

invisible invisible invisible

VI Congresso AISU
VisibleInvisible: percepire la città tra descrizioni e omissioni

II. Visibilità dell'antico: patrimonio e istituzioni culturali

a cura di
S. Adorno, G. Cristina, A. Rotondo



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Salvatore Adorno
Giovanni Cristina
Arianna Rotondo

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Roberta Caruso
Chiara D'Amico

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Alessandro De Caro

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Arianna Rotondo

Introduzione

L'archeologia urbana, come disciplina e indirizzo di studi, ha mostrato che l'apporto di una lettura materiale della città non solo consente di comprenderne lo sviluppo nel corso del tempo, ma soprattutto pone il problema di come le preesistenze della città antica possano essere valorizzate in quella attuale. Questa "archeologia della città" ha sollecitato nuove strategie di tutela del patrimonio storico e archeologico urbano. In questo fascicolo è condotta una riflessione sull'evoluzione dell'archeologia urbana attraverso casi studio che rendono conto dei problemi posti da indagini e da progetti di ricostruzione, recupero, conservazione e valorizzazione, soprattutto a livello infrastrutturale, condotti in città storiche italiane come Roma, Napoli e Torino e ancora Barcellona in Spagna, Lione in Francia e San Paolo in Brasile.

Questo sguardo sulla "città sotto-sopra", fra metodi, teorie e prassi, riflette sul ruolo svolto dall'archeologia urbana nella ricostruzione di un rapporto, fatto di cesure e di continuità, fra la stratificazione secolare e la realtà contemporanea di centri storici oggetto di interventi importanti e complessi. Nell'ambito di questo riformularsi continuo del rapporto fra la contemporanea "città di superficie", sempre in divenire, e la "città del sottosuolo" con le sue stratificazioni storiche, si è indagato anche l'evolversi di norme e il definirsi di valori riguardanti il diverso approccio al patrimonio urbano: un patrimonio, di cui si sono studiati, in particolare per il periodo preunitario e postunitario italiano, piani e interventi volti a percepirlo, conoscerlo, conservarlo, riusarlo.

La città, dunque, è artefatto, tessuto dalle fitte trame e stratificato deposito di memoria, portatore di significati da decrittare nei suoi luoghi visibili e invisibili. E deputato a rendere visibile l'invisibile, in una sorta di integrazione dell'antico nel nuovo, è il museo, istituzione culturale e patrimonio urbano; custode del rapporto fra un "prima" e un "dopo", fra iconicità delle architetture urbane e trasformazioni dettate da cambiamenti funzionali. Particolare attenzione è rivolta alla museografia contemporanea, che, accogliendo le sfide di una società in continua evoluzione, ha perfezionato i suoi strumenti, coniugando ricostruzione storica e proiezione virtuale, per dar vita a progetti di grande impatto, volti a conoscere o a ricreare contesti urbani trasformati e paesaggisticamente modificati.

Un'ultima riflessione è rivolta ad altri due elementi importanti della cultura urbana: le biblioteche e la musica. La funzione sociale delle biblioteche pubbliche, come contenitori di memoria, e la loro interferenza o chiusura rispetto al tessuto urbano sono analizzate in due casi a cavallo tra Ottocento e Novecento: la questione dell'identità territoriale nella storia della biblioteca zelantea di Acireale e quella della circolazione di materiale librario-archivistico in Italia dopo la soppressione degli ordini religiosi. Il ruolo della musica e le sue funzioni in termini di costruzione identitaria sono studiati, sulla scorta dell'indirizzo metodologico della *Urban musicology*, nel particolare contesto della Torino napoleonica e in quello della «grande Catania» del XVIII secolo.

