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City Scans. For an Emotional Survey Formula:
Walking, Stumbling, Detecting, Drawing, Measuring and Mapping

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President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

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Abstract

Contemporary knowledge is increasingly based on the viewing of digital images rather than on direct experience. Similarly, city centres are not only made of historical real estate to observe and study to be preserved: a physical-experience of a place –'from inside'- involves all the five senses; as a matter of fact, there are many temporary elements to be fascinated or disturbed by, or just to be beware of, that must be considered before planning any action.
Urban planners were used to designing on a stated urban map, they visualized cities as if looking down from an airplane; but the aerial view can't focus on how citizens actually dwell and live the city. Nowadays the dream of a perfect urban plan has failed: architects are called to act as anthropologists and detect (not foretell) human behaviours inside the city.
The submitted paper discusses the didactic and research experience carried out during one of the Urban and Environmental Survey courses, held at the School of Architecture and Design in Ascoli Piceno (Italy): it presents the theoretical approach and the graphic results obtained by the students. The training was not merely based on technical measuring instructions for drawing visible architectural facts (measured drawing), but it consisted in facing a series of specific analyses related to the sensible aspects, which can be detected in the city centre of Ascoli Piceno.

Key words:

Corresponding Author:

Premise

> 'Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consumed by a collectivity in a state of distraction.'(Benjamin 1936)[1]

Some cities seem to be timeless and motionless: their poetry consists in a synecdoche: the ancient Main Sight is the mute witness of time; careless of the 'liquid' modernity we live in. In everyday life, the historical centres of these cities appear as a showcase for tourists, with sleepy-looking inhabitants, trapped in the repetition of their daily routine. The Italian marble built town of Ascoli Piceno could be an example. Ascoli Piceno is also a venue, where over a thousand students of Architecture and Design repeat, uncountable times per day, the same route to the University facilities and then back home, where they spend sleepless nights-in-front-of-their-computers. According to Benjamin, students are included in that collectivity which consumes the city 'in a state of distraction'. The space is passively acknowledged, when routinely rushing to a series of interconnected locations (home, school, pubs…). Furthermore, contemporary knowledge is increasingly based on the viewing of images rather than on direct experience. Today we can "visit" almost any place on the planet via the World Wide Web. Users of Google's *Satellite* and *Street View* systems can get to know cities through maps made up of colour photographs; it is not only possible to find one's way around but also to visually experience the local environment in a realistic way, to the point of retaining memories almost as authentic as those originating from direct experience. The project *I've never been there*, by the artist Andrea Bosio[2], demonstrates that even architectural photography no longer requires leaving your desk: his subjects are representations of major cities and their celebrated landmarks, acquired from *Google Street View*.

To counter this detachment from the city, you should 'walk out of your front door as if you've just arrived from a foreign country; to discover the world in which you already live; to begin the day as if you've just gotten off the boat from Singapore and have never seen your own doormat or the people on the landing … it is this that reveals the humanity before you, unknown until now.[3]'

Unsuspiciously, a stimulus to this may come from a University course in Urban Survey, a milestone in the Italian Architecture curricula, that traditionally aims at teaching traditional and innovative techniques of instrumental surveying (topography).

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[1]Benjamin, W. (2008 [1936]). *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, And Other Writings on Media.* English ed. by Jennings M. W., Doherty B., Levin T. Y., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p.40.

[2]For the project's images, also see Bosio, A. (2012). *I've never been there*, in "DOMUS", issue #956, March 2012, p. 49.

[3]Benjamin, W (1999), *The Arcades Project*, (En. translation by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, p. 488 (§ $M_{10a, 4}$).

Walking surveyors. Overcoming 'The Two Cultures'

> 'Literary intellectuals at one pole, at the other scientist […] Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension, […] They have a curious distorted image of each other. Their attitudes are so different that, even on the level of emotion, they can't find much common ground' (Snow 1959) [1]

The most traditional approach to the university courses of urban or architectural survey focuses on historical buildings and monuments: survey is meant as a scientific practice aimed at restoration of the cultural heritage. Final measured drawings can be applied for various aims as restoration, archiving, trade, etc.

A different approach could be not directly "landing" on the object, but observing the amniotic fluid that surrounds it; the practice could focus not on solids, but on the voids of the open space and its multifaceted aspects.

