Portraits of lost and possible cities

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Article Information

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Abstract

At present the urban representation is largely entrusted to management of cartographic information by the GIS-Geographic Information System, reduced to a simple archive system of the cartography now currently in use.
But this procedure is very inadequate, because the cities are the result of the passing of time and stratifications of slow changes and projects of radical reform.
Therefore, the urban representation must introduce the time dimension and include also the carto-iconographic historical heritage.
A representation system so extended makes it possible to:
- describe the changes over time of the whole city or of its single sites, as well as the language with which the city itself has built its portrait and has communicated its identity through time;
- favour the preservation and the divulgation of the archival heritage, often scattered in different archives.
The research project "Portraits of cities in an interior" (co-ordinated by the Department of Architectural Design of Milan and to which participate the Universities of Bologna and RomaTre) have the objective to build a portal for an online access to the GIS of the heritage of cartography and iconography of Milan, Bologna and Rome.
The project, currently in progress, thanks to the versatility of the webGIS - that permits to explore a heritage not homogeneous in terms of aims, representation system and scale - is able to create the conditions for knowledge about urban formation, transmittable to the most varied levels (from the specialist studies to the possibility of creating paths dedicated to school users or even to the planning of personalised museum journeys etc.).
Moreover, among the most interesting potentialities there is the application to the definition of the "portraits of lost cities", that is erased by the urban changes and the "portraits of possible cities", consisting in the recomposition of the urban frames that could have derived from the realization of projects which remained on paper, as in the section dedicated to the big transformation projects of the Illuminist and Napoleonic Milan.

1   Introduction

The widespread success of territory visualisation practices such as *Google Earth* or *Bing maps,* to name the most commonly used, demonstrates how nowadays the need of broadening individual perspectives is generalised, coinciding with the usual individual life context.

In the past, things were different, only for a cultured traveller or an expert was it possible to know, and therefore to recognize as his own, wider territories and a bigger world which he could feel part of.

Such a drastic change is the result of an evolutionary process due to the popularization of cartography[1] through printing, as until then, and for many centuries, it had been the fruit of the initiatory knowledge of the court's cartographer and was approachable only by a small circle of privileged people.

The widespread accessibility of maps, following the push towards the *democratisation* and *universalisation* of knowledge that characterised the Age of Enlightenment and together with the practice of the *Grand Tour,* contributed to forging the most cosmopolitan spirit of the European *intelligentia.*

With a similar role such as the one performed by printing, today the computer network has enormously accelerated the widening process of the need for knowledge also in the spatial area. Nevertheless, the visualisation practices mentioned above can only respond to this need in a very superficial way.

As a matter of fact, such systems replace with photographic *images* (at most integrated by toponymic information) what used to be the *description* of places, which was the specific goal of the traditional paper cartographies. Nevertheless, they offer only an unlikely surrogate to real spatial knowledge, founded in the description of the identity of places and of the topologic relations that interconnect them, even if this surrogate is covered by an incredible amount of data, granted by the extremely high definition of the photographic shooting.

Also, in a more specifically technical field, the network represents today the preferred diffusion channel for the territorial information estate, as even in the smaller local administrations the access to the cartographic material happens now almost exclusively by *web*GIS, *Geographic Information System,* the structure of which is that of a *database,* increasable without limits over time.

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[1] *Regarding the role of printing in the democratisation process see: E. Eisenstein [1]. In contrast, an openly critical analysis of the process of replacing the physical reality of places with their description on the printed map, maintaining that this was a purely political process with specifically authoritarian, was produced by F. Farinelli [2].*

Nevertheless even within this area dedicated to users which are supposed to be technically qualified, we see an under use of the cognitive possibilities of this means, since it is reduced to a bare filing and automatic distribution system for the maps currently in use, that can be downloaded in different versions and/or printable formats.

