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'As much as a system of flows or a code of memories, cities are a matter of things.'

For Manuel de Solà-Morales, the city does not consist of abstractions, but of concrete, tangible things. Urbanity, even dealing with a metropolis that is a node in worldwide networks of capital, people, commodities and ideas, is inextricably tied to materiality. Underlying the works presented in this book is an attentive, sensitive approach to the existing and potential richness of urban sites.

His projects derive from an original observation of city spaces, and are meant to be reinterpretations and proposals for their transformation. They can be regarded as an urban architecture, at the interface of buildings and city plans. By transforming the physical reality at the scale of a building, an urban element, or sometimes with nothing more than the layout of a public space, Manuel de Solà-Morales operates changes that often transcend the physical or spatial dimensions of the intervention.

De Solà-Morales' method offers a handhold for an analysis of how the city, understood as a built entity, can impede or promote human behaviour and thereby affect the habitus of urban residents – now more than half the world's population.

This book presents projects over the past two decades, with an introduction by New York based historian Kenneth Frampton, an essay by the Dutch critic Hans Ibelings, and a selection of texts written by Manuel de Solà-Morales.