

# From picture panel to city-map

*Fabio Reinhart, June 2015*

The “Analogous city” lives on by means of analogous mutation; more precisely, through those mutations related to analogy, memory and identity.

The picture panel focuses on this highly diffuse yet intrinsically marvelous phenomenon by combining both pictorial views and cartographic representations.

Every form of life—biological or cultural—manifests this phenomenon to such an extent that it is often identified with the vital process, or indeed with life itself. Everyone embodies and is intimately aware of this: to live on is to undergo transformation, yet remain the same, and preserve the memory of oneself.

A further example stands before your eyes now, timely inasmuch as it shows two separate, revealing moments in any transformation: one before and one after, the form at the beginning and at the end.

Although present in the picture panel merely as a watermark, the separation distinguishes elements confined to memory: in line with architecture’s self-referential nature, the “Analogous city” is built up through the sedimentary over-laying of many cities which, together and by design, reconstitutes its social and cultural genealogy.

What you have to hand now is no “Analogous city”, nor even a more or less faithful and accurate representation of it, but a “Map of the Analogous city” or rather of the same reality, posited in an analogous form.

The content-identity of picture panel and city-map – both refer to the same reality – allows us to grasp the specificities and the implications of such analogous mutations.

The map is an interpretation of the picture panel, a sort of re-invention within the framework of a new social and cultural reality: of identical content, but materially and dimensionally mutant.

Briefly, regarding this issue, just two observations:

The two-by-two metre format of the original picture panel responds to contingencies, the exhibition event, and the space in which it was to be hung.

The dimensional factor alone involves aspects of disparity. Requiring vertical display, it determines viewers’ standing positions, postures and movements; even conditioning perception, hence too the potential to understand.

For example, the viewer’s eye-level coincides with the horizontal datum spanning the centre, the floor beneath the viewer’s feet corresponds to the pictorial plane over which four figures below the Pleiades move forward. Spatial conditions help the spectator recognise his or her own positioning in relation to the work.

The picture panel was devised for a public attending the International Architecture Exhibition of the 1976 Venice Biennale. Today it stands witness to those faculties that the authors considered legitimate to ascribe to a public, typically educated, accustomed to recognising figurative conventions through historical and artistic elements rooted in time and space, even if distant.

These days the picture-cum-map is a more versatile tool, fitting the pocket.

A common every-day object as such, supplied with information usually useful to the visitor and probably indispensable to latter generations, once more it is proposed as a cartographic representation of territory, to whomsoever must bridge a cultural gap widened in forty years.

Analogies superposed produce a sort of kaleidoscopic play of mirrors. The mutation endured by the picture panel is analogous to that represented: ongoing renewal transfigures a city which remains its same self; expressed differently, 'city-map' stands in relation to 'picture panel' as "Analogous city" stands to 'city'.

Remains identical the nature of its content. However, picture panel, city-map and Aldo Rossi's text (reproduced on the right) state the poetics upheld by their authors.

In this statement are posited the basis, direction and meaning of their design work and teaching.

Indeed, subjection to critically evaluated guidelines alone can rid work of servility, make responsible purveyors shine out, and allow the artist to aspire to fullness of expression.

If - as is observed - verbal conventions have greater permanence than figurative ones, Aldo Rossi's text thrives on this condition, remaining fresh and legible: it therefore has no need of revision, nor of notes.

However, to its acuteness is merit only due, since the diagnosis and the remedies expressed maintain their relevance, forty years of very bad territorial management having under-lined the urgency.

Text and images of the "Analogous city" are complementary, and constitute a whole. Words relate facts and thoughts, images call them up (or recall them) instantly, contributing to their remembrance, as will know whoever lives cities and monuments enquiringly.

Without them - quite probably - you would not be reading the accompanying text and, in consequence, would not occur to you as much as I would hope for: that you ask yourself what is, will be, or could be, your own poetics. Were you to do so, you would discover one of their further properties: images can set alight curiosity, which illuminates knowledge and even, at times, the principal path of one's own life, not merely professional.

[Translation by Christopher Stead]