In seeking to explore one of the possible directions in the evolution of the relationship between graphic image and society in the field of information design, it is essential to consider the figure of Otto Neurath, the Austrian sociologist, philosopher and economist, author of ISOTYPE, a visual system with the ambition to be universal, designed to inform a larger part of society. Neurath was a pioneer of visual journalism, a narrative form based on visual communication that aims to inform and/or offer an account of society. His work was about ‘transformation’ and relied on the collaboration of designers (Gerd Arntz, Erwin Bernath) to develop a visual system with the ambition to be universal, designed to inform a larger part of society. Neurath may be considered as a pioneer of visual journalism, a narrative form based on visual communication that aims to inform and/or offer an account of society.

In his book, *International Picture Language* (1936), Neurath makes reference to the large quantity of images and visual stimuli to which we are constantly subjected: a sort of information overload that makes it difficult to plan strategies for conveying information to a public that has become ‘blind’ to the overabundance of stimuli. The proposal we submit will introduce case studies in visual journalism that support the thesis according to which visual communication, based on graphs and images, as an integral part of multidisciplinary investigative news reports, can play a role in educating a society capable of elaborating a critical view of events that take place at a speed that often allow little time for thought.

Keywords: infographics, information design, visual communication.

1. Otto Neurath and ISOTYPE

Otto Neurath, the Austrian philosopher, sociologist and economist, is a figure known primarily for the significance of his many insights in the visual, social and political fields. His work, developed with different methods across different media, becomes particularly important especially after World War I, when Europe needed hold fast to rise up from the devastation of the War. Driven by the desire to restore and support an improvement in the cultural level of the social classes that had the least possibility of access to culture and science, especially the large segment of the population afflicted by extreme poverty and illiteracy, Neurath first theorized, then implemented a new approach to data visualization from a more ‘analytical practice’ to a more significant ‘information practice’, addressed to a wider, diverse and scientifically illiterate public. His work was about ‘transformation’ and relied on the collaboration of designers (Gerd Arntz, Erwin Bernath) to develop a visual system with the ambition to be universal, designed to inform a larger part of society.


The relevance of Otto Neurath. From ISOTYPE to visual journalism for a visual account of society

Alessandro Luigini, Matteo Moretti

L’attualità di Otto Neurath. Da ISOTYPE al visual journalism per un racconto visuale della società

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Nell’ottica di rintracciare una delle possibili linee evolutive del rapporto tra immagine grafica e società nel campo del design dell’informazione, sarà indispensabile soffermarsi sulla figura di Otto Neurath, sociologo, filosofo e economista austriaco, autore di ISOTYPE, un sistema visuale di ambizione universale progettato per informare una porzione della società più ampiamente di quanto i sistemi consolidati di informazione consentissero. Possiamo considerare Neurath un pioniere del visual journalism, una forma narrativa che passa attraverso la comunicazione visuale con lo scopo di informare e/o restituire un punto di entrata su temi complessi e sfacciati ad un pubblico spesso distratto e sovraffasciato dalla quantità di informazioni. Negli ultimi anni, a quasi un secolo di distanza, assieme a una nuova stagione di particolare attenzione sul design dell’informazione, attraverso le visualizzazioni di dati, le infografiche ed anche, come sintesi significative di testi e immagini grafiche, il visual journalism. Pratiche ormai consolidate, che trovano nuovamente rispo e spazio progettuale grazie all’avvento di nuovi paradigmi tecnologici che rendono l’opera di Neurath estremamente attuale. Molte sono poi i tratti comuni in questo parallelo temporale, come quello della pratica interdisciplinare, o della progettazione attorno all’utente. Seppur con le evidenti differenze tecnologiche – e quindi semantiche – e culturali, permane un filo comune che collega anche alcuni aspetti legati alla società. Nel suo libro *International Picture Language* (1936), Neurath si riferisce alla grande quantità di immagini e stimoli vivi ai quali siamo continuamente sottoposti; una sorta di overload informativo in cui diventa fondamentale progettare strategie per portare l’attenzione dell’attore di un pubblico reso “cieco” dalla sovrabbondanza di stimuli. La proposta che si sottopone entrerà alcuni casi studi di visual journalism capaci di supportare la tesi secondo cui la comunicazione visuale per immagini, integrate a indagini ed elaborazioni di stampo multidisciplinare, può avere un ruolo nella formazione di una società capace di una visione critica degli eventi che si susseguono con ritmi che spesso non conoscono il tempo della riflessione.

