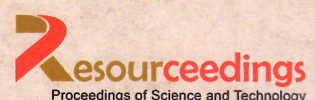


Antonella Vesaci, Francesco Alberti, Marta Seera, Nabil Mohareb,
Sreetheran Maruthaveeran *Editors*

Cities' Identity Through Architecture and Arts

Proceedings of Cities' Identity Through Architecture
and Arts (CITAA) 3rd Edition, Pisa, Italy, 2019





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Identity and evidence

Claudio Zanirato

Architecture Division of the University of Florence

Keywords

Impulses, transformation, identity, evidences, empty, absences, dissolutions, spontaneity, indifferences;

Abstract

Cities are the fruit of our past and an instrument for building our future: they display the history and culture of a community, they reveal the conditions for economic and social development and they accept, sometimes unwittingly, the seeds of change that become evident over time.

So the cities are equidating multiple identities, at least how many are the souls that compose them and some are even "imagination" and all together they contribute to define a "brand".

The dimensions of the cities vary, but the self-identifying phenomena remain the same: Milan as a European metropolis (Figures 1-3) and Bologna as a middle regional city (figures 4-5) give us clear examples of what is happening.

Introduction

The recognisability is linked to the difference, the non-approval of all the places. So the urban identity is determined by the correlation between the differences, hence the unique originality of each city. The relational space of the contemporary city is a kind of flexible territory, devoid of figurative recognizability, but full of service potentialities. It follows that the contemporary social complexity generates the proliferation of a multitude of identities, in turn carrying expressions of self-representation, for which it is determined a typological explosion that tends more and more to escape the Habitual classifications, configuring a city as summation of independent and often contrasting elements.

But the contemporary city also sees in the continuous change and more and more accelerated the search for its own identity, in the provisional, in the figuration of a sort of "programmed chaos".

The Cities express the culture of those who live and inhabited them: the globalization of homing, is true, but also pushes to accentuate diversity and identity as a reaction against. It also loosened the reports of identification of economic entities with the city, seen as simple management and infrastructural support of activities largely dependent on the outside. Therefore, the interactions between the cities acquire intensity not so much from the reciprocal distance but increasingly from the respective specializations, so a city can entertain multiple functional relationships and need as many identities. On the other hand, it increases the need for cities to establish themselves as poles of attraction both for capital and for individuals, and this should involve the accentuation of the characters of the place: more than its reality becomes important the image of the city "offer".

Conclusion

Faced with increasingly complex contemporary cities, with extremely complex communication systems, architectural spaces tend to level out to a single "a-type". The trend towards abandoning typologies, witnessed in recent years, can be seen as a crisis of models, which have been given precedence over architecture, or as the birth of new models, possibly using hybridization. Model production occurs when hybridization is consolidated after frequent repetitions in different contextual conditions. Hybridization arises from the coexistence of different functions and typologies. In consolidated cities these produce a stratified complexity; in more recent cities they give rise to horizontal sequences of combinations.

In the past, when the concept of "place" was studied, research focused on identity and uniqueness and highlighted differences. Today, an identity is always sought for non-places, but it is no longer unique, because non-places are designed by analogy and similarities. Their architecture has an undefined outline, a vague, random shape and an extreme fluidity of internal-external space. The non-place has an architecture of additions

that extends outwards; a communion with nature takes place on its external boundaries in flexible, elastic, transition spaces, neglected conformations that determine the contemporary landscape.

Some contemporary atopies are indifferent to their site. This generates detachment: detachment from the ground, uprooting and alienation from the place. The undifferentiated dispersion of the built-up parts results in the dis-identification of undeveloped areas.

It should be noted however that uniform, repetitive building types also correspond to the homogeneity of how and when space is used, so we can deduce that the identity of these places is to be attributed to the uniqueness of the contained behaviors, in a tendency towards spontaneous self-exclusion. On an urban scale, these attitudes take shape in the poetics of the object: this explains why we understand the construction of the city as a set of objects, why we underline the symbolism of the building and the inter-relationships between the buildings. In the past architecture confronted the heroic intentions of representation and of political projects, but today it has to confront the banality of everyday life: architecture has passed from the need to represent, to the constraint of metamorphosis.

