The urban reality of a mediterranean city: Bari (Italy)

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ABSTRACT

Cities have turned into complex realities; they can disclose at any time news potentialities and new methods of reading and interpretation. For instance, the English geographers Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002) analyze how the peculiarities of the urban reality of Northern European cities can be discovered through daily practices. Indeed, this method can be applied to other cities.

The present paper proposes to read the urban reality of the Mediterranean city of Bari (Italy) according to the following aspects that make up its Everyday-life urbanism:

I.   Urban rhythms

II.   Urban forms of representation

III. Examples of informality in the city of Bari

IV.   The history of the city through urban stratification

V.   The city in movement: traffics

VI.   Urban communities

VII. Bari Sensuous Geography

The aim of the paper is "*to grasp a phenomenality that cannot be known through theory and cognition alone*" (Amin, Thrift; 2002). For this reason it will avail itself of informal, quantitative and qualitative methods. The urban reality is analyzed from the point of view of the individual, who observes the reality to reach the social information. The complete immersion in the social reality (Corbetta, 2003) facilitates the identification of daily practices.

Keywords: Mediterranean City; Bari (Italy); Everyday-life Urbanism; Phenomenological patterns.

RÉSUMÉ

Les villes sont devenues des réalités complexes qui révèlent constamment des nouvelles méthodes de lecture et d'interprétation. Par exemple, les géographes anglais Ash Amin et Nigel Thrift (2002) analysent la manière dont les particularités de la réalité urbaine des villes de l'Europe septentrionale peuvent être découvertes à travers les pratiques quotidiennes. Cette méthode peut s'appliquer à d'autres études de cas.

La présente contribution propose la lecture de la réalité urbaine de la ville méditerranéenne de Bari (Italie) selon les aspects suivants qui caractérisent « sa vie urbaine quotidienne »:

I.   Rythmes urbains

II.   Les formes urbaines de représentation

III. Exemples d'informalité dans la ville de Bari

L'objectif de cet article est "*to grasp a phenomenality that cannot be known through theory and cognition alone*" (Amin, Thrift; 2002). Pour cette raison, nous allons adopter des méthodes informelles, quantitatives et qualitatives. La réalité urbaine est analysée du point de vue phénoménologique, qui prend en compte les expériences et la dimension quotidienne de l'individu. L'immersion complète dans la réalité sociale (Corbetta, 2003) facilite l'identification des pratiques quotidiennes.

Mots-clés: Ville Méditerranéenne, Bari (Italie), Espace urbain de la vie quotidienne**,** modèles phénoménologiques

URBAN RHYTHMS

The importance of the human experience and its symbolic dimension are key aspects of the phenomenological approach in geography. This emerged out of a humanistic geography approach that stressed the importance of human aspects and environmental cognition (human experience, feeling and emotions) in geography (Unwin, 1992). Different scholars have examined the importance of the concept of everyday-life and the associated dimensions of territoriality and everyday practice. Subjective and objective practices but even rational behaviors and unconscious expressions are carried out and became true in Everyday-life. Nowadays it is difficult to define what a city is, as it covers different functions: "*Cities are place of work, consumption, circulation, play, creativity, excitement, boredom.Cities gather, mix, separate, conceal, display. They support unimaginably diverse social practices*" (Amin and Thrift, 2002). Urban rhythms are coordinates by means of which inhabitants and visitors try to make sense of their urban experiences (Amin, Thrift, 2002). Not all rhythms are visible as some of them mark the everyday life of human experience, habits, sounds and smells that produce a sense of time (Allen, 1999).

In the Mediterranean area time spreads and stretches, in fact L. Leontidou states that: "*it is here, in the Mediterranean cities that we find cities that never sleep (...). Southern urban neighborhoods are busy and live longer, many of them until very late at night*" (1993:947). The city of Bari has Latin rhythms that illustrate its Mediterraneity; for instance during the night people like to meet in a coffeehouse or in a pizzeria or just together in particular squares; they have long breaks for lunch and most of all very long nights.

Rhythms determine the character of public spaces. During the day, the seafront of Bari is a major transport axis, while by summer nights it becomes a "public place enjoyed in a private way". This space is enriched and given its character by the manifold meanings that people ascribe it, thus it becomes pivotal for the people and their identity (Copeta, Lopez, 2008). Rhythms pervade the entire city, they are everywhere and key determinants of how it functions. Informal methods such as walking, thinking, reflecting and describing allow us to capture the nature of these rhythms. While these methods may seem simple, they are indeed complex. Walking is an active and reflective process. Paba (1998) suggests that to "*walk is to cross a space, to interact on a communication structure, to meet a palimpsest of culture (...). To walk is to read today's world never forgetting to talk with the old one*". Walking allows the complexity of the city to be captured, the past and present to be read as one, and the walker to have a personalised experience or encounter with particular urban spaces.