Arianna Rotondo

Introduction

Urban archaeology, as a discipline and field of study, has shown that the contribution of a material interpretation of the city not only allows understanding its development over time, but also raises the issue of how the former structures of the ancient city can be valorised in today's city. This "city archaeology" has prompted new strategies for the preservation of a city's historic and archaeological heritage. The article discusses the evolution of urban archaeology through case studies that focus on problems posed by surveys and reconstruction, restoration, conservation and renewal projects, especially regarding infrastructure, carried out in historical Italian cities such as Rome, Naples and Turin and again in Barcelona in Spain, Lyon in France and São Paulo in Brazil.

This overview on the "upside-down city", combining methods, theories and practice, reflects on the role of urban archaeology in the reconstruction of a relationship, both fragmented and continuous, between age-old stratification and the present day reality of historical centres, the subject of important and complex interventions. In the frame of this constant reworking of the relationship between the contemporary "city of surfaces", always in flux, and the "underground city" with its historical layers, it has also investigated the evolution of legislation and the defining of values regarding different approaches to the urban heritage. Plans and interventions have been studied, especially for the pre-unification and post-unification period of Italy, with the aim of discerning, knowing, conserving and reusing this urban heritage.

The city is therefore an artefact, a densely woven fabric and stratified treasure chest of memory, the bearer of meanings to be deciphered in its visible and invisible places. Entrusted with making the visible invisible, in a kind of integration of the ancient in the new, is the museum, a cultural institution and urban heritage; the guardian of the relationship between a 'before' and 'after', between the iconicity of urban architecture and the transformations dictated by functional changes. Special focus is given to the contemporary museum. Accepting the challenges of an ever-changing society, it has refined its tools, combining historical reconstruction and virtual projection, to create high-impact projects aimed at knowing or recreating changed urban contexts with their modified landscape.

One further consideration should be made on two other important elements of urban culture: libraries and music. The social function of public libraries, as storehouses of historical memory and their interference or closure with respect to the urban fabric, are analyzed in two cases at the turn of the century: the issue of territorial identity in the history of the Zelantea library in Acireale and that of the circulation of library-archive materials in Italy after the suppression of the religious orders. The role of music, together with its function in identity building, are studied following the methodological approach of urban musicology, in the particular context of Napoleonic Turin and in that of the *Grand Catania* of the 18th century.

Maria Helena Souto
Ana Cardoso de Matos

From the extinguished Industrial Museum in Lisbon to a proposal of a Virtual Portuguese Design Museum

The Industrial and Commercial Museums in Lisbon and Oporto: a memory to recover

Whoever visits the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon or the town center in Oporto, hardly believes that these two spaces, in the end of the nineteenth century were Industrial and Commercial Museums, created in 1883. However they were the evidence of concern for the Portuguese government as they were the exhibition of the Portuguese industrial products and the presentation of the best examples of the foreign industry.

The situation of these museums in the cities of Lisbon and Oporto was not arbitrary because, in one hand the urban and city dimension – as they are the largest cities in the country, being Lisbon the capital –, and on the other hand for the importance that they have had in the industrial and business field of the country. Moreover their geographical location provided the existence of our two main ports, from which the most important businesses were made, many important businessmen would pass by, many tourists would go on trips and many emigrants would also use these ports.

Additionally the setting of the museums in the urban space was not arbitrary. In the case of Lisbon, its location in the Jerónimos Monastery, in Belém, puts the museum in a belt near the port, and it would be easier to visit by who would come to the city from here. That was also the reason

to the choice of Belém to the accomplishment of the Portuguese World Exhibition in 1940. On the other hand, being in this place in the city, would be near various industries and near the industrial belt in Boavista. Looking at the Oporto case, the museums were installed in a pavilion known as Olympic Circus near the Oporto Crystal Palace, located in a high place of the city, on a hill overlooking the Douro River, where many factories were established. In both cases, the fact of being near the factory units would make it easier to the industrial workers and traders who would come on business work to get easily to these museums.

The creation of the Industrial and Commercial Museums in Lisbon and Oporto were the beginning of a process that started early in the nineteenth century and for that reason, its understanding means we need to know the background of these museums.