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It is easy to identify a city's identity by looking at its architecture. Architecture is the platform where all cultural, historical and economic monuments meet. With each city's unique identity, the impact is left and history made. Similarly, traditions represent a critical piece of our culture and identity. They help form the structure and foundation of our families and our society. They identify the part of a history that defines our past, shapes who we are today and who we are likely to become. Once we ignore the meaning of our traditions, we're in danger of damaging the underpinning of our identity.

The identity of cities has become a serious issue for many countries at present, so that the role of organizations and governments has become to maintain and fix architectural buildings to save their heritage. For this reason, IEREK has organized the international conference on "Cities' Identity Through Architecture and Arts".

This conference will talk about how historical cities are to change in the future and how architecture and arts are to be preserved. It will also discuss the city's self-identity, how this identity could be affected over the upcoming years as well as how the architecture of a city and contemporary arts could affect the identity of a city.

This conference will, also increase awareness of the importance of conserving architectural monuments and arts. IEREK, through this conference, aims to gather research and exchange knowledge from different perspectives and views on the different ways through which architecture and contemporary arts are developed.

Also, IEREK seeks to emphasize the basis of urban development and identities as well as investigating the diverse approaches taken in both fields; architecture and contemporary art.



Identity And Evidence

Claudio Zanirato

Architecture Division of the University of Florence

Keywords

Impulses, transformation, identity, evidences, empty, absences, dissolutions, spontaneity, indifferences;

Abstract

The recognisability is linked to the difference, the non-approval of all the places. So the urban identity is determined by the correlation between the differences, hence the unique originality of each city. The relational space of the contemporary city is a kind of flexible territory, devoid of figurative recognizability, but full of service potentialities. It follows that the contemporary social complexity generates the proliferation of a multitude of identities, in turn carrying expressions of self-representation, for which it is determined a typological explosion that tends more and more to escape the Habitual classifications, configuring a city as summation of independent and often contrasting elements.

But the contemporary city also sees in the continuous change and more and more accelerated the search for its own identity, in the provisional, in the figuration of a sort of "programmed chaos".

The Cities express the culture of those who live and inhabited them: the globalization of homing, is true, but also pushes to accentuate diversity and identity as a reaction against. It also loosened the reports of identification of economic entities with the city, seen as simple management and infrastructural support of activities largely dependent on the outside. Therefore, the interactions between the cities acquire intensity not so much from the reciprocal distance but increasingly from the respective specializations, so a city can entertain multiple functional relationships and need as many identities. On the other hand, it increases the need for cities to establish themselves as poles of attraction both for capital and for individuals, and this should involve the accentuation of the characters of the place: more than its reality becomes important the image of the city "offer".

So the cities are equidating multiple identities, at least how many are the souls that compose them and some are even "imagination" and all together they contribute to define a "brand". The dimensions of the cities vary, but the self-identifying phenomena remain the same: Milan as a European metropolis (Figures 1-3) and Bologna as a middle regional city (figures 4-5) give us clear examples of what is happening.

1. Impulses and transformation

Cities are the fruit of our past and an instrument for building our future: they display the history and culture of a community, they reveal the conditions for economic and social development and they accept, sometimes unwittingly, the seeds of change that become evident over time.

The history of cities should not be seen as a succession of unrelated episodes, despite instances of apparent discontinuity, but rather as a continuous dynamic process, the complex outcome of a stratification of events in which the urban organism is living proof of its constant, existential capacity for re-inventing itself, for re-proposing itself with a radically different format. Cities have never been totally defined objects in themselves and only rarely have they expressed the principle of a formal, voluntary order.

The current urban crisis is in large part due to the ever-increasing lack of attention given to form, and to the unstoppable flight from the classic model which focussed on the centre. This crisis is responsible for the decline of the modern city, and it may usher in the era of the post-modern city, where the sense of centre is distributed along the many nodes of an unpredictable network.

The city has long ceased to exist as a cohesive entity derived from a gradual accumulation over time; rather it seems to be the fruit of its temporal disarticulation, made up of continual discontinuity. Today's city is no longer a city, it is no longer a stratification but a summation; it is no longer made of places but simply of spaces; it is no longer a place of community but a haphazard intermingling of inhabitants. Furthermore the lack of recurring elements in urban areas makes it inevitable that project designs are isolated and unrelated; it is impossible to conceive an urban project in modern cities.

