

Mapping the Exchange: Magazines as Platform for Urban Knowledge

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I was wondering if I should present the outcome of our research on the residential architecture built for the middle classes in post-war Italy (and, in particular, the project to create a digital platform aimed at collecting “stories of houses”). But at the end I decided to take a different direction that is maybe more risky: to inaugurate the discussion around a recent investigation conducted on the 20th century architectural periodicals, that is linked to an educational experience that I’ve been developing in collaboration with Nicole De Togni, post-doctoral fellow in architectural and urban history, over the last three years. I thought that the symposium could provide an interesting occasion to start to explore the potentialities of IT and digital tools for the historical research, in order to contribute to the ongoing discourse on digital architectural and urban history. This would also be an opportunity to explore the possibilities for creating a digital collection that encourages cross-cultural readings and comparative analyses, which has the potential to facilitate the research on the transnational dimension of architecture and urbanism.

Before starting I would like to highlight that what I’ll show today, at the moment, has just been an educational experience and is not the outcome of a funded research project. All the materials I’ll show are based on analyses and elaborations made with the students, without the support of digital tools.

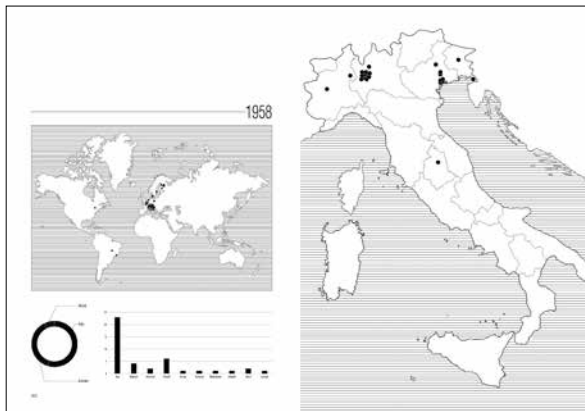
So I consider this talk today as an opportunity for trying to understand how we can use periodicals - observed as complex sources and sets of data to be analyzed in their interrelations- for the study of “global” architecture and urban knowledge, giving

a general statement on the process. I will address this through three different layers: first, I will illustrate the work conducted with groups of students on the analysis and study of specific journals that resulted in diverse forms of visualization; then I will try to briefly introduce the potentialities of multimedia products based on the collected corpus of sources, as tools that can facilitate cross-readings and encourage the investigation of the aggregation of periodicals as a “system”, focusing on the interrelations between journals, extending beyond national boundaries and stressing the comparative analysis; and finally, I will introduce in a synthetic way some recent research experiences that try to use this corpus of sources in order to trace the fortune of a spectrum of urban notions in the transfer process between North-American and post-war Italian urban culture.

In the last month we started to discuss with some colleagues at the Politecnico di Milano (and in particular in collaboration with Ivo Covic), the idea to create a dynamic digital collection, a platform that we provisionally call “Mapping 20th century periodicals as platform for architectural and urban knowledge”, that could be a powerful teaching and research tool for scholars interested in transnational studies, to investigate the international dissemination of models. The digital platform that we foresee for collecting the first results of this undergoing investigation is based on the study of 20th century architectural periodicals conducted over the last three years within the Master course of History and Theory of Architecture (Politecnico di Milano), that has the aim to create a wider and more structured view on periodicals as complex research and teaching material for the contemporary writing of architectural and urban history.

Addressing specialized periodicals as sites of construction, innovation and production of knowledge, we foresee the future creation of a database, intended as a research and teaching tool, that can host diverse forms of visualization. The idea, as I said before, is to try to observe the process of knowledge production at the global scale, opening up new critical perspectives in the research and teaching of 20th century architectural and urban history and theory.

tectural Magazines conducted with the students at the Politecnico di Milano, is just a first moment of this research (on the website of the course we have uploaded a selection of the research works that mirror the first outcomes of the course).



