

Maritimity and habitability of large Mediterranean coastal cities

Maritimité et habitabilité des grandes villes littorales méditerranéennes



Maritimity and habitability : access to the sea



Maritimité et habitabilité sous l'angle de l'accès à la mer

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MaritiMedSeaties

Opening Seminar, Marseilles, May 19th 2025

«Maritimité et habitabilité sous
l'angle de l'accès à la mer/
Maritimity and habitability from the
perspective of the sea accessibility»

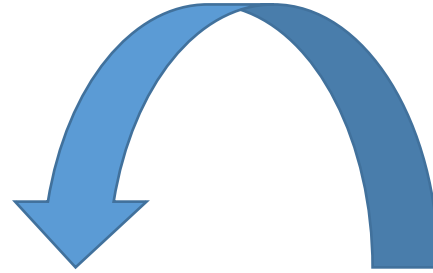
Tramonti (SP)
5terre National Park



THE SEA and THE COAST
NATURE - PROTECTED AREAS

Ecology

Habitats for plants and animals



THE TOWN
COASTAL ABITABILITY

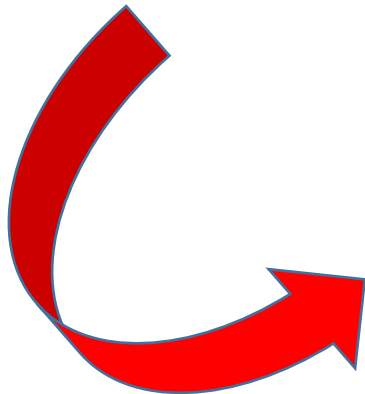
VALUE of «Sea view»

Coastal dunes EROSION

Rocky coast CLIFFS

THE PEOPLE
INHABITANTS and TOURISM
New activities

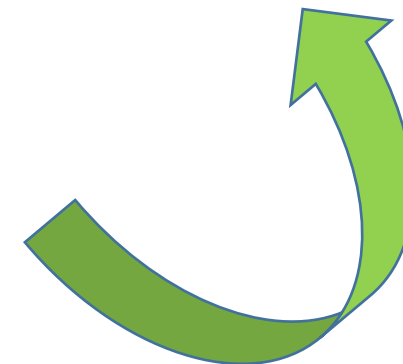
PORTS: navigation routes,
commerce, economy,
infrastructures, **CUSTOMS**



Water QUALITY
SECURITY and SAFETY

URBAN BEACHES/BATHABILITY

ACCESSIBILITY
RIGHT to THE BEACH/SEA



STATE PROPERTY
PUBLIC BEACHES/ PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS



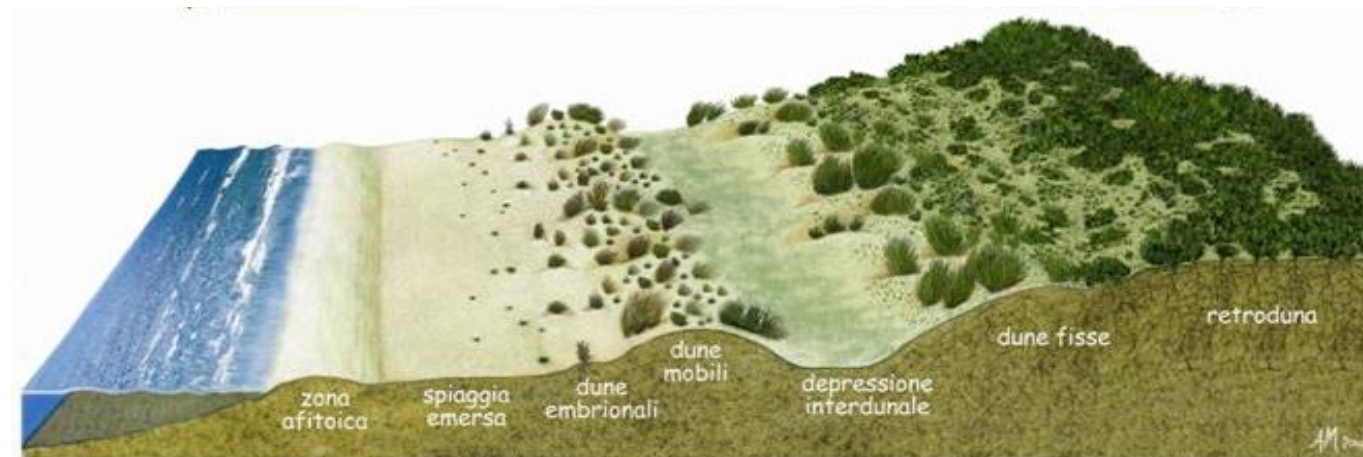
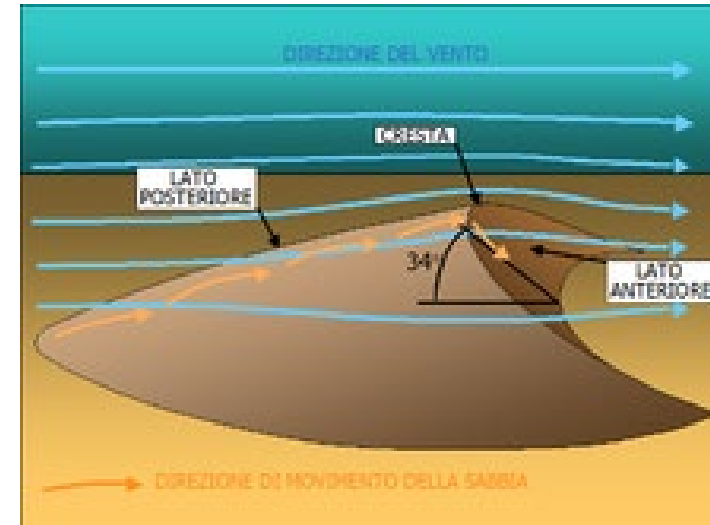
Underwater Archeologic Park in Baia (Naples)



