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The Psychogeographic Fotoromanzo as an Urban Affective Mapping Practice: Notes on Ralph Rumney's The leaning Tower of Venice

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ABSTRACT

Psychogeography, a method of reality analysis incubated in the 1950s by the Situationist International, was presented early on as a methodology capable of unraveling the precise effects of the geographic environment on the psychic behavior of individuals, paving the way for a dialogue between geography and psychology. Ralph Rumney, drawing from the Situationist lesson, translated his research on the city of Venice into a narrative form, choosing the fotoromanzo as an innovative form of representation. Retaining the peculiarities of this type of narrative, Rumney aimed at rendering the analysis of the city of Venice into a topographical condensate of affective mapping, drawing from the subversive potential of the psychogeographic method.

KEYWORDS

Psychogeography; Ralph Rumney; Walking practice; Urban mapping; Psychogeographic dérive

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Introduction

In the last issue of "Potlatch" (1957), the Lettrist International (LI) announced the publication of the *Guide Psychogéographique de Venise* by the British comrade Ralph Rumney, the president of the London Psychogeographical Committee.

The drafting of the text, discussed during a meeting in Cosio d'Arroscia, Alba (Italy), was to include a psychogeographical reading of the city of Venice, a place that was particularly suitable for this purpose - on a par with Paris and Amsterdam - since it offered various opportunities for disorientation.[1]

The text Debord mentions in "Potlatch", and which will never be published in the Situationist International (SI) bulletin, will cost Rumney the expulsion from the core of the SI, which announces its loss in a kind of obituary complete with photo: "*Venise a vaincu Ralph Rumney*".[2]

> Ancient explorers knew a high percentage of losses at the price of which knowledge of objective geography was arrived at. One had to expect to see casualties among the new researchers, explorers of social space [...]. Rumney, therefore, has just disappeared [...]. So the Venetian jungle was the strongest and closes in on a young man, full of life and promise, who is lost, who dissolves among our multiple memories.[3]

The text, despite the author's delay and expulsion from the movement, would be completed and distributed to the public in 1959 through the multi-issue publication of ARK magazine, edited by the Royal College of Arts in London.[4-5] The title of Rumney's work, however, was to be *The Leaning Tower of Venice*,[6] a reference to the photo of the leaning tower featured on

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1 Ralph Rumney. *The Consul*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002): 47

2 *Internationale Situationniste* 1958-1969 (Paris: Editions Champ-Lybre, 1975) : 28

3 Ibid., 28. Translated from French by the author.

4 The history of *The Leaning Tower of Venice* is traversed by a series of unfortunate events that nevertheless allowed the publisher Silverbridge to release a reprint of the work in 2002. As Irma del Monte explains, the materials prepared by Rumney for publication and sent to ARK magazine were fragmented and destined for two different issues (24 and 25). However, there was a change in editorial direction and some of the materials sent by Rumney not only were published in random order, but also lost. In 1989, during a travelling exhibit of the Situationists' work, Rumney noticed that the original boards were displayed, and he asked a photographer to take some photos. To this day, the only documents that testify to the artist's work are those photos taken during the London exhibition, forming the materials for the 2002 re-edition of Rumney's text. See: Del Monte, "Ralph Rumney and his derive in the 1950s".

5 Ralph Rumney, *The Leaning tower of Venice* (Paris: Silverbridge, 2002).

6 In *The Consul*, Rumney argued that his aim was not to offer yet another guide to Venice and that the actual title of his oeuvre was *The Leaning Tower of Venice*. Furthermore, the artist stated that the practice of detourning photographs, and in particular portraits, that was extensively used by the Situationists was suggested by him during the SI first meeting. «You cannot fail to notice that the SI made a lot of detournements of photo novels. I suggested all that. What is called The Guide isn't a guide at all […] In Cosio, I think I talked a lot about photo novels and the possibilities for the SI's publishing detourned photos […] and Guy's irony was to use it in the first issue of the journal to make public my expulsion, because my proposal in Cosio, which was adopted and quickly forgotten, was that each member of the SI should present themselves in the first issue with a little note preceded by an anthropometric photo, a mug shot». See: Rumney, *The Consul*,

the front page of his *fotoromanzo*.

In this respect, the compelling element of Rumney's work lies not only in the methodology of data collection—specifically, psychogeographical dérive—but also in the way the work is presented to the public.