URBAN FORMS OF REPRESENTATIONS

Rhythms can be caught through forms of self-representation of the city, such as:

a)   How the city (especially the Medieval historical city centre) shows itself to tourists

b)   How the city appears by forms of communication

a) How the Medieval historical city centre shows itself to tourists: the ancient metaphor of the city as a theater has been reconsidered by contemporary authors, among which the sociologist Erving Goffmann,

proposes a dramaturgic approach to understanding social life. The city is the stage on which individuals perform multiple social interactions (Gofmann, 1959; Amin and Thrift, 2002). The street is the emblem of the complexity that provides maps and tales to understand how to move in the city.

This metaphor perfectly fits to Mediterranean cities, because theatricality is a core part of their character. The structure of the historical centre of Bari which goes back to Medieval Age is a case in point: it has a labyrinthine street plan stretching out the sea, is covered by small white houses strictly placed side by side, and a district replete with elegant buildings of the XVI century. Moreover, in the historical centre of Bari, there is a castle, a Basilica, a Cathedral and numerous churches and convents. As shown in picture one, the houses overlook narrow streets or yards, and are adjacent to coffee houses, bars, and pizzerias catering to visitors.

Picture 1. Streets of the old historical centre of Bari.

Source: Author

Picture 2. People in Ferrarese Square, old historical centre of Bari.

Source: Author

b) *How the city appears by forms of communication*: the city is also a narrative structure continuously renewing itself through forms of representation such as films and theatre performances in local speech and local broadcastings (radio and television, local newspapers, etc). These artistic experiences and urban cultural communication forms may elucidate hidden practices and rhythms.

Mass media are *knowledge technologies* whose variety of styles produces different urban images.

Local mass media have an inner point of view; they make reference to urban places, thus nourishing the urban collective imaginary. Consequently, performances, films and series in local speech or set in the city can be considered as local knowledge technologies whose symbolism reinforces the sense of belonging. In Bari there are three local newspapers and seven local broadcast organizations.

In the city of Bari there are 15 theatres and 4 of them are specialized in staging performances in local speech. These exemplify "localized" cultural forms, for instance the performance entitled *Jarche Vasce* (Low Arc) is centered on the arc of the historical city, which metaphorically discloses the intimate life of the historical centre of Bari. Once passed the arc, the spectator enters the historical city. The performance has been staged for over 37 years. Furthermore, the city appears in many films which amplify our comprehension of Everyday-life needs. Like novels, films disclose the city. In Bari, the first film was shot in 1931, and in total 26 films has been shot there. According to Paul Rodaway (1994), broadcasting, performances and films are daily visual forms of representation that structure the *visual geography* of the city; they contribute to the reconstruction of a context and of its symbolism.

A different form of daily urban representation is the novel, which is as well based on Everyday-life. Novels might bring to light unknown urban aspects; they analyze the urban dimension, nourish geographical imagination and even make the city famous. Gianluca Carofiglio wrote ten novels set in Bari, but among them *Né qui, né altrove. Una notte a Bari* (Edizioni Laterza, 2008)[22] is perhaps the most well known. In this novel the city of Bari is the main character; it discloses itself through the writer's eyes, and the reader is guided inside the city through well-known routes thanks to mental maps. In this novel, the urban image as theorized by Kevin Lynch (1960, 2008)[23], is based

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[22] Proper translation: *Not Here. Neither Elsewhere. A Night in Bari*. It has been published in Italy in 2008, it has already reached its tenth edition and it has sold 150.000 copies. The novel has been translated into German and Spanish.

[23] Thanks to his most important work *The Image of the City* (firstly published in 1960), Kevin Lynch was the first one who investigated the *mental map of the city*. In his work he analyzed the relations between individual and territory. According to him, the urban image in based on

on commonly known streets and edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. For this reason, the citizens of Bari recognize themselves. A further geographical contribution is that Carofiglio has put Bari on the national and international map; in order words, he has made famous a city previously unknown.

Another example is thenovel *Riportando tutto a casa* (2009, Edizioni Einaudi)[24] by Nicola La Gioia. While also set in Bari, he offers just a partial vision of the city.

