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**After-word. 'Invisible cities': which  
(good-bad) man? For which (good-bad)  
polity?**

Silvestri, Paolo

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Fondazione Luigi Einaudi

Studi  
30

GOOD GOVERNMENT, GOVERNANCE, HUMAN COMPLEXITY

GOOD GOVERNMENT,  
GOVERNANCE,  
HUMAN COMPLEXITY

Luigi Einaudi's legacy and  
contemporary societies

Edited by  
PAOLO HERITIER and PAOLO SILVESTRI



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PAOLO SILVESTRI

AFTER-WORD. INVISIBLE CITIES:  
WHICH (GOOD-BAD) MAN? FOR WHICH (GOOD-BAD) POLITY?

If you choose to believe me, good. Now I will tell you how Octavia, the spider-web city, is made. There is a precipice between two steep mountains: the city is over the void, bound to the two crests with ropes and chains and catwalks. You walk on the little wooden ties, careful not to set your foot in the open spaces [...].

This is the foundation of the city: a net which serves as passage and support. [...] Suspended over the abyss, the life of Octavia's inhabitants is less uncertain than in other cities. They know the net cannot endure beyond a certain limit.<sup>1</sup>

Now I shall tell of the city of Zenobia, which is wonderful in this fashion: though set on dry terrain it stands in high pilings [...].

No one remembers what need or command or desire drove Zenobia's founders to give their city this form, and so there is no telling whether it was satisfied by the city as we see it today, which has perhaps grown through successive superimpositions from the first, now undecipherable plan. But what is certain is that if you ask an inhabitant of Zenobia to describe his vision of a happy life, it is always a city like Zenobia that he imagines, with its pilings and its suspended stairways, a Zenobia perhaps quite different, a-flutter with banners and ribbons, but always derived by combining elements of that first model.

This said, it is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species, but rather into another two: those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I. CALVINO, *Le città invisibili* [1972], Engl. transl.: *Invisible cities*, transl. by W. Weaver [1974] (London, Vintage, 1997), p. 67. In this afterword I generally adhered to the above cited English translation of *Le città invisibili*, except in cases of certain words of the Italian text whose meaning, in my opinion, required a different translation, provided by myself with the help of Rachel Barritt Costa.

<sup>2</sup> I. CALVINO, *Invisible cities* cit., p. 30.

After this long journey one might ask: what conclusions can be drawn from this collection? Which routes should be followed for our future research? Here I would venture no further than a ‘simple’ sketch of a story, an account of our own ceaseless journey of research and the good or bad society that men form by being together. This endeavor will be pursued by giving shape to the manifold and complex impressions I have drawn from a reading of the essays gathered together in this collection, but also from those that came out between 2008 and 2011, on the occasion of the celebrations for the sixtieth anniversary of the election of Einaudi as President of the Republic (1948) and the fiftieth anniversary of his death (1961).<sup>3</sup> It can hardly be a coincidence, I would suggest, that *in a time of crisis*, even those holding the highest institutional offices of the Italian state felt the need to return to the symbolic, moral, intellectual and institutional figure of Einaudi.<sup>4</sup> Perusal of this set of contributions has prompted me to reflect once more on a few unfrequented paths of Einaudi’s journey in search of a good society. I will follow his itinerary without any claim of exhaustiveness or systematic coherence: rather, I will adopt a narrative style (albeit eschewing any literary pretensions) with a sprinkling of elliptical and rhapsodic considerations whose allusive character will, hopefully, be of aid in relaunching the inquiry into the good polity and the relationship between man and society, individual and institutions. I trust that the reasons underlying this choice, which is not merely stylistic, will become clearer upon complete reading of this book: from the introduction to the contributions and up to the end of this afterword.

1. As a first step towards explaining this point, let me start from the title, which interweaves *allusions* and *analogies* that will develop the thread of my discourse.

The allusions refer to Italo Calvino’s famous work, *Invisible cities*, as well as to the allusive use I propose to make of it. Thus in the perspective adopted

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<sup>3</sup> Among these see: R. EINAUDI (ed.), *L’eredità di Luigi Einaudi. La nascita dell’Italia repubblicana e la costruzione dell’Europa* (Milano, Skira, 2008); F. FORTE, *L’economia liberale di Luigi Einaudi. Saggi* (Firenze, Olschki, 2009); R. MARCHIONATTI – P. SODDU (eds.), *Luigi Einaudi nella cultura, nella società e nella politica del Novecento* (Firenze, Olschki, 2010); A. GIGLIOBIANCO (ed.), *Luigi Einaudi: libertà economica e coesione sociale* (Roma - Bari, Laterza, 2010); N. ACOCELLA (ed.), *Luigi Einaudi: studioso, statista, governatore* (Roma, Carocci, 2010); F. TOMATIS, *Verso la città divina. L’incantesimo della libertà in Luigi Einaudi* (Roma, Città Nuova, 2011); the n. 127 (September-October 2011) issue of the review *Reset* partly dedicated to Einaudi, pp. 29-56.

