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- Q8** **Bernardo Secchi. Libri e piani**, a cura di Cristina Renzoni e Maria Chiara Tosi
- Q9** **Utopia and the Project for the City and Territory**, a cura di Luca Velo e Michela Pace

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On cover: detail from Bernardo Secchi's preparatory notes for a cycle of lessons about the role of Utopia in Urbanism (November-December 1991). Courtesy of Annacarla, Maralessandra and Piercesare Secchi, p. 117.

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utopia and the project for the city and territory

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Q9 utopia and the project for the city and territory

utopia and the project for the city and territory

Luca Velo, Michela Pace eds.

*Quelle che ho offe en debbeno domandare & se questi olumnon
 hanno sufficienti e hanno state convenientemente interpretate*

*Faremo questo come Italo confontando le situazioni reali
 a ~~quattro~~ una serie di "altre" ipotesi realiste e
 loro ipotesi. ipotesi realiste e ipotesi non costruttive
 un offrono ma se estremo di un'intervallo quelle che
 interessano tra le idee e i fatti tra le nostre pratiche cogu-
tive e immaginative & le pratiche sociali*

*"Le utopie spesso - ha detto haussmann - non sono altro che
 vere prattiche" [quelle "spesso" non ci da alcuna funzione]*

*In questo intervallo conclusivo di estremo con due stadipe
 - quella degli esempi che mostrano gli discorsi del recupero
 & del problema*

*- quella della ri-forma urbana, nelle sue offrono fatti
 e alberi pura richiamate utopia / buona / unito / colocali
~~deliberata~~ utopia / emergenza / nostalgia
inspiratione*

This volume explores the multifaceted aspects of Utopia, considered as an “extreme effort in imagination”. This approach implies a survey of the most powerful criticisms of the exiting as a possible alternative to approach urbanism. An effort able to conceptualize the city, the territory and the society against new backgrounds in order to understand the future. The reflection on Utopia investigates the need to find a stronger and more flexible language, adequate to describe the complexity of the different elements of the contemporary. The urban project should reaffirm its role as critical tool amongst actors and places, being a ground for representation and confrontation to finally contribute the exploration of reality. After today's growing crisis and uncertainties in democracy, economy and society new challenges are established. They need to be understood through investigation and construction of innovative and original devices. Utopia, as for Bernardo Secchi, is a specific mode developed by the Western culture to imagine the future, with the elaboration of the city and its design at its centre. Urbanism reflects on the best of possible worlds, not in an abstract way but, in Bernardo Secchi's words, through the immersion of a wide number of practices and the conscious modification of the city and territory. Referring to the 500th anniversary of the publication of Utopia by Thomas More, this book is a collection of essays, scientifically peer reviewed by a network of scholars and academics in urbanism. They were originally presented in the first Bernardo Secchi's Study Day in November 2016, and sponsored by the Doctorate School of Architecture, City and Design. The event took place at the Iuav University of Venice, the same school he taught for many years becoming a reference for several student generations.

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Turgut Cansever in Istanbul, Identity and Utopia of Urban Design

Eliana Martinelli

THE POLYCENTRIC URBAN MODEL

Since 1957 Turgut Cansever starts working on the Istanbul Master Plan with Luigi Piccinato, criticizing the previous Prost plan for the city (1936-1951). The first project, with whom begin a fruitful collaboration between the Italian urban planner and the Turkish administrations, is that for the satellite city of Ataköy (1956-59), which provides a complex system of accommodating and bathing facilities, separated from the residential area by a coastal road (Malusardi 1993). Together with Piccinato, Cansever plans the development of several satellite cities to enable the distribution of services and population on the territory, preserving the historic peninsula from the construction of imposing traffic routes, which were instead proposed, and partly implemented, by the Prost plan.

According to Cansever, the reference for the future layout of the city, in anticipation of population growth, lies in the past, precisely in the Ottoman cities. Until the late nineteenth century, what today is a single city consisted of three independent centralities, Istanbul, Galata and Pera; it was 'triune', as Le Corbusier wrote in 1911 (Le Corbusier 1974). In addition to these, there were the holy city of Eyüp and the villages on the Bosphorus, in a hierarchy of independent centralities, nevertheless acting as a unique city. Instead of a centralized system, which would lead, as it happened, to the destruction of architectural heritage, to the pollution and to the property speculation within the historic peninsula, Cansever suggested a multipolar system, in full respect of Istanbul topography, history and especially in regard to the people psychological necessities.

