

Quaderni | 1

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VILLES MINIERES | MINING CITIES

edited by

Cecilia Fumagalli, Eliana Martinelli, Emilo Mossa



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Villes Minières | Mining Cities

(edited by Cecilia Fumagalli, Eliana Martinelli, Emilio Mossa)

All the photos credits are listed below the images

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Introduction

Discovering the World through Travel

Emilio Mossa

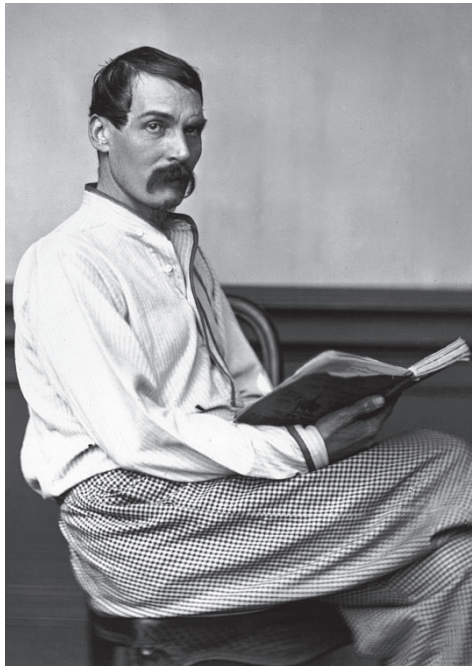
Travel has always been a way to learn from different realities, to investigate unknown and unexplored paths, to collect and bring back home ideas and solutions to different issues. That was the purpose of the *Grand Tour*, the famous trip throughout Europe undertaken by upper-class artists, writers and intellectuals from the 17th and 18th century onwards. This gave wealthy, well-dressed and well-groomed young people the chance to discover European, and mostly Italian (a stop in Venice and Rome was almost mandatory), sculpture, painting and architecture. The bravest among them went further east, in search of more dangerous and unexplored lands. In fact, almost at the same time, travel diaries make their appearance all over Europe, contributing to spread the knowledge of different cultures. The diary of a crazy man, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Mecca* by Richard Francis Burton (Torquay, 1821 – Trieste, 1890), who put his life at risk for this purpose, is a great example of this new practice¹.

The goal of NOSTOI is to continue on this path, rediscovering travel as a means of acquiring and producing knowledge. Workshops are one way to accomplish this goal. *Villes Minières* | *Mining Cities* should be seen in this light: NOSTOI's first workshop is a journey in the old sense of the word. We look at reality around us with the eyes of a foreign visitor, then we discover problems and constraints, analyze them, and try to suggest solutions

¹ See: Richard Francis Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Mecca* (London: Tylston and Edwards, 1893).

derived from the knowledge that each student and professor has brought back home in order to solve similar issues in a different location.

This workshop is the best way to represent NOSTOI, an association set on spreading culture among cultures. As the foundation chart clearly states, our association is aimed at “promoting, sharing and developing research and culture”, while taking a clear stance against ‘big-bus tours’ that support the kind of irresponsible tourism that is making the world a globalized museum at the detriment of any differences and cultural specificities. In conclusion, if the workshop has been a success, this is because of the active involvement of students and professors from the faculties of architecture of the Milan Polytechnic, the University of Florence and the International University of Rabat, which I thank on behalf of NOSTOI.



Sir Richard Francis Burton in 1854
Source: Creative Commons

Questioning the Mediterranean City

Cecilia Fumagalli, Eliana Martinelli

“Marseilles is a Mediterranean city. And the Mediterranean has two shores. Not just ours. Today, Europe only talks of one, and France is all too ready to fall in line. Making this sea, for the first time, a border between East and West, North and South. Separating us from Africa and Asia Minor. On behalf of the lost Andalucias, the silent Alexandria, the divided Tangier, the massacred Beirut, we ought to remember that European culture was born on the shores of the Mediterranean, in the Middle East. Europa, lest we forget, was a Phoenician goddess abducted by Zeus!”¹

1 Jean Claude Izzo, *Garlic, Mint and Sweet Basil* (New York: Europa Editions, 2013): 29-30.

Not too far from the Mediterranean Sea, 2018. It was a cloudy and foggy December Sunday in Milan. Cecilia and Francesco were chatting on WhatsApp, discussing plans to do something together in Morocco.

The idea had come from a journal article that Francesco had chanced upon online, dealing with the new cities that are being built and designed in the so-called Phosphate Valley of Morocco. Following some quick research on the subject, Cecilia, whose conflicted and passionate relationship with Morocco had started some ten years before, assumed that something must have been done in order to preserve the ideas behind the rich historic and modern architectural and urban heritage of Morocco and pass it on to future generations. How would it be

possible to transmit this heritage? Is it best to keep it frozen or to allow for some transformation? Certain she would find fertile ground for these and other questions, Cecilia brought these questions to Francesco and other friends and colleagues: Eliana, Emilio, Martina and Michele were happy to join the discussion and contribute to it. This is how everything started, and why we are finally publishing this book.

The international workshop on architectural and urban design *Villes Minières | Mining Cities* was devised in order to open a debate on the future of a region that is destined to become increasingly urbanized due to the presence of phosphate mines, which feed an immense national and international economic empire. Since the 1920s, however, the region has been occupied by phosphate extraction plants, around which cities such as Khouribga, Benguerir and Youssoufia among others were built.

During the workshop, the participants (both professors and students) explored the topic of contemporary town planning in Morocco by elaborating proposals and design ideas for a new urban settlement. From 8th to 15th June 2019, following a road trip from Casablanca to Beni Mellal, a group of six teachers and twelve students, was welcomed by the School of Architecture of the International University of Rabat, where they shared, discussed and drafted ideas and proposals.

Starting from the analysis of Moroccan case studies from the late 1920s onwards, attention was directed towards the definition of urban strategies and architectural designs. Looking back on a number of well-known architects' past experiences in Morocco, our contribution aims at rethinking and developing compositional methods for the design of contemporary *villes nouvelles*. The workshop started from considering the importance of bringing the students' attention on a crucial theme in our time, one with which the future generations of architects will probably have to deal. The Mediterranean world lays along two shores; what we tend to forget, as

citizens as well as architects, is that we should overcome an approach to design that is essentially Eurocentric. Indeed, it is important to look at the experience of the European architects who played a decisive role on shaping Mediterranean architecture, by trying to understand different settlements criteria, like those of the 'Islamic city', and making the local tradition the focus of the project. Thanks to this, it is possible to highlight the similarities and differences between Mediterranean cities, from which to extrapolate a universal method of design.

The book collects the scientific contributions of the professors involved in the workshop and the designs drafted by the participating students. The first part of the book is dedicated to a more general presentation of the scientific background (Collotti) and the design methodology (Landsberger, Caja), while the second one approaches the references adopted (El Mounni, Fumagalli) and the third one the projects drafted (Martinelli).