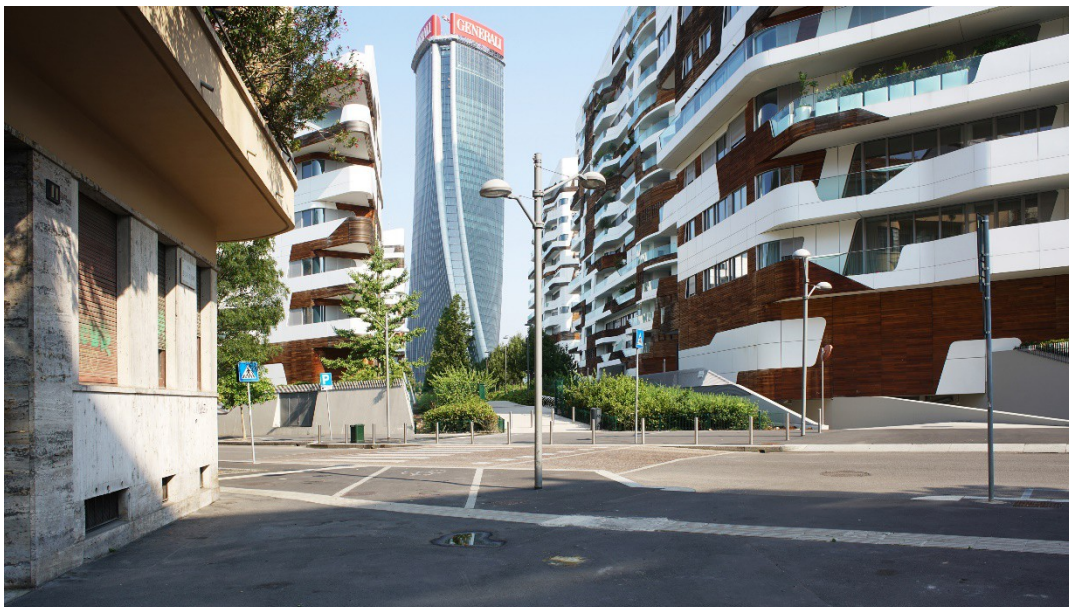
The very different component parts of historical cities are easily identified, but can still be amalgamated in a unitary whole; in contemporary cities, where the various parts are very similar, the overall view is so chaotic that it makes urban contexts confusing, with the sole exception of their historic centres which remain easily recognizable.

Contemporary cities are incoherent conglomerates of functions without structures, the fortuitous result of a myriad of isolated decisions, rather than urban organizations. Physical proximity is increasingly irrelevant for accessing, consuming and participating; this detracts meaning from the city which is no longer seen as a palimpsest of the rationalization and overall manifestation of social relations. This means that network and dedicated interconnections tend to have the upper hand over local interdependencies as factors driving urban development, to the point where the city, considered as a community with a limited territorial base, loses cohesion. Metropolitan areas are therefore increasingly inhabited by people who tend to dialogue with the outside world, rather than with fellow citizens (there may be dialogue with fellow citizens but without meeting them in person) and this results in groups of people being segregated in smaller and smaller fragments of territory.

So the idea of the city as a cultural accumulation able to infuse its physical nucleus with the power to organize a large portion of subordinate territory, enters into crisis, since the overall cultural structure is no longer physically identified with the city, but with dematerialized information, the new symbol of power. A power that no longer requires a physical location, albeit elsewhere, because it has no need for a physical centre in which to settle and present itself.

Global communication, facilitated by telematics, inevitably makes places, and the architectural forms that characterize them, seem irrelevant because physical sites are no longer needed for communicating, whereas in the past, cities originated as places for meeting and exchanging goods. The contemporary frenetic obsession with time leads to the breaking up of territory, considered to be a field of collective relations, and with it urban identity.