In the Master Plan proposed by Piccinato, Istanbul is represented in the form of three distinct core districts, Stanbul, Beyoğlu and Üsküdar, separated from each other by the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus. The satellite cities are connected to these, and their traffic routes lead into the Istanbul – Edirne – London highway, the main axis of the national highway system (Malusardi 1993). According to the two urban planners, thanks to such a traffic planning strategy, it is possible not to undermine the historical city centre with further demolitions, developing at the same time an open urban model, able to extend itself through a multiplication of centralities, in anticipation of a demographic increase.

The advantage of this solution is demonstrated by some Cansever's sketches, describing different possible developments of the city of Istanbul. For Cansever, however, the polycentric model is much more than an operational choice: it represents the possibility of reconstituting the urban identity of Istanbul, built model of the Ottoman city, rediscovering in the meantime a cultural and social identity, deeply in crisis in Turkey at that time. The architect talks about a 'relational pattern' (Cansever 2010) between the various urban areas.

Between 1965 and 1966, Cansever carries out a careful historical analysis of the transition period at the time of the *Tanzimat*¹ (1839-1876), during which Istanbul modernized and demographically grew, having simultaneously to tackle the problem of transportations and connections between various districts. Since then, Beyoğlu became the new cultural centre of the city, while the Golden Horn switched from recreational centre to storage area for goods deriving from shipping. Starting from this analysis, the architect tries to answer to the needs imposed by the contingent increase of population, that according to his predictions, proved to be realistic, could have reached the number of about six million inhabitants by 1985 (*ibidem*) and then grown again. In the report Cansever highlights



Comparison between the different developments for Istanbul (Cansever, 1981, p.79). Courtesy Cansever family.

the opportunity to build, on the opposite sides of the Bosphorus, two different but functionally autonomous settlements that minimize the need to cross the sea straight, in order to avoid the construction of other bridges, and consequently of other roads and railways.

In pointing out the potential of Istanbul, Cansever also draws attention to the various seas that border the city, each with its own climatic and natural conditions, which can give rise to different types of recreational activities, necessary to make the settlements economically self-sufficient.

The architect identifies some strategies for the correct planning of the territory, such as the separation of residential areas, located into the natural landscape and driven by socio-cultural activities, from the districts hosting other collective functions. In the contemporary city this is reflected in a separation between residential neighbourhoods, supported by recreational activities, and business and productive districts, in line with Piccinato's idea for the future layout of the city.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE CITY

The collaboration with Luigi Piccinato continues during the '70s, when Cansever, as the head of the Greater Istanbul Planning Authority, promoted the General Planning and Urban Development Study (1974-75). In the same years the Turkish government entrusted Piccinato with the task of advisor for the studies of the Istanbul Metropolitan Area Plan, to be carried out in coordination with the Ministry of the Regional Planning of Marmara (Malusardi 1993). Probably thanks to this long period of collaboration, the two designers matured a relationship of mutual estimation and friendship.



Position of the pedestrianization project areas within the historical peninsula. Image elaborated by the author.

During the period of direction of the Planning Authority Cansever works, as Piccinato had already done, on the satellite city of Ataköy, planning a business centre next to the Yeşilköy International Airport, within a park of about three hundred hectares, in order to move the economic engine of the city outside of the ancient town (Cansever 1981). Among the other urban projects, the most remarkable are those for the settlements along the Marmara Sea coast (1976-78). In the private archive of the Cansever family were found in particular two: one for the stretch between Haydarpaşa and Bostancı on the Asian side, the other for the Yeşilköy-Bakırköy district on the European side.

The planning programs also include a series of pedestrianization projects (1976-78), strongly supported by Cansever, that assume importance if assessed in the overall rehabilitation of the Istanbul's open spaces. In this sense, Cansever's project for Beyazıt Square (1958-61), the first pedestrianization project in Turkey, anticipated an intent, which later revealed an organic character. From the archive research, two other pedestrianization projects resulted, in addition to that for the Beyazıt area: one for the square overlooking the New Mosque (*Yeni Cami*), the other for an area interposed between the Mosque of Mihrimah and that of Kariye, near the Edirne gate. From these plans, it is readable the intention to promote, through the ousting of vehicles, the preservation of certain areas of the city, which have a great historical significance and at the same a strategic importance for their position. The first indeed is located in front of the Galata bridge, the oldest bridge on the Golden Horn; the second is near the most important gate of the ancient city.

Considering the three pedestrian projects as a whole, we could say that Cansever works exactly at the main points of access to the historical Peninsula, for those coming from East or West. The two directions, while not easily detectable for the dense stratification of Istanbul, converge on a pivot represented by Beyazıt Square, centrally located in the

ancient city. Even today, these three areas are unsolved places of the city, which have lost their representative and identity aspect, especially because of the numerous demolitions incurred over time.