3. Casabella-Continuità (1953-62). Geolocation of the projects published during the analyzed period.

I would like to describe the corpus of periodicals we worked on, selected on the base of some critical considerations that served to define the genders and generations of periodicals and the time of publication, in order to create a coherent set of data that can encourage the cross-reading. Over the last three years, the work of indexing was conducted on 46 periodicals, published in 17 different countries between 1920s and 1960s, documenting also all the modifications in titles, structures, layout and composition of the editorial board, and through mapping the presence of the authors over the time. The corpus is quite heterogeneous — as we have been working with international students — and this includes different types of established magazines: from the post-war American trade-commercial journals to technical publications, but also institutional journals linked to official professional organizations. Among them the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, the British Official *Architecture and Planning Journal*, the *Royal Australian Institute of Architects Journal*, *Urbanistica*, the official magazine of the Italian Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (INU), the *Journal of the Hungarian Construction Workers Új Építészet*. Finally, are also included more “engaged” journals or official platforms of political associations like the Italian magazine, *Architettura: Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti*, or the Spanish one, *Revista Bimestral de la Obra Sindical del Hogar*.

I would like to clarify the reasons for the inclusion and exclusion of certain journals. First, we de-

cide not to include the avant-garde magazines of the 1920s because of their specificities: their short life span, the fact that they are deeply linked with specific figures or groups included in networks built on personal and non-official relations, or manifestos of diverse ideological statements. We started to look at the late 1920s and 1930s in order to analyze this moment of institutionalization of the avant-garde and to observe the shift from the rhetoric of “paper architecture” to a more objective information promoted by established journals more connected to the reality which had lasted for a long time, even with different identities, over the century (*L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, Casabella, *Architectural Review* etc).

Thus, as Jannièrè highlighted, the main characters of the journals of the 1930s are: the institutionalization of the editorial board that is important in order to understand the professional authority and the intellectual authority of the journals; the inclusion of the technical sections and the “press reviews”, that are powerful vehicles to understand through foreign examples certain political frames of the real statements of authors.

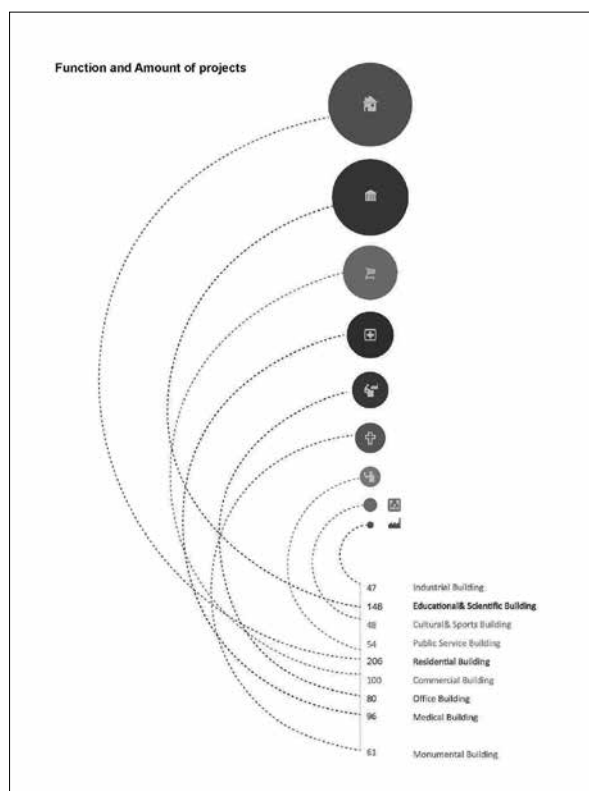
And then we decided to exclude in our exploration periodicals published after the 1980s, when a process of “mediatization” of architecture started, and magazines were purchased by press groups and electronic media that contributed to transform the logics of the production of knowledge. Even within this chronology we excluded two other types of magazines: first, the spectrum of theoretical magazines that developed an autonomous discourse within the departments of architectural theory and history of certain North-American universities in the 1970s. And second, the so called “little magazines”, using the term coined by the architectural historian Beatriz Colomina, that marked the return of the avant-garde, and are really modeled after the image of avant-garde journals.

I would like to explain briefly the methodology that we used. Here you can see the journals that had been processed and analyzed: before you see the years addressed by the work of analyses and the years of publication of the journals.

Moving from the list of the articles, the idea was that students try to “sketch the identity” of the journal, deconstructing and analyzing all the parts of the journal and organizing “groups of objects”. And this is a very important point that I would like to stress, minor parts have quite a crucial role in analysis of the journals: books’ reviews, letters to the

editors, technical sections, or foreign press reviews. These are actual examples of a conceptual grid -grid of configuration- that we used for building an excel data set (including an index of all the sections, titles of all the articles, authors, projects, events, publications, figures and critical statements). However the excel is conceived as a “neutral” static tool.