What would happen if the practice of survey was experienced as a performative practice that, before taking measurements, acted as "emotional" tension? How would the students' perception of the city change if their surveys were not assigned by the teacher, but originated by strolling in the historical centre?

To counter the dualism between "the two cultures" described by Snow, scientific and objective competences can be contaminated by an artistic practice: the flânerie.

Walking aimlessly, having activated one's eyes-ears-nose-hands-and-feet, perceptions can become an urge to explore the urban landscape; we can discover ourselves to be investigators, searching for the "human" and the "unconscious" aspects of the city.

Walking is (e)motion; the "e" between brackets highlights three meanings at the same time: movement, emotion, motive. These words are related to the same Latin root, the verb *movere*. In the *Atlas of Emotions*, Giuliana Bruno had already noticed: "motion produces emotion, and that, correlatively, emotion contains a movement" [2]; the further and third piece of language reveals that in order to move around and get moved or excited there must be a motive, a reason.

This approach can lead architects and architecture students to pursue any kind of project: restoration, new buildings or urban design. Consider nineteenth-century arcades (*les passages de Paris*) and the ways their construction healed the centre of Paris from the hygienic and economic points of view; then wonder about how much the birth of these tunnels has influenced customs and traditions, working "as a past become space"[3]. Nowadays,

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[1] Snow, C.P. (2001 [1959]), *The Two Cultures*. London: Cambridge University Press, p.4.
[2] "The major premise is that motion produces emotion, and that, correlatively, emotion contains a movement" Bruno, G (2006), *Atlante delle emozioni. In viaggio tra arte, architettura e cinema*, Mondadori, MIlano 2006, p.7.
[3] Benjamin, W (1999), op. cit., p.923.

walking "inside" the centre of Ascoli, for example, one can notice flags, ribbons and symbols, hanging from windows and balconies; these reveal a strong sense of self-representation by the inhabitants which would be concealed and would lose its meaning if the narrow streets (called "rue"), anachronistically, became covered spaces (arcades).

Urban planners are used to design on a stated urban map, they visualize the sites as if looking down from an airplane; but this kind of view can't catch how citizens dwell and live the city[1].

In order to reach a profound knowledge of urban landscape as a place for intervention, some contemporary approaches to urban planning try to overcome formulations merely based on the top-down view of maps, by involving people (interviewing them, for instance) as first action.

Contemporary planning should consider not only the geographical aspect or traditional use of space, but also its dwellers' spontaneous answer. This is due to the fact that cities are not only made of real estate, but they can be read as representations of their dwellers.

In addition, the practice of walking (to investigate space) is becoming more and more a domain of Art and Architecture.

This is the critical sensibility that was presented to the students; they were asked to choose a starting point and progress in outlining a path, subjectively oriented by urban *menhir*, as that European walker, who "never seems completely out of reach of the next bell."[2] Their task was to walk in groups, without any fear of stumbling to observe the unexpected. 'Losing time is earning space', as declaimed by the collective of architects and artists called 'Stalker'.

Silent American comedies are the most impressive works of art, which have been able to show the city as the chaos caused by its inhabitants. The city - where Buster Keaton, Chaplin or Harold Lloyd were continuously stumbling - was a vaudeville of running cars, overhead beams, dumped objects one could trip over. The representation of such factual city by those artists was mostly a means to understand the inner soul of urban society. Nowadays, the dream of a perfect urban plan has failed: architects are called to act as anthropologists and detect (not foretell) human behaviours inside the city.

The proposed approach required the students to go through the haptic space of the city and to recognize the stratified layers (signs, smells, lights...) over the "crime scene", overcoming the views shown in some kind of photographs that emphasize only the architectural shapes. In this way, the city looks as if it were naked. The aim was to coat the "naked city" featured in

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[1]The aesthetics of the flight has been very important in the XX century, although some words of Le Corbusier reveal themselves that aerial views are mostly useful for planning new great American cities: 'This American country is dimensioned for the plane. It seems to me that airline networks will become its efficient nervous system.' (Le Corbusier (1991 [1929]), Precisions: On the Present State of Architecture and City Planning, MIT Press, Cambridge, Ma.)

