Italy, 1980s: Touring Club Italiano's Guides and the Non-monumental Heritage

Non-monumental heritage, cultural dissemination, Touring Club Italiano, 1980s, tourist guide

/Abstract

Between 1983 and 1985, the T.C.I. (Touring Club Italiano) published the three hardcover, large size volumes of the collection *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori, literally Cities to be discovered. A guide to Italy's secondary towns*, directed by historian and geographer Lucio Gambi.

The guide label is misleading for such an ambitious editorial project. A notable series of long form essays by prominent scholars reconstruct the architectural and urban development of each of the more than 200 selected Italian towns. All texts are accompanied by a rich iconography, also featuring specifically commissioned aerial views, and cartography, including diagrams detailing the main phases and events of the agglomeration's growth.

The *Guida ai centri minori* seamlessly fitted into the T.C.I.'s cultural agenda of the time, aimed at rerouting mass tourism away from its traditional destinations. As a matter of fact, the three books reached a wide, lay public, as they were delivered as Christmas gifts to hundreds of thousands of the association's members.

They were more than a practical tool for tourists, though. The focus on the centri minori was the occasion to shape an innovative, comprehensive representation of a non-monumental Italy, one which could replace the outdated stereotypes of the Bel Paese. Moreover, thanks to its one-of-a-kind positioning between scholarly research and dissemination, the *Guida ai centri minori* acted as a powerful tool to mainstreaming this up-to-date representation.

Starting from this case study, this paper aims at outlining the 1980s T.C.I.'s cultural project for the dissemination to a larger audience of the latest advancements of the high-culture debate on Italy's non-monumental heritage.

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Introduction

Between 1983 and 1985, the T.C.I. – Touring Club Italiano delivered to its half million members the three volumes of the collection *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori*¹ (*Cities to be Discovered. A Guide to Italy's Secondary Towns*) [Fig. 1]. The guide label is diminishing for this ambitious editorial project, featuring essays by prominent scholars and an extraordinarily rich iconography. The Guida fitted into the T.C.I.'s cultural agenda of the time, trying to reroute mass tourism away from its traditional destinations. It also coincided with an advanced phase of a decades-long debate on the transformations of the Italian territory, and on the country's non-monumental heritage.

I will argue here that the *Guida* was more than a practical tool for tourists. The focus on the *centri minori* shaped an innovative, comprehensive representation of a non-monumental Italy, one which could replace the outdated stereotypes of the *Bel Paese*. Moreover, thanks to its one-of-a-kind positioning between scholarly research and dissemination, the *Guida* acted as a powerful tool to mainstreaming this up-to-date representation.

This paper consists of three parts: first, some background is provided on the T.C.I. and its editorial production; a focus on the *Guida* follows, describing its general features, its authors and their approach; finally, its main elements of originality are highlighted.

Fig. 1

The covers of the three volumes of the collection *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori*, directed by Lucio Gambi and published by the Touring Club Italiano between 1983 and 1985. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

¹ Touring Club Italiano, ed., *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori*, 3 vols. (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1983-1985).

The T.C.I. and the debate on the transformations of Italian territories

Founded in 1894 to promote a culturally-oriented tourism, the T.C.I. has remained since then consistent with a liberally-inspired approach to cultural dissemination, which believed that cultural elites had a responsibility for educating the common people². According to historian Stefano Pivato, it has contributed to "a broader educational project, targeting the average Italian, promoted by the liberal establishment."³ The T.C.I. has steadily published maps, magazines and guides, their remarkable circulation ensured by their automatic delivery to the association's members⁴. The latter steadily increased from an average of about 170 thousand in the early 1950s⁵ to 500 thousand in 1965⁶. By the late 1970s, art critic Filippo Zevi could claim that "no Italian family exists that hasn't heard of the T.C.I.'s outreach activities."⁷

Beginning in the 1950s, the heavy transformations of Italian cities and territories⁸ were the subjects of an intense debate. In a period of economic growth and hectic building speculation, this debate focused in the first place on the denunciation of the destruction of the country's heritage and traditional landscapes. At the same time, new categories were elaborated on a theoretical level to interpret Italy's changing territories, with a more constructive and design-oriented approach, as opposed to simply lamenting the destruction of the country's heritage. The notion of *centro storico*⁹ now operated on two levels: first, it shifted attention from the monument to the urban fabric as a whole; and second, it attempted to reconcile history and modernity, presenting the preservation of the ancient

