond being a knowledge tool, I hope that my thesis can initiate further critique on the way the current regime model uses demarcation processes to obscure complexities in the effort to achieve legibility and politization, especially in the face of the current ecological crisis.

Main motivation for the project / Problematization

*“To live in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.”*

Hannah Arendt

### Problematization

The ecological crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – as manifested through the sea level rise – shifts the focus from the land to the sea making it the new frontier for human occupation and activity. As an urbanized entity – occupied, imagined, and produced through a long process of negotiation between historical, political, cultural, and environmental forces – the seascape embodies and exhibits all the processes of commercialization, legislation, and politization associated with intensified transformation of nature in the state-regime-nexus. In this embodiment, the sea as a complex thick space, characterized by depth, movement, and change over time, remains rendered in a convenient state of blankness.

The oceanic territories, invisible and largely unexplored, are precisely drawn to designate zones of control and jurisdiction and are surveilled by a complex web of border agencies, anti-immigration missions, satellite imaging and real-time tracking technologies. These superimposed hard-edge statal borders and the related borderzone territories direct an increased fragmentation, isolation and instrumentalization of the sea – above

and below its surface – that devoid it from its cultural relevance and historical continuity. The problematic of the borders as projected political lines at the center of the contemporary capitalistic experience of the world that connect, disconnect and overlap defining new forms of exploitation and often ritualizing displays of violence and expulsion, is multiplying in the body of the sea affecting critically the complex human and more-than-human assemblages.

The Mediterranean Sea – defined and restricted by its own boundness – constitutes a primal space of this border superimposition and conflation produced and cultivated through a constant conflict that Braudel (1995) calls *Courte Durée*. Being a historic place of conflict, a palimpsest of natural, political, and cultural boundaries that extend way beyond its surrounding space and the most highly securitized waterway on Earth, the Mediterranean remains a central embodiment of global power dynamics manifested in the coexistence between violence and leisure, while it is expected to be significantly disrupted by the effects of the ecological crisis in its human and natural systems. In this process, it is the very own physical boundary between the land and the sea that is predicted to alter completely challenging the very understanding of urbanization in its space and altering the dynamic between established borders and thresholds.

Location(s) of your graduation project (for research and intended interventions)

(add visual references, including maps)

#### Mediterranean Basin

The Mediterranean Basin under the scope of the projects is expected to be studied and designed through the focus in its different borderscapes, and especially the ones that are going to be defined as more critical in terms of both historical and ecological crises. The understanding of the Mediterranean as entirety, then, is based on the significant difference between continuity and contiguity.

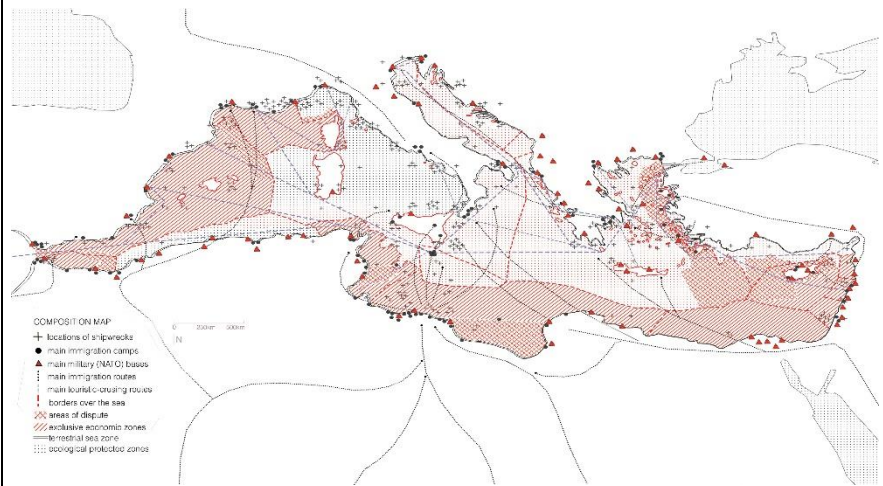


Figure 7: Composition - Accumulation Map of the Mediterranean Basin  
A accumulation of borders and networks