Figure 1 Milano, City Life



The temporal dimension, not the spatial dimension, determine how large cities are constructed: the prevalent unit of measurement is the time required to reach a destination, which means the distance-time binomial prevails over spatial identity. So daily commuter movements which bypass the city nucleus prevail. In so doing they eliminate every centripetal hierarchy and redistribute the main service functions along the boundaries. This creates a fringe city that surrounds an increasingly weak centre: the older established city centre continues to atrophy and is

gradually transformed into a pedestrian-only area dedicated to shopping and entertainment with limited vehicle access.

The central and most esteemed parts of urban systems tend to perform the function of consumption absorption, almost always induced by external factors. This increases the geographical distance between production sites and places supplying/consuming products and services - a territorial displacement between direct economic interests and local society. The unforeseen success of individual mobility and of telecommunications systems, together with a decline in production and the internationalization of distribution, have facilitated the disintegration of the strategic role of cities, based on concepts of accessibility, proximity and variety.

Information is essentially raw material manipulated by post-industrial society, and as such it possesses a symbolic, immaterial capacity that replaces the vital importance of manual activities in the industrial city. This change reconfigures the cities materially. Local identities and urban characteristics tend to be levelled, to promote a vision of the territory that acts as a support for functional systems and as energy to be consumed; the territory as a space for exchange and generalized consumption, where mobility and displacement are exacerbated and the consumer-citizen, socially isolated, is transformed into a competitor.



Figure 1 Milano, Porta Garibaldi

2. Disintegration and indifference

When buildings become independent and the space between them becomes ever larger, a conflict arises between the overall sense, the city of belonging, and the sense of the single artifact. Fragments highlight a lack of unity and demonstrate the contemporary trend to the interrupted, the unfinished, the discontinuous, from which an image of the city as a whole made up of large, incomplete components emerges. The concepts of discontinuity, fracture and fragmentation are enhanced once cities are no longer perceived as homogeneous territories.

The contemporary city is therefore seen as a constantly changing open work, the result of a myriad of isolated decisions, whose transformation is stimulated by the habits and lifestyles of those who live there. For centuries sensitivity has been refined around the appearance of a stable image but sensitivity now tends towards unstable, deconstructed images.

In contemporary projects, form no longer structures relationships but dissolves into frenetic, intermittent appearances of disordered images. The cities that are emerging are nothing like the historic city, but they are still "coexisting cities", with their intertwining diversity and contrasting visions.

These simultaneous - and unstable - coexistences support the hypothesis of the city as an event, given the difficulties of defining its form. The ungovernability generated by the constant transformation processes within the built-up area, is such that the only possible resource for redefining the image of the city is a vacuum.

Diffusion is associated with hybridization and a mingling of uses. Horizontal hybridization, favoured by high technology and telework, is characterized by transformations of varying intensity, the result of a myriad of small projects. Vertical hybridization, (which more closely resembles historical cities), is not used.

Urban areas, therefore, are not identified by individual spaces but are articulated in a series of relationships between spaces, which are proposed as shreds of city whose usefulness to urban life is available for individual interpretation. So the city can be seen as a great hybrid landscape, where the heterogeneity and diversity of each of its component islands, distinct parts or fragments that provide a solution for the most varied lifestyles, making it possible for all citizens to have their own city.

The concentration, continuity and closure typical of places, today echo with the rarefaction, discontinuity and opening of non-places: this is changing the destiny of cities. The concept of urban "centre" is also gradually disappearing: cities that have extended beyond their historic limits now have several centres, forced as they are to continuously invent new attractions so as not to collapse dimensionally. If there is no strong centre, then a weak periphery area, from which the centre will try to stand out, may not survive.

Western cities of the new millennium are now facing a pause in their cyclical growth process, which until now has been the most frenetic and uncontrolled development of the modern era. The notion of development no longer coincides with physical expansion: historical cities transform, re-qualify and/or decommission their built environment (especially badly in recent decades) rather than attempting to "conquer" new territories. This is one of the effects of role involution and spatial contraction in many cities brought about by widespread de-industrialization.

Declining population growth allows cities to redefine their boundaries and to redirect their construction efforts towards transforming the existing urban fabric, which is increasingly seen as cultural heritage that deserves to be valorized. An awareness that cities cannot extend *ad infinitum* also tends to make people aware of the value of the existing urban fabric.



Figure 1 Bologna, Trilogia Navile

Figure 1 Bologna, MAST



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