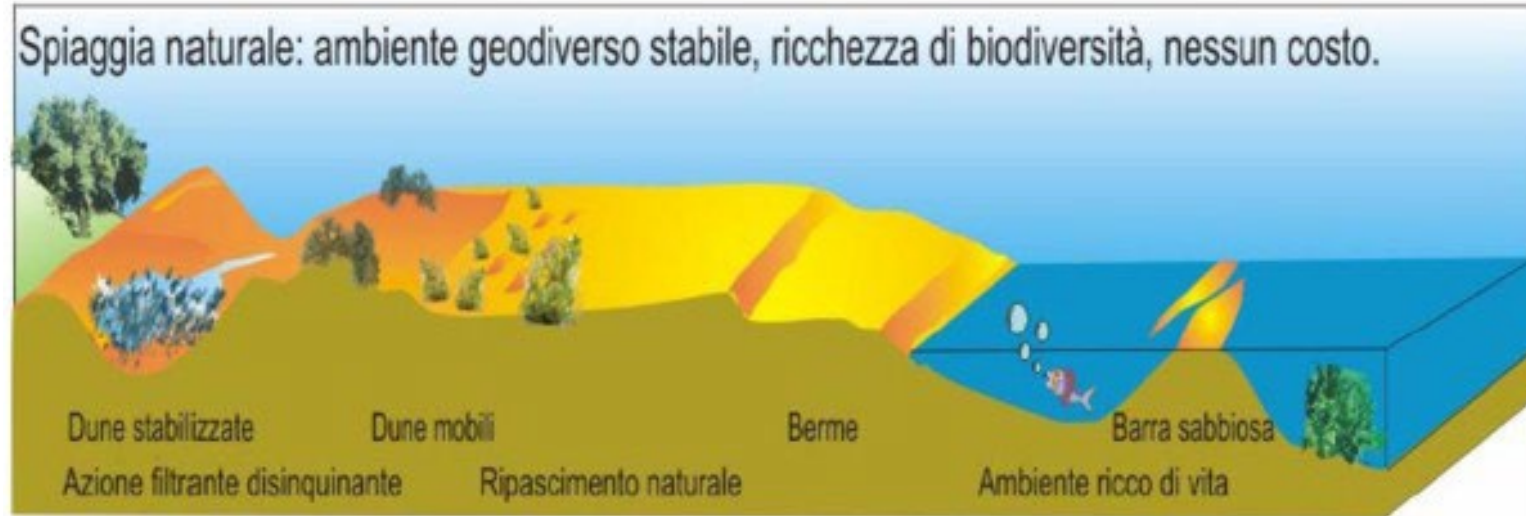
CITIES-SEA INTERACTIONS

BETWEEN LAND and SEA

The beach is always changing:
the waterways, the sea transport
pebbles,
sand and different materials
the wind moves the dunes...
THE PLANTS MOVE



Natural beach: geodiverse stable environment, richness of biodiversity



Anthropized coast: instable environment, life disappearance, high maintenance costs

5 terre: «the WAY of LOVE» (re-
opened July 24, after 12 years) in
the National Park, UNESCO
Heritage List
(23 millions of euro)



www.cinqueterrehike.com



Riomaggiore - Manarola



DIMENSIONS,
NUMBERS,
OVERTOURISM



Free or private ?

*Glaucium
flavum*



*Chrithmum
maritimum*



Beach Flowers



*Cakile
maritima*



*Pancratium
maritimum*

Salicornia europaea glasswort



***Pancratium maritimum*: a plant with swimming seeds**

“hermaphrodite” flower with entomophilous pollination, producing a corky capsule containing the seeds for “hydrochore” dissemination





Parc national
des Calanques





La Ciotat and
the Green island



**Calanque
de Sormiou**



Marseilleveyre

Callelongue

URBAN BEACHES





Barcelona



Marseilles

Plage des Catalans



Un solarium permettant surtout d'accéder à un bassin de baignade en eaux de mer, sécurisé, de 3 000 m² pour 3 mètres de profondeur. Autour de cet espace balnéaire artificiel, le public trouvera des cabines, une consigne, une infirmerie et des accès pour personnes à mobilité réduite









Beach vendors



WEST 8 BRIDGES BORNEO-SPORENBURG
1998-2001, AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS



1.5 billion euros to clean the Seine



Urban beach in PARIS



NICE

Florence JOLY

Association Les Libres nageurs

pour le développement de la pratique de la nage en eau libre en mer
(en dehors des seules zones de baignade surveillée près des plages).