The background of the Industrial and Commercial Museums: the remembrance of a “History”

The first attempts to create an industrial museum in Portugal goes back to 1807¹, when the Government assigned the Chamber of Commerce to create: «a collection of books, model plans or machines and other useful object drawings to promote and to encourage the various areas in the national industry», similar to was created in France in 1794. However the political situation obstructed the creation of this collection² and in 1819, there was still the need to create a similar museum. Eleven years later, Alexandre António Vandelli, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Lisbon took back this matter, reinforcing the need to build such museum, which he considered important to the progress of the Portuguese industry.

In turn of the definitive launching of the Liberalism in Portugal (1834), it was installed a renovation in the education that promoted the artistic, technical and industrial education. In the range of this change two Conservatories of Arts and Crafts were created, one in Lisbon and the other in Oporto³. However the developments of these Conservatories didn't match the aims it was created for so, in 1844 was decided

to integrate them in the Lisbon Polytechnic School and in the Oporto Polytechnic Academy.

In 1852, it was created the Lisbon Industrial Institute, in Boavista (which was already and important industrial area), and the Oporto Industrial Academy, in the Students Area of this city. Industrial museums should run nearby these schools in order to complement the theory and practical education that was given in the various workshops⁴. The decision to create these museums was influenced by the Universal Exhibition of 1851 and by the Kensington Museum⁵, created with the same goals, by Henry Cole and Prince Albert.

The Ministry of Public Works, Trade and Industry report, dating back to 30 December 1852, referred that the industrial museums should have as models the countries that had the «best institutions of this type»⁶. However, due to lack of money, these were not created immediately.

In 1864 the importance of these museums was mentioned again, referring that these should have everything that «could contribute to ease the education and to improve the good taste of the industrial class»⁷. In 1867, Francisco da Fonseca Benevides that was responsible for organizing the museum of the Industrial Institute of Lisbon visited the Paris Universal Exhibition with the aim of getting important and essential material for the museum.

Parallel to the idea of creating industrial museums, intended to spread the industrial progresses and to promote the industrial art, throughout the nineteenth century was also defended the idea to create art industrial museums connected to the artistic education, that would be very important for the industrial progress.

The creation of Industrial and Commercial Museums in Lisbon and Oporto

Lisbon and Oporto Industrial and Commercial Museums were created in 1883 and had its roots in the Industrial Institutes museums. Each one of these museums was at the time divided in two sections, one was the industrial and the other was the commercial one that would thereby be divided in another two sections, the national and the foreign one.

The Oporto Museum was set up in the pavilion near the Crystal Palace, and opened its doors on 21st March 1886, being Joaquim de Vasconcellos responsible for it. The Lisbon museum was set up in Jerónimos Monastery, in Belém, and was formally opened on 28th July 1887, due to the work of its director, Joaquim Tello. In 1893 the Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Museum was filled out in two galleries of the Jerónimos Monastery, in Belém.

The buildings chosen to set up each of these two museums were completely different, in its age, architecture and materials used as well as in the symbols that covered each one of the buildings.

In Lisbon its choice was on a monument with great historical and symbolical meaning, as it was built by the king, D. Manuel I, as a way of commemorating the Portuguese discoveries. Moreover, its significance for the country and the city History was so high that in 1910⁸ was classified as the national museum. In 1983 together with the Belém Tower was recognized by UNESCO as national heritage.

In 1893, when the Museum organized an exhibition of the Portuguese industry, the journal «O Occidente» published an article underlining the symbolism of this building: «What place more beautiful, more appropriate for an event of this importance than that tracery monument, proof of birth of the Lusitanian people, of their glories and at the moment of their industrial work?»⁹.

This exhibition had a great number of visitors and the physical space of the museum was not enough for so many people. So it was needed to expand the exhibition to another room that was designed for the agriculture museum and still widen to the gardens of the Jerónimos Monastery, where pavilions and tents were placed, given by the Ministry of War¹⁰.