But this quantitative and qualitative richness of the current cartographic production – which has replaced paper, intended as a unique document, with an integrated system of multiple mapping – is only apparent, since it reduces the represented object, the city and the territory, to a purely spatial phenomenon, omitting to consider its peculiar nature as a product of historical stratification and to recognise, along the time coordinate, permanency lines and changes, which are signalled by the tracks imprinted in an indelible way in the shape of places by events sometimes very far away in time, but the effects of which remain engraved as tattoos on the live skin of the urban soul.

On the contrary, digital cartography, if it is extended to include also the historical carto-iconographical heritage of a city, can constitute a truly new representation system, able to build not only the spatial description of places, but also to introduce the time dimension, joining and making it possible, even for non experts and following different queries, to consult at the same time cartographic and iconographic documents not homogeneous among themselves in kind, purpose, representation system, scale and date.

A digital representation system, organised as a GIS, but extended to include also the cartography, iconography and in a broader sense, any historical document aimed at describing the physical arrangement of a determined place, allows us to:
- favour the preservation and divulgation of the documentary heritage, often scattered in different archives;
- describe the change over time of a city or of its single parts;
- decipher the language and ways in which every city has progressively built its own portrait and communicated its own identity.

2   Milan in space and time

It is with the intent of experimenting these specific potentialities that the research project *"Portraits of a city in an interior* has been activated*. To consolidate the collective memory of the city through the computerization and the divulgation of historical cartography",* having as its object the building of a telematic access portal to the GIS of the cartography and iconography of Milan, Bologna and Rome.

Within this project and on the research line on Milan, the enlightenment and Napoleonic Age turned out to be the crucial moment during which this city outlined and divulged the image it intended giving of itself.

In the space-time representation frame, conveniently reassembled thanks to the aid of the new information systems, the documentary heritage referable to that time and space has made it possible to decipher and describe the urban physiognomy, the face of that same city that everyone still walks around and perceives, as the fruit of a stratification of multiple representation intentions – each

one moulded both on its own specific purpose and on its general vision of the world expressed by its age [2] – and of different and sometimes contrasting ideas of form, materialized by the whole of the projects developed for the city.

In a portrait conceived in this manner, the projects that the city has developed and stored, be they realized or left on paper, assume the same specific weight and almost the same material consistency of actually existing roads and buildings, constituting a reality lacking only in existence (and sometimes for totally short-term reasons) to be such. In fact, it happens that in the memory of the city, every sign, once traced, transforms a hope into a defined fact, from which those who will come in the future won't be able to prescind from anymore, should that be only to contradict it [3].

So, along the time and culture line of each city, what is not there anymore interweaves with what already exists *hic et nunc* and also with what could have been.

In the case of Milan this weaving shows the overlapping and intersection over time of two ideas of city very different and conceptually opposing each other: on one side the city almost re-founded by the proud tracing of the new Enlightenment straight stretches, "roady", to use Tessenow's description [4], in contrast with the "squary" Milan of the landscape artists interwoven into the weave of the living fabric, so wisely described by the system of the Teresian Land Registry.

In the space-time portrait of Milan, in fact, a disappeared city is outlined. A city made of houses, markets and waterways, submerged in its impetuous growing process, but that the engravings and paintings of the Lombard landscape artists can still evoke. As if watermarked, the project of a great "wish Milan" also appears, that cosmopolitan *Capital of the Kingdom of Italy* for the realization of which the survey shown in the *Carta degli Astronomi* (Astronomer's Charter) was created, that city that the Enlightenment architects – Cagnola, Canonica, Antolini – dared to dream of, projected over the border of the Spanish walls and based in the *grandeure* of the idea of civic magnificence.

2.1   Lost Milan

The spatially correct description of the current arrangement of certain places of the city finds its sense in the relation with the image of how each one of these places was in the past, and, at the same time, of how it could have been, if the great projects edited in the short yet intense season represented by the first decade of the XIX century had actually been realized.