EXAMPLES OF INFORMALITY IN THE CITY OF BARI

Informality is a feature of Mediterranean cities that influences their rhythms, habits and sense of place. Here the space is lived in all its opened and closed forms and public and private spaces are not clearly demarcated (Giovannini, Colistra, 2002). Great value is given to the seafront and to public spaces, because they are *places*, that is they have symbolic value and are landmarks and traces for social relationships and urban identification. As mentioned previously, by night the seafront becomes a meeting place. Public space is also enjoyed in a more private way in the historical centre of Bari, where residents consider the street contiguous to their houses and use them accordingly.

Picture 3. Stalls selling sea urchins, Bari

Source: Author.

Picture4. Women frying Sgagliozze, historical centre, Bari. foto estirada

Source: Author.

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five main concepts: *paths* (streets, sidewalks, trails, and other channels in which people travel); *edges* (boundaries); *districts* (relatively large sections of the city distinguished by some identity or character); *nodes* (focal points or intersections); *landmarks* (objects which serve as external reference points).

[24] Proper translation: *Bringing Anything Back Home.*

"Mediterranean Europe has been always surrounded by a booming regenerating informal economy" (Leontidou, 1993:954). While *walking* throughout the city, we *observe* different forms of informal commerce such as stalls selling flowers, dried fruit, fresh almonds and sea urchins. These habits of the city are also pointed out in the above mentioned novel of Carofiglio, as he reminds his readers that in the historical centre women fry sgagliozze[25]: "*Are there still those who fryscagliozze? (...). Typical and very tasty Bari street food"* (Carofiglio, 2008:64). These informal economic activities show the ease with which the meaning of urban space is constantly changed.

Finally, informality is as well expressed through forms of illegal work.According to Lila Leontidou (1993), illegality is a further feature of the Mediterranean world, as the postmodern Mediterranean man has always been acting regardless of norms and rules.

THE HISTORY OF THE CITY THROUGH URBAN STRATIFICATION

In Leontidou's words, stratigraphy is the way in which "*The passage of time is thus partly written on the built environment, where different periods and different styles are superimposed"* (Leontidou, 1993). The apparent architectonical confusion of Mediterranean cities derives from the coexistence ofthe urban heritage of different civilizations. Stratigraphy can be related to the metaphor of footprint proposed by Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002), as in both cases there is a relation between past and present and a reference to historic symbolic systems. Complicating these features according to Lila Leontidou (1993) is that the evolution of Mediterranean cities is not linear, as post-modern culture is innate. This post-modernism is reflected in the "visible and evident" urban dimension and in the "hidden and unknown" one.

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[25]*Sgagliozze* is a typical food of Bari consisting in slides of fried polenta.

The city of Bari is rich in footprints that evoke the past and activate a sense of belonging and identification for the citizens. The historical stratification of Bari can be read both horizontally and vertically. By horizontal level, it is meant the visible urban stratigraphy, what the eye can easily catch. By vertical level, it is meant the hidden urban landscape that archeology discloses.

Having a walk in the historical city of Bari, it is possible to reconstruct its history through footprints. Among them, there is the hypogeum of the Cathedral (called *succorpo*), which today is a museum consisting of churches and other remains belonging to the Roman, early Christian, Medieval and Modern periods. Further examples of the hidden Bari are: numberless hypogea, rupestrian churches, foundations of buildings and monuments; visible evidences are Peuceti walls (VI-IV cen. b. C.) of Santa Scolastica Church, Roman columns of the Via Traiana and the Francigena Ruga.

Picture 5. Pavements of the Via Traiana, Bari

Source: Author.

Picture 6. Roman Columns of the Via Traiana.

Source: Author.

The defensive city walls shape the Medieval profile and character of the city; they are called "Muraglia", along which nowadays there are offices, houses and meeting places.

THE CITY IN MOVEMENT: TRAFFICS

Traffic is a domestic rhythm that illustrates the movement of the city towards new destinations and nourishes communication and social exchange within the city (Tinacci Mosello, 2005). For the case study, there have been considered the following typical kinds of traffic:

a) *Urban Traffic*: in Bari it is irregular. The following photo illustrates that motorcycles travel in an uncontrolled manner regardless of the correct direction and not all motorcyclists wear the helmet.