The Oporto Industrial and Commercial Museum was installed in the Olympic Circus, a building that, like the Cristal Palace, was built for the International Exhibition that was organized in Oporto in 1865. This Cristal Palace and the Olympic Circus, that had an architecture that was directly influenced by the Crystal Palace of the Universal London Exhibition of 1851, used new materials such as iron and glass. The use of

these materials were connected to the industrial progress, and so the choice of this building to set up the museum was underlined to the quote that the industry was connected to the technical innovations as well as the new architectural styles.

The Oporto Crystal Palace marked the urban space and however in 1951 the initial building was demolished and substituted by a new reinforced construction; it was vital and important that this new building maintained its same name: Crystal Palace.

These museums disappeared, but through the bibliographical sources existing in several archives, you can reconstitute their collections that provide the basis for a Virtual Museum of Portuguese Design, that associate the outputs of a research project sponsored by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology that will provide a comprehensive understanding of the role played in the development of design in Portugal between 1960 and 1974, by the *Art, Industrial Architecture and Industrial Design Nuclei* of the National Institute of Industrial Research (INII)¹¹.

Design discourse and industrial policies in Portugal between 1960 and 1974: a research project about the Portuguese Design

In the late 1950's, the Portuguese Economy witnessed an enhancement of its industrial sector. One of the dynamic efforts intended for this sector was the establishment of the National Institute of Industrial Research (INII), which began work in 1959¹². This public institute answered to the Industrial State Secretary and its main task was to provide scientific and technical assistance to private industry¹³, within a policy of industrialization and economic growth defined in the *2nd Foment Plan* of the Portuguese New State's dictatorship, which led to significant changes in the 60s¹⁴.

In January 1960, Portugal joined EFTA (European Free Trade Association), requiring an industrial reorganization and the elimination of protectionist barriers of internal competition. To carry out these tasks it was through the INII that the Government realized that investing in

the quality of its industrial products, meant the need to promote design in Portugal.

In this year of 1960, the architect António Teixeira Guerra (b. 1929), with the support of the INII's director, engineer António Magalhães Ramalho (1907-1972) proposed a subject with enough potential to thrive with the relationship established between the Art and Technique subject matters. Teixeira Guerra himself initiated this proposal, which led him to the creation of the *Art and Industrial Architecture Nucleus*, whose first activity, still in 1960, was to develop aspects related to the designing of products and their production methods, establishing a seminal industrial design sector.

This *Nucleus* would influence some enlightened industrials and its main actors believed that a metadesign approach in Portuguese industry might bring the achievement of democratic governance. This is a daring idea. Ultimately, it reminds us that the main goal of a utopia is to make it thinkable.

In 1965, the *Nucleus* organized the “1st Fortnight of Industrial Aesthetics” in Lisbon, with the realization of a series of conferences, lectured by several European experts on industrial design, under the responsibility of the sculptress and glass designer Maria Helena Matos (b. 1924), who still in early 60's assumed the *Nucleus's* leadership. This event was accompanied by an International Exhibition of Industrial Design which established a milestone in the Portuguese design history: for the first time the English term *design* was integrated in the lexicon of the official discourse appearing in the title of the exhibition and its catalogue¹⁵.

The dictatorship sought to modernize and young Portuguese technicians took advantage of the little openness that was provided. The International Exhibition of Industrial *Design* performed between 15th and 30th of June, in Lisbon (Foz Palace), presented industrial design pieces from European countries (England, France, Italy, Finland) and some national, with a concern, quoting engineer Magalhães Ramalho's words: «to make accessible to all officers, technicians and artists the most modern ideas and work processes that interest the progress and expan-

sion of industrial activities and about the most important and increasing current problem of industrial design»¹⁶.

The actions of the *Art and Industrial Architecture Nucleus* definitely contributed to the affirmation of design in Portugal and they were carried out by personalities either with training in architecture and fine arts from Lisbon and Oporto's Fine Arts Schools, or graduated from industrial and decorative arts schools inspired by the English and Austrian Arts and Crafts Schools, born under the influence of William Morris's Arts and Crafts movement in virtue of not yet existing¹⁷, in Portugal, schools that technically prepared, in structural terms, the designers.