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[2] *Regarding the influence of the overall historical perspective on cartographic representations see: U. Tucci [3].*
[3] *W. Faulkner [4] stated exactly the irrevocable nature of the stratification of urban events when he has one of his characters say, about the founding of a small city: «In fifty years time you will try to change it in the name of what you call progress. But you won't succed; you will never free yourselves of it».*
[4] *In a slightly humorous conference held in 1926 at the Kunstbibliothek and published on 2.3.1926 in* Die Deutsche Zeitung*, Tessenow [5] stated: «Young cultures are "roady", animated by growth and what they are becoming, immature. When the culture gains stability the roads start to cross, a point of tranquillity is formed and the culture develops in height and depth, tall buildings dominate, quiet gains ground, femininity, intimacy and squares take over (...). Contemporary man is "roady", and yet he carries within him the nostalgia for the outlined space of squares, for femininity. Conservatives are the opposite of this».*

We need to consider, in fact, the strongly dialectic relation established by the architectural culture of the Enlightenment with the inherited city, of which until the Sixteenth century amazed travellers had described[5] the abundance of available goods. Among these were the manufactured products deriving from the traditional processing of silks and brocades, of steel and crystal, produced in the handicraft workshops aggregated in specific and well identifiable urban areas, while the foodstuffs came into town through the Navigli waterways.

A commercial character which physically translated into a weave of little semi-detached houses, only seldom interrupted by high-class buildings, built after the second half of the Seventeenth century (and therefore very late in comparison to the tradition of the urban building, greatly cultivated in Florence, Rome and Venice since the end of the Fifteenth Century) to substitute small groups of houses. A morphologic structure oriented on the radial system of the Gates and the hierarchic organisation of the many religious buildings, among which until 1768 it was possible to count 300 convents [7].

This minute building fabric, evoked by the long shot perspectives of the 22 watercolour views by Giovan Battista Riccardi, is comprehensively described by the complex classification method of the Teresian Land Registry, the *Maps* of which – edited in 1721-23 in a 1/2000 scale and completed, as far as the inside the walls territory is concerned, by the *Iconography of the City and Castle of Milan,* edited in 1722 by engineer G.Filippini – are integrated by an analytic description, conducted house by house, parish by parish, door by door, by the *The new cadstral survey tables* of the *Land Registries Fund.*

For this reason the eighteenth century views and the cadastral survey contribute to compose an image of a unitary city, made up of single places, usually coinciding with the seats of civil and religious institutions, in respect of which the residential fabric that contains them, surrounded by the semirural areas around the limiting perimeter of the walls, conglomerates.

A city made then by progressive inclusions, places gathered and contained in the bigger perimeter of the surrounding walls.

Once the Bonapartist climate ended, the restored Austrian administration and, even more, the Risorgimento municipality paid great attention, on the strategic choices level, not to throw away the transformation process of Milan into a city structurally and spatially open – a transformation supported during the Napoleonic Age – by following and boosting the land valorisation processes already started. In the iconographic area, on the other hand, especially referring to the experience of the "vedutismo", the ancient will of wanting the peculiar identity of the single places to prevail in comparison to the description of the new spatial relations on an urban scale, regains vigour.

Differently from the Neapolitan and Venetian "vedutismo", the representations of which take strength from the exaltation of the relationship between city and nature, or from the Roman one, that has its leitmotiv in the always present archeological heritage, the Milanese "vedutismo" takes the urban landscape as it is as its privileged object and it constantly refers back to it, even when it represent an inn outside the city walls.

But this leaning towards the "urban painting", not being supported by celebrative nor monumental intents, sometimes provokes a shift towards the pictorial gender and the fragmented connotation, while in the most advanced declinations of the pictorial culture of that time, in the paintings by G. Migliara, G. Canella, L. Premazzi and most of all in the ones by Angelo Inganni, translates into the distressing transcription of a city that is disappearing, in the subdued flow of the Naviglio, erected as the Milan place par excellence, as the consciousness of its inevitable cancellation already emerged.