Rumney's initial intention was to shoot scenes with a videocamera, but having only a Rolleiflex at his disposal, he decided to turn his project into a *fotoromanzo*.[7] This editorial format fascinated Rumney, who decided to realize his *dérive* precisely in the city of Venice, in order to offer a de-spectacularized view of the urban fabric through alternative and unprecedented routes away from the banks of the Grand Canal.[8]

In this paper, we will explore the psychogeographical methodology of the *dérive* and its relevance in the context of Rumney's text *The leaning tower of Venice*. Drawing from these insights, we will examine how the psychogeographical method and more specifically the dérive, can be interpreted as an affective[9] and subversive mapping practice. To this regard, not only aimed Situationist psychogeography at developing a scientific toolkit to study and represent cartographically the experiences provoked by space, but also intended to unveil the boundaries and the affective junctions that traditional cartography was unable to read.

Elements of situationist psychogeography

The origin of the term psychogeography should be traced back to the mid-1950s, when Guy Debord, a leading figure in the Letterist International (LI) and later the Situationist International (SI), dedicated a few pages to defining this notion. The term, as recalled by LI members, was suggested by an unlettered Kabyle man they met in a Parisian bar[10] and immediately used to identify a new method of analysis based on the relationship between the individual psyche and the environment.

Specifically, Debord wrote: "*la psychogéographie se proposerait l'étude des lois exactes et des effets précis du milieu géographique, consciemment*

47-49.

7 Rumney, The Consul, 51.

8 «The plan was to create a sketch which would show the areas where no one went, far from the Grand Canal. The idea was to de-spectacularize Venice by suggesting unknown routes through it». Rumney, *The Consul*, 47.

9 The term 'affective', here, is not used in reference to the emotional or affective geographies part of the cultural turn in geography, which on their side, has resurged an interest in psychogeographies. Cfr. Nat O' Grady, "Geographies of Affect," *Oxford Bibliographies* (2021). In particular, what distances the psychogeographical method from these disciplinary offshoots, apart from the historical hiatus and literature reference (consider, with regard to affective geography, the influence of Deleuzian readings of Spinoza), is the political substratum guiding the practice. Psychogeography, is a tool that not only aims at reconstructing space representations from evoked sensations, but above all is a political claim. The scope of the Situationniste International (SI) is not just producing an alternative reading and mapping, but to establish a science capable of guiding a revolution of everyday life and space.

10 Guy Debord, "Introduzione a una critica della geografia urbana," in *Ecologia e Psicogeografia* (Eleuthera: Milano, 2020, 1955): 11

aménagé ou non, agissant directement sur le comportement affectif des individus".[11]

Following Debord, psychogeography was concerned with studying the exact laws and precise effects of the geographical environment on individuals and behaviour. In this regard, psychogeography brought together two disciplinarily distant terrains: that of geography, which "accounts for the determining action of general natural forces, such as soil composition, or climatic regimes, on the economic formations of a society", and that of psychology, which seeks to reason about the affective behaviour of individuals transiting through urban space.

The analysis conducted through psychogeography proposed the development and use of exact scientific laws that would study and represent in cartographical form all those experiences and behaviours provoked by space in the individuals. It was a matter of drawing "a new topography that, instead of depicting the geographical limits of the territory, represented in the form of 'lines of circulation' the psychic limits that a living environment imposes on the affective behaviours of the inhabitants".[12]

Specifically, the uniqueness of the psychogeographical method, and more generally of the situationists' approach, lied in recognizing a close relationship between space, power and individuals. In this sense, space was defined as matter ordered by the political.

Psychogeography was equipped with a series of tools implemented to draw images of space that were not only capable of subsuming alienating human living conditions, but also of enacting non-alienated forms of space occupation.

Generally speaking, psychogeographical practices were characterized by a deep sense of playfulness through which the Situationists sought to overcome the process of trivialization of everyday life.[13] Gilles Ivain wrote: "we are bored in the city, one has to work hard to still discover mysteries on public street signs, the last stage of humour and poetry".[14]

Among the proposals to chase away boredom: that of breaking into the floors of demolished houses during the night hours; hitchhiking through the city of Paris during a transport strike; entering the dungeons of the catacombs during the hours when they are closed to the public; exploring the tunnels of the subways after the last trains have passed through, strolling through the gardens at night; in the dark and fitting the street lamps with switches so that the illumination is available to passers-by.[15]

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11 *International Situationniste*, 19.