In 1971, Maria Helena Matos organized an historical initiative: the "1st Portuguese Design Exhibition", under the leadership of the engineer José de Melo Torres Campos (1932-), the second Director of the INII Held between 20th and 29nd of March 1971 at the FIL (International Fair of Lisbon), the main goal of this exhibition was to bring together the work that best represented the state of art in Portuguese design, for which included the projects presentation of sixty-seven designers, as a total of two hundred and sixty products. In the exhibitions catalogue, the *Nuclei* established design as a «democratization of useful-pleasant, useful-comfortable that is no longer a privilege for a few» making it «accessible to the general public»¹⁸.

In November, this exhibition had a second presentation in the city of Oporto, on the Stock Exchange Palace which iron and glass structure, welcomed the display of the Portuguese design products.

Following this 1st Exhibition, the *Art and Industrial Architecture Nucleus* finally changed to *Industrial Design Nucleus* with Helena Matos as leader and, in 1973 the *Nucleus* organized the "2nd Portuguese Design Exhibition".

Once again, this exhibition was shown at the FIL (International Fair of Lisbon), between 10th and 22nd of March 1973, conducted by the *Nuclei*, and conceived and directed by the architect António Sena da Silva (1926-2001) and the Cooperative "Praxis". As a result of this display, the design in Portugal finally began to have a larger public recognition and ceased to be understood as a simple embellishment of the product to a higher level of sales, but as a projectual area that ensures the quality of

industrial products, confirmed by the large number of stands, shown through the products representative from various companies, products submitted individually or through the attention given by the general and specialized press.

From Imaginary Museums by André Malraux to the Digital and Virtual Museums

The conceptual development of the museum as a cultural and patrimonial institution has suffered practical and theoretical changes over the centuries. The cyberculture became a parallel and independent way of communication, compared to the museum institution, becoming an important structure for cultural promotion and disclosure.

The museographic practices originated from the concepts of “New Museology” of the 1980s began to be questioned and subjected to debate, assessing the urgency of their literature review, sketching the principles of the “New Museum Theory”, a result of the discussion of this academic subject in a space which is day by day vital to the communication – the *world wide web* – as a way of communication, dissemination of knowledge and catalyst of the radical changes.

The concept of the virtual museum has its base on the *Imaginary Museum* (1965) by André Malraux, without physical boundaries and accessible to a large range of people, where the works of art are shown under a new perspective – the representation of the artistic good through and image. According to Malraux exposing is to transform an object into an image. The museum is seen as a space with images, in which it develops the “decontextualization and the recontextualization” of the goods to collect. A photo album or a masterpiece book create «an imaginary space that exists on its own»¹⁹ and that allow us to see accessible and inaccessible works²⁰.

The use of the photography and the digitalization as a way of keeping the patrimonial memory allowed one to assimilate new techniques and technologies in the way of acting and promoting the patrimony in the museums. The museum of the twenty first century structures the cultural policies understanding the aspects of the contemporary culture

and readjusting its consulting and divulgation activities and aims of the museum spaces creating a space without borders. The Digital Museums and the Virtual Museums give a new cultural reality in the technical and artistic progress.

The digitization of works and their inclusion in databases devoted new possibilities for the dissemination of information in the global environment, the *Internet*, allowing the creation of new museums, the Digital Museums. These widen and transform the fields of action of the processes of access and ownership of collections. In this matter, the *web*, is an important tool of publicity.

Building a database as a support of the Virtual Portuguese Design Museum

For our project on the *Nuclei* of the National Institute of Industrial Research (INII), in order to interpret the State's constructed discourse on the articulation between design, the industry and its interaction with the public, it is important to examine the knowledge available and produce a detailed inventory that gathers and registers the main actions, participants and documents produced by the *Nuclei*.