3   A contribution to the study of Napoleonic Milan

3.1   When Milan looked like Paris

With the arrival, in May 1796, of the French troops and, in the following year, the proclamation of the Cisalpine republic and in 1805, of the Kingdom of Italy, Milan entered a period of political and institutional change that had the merit of brining about a reconsideration of the cultural conditions and social roles of the entire city; even if the general events and particular circumstances that that influenced the administrative organisation, urban activity and architectural transformation during the Napoleonic period are known, certain events will be recalled along the way so as to configure an frame within which to place the image of the new urban structure, taking shape between the end of the Sixteenth Century and the mid Eighteenth Century.

The reference to Napoleon and to the progressive definition of a specific Napoleonic iconography, the influenced all the arts during the years of the republic, is fundamental because it makes it possible to place the study of Milan the Capital of the Kingdom of Italy within a *milieu* of particularly rich cultural and artistic exchanges, where the political role attributed to the city determined a radical change in the urban scene.

The development of Napoleonic iconography can not in any way be separated from the creation of the image of the new Milan that, placed at the head of a formally autonomous nation and elevated to the rank of the great European capitals, was invaded by various transformations. If some of these can be ascribed to the sphere of historical celebration, the exaltation of the military enterprises of the emperor as well as political propaganda, in reality the thick web of urban interventions and structural adjustments projected between 1796 and 1814, are a testimony to the hopes and ambitions that animated those years.

At a time in which *Milan looked like Paris* – and aspired to be such – the great projects of the Napoleonic era, that for the most part were never or only partially realised, foresaw a city with ample width, which in its renewed relationship with the countryside constructs itself on broad lines, in contrast to the walled city inherited form the renaissance. On the wave of the revolutionary push, a city appears organised around institutional places and the collective life that is formally and architecturally defined by the different projects and tends to modify the urban topography of identified spaces, typical of the previous period.

A comparison between the traditional landscape art of the end of the Eighteenth Century, epitomised by Aspari's urban scenes – «that isolates specific places,

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[5] *Fora n overview of the descriptions and* topoi *recurring in the* Cahiers de voyage, *in the guides and memoirs of the XVI and XVIII centuries, see: L. Gambi, M. L. Gozzoli [6].*

environments and moments in the city» [8] – and that of Galliari, only a few decades later, after the arrival of the French troops, illustrates the profound change the body of the city had undergone and explains the distance between the aristocratic Teresian Milan and the revolutionary Napoleonic one. The monumental breadth of Ascari's engravings, where certain buildings in the ancient city provide a background to civic life with noble fixity and scenic grandeur, becomes a Jacobite love for a new society recognisable in the open spaces of court life and military exercises [9].

Fig. 1 Superimposition of some urban maps, describe by the GIS. a. "Pianta di Milano", G.B. Clarici, about 1580 (Academy of San Luca, Rome); b. "Iconografia della Città e del Castello di Milano", G. Filippini, 1722 (Record Office of Milan); c. "Milano Capitale del Regno d'Italia", Brera Astronomers, about 1810 (Record Office of Milan).

Exemplary is the view of Saquirico (*Pace celebrata al Foro Bonaparte il 10 Fiorile IX)* on the occasion of laying the first stone of Foro Bonaparte in April 1801, as designed by the Roman architect Bargigli who foresaw, in the area in front of the castle, now free after the demolition of the Spanish fortifications, a series of provisional architectural structures glorifying Napoleonic magnificence[6].

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[6] «*South of the ponderous protrusions of the Sforza castle, of colossal statute of Peace victorious , holding our a laurel and an olive branch, was raised on a cylindrical plinth, as if it were a section of the Trajan column, with spiral engravings and among gigantic trophies. On one side there arose a Doric rotunda, dominated by Victory crowning Bonapart, while between the columns there were the busts of French and other monuments hailed the other heroes of the Italian campaign, intrepid generals such as Joubert, who died at Novi, Desaix at Marengo and Championet also recently deceased. On the other side a vast podium held up an incense burner, on which the first stone of the Foro had been laid*» [10].