Genoa



Rémi BLASCO

doctorant

Social, Urban, and Environmental Integration of Marinas

approche systémique: infrastructure, lieux de pratiques,
lieux de l'entre-soi,

interface plus ou moins ouverte sur la ville

Marseilles





Les Libres Nageurs, a young, tiny association without any subsidies

Founded in 2021

3 statutory goals:

- Promotion of open-water swimming
- Sea and coastline protection
- Free access to the sea for all

6 very active administrators, 150 members

No subsidies, 2025 Budget = around €2000

1 discovery-swim every first weekend of the month

1 monthly newsletter to members

Website, FB, IG, X accounts, YouTube channel.

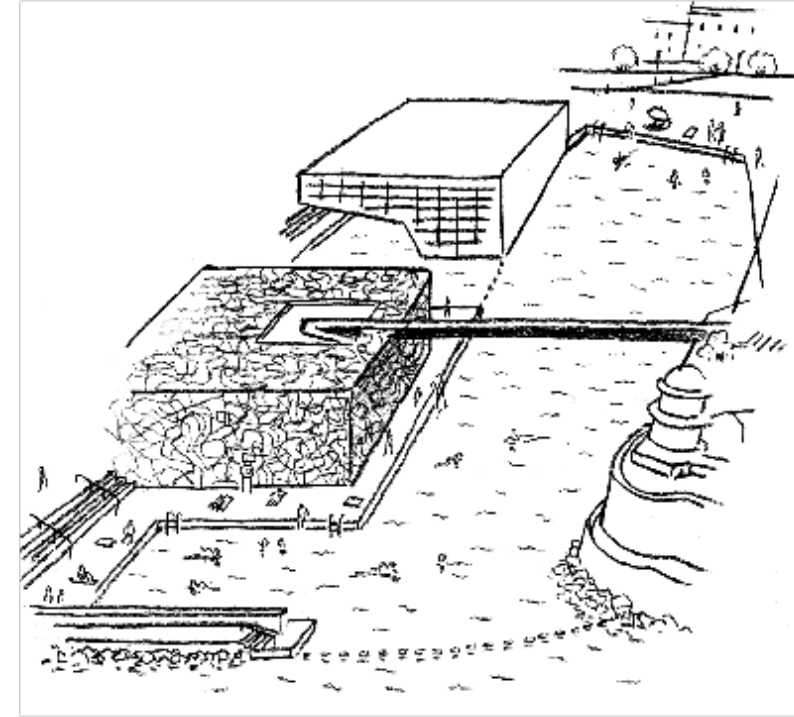
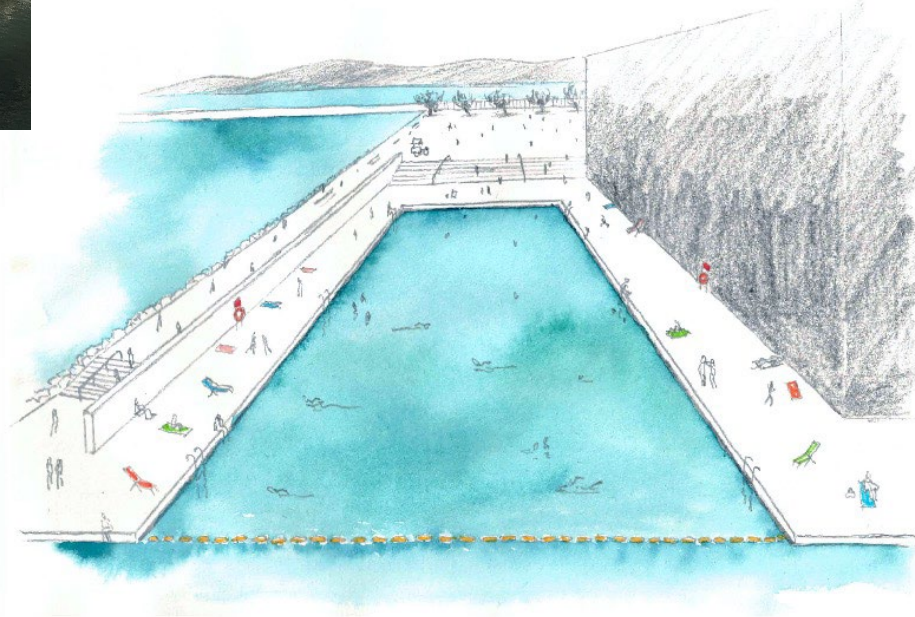
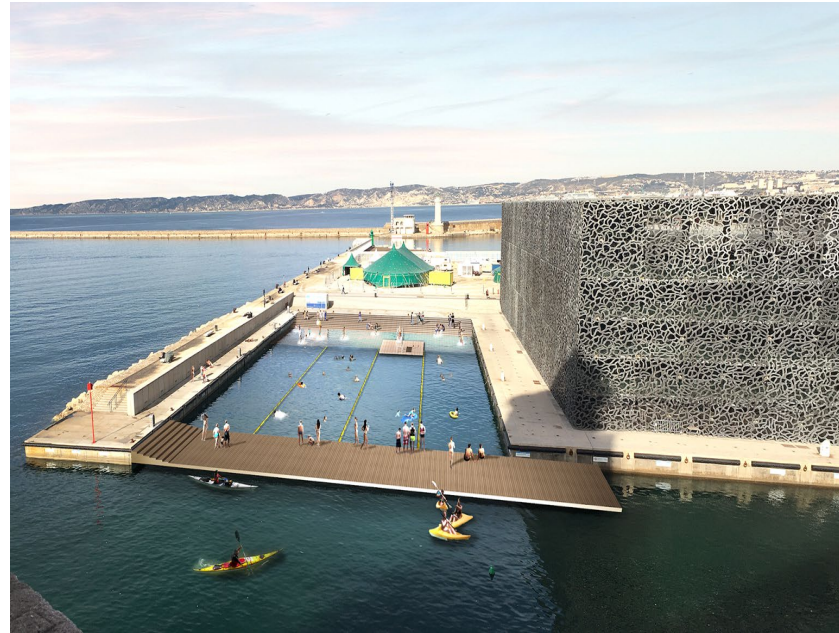
Numerous supporting media coverage, following our press releases