12 Ibid., 19. Translated by the author.

13 Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Herts: Pocket essentials, 2006): 6

14 Gilles Ivain, *Formulario per un nuovo urbanismo*, trans. Carmine Mangone (Maldoror Press, 2013): 9. Translated by the author.

15 Gianfranco Marelli, *L'amara vittoria del situazionismo. Storia critica dell'Internationale Situationniste 1957-1972* (Milano: Mimesis, 2017): 87. Translated by the author.

The reference to the ludic character and playful component of human activities was not trivial; rather, it was closely anchored in a theoretical background ranging from a critique of everyday life and the concept of youth (refined especially by Isidore Isou's Lettrism), to an explicit reference to Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens.[16] Debord himself - along with Constant - frequently quoted the Dutch author, stating that this would "demonstrate that culture, in its primitive stages, takes on the features of a game and develops under the forms and in the environment of play".[17]

Huizinga argued that play is an innate activity in human beings and, with the aim of understanding whether this tendency belongs exclusively to certain cultures or characterizes the whole of humankind, he ended up finding it not only in all the cultures under analysis, but also in the animal world. For Huizinga - and for the situationists - play represented a concrete proof that human beings are not exclusively limited to the rational sphere.

Dérive as walking method

Dérive was defined as "a technique of hasty passage through various environments"[18] whose meaning was inextricably linked to its psychogeographical nature - the effects of which the subject will lucidly recognize during its enactment (and to the affirmation of that playful-constructive behaviour we alluded to in the previous paragraphs).

Precisely because it is not aleatory, but rather the result of a theoretical instance, *dérive* differed sharply from the classical notions of: travel, walk, surrealist walking and even *flânerie*. If walking can be traced back to a disinterested type of movement where the body is dragged through space for the purpose of enjoying a beautiful view, the *dérive* is instead attentive, active, and willing to lucidly take in the stimuli that come from traversing urban landscape.

The *dérive* exercise enabled to detect the articulations of the modern city because it recognizes its units of affective environment by locating them geographically. It traced their main axes of passage, exits and defences by lucidly identifying their junctions.

However, *dérive* did not only represent a tool for conducting a pure analysis of the affective status of the city. Rather, it announced and *denounced* the way urban space reflected the order of the dominant society, suggesting that space directs the affections and behaviours of its inhabitants. The great discovery made through this methodology was the understanding

16 Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture.* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1998).

17 Guy Debord, "L'architettura e il gioco," in *Ecologia e Psicogeografia* (Milano: Eleuthera, 2020): 7. Translated by the author.

18 *International Situationniste*, 19. Translated by the author.

of the influence of space on the daily lives of individuals.

Situationists, then, not only became aware of the psychogeographical relevance of the urban fabric, but also sensed that by changing its form and functions the psychogeographical outcome could be completely disrupted. If the spatial representations ordered by the dominant ideology could influence the daily lives of individuals, why not to adopt a strategy to change the form and functions of space from the human being's assumptions of fulfilment and desire?

As Coverley wrote, the peculiarity of the psychogeographical practice was its style of execution: walking.[19] Psychogeography, in fact, was an urban affair, and since the metropolitan environment is increasingly hostile to pedestrian movement, not only from the point of view of mobility efficiency, but also from the perspective of urbanistic propensity to organize space, it is inevitable that walking becomes a subversive practice of occupying space.

For Situationists, walking through the city represented a challenge to the spatial configuration of organized capitalism since not only it allowed for self-determination of one's movement within representations of space, but also enabled to bypass marked routes and explore areas on the margins inaccessible by other means of transportation.[20]

Walking allows greater expression and freedom of the body, not only in terms of movement, which becomes spontaneous and follow a rhythm[21] dictated by the subject, but also in terms of autonomy in choosing which route to take.

Moreover, walking enables to unleash the repressed energies through the exercise of a physical practice and, in this sense, is closely connected with the enhancement of the playful and childish aspect that characterizes all psychogeographical practices.

For Coverley: "walking becomes a bound with psychogeography's characteristic political opposition to authority".[22]

Discussing situationist psychogeography as a perspective on walking method involves examining its theoretical and practical foundations. It not only acknowledges the body in motion as a key tool for analyzing and critiquing space from the perspective of the mobile subject, but also views walking as an active and transformative practice.

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19 Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 6.