<sup>4</sup> See: M. DRAGHI, *Prefazione*, in A. GIGLIOBIANCO (ed.), *Luigi Einaudi: libertà economica e coesione sociale* cit., pp. v-vii; G. NAPOLITANO, “Luigi Einaudi: un’eredità per il riformismo e per tutti”, *Reset*, n. 128 (November-December 2011), pp. 5-10.

in this Afterword, *Invisible cities* is a presence from the realm of allusion, and I believe it should awaken no impulse to analyse or recall the specific literature on this work. Here I draw encouragement from Calvino himself who, spurred by the attempt of various commentators to pinpoint the “moral of the story” – which has often been found in its conclusion – suggested that *Invisible cities* is “a book built like a polyhedron, and as for conclusions, they are scattered everywhere, written all around its sharp corners, and it also has some that are no less epigrammatic or epigraphic” than its own conclusion.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, I trust that an epigrammatic or epigraphic use of *Invisible cities* will not be taken as a forced interpretation, especially bearing in mind that it is my own personal and ingenuous re-reading. ‘Ingenuous’ at least in the sense that, ‘from the *incipit*’, from the very beginning, whenever we open a book, enter into a dialogue, a relationship or research group, or embark on an individual line of exploration, we always find ourselves hovering between ‘to believe’ and ‘not to believe’.

“If you choose to believe me, good”. At every new beginning we are constantly exposed to misunderstandings, face to face with the difficult interpretative-communicative situation such as that recurring throughout the dialogues between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan and narrated from the very *incipit* of the tale:

*It cannot be taken for granted that Kublai Khan believed everything Marco Polo said when describing the cities visited on his missions [...]. In the lives of emperors there is a moment which follows pride in the boundless extension of the territories we have conquered [...]. There is a sense of emptiness that comes over us at evening [...]. It is the desperate moment when we discover that this empire, which had seemed to us the sum of all wonders, is an endless, formless, ruin, that corruption's gangrene has spread too far to be healed by our sceptre [...]. Only in Marco Polo's accounts was Kublai Khan able to discern, through the walls and towers destined to crumble, the tracery of a pattern so subtle it could escape the termites' gnawing.<sup>6</sup>*

Furthermore, Calvino himself, faced with the question of the overall meaning of the story, wrote that “only the text itself, in its own form, can authorize or exclude this or that reading. As a reader among many, I can say that in chapter five, which at the very heart of the book develops a theme of *lightness* strangely associated with the city theme, there are some of the pieces I consider the best as visionary evidence, and perhaps these spidery fig-

<sup>5</sup> I. CALVINO, “Italo Calvino on Invisible cities”, *Columbia*, n. 8 (1993), pp. 37-42, Ital. transl.: “Presentazione”, in *Le città invisibili* (Milano, Mondadori, 1993), p. x.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, *Invisible cities* cit., p. 5.



ures (“thin cities” or suchlike) are the lightest zone of the book”. But his conclusion was: “I would hardly know what more to say”.<sup>7</sup> A conclusion Einaudi himself might well have come to if he had been prodded by his critics into being *explicit* about the overall meaning of his search for good government. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the ‘story of good government’ is a message that always appeals to one’s own freedom and sensibility or to the response of a ‘you’ who reads, listens and re-interprets and re-writes or re-tells the story.

*Kublai asks Marco: – When you return to the West, will you repeat to your people the same tales you tell me?*

*– I speak and speak, – Marco says, – but the listener retains only the words he is expecting. [...] It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear.*

*– At times I feel your voice is reaching me from far away, while I am prisoner of a gaudy and unlivable present, where all forms of human society have reached an extreme of their cycle and there is no imagining what new forms they may assume. And I hear, from your voice, the invisible reasons which make cities live, through which perhaps, once dead, they will come to life again.<sup>8</sup>*

On the issue of analogies, one may find several family resemblances between *Invisible cities* and the research on good government: those I will develop later are just a few of the possible. But it is worth noting forthwith two fundamental analogies: one related to content, the other to form or style.

The content-related analogy concerns the relationship between traveling and researching. Marco Polo’s journeys are to the Einaudian quest for good government as they are to our own research. In other words, here I assume the paradigm of the traveler-researcher.

As regards form or style, perhaps it is time to do justice to Einaudi the preacher and storyteller, for his expository style is by no means a mere detail. Rather, it is the typical form in which the thoughts and sentiments that most deeply affected him took shape.<sup>9</sup> To recall our starting point – the fertile duality of Einaudi’s thought, the individual and the institutional – this is true both for the Einaudi who reflects on the individual foundation of a good society – Einaudi the narrator of everyday stories of individual men, humble and falli-

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*, *Presentazione* cit., p. xi (italics mine).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*, *Invisible cities* cit., pp. 123-124.

<sup>9</sup> See V. DELLA VALLE, “La lingua di Luigi Einaudi fra classicismo e pathos”, in A. GIGLIOBIANCO (ed.), *Luigi Einaudi: libertà economica e coesione sociale* cit., pp. 138-154.

ble, who learn through experience by “trial and error” – and also for the Einaudi who reflects on the institutional foundations of the good society: indeed, the very portrayal of good government appeared to elude him save by casting it in the narrative-allusive mold.