Parole chiave: comunicazione visuale, design dell’informazione, infografica.


2. Cf. *PLAYFAIR* 1801.


4. Cf. SNOW 1855.
new visual language that could make data visualisation less abstract and transparently self-explanatory.

In any case, the shift towards information took place using a scientific methodological, which lasted many years and was validated in studies based on sample users. The integrated work of the transformer and the designer, in Neurath’s project, represented the theoretical and pragmatic design capabilities. His most important insight consisted in replacing the abstract forms typical of data visualisation, with visual units in the form of pictograms (fig. 1). In other words, the transition from an abstract linguistic and potentially symbolic code to an iconic pictographic code.

From a semiotic point of view, Neurath set the symbolic code to an iconic pictographic code. 

On the conceptual level, Neurath’s intentions were explicitly articulated in an article written in 1927, with the explicit goal of Viennese society first, and of other contemporary classes that mirror a ‘given’ structure of the world. This is not the (philosophical) project for semantics, but the (technical) project for a visual semiotic system that is effective in the present time. In fact, positioning Neurath’s work within the framework of a logical positivism may well be considered less abstract and tendentiously self-explanatory. This is another reason why Neurath does not seek a solution to the positivist search to codify a new a priori language, “complete with semantic classes that mirror a given structure of the world. This is not the (philosophical) project for semantics, but the (technical) project for semantics, but the (technical) project for a visual semiotic system that is effective in the present time.”

In fact, positioning Neurath’s work within the framework of a logical positivism may well be reductive. In 1966 Ellen Lupton ended her re-

Figure 1


12. LUPTON 1986, p. 58

5. Cf. NEURATH 1936.


Neurath, Isotype and the terra comperata. Progetto Grafico.

2. 2003, pp. 20–27.


8. ZOLO 1986, p. 31.


Figure 1


12. LUPTON 1986, p. 58

5. Cf. NEURATH 1936.


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Figure 1

super-scientific, that disciplined the standards of a philosophical centralism wielded by a sort of logical positivists, to become a set of signs free grounded in the apparent objectivity of perception. Neurath intended his visual language, like the proposed scientific language of the logical positivists, to become a set of signs free of the redundancy and potential ambiguities of an historically evolved verbal language\textsuperscript{14}. While Anceschi underscores how some sections in Neurath’s work are neither positivist and nor logical, starting with a critique of the “idea of a philosophical centralism wielded by a sort of super-science that disciplines the structure of nature. As the paradigm change in the field of visualising the social sciences, introduced by Neurath’s method, was further enriched by another equally significant innovation which we will return to later as our study develops: the imperative constitution of an ‘interdisciplinary’ team. Neurath recognized that a transformation of the complexity of social and economic phenomena could not be achieved within a strictly disciplinary vision, as it had in the past, too often limited by extreme specialization. He thus constituted an interdisciplinary team consisting of designers, sociologists and experts of various kinds, coordinated by the ‘transformer’, a figure that Neurath cut out for himself: an interpreter capable of adjusting the visual and verbal language of design to that of the community of reference. We can, ultimately and asacentred-designer.