20 Regarding psychogeography and marginality, it is interesting to note that the derivations of psychogeography since the 1990s have distinguished by a focus on marginal and peripheral spaces (e.g. Nick Papadimitrou, William G. Niederland). A striking example is Iain Sinclair's work on London's M25 (*London Orbital*, 2002). See: Tina Richardson. *Walking Inside Out. Contemporary British Psychogeography* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015): 6

21 On the importance of rhythms for everyday life, see: Henri Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaisance des rythmes* (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1992).

22 Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 10.

According to the situationists, the moving body could perceive how the environment affects mental states and identify the forces influencing its psychological conditions. In this context, psychogeographical practices could enable researchers to create human-scale cartographies that awaken the senses and sensations stifled by functionalist and overly rationalizing urban planning.

Psychogeographical maps and dérive

> "The exploration of a fixed spatial field entails establishing bases and calculating directions of penetration. It is here that the study of maps comes in".[23]

According to Debord, the role of maps in the psychogeographical practice was that of supporting the drift design within a city, especially when those who implement it are unfamiliar with its geography. However, maps were primarily used with the purpose of redrawing and improving them, given that what was learned during the drifting should foresee the establishment of brand-new boundaries and psychogeographical junctions that traditional cartography was unable to glimpse within space.

With respect to the topic of maps, drift aimed at filling this gap and served not only as a tool for reading, but for translating the psychogeographical effects of walking onto an objective medium.

The creation of the *Guide Psychogéographique de Paris* (1957) represented the first attempt to create a detourned cartography from the collage of some cutouts of Turgot's perspective plan, an image that was intended to represent the classical conception of the unitary city and whose three-dimensionality was reminiscent of touristic maps with city monuments in axonometry.[24]

The choice to make a folding map precisely from Turgot's perspective was not accidental; rather, this was conceived as a real guidebook, one that invited readers to get lost by following the red arrows indicating access and escape routes from the *unite d'ambiances* (depicted as floating plaques) and previously identified and delimited through psychogeographical surveys.

> "Opening this bizarre city guide, we find a Paris exploded into pieces, a city whose unity is shattered and in which we can only recognise fragments of the historic centre floating in a void space".[25]

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23 *Internationale Situationniste*, 19.

24 The *Plan de Turgot*, made between 1734 and 1739, was a bird's-eye view plan of the city of Paris ordered by Michel Etienne Turgot - head of the Paris municipality - and made by topographer Louis Bretez. More than a plan, it was a perspective in which houses, hotels, garden squares, boulevards, churches, etc., were visible at a glance making the image enjoyable to the reader. The instance that prompted Turgot's request stemmed from the need to endow the city with a perspective view that could be compared with that of other capitals. See: Francesco Careri, *Constant: New Babylon, una città nomade* (Torino: Testo&Immagine, 2001): 67

25 Careri, *Constant*, 67. [Translation from Italian is mine]

As Careri suggested, the intent not to sketch out complete paths, but rather to replace the transitions between one unit of environment and another with coloured arrows, lies in the desire to make those spaces significant interstices of potential and imaginary drifts, in an urban space made up of voids and solids. Repeatedly, the "drift is transformed from a reading methodology to a tool for imaginative construction of infinite possible cities. The erratic path not only has an analytical role, but also that of synthesis; it is an action that is offered as a true architecture of lived space".[26]

The white space where the *unité d'ambiances* islets float symbolizes a defined territory that encloses individuals' spaces of wondering, free from the ambiguities of the outside world. In a way, these white areas equip readers to navigate space autonomously and intuitively, encouraging them to assert their own intent.[27]

Although the theory of *dérive* occupied a fundamental part within situationist practices, the number of psychogeographical maps is quite small. An interesting example, however, is the map reproduced in Abdelhafid Khatib's *Essai de description psychogéographique des Halles*.[28] The map, accompanied by an essay, traced what the author calls «the inner currents» of LEs Halles district by showing the lines of communication and barrages that occupy the streets. Rather than describing the path of a possible drift or implementation, the essay offered an analytical reading of the neighbourhood, divided into zones, and catalogued from affections: "this area is depressing", "this area is, at night, industrious and gay", another had "a bizarre and undefined character".

The psychogeographical fotoromanzo

To get into the merits of Ralph Rumney's psychogeographical city-mapping oeuvre in Venice, we need to consider some unusual features of his work.