La Piscine du MuCem

Struggle for an urban sea-water pool

Libres Nageurs Projects
Since 2021



Marseille in a few Facts & Figures

LEISURE BOATS

- 99% of Marseille residents do not own a private boat
- 11h/year = national average of leisure boat use
- 100 floating pontoons with a linear length of 5km in the bay of Marseille

POOLS

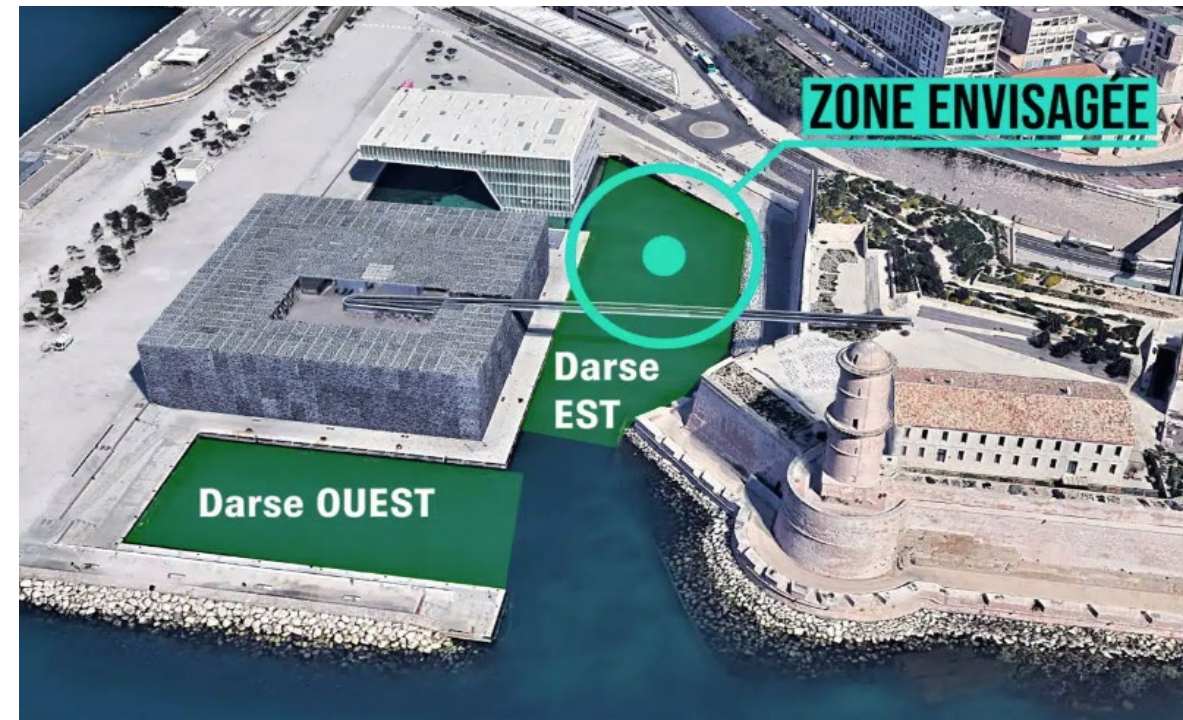
- A poor record of only 14 swimming pools in Marseille for nearly 1 million inhabitants – Difficulties for opening during the whole summer. Urgent renovations need for most of them
- Average surface of public swimming pool/inhabitant= 6 times lower than the national average
- 55% of the city's children do not know how to swim



France is the country with the highest number of private swimming pools per capita in Europe

