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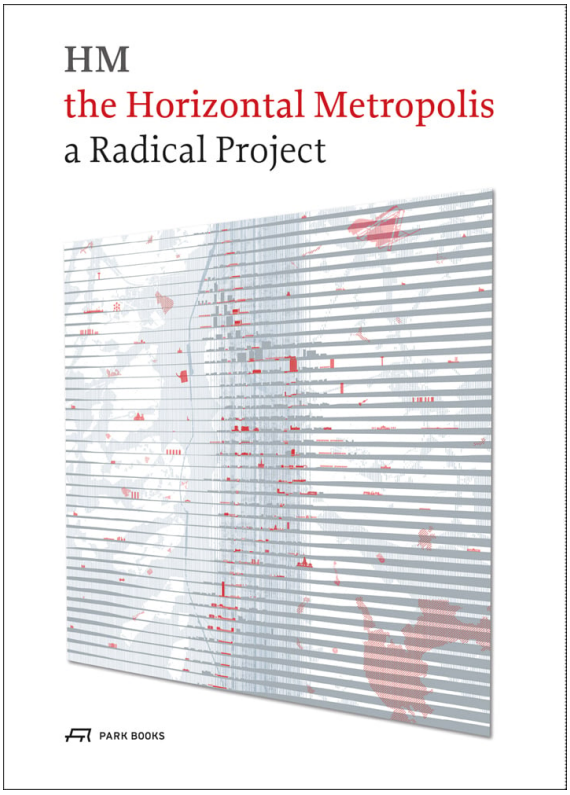

The Horizontal Metropolis

A Radical Project

Chiara Cavalieri

Paola Vigano

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Territory	World excluding Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Puerto Rico, United States, Canada, and Japan
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- Urbanisation processes in the larger surroundings of metropolises are a major challenge in spatial and infrastructural planning around the world
- Presents latest research on settlement structures that belong neither fully to metropolitan nor to rural spaces
- Explores the sustainability and potentials of desakota, or horizontal metropolis, as a concept

Two contrasting terms are joined to conjugate the traditional idea of metropolis (the centre of a vast territory, hierarchically organised, dense, vertical, produced by polarization) with horizontality (the idea of a more diffuse, isotropic urban condition, where centre and periphery blur). Beyond a simplistic centre vs periphery opposition, the concept of a horizontal metropolis reveals the dispersed condition as a potential asset, rather than a limit, to the construction of a sustainable and innovative urban dimension. Around 1990, Terry McGee, an urban researcher at the University of British Columbia, coined the term “desakota”, deriving from Indonesian “desa” (village) and “kota” (city). Desakota areas typically occur in Asia, especially South East Asia. The term describes an area situated outside the periurban zone, often sprawling alongside arterial and communication roads, sometimes from one agglomeration to the next. They are characterised by high population density and intensive agricultural use, but differ from densely populated rural areas by more urban-like characteristics. The new book *The Horizontal Meteropolis* investigates such areas alongside examples in the US, Italy, and Switzerland. The study highlights the advantages of the concept and its relevance in economical, ecological, and social aspects. The concept reflects a vision of global urbanisation that no longer allows for “outside” areas and that will test the urban ecosystem to its limits.

Chiara Cavalieri is an architect and urbanist. She works as a researcher and lecturer at Università IUAV di Venezia and as a post-doctoral researcher at EPFL in Lausanne. **Paola Viganò** is a co-founder of the Milan-based urban design firm Studio 015. She also teaches as a professor of urban theory and design at Università IUAV di Venezia and at EPFL in Lausanne.

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