Then, the composition of the editorial board and the contributors were observed over time, analyzing all the agents involved in the process of conceptual, graphic and material production of the journal over the periods (director, publisher, influential authors, guest editors...). Of course, the students used an heterogeneous spectrum of graphic tools and forms of visualization. Despite this, it was possible to “map”, for instance, the presence of directors and members of the editorial boards over the periods analyzed (this is the case of the Italian magazine *Metron*). Another aim is to observe the changes in the composition of the editorial boards and the network of exchange between editors, authors, critics, professionals and bureaucrats involved in the production of journals.



4. Architectural Forum (1949-1956). Analysis of the projects' typologies.

Then an important part of the analysis was focused on the creation of an archive of digitalized images that included all the covers of the journals that we worked on, investigating the relationship

between texts and images. Covers are the graphic expression of the critical statement of the journals and is a precious source to investigate the circulation of ideas, offering an insight of the centrality of certain topics and discourses in specific moments and geographical frames. And these are diverse examples of analyses conducted on the covers of the Italian magazine *Casabella-Continuità*, the *JAIA*, or *Arquitectura*.

In some cases, students analyzed the layout of the cover and listed the images featured over the period. In other cases, they focused on the structure of the journal looking at specific sections,—like the editorials, themed sections and recurrent columns — or by observing and documenting the main changes over the period through simple graphic analysis. In other cases, they analyzed the advertisements, listing advertisers and analyzing the role that the advertiser had in the structure of the journal. In the case of post-war trade-commercial journals, advertisements were collected and indexed and in some cases we have the complete catalog of the advertisers, the kinds of product, and the firms involved. In the case of certain North-American and British periodicals, the analysis included also the journals' sections devoted to cartoons and comic strips, that enable a very interesting reflection about the public discourse on urban transformation undertaken over the period.

Students tried also to produce — and this I think is a part of the process that we have to re-frame — a synthesis of the contents, examined per single years. For the analysis, we considered four categories: national projects, international projects, national events (and here we include the publication of books, exhibitions, conferences and various types of meetings, and the opening of new university programs), critical statements and articles devoted to specific figures. These analyses were aimed at documenting the history of the journal over the period and was represented through multi-layered timelines that introduce new timeframes and underly the moments of major changes, often originating new narratives and offering a new insight on the historical moment and on its impact on the production of architectural and urban knowledge.

Another phase of the work move from the analysis of the different sections of the journal, observed in their changes and modifications over the period; and these are the forms of management, elaboration and visualization of the output of this analysis. As an example, I can show the diagrams and schemes

proposed by the team working on the issues of the Italian magazine *Metron* in the immediate post-war years: they used the title of different sections of the journal observing the roles occupied in the structure of the journal over the period.

This first quantitative part of the analysis of the contents, that include also the geo-localization of published projects and authors, was communicated also through bi-dimensional forms of visualization that adopted a plurality of diverse graphic tools and tentatives to represent through multi-layered time lines, pie charts, diagrams, histograms, maps, clouds and meta-clouds etc. All the analyses included an investigation based on typological analysis of the published -built- projects, conducted on the single years

These are different attempts to visualize the outcome of the analysis that prepared the ground for the investigation about the emergence, recurrence and fortune of specific types of buildings, after this preliminary process of survey. These two researches of students show, for instance, the analysis conducted on hospitals and schools documenting the recurrence of certain typologies and the emergence of a discourse on the design of health and educational buildings that took shape over the period, including the geo-localization of the featured projects in a map. In some other cases, teams tried to work on the recurrence of key-words and concepts and the frequencies of their use in specific case studies, adopting clouds as the tools to represent the outcome of a research that has been “tested” only on specific sections of the magazines and has not adopted softwares conceived for the textual analysis.

I would like to briefly focus on the use of maps that have been used with diverse purposes. On the one side maps have the aim to investigate the spatial distribution of featured projects and figures (already listed and geo-localized), analyzing first the situation year per year and then through a synthesis of the analysis. This observation is crucial to understand the centrality of certain geographies in precise historical moments and their variations over the period.

As an example, I can show the work conducted on *Casabella*, that through a series of maps show the projects published every year by the magazine (listed and analyzed year per year on the basis of the types of projects), built in the Italian, European and the extra-European contexts, while a synthesis over the period —from 1953 to 1962— is represented by this final map.