Similarly to the preparations for republican celebrations, the plans of the architects involved at the numerous transformations foreseen for those years reveal, despite the variety of the particular models, the possibility of a "new and unexpected Milan": Antolini's Foro Bonaparte, as much as the subsequent proposals for the Canonica Castle, the Arena, the Botanical Gardens as well as the monumental city gates – ideal transcriptions of classical Rome, had they been realised, would have radically changed the appearance and structure of the city.
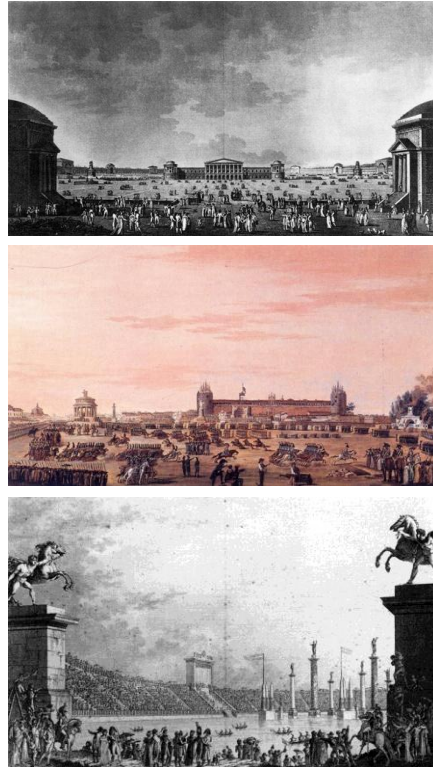

Fig. 2 Iconographic documents joined-up urban maps: a. G. Antolini, Project for Foro Bonaparte, 1801 (Civic Archive A. Bertarelli, Milan); b. Anonymous, "Pace di Lunéville", 1801 (Museum of Milan); c. G. Galliari, "Spettacolo di Naumachia dato alla Città di Milano il 9 giugno 1811, nell'Anfiteatro", 1808 (Civic Archive A. Bertarelli, Milan).

For the neoclassical architects called to work under Napoleon, Milan was not just a physical space, it was an opportunity to realise an urban utopia; an architectural idea that was in line with the shape of the city, looking towards the great European capitals and aspiring to embody classical ideals. The greatness of Rome, the eternal city, even with its weaknesses and compromises tied to the emphasis on celebration and on the ability of single individuals, was the recurring imagine in the many projects of that time, that were trying to modernise and adapt to the changed civil conditions the principles of classical composition.

This lead to a hypothetical reconstruction of a possible history, the 'lost Milan" of the ephemeral constructions erected for the celebration of the republic, the "virtual Milan" of the unrealised projected and, finally, the current Milan that in its architectural definition still reveals the traces of that heroic era.

"Portraits of possible cities" that are measure each other in the multiple superimpositions and coexistence in

different images; parallel registers that, in the plurality of responses, have contributed to defining the layout of the city and its characteristic features. Examining these multiple "unrealised Milans" it is possible to rediscover a series of plans, designs and projects, almost all of them cancelled by subsequent transformations, or at least diluted by them. The value and role of the projects from that period have been progressively obscured until the have almost disappeared, to a degree that their interpretation is almost impossible for the layman and, indeed, not immediate even for historians and architects.

Even if, therefore, the events and elements around which research is built belong to common knowledge, interpreting them and the criteria that guided them are tied to a specific idea of a city and its multiple declinations. Therefore, the research, utilizing the available historical materials, has hypothesised a "possible city" on a logical plain – Milan Capital of he Kingdom Of Italy – and it has attempted to verify its credibility on a disciplinary level. Thus, what was considered to be most important was not the historical validity of this hypothetical discovery – the concrete events and the true ambitions that guided the protagonists of the age – as much as rather the tuning of the analytical tools congruent to the formalization of a theoretical hypothesis.

