

Beyond the gaze

Interpreting and understanding the city

AISU Aisu International
Associazione Italiana
di Storia Urbana

Università
degli Studi
di Ferrara

DA Dipartimento
Architettura
Ferrara

Oltre lo sguardo. Interpretare e comprendere la città

11th AISU Congress September 13-16 Ferrara 2023

Macrosessions

For information relating to the Congress write to the email address ferrara2023@aisuinternational.net



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1. The measured and quantified city

Marta Calzolari (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Luca Mocarelli* (Università di Milano Bicocca, Dipartimento di Economia, metodi quantitativi e strategie d'impresa), *Donatella Strangio* (Sapienza Università di Roma, Dipartimento Metodi e Modelli per l'Economia, il Territorio e la Finanza), *Guido Zucconi* (Università Iuav di Venezia)

The measured city marks an epochal shift from a romantic-impressionistic attitude to a systematic one: now the observer's gaze tends to be increasingly based on quantitative investigations concerning numerous aspects of urban centers and their functioning. The city thus becomes a field of study for physicians, economists, scientists, and also for new specialists such as statisticians, sociologists, and anthropologists: this way of observing is reflected not only in the numbers and graphs contained in surveys, but also in journalistic reports (often conceived as essays on sociology), often influencing the field of fiction (the Italian "verismo") and photography (with the so-called "palombari").

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- Birth of parcel registers and other fiscal instruments
- Demographic, economic, health, and environmental surveys
- Surveys of mobility flows with related cartography
- Portraits of cities between photography and verist literature

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2. Plural perceptions. Unexpected subjects and gazes on the city

Benedetta Caglioti (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Rachele Dubbini* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici), *Francesca Romana Fiano* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici), *Orsetta Giolo* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Giurisprudenza)

Perception is the act of becoming aware of a considered external reality through sensory stimuli, analyzed and interpreted through an intuitive, psychic and intellectual process. It is an active phenomenon, both individual and collective, suspended between holding and shaping the existing, between public and private spheres, between imaginaries and stereotypes, between complexity and simplification, with resulting repercussions in the social and political spheres. Perceiving precedes interpreting and attributing meanings and values to everything that makes up and determines the city. The multiplicity and variety of gazes, in this sense, enriches the outcome of interpretation with meanings, due to the inclusion of the point of view of all subjects and going beyond the distinction between relevant and marginal perceptions. The macro-session is open to different methodological approaches and involves both issues of law, primarily those of equality and universality of rights, and those of cultural heritage, namely its fruition, education, inclusion and sustainability. The aim is to investigate, from the centrality of perception, the different modes of interaction and relationship with urban reality (ancient and contemporary) and the practices of subjectification or subjugation that take shape in cities.

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- Perception and interpretation: the construction of cultural value
- Subjectification and subjection in urban spaces
- The universal in the city: cultural inclusion and fruition
- Right to the city, rights in the city
- Urban spaces in the gender perspective
- Perception and memory
- Mindscapes and virtual reality
- Perceiving history: the relationship between heritage and community
- Imaginaries and stereotypes in the city between complexity and simplification

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3. The city of functions

Olimpia Di Biase (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Ludovica Galeazzo* (Università degli Studi di Padova, Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali), *Antonello Stella* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura)

The functional nature of cities refers as much to a spatial dimension as to the cultural, political, economic and social relations that can be activated there. In this macro-session, the polysemous nature of functional processes related to the spatial dimension of the city should emerge through the investigation and presentation of case studies (also in comparative form) in a broad perspective: from the historical to the contemporary city. In particular, the topic will be approached from a transdisciplinary perspective, investigating the functional aspects of the city and the relationships between infrastructures and the built environment.

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- Urban infrastructures (functional pathways)
- The spaces of public functions (celebratory, sacred)
- The functional hubs of the urban system (squares, financial centers, commercial centers, industrial hubs, etc.)
- The specialized cities (art, university, sacred, tourist, multifunctional cities)

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4. The city as a living environment: practices, feelings, perceptions of the urban culture

Andrea Baravelli (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici), *Giovanni Cristina* (Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Dipartimento di Filosofia, Comunicazione e Spettacolo), *Marco Folin* (Università di Genova, Dipartimento Architettura e Design)

Since ancient times, the city has been perceived as a peculiar living environment, distinguished from the surrounding territories by a series of quite specific dynamics, phenomena, and characters. Going beyond the gaze, then, also means trying to grasp that fabric of relationships, affects, perceptions – at times intangible, but also very tangible – that each generation has experienced as typical of its own time.

