



**Politecnico
di Torino**

Honors Thesis

Master in Architecture Heritage Preservation and Enhancement

Abstract

Urban and regional history in italian museums and cultural institutions: a critical investigation.

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The aim of this research thesis is to investigate the multiple subjects, declinations and ways in which urban history is narrated in Italy; first and foremost, the strong territorial component that is, in the Italian context, an essential complementary theme. In trying to define the state of the art of urban and regional history in Italy, the initial research question was: which cultural institutions communicate it? In Europe such a role is entrusted primarily to City Museums, which are continuing the evolutionary growth that characterised them in the new millennium, generated by the new challenges posed by contemporary society. The Italian context, on the other hand, is more diversified and complex because the typology of city museum has taken root less than in other countries and the treatment of urban history is in charge of a plurality of cultural institutions, such as historical, civic and archaeological museums, archives and other new generation hybrid realities such as Urban Centres. In order to understand better the Italian panorama and the reasons of such diversification, a systematic mapping project has been set up, which, through the quantitative investigation of two regions with very different historical and territorial layouts - Piedmont and Sicily - has been translated into qualitative reflections also valid on a national scale.

At the basis of the research on the territory there were three areas of investigation: which cultural institutions; which urban history - including in this sense various indicators, such as the diversity of themes, periodisations and sources used - and finally which modalities of fruition, highlighting in this case the importance of the participatory aspect and the digital dimension.

In investigating the new connotations that urban history takes on in cultural institutions, the research focused on recent developments concerning: on one hand, the new relationship of urban history and museums with society; on the other, technological innovation at the service of these realities in the discipline of Digital History. In this regard, it is important to emphasise how one of the premises of the thesis work was to actualise the themes under examination by critically reflecting on the current historical period. The last two years have been witnessing the accelerations of certain dynamics - such as the increase in the use of digital technologies - mainly due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The last one, being a period of global and unexpected crisis, has highlighted how the cultural sector has been able to translate the sense of belonging into a resource to generate resilience, enabling the enjoyment of cultural heritage by overcoming physical and social barriers. New meanings for urban history also derive from these dynamics, ranging from taking on different declinations beyond those traditionally inherited to the active involvement of society, seizing the chance of new opportunities such as those provided by ICTs (Information Communication Technologies). The result is a scenario, certainly not exhaustive, of the good practices that Italian museums and cultural institutions carry out in the narration of the history of the city and of the territory, aiming not only at enhancing the cultural heritage but also - through the construction of a shared historical knowledge - at achieving a democratically sustainable city; aware of its past and open to a collective dialogue on its future.