Finally, Calvino’s mention of “lightness”, almost anticipating his spiritual testament, *Six memos for the next millennium*, might well sum up the sense of Einaudi’s style as well as my reference to literature and why I consider it just another way of looking at the world:

Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don’t mean escaping into dreams or the irrational. I mean that I have to change my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification.<sup>10</sup>

2. Having said this, Einaudi the narrator of stories of concrete men can be found from as early as his first book, *Un principe mercante* [A merchant prince] (1900),<sup>11</sup> where he relates the deeds of a self-made-man, an entrepreneur who, undaunted by difficulties and failures, built a business empire in South America. It was a work that earned Einaudi the following compliment from a colleague of his: “you have become a fine novelist economist, almost a Verne of political economy”. This is also the same Einaudi who, upon returning to his home town for the inauguration of a company, wrote the following dedication to its founders and their “vocation”:

Thousands, millions of individuals work, produce and save in spite of everything we can invent to put spokes in their wheels, to thwart them, discourage them. It is the natural vocation that spurs them, not merely the thirst for money. Enthusiasm, the pride in seeing one’s business grow and prosper, seeing it acquire reputation and inspire trust in an ever greater range of customers, expand the industrial plant, embellish the sites – all these aspects constitute a driving force of progress every bit as powerful as that of profit.<sup>12</sup>

Yet this is the Einaudi who, at the same time, was aware that economic activity and exchanges are not intrinsically self-founded (but what is?). In his *Lectures on social policy*, he introduces his students to the topic with the incipit:

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<sup>10</sup> I. CALVINO, “Lightness”, in ID., *Six memos for the next millennium*, P. Creagh transl. (London, Jonathon Cape, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> L. EINAUDI, *Un Principe mercante. Studio sulla espansione coloniale italiana* (Torino, F.lli Bocca, 1900).

<sup>12</sup> ID., *Dedica all’impresa dei Fratelli Guerrino*, Dogliani, September 15, 1960.

Have you ever been in a country town on the day of a fair? [...] That fair is a market, that is to say a place where on a fixed day, hundreds of sellers [...] come together [...]. And from every direction, from the circle of villages and farmhouses around the large town [...] a multitude of buyers converge to acquire the things they lack. The crowd of buyers and sellers is especially large at the Easter and All Saint's Day fairs.<sup>13</sup>

This great narration of exchanges and human relationships is then followed by a colourful description of what lies in the background or “around the fair and affects it”, precisely because the “market” is not “something that stands by itself”: rather, it is also embedded and depends on legal, political, symbolic and moral institutions.<sup>14</sup>

Euphemia, where the merchants of seven nations gather at every solstice and equinox [...]. But what drives men to travel up rivers and cross deserts to come here is not only the exchange of wares [...]. You do not come to Euphemia only to buy and sell, but also because at night, by the fires all around the market, seated on sacks or barrels or stretched out on piles of carpets, at each word that one man says – such as ‘wolf’, ‘sister’, ‘hidden treasure’, ‘battle’, ‘scabies’, ‘lovers’ – the others tell, each one, his tale of wolves, sisters, treasures, scabies, lovers, battles. And you know that in the long journey ahead of you, when to keep awake against the camel's swaying or the junk's rocking, you start summoning up your memories one by one, your wolf will have become another wolf, your sister a different sister, your battle other battles, on your return from Euphemia, the city where memory is traded at every solstice and at every equinox.<sup>15</sup>

This is also the Einaudi who was aware that the market, the state as well as any policy or any (good) governance are founded on a certain sense of a limit, which he emblematically formulated in the doctrine of the “critical point”. Hence, in this context the Einaudian lesson can be interpreted as an *ethic of limit and finitude*,<sup>16</sup> of which the ‘economic’ is an emblematic figure. And this is hardly a story that begins with the emergence of the market-economy in modernity: it is a far older story, which Einaudi himself dated back to

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<sup>13</sup> ID., *Lezioni di politica sociale* (1949), partially transl. in “Lectures on the market”, in ID., *Selected economic essays*, L. EINAUDI, R. FAUCCI and R. MARCHIONATTI (eds.) (NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 39 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 57 ff.

<sup>15</sup> I. CALVINO, *Invisible cities* cit., p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> See P. SEQUERI, *L'umano alla prova. Soggetto, identità, limite* (Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2002).

the great biblical narration of the Fall from Paradise. In a paragraph symptomatically entitled “The national minimum income. The limitedness of goods”, Einaudi sums up the main problem confronting a sound social policy in a sound *welfare state*: on the one hand he accepts and endorses the hypothesis of a “national minimum income”, with the aim that even those most severely afflicted by the contingencies of life “can develop their natural talents”, so that from within their ranks there will “come scholars and inventors who today have no chance of achievement. This is the ideal we must strive to attain”. Yet on the other hand he immediately warns:

Let us never forget that when God chased Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden he said to them: “By the sweat of your brow you shall eat your bread”. Certainly, bread should become more abundant for all men, and many other things must be made available to men free of charge. But the law compelling men to toil in order to scratch from the ungenerous earth the fruits with which it is so richly endowed will endure for all eternity.<sup>17</sup>

This Einaudian insistence on the sense of the limit, on the ethic of saving and sacrifice, by no means implies an attitude of mortification of *life* or of *desire* or, much less, of *liberty*. For Einaudi, economic action and initiative always arise in a context of limits and constraints, but he was equally aware that it is precisely through experience of the limit that the meaning of freedom can be appreciated and a window of opportunity for the emergence of novelty opens up. Accordingly, even when he emphasizes the fundamental economic principle of scarcity or “limitation of means”, Einaudi also underscores the anthropological dimension of “desire”:

Even though technical and scientific advances daily push back [...] the obstacle of the limitedness of means which thwarts satisfaction of human desires [...], man’s desires race faster than does science [...]. In fact, if man’s gaze were not directed towards the new, and upwards, then how would humans be distinguished from animal species?<sup>18</sup>

Following along this path one thus encounters the same Einaudi who, in his *Prediche inutili* [Useless Preachings], composed the essay *In lode del pro-*

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<sup>17</sup> L. EINAUDI, *Lezioni di politica sociale* [1949] (Torino, G. Einaudi, 2004), pp. 55-56.

<sup>18</sup> ID., *Scienza economica ed economisti nel momento presente* (Torino, Tip. Artigianelli, 1950), p. 23 (transl. mine); Engl. transl.: “Economic science and economists at the present days”, *International social science bulletin*, II, 2 (1950), pp. 160-171.

*fitto* [In Praise of Profit] as praise of the human faculty of initiative, the faculty of sparking a new beginning, the willingness to take on “risk”, to embrace the “new” and “unknown”.<sup>19</sup>

3. Now, further pursuing the game of analogies between the search for good government and the *Invisible cities*, and directing attention towards the ‘institutional-instituting’ level of Einaudi’s discourse – from good government of the *oikos* to good government of the ‘city’ – let me focus once more on those ideal-real places that were conventionally assumed in the introduction of this volume as the Alpha and Omega of Einaudi’s journey in search of good societies. The Alpha is Einaudi’s ethos-home, which was also fictionally assumed as a bridge allowing us to take our first step in our own research-journey. The Omega is the fresco by Lorenzetti, *The effects of good and bad government*, of which Einaudi interpolated a few details in his collection *Il buon governo* (1954), printed when he was President of the Republic.

Let us start again from Einaudi’s ethos-home, the place where it all began, the symbolic place of origin, but also the place which, through distance and lack, endows the Einaudian everlasting quest for good government with sense and significance. Einaudi’s Introduction to the writings of his uncle, whom he “worshiped like a father”, was composed partly in the wake of the devastating effects of World War I and during the ensuing social and economic crisis. It is an essay cast in the mold of a great autobiographical tale, almost epic and biblical at once, where there stands out, on the one side, the heroic figure of the mother who, “having been left a widow”, succeeded through “sacrifices” that verged on “the miraculous” in assuring a future for the children and in “transmitting the small endowment from our father”. On the other side stands the symbolic authority of the uncle who, after the father’s death, welcomed the young Einaudi into his home as if the boy were his own son. In later years, recalling the ethos of this family home and that of the local institutions, Einaudi embarked on his journey in search of good government.<sup>20</sup>

Following on from this ‘first’ image of good government of the *oikos* (later also projected to the public sphere), the pages of this collection chart the many waystages of Einaudi’s long journey in quest of ideal or historical – but no less idealized – forms of good politics:

<sup>19</sup> Id., “In lode del profitto” (1957), in Id., *Prediche inutili* (Torino, G. Einaudi, 1956-1959), pp. 171-193.

<sup>20</sup> Id., *Avvertenza del compilatore* [1922], in *Pagine doglianesi, 1893-1943*, ed. by the Municipality and the “Luigi Einaudi” Civic Library, Dogliani, 1988, pp. 13-38.

- the “*divine city*”, an ideal society where pluralism reigns under the rule of law – a city sketched in the very midst of the social unrest from which fascism drew its lifeblood;<sup>21</sup>
- the “*ideal city*”, emerging from discussions with his pupil Gobetti on Le Play’s thought (institutions are founded on a fragile “magic spell”, as it were, yet it is this fictional stage act, made up of symbols, myths or “taboos”, that enables societies to hold together) – a city glimpsed in Gobetti’s thought and recognized after his death;<sup>22</sup>
- the “finance of *Periclean city*”, where “the leader chosen by the *valentior pars* of the citizens [...] intends to elevate the mortals of the earthly city to the divine city” – a finance counterposed to that of “tyrannical government”;<sup>23</sup>
- the “*13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century city states*”, where Einaudi meets his friend and colleague Röpke, who was himself on a quest for a *Civitas humana*;<sup>24</sup>
- the “*garden city*”, ideally counterposed to uniform mass societies – a concept Einaudi outlined when he was in exile;<sup>25</sup>
- the “*liberal society*”, as an “ideal of society of free men”, to be rebuilt after twenty years of the “fascist bad government”, but also in a European perspective, after and beyond the “dogma of state sovereignty”;<sup>26</sup>
- the “*beautiful city*” and the “*ugly city*”, which are such depending on the kind of tax on building sites adopted by the government;<sup>27</sup>
- the images of *The effects of good and bad government in the city and the countryside...*