Form this stand point, an explanation of the tools used, without which the hypothesis put forward would remain in the abstract field, is considered essential for the understanding of the content of this research, and it becomes necessary to determine the scientific confines of this operation and its level of autonomy compared to neighbouring disciplines.

3.2   The plan for Milan Capital city and its architectures

In December 1806, the Italian government headed by Viceroy Eugenio from Beauharnais, nominated the *Commission for the Architecture and Fine Arts,* moderated by mayor Brivio and made up of Andrea Appiani, Giuseppe Bossi, Luigi Cagnola, Luigi Canonica and Giuseppe Zanoja. Canonica, nominated general superintendent for National Buildings and eventually, after the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, Royal Architect [11], became head of this Commission, that following an internal regulation arranged by abbot Zanoja, divided the city in five sectors, assigning the relevant jurisdictions to different commissioners.

Since its constitution and until 1814, the Commission experimented and developed several effective procedures connected with the spatial control of the city. Even if originating from measures of the Austrian age and from the French urban tradition, such procedures will transform the specific methods of the project, foreseeing a totally uncommon image of Milan. In fact, concentrating in a single organism the definition of the land used as well as the management of the building activity of public and private undertaking[7], the work of the Commission, even if with several political and economic difficulties that bound it, ratified the birth of a new urban vision, within which the means of the land used addressed all the resolutions of the single commissioners between 1807 and 1814. The double role covered by the Commission allowed to define the urban face of Milan, following an order and propriety principle thanks to which every element of each building

adopted the most convenient and proper shape for its definition.

The *Piano dei Rettifili* undoubtedly played a central role within the dynamics of transformation of Milan's face. Expressly required by Napoleon of the Minister of the Interior Di Breme around the end of 1806 and formally solicited with the Decree of January 9th 1807, it was traced out by hand on Milan's plan drawn in 1801 by building surveyor Giacomo Pinchetti (scale 1:6200) and re-printed in 1807 to draw on it the plan presented by Napoleon on December 1st that same year[8]. Such events took place despite Minister Di Breme commissioning to the Brera Astronomers the editing of what would eventually be the map *Milan Capital of the Kingdom of Italy* at the disposal of the Ornato Commission only after January 1809. This map, at first submitted on a 1:3000 scale, was later drawn in 27 pieces of paper on a 1:1000 scale, but the difficulties occurred during the realization delayed the finishing of it, so much that the Commission could not use it for drawing the plan that had to be submitted to Napoleon[9].

If on, one hand and in brief, these are the events around the editing of the *Piano dei Rettifili,* it is also important to consider how in fact it had been the internal structure of the Commission itself that offered the institutional base to concentrate in one unique organism the definition of the general urban plan, the editing of specific projects and the control of the single interventions on building discipline, allowing in this way a reciprocal commensuration between the architectures and the plan, as well as between the plan and its architectures. This statement, far from being tautological, reveals how the composition scheme identified through the well known *Piano dei Rettifili* could not become concrete but in the single projects, through a deeply modern modality that involving a tendentious *ante litteram* reading identifies within the value of single elements the possibility of the formation process of the whole structure. It doesn't look in any way casual that the confrontation between the editing dates of some projects – especially by Cagnola and Canonica – with the editing of the plan shows how the work of the two architects, in relation with the projects connected to the realisation of the plan, coincides, if it doesn't anticipate, its editing and therefore on that could

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[7] *See articles 4-5-6 e 7 of the Decree of January 9th 1807, Civic Historic Archive of Milan,Ornato Strade, I.*

[8] *The descriptive report attached to the plan was submitted to Napoleon on September 17th 1807. Unfortunately this document, possibly countersigned by Cagnola, is no longer traceable among the papers of the Civic Historic Archive of Milan where Ettore Verga reports he consulted it at the time of the editing of his essay [12]. The map quotes below the handwritten caption: «Pianta rappresentante i Progetti dei nuovi Rettifili/Avvertenza/Tutte le aree coperte di cerasa denotano le demolizioni da farsi per i nuovi Rettifili/Tutti gli spazi tinti in nero segnano i ritagli delle attuali contrade da concentrarsi/nelle case vicine». On the right: «I. Decembre 1807/Progetto di rettifili presentato/a S.M. l'Imperatore e Re». We still have a 1808 edition of the Pinchetti Map, besides the 1801 version and the colour copy on which the plan was drawn: on this edition in place of the Foro Bonaparte by Antolini, is represented the Castle with its surroundings settled with Boschetti, the Piazza d'Armi, the Arena and the Arco della Pace under construction.*