[2]Steiner, G. (2006), *Una certa idea d'Europa*, Garzanti, Milano 2006, p.33. (En. Translation by the author)

postcards with real-life signs, reminiscent of what the pioneers of photography (from Eugène Atget to Walker Evans, Berenice Abbott, Brassai, …) captured as a series of significant human transits.

Hence, the second ingredient of the urban survey (e)motivating formula is stumbling as Buster Keaton did.

An ancient satirical anecdote tells about the philosopher Thales of Miletus falling into a well while gazing at the stars: stumbling is a way of detecting something you weren't aware of while following landmarks, with a bottom up point of view. Stumbling can be a performative action, that can be meant as *ludus* itself but also as a strategy to choose (after the fall) the punctual elements to investigate by surveying: when you fall, you end up touching something.

Once again, it is Benjamin who stresses the haptic perception of architecture, related to the everyday tactile habits (Benjamin 1936). Exploring space with the sense of touch, a type of perception which does not merely belong to blind people, is generally opposed to vision and contemplation. *Homo videns* seem to ignore their five-senses physical origin and the haptic learning[1]. 'The eye assigns them [forms] names, but only the hand truly knows them'[2] (Bachelard 1942).

A conscious surveying formula should consist of looking and touching. Sketching is an exercise for looking, measuring can be an experience for touching. From the operative point of view, students were asked to adopt the traditional instruments of surveying in order to get in touch with the stones, and to entrust the stones' memory to drawing. Traditional methodology is based on preparatory sketches (eidotypes) of measurements and triangulations. Precise calculations are then taken and noted on the sketch papers. Students should also use speed screening surveying techniques (Photogrammetry), because photography captures the *continuum,* allowing others to reinterpret the collected data at any given time.

Walkers and Maps. Strategies of Representation

'The pictures did exist, not in the streets where they had been drawn,
but in Quinn's red notebook.' (Auster1990)[3]

Walking as nomads, we disclose space; this is the zero-degree of Architecture: footprints can be invisible, but retracing their path we can investigate the relation between walkers (society) and space. Maps have not always meant to be cartographies, mathematized and objective instrument adopted by governors as a tool to control space. Vitruvius defined three main formats to represent space: *ichnografia*, *orthographia* and *scaenographia*[4];

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[1]Also see, Sartori, G. (2000) *Homo videns*,, Bari: Laterza.

[2]Bachelard, G. (1999 [1942]). *Water and dreams*: *An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, Dallas: The Dallas Institute for Humanities & Culture, p.1.

[3]Auster, P. (1990). *The New York Trilogy*, New York: Penguin Books, p.86.

[4]*Species dispositionis, quae graece dicuntur ideae, sunt hae: ichnographia, orthografia,*

similarly, it is possible to relate them to three kinds of space. Cartography isolated the footprint space from the other two spaces: the space of walls (that we can directly touch) and the scaenographic space (what we see all around us).

Originally, maps were subjective interpretations of time and space. Drawing a map implied a series of operations to retrace a narrative or help "wayfinding".

Back to the Middle Age, soldiers and monks, the travellers *par excellence,* travelled all over Europe; monk Matthew Paris (1200 ca.-1259) drew the itinerary from London to The Holy Land in his manuscript *Chronica majora.* By observing its pages, one can notice that its maps are a collection of different kinds of drawings, descriptions and notes. These representations were not made to help people on their journeys, but they were more like *memorandums* prescribing actions to be done. They typically featured only straight paths of trails, because sites, in medieval maps, were juxtaposed one into the other as space-time diversified stories; symbolic hierarchies of values were translated into signs to measure distances and different worlds. Before being geometric, medieval space was diachronic and symbolic, open to a wealth of possible interpretations[1].

Renaissance Perspective submitted places and space elements to a single point of view: an external point of view, outside representation[2]. The rise of modern scientific discourse between the 15th and 17th centuries saw geographical maps progressively moving away from depicting itineraries to more "theatrical" views (Atlases were then called "Theatres"). Itineraries disappeared and maps became a system to isolate geographical loci.