Regarding the form of the text, as stated by the author, Rumney took inspiration from the pattern of the *fotoromanzo* - an all-Italian invention of the 1950s - which encapsulated a form of storytelling intended primarily for female audiences. In this genre, characters pictures (usually posing actors) were juxtaposed to vignettes featuring dialogues or brief descriptions by the narrator's voice.

About the *fotoromanzo*, Mario Dajelli wrote that this was the heir of the

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26 See: Careri, *Constant*, 68. To Careri, a key aspect of early psychogeographical maps is that they represent the city experienced as a liquid space. The drift would cause a kind of disconnection between the islets that make up the map and the negotiated tensions/affections of the unite d'ambiance allow the neighbourhoods/continents to assume a magnetic autonomy transforming them into plaques susceptible to collisions, landslides, and fractures.

27 Michel De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano* (Roma: Edizioni Lavoro, 2001): 199.

28 *Internationale Situationniste*, 16.

French feuilleton, a 19th Century literature format which enjoyed great popularity both among the public and by influential writers of the period. The *feuilletons*, as would later be the case of the *fotoromanzo*, were published serially in newspapers and intended for a mainstream and popular public.[29] It is interesting to note that, fourteen years after the appearance of the *feuilleton*, because of its wide success among the subaltern classes, it was condemned detrimental to public order. For this reason, a tax was imposed by the government making its publication practically impossible.[30]

Antonio Gramsci wrote: "the *feuilleton* replaces (and at the same time encourages) the reverie of the folk man, it is a true daydreaming".[31] In this framework, the *fotoromanzo* - direct heir of the ancient *feuilletons* - fostered and satisfied a need for escapism and imagination widespread especially among the subordinated classes.

The image popularized through the 6x6 format[32] (typical of the pictures used for creating *fotoromanzo* contents) despite representing stereotypical, banal, and artificial portraits and sets, could stimulate the *reverie*, precisely through the vividness of the photographs, suggesting that it could be, at least in appearance - on that page that could be touched by hand and so close to the vivid colours of reality – accomplished and fulfilled.[33]

By choosing a popular editorial form, disdained by upper classes due to the narrative and storyline poor quality (the *fotoromanzo* plot is primarily about sentimental affairs), Rumney performed a *detournement*[34] of the genre. This way, the Italian *fotoromanzo*, from a frivolous editorial form, was turned into an effective storytelling and scientific research tool.

The romantic component linked to affections was kept and even stressed, since it was precisely through this very form that the author succeeded in effectively conveying the results of his psychogeographical drifts. These, indeed, involved nothing more than: "the study of the exact laws and precise effects of the geographical environment which, consciously or unconsciously, act directly on the affective behaviour of individuals".[35]

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29 ibid., 171.

30 ibid., 192.

31 Antonio Gramsci, "Letteratura e vita nazionale," in *Opere di Antonio Gramsci* (Torino: Einaudi, 1950): 141. Translated by the author.

32 Rumney admits a certain infatuation with geometric shapes and in particular with the square one. He recounts that he found himself in San Marco, Venice and was fascinated not so much by the architecture of the buildings or the view, but rather by the shapes that had been chosen to pave the square's floors. He stated: «squares, Polaroids, for example-have always fascinated me. A lot of my paintings are square. I still dream of making square films». See: Rumney, The Consul, 147.

33 Mario Dajelli, "Fotoromanzo, invenzione italiana," in *Le tecniche dell'immagine* (Roma: Armando, 1975): 187.

34 According to the definition, *détournement* is a form of estrangement from the given reality. Specifically, the term is the shorthand for '*détournement* of pre-constituted aesthetic elements' that can be materially realised through, for instance, collage or montage. This technique was borrowed by the SI from Lettrism.

35 *International Situationniste*, 19.

The choice to employ the *fotoromanzo* scheme, an editorial product aimed at the less educated and often illiterate classes, was probably due to an awareness of stimulating a kind of estrangement from the everyday context by using it as a means of psychogeographical popularization.[36] The instances of the Situationists, in fact, moved from a strong criticism of the trivialization of everyday life and the alienation of the individual whose consciousness, in modern society, was mystified.[37]

The *fotoromanzo* scenography was originally made of domestic spaces, familiar and everyday life scenes that, precisely because of the introduction of the extraordinary of the romantic, provoked a telluric movement in the imagination of the reader who identified with the scenarios.