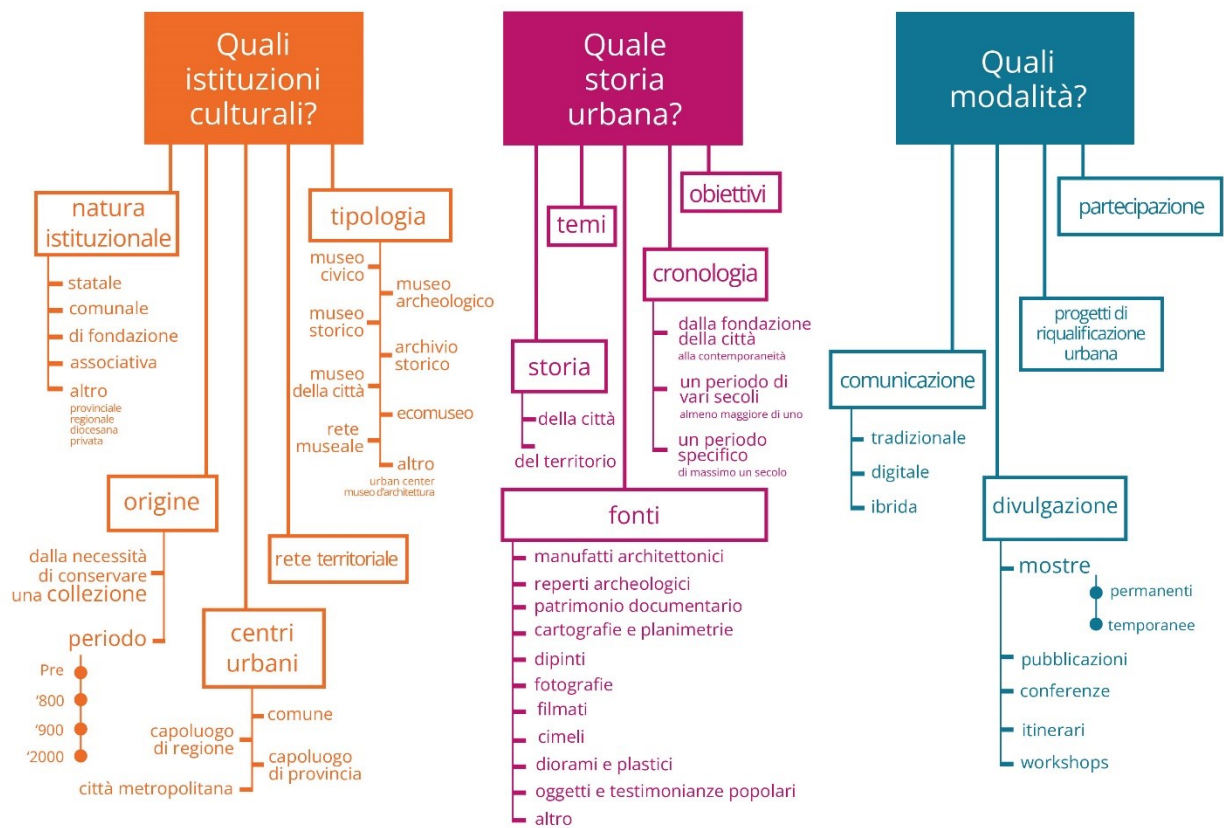


Figure 1 _ Scheme of indicators attributed for each survey section.



Figure 2 _ Critical partition of data interrelation chart.

Quali istituzioni culturali li trattano?

Quale storia? Della città e/o territoriale?

Con quali fonti e con quali modalità?

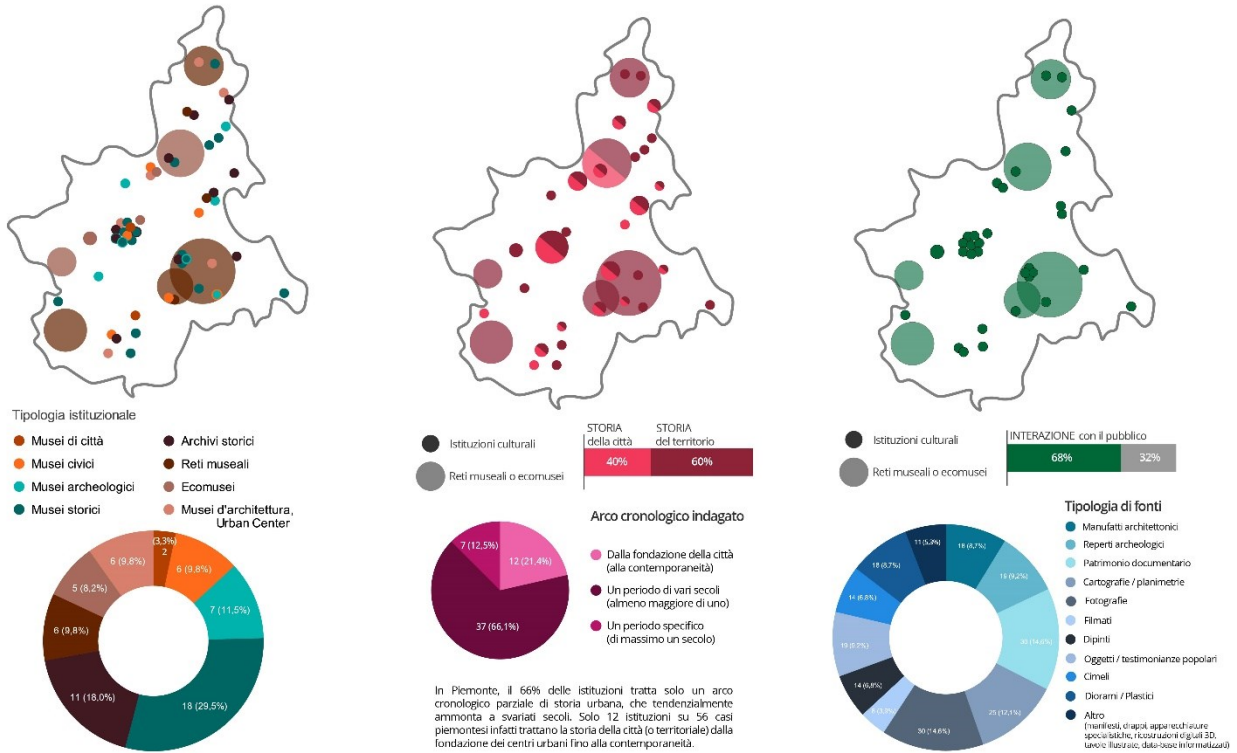


Figure 3 _ Graphical representation of the Piedmont analysis framework.