Maps have become plans: total, exclusive, synoptic displays. Nothing is neglected; everything is shown. The view is vertical and dominant (orthogonal projection); the observation point isn't directed to a specific place: it is everywhere and nowhere. From this perspective, 'the map is not only power: it is absolute power.'[3] The triumph of this way of mapping the world consisted in the aerial vision, until the art of the '60s touched ground again. They set the body in motion once more, undermining Modern certitudes and utopias. Even before Land Artists started to sculpt their 'Earth works', Guy Debord promoted the Drift. Roughly in the same period, the American urban planner Kevin

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scaenographia. Ichnographia est circini regulaeque modice continens usus, e qua capiuntur formarum in solis arearum descriptiones. Orthographia autem est erecta frontis imago modiceque picta rationibus operis futuri figura. Item scaenographia et frontis et laterum abscendentium adumbratio ad circinique centrum omnium linearum responsus.' (Vitruvius, *De architectura*, I liber,II,2)

[1] Also see Guerreau, A. (2002). 'Il significato dei luoghi nell'Occidente medioevale: struttura e dinamica di uno spazio specifico'. In: *Arti e storia nel medioevo. Tempi, spazi e istituzioni*, vol. I, ed. by E. Castelnuovo and G. Sergi, Torino: Einaudi.

[2] Panofsky, E. (2001). *La prospettiva "come forma simbolica". E altri scritti*, Milano: Feltrinelli.

[3] Marin, L. (2001). *Della rappresentazione*, It. ed. by L. Corrain, Roma: Meltemi, p. 88 (En. Trans by the author).

Lynch coined the word 'wayfinding' to define 'a consistent use and organization of definite-sensory-cues from the external environment'[1].

What kind of graphic representation can be used to record a surveyor experience based on walking?

'One of the main problems with the art of walking is translating the experience into an aesthetic form. The Dadaists and Surrealists didn't transfer their actions on a cartographic representation but avoided representation itself, resorting to literary narratives; the Situationists proposed psycho-geographical maps, but didn't mean to represent the actual trajectories of the drifts they made.'[2]

Map-making, in its various forms, keeps on returning in the history of representation.

In contemporary art maps meet collage. In the Lettristes' *Metagraphies influentielles*, maps are made with a collage of images and phrases from newspapers: once again, representation has been turned into pieces, made of fragments (of historical cities) floating in an empty space.

During our case study, students could experiment a hybrid narrative of drawings, photographs, notes, cartography, thematic-maps, infographics, perspective sketches and, of course, "traditional" tables (plans, elevations, sections), both trough traditional and digital techniques.

To record their experience, jumps of scale and different stylistic registers were allowed, in order to achieve a final synthesis of such hypertext: collage.

Collage, like maps, originates from a selection and juxtaposition of information, where space becomes a background for the figures that are on stage. Collage-making also offers the opportunity to decontextualize: cut out elements from a whole and then past them somewhere else. This technique, dear to the Dadaists and also to a critical approach to Architecture in the '60s and '70s, has been chosen as a means to synthesise what is an abstraction and conceptual elaboration of space in one single visualisation. Most importantly, this elaboration arose from the physical experience that one has had of space itself.

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[1]Lynch, K. (1960), *The image of the city*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
[2]Careri, F. (2006). *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 112 (En. translation by the author)