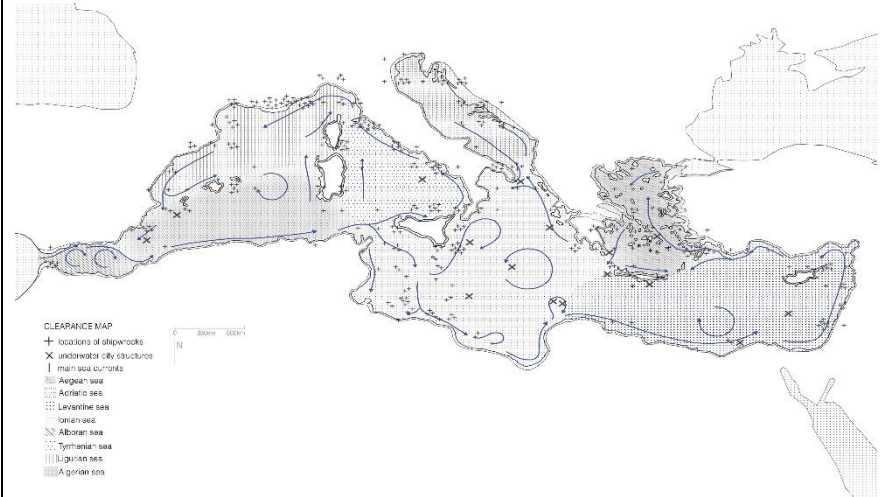


Figure 8: Clearance Map of the Mediterranean Basin  
A depiction of spatial subdivisions based on currents, topographies and ecosystems

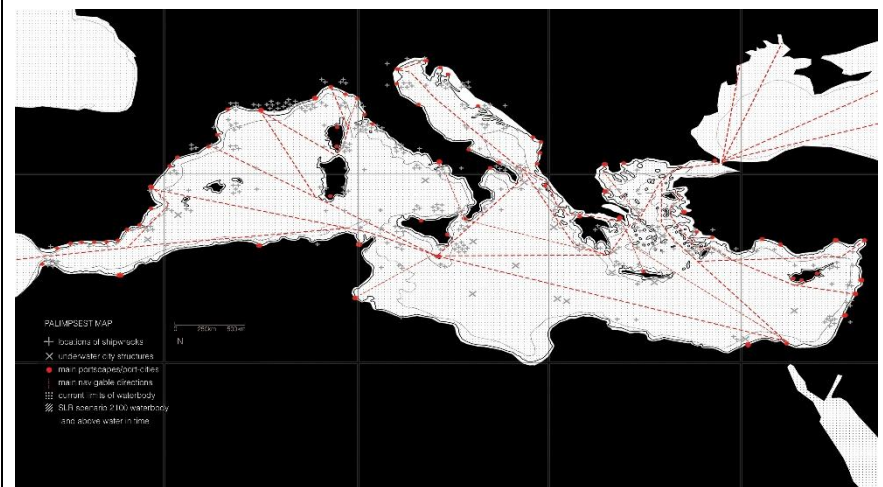
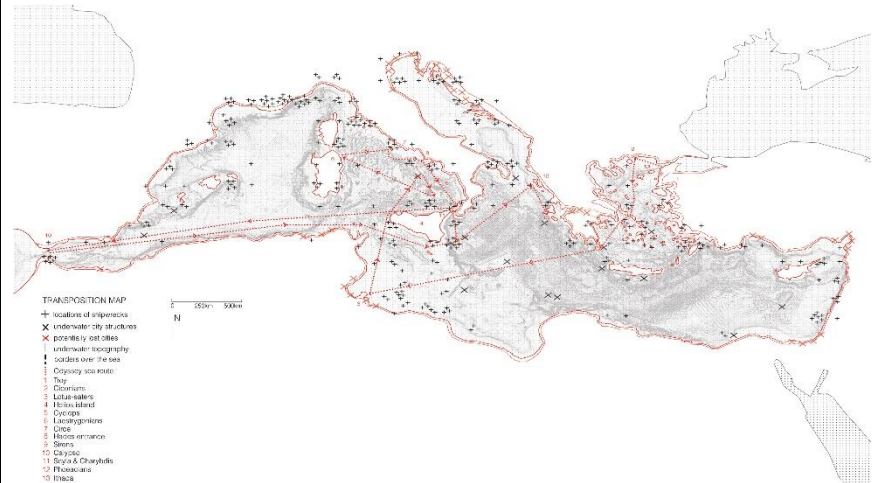