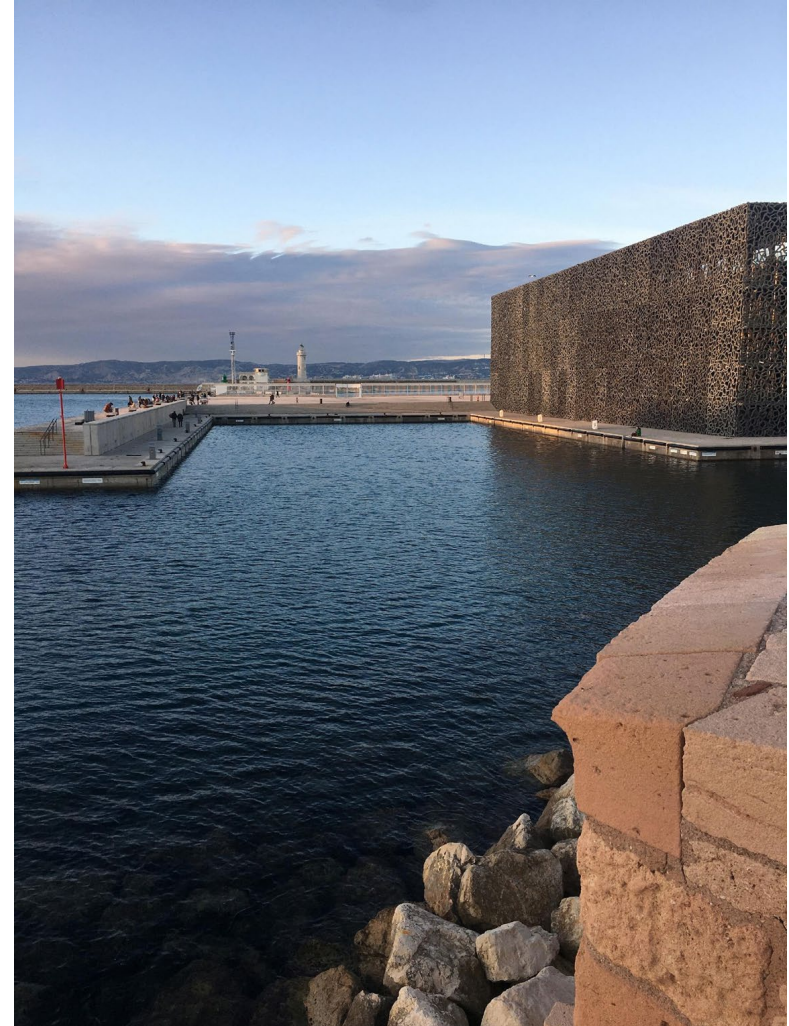
The MUCEM - Museum

- Emblematic building (museum) inaugurated in 2013 for Marseille, European capital of culture
- Prestigious location, only 100 m away from the Old Harbour City Center
- Basins dug during the building of the museum in 2013
- Current management as a marina => hence, a swimming ban
- Correct water quality
- Has always been a historic swimming spot
- Today an informal swimming spot



The Mucem swimming pool- a location full of advantages

- Very reasonable construction-cost compared to indoor public swimming pools
- No other public swimming pool in that district of Marseille, one of the poorest of Europe
- A second access to the sea for the whole northern half of Marseille (10 beaches are located in the southern half of the town)
- Low carbon operation, no chemical treatment of the water.
- A reponse to climate issues (especially during summer time in an area without any public garden)
- A response to social issues and public access to swimming activities
- A response to health issues (encouraging sport and physical activities)



Many events and happenings

Ploufs du 13



Guerilla swims



Since Sept 2024, one regular event /month

Parody of the private club « Cercle des Nageurs de Marseille »



Pick-Nics



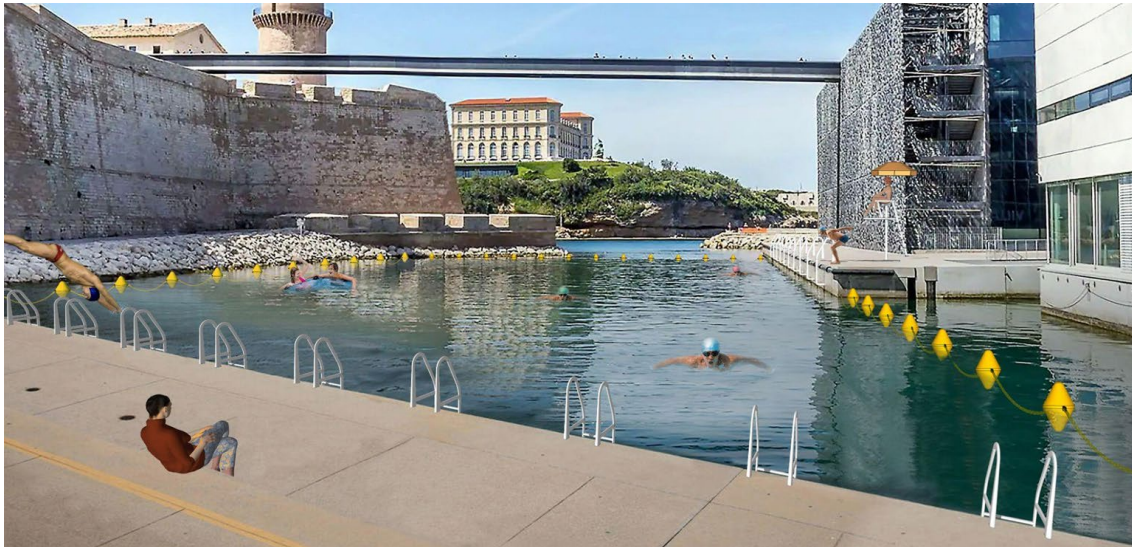
Various parodies always with a tight connection between the event and serious press releases