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Figure 1. *Walker's maps in history. From the top: a) Matthew Paris, Historia Anglorum, Chronica majora, Part III, England (St Albans), 1250-1259, Royal 14 C. vii, f. 4r; c) Problems of Boston image from K. Lynch, The Image of the City (1960)*
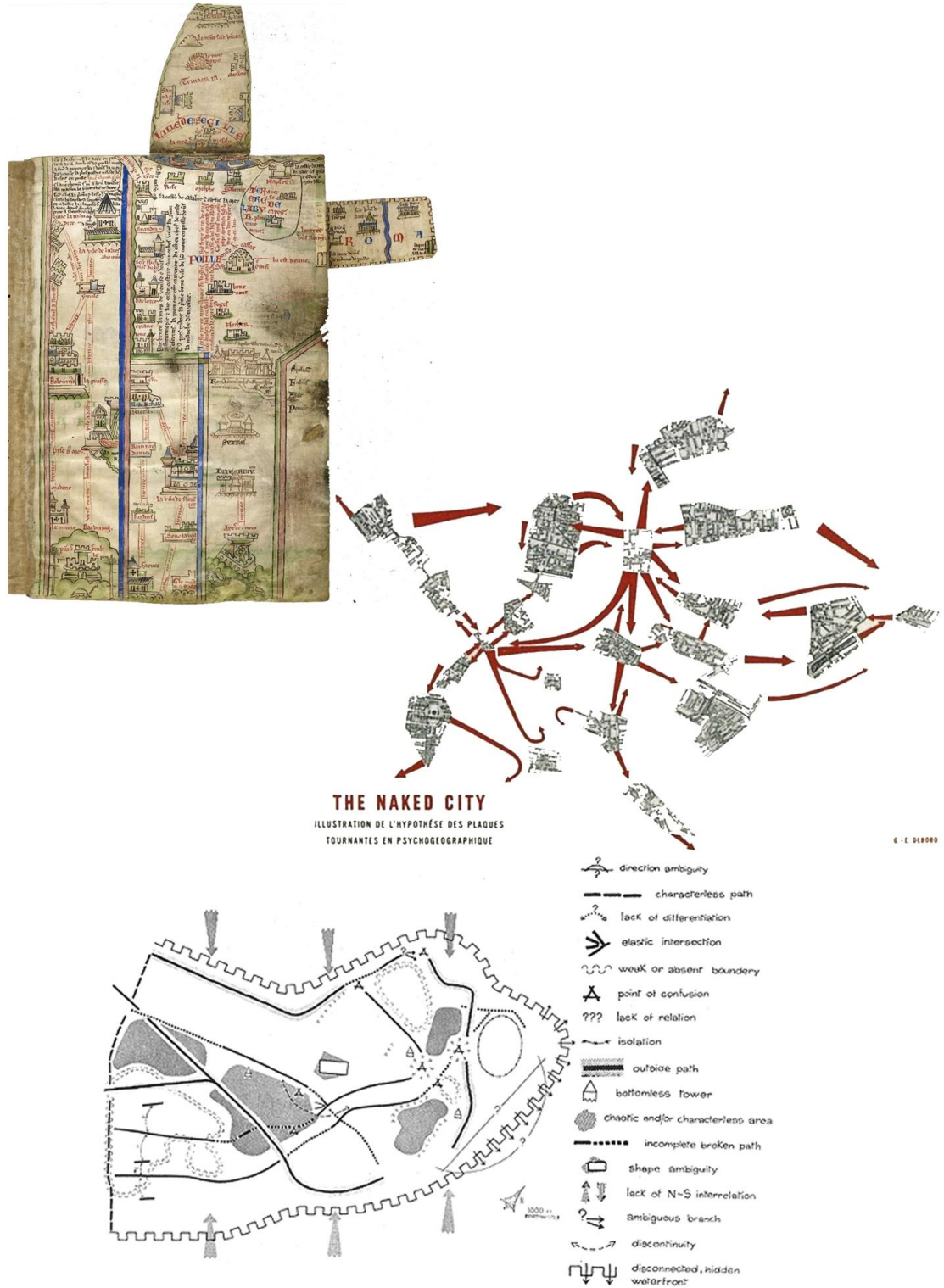
Figure 2. *Walking in Ascoli Piceno. Synoptic map of the walking routes chosen by the students (Nov. 2012)*
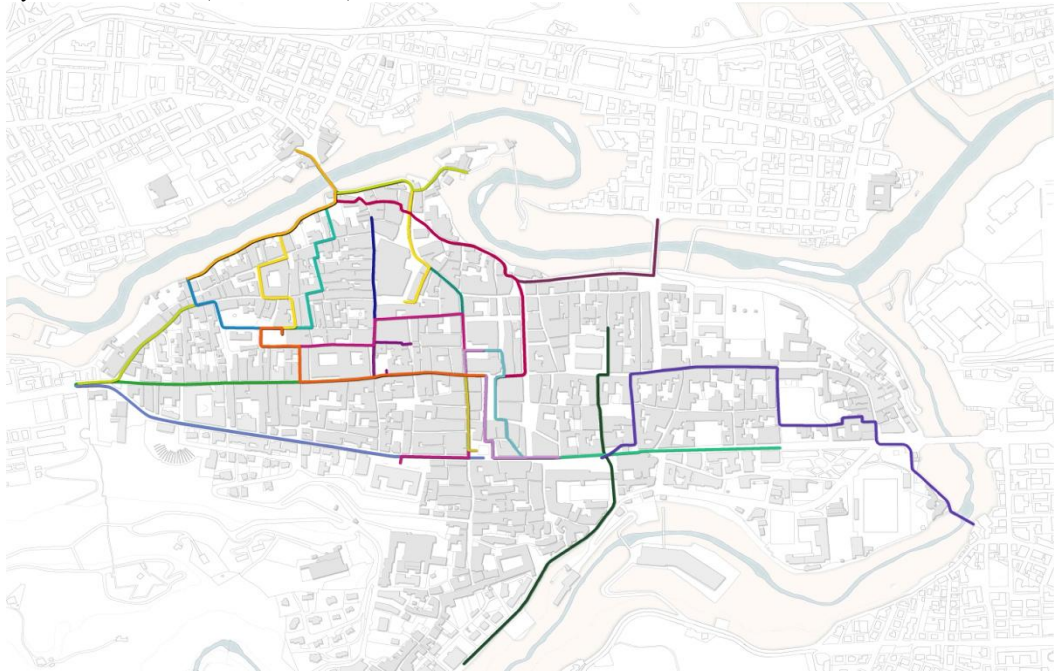
Figure 3. *Ichnographic, orthographic and scaenographic spaces*