1.1 A century of information overload

In his 1946 book International Picture Language. The First Rules of Isotype, Neurath explicitly notes that “The number of pictures which come before everybody’s eyes in newspapers, in motion pictures, in the street advertisements, is getting greater and greater” and furthermore: “To most men the reading of long lines of numbers is a great trouble – they put down a book when they see it has in it numbers or curves. But pictures are an attraction”, noting how, a century before, the average reader was already overwhelmed by a flow of extreme attractive images and information (fig. 2). It should be said however that he was not a critical pioneer in this regard, though he was among the first, if not the first, to offer a structured response to visual overload. As early as 1927, Kraeauer, in an essay on photography, left no possibility of alternative interpretations when he denounced the toxic effects of the excessive presence of photographic images in illustrated magazines, veritable visual clusters that do not encourage, but on the contrary hinder memory and knowledge\textsuperscript{17}. Kraeauer wrote: “In illustrated magazines, people see the world that the illustrated magazines keep us from perceiving […] Never before have we known so little of our own era. The invention of illustrated magazines by the dominating era dominant in the circle of universities, we realized that the intellectuals many that had succeeded them were overwhelmed by the idea of the democratic nation and that they were appraisingly principally the ideas of liberalism, but in second place, also to those of the socialists, the utilitarianism, the pragmatism, and empiricism, in a mixture of ideas that was eventually definitively abandoned. In reality in this we were not pioneers, but we were among the first, if not the first, to offer a structured response to visual overload. As early as 1927, Kraeauer, in an essay on photography, left no possibility of alternative interpretations when he denounced the toxic effects of the excessive presence of photographic images in illustrated magazines, veritable visual clusters that do not encourage, but on the contrary hinder memory and knowledge\textsuperscript{17}. Kraeauer wrote: “In illustrated magazines, people see the world that the illustrated magazines keep us from perceiving […] Never before have we known so little of our own era. The invention of illustrated magazines by the dominating

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society is one of the most powerful means of organizing a strike against understanding"18. George Duhamel took the same position three years later when he wrote: "I am no longer able to think what I want to think. Moving images have taken the place of my thought"19. The decades leading from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century witnessed the alternation between icono-enthusiastic and icono-sceptical positions with the typical exception of points of view by individual scholars, but as Pinotti and Somaini note, it is relatively simple to find analogies between the critical positions of the above-mentioned Kracauer and Duhamel, and those of Debord on the ‘disappearance of reality’, all the way to Latour’s and Baudrillard on the ‘disappearance on the anesthetising power of photography, and Duhamel, and those of Debord (1967) on the society of the spectacle that gather information even when we are not looking at their screens, and present it to us later in large quantities. 2. The spread and development of ISOTYPE Neurath’s work acquired international relevance very quickly. By the end of the 1920s he collaborated with Belgian bibliographer Paul Otlet, with whom he designed a worldwide museum, the Mundaneum, which was to have its headquarters in Geneva and would be designed by Le Corbusier. In 1931, Neurath also agreed to work with the Soviet leadership on the constitution of a statistical institute for pictograms to be called Izostat. In 1933, when he was forced to emigrate in Holland, he co-founded the Aja international foundation for visual education, aja international foundation for visual education, which was already symptomatic a century ago, which he continued to develop even more persistently with the introduction of pervasive technologies such as smartphones we carry with us everywhere, thus illustrating from the society of the spectacle that even when we are not looking at them, they are presented to us later in large quantities.

It is clear how these twentieth-century considerations on the image society may be validated by the use of the image in social environments with the appropriate educational level and degree of literacy, and even more so in the case of social circles with a more modest educational level or in the early years of life. Then this flow, which was already symptomatic a century ago, is absolutely analogous to what we now call ‘information overload’, meaning the cognitive overload to which most users of Internet or other visual media are exposed. This phenomenon has become even more persistent with the introduction of pervasive technologies such as smartphones we carry with us everywhere, that gather information even when we are not looking at their screens, and present it to us later in large quantities.

3. ISOTYPE oggi: l’eredità di Neurath nella comunicazione sociale All’oculo delle precedenti riflessioni, emerge quanto il lavoro di Neurath sia estremamente utile sia dal punto di vista del processo, degli intenti, che nella sua espressione visuale. La sua eredità si rivela importante per comunicare fenomeni sociali e politici ad un pubblico etnogenico, spesso distratto dalla sovrabbondanza di stimuli visuali, con una
of other contexts such as the Olympics, the American Institute for Communication, and probably the first visual systems by Apple for the Macintosh systems21, and other countries such as Mexico, the United States and China22 as well as Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria in the 1950s, when Marie Neurath had already succeeded her husband at the head of the In- stitute of Visual Education. Anticipated in 1943 by the exhibition Human Life in Africa designed by Neurath, shortly af- ter his death the governments of several devel- oping African nations on their way to eman- cipation from European colonialism began a fertile collaboration with Marie Neurath’s team. The work developed for Nigeria was particularly interesting in terms of the quanti- ty and quality of the publications, which left us a corpus of four major publications: Education for all (fig.3), Better farming for better living, Health for all, Paying for progress. The consti- tution of a Nigerian society relied on the visual language of ISOTYPE.