Already nearly 50 meetings with
all the concerned communities
and local authorities



2 projects have been proposed by the City of Marseille

*initially planned for summer 2023 and summer 2024...
but finally cancelled*



1st project - Summer 2023

cancelled a week before its planned opening.



2nd project - Summer 2024

Vote of 6 million € by Ville de Marseille for 3 years.
Cancelled 2 months before the planned opening

Today

PROS

- A location with many advantages
- A real need for sports equipment and access to sea in Marseille
- Broad media support for our project and actions
- Rapid support from the mayor and local actors
- Vote of €6 million VdM for 3 years



CONS

- Poorest metropolis in France with political rivalries at stake
- Lack of time, procedural obstacles and hard reglementation regarding public safety
- Equipment which might be considered as insufficiently secure
- Opposition from "Buildings of France" and from the architect Rudy Riciotti, from MUCEM employees, boat owners and right wing criticism

Reopening of the Digue Du Large public access

Reopening the access to a large sea-wall running along the Marseille Harbour
Coalition 30 associations and citizens : « rendez la digue »



Parody trial of the theft of
the public's seawall



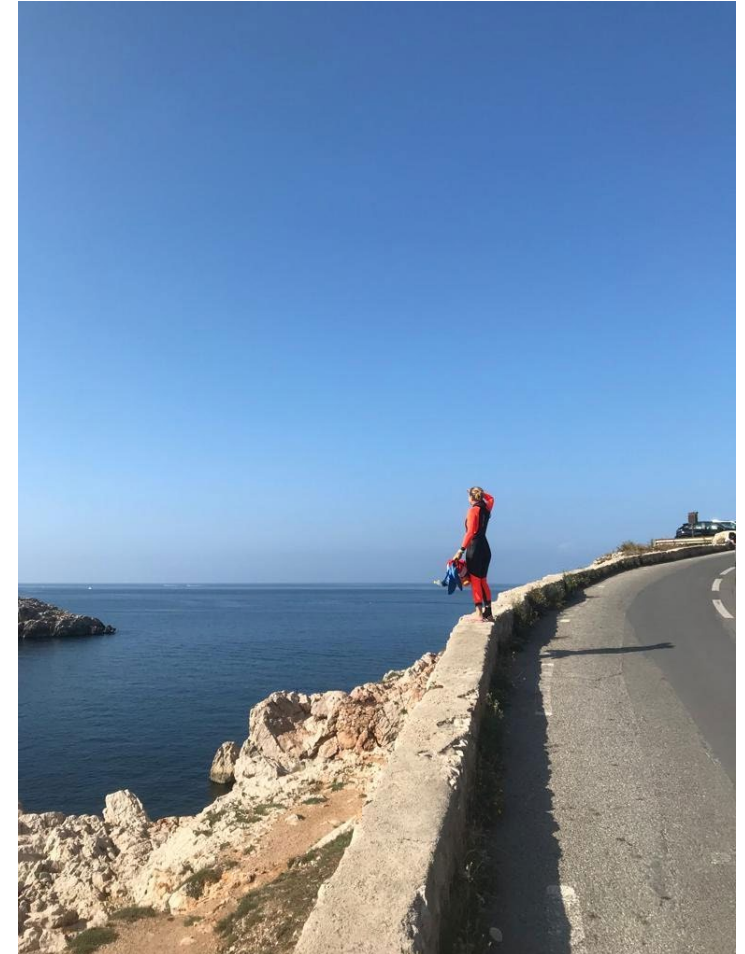
Future course of action for the Libres Nageurs

Follow-up of the MuCem pool project

Access to the « Digue du Large (Seawall)

Open-swimmers' safety at sea (e.g. securing a 500 meters isolated seawall, near Catalans Beach)

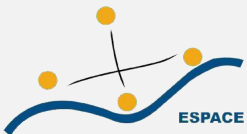
Participation to French, European and International associative networks



MaritiMedSeaties Inaugural seminar

Maritimity and habitability: access to the
sea

19 May 2025





The port is associated with glamour and desirability — a space perceived as attractive and conducive to social engagement.