@students: M. Di Bernardo, A. Marinelli, G. Vespo

Figure 4. *Wayfinding in Ascoli Piceno (students' table)*

@students: D. Petrini, C. Scartozzi, D. Neroni, S. Buttafoco, S. Rapini

Figure 5. *Surveying instruments and methods (students' table)*

@students: C. Marè, M. Makhoul, E. Montevidoni, S. Marchetti

Figure 6. *Finding layers along the itinerary: street lights. (students' tables)*

@students: F. Nughes, F. P. Russo, A. Ulisse)
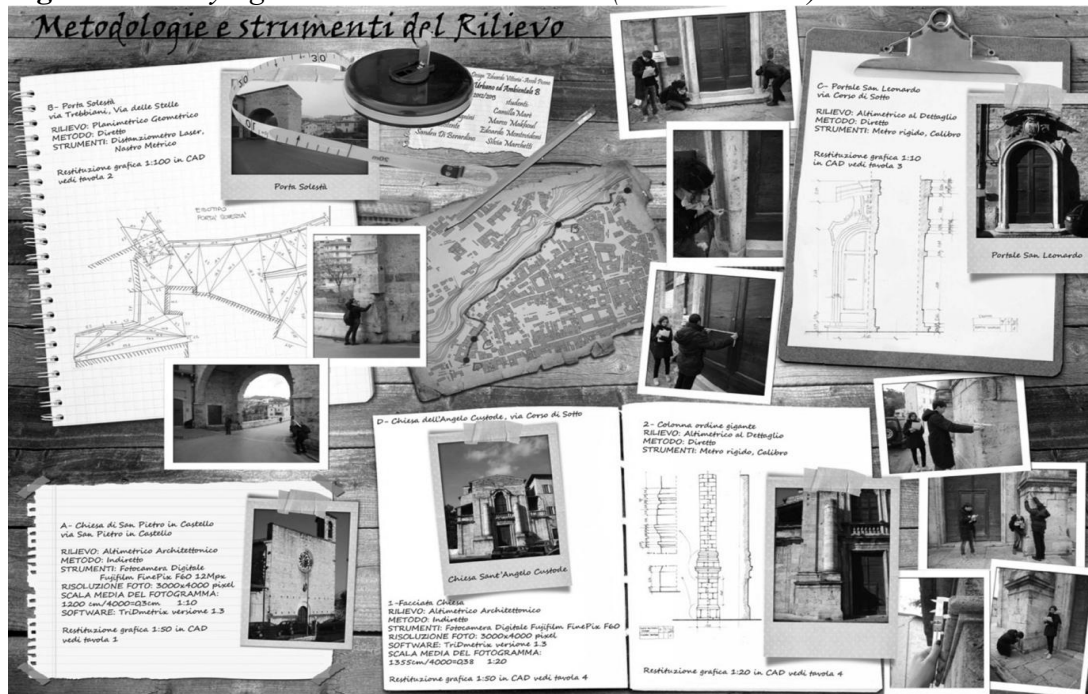
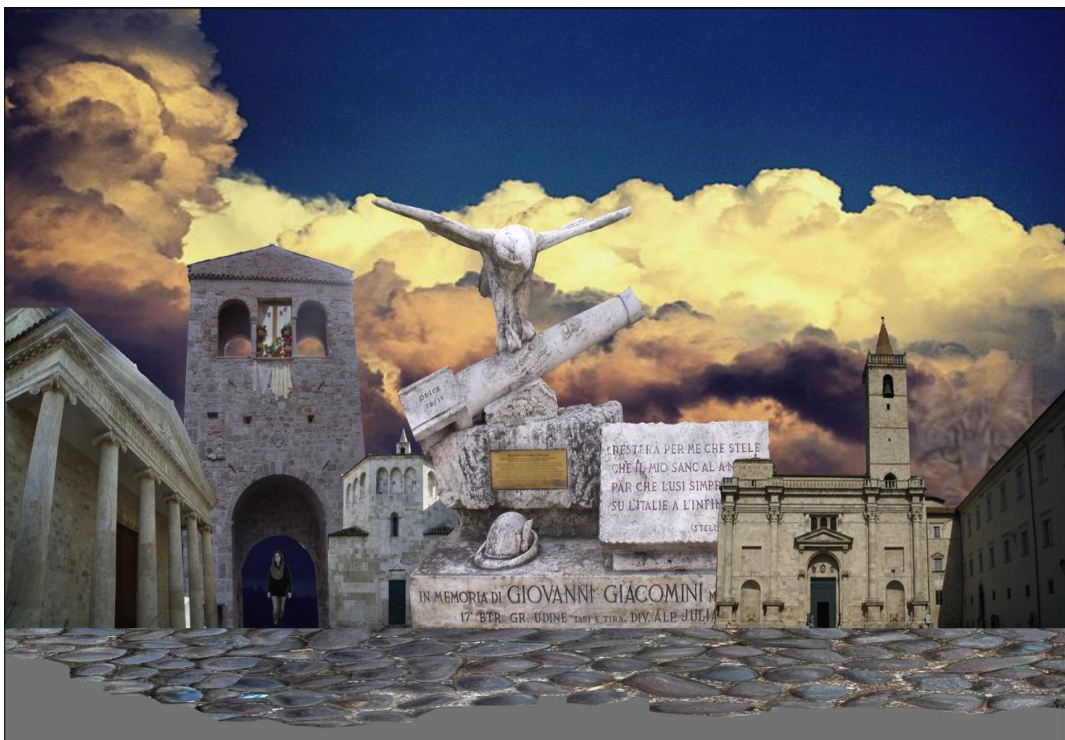**Figure 7.** *Surveying tables*