This will establish a study that will allow the confrontation of the state of design in Portugal with other countries, looking «[...] that all design [must] be understood as integrated in a network of mutually relevant and geographically expansive connections»²¹.

The best defense of a design piece can be achieved, firstly by its documentation. In this matter it is necessary to proceed to the task of inventory, description and archiving of all known references of the pieces, thus constituting a database consisting of a set of record sheets with information about the patrimonial, essential tool of action and a working aid open to new contributions.

The aims of having this database about the Design in Portugal it's not only to spread the running investigation project as well as to provide the knowledge and the investigation practice in this scientific field.

Therefore we also seek to explore how through the Design Culture the memory became a mental process of approaching the invisible and

visible, the immaterial and material culture. Establishing the interdisciplinarity of the contexts, we can see its importance as a database for the social science areas, working with the memory in an active way, *seeing*, namely in the archeology of the space and the industry, by studying two crucial moments of the development of the industry in Portugal the first one, in the second half of the nineteenth century, where the physical museum is used to show the new realities brought by the Industrial Revolution and the second, one can see that how the Design in Portugal contributed to the modernization of the Portuguese industry after the Second World War.

In conclusion, our investigation aims to cross a dataset, that establish a work support o to the Virtual Portuguese Design Museum that allows «an interdisciplinary approach, through implementation of complex semantic associations, which will allow the user to understand the culture that is behind the objects and contextualize them»²², in relation to the national area as well as international.

Notes

¹ This decision that was not concretized and later, the artifacts and machines of these Conservatories were integrated in the Industrial Institute of Lisbon and Industrial Academy of Oporto created in 1852.

² Portugal was invaded by the troops of Napoleon I in 1808 and the royal family was forced to move to Brazil.

³ Decreto de 18 Novembro 1836. In the following year was created the Conservatory in Oporto.

⁴ Decreto de 31 Dezembro de 1852.

⁵ About this subject: A. Cardoso de Matos, *Les musées techniques portugais et les expositions universelles au XIXe siècle*, in A. Cardoso de Matos, I. Gouzevitch, M.C. Lourenço, *Expositions universelles, musées techniques et société industrielle/World Exhibitions, Technical Museums and Industrial Society*, Lisboa, Ed. Colibri, 2010, pp. 49-74.

⁶ «Boletim do Ministério das Obras Públicas, Comércio e Indústria», nº 10, Outubro 1862, p. 250.

- ⁷ *Relatório do Ministério das Obras Públicas, Comércio e Indústria* datado de 20 de Dezembro de 1864.
- ⁸ Decreto de 16 Junho 1910, DG nº 136 de 23 Junho 1910.
- ⁹ «O Occidente. Revista Ilustrada de Portugal e do Estrangeiro», 16º ano, vol. XVI, nº 531, 21 de Setembro de 1893, p. 211.
- ¹⁰ *Relatório e catálogo da exposição Industrial Portuguesa realizada no Museu Industrial e Comercial de Lisboa em 28 de Julho de 1893*, Lisboa, Imprensa nacional, 1893, pp. 33-34.
- ¹¹ R&D Project – Reference PTDC/EAT-HAT/121601/2010. Design in Portugal (1960-1974): the actions, actors and repercussions of the Art, Industrial Architecture and Industrial Design Nuclei of the National Institute of Industrial Research (INII). Principal Investigator: Maria Helena Souto. Research project funded by Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and co funded by COMPETE.
- ¹² Decreto-Lei nº 42.120, Decreto nº 42.121, «Diário do Governo», I série – nº 19 (23 de Janeiro), 1959.
- ¹³ Cf. Lei nº 2089, «Diário do Governo», I série – nº 133 (8 de Junho), 1957, p. 595.
- ¹⁴ M.H. Souto, *Design in Portugal (1960-1974): the actions, actors and repercussions of the Art, Industrial Architecture and Industrial Design Nuclei of the National Institute of Industrial Research (INII)*, Newsletter Design History Society, 2013, <[www.designhistorysociety.org/features/design_in_portugal_\(1960-1974\).html](http://www.designhistorysociety.org/features/design_in_portugal_(1960-1974).html)>.
- ¹⁵ *Exposição internacional Industrial Design*, Lisboa, Ministério da Economia – INII, 1965.
- ¹⁶ *Tradução das conferências proferidas durante a 1ª Quinzena de Estética Industrial*, Lisboa, Ministério da Economia – INII, 1966, p. 1.
- ¹⁷ M.H. Souto, *Design em Portugal*, Enciclopédia Temática Portugal Moderno. Artes e Letras, Lisboa, Portugal Moderno, 1992, p. 101.
- ¹⁸ *1ª Exposição de Design Português*, Lisboa, INII, 1971, p. 115.
- ¹⁹ A. Malraux, *O Museu Imaginário* (1965), Lisboa, Edições 70, 2000, p. 205.
- ²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 108.
- ²¹ G. Adamson, G. Riello, S. Teasley, *Global Design History*, London, Routledge, 2011, p. 6.
- ²² P. Moscati (ed.), *Virtual Museums and Archeology. The Contribution of the Italian National Research Council*, «Archeologia e Calcolatori», Milano, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche – Dipartimento Patrimonio Culturale, 2007, p. 221.