Figure 9: Palimpsest Map of the Mediterranean Basin

## Aim of study

The project aims to offer a new reading of sea urbanization using the Mediterranean basin as a mesocosm and reversing the focus from land to sea. To do so, it attempts to study urban transformation through borders expanding their understanding as thickened zones where the effects of movement and living processes overlap offering thresholds for negotiation and exchange. This shifted focus activates the potentiality of the borderscape to act as a common ground for the cultivation of the sea as primarily a cultural construction produced over time through the interaction of human and more-than-human entities and networks.



*Figure 10: Transposition Map of the Mediterranean Basin  
Model for the 'world enlargement' through the introduction of modes of living at sea,  
navigating or interacting with water, and letting the cultures move and mingle*



*Figure 11: Transposition Map of the Mediterranean Basin  
Model for the introduction of a new transmediterranean border zone that reinstates the  
seas as public space*



Main preliminary research question(s)

Research Question

In light of the ecological crisis and its subsequent sea-level rise:

How can borderscapes direct the creation of a new common ground between human and more-than-human entities in the Mediterranean basin through an inversed understanding of the sea as island?

Sub-research Questions

-What are the design possibilities for the borderscapes, especially the ones contained in water?

-What are the methods, elements, and conditions for a co-construction of a common ground between human and more-than-human entities?

-How does the inversed understanding of the sea as island strengthens its recontextualization as a spatial, cultural, and social complex through the redefinition of its boundaries?

-What does it mean to acknowledge coastal and port cities as maritime access points and as extensions of the sea, especially in the Mediterranean context?

-What does the specific study of borders and thresholds in the space of the Mediterranean has to offer in the understanding of ocean urbanization and in the planning process towards the cultivated sea?

-How can representation overcome the spatial, political, and conceptual 'blankness' of the Mediterranean Sea to document its complexities, viscosities, narratives, and political dimensions?

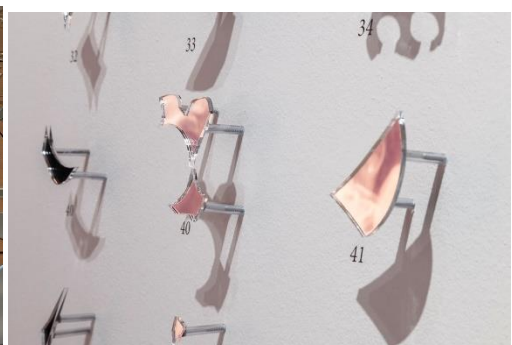
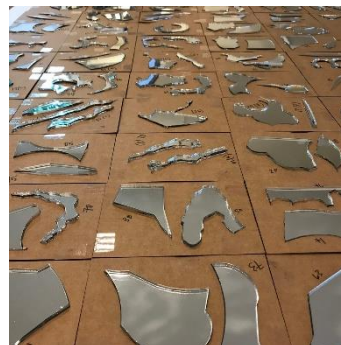
Intended concrete outcomes

(add visual references, including reference projects)