3. ISOTYPE today: Neurath’s legacy in social communication

These earlier considerations shed light on the extreme relevance of Neurath’s work from the point of view of its process, intents, and visual and verbal emanation. His legacy has proven to be important to communicate social and political phenomena to a heterogeneous public often distracted by an overload of visual stimuli, de- signed to create a communicative environment that de- signs a narrative mediated by symbols and images, as well as texts. These clues become very significant in the daily practice of visual jour- nalism (VJ). Though it may not be considered a direct evolution of Neurath’s work, VJ shares with it a series of important elements on both the methodological and visual levels, that raise it to a position of interest, especially in regards to the relationship between image and socie- ty. Of particular importance is its educational and informative intent, developed through the visual medium and oriented towards fostering greater social and civic consciousness.

3.1 Visual journalism

VJ is a recent, rather broad and multifacet- ed practice: some definitions associate it with a form of journalistic storytelling that relies on photographic or moving images23, or car- toons and illustrations24. The most precise de- finition, especially with regard to the most advanced forms of VJ, is the one by Machin et al. in one of the rare monograph publica- tions on the topic–modale. Il VJ, quindi, non si sviluppa in un contesto tecnologico; può svilupparsi sulla carta, onli- ne o nello spazio fisico: non è la natura tecnolo- gica a definirlo quanto invece la relazione orizzontale che hanno le diverse discipline all’interno del processo informativo. I più re- centi progetti di VJ rispondono alla crescente complessità della società contemporanea nella- misura in cui riescono a fornire una visione più approfondita del tema trattato, sia inte- grando tecniche giornalistiche e di visual de- signe, sia con la profonda integrazione di cont- ributi disciplinari differenti, favorendo di fatto una librizzazione dello spazio indispensabile. Quali siano le migliori pratiche verso un’e- sperienza più coinvolgente, capace di attirare e mantenere l’attenzione di un pubblico più ampio nella lettura di contenuti spesso a- profonditi e complessi, è stato ancora scar- samente esplorato soprattutto nel contesto dei progetti progettati da percezioni grossolane dei fatti25, e dei numeri ad esso le- gati26, che non facilitano l’approccio sereno di lettore alle informazioni e alla compren- sione di testi complessi.

3.2. L’eredità visuale di Neurath

È per noi di notevole interesse constatare come l’eredità di Neurath abbia una grande influenza nei progetti di comunicazione socia- le contemporanei. I casi che di seguito si apro- profondiscono evidenziano come le strategie figurative messe a punto con ISOTYPE quasi un secolo fa siano tuttora sostanzialmente va- lide, nonostante un contesto tecnologico, po- litico e sociale completamente differente. Un caso, forse tra i più promettenti al modello originale, è Count the kids27, che ha progettato da J. Sadri, che aggiorna i lettori, pressoché in tempo reale, sul numero di bambini decedu- ti durante il conflitto israeliano-palestinese, rappresentando ogni caso di morte con il pit- togramma di un neonato, in cui il solo color permetterà di distinguere tra le vittime pale- stinesi e quelle israeliane.

Il progetto, per modalità e temi, ricorda la ce- lebre visualizzazione sul rapporto tra nascite e morti in Germania, in cui veniva immedi- atamente explicitato il saldo negativo registra- tos presso una cronologia mondiale (fig. 3). Seppur con mezzi e tecnologie differenti, i due progetti condividono molti aspetti meto- dologici, nonostante dal punto di vista quan- titativo e simbolico ci sia una certa differenza sull’uso dei pittogrammi. Mentre Neurath ha spesso raggruppato dietro ad un singolo sim- bolo una determinata quantità (nell’esempio corrente ogni pittogramma rappresenta 250.000 esatti umani), il progetto di Sadri mantiene una relazione unitaria, ipotizziamo, nell’in- tento di rendere più vicina la percezione della realtà e, probabilmente, anche per l’aggiorna- mento in tempo reale che segnala visualmente ogni singola vittima. Non sono certe le motivazioni che hanno spinto Sadri ad intraprendere tale scelta, mentre
The case studies we examine here will show how the figurative strategies developed in ISOTYPE almost a century ago are still substantially valid, despite the completely different technological, political and social context. One case, perhaps one of the most similar to the original model, is Count the kids\(^26\) (fig. 4) designed by J. Sadri, which updates readers, practically in real time, on the number of children who died during the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, representing each death with the picture of a newborn baby, in which only the colour distinguishes a Palestinian victim from an Israeli one.