[9] *«The map is the fruit of the necessity of having a detailed, updated and precise cartographic means, foreseeing those interventions that should have adapted Milan to the role of Capital of the Kingdom of Italy: a task that the Pinchetti Map, despite its graphic quality, certainly could not discharge. To grant the scientific level of the result, around the end of 1806 the Government charged the astronomers of Brera with making the survey» [13].*

depend the definition of the formal structure recorded on the *Pinchetti Map.*

It is supposed that the drawing of the plan is measured by the architectures and exactly in that sense a new critical reading of it is necessary. A reading that, even considering the vast tradition of studies on this subject, cannot be read by itself but through the single projects, making the architecture speak, the architecture that connect the formation process of the new urban structure to a specific building moment, as a skeleton without which the architecture itself would not be explainable, but that only the projects and their reciprocal relations are able to reveal.

Fig. 3 To be able to define an intervention frame that includes the compact city within the Spanish walls and the necessary to mount about a hundred pieces of paper of the Corpi Santi from the Teresian Land Registry from 1722 This was necessary to create the picture of the portion between the ground of the walls and the current outer ring-road, in order to realize a combined document of the "Iconografia della Città e del Castello di Milano" by Engineer Giovanni Filippini (1722) with the above mentioned papers and a twin document that associates the same land registry papers to the plan "Milano Capitale del Regno d'Italia". For example: Porta Ticinese.

The relationship between the plan for Milan Capital city and the architectures that would have made its realisation possible, swings between two different poles: the assertive one of the straight stretches drawn on the *Pinchetti Map*, a wonderful product that the Commission defines in relation to the great number of decrees that follow in the first years of the Nineteenth century on roads

and building regulations, and on the other hand the fragmented one of collation of the single architectures designed in those years, often alternatives very radical among them, fruit of a rewriting work of the same themes by different hands.

Fig. 4 Iconographic documents and projects joined-up urban maps: a. L. Canonica, Project for Porta Marengo, 1810 (Civic Archive A. Bertarelli, Milan); b. L. Cagnola, Project for Porta Ticinese, 1807-1815 (Civic Archive A. Bertarelli, Milan); c. G. Migliara, "Ponte del Trofeo a Porta Ticinese" (Museum of Milan).

Right in the constructive value of the projects reside the several development possibilities of the city, to such an extent that taking into consideration the single interventions – and in particular the many studies produced around the theme of the urban doors, concentrated on the heads of the radiocentric mesh of Milan – these would apparently seem to contradict the cardodecumanic order principle, which represents the very foundation of the plan[10]. The critical reading of the materials gives back a relationship of reciprocal exchange

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[10] *It is paradoxical that the project by Canonica for the Bonaparte City, able to show more than any other the implicit character of the drawing of the straight lines is not represented on the Map Pinchetti, even if for congenital reasons totally alien from the architectonical contents of the plan itself.*

between the real city and the city imagined by the Ornato Commission and shows how the cardodecumanic system rediscovered by the *Piano dei Rettifili* [14] was not read in contrast with the radiocentrism congenital to the urban structure. Rather than this, in the specific declination of the single projects, the two hypothesis, apparently antithetic, define themselves reciprocally and in relationship with the regained territorial dimension. The many projects for the gates coexist with the tracing of the Stradone Bonaparte, new main axis of the urban structure that joins the ancient Roman cardo in proximity of the Ospedale Maggiore: the real body of the city is included and transformed within the new vision of the land use.