On the other hand, the maps have been used also as a powerful tool of analysis and representation, to investigate the trajectories of architects, authors, editors and contributors involved in the production of the magazine and their network of relations, the circulation and fortune of texts and projects and the mobility of ideas, opening up to certain concerns related to the study of the channels of transfer and the occasions of exchange. I show you a number of examples (among them the analysis conducted on the Indian magazine *Marg*), that try to document the presence and contribution of international authors, professionals and models in the Indian context over the period analyzed (1946-59).

So this was the overall methodology that we used to deconstruct and analyze the magazines, —organizing “groups of objects” and originating a data set— showing their potentialities as complex research and teaching material for architectural and urban history.

What we would like to create through this dynamic database?

We can position the research in the framework of a renewed interest for big data, which affected urban and architectural history in the last years. Treating periodicals as Big Data (forerunners of IT platforms), the project intends to create a digital collection —as an advanced research and teaching tool— that will continuously be improved in the future. The collected corpus of sources can allow the creation of data sets that can facilitate the cross-reading and, as I already mentioned, encourage the investigation of the aggregation of journals as systems. And this is the first step of the project that we would like to start.

The creation of the research structure can support new phases of the research in the future. The analytical and methodological tools can be applied to the investigation of other historical moments, using the collection of data and images.

One of the goals will therefore be to increase the complexity of the inquiry and to facilitate it by interweaving the analyses of the data, by moving from a 2D to multidimensional visualizations of the collected data that can allow dynamic representation of spatial and temporal evolution, leading to a subsequent phase of the investigation (mining, mapping, images converted in holograms, text narratives...). The dynamic database would allow to increase the number of outputs through diverse forms of intersection of the data, supporting thematic investigations that adopt a cross-cultural

perspective and producing new narratives on the origins, usage, transformation, fortune, circulation and impact of a set of notions and protagonists operating at global scale. The last goal would be to work in the future on the terminological mobility that crossed national, cultural, disciplinary and linguistic frontiers.

I am aware that what I brought here is an extremely fragmented and heterogeneous collection of data, that will be verified, integrated and implemented in the next years. At the moment the core of this corpus of periodicals is made of Italian and North-American journals, which have been observed on a relatively long period of their production.

The occasions to try to test in some way the use of this corpus of data arrived through a recent research experience that aimed to map, at various levels, the transfer of a spectrum of urban notions, visions, and concepts between America and Italy in the aftermath of WWII. I would like to come back to the idea that Andrea Urushima introduced yesterday about the importance of having Bi-lingual and Bi-cultural translations of terms, notions and models. The case of the Italian planning culture is very interesting because it shows in the incorporation and hybridization of a set of ideas transiting from North-America, not only a misunderstanding of the aims and values that originated certain North-American models, but also the instrumental use of certain imported notions, in order to legitimate undergoing programs, policies and planning decisions. This is, for instance, the history of the reception and revision of the concepts of “neighborhood”, “urban design”, “city region”, and a plurality of experiences that were incorporated into the discourses and the professional practice of planners and architects in Italy in the Post-War period, showing evident misunderstanding, and misreading of certain models.

Thus, starting from the investigation of the transatlantic exchange of urban notions, terms and visions in the 1950s and 1960s we tried to map the transfer of notions between two different cultures, working on a selected number of journals. We tried to examine and map the circulation and the fortune of two notions. In the first case the debate on urban design was observed through the analysis of the issues published by the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, between 1960 and 1965, working on the recurrence of the term, on the discourse on its definition, and on its impact on spatial forms

over the five years.

In the second case, the team documented the fortune of neighborhood as a dispositive in the post-war Italian architectural and planning culture (this exploration started with the organization of a seminar at the Politecnico di Milano in 2015, devoted to the multiple interpretations of this urban concept in diverse geopolitical contexts over the 20th century). The main aim was to map, through the analysis of post-war Italian magazines like *Metron*, the presence of the discourse on neighborhood in the Italian press in the immediate post-war years. They documented its various use in public housing projects, in planning policies, in academic circles and in the practice, showing an evident misunderstanding of the original aims of the concept.