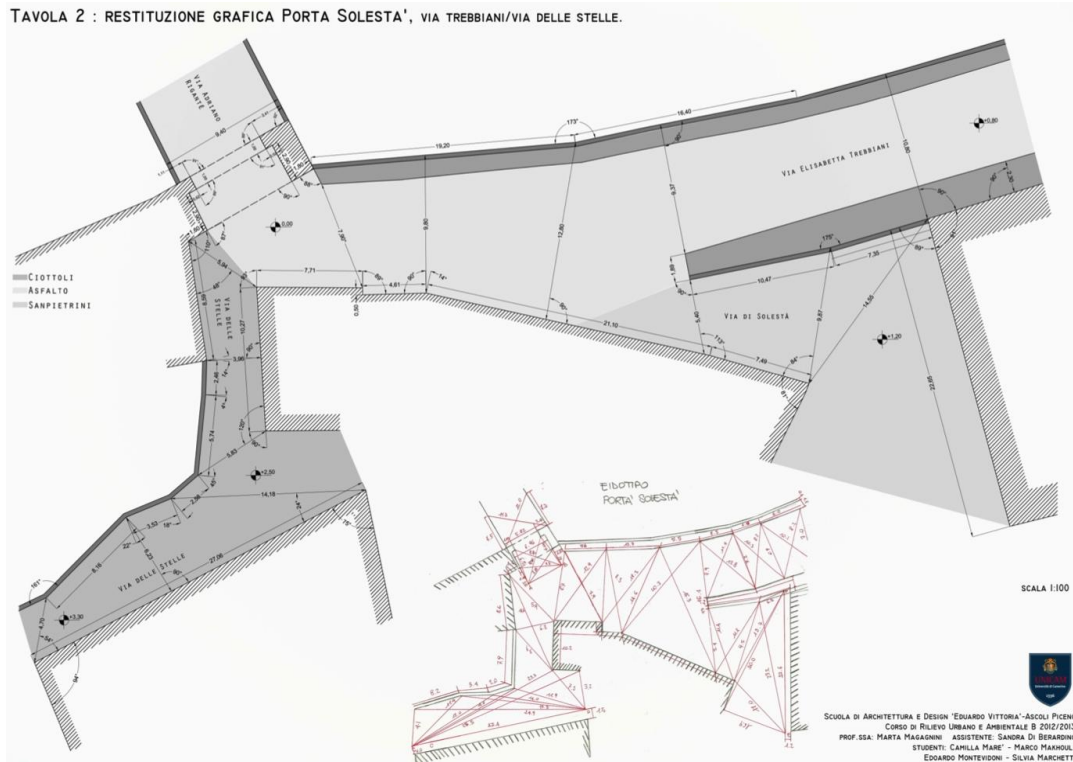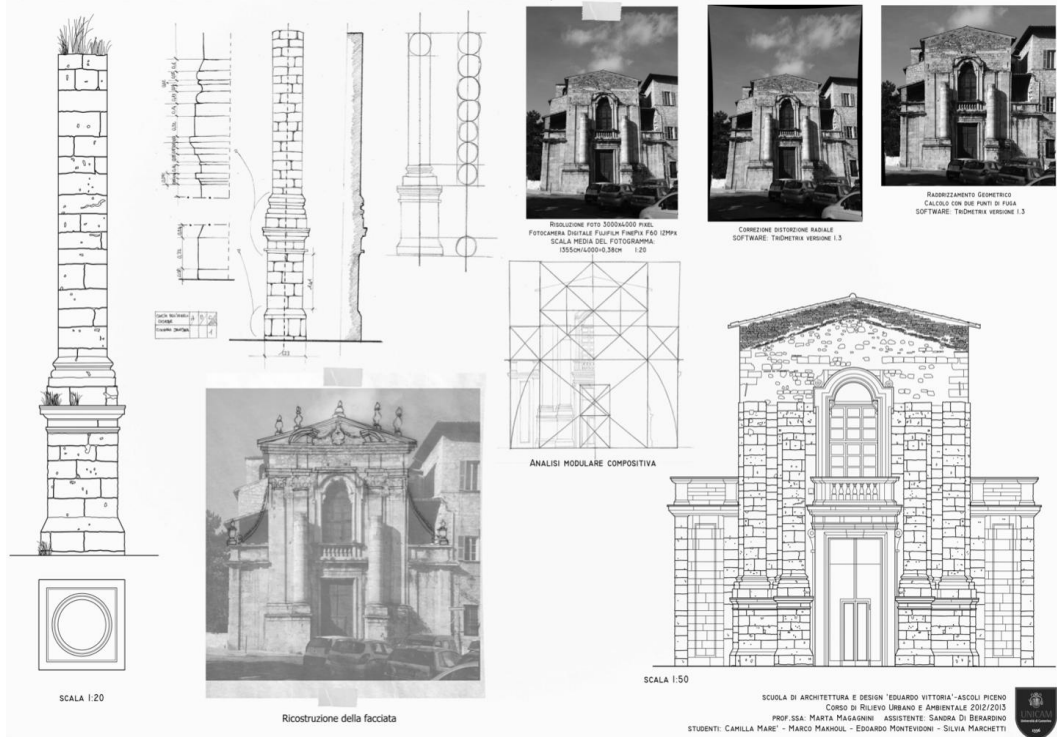
@students: C. Marè, M. Makhoul, E. Montevidoni, S. Marchetti

Figure 8. *Sinthetizing the walking routes: collages*

Al margine della storia @students: M. Makhoul, E. Montevidoni

Mente Locale @student: Nancy Troiani **Premise**