In terms of method and themes, the project is reminiscent of the famous visualisation of the relationship between births and deaths in specific medium or technological domain; it may be developed on paper, online or in physical space: it is defined less by its technological nature than by the horizontal relationship between the different disciplines within the information process. The most recent VJ projects respond to the growing complexity of contemporary society to the extent that they are able to provide a more profound vision of the theme they address, by integrating the techniques of journalism with visual design, and by deeply integrating the contributions of different disciplines, thereby fostering a hybridisation that is often critical.

What the best practices might be for a more engaging experience that can attract and hold the attention of a wider public in reading content that is often complex and exhaustive, has been insufficiently explored to date. This is especially true of the contemporary context, distinguished by a cursory perception is especially true of the contemporary context, distinguished by a cursory perception of the facts\(^26\) and of figures related to them\(^27\), making it harder for readers to serenely approach information and the understanding of complex texts.

3.2 Neurath’s visual legacy
It is of great interest to us to observe the extent to which Neurath’s legacy has influenced contemporary social communication projects.
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Germany, which made the negative balance recorded during World War I instantly explic- it (fig. 5). Though they rely on different means and technology, the two projects share many methodological narratives to parse the different ways the pictograms are used from a quanti- tative and symbolic point of view. Whereas Neurath has often grouped a specific quanti- ty behind one single symbol (in this example, each pictogram represents 250,000 human beings), Sadrī’s project maintains a unitary relationship, with the intent, we believe, to enhance the perception of reality and proba- bly to provide real-time updates that visually track each individual victim.

The reasons that prompted Sadrī to make this decision are uncertain, while Neurath’s mo- tives for advancing a different choice are well known. He indicated that one of the essential rules of ISOTYPE was to visually structure the data into units, with the primary aim of making it easier for the reader to compare val- ues, an essential parameter for any data visu- alisation project. Furthermore, Sadrī’s work did not require structuring the numbers into units, given the disproportion between the Palestinian and Israeli victims, which makes the comparison so very clear at first glance. It should also be underscored that the com- munication of these data with a graphic system acquires particularly significant symbolic val- ues when you realize that the same pictograms are used for children from opposing ethnic groups, most likely signifying that human life, especially in the case of children, has the same value above and beyond the context.

A similar approach was taken by the Washin- gton Post to illustrate the dramatic conditions of worker safety on the construction sites for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar29 (fig. 6). The visualisation again relies on the use of anthropomorphic red pictograms, based on a unitary quantification like the project described above, even though in this project the reporting is clearly the dominant element: while Count the Kids does not use text, but al- lows the visual narration to carry the story, in the Washington Post project, the visualisation is part of an investigative report structured as a text that explores the issue in-depth accom- panyed by images and a video. And finally, it is interesting to highlight the project entitled Are We in the Midst of a Sixth Mass Extinction30 (fig. 7) by the New York Times. Published in 2012, it visualises informa- tion about the extinction of animal and plant species, divided and represented by class. In terms of themes, methodology, graphic and sociological synthesis, this case closely referen- ces Neurath’s work (fig. 8), offering a general perspective and quasi-quantitative considera- tions on a theme as complex and delicate as the extinction of life forms on Earth.

3.3 Neurath’s methodological legacy Moving beyond the purely figurative level of the comparisons to a more methodological and sociological level, we find yet another thread of continuity between what was proposed and formalized by the Austrian sociologist in the first half of the twentieth century and to- day’s practice of visual journalism. The visual narration of particularly significant social phenomena, aimed at fostering greater civic consciousness and improving the cultural and cognitive conditions of society, is a distinctive feature of Neurath’s work that may be found in many contemporary visual journalism pro- jects. These projects often rely on both verbal and visual10 communication to serve an ‘educa- tional’ function, as described for example in the work of Moretti et al.31, some works sup- port the opening of debates online and fight dominant on ‘narrative’11, for a more conscious and better-informed society.

