



LIQUADERNI

#03

settembre_dicembre 2013
numero tre
anno uno

URBANISTICA 
giornale on-line di
urbanistica
ISSN:
1973-9702

Rappresentazioni urbane Urban Representations

a cura di ETICity

- Simone Tulumello & Giacomo Ferro |
- Paola Briata |
- Maria Michou |
- Giansandro Merli & Monia Cappuccini |
- Ifigeneia Kokkali |
- Maria Elena Buslacchi |
- Petra Potz & Ariane Sept |
- Lidia K.C. Manzo |

- Cristina Gorzanelli, Gail Ramster, Alan Outten & Dan Lockton |
- Aslihan Senel |
- Giuliana Visco & Alioscia Castronovo |
- Claudia Bernardi |
- Maria Luisa Giordano |
- Irene Dorigotti |
- TooA |
- Oginoknauss |

Direttore responsabile

Giorgio Piccinato

Comitato scientifico

Thomas Angotti, *City University of New York*
Orion Nel·lo Colom, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*
Carlo Donolo, *Università La Sapienza*
Valter Fabietti, *Università di Chieti-Pescara*
Max Welch Guerra, *Bauhaus-Universität Weimer*
Michael Hebbert, *University College London*
Daniel Modigliani, *Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica*
Luiz Cesar de Queiroz Ribeiro, *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro*
Vieri Quilici, *Università Roma Tre*
Christian Topalov, *Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales*
Rui Manuel Trindade Braz Afonso, *Universidade do Porto*

Comitato di redazione

Viviana Andriola, Elisabetta Capelli,
Simone Ombuen, Anna Laura Palazzo,
Francesca Porcari, Valentina Signore,
Nicola Vazzoler.

<http://www.urbanisticatre.uniroma3.it/dipsu/>

ISSN 1973-9702

Progetto grafico e impaginazione
Nicola Vazzoler.

in copertina:

“piezas” di Andrea Falco > vedi progetto CallforCover p.135



#03

settembre_dicembre 2013
numero tre
anno uno

september_december 2013
issue three
year one



in questo numero
in this issue

Tema/Topic >

Rappresentazioni urbane

Urban Representations

a cura di ETICity_p. 05

Simone Tulumello & Giacomo Ferro_p. 13

Le volatili rappresentazioni di piazza Martim Moniz a Lisbona
The fleeting representations of a square: Martim Moniz, Lisbon

Paola Briata_p. 21

**Acquired for development by...
le giovani generazioni e la rigenerazione di East London**
*Acquired for development by...
The Young Generation and East London*

Maria Michou_p. 29

Athens streetside arcades: silent gestures of minor occupation

Giansandro Merli & Monia Cappuccini_p. 37

**Atene tra crisi economica, narrazioni urbane e
discorso razzista**
Urban narratives and racist propaganda in the city of Athens

Ifigeneia Kokkali_p. 43

**City representations and the selective visibility
of the (ethnic) 'Others'.**
A short note on the fervent 'diversity' in Europe

Maria Elena Buslacchi_p. 49

**La moltiplicazione degli Off. Rappresentazioni urbane
in una Capitale Europea della Cultura**
*Off Multiplying.
Urban representations in an European Capital of Culture*

Petra Potz & Ariane Sept_p. 57

Cittaslow-Germany: dove i piccoli centri urbani si rappresentano
Cittaslow-Germany: where small cities represent themselves

Lidia K.C. Manzo_p. 65

MILANO MONTECITY. La città sospesa
MILANO MONTECITY. The suspended city

Cristina Gorzanelli, Gail Ramster, Alan Outten & Dan Lockton_p. **75**
Cittadini e nuovi media per un'intelligenza creativa
Citizens and new medias for a creative intelligence

Aslıhan Şenel_p. **85**
Mapping as Performance:
An Alternative to Authoritative Representations of Istanbul

Giuliana Visco & Alioscia Castronovo_p. **95**
Trasformazioni metropolitane
ed educazione popolare a Buenos Aires
Metropolitan transformation and "popular education" in Buenos Aires

Claudia Bernardi_p. **103**
Temporalità urbane.
Politiche del controllo e reti migranti
Urban temporalities. Politics of control and migrant networks

Maria Luisa Giordano_p. **111**
Who's maps?
Interrogating authorship in collective map-making

Contributi visuali/Videos >

Irene Dorigotti_p. **118**
Kigali or building a symptomatic city.
Young's Imaginary and Crea(c)tivity in Rwanda after 1994

TooA_p. **120**
42 - storie di un edificio mondo
42 - tales from a global building