[Khan:] – *What is the use, then, of all your traveling? [...] You advance always with your head turned back? [...] Does your journey take place only in the past? [...].*

<sup>21</sup> L. EINAUDI, “Verso la città divina” (1920), in ID., *Il buongoverno. Saggi di economia e politica (1897-1954)*, E. ROSSI (ed.) (Bari, Laterza, 1954), pp. 32-36.

<sup>22</sup> L. EINAUDI, “Piero Gobetti nelle memorie e nelle impressioni dei suoi maestri”, *Il Baretto* (16 March 1926), p. 80.

<sup>23</sup> ID., *Miti e paradossi della giustizia tributaria* (1940, second edition revised and extended) (Torino, G. Einaudi, 1959), pp. 263 ff.

<sup>24</sup> ID., “Economia di concorrenza e capitalismo storico. La terza via fra i secoli XVIII e XIX”, *Rivista di storia economica* (June 1942), pp. 49-72: 72. Engl. transl.: “Economy of competition and historical capitalism”, *Scienza Nuova* (Oxford), I, 1954, n. 1, pp. 1-29: 28.

<sup>25</sup> ID., *Lezioni di politica sociale* cit., pp. 192 ff.

<sup>26</sup> ID., “Lineamenti di un programma liberale” (1944); “Commento al programma” (1944); “Gerarchia nel programma” (1944); in ID., *Riflessioni di un liberale sulla democrazia. 1943-1947*, P. SODDU (ed.) (Firenze, Olschki, 2001), pp. 42-59: 54.

<sup>27</sup> ID., “Dannosa nella città bella l’imposta sulle aree fabbricabili”, *Corriere della sera* (January 6, 1961), p. 1; ID., “Nella città brutta è il luogo dell’imposta sulle aree fabbricabili”, *Corriere della sera* (January 7, 1961), p. 1.

*What [Polo] sought was always something lying ahead, and even if it was a matter of the past it was a past that changed gradually as he advanced on his journey, because the traveler's past changes according to the route he has followed: not the immediate past, that is, to which each day that goes by adds a day, but the more remote past. Arriving at each new city, the traveler finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.*

*– Journeys to relive your past? – was the Khan's question at this point, a question which could also have been formulated: – Journeys to recover your future?*

*And Marco's answer was: – Elsewhere is a negative mirror. The traveler recognizes the little that is his, discovering the much he has not had and will never have.<sup>28</sup>*

Indeed, it is no coincidence that Einaudian reflection on good government took shape *post res perditas* and that its most important moments stem from the darkest periods and most tragic events of the twentieth century, and particularly of both Italian and his own personal history: the first World War, the ensuing economic and social crisis, fascism, the great depression of 1929, World War II.

Taken together, the above reflections should yield a first conclusion: *the quest for good government is spurred by the individual or collective experience of evil,<sup>29</sup> of suffering, of crisis, of loss, of 'bad government'.* As Calvino put it, in a later comment on his book:

*I feel I have written something approaching a final love poem for cities, at this time when it is becoming more and more difficult to live one's life in them as cities. Perhaps we are moving close to a moment of crisis in city life, and the *Invisible Cities* are a dream that springs from the heart of unlivable cities.<sup>30</sup>*

This list representing the game of analogies between the Einaudian quest and the *Invisible cities* could easily be extended:

*– In a time of crisis, Einaudi had set out to explore historical-ideal forms of good polities, inquiring into the moral reasons that enabled cities to experience eras of prosperity in which decadence was kept at bay. / “The heartfelt*

<sup>28</sup> I. CALVINO, *Invisible cities* cit., pp. 23-25.

<sup>29</sup> The question of evil, often forgotten by the contemporary social sciences, would deserve examination in greater depth for a better understanding of the human; see: J.P. DUPUY, *Avions-nous oublié le mal? Penser la politique après le 11 septembre* (2002), Ital. transl.: *Avevamo dimenticato il male? Pensare la politica dopo l'11 settembre*, transl. by P. Heritier, E. Scattolini (Torino, Giappichelli, 2010); P. HERITIER, *L'antropologia giuridica e il problema del male. Dieci anni dopo l'11 settembre*, *ivi*, pp. 115-138.