² In a sense, the T.C.I. shares the fundamentals of its liberal-inspired approach to cultural dissemination with other associations that in the second half of the 20th century were advocating for the preservation and a correct use of the national heritage, such as Italia Nostra (founded in 1955), the ANCSA – National Association for Historic and Artistic Centers (founded in 1960) and the FAI – Fondo Ambiente Italiano (founded in 1975). They all believe in what is, according to German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, one of the basis on a liberal interpretation of the relationship between cultural élites and public opinion, namely that: "Educated and powerful citizens must form an elite public, and their arguments must influence the public opinion". *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2015), 157. 1st German edition Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962. (translation by the author)

³ Stefano Pivato, Il Touring Club Italiano (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 9. (translation by the author)

⁴ Between 1914 and 1926, for instance, the T.C.I. publishes the first edition of the *Guida rossa* (Red Guide), the very first Italian guide to Italy, whose 16 volumes are printed in more than 6 million copies. Pivato, *II Touring Club Italiano*, 85.

⁵ Pivato, Il Touring Club Italiano, 138.

⁶ Ibid., 151.

⁷ Filippo Zevi, "Le altre città e il paesaggio italiano", in *Gli Alinari fotografi a Firenze 1852-1920*, eds. Wladimiro Settimelli and Filippo Zevi (Florence: Edizioni Alinari, 1977), 255, cited in Leonardo Di Mauro, "L'Italia e le guide turistiche dall'Unità ad oggi", in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 5, *Il paesaggio*, ed. Cesare De Seta (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1982), 406. (translation by the author)

⁸ On the history of Italy in the second half of the 20th century see, amongst the others: Guido Crainz, *II paese mancato. Dal miracolo economico agli anni '80* (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2005); Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006, 1st edition 1989). On the history of Italian architecture and urbanism during the same decades, as related to the transformations of the country's landscapes, see, amongst the others: Giovanni Durbiano and Matteo Robiglio, *Paesaggio e architettura nell'Italia contemporanea* (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2003); Arturo Lanzani, I paesaggi italiani (Rome: Melterni Editore, 2003).

⁹ The notion of *centro storico* acquires new centrality after the publication of the seminal Gubbio Charter, in 1960. The charter was drafted on the occasion of the *Convegno sulla salvaguardia e il risanamento dei centri storici* (Conference on the Preservation and the Rehabilitation of Historic Centers), held in Gubbio on September 17-19, 1960, organized by a group of architects, urbanists and intellectuals, as well as by several municipalities. Although it doesn't provide a clear definition of *centro storico*, the charter is a seminal reference for the reflection on the ancient centers, stressing the relevance of coordinating planning and preservation. On the occasion of the conference, the ANCSA – National Association for Historic and Artistic Centers, was founded, primarily aimed at pursuing the charter's goals. An in-depth reconstruction of the establishing of the notion of *centro storico* in the Italian and European urban culture, see for instance Davide Cutolo and Sergio Pace, *La scoperta della città antica*. *Esperienza e conoscenza del centro storico nell'Europa del Novecento* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016).

centers as an integral part of the planning of the contemporary city.

This debate, which unfolded between the 1950s and 1980s, was characterized by a continual interplay between these two poles: public criticism and theoretical elaboration¹⁰. Largecirculation newspapers and magazines regularly featured articles by such scholars and architecture critics as Bruno Zevi and Antonio Cederna¹¹, functioning as shared platforms between the high-culture of specialists and mass culture. A similar role was played by the journals, symposiums and campaigns promoted by such associations as Italia Nostra, the ANCSA – National Association for Historic and Artistic Centers and the T.C.I.

In 1967, in Milan, it co-organized with Italia Nostra the exhibition *Italia da salvare* (Saving Italy)¹² **[Fig. 2]**, a bold denunciation of the Italian territory's decay. Hundreds of shots by photographer Renato Bazzoni offered the first visual overview of the country, as it had been reshaped in the previous two decades. Italy was shown as ravaged by unplanned, unsympa-



thetic modern constructions, and by the neglect of its historic heritage.