Oginoknauss_p. **122**
ДОМ НОВОГО БЫТА - DOM NOVOGO BYTA

Apparati/Others >

Profilo autori/**Authors bio**
p. **126**
Parole chiave/**Keywords**
p. **131**
Illustrazioni/**Illustrations**
p. **135**



Athens streetside arcades: silent gestures of minor occupation

@ Maria Michou |

Arcades |
Homeless |
Athens |

The architectural typology of streetside arcades is examined as constitutive of a 'natural environment' for the Greek city as this developed during the building boom of the '60s and '70s, focusing on the example of Solonos street in Athens. The development of central districts with multi-storey blocks whose street level elevation was placed in recess from the rest of the building volume, creates semi-sheltered outdoor passages which provide particular conditions for the pedestrian in terms of walking and engaging with the market and the urban condition in general. These characteristic spaces present today, with excessive clarity, the desertifying effects of the economic crisis, where rows of vacant stores empty entire arcades from their function and purpose. As a result, these same intermediate spaces have begun to offer home to homeless individuals, providing relative quiet, protection and space for the expansion of their settlements, both as far as permanence as well as volume of objects are concerned. An unusual phenomenon in this particular part of town, homelessness is becoming increasingly evident further around the city; homeless' arrangements taking many shapes to serve the different routines of individuals' everyday—part of which the photographic narrative is attempting to capture. A further consideration of the circumstances that bring a person out into the street according to institutional research, but also the observation of particular cases of state treatment of homeless in Athens, sketches out a difficult balance between care and expulsion, between those walking and those constantly making a home of the street.

Solonos street, source of inspiration and point of departure for this narrative route, is at the same type a typical yet distinctive commercial strip of downtown Athens. Lined up with modernist apartment blocks, Solonos is a one-way, double-lane stretch that connects two diverse parts of the Greek capital: the upscale area of Kolonaki—across the Parliament and its adjacent National Gardens—with the 'alternative' district of Exarchia—the first suburb of the city in the 19th c., home to a number of University Faculties since the 1870s but also to junkies, legal and illegal immigrants, the anarchist community and the most active self-managed citizen initiatives in this city today.



What is typical about Solonos street are to a large extent the formal elements that comprise it. In particular, the characteristically Greek cityscape of six-to-seven storey high blocks, built in continuous rows interrupted only at junctions with the street grid; the building-height to street-width ratio which makes for steep street perspectives; the identical treatment of public space at the buildings' ground level; altogether these lend their characteristic form to the entirety of the familiar streetscape of old downtown Athens.

"1. The construction of a streetside arcade is mandatory when this is provided in the area's city plan, and at the approval or amendment of the city plan its width is numerically defined. The streetside arcade should be functionally and aesthetically connected with the building and its one side should be adjacent to the 'construction line' and it cannot be an independent structure. [...] 2. Its construction abides with the following specifications: a) Its floor surface to be continuous with the sidewalk. b) Its free height from the sidewalk level to the lowest ceiling level to be not less than the height which results from the relationship of height to width 3:4 and in all cases should not be less than 3,00 m. c) There should not be any permanent ledges or structures on the floor, ceiling or sides of the building. [...]" (Law 4067/2012, Art. 22)

Similar to the city's wider commercial stretches as well as its secondary street network, Solonos is made up of consecutive streetside arcades for its most part, where the street level elevation is placed in recess from the rest of the building volume, flanked on one side by structural colonnades that support the floors above and on the other by medium-sized shops in continuous sequences. As prescribed by the city plans of the '70s, these



“external arcades” (L. Decree 8/1973) satisfied both the reconciliation of basic planning deficiencies on the part of the state as well as the interests of private developers at the time. As obligatory formal elements, they surrender private land to public use, making up for the narrow streets and minimal sidewalk provision; at the same time they formulate a sheltered intermediate space which allows the passer-by to feel momentarily more comfortable, slow down their pace and benefit from window-or-real shopping.¹ As such, these ‘street pilotis’ have become a whole kind of ‘natural environment’ for Greek urbanity, which comfortably mixes small commercial enterprises with residential and office uses and caters for the ‘semi-sheltered life’ appropriate to the mild climate of the Greek outdoors.