5. Architectural Record, Analysis of the “Section_Comics”, 1959.

To conclude I bring an example of data visualization, that can possibly help to understand how a research on the circulation of figures, projects and notions can be addressed, and what is the impact of knowledge circulation on the production of architectural and urban knowledge. The reference that I want to propose is the research database/map “East Art Map. A Re-construction of the History of Contemporary Art in Eastern Europe 1945-2000”, developed by the artists of the IRWIN group in

Ljubljana and funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Culture. This project was developed in two moments. The first moment occurred in a tentative to propose for the first time a map produced through the contribution of 24 art curators, critics and artists that were asked to present ten important art projects from their country. This information was integrated into a map and aimed at showing the impact that these figures had in the process of construction of the Eastern European Art between 1945 and 2000. From this project a book was published by the MIT Press in 2006. Here the questions “who, where and when” framed the analysis of the process of circulation of figures and projects. The second moment, aimed at an objective analysis of the information and a democratic opening of these researches, made publicly available these maps and convert them into an internet open platform, through a process of participative map construction and through the contribution of visitors to the site that have the possibility to change the map by adding examples, projects and figures. This could be an example of how this treatment of a dynamic platform can work to investigate the exchange and transfer of models, figures and ideas.

Questions and Comments

(Hugo SEGAWA) Thank you Gaia. Some years ago, I had to read all the collection of the magazine *Arts & Architecture* to see how many times and which projects of Latin American architects were published in that magazine, because I had to write an article about this. It is interesting to see that there are some key words that recurrently appeared in this searching process, such as transnational, cross-breeding, cross-national, cross-cultural, circulation, and transfer. Thus, I am curious about the practical process of using a database created following the samples you showed. I was wondering, for example, how could we probably map the Latin-American presence through those magazines?

(Gaia CAMELLINO) That is an important point and this is also why I decided to dedicate only a few sentences to the possibility to host on the platform multidimensional visualizations, even if this could be a useful tool to analyze architectural periodical press in an extended geographical context, crossing perspectives from different local traditions and working on the interrelation of figures, notions, projects and perspectives listed in a reference system. At the moment, the excel data set

and the archive of images was created working over single journals and allow a research on the list of the titles of all the articles (that include all the sections up to the advertisements), organizing groups of objects, according to an unusual way of cataloguing the information contained in magazines. So if the term “Latin America”, or the name of a Latin American architect or project, or the name of a place in Latin America is mentioned in the titles of articles of one of these sections it would be possible to identify them. But I think that this is still a very initial phase of the research. Our future aim will be to understand how to interrogate this data set, in order to analyze the circulation of authors, projects and ideas in different geographies and cultures. Until now we only worked on specific magazines but the interactions with the sciences of representing and processing information and knowledge can open up, from a methodological point of view, new critical perspectives in the research of 20th century architectural and urban history. However, I think that the search has to be “guided” by scholars and researchers. I’ll bring the example of the research on “urban design”, investigated not only through a search of the use of the term but also addressing the pre-history of the notion and its application through diverse design concepts. So, I also find it is still difficult to understand how a pure textual analysis can answer the questions of the research. However, if the aim is to understand when or where an architect or project is mentioned, that could be done quite easily through the complete indexing of all these journals. At the moment, I see the platform as a corpus of sources that can support and simplify the work of the researcher and allow further explorations in the future, but always dependent upon a critical operation of it.

(Hugo SEGAWA) For example, as a practical difficulty that I could identify in that process of research, almost all Latin American architecture will not be described by the word Latin America. So in *Arts & Architecture* I had to identify architects by name, from my own accumulated knowledge about Latin American architecture, or other’s architects by identifying the roots of a name, that could have a Spanish origin, but that could indicate a Spanish architect or a Mexican. So, if I did not know beforehand if it was a Spanish or Mexican, I would need to go through an even longer process of research. Thus, I think it is important to mention this kind of problem that might appear in the research process.

(Gaia CAMELLINO) I absolutely agree with you, and it will be fundamental to consider this kind of questions. I think there are some innovative aspects in this type of digital collection, comparing to other available database: the first is that in this case the work of indexing included all the sections of the journal, analyzing parts that were never taken in consideration in other database. Moreover the intersection of data set of texts and the archive of images can produce diverse types of information. Also we must remember that the work produced by students need to be verified and integrated in a quite systematic way in order to move from an educational experience to the format of a research project.