<sup>30</sup> I. CALVINO, *Presentazione* cit., p. IX.

wish my Marco Polo cherishes is to discover the secret reasons that have led men to live in cities, reasons that can hold true irrespective of all crises".<sup>31</sup>

- The Einaudian investigation is likewise a search for the invisible foundations that are the linchpin supporting a good society. / The first of the "thin cities" is introduced in the following manner: "Isaura, city of a thousand wells, is said to rise over a deep, subterranean lake. [...] an invisible landscape conditions the visible one".<sup>32</sup>
- The Einaudian search for the good society is not the quest for paradise on earth, nor a flight to Utopia, or the search for a perfect city. "Perfection" can only be conceived in terms of perfectibility, given man's unavoidable "original sin", and it "cannot be equated with uniformity, nor with unity: the essence resides in variety and contrast"<sup>33</sup> of actions and ideas. / The most infernal invisible cities, frightening and populated by monsters, are the "continuing cities" – immobile cities, without change or variation, without an "inside" and an "outside" –, cities in which all differences are eliminated.

Beyond these analogies, one could seek to draw a further conclusion in an attempt to render meaningful Einaudi's gesture of ideally returning to his ethos-home – a gesture made in a moment of distress – as well his writing of the *Introduction* mentioned at the outset of this volume, with which he testifies to his rootedness and his debt of gratitude to his father and mother. *The good society appears and begins to take shape through the free acknowledgment of a limit*: a lack, a dependence, a debt, a bond between individuals or even between generations, with a "thank you for the trust given to me". This is the Einaudian way of recognizing the importance of the institutional: variously portrayed by Einaudi in terms of "myths", "taboos", "formulas", "rituals", "traditions", "values", "customs", the institutional re-emerges in his speculation, like a *hidden or invisible* foundation, precisely at times when the institutions were under threat or crisis and when he felt the need to rebuild the liberal society on new foundations. Paraphrasing Einaudi, it could be stated that if, on the one hand, a good relationship or a good society develops from this recognition of a limit, on the other hand, the symbolic and institutional resources have the task of helping to reactivate, give shape and meaning to the trust on which good bonds are founded.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*, *Invisible cities* cit., p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> L. EINAUDI, "Verso la città divina" (1920), in *Id.*, *Il buongoverno* cit., pp. 32-33.



4. To gain additional insight into this point, we must take one step forward and one step back, following Einaudi a little further along the road of his unfinished search for the good society. We must walk beside him throughout his personal and institutional parable, while at the same time going back to the beginning of Einaudian anthropology and, at an even deeper level, to Christian anthropology: man as a flawed and fallible being, constitutively torn between good and evil, past and future, tradition and critical awareness, rules and life, institutions and freedom, Law and desire... Father and Son.

Symptomatic in this regard is the Einaudian essay on *The doctrine of original sin and the theory of the élite in Fredric Le Play* (1936). In the darker years of fascism Einaudi definitively turned away not only from the theories of the elites developed by Pareto and Mosca, inasmuch as such theories, guided by the category of *necessity*, inevitably ended up with the conclusion that “everything is power”, but also from the corresponding theories of legitimacy, which maintained that power always obtains consensus through “formulas” and “myths” that prey on the (always irrational) emotions of the governed. This legitimation of the *fait accompli* had induced the additional consequence of loss of any criterion of distinction between good and bad government. Einaudi’s conclusion, where he makes an appeal to men of good will, is symptomatic:

If a number of sound families survive ruin, then there exists no invincible fate that necessarily leads society to death. The political techniques employed by ruling classes not inspired by the moral law are not fatally destined to prevail. Their formulas for gaining and holding political power do not take account of the elite, the only class throughout the ages that has given mankind real guidance and direction. Let there be some survivors, actively operating and teaching, composed of a cluster of wise men, let some families and some social groups still draw inspiration for their action from the teachings of the wise men, and the eras of prosperity can return once more.<sup>34</sup>

These conclusions testify to the faith and hope by virtue of which the Piedmontese liberal uttered his *no* to the evil (the evil of fascism) and, at the same time, asserted that a different world was still possible.

And even when he was vindicated by history and the good seemed to ‘emerge triumphant’, Einaudi in no way abandoned his quest, and never forsook the attempt to pinpoint the foundations of a good polity.

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<sup>34</sup> Id., “Il peccato originale e la teoria della classe eletta in Federico Le Play” (1936), in Id., *Saggi bibliografici e storici intorno alle dottrine economiche* (Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1953), pp. 307-344: 328 (transl. mine); Engl. transl.: “The doctrine of original sin and the theory of the élite in Fredric Le Play”, in *Essay in European economic thought*, ed. and transl. by L. SOMMERS (Princeton, N.J., D. Van Nostrand Company Inc., 1960), pp. 162-217.

This was the period when Einaudi, as a protagonist of the economic reconstruction of Italy, was no less concerned with its institutional reconstruction. After the fall of fascism, almost anticipating the future institutional referendum in which the Italian people were faced with the choice between Monarchy and Republic, Einaudi explained, with a legal-philosophical argument implicitly evoking Saint Paul's epistle to the Romans, that it was necessary to save the "spirit" and not the "letter" of the constitutional monarchy, precisely in order to prevent that which had already happened during the fascist period with regard to the reduced royal prerogative to dismiss the prime minister: an excess of "strict observation of the rule" implied that "the letter had killed the spirit of the Constitution".<sup>35</sup> The "institutional referendum" was held in June 1946. Einaudi publicly declared he would vote for the Monarchy, Victory went to the Republic. From the very beginning Einaudi was perfectly aware of what was at stake not only in Italy but throughout Europe, where many constitutions were being rewritten: the *symbolic* and *invisible* resources of Legitimacy, now in need of a new founding reference.<sup>36</sup> The day after the referendum Einaudi wrote an essay with the title *Della paura* [Of Fear], recalling Guglielmo Ferrero's works on legitimacy and, implicitly, Ferrero's spiritual testament, *Pouvoir: Les génies invisibles de la cité*,<sup>37</sup> a work that endeavored to explain how, with the support of 'sound' legitimacy, societies overcame the fear that often threatened to undermine both their governors and the governed. In *Della paura* Einaudi explained:

[Stable] political societies are built on the rock-solid base of juridically indefinable myths, of some words whose meaning is probably impossible to define precisely, of words and myths which, however, embody the will of the past and the consensus of the living. [...] Political myths do not operate by virtue of written laws. They are states of mind, and woe betide us if no such states exist! Sooner or later, a country with a deficiency in this regard is doomed to ruin. It lacks the basis of legitimacy. To endow countries with stability it is by no means necessary for those words to be pro-

<sup>35</sup> L. EINAUDI, "A proposito della scelta in Italia tra Monarchia e Repubblica" (1943), in *Id.*, *Riflessioni di un liberale sulla democrazia. 1943-1947* cit., pp. 23-36.

<sup>36</sup> On the notion of "founding reference" and its political, legal, aesthetic and anthropological implications see: P. LEGENDRE, *Della società come testo. Lineamenti di un'antropologia dogmatica* (2001), Ital. transl. P. HERITIER (ed.) (Torino, Giappichelli, 2005); *Id.*, *L'occidente invisibile* (2004), Ital. transl. P. Heritier (Milano, Medusa, 2009); P. HERITIER, *Legendre e la fondazione antropologica dell'estetica giuridica*, *ivi*, pp. 89-118; *Id.*, *Società post-hitleriane? Materiali didattici di antropologia ed estetica giuridica 2.0* (Torino, Giappichelli, 2009<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>37</sup> G. FERRERO, *Pouvoir. Les génies invisibles de la cité*, New York, N.Y., Brentano's, 1942 (Paris, Plon, 1943). In a certain sense, this is a theme that Ferrero faced, even though with a positivistic approach, from the moment of his first work in legal anthropology: *I simboli in rapporto alla storia e alla filosofia del diritto alla psicologia e alla sociologia* (Torino, F.lli Bocca, 1893).

claimed day by day and to be insistently emphasized [...] rather, what is far more important is for those words to become a formula that goes unnoticed, possibly not even written down, one that raises no objections. [This is how the institutions are accepted by the] future generations.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps it was not simply an irony of history that Einaudi became the first elected President of the Republic, destined to become a myth in his own right. He occupied the same symbolic place as the Monarchy, and was perfectly conscious that he should be a “*reference figure*” and a “*Third super partes*”.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, he acted as a bridge both synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically because, as stated in art. 87 of the Italian Constitution: “the President of the Republic is the head of State and represents national unity”; diachronically because he was a bridge between the past liberal system and the future republican regime. It is no coincidence that Einaudi was indeed celebrated as a moral and spiritual *founding father*.

But even after becoming a *living institution* and reaching the position of “Third super partes”, of *guarantor of last resort*, committed to urging observance, through his own institutional behavior, of the fundamental moral commandment: “one has to set the good example”,<sup>40</sup> Einaudi constantly maintained a firm distinction between myth and idolatry, for he knew that his own word was not the last word.

By starting out from here we may perhaps reach the Omega of Einaudi’s journey: the images of *The effects of good and bad government*, a few details of which were interspersed by Einaudi in his collection *Il buon governo* (1954), printed when he was President of the Republic. What did Einaudi recognise in those images?

*Dawn had broken when he [Polo] said: – Sire, now I have told you about all the cities I know.*

*– There is still one of which you never speak.*

*Marco Polo bowed his head.*

*– Venice – the Khan said.*

*Marco smiled. – What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?*

<sup>38</sup> L. EINAUDI, “Della paura” [1946], in ID., *Riflessioni di un liberale sulla democrazia*. 1943-1947 cit., pp. 223-226.

<sup>39</sup> L.R. EINAUDI, “Le molteplici eredità. Un ricordo personale di Luigi Einaudi”, in R. MARCHIONATTI – P. SODDU (eds.), *Luigi Einaudi nella cultura, nella società e nella politica del Novecento* (Firenze, Olschki, 2010), pp. 319-320.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

*The emperor did not turn a hair. – And yet I have never heard you mention that name.*

*And Polo said: – Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice.*

*– When I ask you about other cities, I want to hear about them. And about Venice, when I ask you about Venice.*

*– To distinguish the other cities' qualities, I must speak of a first city that remains implicit. For me it is Venice.*

*– You should then begin each tale of your travels from the departure, describing Venice as it is, all of it, not omitting anything you remember of it.*