On the other hand, Solonos street’ intermediate scale and the variety of services it accommodates render it with a distinctively ‘comfortable’ urban quality. The street is wide enough for the body neither to feel confined, nor alienated as in the vast central boulevards. Here, one can find from expensive, lifestyle-seeped department stores and boutiques to handmade toys and organic foodstores on the street’s upper end, to a multitude of booksellers, printing houses and bookbinding workshops on its lower end. With minimal public squares or green along its entire length, walking along Solonos str. is a constant movement from light into shade, from sheltered undercrofts of consecutive streetside arcades to single-file exposed sidewalks—brushing against strangers’ shoulders and staring into each other’s eyes for the instant it takes to decide who will wait to let the other pass first, and sometimes smile. Meanwhile, cars, buses, taxis and the few cyclists rush down the street, in a constant buzz of exhausts, horns and engines that start, stop and in cases swear at each other...

¹ A streetside arcade fronts a row of twenty-one shops on the Roman Market’s ground level already in 2nd c. BC Athens (Attalos Stoa 2012).



“Because men are the city, and neither walls nor empty battleships”
(Thucydides, H-77)

Back to the capital from summer’s leave, Solonos street has shockingly followed the desertifying effects of the economic crisis: one after the other, often in sequences of two, three or four, storefronts display signs “To Let”. Among the smaller one-off shops that have closed down, some of the oldest bookstores Athens could boast of have stopped business. A few weeks later into autumn, a minority of the vacant stores have already been converted into state-of-the-art pastry-and-coffee-to-go shops, featuring fast wireless internet connection, the gentrified taste of a franchise brand or the minimalist décor of snack-as-lifestyle which is the current trend.

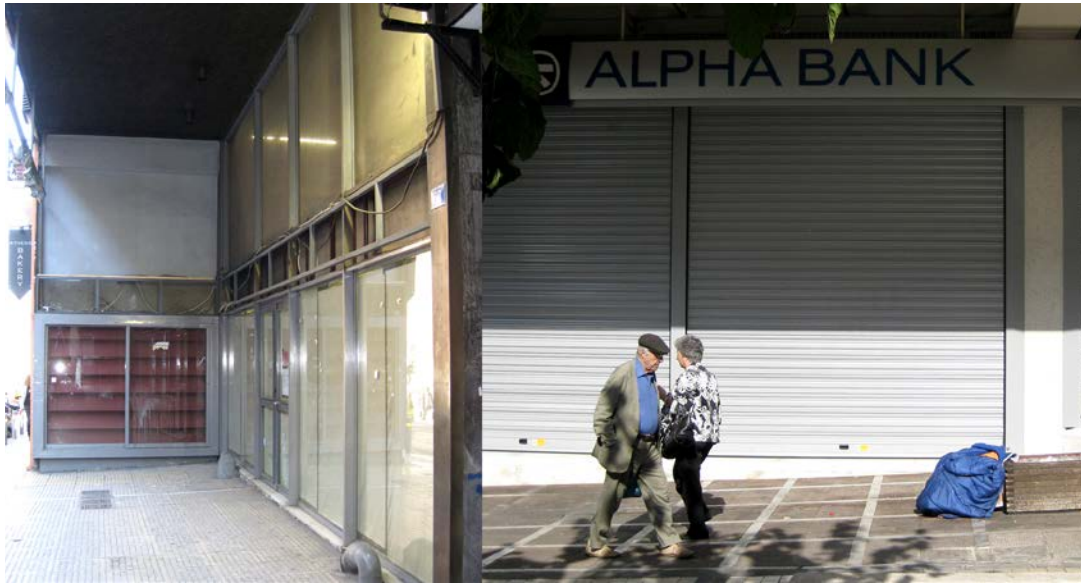
As streetside arcades are emptied from their usual functions, they begin to open up space for the homeless men and women of this city. Occupying the empty recesses in front of vacant shops, often using disused decks and sound barriers in front of old cafés or behind ledges and at the corners to create protected niches for themselves, people sleep rough on paper cartons and sleeping bags, behind boxes and amidst plastic bags that contain their belongings. The new spatial reality of Athens has allowed them to wander away from the busy avenues and parks that have sheltered them for the past 30 years the phenomenon of homelessness has been expanding, to seek refuge in denser mixed residential-commercial parts of downtown. The permanently dark shop windows and the unused sidewalk in front of them permit individuals to begin assembling small households that remain ‘unpacked’ during the day, even whilst they are away from their ‘spots’, creating unusual viewpoints into their otherwise silent life. In this manner, streetside arcades become sites of minor occupation: ‘homes’ on borrowed



land to return for a night's sleep on a proper mattress, and even, in certain cases, sites to share with the company of another also in need of a stretch to lay down their blanket. Such setups have been extremely rare in the past and definitely non-existent in this part of town.