The T.C.I.'s publications, though, seemingly ignored these changes for quite a while. In 1982, architectural historian Leonardo Di Mauro wrote a history of Italian tour guidebooks, from the 18th century's Grand Tour to the 1980s. Concerning T.C.I.'s most famous guide, the *Guida Rossa* (Red Guide), he stated: "as Italy changes its appearance rapidly (...), [the T.C.I.'s] editors and authors seem not to notice (...). Italy is often described as it was, as one would like it to be, seldom as it is."¹³ By that time, though, the association had already started

Fig. 2

¹⁰ On the connections and differences between academic criticism (tightly connected to theoretical elaboration) and public criticism (more directly responding to the transformations of the built environment), see the reflections of Suzanne Stephens on the US context in the 20th century. "La critique architecturale aux États-Unis entre 1930 et 2005. Lewis Mumford, Ada Louise Huxtable et Herbert Muschamp", in "La critique en temps et lieux", eds. Kenneth Frampton and Hélène Jannière, special issue, *Les Cahiers de la recherché architecturale et urbaine* 24-25 (December 2009).

¹¹ Architect and architecture historian Bruno Zevi (1918-2000) was a regular columnist for the weekly magazine *l'Espresso*, founded in 1956. His articles for *l'Espresso* were later collected in Bruno Zevi, *Cronache di architettura*, 7 vols. (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1971-1979). Archaeologist Antonio Cederna (1921-1996) wrote about architecture and urbanism on the main national newspaper (*II Corriere della Sera*), as well as on several weekly magazines (including *II Mondo*, published between 1949 and 1966) and monthly magazines (including *Abitare*, where he will be responsible for the column *II giardino d'Europa*). A selection of his articles was collected in Antonio Cederna, *I vandali in casa* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1956).

¹² Pivato, *Il Touring Club Italiano*, 149. In 1963 the association's monthly magazine *Le vie d'Italia* (Routes of Italy) launches the five-year-long campaign *Italia a pezzi* ("Italy, Falling Apart"), whose results are displayed in the exhibition *Italia da salvare* ("Saving Italy"), co-organized with Italia Nostra at Milan's Royal Palace in 1967.

¹³ Di Mauro, "L'Italia e le guide turistiche", 413.

The cover of *Italia da Salvare*, the exhibition organized by Italia Nostra and the T.C.I. at Milan's Royal Palace in 1967. Cover design by Pino Tovaglia. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano



an update process of its representations of the Italian territory, which would achieve remarkable results, in particular through two publications.

The first one is *Attraverso l'Italia*¹⁴ (Crossing Italy) **[Fig. 3]**, a collection of photographic books portraying the Italian regions, launched in 1980. In order to update its iconography, the T.C.I. commissioned photographic campaigns by the leading figures of the rising Italian landscape photography movement¹⁵. Such photographs as Luigi Ghirri's image of an exhibition in Reggio Emilia **[Fig. 4]**, Mario Cresci's shot of Giuseppe Garibaldi's monument hidden by a bus in Trapani **[Fig. 5]**, and Gianni Berengo Gardin's photographs of the outskirts of Milan **[Fig. 6]**, show both Italy's historic heritage and the most recent additions to it, the two layers co-existing factually, if not pacifically.

The *Guida* participates in the same process as *Attraverso l'Italia*, and takes it to a higher level of ambition.

Fig. 3

¹⁴ Touring Club Italiano, ed., *Attraverso l'Italia*, 21 vols. (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1980-1990). The volumes published in the 1980s are the third edition of the collection. The first edition was published between 1930 and 1955; the second edition was published between 1956 and 1972.

¹⁵ Luigi Ghirri (1943-1992) is widely recognized as the initiator of the landscape photography movement that rises starting from the early 1970s in Italy. The collective exhibition *Viaggio in Italia*, held in 1984 at the Pinaco-teca provinciale in Bari, organized by Luigi Ghirri, Gianni Leone, Pina Belli d'Elia and Enzo Velati, and involving 20 photographers, is usually considered as the most remarkable accomplishment of a group of artists, sharing a common sensitivity and all engaged in the re-interpretation and re-representation of the national territory, almost unrecognizable after the profound changes that it underwent in the previous decades.

The cover of Attraverso l'Italia. Emilia Romagna, vol. 2, part of the 21 volumes collection about Italian regions, published by the T.C.I. between 1980 and 1990. Courtesy of the Archivio







A photograph by Luigi Ghirri from the first volume about Emilia Romagna of the collection Attraverso l'Italia (1980-1990). Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

Fig. 5

Fig. 4

A photograph by Mario Cresci from the volume about Sicilia of the collection *Attraverso l'Italia* (1980-1990). Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

Fig. 6

A photograph by Gianni Berengo Gardin from the first volume about Lombardy of the collection *Attraverso l'Italia* (1980-1990). Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

The "Guida ai centri minori" between scholarly research and cultural dissemination

As the T.C.I.'s archives from the 1980s are not accessible to the public, the sources for this study include the three volumes of the *Guida ai centri minori*, some interviews with their editors and authors and some general, mainly self-promotional publications by the T.C.I..

