

Reviews

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Metropoli il disegno delle città 2

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After the interest in the themes of the city was reduced at the end of the twentieth century, while at least until the end of the '70s they were so popular, with the new millennium these issues exploded again and today the mutual relationship between *urbs* and *cives*, the physical and the relational reality, the infrastructures and the people are very relevant. In this era everyone is back to talk about the city, not only for its technical and specialized aspects, but also as the site of the survival of humans, therefore a priority. In fact, since the first decade of 2000, for the first time in history, on the planet most men live in the cities than being spread in the territory. Statistics say that by mid-century at least 75% of men will inhabit cities, and their number will rise to almost 10 billion. Probably cities will represent (and perhaps even now they represent) the only 'place' where you can 'live' in a contemporary sense. In the second half of the 20th century, often the city had the problem of not representing the best in quality of life (large population density, complex mobility, noise levels and air quality far from being desirable etc.). But, since the beginning of the digital age, to live in a connected place, equipped with cultural and communication infrastructures, with networks and education, is synonymous with wellness and welfare.

Contrary to what one might imagine twenty or thirty years ago, statistics also say that larger cities grow more than smaller: Metropolises, megalopolises,

megacities will become the privileged (or perhaps the indispensable) place for a good part of humanity. It is not hard to see why, even if the reasons are many and intersecting each other and they are readable only through the complexity that seems to characterize the current phase of the planet's life (Edgar Morin *docet*). Except for a few cases where there is a decline, mainly the big cities of the world are characterized by a growth that seems unstoppable. The shape of the metropolis continuously changes in appearance and substance: the aggregative principles of the new suburbs, the relationship with the centre/centres, the regeneration of compromised parts, the densification of aberrated portions.

Only those who ignore the architecture and its urban role may think that the substance of a constructive mutation does not become an image. Even if these phenomena seem to be globalized and they tend to look alike to each latitude and longitude, in reality European cities differ from Asian ones in their development and those of North America differ from Latin American or Asian ones. This difference draws a dissimilar design in each megacity, not only derived from the morphological matrix, the original system, the morphology of the territory on which it grew, but very much it derives from endogenous paradigms: culture, religion, customs and traditions, that holds different identity settings even in a contemporary and maximized city.

After the first volume named *Metropoli*.

Il disegno delle città, in which Livio Sacchi led us to the main European cities (Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Berlin, Istanbul, Rotterdam, Turin, London, Madrid, Milan, Paris), this second volume takes us to 23 other megacities equally spread around the world: again Europe (Hamburg, Barcelona, Dublin, Helsinki, Lyon, Manchester, Munich, Moscow, Oslo and Stockholm), but also Asia (Dubai, Hong Kong, New Delhi, Beijing, Riyadh, Shanghai), North America (San Francisco and Los Angeles), South America (Bogotá and San Paolo) and Africa (Cairo, Nairobi and Cape Town). For each city, the information is always accompanied by very explanatory graphs and diagrams and provides a clear dimensioning of the planimetric extension of the conurbation, its shape, the number of its inhabitants, and as a result it give the urban information (density in particular) aimed at immediately give a first idea of the specificities and similarities between the different cases.

Almost always there are diagrams to understand the evolution over time of the urban dimension and shape. Generally, the topography of the territory and the presence of the main geographical features (orography, sea, rivers etc.) are compared. Districts, neighbourhoods and number of residents, often divided by ethnicity or origin, immediately show the heterogeneity of these cities, as authentic symbols of the contemporary, made of both globalization and a characteristic uniqueness. Diagrams, illustrations and data are joint with images, renderings and photos of the architectural projects that characterize the last years of development and those that are planned

and/or under development and which currently the metropolis is still debating. All these images also provide a possible representation of the city in terms of communication and image. Much attention is given to transport infrastructures, such as airports, stations, subways, as distinctive features of a large city, which is identified and recognizable by the structures that define its level of efficiency and international context. From the documentation reproduced on the latest urban masterplans, the immediate future is clear as imagined by the communities in terms of urbanization and land consumption. These are the answers that the single cities give to the theme of regeneration and urban organization between concentric or polycentric growths, including organization in dependent or autonomous suburbs. The relationships between urban and population growth, through planned interventions aimed at governing the mere growth in size, tend to improve quality rather than to manage quantity. Very often, specific projects are reported: they aim to combat pollution, or to reduce the risks deriving from rising seas, especially for coastal cities (San Francisco *in primis*). From the comparison between the metropolises, the importance of the demographic flows can be understood, particularly in Arab, African and Asian countries. There, the dimension is 'mega', and the growth influences the sociological aspects due to multi-culture and multi-faith.

Therefore, the city evoked in the book is not ideal, but a plural recognition that highlights the multidirectional tension, even in a globalized world, towards an identity of places as an essential element

of a rediscovered urban 'superiority'. The *2030 Agenda*, whose 17 goals have been signed by 193 countries belonging to the United Nations, defines the objectives that the whole planet and in particular the cities must quickly reach. Thanks to the data collected about environmental aspects of quality of life in the metropolis (air, water, CO2 etc.), we can understand how urban ecology is becoming the 'place' of strategic importance for the political and institutional success of a community that looks to the well-being of its own future.

In conclusion, although the research was carried out on historical even if recent data, a perceptible sense of future transpire from the analysis, making visible the different approaches of the single cities, now in competition with each other, and the upcoming opportunities of their inhabitants. You glimpse their future design: the drawing of cities. Each one is different, each is deeply rooted to their origins, but all are equally moving towards a constant modification: this remains the most challenging thing that cities will have to immediately respond. Only the metropolis that will be able to change, despite the immanence of the structures of which they are made (buildings, networks, infrastructures), and to remain constantly attractive and inspiring, they will be able to compete on the international scene, under penalty of dissipation of the skills brought into play. The countless representations and data presented show that the real challenge will shift from material to intangible relationships, from the physical to relational values, in terms of people's health, opportunities and quality of life.

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