Picture 7. Urban traffic, Bari.foto muy estiraday se distorsiona

Source: Author.

b) *Goods Traffic:*it refers to the movement across commercial centers which are usually located at the periphery of the city, so that streams of people move towards the different points of the city.

c) *Train traffic*

d) *Air Traffic*: Bari airport is connected with 31 destinations[26]. They are distributed as follow: 14 destinations are in Italy, 5 destinations are in Germany, one destination is in Switzerland and one destination is in

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[26]http://www.aeroportidipuglia.it/default.asp?idlingua=1&rif=11&what=1&where=bari&colle gamento=0&compagnia=0Consulted on 15 December 2010.

the United Kingdom. Furthermore, 3 destinations are in Spain and 5 destinations are in Eastern-Europe. Paris and Malta are other destinations.

e) *Port Traffic*: the port is a key element for the identity of a Mediterranean city (Leontidou, 1993; Carofiglio, 2008) and for the urban economy. It is a vital space and a central node for traffic networks connecting different regions together. It is the reference point both for sea and ground communication forms, for people and goods traffics that move in two directions. Considering its functions, the port of Bari is:

- *A World*: in it streams of people, workers, tourists and transports circulate. People coming from different nationalities meet, each one with the rhythms of their own everyday-lives. As a matter of fact, there are different rhythms between a worker and a tourist, between who arrives and who leaves. This metaphor is perfectly described by the following words "*The port is a separate universe. If you <u>walk</u> there by night, you are not able to understand how it can be so immense, how it is possible that a so vast place is contained in a city, when it seems to be the opposite*" (Carofiglio, 2008:85).

- *System Network*: the network dynamics reinforce the geographical position, the existing infrastructures and the endogenous resources that facilitate the regional economic organization. The Apulian ports of Bari, Barletta and Monopoli have shaped the society: *Network Autorità Portuale del Levante*[27] in order to get a more relevant position in international markets and reinforce their territorial economic identity. Moreover, the port is a node of the *Pan-European Corridor VIII*, which ensures diversified users: tourists, workers and transport (goods and people).

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[27] Proper translation: *Near East Port Authority Network.*

Table 1. *Traffic within the Port of Bari*

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Ferries Pax	1.262.093	1.308.819	1.339.464	1.454.948	1.575.367	1.780.029	1.846.398	1.961.283
Cruises Pax	203.431	213.984	262.888	277.979	303.338	351.897	465.739	567.885
Car Traffic	173.042	178.985	182.837	210.127	223.247	253.790	249.836	271.081
Bus Traffic	4.536	3.769	3.406	4.057	4.786	5.078	5.218	5.674
Camion Traffic	114.478	118.060	121.866	147.709	185.673	203.620	203.988	176.674

Source: Autorità Portuale del Levante. Proper elaboration.

Ferries connect Bari with Greece[28], Croatia[29], Albania[30] and Montenegro[31]. The following table summarizes the statistics of the port of Bari concerning passengers, cars, buses and lorry traffic within the port. Cruises and ferry traffic reveal a growing trend. In addition, the number of cruise-landings[32] has been constantly growing during the latest years, in 2006 and 2007 they were 120, in 2008 they grew up to 142, and they grew up to182 in 2009 and to 146 in 2010.

THE COMMUNITIES OF THE CITY

The city is articulated in communities defined according to social relations among its members. In the case of Bari, it is possible to find out the following communities:

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[28] Patras is served by two companies, each has one daily connection. Corfu is connected by one company daily. Igoumenista is reached by three ferries companies.

[29] Dubrovnik is reachable by two lines, one of them operates daily.

[30] Bari is the leader port regarding the connection to Durazzo, indeed there are five ferries lines, four operate daily, and one has two connections in a day.

[31] Bar is reachable each two days.

[32] Cruises companies that operate in Bari are: Costa Crociere, MSC, SEABOURN CRUISE LINE, P&O CRUISES, MONTENEGRO LINES, CONSTELLATION CRUISE HOLDINGS, Tapas, AZAMARA, DELPHIN CRUISE, KRISTINA CRUISES, MANO SHIPPING

a) *Closed community*: it is the community of face to face interactions. Although some scholars consider it an already overcome concept, in the historical centre there are still relations based on proximity, for which the street is a geographical reality (Dardel, 1952). The street is the centre and setting of Everyday-life, in which people are passersby, inhabitants, and workers. For many people the street is core to their life cycle; they were born, lived and died there.

b) *Opened community*: it is formed by the remaining inhabitants of the other districts of the city. It is also formed by immigrants; so the city has a multicultural aspect.

c) *Marginal community*: it is located in marginal places, almost always in suburban districts. They are authorized or even unauthorized Rom Communities.

d) *Virtual community*: any aspect of daily life is influenced by Internet, which connects users of different age and with different motivations (Malecki, 2003). ICT grant their users active participation to the world system (Castells, 2006). As users and creators are the same, virtual communities are an example of self-representation. For these reasons, they are auto-poietic systems that produce utopian social relations.