The three volumes were published in 1983 (*Northern Italy*), 1984 (*Central Italy*) and 1985 (*Southern Italy*), printed in more than 500 thousand copies, and delivered as Christmas gifts to every member of the T.C.I.¹⁶. They contain between 368 and 400 pages, each measuring 17 by 29.5 centimeters, which make them remarkably larger than a typical guide's pocket size. They were laid out by renowned Dutch-Italian graphic designer Bob Noorda.

Towns are presented through dedicated chapters or through chapters grouping up to four municipalities **[Fig. 7-8-9]**. 201 towns are covered overall. A number of intermediate chapters focus on wider territories and function as a shared introduction for several towns.

Each town's presentation consists of an essay on its urban history and of one or more recommended itineraries. Illustrations include specifically commissioned photographs: an opening aerial view¹⁷, bird's-eye and eye level views, from wide angle urban shots to close up of architectural details, and maps, both historical and newly created by the T.C.I.

A short focus on the guide's authors will help outline its cultural framework, including its positioning on the threshold between scholarly culture and popular dissemination. Two figures are particularly crucial to these ends: Lucio Gambi and Franco Mancuso.

Geographer Lucio Gambi was the publication's general coordinator. Historian Alberto Saibene defines Gambi as "Italy's greatest geographer (...) interpreting the relationship between men and their environment through the *longue durée* perspective of the Annales school."¹⁸ Gambi also shared architect Carlo Cattaneo's

¹⁶ Adriano Agnati (T.C.I.'s editorial director from 1975 to 1996), in discussion with the author, at the T.C.I.'s headquarters in Milan, on December 9, 2019. Official reports on the print-run of the publications from the 1980s are part of the non-accessible section of the T.C.I.'s archives. The same figures were confirmed by several contributors to the *Guida ai centri minori*, including Franco Mancuso and Daniele Vitale. It should also be noted that all T.C.I.'s publications were made available in bookstores one year after their first publication. Final circulation figures may therefore be higher.

¹⁷ Aerial views were commissioned to the *Compagnia Generale Ripreseaeree di Parma*, which is credited on all the three volumes.

¹⁸ Saibene specifically refers to Gambi's famous essay on *I valori storici dei quadri ambientali* (which literally translates to "Historical Values of the Environmental Frames"), published in *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 1, *I caratteri originali*, eds. Ruggero Romano and Corrado Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1972). Saibene states that the essay "is an extraordinary synthesis that clearly relies on the lesson of such a master as Carlo Cattaneo (and further back in time of Cuvier's and Darwin's), which crosses from a bird's-eye perspective five thousand years of the Italian peninsula's modifications, interpreting the relationship between men and their environment through the *longue durée* approach of the Annales school". "Carte, mappe, guide; 1975 e dintorni", in *Comunità Italia. Architettura, città, paesaggio.* 1945-2000, eds. Alberto Ferlenga and Marco Biraghi, 162. (translation by the author)

7





Sarzana

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Fig. 7

The six page essay about Sarzana, from the first volume of the Guida ai centri minori, published in 1983. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

Sarzana

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Hinerario di visita
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Assumendo come capisaldi dell'itinerario alcuni punti focali – piazza Mattootti, la Cattedrale, la Cittadella – de hene percorrere i tratti intermedi soffermandosi ad osservare le molte edicole votive, gli stipiti dei ortoni, i pavimenti degli androni, certi ferri battuti, persino i sotto tronda e i pluviali, ciò che caratterizza il minuto tessuto edilizio.
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The six page essay about Sarzana, from the first volume of the Guida ai centri minori, published in 1983. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