1. Homeless people are recognized as a socially vulnerable group, to which social protection is provided. As homeless are recognized all individuals who live legally in the country, who lack access to or have uncertain access to sufficient privately-owned, rented or conceded residence that fulfills the necessary technical specifications and has basic services of water and electricity. 2. In the definition of homeless people are particularly included those who reside on the street, in guest houses, those who are offered temporary shelter from necessity in institutions or other closed structures, as well as those who reside in inadequate dwellings. (Law 4052/2012, Art. 29)

Homelessness has been increasing in Greece as a result both of the economic and the illegal immigration crises, yet only last year did it receive its official legislative definition, inclusive only of legal nationals as eligible for state support. According to 'Klimaka', a Not-for-Profit Organization that provides support to "vulnerable social groups", funded mainly by the Ministry of Health, the majority of homeless people is presently or has suffered in the past from substance abuse, and faces severe psychological difficulties (Klimaka, Homeless 2013). Further, the "Research about Poverty in Athens", carried out by the Municipality of Athens' Center for Reception and Solidarity in the summer of 2013, has shown that very few of the 1000 homeless wandering individuals of the city are prepared to "enter any closed structure", i.e. to adopt a permanent sleeping place in one of the municipal



guest houses for the poor and attempt social rehabilitation, but rather appreciate access to a daily hot meal and bathing facilities (Conclusions from the Recording of Homeless, 2013).

Solonos street' comfortably scaled and shaded streetside arcades—approximately 3 meters deep—host today a number of 'permanent' homeless settlements with significant volume of consumable items and even pieces of found furniture. Instances of such living arrangements right in front of just-vacant expensive stores at the 'posh' end of the street compose striking images for the frequent passer-by; however, these are usually immediately removed. Diverging from Solonos into other, more central parts of the downtown, one becomes witness to different evidently ephemeral or more expansive structures that accommodate homeless' routines—begging for change, sleeping, passing time—depending on the spatial and cultural particularities of a certain area. Along central boulevards, under the deep undercrofts of monumental building blocks—often, ironically belonging to central bank branches—homeless men have traditionally spent their nights and, on weekends, their daytime also. Others resort to dark disused commercial arcades, but also find refuge under the sheltered entrances of busy metro stations.

Whilst in most cases homeless people are treated with care and respect by locals, the recent incident of the 'proudly neat' homeless man of Kolonaki is shocking. An old-aged foreign homeless man had settled along the property wall of central Athens' main state hospital, having occupied a street bench and the sidewalk on its sides. Surprisingly so, he had taken care to decorate a timber shelf supported on the back of the bench with flowers in vases, a porcelain horse miniature, fruits and symmetrically placed coffee-ware, and



had carefully laid the seat of the bench with checkered blankets to serve as his bed—all reminiscent of a well-kept middle class home. At the beginning of October the old man of Marasli street was admiringly photographed in his settlement and published in a digital news blog; immediately the image was widely circulated in social media. Only a few days later, the old man was expelled by the municipal authorities together with his belongings, to be very soon released and allowed to return to his ‘spot’ after citizen reaction; yet, many of his precious objects were missing (The homeless man of Kolonaki has returned to his bench 2013)...

The old man of Marasli street offers one of the few exceptions of homeless settlements that appear to intentionally address the passer-by from the conceptual position of a home interior, inverting the function of decorative objects from secondary into primary markers of private space: if a home is decorated to display a certain morality or social status, it is inescapably addressing the other, the external public eye; hence, here the existence of decoration is constructive of the privacy of the homeless individual itself—miniatures necessitate the real or, in this case, conceptual enclosure of walls.

In a twisted paradox, those incapable of the direct personal contact that any social commitment entails, resort to throwing themselves out into the most exposed site of our urbanized civilization: the street. Yet, homeless’ occupation is singular, lonely and estranged, indirect; utterly indifferent to the urban spectacle that mystifies the flâneur type, it resists the maneuvers of power inherent in any ‘closed structure’, even those intrinsic to domestic life. Instead, it constructs silent cocoons out of soft homely and harsher street objects—leftovers of our own homes—in the most banal of Athenian urban spaces; with the broom as an instrument to practice habitation, homeless

UB

i QUADERNI

#03

settembre_dicembre 2013
numero tre
anno uno

URBANISTICA tre
giornale on-line di
urbanistica
ISSN:
1973-9702

È stato bello fare la tua conoscenza!
cercaci, trovaci, leggici, seguici, taggaci, contattaci, ..

It was nice to meet you!
search us, find us, read us, follow us, tag us, contact us, ..