Marina functionality

“The marina in the contemporary city becoming a form of in-between stage that articulates societal spaces and functions”
(Gibout & Herbert, 2017, translated from french)

5 Main functions of marinas (Salbert, 2017)

Hosting functions

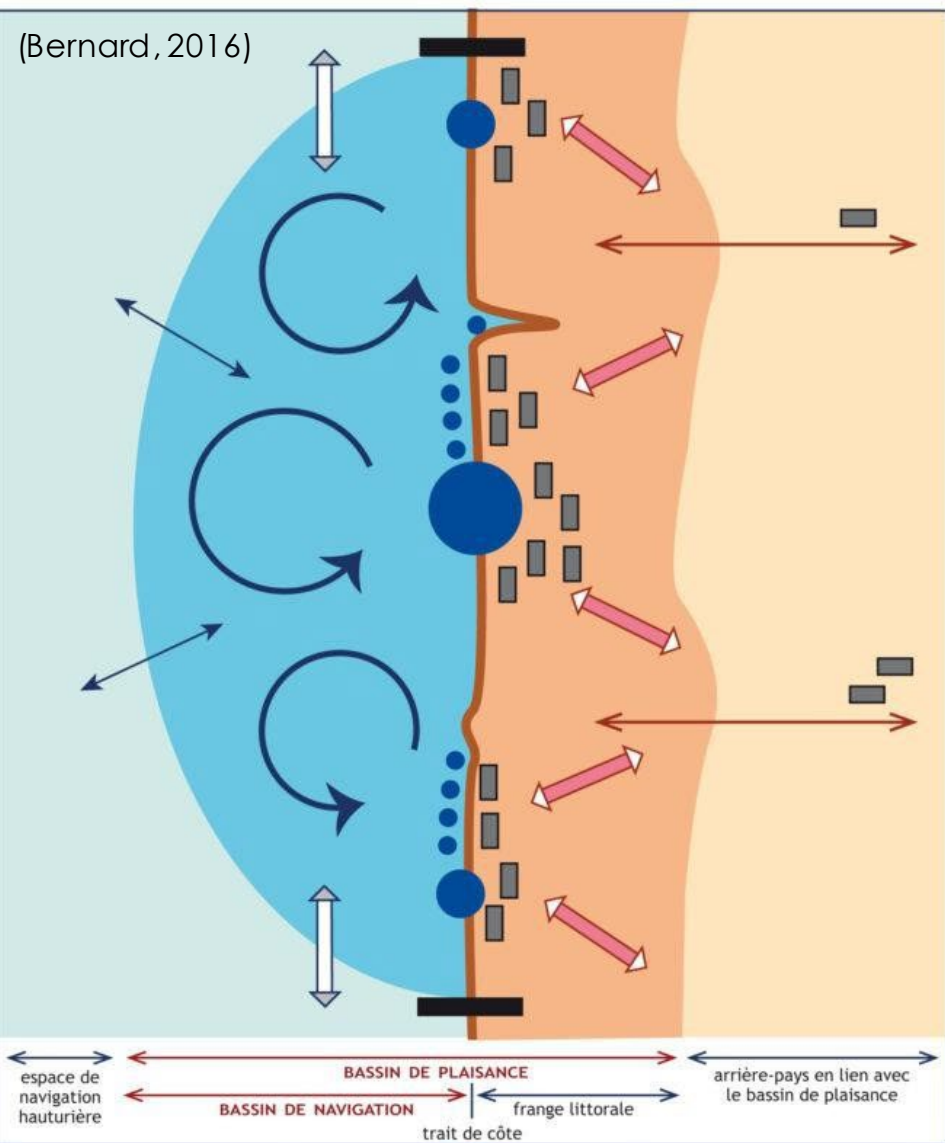
Administrative function

Commercial Function

Industrial Function

Recreational/Tourist Function

(Bernard, 2016)



conception : N. BERNARD, UBO - Brest, 2015.

Urban Functions of Marinas: A French Academic Perspective

Provost, 2010 ; Regaud, 2017

Construction of marinas in former port wasteland areas → port as '**synapse**'; gateway from town to port

Sonnic, 2005

Marinas as "drivers of port redevelopment port conversion in an urban environment"

