Towards a Novel Cultural Analysis of the City of Rome II (Rome, 11-13 Jun 24)

Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome
Deadline: May 10, 2024

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Call for Participation: "Towards a Novel Collaborative Cultural Analysis of the City of Rome II".
Rome, Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, June 11-13, 2024, 9:00-17:30.

Scientific Organization:
Maximilian Schich (Tallinn University) & Tristan Weddigen (Bibliotheca Hertziana)

Confirmed keynote and invited participants:
Luca-Maria Aiello (ITU Copenhagen), Ksenia Mukhina (Tallinn University), Guido Caldarelli (Ca' Foscari Venice), and Petter Holme (Aalto University)

Project purpose and previous workshop:
The purpose of the project is to explore the state-of-the-art and joint emerging opportunities towards a novel, collaborative, and multidisciplinary understanding of the city of Rome, as imagined, represented, and enacted in historical sources and modern data. Relevant materials include maps and topographic records from the forma urbis to cell phone data, texts from medieval mirabilia to ChatGPT, and images from Renaissance drawings to millions of online tourist photos. The project coincides with several large digitization projects, including the entire BH photo collection and the library's Rome department, both among the most comprehensive of their kind. Together with the availability of modern sensor and social media data, and recent methods of quantitative aesthetics, network science, machine learning, information visualization, etc. our goal is to jointly capture and harness unprecedented opportunities. A more detailed project description and last year's program remain available on the 1st workshop website at https://www.biblhertz.it/3395137/.

As laid out previously, relevant materials under consideration may include maps and topographic records from the forma urbis to cell phone call-detail records, texts from medieval mirabilia to ChatGPT, and images from Renaissance drawings to millions of online tourist photos. Novel opportunities emerge from the coincidence of our workshops with the completion of several large digitization projects at Bibliotheca Hertziana, including the entire Photographic Collection and the Library's Rome department, both among the most comprehensive of their kind. Considering this material together with the availability of modern sensor and social media data, as well as recent methods of quantitative aesthetics, network science, machine learning, information visualization, etc., our goal is to jointly capture and harness an as-yet unprecedented set of opportunities.

2nd Workshop outline:
In the 2nd workshop we will collaborate practically, aiming towards a product that serves as a point of reference for the community, while constituting co-authorship for active participants. Newly available data includes recently digitized material from the Bibliotheca Hertziana library and foto collection. Since last year, Dr. Ksenia Mukhina and Maximilian Schich have further analyzed millions of public images that became available on a major social media platform over the past two decades. This situation enables a novel joint cartography of Rome, in time for 2025, integrating and comparing additional data sources with densities of modern locals vs. tourists, indoor vs. outdoor images, and associated oscillations of attention at time-scales ranging from hours in the day to seasonal patterns in years. For connoisseurs, the preliminary result appears meaningfully in sync with historical sources such as the Nolli map of 1748, while confirming modern individual experience in detail. Covering tourist attention in the first quarter of the 21st century, it would be further compelling to enrich the picture with the coverage of scholarly literature, libraries, foto collections, etc. We note that the full potential includes a set of projections capturing the topography of geolocated objects, yet also the topology of the underlying multidimensional space of image similarity. We anticipate this research to result in a new kind of "Bedeutungsperspektive" (hierarchical proportion) based on logarithmic frequencies, and in fundamentally new statements regarding the canonic stability of Roman points of interest, the latter due to the unprecedented temporal granularity of the available data.

The second workshop is convened by Prof. Dr. Maximilian Schich, ERA Chair for Cultural Data Analytics at Tallinn University and BH Wittkower Fellow 2023/24, and BH Executive Director Prof. Dr. Tristan Weddigen.
Its purpose is to focus on co-creation towards a joint product via productive discussions and/or ad-hoc working groups. Possible products include a joint cartography that captures the coverage of available information from antiquity to the present, and a roadmap for the research community. While we provide a foundation, participants are encouraged to bring their own ideas and data!

Taking place at Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome (Via Gregoriana) from June 11 to 13, 9:00 to 17:30, the workshop starts with a small number of invited presentations, a string of short contributed presentations, and a keynote on day 1. Meanwhile on days 2 and 3, we will fully concentrate on co-creation towards a joint product via Dagstuhl-style discussions and/or ad-hoc working groups based on available data. The program will be specified in collaboration on day 1, as usual in similar high-profile events, such as Dagstuhl workshops or SciFoo.

Participation and contribution:
To participate as a contributor toward the joint products, please send a single page proposal pdf to via email to mxs@tlu.ee by Wednesday, May 10. Acceptance notifications will go out on May 11. While we cannot cover travel and accommodation for additional participants, we'd be happy to feature relevant contributions via brief presentations in the program on the first day. The 1st day is open to the public and does not require registration.

Co-authorship and data statement:
Contributing will establish co-authorship in the final product, even if it takes a village, which is similar to co-authored group efforts in biology or physics. Our aim is not to re-publish data or to diminish existing platforms, but to raise the importance and traffic of original data sources by providing

overviews and meaningful summary statistics, ideally with granular pointer back to the original data. Additional data contributed by individual participants or partner institutions should ideally include granular object ids, image files, and/or metadata including geocodes or other useful multidimensional coordinates. Integrating data, we plan to harness the collection space navigator software, which is open source, open access, and provides for convenient import and export functionality of result images and calculated data coordinates, which can be reused elsewhere. In case contributed data needs further processing, we plan to evaluate the challenge and highlight the inherent opportunity in the community roadmap towards a more comprehensive analysis.

Acknoledgements:
The analysis of millions of social media images by Ksenia Mukhina and Maximilian Schich is supported by the CUDAN ERA Chair project for Cultural Data Analytics (https://cudan.tlu.ee), which is funded through the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation program of the European Commission (grant no. 810961).