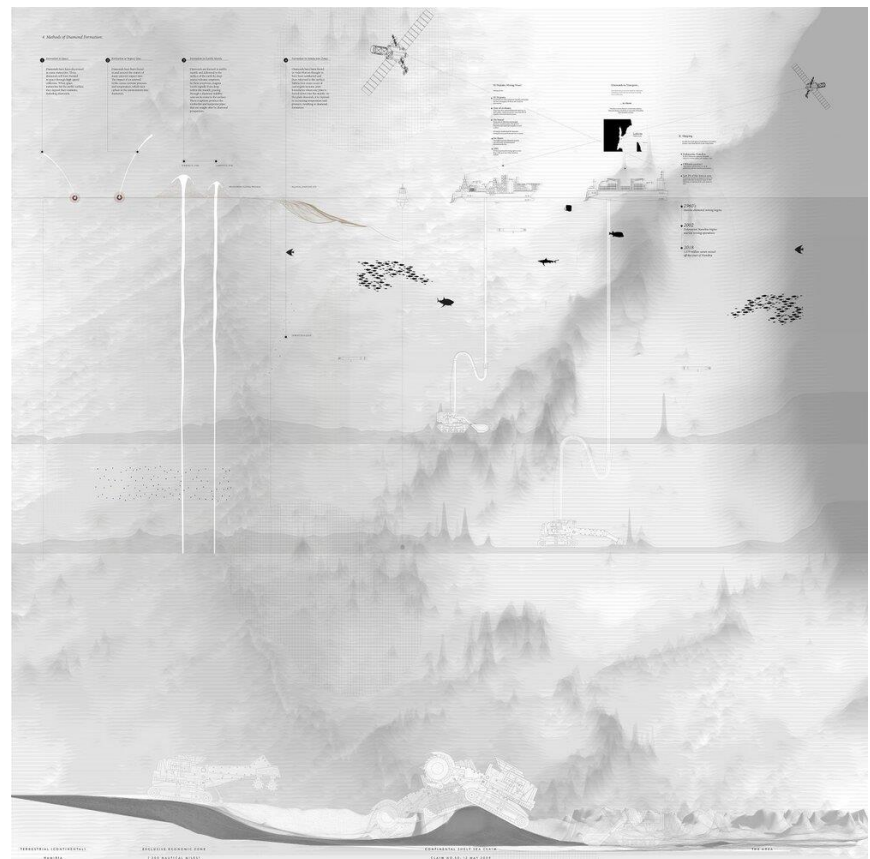
Figure 12: Atlas of the Sea\_Ghosts in Water by Elisa Kim

A counter-mapping of the bordered statal territorial claims in the ocean floor as islands





*Figure 13: Atlas of the sea\_Hydrographia by Elisa Kim  
A counter-mapping of the bordered statal territorial claims in the ocean floor as islands*



*Figure 14: A maritime study for the Republic of Namibia by Elisa Kim  
A sectional research of human activity and borders in the sea of Namibia*



*Figure 15: Architecture of territory - Sea Region Singapore, Johor, Riau Archipelago by Milica Topalovic, Hans Hortig & Stefanie Krautzig  
Shifting the focus of the maps from land to sea*



*Figure 16: Potential for the Public Sea*

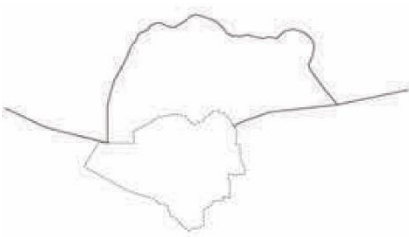
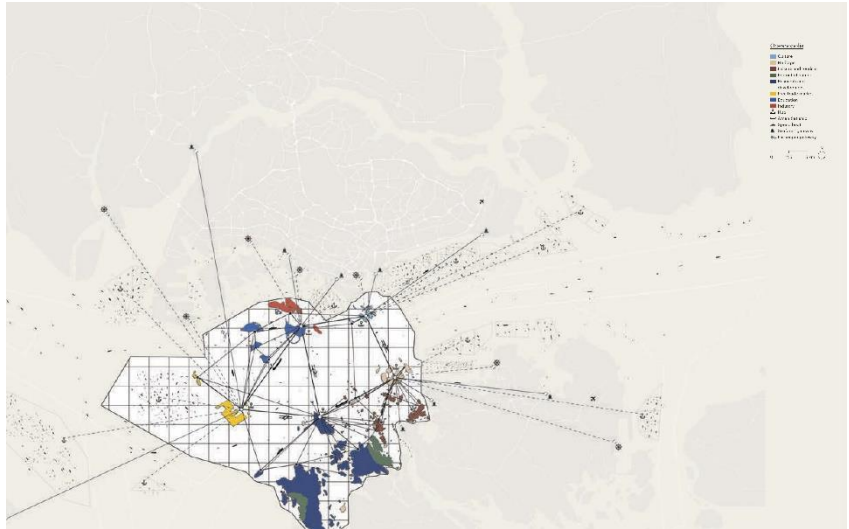