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- Sound and the city: soundscapes, the places for music, voices and noises in the city
- Times and rhythms of city life: perception of change, places of memory, sense of the present and the horizon of the future
- Urban detectability: signs, boundaries, landmarks and orientation in the city
- Places and practices of dwelling: settlement geographies, domestic spaces, neighborhood practices
- The city and generations: topographies and histories of intergenerational exchange, trends, and conflicts
- Sentimental geographies: the city and emotions, family relationships, the affectivity of places
- The construction of city identity: rhetorics of belonging, forms and practices of citizenship, mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion, the spaces of politics and the places of urban sociability

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5. Narratives and rhetorics of the city

Alfredo Alietti (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici), *Elena Dorato* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Romeo Farinella* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura)

The relationship between cities and the future has historically defined and redefined the boundaries of humanity's social, economic and cultural progress. Cities have always been confronted with ideas of the future that can promote changes in political and governance dynamics, socio-economic structures and the broad field of cultural and artistic processes, representing the "future society" in its articulation and complexity. If utopian narratives of ideal cities described a society based on rationality with no apparent spatiotemporal connection to the present, urban dystopias interpret existing trends dominated by disorder, totalitarianism, alienation, homogenization, and injustice to the extreme. Reasoning about contemporary visions of an eco-technological urban future becomes possible today only through the interaction between different historical, urban planning, and social disciplines that can find plausible answers in the past and present.

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- Power and cities
- Rights and inequality
- Environmental and spatial justice
- Rhetorics and communicative systems
- Ethics and technics
- Bodies and organisms
- Energy and technology

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6. The city as an object of representations

Emanuela Garofalo (Università degli Studi di Palermo, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Manuela Incerti* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Massimiliano Savorra* (Università di Pavia, Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile ed Architettura), *Ines Tolic* (Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Dipartimento delle Arti)

With different tools, techniques and media, the city has been represented with and through images for centuries: first through maps, cartographies, paintings, drawings, prints, and later also through photographs, cinema, videos, comics, video games, and various multimedia devices. The macro-session thus understands the city as the subject of a specific production of images and visual narratives, which are being disseminated with growing rapidity and extensiveness, also thanks to the development of increasingly refined technologies. By means of an articulated complex of sessions and adopting a multidisciplinary approach characteristic of urban history, the macro-session aims to return to a reflection on the city in relation to its many possible representations by welcoming submissions related to all historical periods. Placing itself in the balance between history and project, this macrosession is also aimed at scholars of the more current contemporaneity, identifying paradigms and issues in the present era that are more rarely addressed with a critical-historical approach. In such cases, proponents are invited to suggest, contextually to the session's content, a working methodology as well, articulated around specific case studies or themes instead of generic analyses or long-term articulations. Beyond any impressionistic reading, the macro-session aims to reflect on the most pressing issues concerning the relationship between the city and its representations including, for example: How do representations, from cartography to digital twins, contribute to the construction of the city? What role do viewpoints related to the space of graphic representation play in the process of analysis and knowledge? What practices, actors, and media contribute to the visual definition of the city and its history? What role do the manipulations, reuses, and contaminations introduced by users of images play?

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- The visual narrative of the city and its impact on the built environment
- Methods of representing the city between history and design
- Manipulations, uses and reuses of urban images
- Design drawing between the history of representation and survey
- The city and viewpoints in the space of graphic representation
- City images, rhetorics and identity constructions
- Authors and processes of city representations

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7. The making of the city: stories, processes, substrata

Veronica Balboni (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Rita Fabbri* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Marco Mulazzani* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Giorgia Sala* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Renata Samperi* (Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Architettura), *Stefano Zaggia* (Università degli Studi di Padova, Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, Edile e Ambientale)

Cities are layered and open structures, the outcome of processes that, in their making, produce organisms made up of different parts and characterized by a multiplicity of images. The macro-session aims to solicit reflections on the city in order to grasp the complexity underlying its image, paying attention to the formative and transformative processes that define its physical entity. Such an understanding requires interdisciplinary approaches, in order to foster synergies between different points of view, and investigations at different scales, from the urban whole to detailed elements. The goal of the proposed research scope is to reveal and tell, through the analysis of aspects and components of the city landscape, stories of things, phenomena, and people, unfolding knowledge and memory perspectives for the future.

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- Substrata of the city: infrastructure, networks, routes
- Forms of the city: spontaneous, planned, entropic
- Cultural contexts, actors and strategies of patronage
- Methods, places and procedures of city design and construction
- The part for the whole: streets, squares, urban corners
- Between nature and artifice: spaces and organization of greenery and water

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8. The expanded and the shrunken city

Monica Esposito (Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, Dipartimento di Architettura e Disegno industriale), *Elena Manzo* (Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, Dipartimento di Architettura e Disegno industriale), *Massimiliano Savorra* (Università di Pavia, Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile ed Architettura)

Which historical architectures, which memories of life, which spaces – notably, industrial – have influenced contemporary transformations? In a city's history, the moments of founding, growth and eventual decline are never really disjointed. However, frequently, the reflections on the urban structure of periodical phases of decline – on an architectural or spatial scale – are often ignored in their reflections and community spaces; this is even more evident in those cities linked to industrial or post-industrial phenomena. In the different typologies of behavior, on the other hand, it is possible to identify some lines of evolution that seem cross-cutting with respect to the specifics of individual settlements, and thus inherently recognizable as constants related to the theme of the expansion/contraction. So much so that they represent open grounds for reflection and confrontation, where what should be questioned is not so much the transition from the industrial economy to a post-industrial city, but rather the ways and cultural approach to preserving the sense of historical heritage while reevaluating it.

More specifically, the macro-session includes (but is not limited to) the following themes:

- Fluid cities, continuous cities, thematic cities, patchwork cities, globalization and deindustrialization, shrinking cities, dense cities, nomadic cities, fringe cities
- Places of inclusion, ghettos, suburbs and conurbations

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