Emblematic in this sense is the confrontation between the project for Foro Bonaparte presented in 1801 by Antolini and the one edited in 1807 by Canonica: this last one not only accepts the bourgeois condition of the city, but builds an original image of it, where the big void of Piazza d'Armi refers back to a paratactic composition of elements – see for example the position of the Castle in relation with the Arena and the Arco della Pace – that organises the whole north-western portion of the city in relation with the axis of the Sempione.

The drawing of the plan substantiates not only in its graphic definition, but most of all in the single projects, especially in the not realised ones – then again the plan itself was left in great part unrealised – that once recomposed in an unitary frame would allow a reading that could go beyond the simple and fundamental geometric indications recorded on the *Pinchetti Map*.

The intrinsic and objective need of the project for the real transformation of the city and for its pre-configuration is clear. Just to think of Milan as a new capital city – some historians spoke of a *virtual capital* [11] – makes the plan and its projects essential, able to substantiate the urban value. It is not by chance that Napoleon himself demanded the editing of it and promoted it, establishing a commission in charge of this specific assignment[11]. It is a progressive development of awareness of the structure of the city operated through means congruous to its disclosure: the editing of the maps as images of the anatomy and physiology of the urban body and of the territorial *continuum* in which the city itself is collocated, the compilation of the geometric-particle land registry and the definition of the new face of the city through formally identified projects. The idea itself of *Milan Capital City* takes shape through the development of a culture of the project which aspires to join with the urban body and to last within it, even when it is not possible to reach its actual realization.

3.3   The drawing of an unknown Milan

The comparison between Milan and its virtual doubles, together with the analysis of the projects which were left on paper during the Napoleonic Age, puts the focus of the research on the role of drawing and the disciplinary value that resides in the sedimentation of different urban ideas. Since the city is not given just by the simple sum of physical facts that conditioned its shape and since its identity depends most of all on the projects of which it has been invested in over time, we tried to discover the territorial logics of the land use from 1807, both in respect

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[11] *«…the greatest impulse towards the transformation of Milan from a medieval to a modern city was given by Napoleon: it is well known how with a pen he imperiously traced on a map of Milan the plan of the avenue that should have joined the Castle with the Royal Palace»* [15].

to the definition of the single straight stretches and in relation with radial layouts going out from Milan, starting from the cartographic production of that time and from the project drawings.

If what brings together the single interventions, even in the variety of their specific configurations, is the renovated relationship between the city and its territory, followed by the pulling down of the Spanish walls, the substitution process of the urban gates and the tracing of the straight stretches scheduled in the plan participate in one same drawing. Their simultaneous reading reveals a Milan as not necessarily radiocentric and hovering around the Duomo, but a multi-focus city alluding to a congenital multiplicity of central places, showing its collective character through the great voids of the Piazza d'Armi and of the Lazzaretto.

Such unpublished Milan, fruit of the aspirations of the plan and of the direct confrontation with the conditions of the existing city, never found a concrete realization. The political changes that followed the arrival of the Austrians in 1814 contributed to weaken the ideals of the Napoleonic Age, and we witnessed the progressive chipping of the plan into multiple partial interventions, often only formally heirs of that unitary idea of city that the Ornato Commission had been able to foresee.

4   Conclusion

Therefore, the space-time representation of the city of Milan, put together following the mentioned modes and procedures, outlines not a univocal urban physiognomy, but a multiplicity of portraits that refer one to the other, almost as a multiple mirror game in which each one of the reflected images carries its own truth, even if without ever managing to set itself as a exhaustive description of the complexity of the urban phenomenon.

Anyway, it is exactly in the awareness of the impossible continuity *of* the past and on the other hand in the confirmed necessity of finding continuity lines and elements *in* the past that one of the main modernity lesson of the neoclassicist heritage lays.

Appendix

Paragraphs 1, 2 (2.1) and 4 are edited by Maria Pompeiana Iarossi; paragraph 3 (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3) is edited by Francesca Belloni.

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