3.4 New practices between images and society The selected case studies below present a particular form of visual journalism that finds support in urban space and relies on the data dissemination of information to the public about specific social issues, to influence the user directly in public space, which thus be- comes a space dense with straightforward in- formation. The term ‘data visualisation’ re- fers to all artefacts whose figurative elements incorporate data12. These are not data visu- alisations that appear on media such as the Internet or in print, but actual site-specific installations, some of which are interactive

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34. Cf. JANSEN, DRAGICEVIC, ISENBERG, ALEXANDER, KARNIK, KILDAM, SUBRAMANIAN, HORNBÆK 2015.

Figure 9, 10 Dal narcissico p. 89.
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The project does not stop at the installation in late matter, in order to further substantiate the informative practice that takes place on the urban territory.

A particularly interesting project is the one in Stuttgart, to raise greater civic consciousness of best practices to fight this phenomenon.

The new practices also include the urban-scale work of Roni-Levit, the Israeli visual designer and storyteller, whose project, winner of the Information is beautiful award 2018, has focused attention on a distinctively spatial and temporal point of reference. The project was developed to open debate on the dilemma that coincides with this part of the city and its inhabitants, on the tension between its current plight and its possible future. The design included spatial visualisations of the existing common urban elements in the district, such as walls, benches and stairs, accompanied by short captions that help to introduce the

Figure 11, 12, 13 Urban visualisation by Roni Levit. Available at: https://www.ronilevit.com/meow.

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The new practices also include the urban-scale work of Roni-Levit, the Israeli visual designer and storyteller, whose project, winner of the Information is beautiful award 2018, has focused attention on a distinctively spatial and temporal point of reference. The project was developed to open debate on the dilemma that coincides with this part of the city and its inhabitants, on the tension between its current plight and its possible future. The design included spatial visualisations of the existing common urban elements in the district, such as walls, benches and stairs, accompanied by short captions that help to introduce the

Figure 11, 12, 13 Urban visualisation by Roni Levit. Available at: https://www.ronilevit.com/meow.

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Figure 11, 12, 13 Urban visualisation by Roni Levit. Available at: https://www.ronilevit.com/meow.
theme and the context of the visualisations, making the quantitative aspects explicit. The result is a highly present, profoundly engaging visual form, capable of producing hyper-contextualized information. The project illustrates ‘the’ place ‘in’ the place. The elements that compose the urban space thus become part of the process for raising awareness of the quality of that environment, elements of information that lay the basis for considerations on the context and the future scenarios of urban policies (figs. 11, 12, 13).

The project Occupy George, curated by Andy Dao during the 2011 protests in San Francisco, Berkeley and Oakland by the Occupy collective, intends to provide detailed information to an ample public on the social and economic inequality produced by the American capitalistic model. Like the preceding cases, the choice of medium for the data visualisation leads to a semantic layering. The dollar bills, bearing the effigy of George Washington, are transformed into elements of information (figs. 14, 15), by overlaying data visualisations on the issue of American economic inequality. All developed with an essential graphic design, transferred onto the dollar bills using rubber-stamps designed for this project by the author. In this case the project adopted a multimedia approach, in which the ‘dollar bill’ medium works with the digital medium: each informative–dollar bill features the address of the project’s website, which provides the template to use with one’s own printer or the template with which to create one’s own rubber–stamp, transforming mere readers into producers and distributors of informative–dollar bills (fig. 16). During the exhibition Disobedient Objects held at the Victoria & Albert Museum38, the author was commissioned to produce a new rubber–stamp to use on the five–pound bills, which would bear the data on salary inequality for two reasons: 1) the capacity of communicating with a public more specific and detailed and 2) the innovation in the visualisation of information.