A tale of two cities: nineteenth-century engravings of the a) Jerónimos Monastery, Lisbon, b) Crystal Palace, Oporto; photos of the c) International Exhibition of Industrial Design (1965) at the Foz Palace, Lisbon, d) Foz Palace, e) 1st Portuguese Design Exhibition (1971) at the Stock Exchange Palace, Oporto

Per capire una città bisogna conoscere e studiare ciò che mostra e ciò che nasconde, ciò che è evidente e ciò che è opaco, ciò che è visibile e ciò che è invisibile.

La città risponde allo sguardo interno dei suoi abitanti – già vario per condizioni socioeconomiche e culturali – e a quello esterno di chi la visita per turismo, dei pendolari per lavoro o per studio, dei *city users*, degli immigrati.

Una pluralità di soggetti seleziona punti di vista diversi sui modi di utilizzare gli spazi della città, di fruire dei suoi servizi, di partecipare alla sua vita sociale, e definisce diverse modalità di valutarla, immaginarla, se si vuole di amarla. Ciò che è visibile allo sguardo di alcuni è escluso dall'orizzonte di quello di altri: c'è una città invisibile per molti e non tutti vedono la città allo stesso modo.

Dal 12 al 14 settembre 2013 si è svolto a Catania, presso il Monastero dei Benedettini, il VI congresso dell'Associazione Italiana di Storia Urbana dal titolo *Visibile/Invisibile. Percepire la città tra descrizioni e omissioni*.

Il congresso ha offerto una proficua e intensa occasione di incontro e di scambio tra gli storici che pongono al centro della propria riflessione il tema della città. L'obiettivo di questa pubblicazione è quello di custodire la ricchezza e la molteplicità di temi d'indagine, approcci metodologici, punti di vista e spunti per la ricerca, progetti e lavori in corso proposti nel congresso. Si è pensato allora di costruire un contenitore che preservasse la memoria di quell'incontro, la varietà degli argomenti discussi nelle sessioni parallele, le poliedriche declinazioni del tema proposto. Occorreva non perdere i frutti di un momento così fecondo, lasciando un segno visibile e fruibile del lavoro intellettuale prodotto da quei giorni di discussione.

SALVATORE ADORNO

è professore associato di Storia contemporanea presso il Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche dell'Università di Catania.



GIOVANNI CRISTINA

è attualmente "Marie Curie Post-doc Fellow" al Centre de Recherches Historiques all'EHESS di Parigi.



ARIANNA ROTONDO

è ricercatrice di Storia del cristianesimo e delle chiese presso il Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche dell'Università di Catania.