(Ana TOSTOES) Gaia, congratulations. I think it is a fantastic huge project, and I think everybody was impressed that you could do this work with the students. And I would also like to thank Hugo Segawa, because he was a pioneering in this kind of research concerning Latin America. I would like to mention that there was a publication in 2010, on our conference in Mexico of Docomomo and also in Pamplona, when the Navarra University made a seminar also addressing the research over journals and the circulation of knowledge. And I think there are a lot of inputs on these issues and this kind of research challenges, that we would love to have someone or a group of digital people able to help us to put this into clear and quantitative ways, and in very clear and simple databases. Myself I started my surveys in the end of the 1980s, when I tried to bring to the front the Postwar architecture in Portugal that was not recognized at the time. The first thing I did was to analyze one entire year of journals including the advertisement sections and all other sections. My question now, because we could spend a week here discussing such a stimulating topic, is that I think I understood your difficulty to select the journals to include and the journals to avoid, however when choosing the journals, did you choose it by the importance you think they have for your final goal which was to relate Italy and the USA? I mean, and allow me to be very Portuguese, is there any journal published in Portuguese? It is not because of Portugal, but it is because of the language. What I want to address is the cultural question because you might know that there are languages which are very strong in the world. You know that I have been doing research in former Portuguese colonies in Africa and we can see a very strong

cultural relationship also with Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, or Spain. So there is a kind of an Iberian American culture, something beyond the latin that could be important. For instance, to understand the importance of Brazil, it is also important to look at the Portuguese journals where the Brazilian architecture was largely published. To give you an example, the architecture of Carlo Scarpa was first published in the world in a Portuguese journal, in *Architecture*, a journal published from the 1930s to the 1980s during a long period. And this circulation of knowledge occurred in tight relation with Spain, Mexico and Colombia. So, when you choose the journals is it oriented towards building a worldwide vision that aims to relate Italy to North America?

(Gaia CAMELLINO) You are mentioning a crucial point. Since this seminar has been developed as an educational project conducted with international students, we decided to leave the groups of students free to choose the case studies, if they had the linguistic skills to work on the journals that they wanted to analyze. So, the only journal we were able to analyze in the Portuguese linguistic area was *Acropole* and I guess the reason why they were able to work on that journal was because it is available as an open source digital database coordinated by Hugo Segawa at Sao Paulo University. However, I think that the potentialities of the data collection can be better tested focusing on a precise timeframe and geographical context, as we did in the case of the investigation of the exchange between post-war Italian and North-American journals. Nevertheless, I found very fascinating, since the beginning, the possibility to investigate also less-explored cases, like journals published in non-Western contexts, that provide an interesting ground for the cross-reading of the magazines, to observe the circulation of concepts, models and ideas. The study of these journals allowed to revise certain official narratives, that still have their geographical focus on Western countries and culture and contributed to establish consolidated chronology. Through the cross-reading of the analytical works conducted on this spectrum of magazines and through the study of this network of worldwide relations, it is possible to see that certain canonic narratives can be partially revised and discussed. For instance, it is interesting to observe the changing network of international relations and set of references between the 1950s and 1960s. We strongly encourage the teams working on these journals to

pay a particular attention to the foreign influences and international exchanges, in order to understand how the models and references have been received and hybridized at the local level.

(Ana TOSTOES) If you allow me to finish, I believe Ernesto Nathan Rogers, with his project for *Casa Bella Continuita*, was also very important in Portugal and heavily published there. And he was also in some way part of a group that stood against Oscar Niemeyer and the wave of Brazilian modernism. You could link this, finally, with the other side, with the Eastern European countries, the socialist European architects and Niemeyer. It would be extremely interesting to see how Niemeyer was recaptured in the socialist world. And also it would be interesting to understand why the Italians with Rogers and the CIAMs attempted to give this kind of continuity by using networks and references from the USA and not so much from the UK.

(Gaia CARAMELLINO) It is true that also through this initial survey of post-war Italian and North-American journals, it is possible to enrich the already well-known map of transatlantic relations and professional, institutional and academic networks of exchange (I can just mention the role of Bruno Zevi, but also the presence of figures like Ludovico Quaroni and Ernesto Nathan Rogers in MIT and Harvard during the 1950s). However this survey shows that the “map” of the circulation of figures and texts is definitely more complex and still has to be investigated, also paying attention to less-documented authors and professionals. Our idea would be in the next years to develop this educational project and to create a research structure to convert this experience into a research program. Andrea suggested to consider the idea to start by establishing an international network of research projects.