e) *Bari Global City*: it has not precise geographical connotations, the relation space-place disappears and all its inhabitants have access to the media. Portal, web pages, social networks virtually reconstruct Bari, so that the local identity becomes associated with the global dimension. For instance, in the case of the social network Facebook, the city presents and re-presents itself through groups, dealing with the local speech of Bari, gastronomy and history. New technologies produce information flows that are difficult to control and to analyze as information moves silently and secretly.

f) *Bari Informational City*: it originates after the electronic revolution. The presence of a large number of computers enables the connection between the local and global dimension.The electronic revolution has dislocated urban structure, but social values remain essential as the informational economy is based on them: "*Since its first joint is information, the informational city is based on the immaterial ability*

of symbolic manipulation, which is another way of saying culture"
(Farinelli, 2003:191).

BARI SENSUOUS GEOGRAPHY

Cognitive knowledge is a human process as the body is the source of the action in the city (Amin, Thrift, 2002; Paba, 1998; Arnheim, 1974). How we experience place draws from our internal 'dictionary' of tastes, smells, sounds and experiences. According to Rodaway "*Perception is an experience of the whole body and an activity in a dynamic world. Behavior and perception are implicative of one other*" (1994).

Senses catch concepts which are useful in understanding external reality (Arnheim, 1974; Paba, 1998), and for this reason they *"...are crucial elements of urban life"* (Amin, Thrift, 2002). They are examples of hidden rhythms that guide us throughout the city.Sensations are also bound to daily rhythms *"(...) to sounds and even to smells that mark the life in the city and that give (...) a sense of time and place*" (Allen, 1999). These *sensuous geographies*help structure our environment. As mentioned previously, walking requires the ability to perform a perceptive, emotional and sensuous immersion in the city (Sheringham, 1996). During the walk, one should let himself go to listen to sensations and feelings, thus catching urban reality and its secrets.

Here follows a reading of the urban reality of Bari through senses: sight, smell, hearing, and touch:

a) The *sight* is "*the most extraordinarily efficient human organ for human motions*" (Arnheim, 1974:XI). Thanks to it, we catch the colors of the city. In a Mediterranean city, characterizing colors are: the blue of the sea and of the sky; the white of the monuments, of some buildings and of pavements of the streets of the old city, and the air brightness. Furthermore, through the eye we move inside the city and we recognize where we are (Paba, 1998).

b) The city is also an *olfactory landscape*. We live the city according to smells and perfumes (Paba, 1998). The smell that accompanies us in Bari is the one of the sea, it is saltiness. There are also smells of some typical

foods, as for instance the one of the Focaccia, which is "*...oily, crispy, fragrant*" (Carofiglio, 2008). Focaccia even recalls the sense of taste: "*The focaccia is one of the tastiest things in the world (...). It is one of the few symbols in which Bari citizens concrete their Identity*" (Carofiglio, 2008).

c) The city became a concrete reality through a plurality of voices because "*the sound is a constant in cities, marking out through the daily to and fro of traffics*" (Lefebvre, 1996, quoted in Amin, Thrift, 2002). In the case of Bari, dialect, intonation and accent characterize the city. Indeed, sounds are crucially important in distinguishing the cultures of cites (Schafer, 1985); Scialò (1995) refers to topophony in order to indicate the musical tradition of a culture, which is able to make up specificities of the sound-scape. Daily sounds differ from the night ones, for instance by day there are the voices of people, the noises of the markets and of the irregular traffic. In the city of Bari, the sound par excellence is the lapping of the sea that can be heard when you are near the water.

d) The *sense of touch* plays a central role in the perception of the environment (Paba, 1998). It derives from the most extended organ and it recalls the constant relationship between cities and natural elements (Sarlo, 2002). Climate is a natural element that determines and creates urban reality, marks the passing of time and the Identity of the City. In Mediterranean regions, it is determined by dry and hot air coming from the South (Spina, 2002). For this reason, in the Mediterranean city touch sensations are notable, such as the sea breeze; mistral, and humidity. It is possible to find out characteristic elements of the Mediterranean Region: the length of season, the sand, the sea, the wind (Taccone, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Contemporary urban studies should reconsider their focus starting from their characterizing urban phenomenological patterns. Understanding the city is a more experiential manner is critically important. Phenomenological patterns refer to rhythms, traffics*,* knowledge, economy, history and senses. The reading of Bari undertaken above illustrates how each city has its Identity, which reveals itself through citizens, movements and knowledge.

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