CONSERVATION AND DESIGN

In the same context, the gentrification proposals for the historical settlements of Süleymaniye, Zeyrek, Eyüp and Ayasofya are relevant, especially for the idea that 'design' and 'conservation', 'construction' and 'reconstruction' are actually inseparable concepts. For Cansever indeed, the theme of 'conservation' includes not only the preservation of remains of architectural heritage, but also the rebuilding of social and cultural relational patterns that have been lost, through the reconstruction of the city's architecture².

Many of these proposals are developed together with the architect and professor Nezih Eldem (1921-2005). Cansever and Nezih Eldem's architecture students take part in these projects, which are real field researches, with advice from the UNESCO representatives. Among others, the most remarkable is the rehabilitation project for the area between Sultanahmet and Hagia Sophia, in which several morphological and functional units, constituting sub-areas within the whole neighbourhood, are identified. For each one is proposed a different type of intervention, which takes into account the specific formal and functional characteristics.

In particular, according to the Conservation and Development Plan promoted by the Department of Monuments and Sites, the wooden houses of Soğukçeşme Street are considered monuments of great historical interest, as they represent some of the few remaining examples of ancient housing architecture in Istanbul. The particular position of these buildings, leaning against the wall of Palazzo Topkapı and facing the wall of the kitchens of Hagia Sophia, makes them unique examples, giving the idea, even perceptual, of the nineteenth century Istanbul and of a particular dialectic, among stone monuments and wooden houses.

The research team composed by these architects will not unfortunately be able to carry out the project, which will be instead implemented on the initiative of Çelik Gülersoy in 1985-86, on behalf of the Touring Club Otomobil. Today this road is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but in its own way, it remains a place excluded from the city, mostly experienced by wealthy tourists, who stay here. The realization and the latest restoration did not deserve the great research work carried out by Turkish architects during the 1970s, studying a possible rehabilitation of this area in a perspective of overall reuse of the neighbourhood. The research team at the Istanbul Technical University, led by Nezih Eldem, proposed to host some art exhibitions and exhibition spaces that represented the complexity of cultures within the same neighbourhood, using the complex of buildings around the madrasa as a hostel. The approach was oriented to the reorganization of the area, in order to avoid the building speculation (Eldem, Kamil, Yücel 1980). Even from an architectural point of view, the current pastel colours and the choice of finishes partially refer to the traditional Turkish house, but at the same time are reproduced with a fetishist attitude. Conservation and reconstruction, for Cansever as for Eldem, was not intended to return a postcard image, but to rebuild an urban and social pattern that would give rise to persistent interactions over time.

CONCLUSIONS

Writing about Cansever's urban planning projects for Istanbul is an opportunity to contextualize his overall thought, which range from architecture to urbanism, and remains strictly consistent with the reality of the urban facts, while being attributable to an utopian and partially idealistic conception of the past.

If, on the one hand, the project produces knowledge and it is therefore difficult to separate it from the social sciences (Viganò 2010), on the other hand it can be also a producer of consciousness. In the proposals in question, which face the identity crisis of a city becoming a metropolis, the issue of building awareness of the architectural heritage is central. According to Cansever, the strategies for the urban project in Istanbul should not lose sight of two needs: the

first, to re-qualify the monuments and the small urban fabric, so that the citizens themselves will be aware of it; the second one is to transmit to the future generations the responsibility of a conscious project, looking at architectural and urban solutions that make buildings of different ages able to co-exist in harmony.

The planning programs directed by Cansever were never implemented, for their complexity but also for political disagreements. However, the urban projects in question, which are not well-known in a Turkey where demolition is more common than conservation, tell us of an aspect of utopian innovation deriving from the collective cultural premises. In this sense, it is evocative what Bernardo Secchi wrote in the afterword of the volume *Fare Utopia*:

Necessitiamo di progetti radicali, che esprimano i cambiamenti radicali della società, dell'economia, del vivere quotidiano, come dello 'stare insieme' alle diverse scale. Abbiamo bisogno forse anche di utopia, di esplorare i futuri possibili abbandonando i luoghi comuni. Abbiamo bisogno di sollecitare gli immaginari collettivi, senza abbandonare la memoria del passato, ma rileggendolo alla luce del cambiamento (Bilotta, et. al 2012, 163).

Notes:

1. "Literally 'reorganization', it is a period of reformation of the Ottoman state, which begins and ends in the nineteenth century. This period was characterized by an attempt to modernize the state." (Cansever 2005) Translation by the author.

2. Observations taken from an unpublished writing by T. Cansever, titled *Legislation, Effects and Roles in Conservation*, found in the private archive of the Cansever family in Istanbul. Beirut: the image and the mask.

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