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dell'antico Mercato, poi nella via Castruccio Castracani: da questa si turati nel 700 (portali marrorei), e la via Torrione S. Francesco che tromina nell'omonimo baluardo cinquecentesco (adattato ad abitazione). Opo il neoclassico edificio dell'ospedate S. Bartolomos si è alla chiesa di S. Francesco, fondata nel '200 ma notevolmente ristrutturata: nota-re sulla facciata il portale trecentesco (alterato) e il tabernaciol (secon-da metà del '500). L'interno mantiene la struttura gotica con sovrappo-tambino nel 1822, opera d'arte, notare soprattutto il sepolero di Guarnerio degli Antelminelli, figlio di Castruccio Castracani, noto-tambino nel 1822, opera d'arte, notare soprattutto il sepolero di Jambino nel 1822, opera d'arte, notare soprattutto il sepolero di Janza Garbaldi, su cui prospetta il Tadrot degli Impavidi, costrutto in to è un bellissimo cancello di ferro battuto -art nouveani: a via conduce alla Porta Romana, aperta nel 1783 nella bastionata di Cattadella, il cui tracciato segue l'andamento della cinta muraria, oltre apesa l'oratorio della Misericorta ducesnezzo di clareta, a sin, la vio Cattadella, il cui tracciato segue l'andamento della cinta muraria, oltre agesa l'oratorio della Miserico tra il 1488 e il 1492 su progetto di l'andiantette. L'alla concessione della distruttadella, margere, nello stesso luogo della distrutta duceentesca fortezza pisana di farzandelo nello chesso luogo della distrutta duceentesca la Cittadella, l'atti si può salire (Mn 2 di strada panoranica) alla fortezza di farzandello nello, che sorge in forte posizione strategica a controlo della bassa Lungigiana; erroneamente attribuita a Castruccio Castraca-fi, probaldimente inizzata dai Genovesi, ma prese forma compiuta di d'atto di ecompletata dai do di udi tatta a Castruccio Castraca-fi, probaldimente inizzata dai Genovesi, ma prese forma compiuta del '400 et i completata dai da che consci, ma prese forma compiuta del '400 et i completata della città murata.

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Fig. 9

The six page essay about Sarzana, from the first volume of the Guida ai centri minori, published in 1983. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

vision of territory as "an immense accumulation of labor."¹⁹ For the *Guida*'s first volume, Gambi authored a general introduction, which set the tone for the entire collection on these bases. He stated that all selected *centri minori* were small towns, in terms of their population and extension, but they all showed a strong

"historic individuality", basically meaning that their distinctive architectural and urban heritage had been well preserved to the present.

Gambi selected 19 regional coordinators, which would author essays and select more than 80 further contributors, including scholars, such as Giovanni Cislaghi and Daniele Vitale²⁰, and journalists, such as Aldo Gorfer. Let us briefly focus on Franco Mancuso, who was one the regional coordinator for Friuli, Trentino-Alto Adige and Veneto. Mancuso's role was crucial as he was commissioned to develop the first sample essay on Castelfranco Veneto, later shared with all the authors, with guidelines specifying their tasks²¹. These guidelines included the urban history essay on their *centro minore*, commissioning photographers for a precise list of shots and writing their captions. In addition to this, authors would also define the itineraries and communicate with the T.C.I.'s cartography department to produce annotated maps.

Mancuso is also representative of the guide's contributors as a whole in terms of his academic, professional and intellectual activity. A former teaching assistant of Giancarlo De Carlo, in the early 1980s Mancuso was a scholar, teaching at the Architecture faculty in Venice, a professional, running his own firm, and a member of the ANCSA association which was, as mentioned, one of the most active in the debate on the Italian territory.

Mancuso recalled an episode from 1971, at the beginning of his decades-long collaboration with the T.C.I., providing a valuable insight into the relationship between scholarly and popular culture that the association was striving for. He explained: "When I delivered my first essay²², I was summoned to Milan by the book's coordinator. 'Your incomprehensible text' he told me 'needs to be rewritten from scratch. Amongst our main readers are families and children, using our books for their school projects. (...) I sometimes emulated Giuseppe Samonà's intricate style of writing, but I was now explicitly asked to follow the basic scheme subject-verb-object."

¹⁹ Carlo Cattaneo, "Agricoltura e morale", in Atti della società d'incoraggiamento d'arti e mestieri. Terza solenne distribuzione dei premi alla presenza di S.A.I.R. il Serenissimo Arciduca Viceré nel giorno 15 maggio 1845 (Milan: 1845), now also in Carlo Cattaneo. Scritti sulla Lombardia, eds. Giuseppe Anceschi and Giuseppe Armani (Milan: Ceschina, 1971), 327. (translation by the author)

²⁰ Interviews to both were realized on December 2, 2019 (Giovanni Cislaghi, phone interview) and December 19, 2019 (Daniele Vitale, interview in his flat in Milan).