Moreover, the *fotoromanzo* was constructed through a narrative form that had a language of its own: metaphors, hyperboles, literary stereotypes, etc. that found no real correspondence in any written or spoken language. Through its lines, between the columns and captions, an abstract, independent, but concrete phraseology was literally encoded.[38]

As Turzio writes, in contrast to the general opinion that consider *fotoromanzo* a subcultural product, reading could provoke a vibration capable to shape the conflict or encounter between interpretive orthodoxy and the silently and vernacular creativity, transgression, irony, and poetic activity of the reader.[39]

If, on the one hand, the photostory did not only offer the dream, but attempted to direct it through an ideological discourse (which does not have to be thought, but rather accepted), on the other hand, the audience looking for evasion could refuse it.[40] According to De Certeau, reading always represents an act of subjective freedom, a poaching practice escaping in liminal and unpredictable ways the dominant narratives. Reading ends up constituting interstices, spaces of representation and individual emancipation. The text, in fact, only acquires meaning through its readers,

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36 Turzio provides a dense account of the public opinion of the time when *fotoromanzo* became popular. In Italy, this editorial format was particularly criticised by leftist parties and more urgently by the Italian Communist Party, which believed *fotoromanzo* was an American invention aimed at disseminating North American culture. The criticism was condemnatory and sensitive to the women cause, claiming that *fotoromanzo* was proposing standardised and unreal female models. Interesting in this debate were Giuliana Saladino's (a Sicilian activist) remarks on the educational and empowering impact of the genre. She wrote that *fotoromanzo* was an accessible medium for illiterate women to become aware – through simple plots, pictures, and short slogan - of their condition of female oppression and subalternity. See: Silvana Turzio, *Il fotoromanzo: metamorfosi delle storie lacrimevoli* (Milano: Meltemi, 2019).

37 The work of the situationists has been strongly (and mutually) influenced by the works of Henri Lefebvre: Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (Montreuil: L'Arche, 1947), and Norbert Guterman, Henri Lefebvre, *La conscience mystifiée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936). More specifically, they resumed the attempt to reshape the perception of the everyday by overcoming the trivialisation, commodification and spectacularization of ordinary life, starting from the consideration that the consciousness of the modern individual is mystified by production relations.

38 Dajelli, *Fotoromanzo invenzione italiana*, 180.

39 De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, 244.

40 Dajelli, *Fotoromanzo, invenzione italiana*, 192.

morphs with them and finds its own order according to unprecedented codes of perceptions, sensations, expectations and evoked memories that continually elude systematization.[41]

In terms of research method, Rumney adopted the walking dérive, as stated on the first page of the text through Debord's quote. To that concept, Rumney matched an aerial view of the city of Venice on which the psychogeographical trajectory is plotted. In the following pages, however, Rumney presented several shots: historical monuments, *calli* and *campi*,[42] people intent on their business, and children playing are all the portrayed characters of his photographic recherche.

Rumney walked through the city of Venice accompanied by his friend and colleague the writer Allan Alsen, who is the protagonist of the author's pictures and that will be referred as "A." From the beginning, he stated, "our thesis is that cities should embody a built-in play factor. We are studying here a play-environment relationship. At this stage environment is of greater interest than the player".[43]

The playful type of Rumney's *oeuvre*, which is presented not only in the form of the drift, but also reported through the *détournement* of the analytical methodology, challenged the traditional representation of the city.

While Venice offered the opportunity for disorientation by stimulating the process of drifting, Rumney's goal was not to get lost among the *calli* and *campi*. Rather he wanted to push the spectacularized reading of a city devoured by consumption toward the search for its inherent playful component and study its effects on those who traversed its space. "Venice-type play pattern is crystallizing",[44] the author wrote on a column. However, it was still possible to be amazed by the "microclimate" that characterizes some parts of the city: "we suspect that in special cases weather is modified by environment", distinguishing sinister, from beauty or even depressing areas.

As was the case with psychogeographical maps, particularly with the *Guide Psychogéographique de Paris* (1957) and *The Naked City* (1957), Rumney's work showed the attempt to offer a vision of space based on affective experiences. Here, spatial topography was no longer drawn from abstraction, but rather from direct embodied experience.