4. Conclusions

Neurath’s work resonates constantly, almost a century later, especially in terms of its methodological and functional insights, rather than fonda distanza mediale tra le tecnologie novecentesche e quelle attuali: se la produzione di una matrice per un timbro ai tempi della nascita di ISOTYPE richiedeva doti artigianali specialistiche (fig. 18), la produzione di una matrice per timbrare le banconote del progetto Occupy George è accessibile a chiunque sia connesso a internet, per ordinazioni online o prototipazioni tramite stampante 3d. La continuità, quindi, è data dalla strutturazione di una produzione di dati di processi di profilazione – il vantaggio rapido – almeno con il ruolo del “trasformatore” che è possibile assimilare a quello del designer, capace di incidere in modo più diretto e, si spera, più profondo nella coscienza collettiva. Le attuali tendenze del VJ mostrano come la cortocircuitazione di tre piani differenti di informazioni, contenuto e contesto – posa rendere i singoli progetti più efficaci principalmente per due ragioni: 1) la capacità di comunicare con un pubblico più specifico e dettagliato e 2) l’innovazione nella visualizzazione di informazioni contestuali.

Rispetto ad un approccio esclusivamente digitale, caratterizzato da una conoscenza “opaca” dei fruitori del progetto – a meno di processi di profilazione – il vantaggio rappresentato dalla materializzazione di dati è di ridurre a comunicare con un pubblico specifico, quello degli utenti del luogo in cui il progetto viene realizzato, riprendendo così uno dei principi fondanti della proposta di Neurath, ovvero che la visualizzazione delle informazioni debba essere la più auto–esplicante possibile (sprechende Bilder). Princípio assoluto anche attraverso la sostituzione delle tradizionali forme dei grafici: non più cerchi, ellissi o rettangoli, ma elementi pittografici dal forte valore simbolico, in grado di suggerire al lettore il contesto e il tema ai quali il racconto visivo si riferiva. Aspetto che risuona in maniera differente nei casi studiati, in cui il ruolo metaforico viene attribuito ad oggetti come le banconote o a elementi architettonici e di arredo urbano, assimilando di fatto la funzione assolta dai pittogrammi tipici di ISOTYPE in una coincidenza di forma, contenuto e contesto che rende l’eredità di Neurath ancora estremamente significativa.
the figurative aspects that appear somewhat dated and the profound media gap between the technology of the early twentieth-century and today’s, while the production of the matrix for a rubber stamp at the time that ISO-TYPE was created required specialized crafting skills (fig. 18), the production of a matrix to rubberstamp the bills in the Occupy George project is accessible to anyone connected to Internet, to be ordered online in the interdisciplinary structure of the design team, the user-centered approach, and the role of ‘transformer’ which may be considered akin to that of the designer, as a mediator within complex processes which can relate to all the subjects involved in a project, to lead a design process that is as inclusive and effective as possible. The case histories makes it clear that yet another, not always obvious, component may be identified: a real pluri-modality in VJ projects that are moving beyond their original media (print and web) to increasingly invade the daily life of potentially interested individuals. In forming society by means of images acquires new meaning when the content about public space is channelled through ‘the public space itself, i.e. when creating infographics within the space creates a relationship between the medium and the content of the communication, a subversively circular bond that can have a more direct, and hopefully deeper, impact on our collective consciousness.

The current trends in VJ demonstrate how

the project Occupy George. Available at: http:// occupygeorge.com/

with a more specific and detailed audience and 2) the innovation of channeling contextual information. With respect to an exclusively digital approach, based on an ‘opaque’ idea of the users of the project — unless it includes profiling processes — the advantage of materializing the data lies in the ability to communicate with a more specific audience, the users of the place in which the project is located, thereby fulfilling one of the founding principles of Neurath’s work, that the visualisation of information must be as self-explanatory as possible (sprechende Bilder). A principle that is also expressed in the substitution of the traditional forms of graphic design: gone are the circles, ellipses and rectangles, replaced by pictographic elements with a strong symbolic value, that give the reader a clue as to the context and theme to which the visual story refers. This aspect resounds in different ways in the case studies analysed here, in which the role of metaphor is assigned to objects such as the banknote or architectural elements or urban furniture, thereby assimilating the function served by the pictograms typical of traditional forms of graphic design: gone are the circles, ellipses and rectangles, replaced by pictographic elements with a strong symbolic value, that give the reader a clue as to the context and theme to which the visual story refers. This aspect resounds in different ways in the case studies analysed here, in which the role of metaphor is assigned to objects such as the banknote or architectural elements or urban furniture, thereby assimilating the function served by the pictograms typical of ISO-TYPE in a convergence of form, content and context that makes Neurath’s legacy extremely significant today.

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