²¹ Franco Mancuso, in discussion with the author, at his office in Venice, on December 11, 2019. Franco Mancuso works on the *Guida ai centri minori* together with his wife Ernesta Serena Mancuso.

²² Mancuso refers to the first draft of his introduction to the volume *Italia meravigliosa. Piazze d'Italia*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1974).





Chioggia

Chioggia ha dunque forma stretta e lunga, e si protende da sud nella laguna veneta seguendo la parte terminale di uno dei lunghi cordoni dunosi formatisi nell'antico delta del Po.

differenza degli altri insediamenti lagunari, che assumono forme irregolari ma ggnicamente legate alle anse di antichi corsi d'acqua sofcanti ni laguna. Chiog a ha l'impianto regolare tipico degli insediamenti costieri, o del litorale, cor ndamento lineare di un tessato che si disposto seguendo una solida lingua di uttosto come una penisiola, solcata da un asse viario interno che non casualmen prosegue fin sul lordo lagunare, quasi a portarvi il prolungamento dell'antico acciato della strada Romea, in una direzione che punta inequivocabilmente ver i cordoni litoria su cui sorgono Pellestrina, S. Pietro in Volta e Malanocco, uesta sua provenienza dalla terraferma è del resto testimoniata dal fatto che i ino nuelco della città nasce proprio nella parte, S. Pietro in Volta e Malanocco, accentuado con e una esticazione si lagunare della città. Ne è da eschi eris che questo prove di una edificazione svilupata sulle progragni settentriona accentuando col l'interzionale penetrazione lagunare della città. Ne è da eschi resi che questo primo nuccio avesse in parte una disposizione ortogonale all'assa ario, incentrato quindi au Canade Perottolo, simile in cio all'antica Malamocco organi caso, la presenza del Duono, documentati fin dal secolo Xi, indica como di ll'idverso orientamento che il Duono aventi no cigine, con l'andica al post di ll'adverso orientamento che il Duono aventi no cigine, con l'andica al post di ll'adverso orientamento che il Duono aventi no cigine, con l'andica al post di ll'adverso orientamento che il Duono avento no cigine, con l'andica al post di ll'adverso orientamento che il Duono avento no cigine, con l'andica al post di la diverso orientamento che il Duono, advento di casta al post di la diverso orientamento che il Duono avento no cigine, con l'andica al post di la diverso orientamento che il Duono, advento di casta al post di la diverso orientamento che il Duono, documento di conto la terrafer a, quale sito portuale facilmente raccordato, tramite canali interni, alle impor portuale sito portu

tanti città dell'entroterra, prima fra tutte Padova, che attraverso il Bacchiglione convergeva appunto nella laguna di Chioggia. Del resto, questa originaria relazione con la terraferma permane in certe caratteristiche dell'edilizia clodiense,

An innovative representation of a non-monumental Italy

By dedicating a guide to the *centri minori*, the T.C.I. aligned itself with a trend in the publishing sector of that time. The tourist boom from the 1960s had led to a diversification of tourist destinations and of the related guides. Rerouting tourists towards unexplored territories was considered urgent in Italy, where the most established destinations' congestion was leading to the deterioration of their material structures, social environment and the tourists' experience. Thus, the T.C.I.'s president Franco Brambilla declared that the *Guida* "corresponds to a precise stance taken by the T.C.I. (...). The 'tourism pressure' (...) threatens to jeopardize the very survival of certain areas and to diminish the visitor's encounter with reality to a trivial mandatory step (...). Luckily enough (...) Italy is particularly suitable to offer relevant opportunities of 'decentralization' of the tourist activity."²³

The identification of new tourist destinations, that is this shift to the *centri minori*, went hand in hand with a substantial update of the way the T.C.I. represented Italy as a whole. Quite remarkably, this update was enabled by the establishment of a link to specialist and scholarly culture.

An example of the pairing of aerial views and annotated maps from the first volume of the Guida ai centri minori: the town of Chioggia, Veneto. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

10

Chioggia

CHIOGGIA Probabile nucle (Quartiere Pero Probabile estent Sviluppo urbann Sviluppo urbann

²³ Franco Brambilla, "Prefazione", in *Città da scoprire 1. Guida ai centri minori. Italia settentrionale*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1983), 6-7.