Figure 17: Oceanopolis\_A Trisnational Trans Border Special Zone

Indication of possible preliminary project approach (methodology / methods)

Scientific relevance of your graduation project

### Expected Outcome

The project aims to produce a new Atlas of the Mediterranean basin through a cartographic and political enquiry of its borderscapes. This reading of borders not merely as a concrete outcome but as a process and manifestation of the Courte Durée in the Mediterranean offers an alternative scenario for a cross-border vision of a unified maritime space that acts as a mesocosm in the effort to understand and plan sea urbanization.

The preliminary project approach consists of three main parts for the completion of the currently expected outcomes:

1. Definition of key concepts and interpretations  
The first part concerns a scholastic literature review aiming to produce a strong theoretical and conceptual framework that aims to direct the project and to produce a lens for future narratives in the same direction.
2. Cartographic Analysis – Construction of the Atlas  
The second part, which is probably going to be the most significant of the process, aims to investigate the understanding of the urbanization of the Mediterranean basin through its borderscapes. To do so it dissects the current accumulation of borders through its palimpsest searching to define selected sites of critical interactions. Those borderscapes assemble an alphabet of a metaphorical map of the Mediterranean emphasizing unexpected classifications and connections.
3. Vision for a Public Sea  
The final part entails the development of a shared Vision for the Mediterranean Basin that revolves around the right to the sea explored through the establishment of a Transmediterranean Zone that reinstates the understanding of the sea as public space while it brings forward questions about environmental and social spatial justice.

The theme of urbanization of the sea is still evidently understudied, especially beyond its definition as a space of increased economic production. Although the ecological crisis and the subsequent sea level rise bring maritime spaces in the focus of urban studies, the ocean remains deeply invisible and unexplored. As discussed above, the project attempts to define a different narrative of the sea as a common ground for the human and more-than-human

Societal relevance of your graduation project

entities and a cultivated artefact. The case of the Mediterranean is selected as a representative example of a historically urbanized fabric that manifests all the implications of the instrumentalization and politicization of sea space in its bounded area.

The importance of the sea for the Mediterranean civilizations is historically validated and societally undeniable. However, as emphasized in every critical reading concerning the Mediterranean, the sea has embodied all the conflicts and tensions of the capitalistic regime and is still the scene of violence that unites and defines the three surrounding continents. It is the 'table' that, in the words of Lahoud (2013) binds together the consequences of Western industrialization, global carbon emissions, aerosol dispersion patterns, sea surface temperatures, monsoons, precipitation, pastoralists, herders, farmers, cultivars, migratory routes, treaties, coast guards, statistical models, satellite imagery, and detention centers. In this diachronic accumulation of societal implications, it is naïve to believe that an individual project by itself could engage all the necessary stakeholders and propose an ideal scenario for the future. What the project can do, though, is to narrate an alternative reading of the Mediterranean basin that challenges the current industry-led sectorial approach of its maritime ontologies by emphasizing the right to the sea – both for human and more-than-human entities- and reminding that there have been civilizations and cultures that have experienced the sea as a living space without projecting the current ownership system.