In the attempt to discard traditional mapping *savoir* and to offer a psychogeographical representation, lied the Situationists attempt to shred that same space,[45] now rendered through a collection of diverse and discontinuous images (which, however, have their own rhythm). In a sense, by

41 De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, 240.

42 Local denominations for squares and streets in Venice.

43 Rumney, *The leaning tower of Venice*.

44 Ibid.

45 De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, 181.

choosing *fotoromanzo*, Rumney not only invited his readers to engage in the playful activity of dérive, but also to enjoy the creative format of the text.

As was the case with psychogeographical maps, the blank interstices between photographs (both material and narrative) did not only respond to editorial needs; on the contrary, they were fulfilled with meanings. Those tiny off-white spaces really served as passports for the poaching reader ho was warmly invited to fabricate his imaginary theatre of actions and encouraged to fluctuate between what it is written and his own, subjective playground.

Conclusions

Rumney's text, understood as a psychogeographical product, shows the possibility of providing a different reading of the space the author crossed during his psychogeographic drift. Crucial in this sense is the term 'crossed', as space in this psychogeographical exercise is mapped from the effects and impacts on the individual's experience and, more specifically, on the researcher's body. To this regard, Ralph Rumney's psychogeographical *fotoromanzo* can be understood as a form of subversive affective urban mapping.

It is interesting to note that the psychogeographical *fotoromanzo*, like it was for the *Guide Psychogéographique de Paris* (1957) and *The Naked City* (1957) collected impressions and affections as data with the aim of rendering a subjective-objective reading of the urban fabric.

In this regards Rumney's *The Leaning Tower of Venice* represents an unprecedented example of psychogeographical effects displaying on a book. However, here more than in other situationists works, the emotional heritage of the space and its rhythmicity are gathered and made manifest.

Even from a qualitative methodology point of view, the work has so many resonances with the walking ethnographies and can be considered a valid contribution for inspiring a creative turn in data collection.

Especially with the turn to phenomenology, poststructuralism, and contemporary feminism theories, the bodily senses superseded their illegitimate status becoming important means for gathering significant details that cannot be collected in other ways. As – among others - it is the case for emotional geographies, the subjective (and sometimes also political[46]) dimensions enter that of science showing that data collected through an aseptic reading of reality are not always enough to offer a complete

46 It is worth to mention the contribution, in contemporary walking ethnographies of the politically nuanced work of *The Walking Lab* group, which builds on the importance of place, sensory inquiry, embodiment, and rhythm within critical walking methodology. Generally speaking, the most important source of this drive is due to the influence of feminisms on the approach to research. See: Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman, 'Walking in/as publics,' *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, no. 4, (2019).

insight of the observed phenomenon.

In a sense, the intuition of the psychogeographical method, was that of pushing toward a deconstruction of the legitimated research patterns, to make room for the collection of subjective relationships and affections. Only the gathering of these perceptions represented a more comprehensive, *démistyfiée* and accurate description of a particular space or place.[47]

For the situationists, walking enabled to unveil and expose the urban fabric to an active critical reading by showcasing the order of the dominant representations and by suggesting that not only has space the potential to direct individuals' perception, but also can stimulate habits and behaviours. SI commitment consisted in understanding the influence of space representations and practices on individuals' daily lives and through the employment of psychogeographical techniques, synchronise with and decipher that same flow.

Without much hesitation, but that it was rather considered a vehicle that the *dérive* in the psychogeographical project represented a tool for critical investigation, but was rather considered, vehicle for political engagement and emancipation.

47 As Wood points out, it is worth mentioning that the development of psychogeography runs parallel to Kevin Lynch's studies on the imageability and legibility of American cities (Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT, 1968)). There are many similarities between the two, suffice it to mention the emphasis on users' subjective representations of urban space and 'mental mapping.' However, if for Lynch the ultimate aim of his research is to provide material for urban planners, so that they can take these elements into account in the design of more user friendly cities (and thus a certain confidence in government action is implicit), for Debord, and more generally for situationists, psychogeography and its products «aimed at nothing less than the collective takeover of the world» whereas urban planning is considered «a rather neglected branch of criminology». See: Denis Wood, "Lynch Debord: About Two Psychogeographies," *Cartographica*, 45, no. 3 (2010): 195. As with the SI, for Lynch the drive to emphasize user-friendliness stemmed from an aversion to the utilitarian forms conceived by the Modern Movement that standardized the needs of the individual. In this regard, it is deserving of mention Jane Jacobs work which, to the massive cité radieuse of Le Corbusier, contrasts a city of proximity no longer on the scale of man understood as a machine, but of the human. See: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

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