Specialist and scholarly culture is firstly seen in the texts. In fact, the *Guida* collected numerous essays on urban history, based on high-quality, original investigation by scholars and experts, complete with bibliographies, and edited in relatively accessible language. For the first time, an entire guide was centered on such notions as *centro storico, tessuto urbano* (urban fabric), and *patrimonio* (heritage), that were presented in their manifold meanings to at least half a million non-specialist readers. History (the *longue durée* of urban transformations, as interpreted by Gambi) and geography (the *centri minori* described within their territory, as intended by Cattaneo) were summoned to contextualize the evolving configurations of Italian cities and territories.

Specialist and scholarly culture is secondly seen in the images: aerial views were still uncommon at the time, and mostly used by professionals as technical tools. Hundreds of them were reproduced here at full page scale, paired with an annotated map of the same area [Fig. 10]. The latter shows the main phases and events of the town's developments (such as expansion areas from different ages and opening of new roads or squares), the most valuable elements of its heritage (walls, monuments and parts of the urban fabric), both existing and demolished, and the boundaries between the centro storico and the contemporary city [Fig. 11-12-13]. All aerial photographs and maps were reproduced at the same scale, facilitating direct comparison. In this regard, geographer Umberto Bonapace talks about the creation of "a fascinating relationship between reality and symbol, evocation and representation (...). Traditional tourist maps were conceived as tools to move through space (...). These maps try instead to represent things and facts that sometimes do not exist in the landscape, or that are embedded into it as coded signals referring to other, different things and facts, sometimes far back in time."24

Overall, it can be said that the change of the objects, from established tourist destinations to *centri minori* corresponded to a change of the focus of attention: from the building to the urban fabric; from the monument to the whole *centro storico* as heritage in its own right; from the urban center to its territory; and from the here and now to the long times of history. From the guide's texts and images emerged a comprehensive representation of Italy's non-monumental, diverse heritage, or even better: of a non-monumental, stratified Italy. This representation was based on the most up-to-date contributions of several disciplines, made accessible to a lay audience. This is what makes the *Guida* a one-of-a-kind-publication of great cultural value.

Yet, this commendable framework shows at least one weak point. The modern and contemporary cities, strongly denounced by the 1967 exhibition *Italia da salvare*, and explored with curiosity by the collection *Attraverso l'Italia* of the 1980s, are here dramatically under-represented. Within two or three-page essays, reconstructing in principle each *centro minore*'s entire history, few lines

²⁴ Umberto Bonapace, "I progressi della cartografia turistica", in *90 anni di turismo in Italia*, *1894-1984*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1984), 64. (translation by the author)



Fig. 11-12-13

A few examples of annotated map from the first volume of the Guida ai centri minori: Casale Monferrato and Ivrea, Piedmont; Vigevano, Lombardy. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano describe its evolutions following the Italian unification in 1860. Furthermore, these essays portray a consistently negative vision of modernity, distorted by simplifications and ideological biases. This is in line with Gambi's claim in the book's introduction that towns were selected only if they had been spared "the construction mess which has vilified and soiled the identity of countless historical places."²⁵ This bias against modernity, replicating a fear of destruction of some idealized past, also borrowed from the general debate, would certainly deserve further investigation.

To conclude, a few remarks on the *Guida's* reception. Adriano Agnati, the T.C.I.'s editorial director of the time, underlines that several municipalities considered it an effective promotional tool, and asked to be included in the collection. But the project to create a template, to be filled in by the local administrations and reviewed by the T.C.I., was finally dismissed²⁶. The average tourist-reader apparently had some difficulty with the *Guida's* format and contents. Hundreds of complaint letters were received by the T.C.I., lamenting its lack of ease of use. Agnati himself admits that to publish such complex essays the T.C.I. "definitely wringed its neck, compared to other more accessible publications." It is probably not by chance that the collection remains a one-off experiment, never updated, nor extended to the present.

²⁵ Lucio Gambi, "Città fuori dai capoluoghi", in *Città da scoprire 1. Guida ai centri minori. Italia settentrionale*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1983), 11.

²⁶ Agnati estimates that the mayors of no less than 90% of the selected towns attended the first volume's general presentation, held in Guastalla, Emilia Romagna, in 1983. Although the idea of the template was never put in place, the steady increase in the number of towns from the first to the third volume (from 50 to 82) might result from the same demand.

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