Reflection on all Urbanism MSc3&4 studios: briefly describe the project focus when performed under studio (200 words per studio)

#### Transitional territories studio

As expected already from my motivational letter, the aforementioned studio offered to me the umbrella to situate my project concerning 'Extended Urbanization' in the Inland-Seaward subject with a focus on transition as a process of clearance in a diachronic continuum of accumulation. Under this lens, the selection of the site, the Mediterranean Basin, was accompanied by a deep understanding and reflection over the processes and concepts that direct transitional realities in a planetary scale and tie together man-made and natural systems. Trying to answer the pressing question of co-habitation in a congested space during the current ecological crisis, I was introduced to mapping techniques not merely as representations but also as subjective readings of reality that encompass a critical thinking on the way data are used and manipulated through dominant power structures. Furthermore, the overall philosophy and the proposed readings of the studio mentors helped me cultivate a concrete theoretical and

conceptual framework that sees design as a deeply social and political act and not as a commodified market-oriented practice. In this context, I believe that my project has evolved significantly following paths that I hadn't explored before and offering me a methodology to understand and design for transitions in critical environments.

#### Complex cities studio

Both the scale and the obvious complexity of the selected site concern the politics and the governance systems of the urban environment. In that sense, and since the project entails a strong research base and understands the site and its design as an experiment, its potential evolvment through the Complex Cities Studio could lead to a more informed update of the policies connected to the current efforts of the European Union to reinstate a common identity in the Mediterranean. In parallel, it could direct me towards a more stake-holder oriented approach untangling the complicated interplay of different agents that define notions of identity, border-making and migration processes in the area.

#### Urban fabrics studio

Following the Urban fabrics studio would entail a significant turn in the process of the project using the lens of the Mediterranean Basin to understand the similarities and differences of the built environment and to define the Mediterranean city through its multiple scales, densities, and patterns. This definition would be informed both by a societal understanding of space through my personal experience of the Mediterranean context, and by a strong focus on relevant databases and evidence-based thinking. Focusing on access as the new capital that define power structures in the selected case study or case studies would lead into a new comparative reading of the Mediterranean urban fabrics revealing invisible relations and connections.

#### Metropolitan Ecologies studio

The Metropolitan Ecologies Studio would also entail a shift of emphasis towards natural processes and more-than-human assemblages as disrupted by the contemporary ecological crisis. This closer look on expected disasters connected not only to sea rising levels but to the complex interplay of climatic conditions and man-induced interruptions would strengthen system-thinking approach and process-oriented approaches for the future of the Mediterranean Sea and its vulnerable ecosystems. In this direction and trying to strive for a new balance producing resilience through transformation, the project could be directed to experiment with various nature-based solutions and co-evolution strategies.



### Cities of the future studio

The evolution of the project under the lens of the Cities of the Future studio would move to a more unconventional path through an informed interdisciplinary thinking and through concrete speculation over different development models and methods. In that sense, I believe that the progress of the thesis and the understanding of the site could be completely different based on the specific group of focus, but it would definitely uncover an innovative look on site-specific materiality leading to a very unexpected selection of critical intervention territories.

### Ethical considerations

Historically, the understanding of the Mediterranean basin as an entity hasn't only been used to highlight a common history and identity but has also been instrumentalized and politicized to reinforce various colonization narratives. Even the concept of the Courte Durée has occasionally been utilized – and is utilized even today - to absorb conflicts, tensions, controversies, and structural injustices under the thread of history. Manifested through the complex border networks, extending way beyond the body of the sea towards their pre-frontiers in the North Africa, the Sub-Saharan Region, and the Middle East, and their legal or illegal cross-points, these structural injustices and invisible tensions that affect human and more-than-human entities are in the forefront of this research. Dealing with them as an urban designer requires a critical thinking that overcomes not only one's personal biases but also preconceptions legitimized and presented as true by dominant power structures.

### Mind map brainstorm on the project / topic