Deboudt, 2017

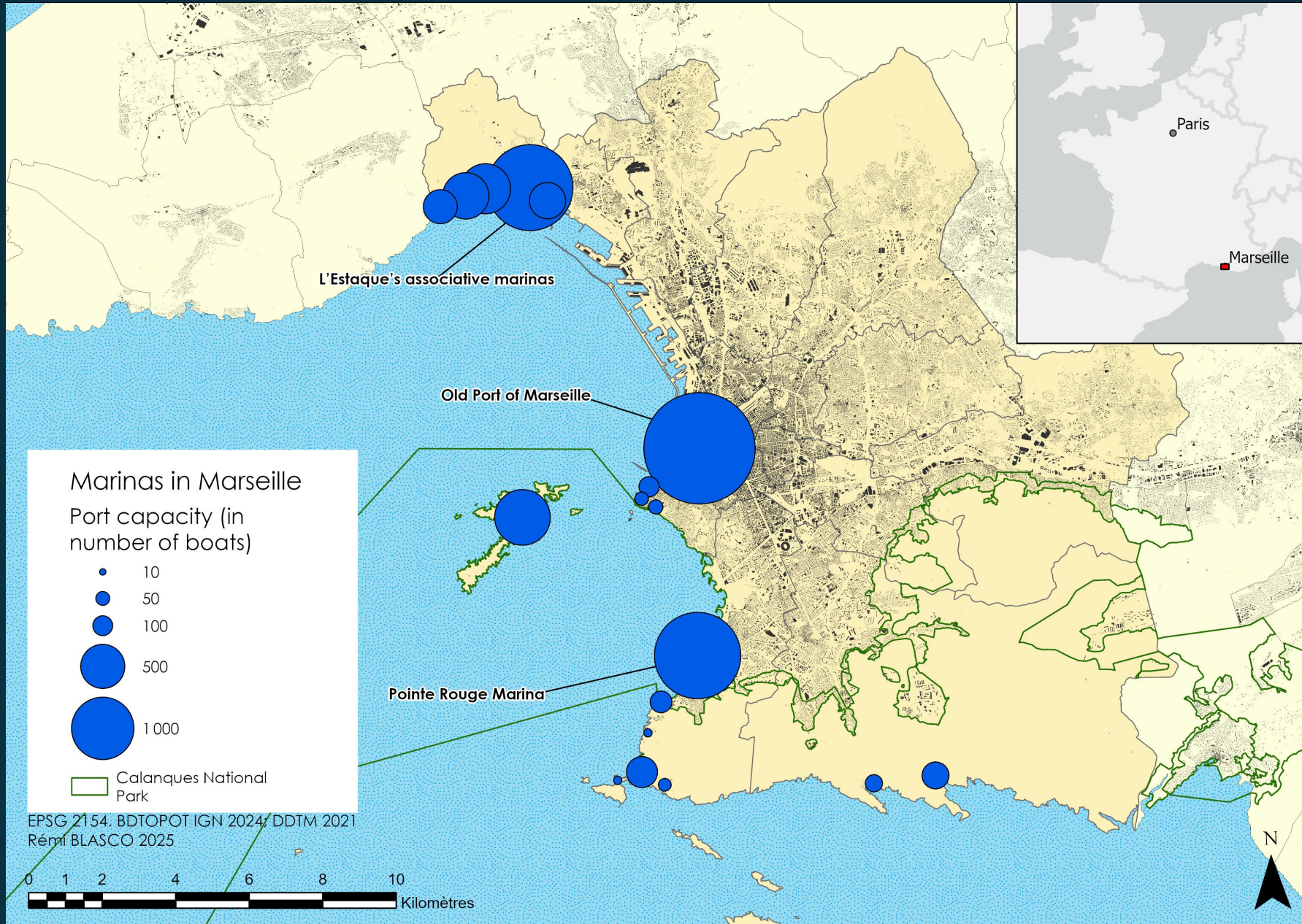
Marinas as a « component of an urban project »

Bertoncello & Hagel, 2016 ; Salbert, 2017

Ports as enclosed places; port functions that are poorly integrated into the city

"The marina thus serves both as a gateway and a transitional space between the active port area and the city, but also as a threshold between life on land and life at sea." (Provost, 2010, translated from french)

Marseille : Nautical Hub



- 62 marinas
- Over 20,000 berths
- different types of coastlines
- different types of port environments
- Three port authorities, including the Grand Port Maritime of Marseille.

The City-Port agreement designates the Estaque area for nautical and yachting activities

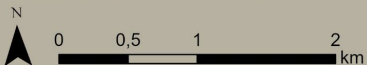
Marseille : Nautical Hub

Grand Port Maritime of Marseille: the 3 zones defined in the city-port agreement

Port areas

- Port waters
- Northern zone
- Central zone
- South zone

Auteur : Rémi Blasco
EPSG : 2154
Source : <https://www.marseille-port.fr/charte-ville-port/>
BDTOPO 2023 ; Limite terre-mer SHOM; OCSOL PACA



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A walk
overlooking
the marinas



a fenced-in
promenade
that leads to
a dead end



Where are
the boats?...



...They are
hidden
behind



The
pedestrian
path to the
beach



Well-
protected
boats

Materiality of the marina interface : Estaque area

In the area,
there are:

- **1 kilometer** of barbed wire
- **2.4 kilometers** of fencing
- approximately **1 kilometer** of fences or mesh topped with spikes
- around **1 kilometer** of guardrails.



The Old Port of Marseille: Reinvestment of the quays

[https://remonterletemps.ign.fr/comparer/?lon=5.370245&lat=43.295254&z=17.1
&pointer=true&layer1=17&layer2=10&mode=split-h](https://remonterletemps.ign.fr/comparer/?lon=5.370245&lat=43.295254&z=17.1&pointer=true&layer1=17&layer2=10&mode=split-h)



conclusion

- Urban and recreational functions make it possible for the marina to be both a space of access to the sea and an urban place
- The marina can also be a closed space, marked by exclusivity

**What are the mechanisms that foster the opening or closing of the marina?
How can different forms of access to the sea coexist within the marinas?**

From the 'Right to the City' to the 'Right to the Sea'
(Hellequin & Gibout, 2012)

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