*The lake's surface was barely wrinkled; the copper reflection of the ancient palace of the Sung was shattered into sparkling glints like floating leaves.*

*– Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased, – Polo said. – Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little.<sup>41</sup>*

At a first superficial glance one might be tempted to say that the fresco of good government is perhaps the best known representation of the medieval experience of the *communes* or of the “communal model” (in that case with specific reference to Siena), which Italy successfully nurtured, dispersing its seeds throughout Europe: the *Europe of the cities*, with their *squares* – that emblematic public space – and the *communication* routes, the Europe of the peaceable yet belligerent meeting among civilizations, cultures, customs, people and goods. Moreover, in the final chapter of *Il buon governo* Einaudi inserted a few of his more far-sighted reflections on globalization processes, the crisis of the principle of sovereignty and the need for a new institutional architecture, identified as residing in the European Federation.<sup>42</sup> The Federation, he believed, could help to solve what he felt to be the real problem of the future: how to find the “formula for mediation between small, spiritual homelands and the unity of the economic world”,<sup>43</sup> between local and global, di-

<sup>41</sup> I. CALVINO, *Invisible cities* cit., pp. 77-78.

<sup>42</sup> On this aspect of Einaudi's thought see: U. MORELLI, *Contro il mito dello stato sovrano. Luigi Einaudi e l'unità europea* (Milano, Franco Angeli, 1990); C. CRESSATI, *L'Europa necessaria. Il federalismo liberale di Luigi Einaudi*, intr. di R. FAUCCI (Torino, Giappichelli, 1992); A. QUADRO CURZIO – C. ROTONDI, “Luigi Einaudi: il disegno istituzionale ed economico per l'Europa”, in *Luigi Einaudi: Istituzioni, mercato e riforma sociale* (Roma, Bardi, 2005), pp. 163-194; F. FORTE, “Economia dei mercati globali e governo sovranazionale secondo Luigi Einaudi” (2007), in ID., *L'economia liberale di Luigi Einaudi. Saggi* (Firenze, Leo Olschki, 2009), pp. 303-342.

<sup>43</sup> L. EINAUDI, “Why we need a European Economic Federation” (1943), in ID., *Selected economic essays* cit., pp. 245-249. “Alongside the tenacity with which peoples, small and large, yearn to conserve and perfect their own spiritual, cultural and political autonomy, we have the opposite tendency of the economy towards unity, not merely of large areas, but of the entire world. Not just small states but larger ones too have become economically anachronistic and absurd” (*ibid.*, p. 245).

versity and unity.<sup>44</sup> In pursuit of this goal, what was necessary was to “recreate the medieval worldwide Christian community”: in other words, to redesign in a contemporary perspective that model of composite (or variable geometry) city-states, beyond the “dogma” or “the myth” of the sovereignty of the State. It is worth noting that from Einaudi’s point of view, the problem is not the “dogma” or “myth” as such, which, as we have seen, he characterized as symbolic resources of the institutional. The real problem, to quote the concluding words of *The myth of the sovereign state*, is when the myth becomes an “*idol*”<sup>45</sup> with claims of absoluteness and perfection, and, consequently, is no longer open to criticism.

In Einaudi’s view, this was true both for the social-political sphere and for that of scientific knowledge, because even Economic Science can become an “*idol devoid of soul*” when its claims to “scientific neutrality” go beyond a certain limit.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, in this discourse, in which the foundation (of the individual and the social) assumes an aesthetical character, it may not be surprising to discover James Buchanan attempting to re-vitalize *The soul of classical liberalism* and visualize that “soul” through an evocation of an ancient myth, the “*shining city on a hill*”: “I suggest invoking the soul of classical liberalism, an *aesthetic-ethical-ideological potential attractor*, one that stands independent of ordinary science, both below the latter’s rigor and above its antiseptic neutrality”.<sup>47</sup>

But Lorenzetti’s fresco interpolated into Einaudi’s *Buongoverno* also raises further questions: what is the communicative-normative significance of this

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<sup>44</sup> On the Einaudian tension between local and global, diversity and unity and his reflection on the symbolic structure of the future European institutions see: P. SILVESTRI – A. ODDENINO, “Autonomie locali e istituzioni sovranazionali. Il problema del buongoverno tra globalizzazione e localizzazione alla luce del pensiero einaudiano”, in S. SICARDI (ed.), *Le autonomie territoriali e funzionali nella provincia di Cuneo in prospettiva transfrontaliera (alla luce del principio di sussidiarietà)* (Napoli, ESI, 2011), pp. 97-132.

<sup>45</sup> L. EINAUDI, “Il mito dello Stato sovrano” (January 3, 1945), in ID., *Il buongoverno* cit., p. 630.

<sup>46</sup> ID., *On abstract and historical hypotheses and on value-judgments in economic sciences*, edited with an *Introduction* and an *Afterword* by Paolo Silvestri (London - New York, Routledge, Forthcoming: 2012).

<sup>47</sup> J.M. BUCHANAN, “The soul of classical liberalism”, *The Independent review*, V, n. 1 (Summer 2000), p. 114 (italics mine). Buchanan’s aesthetic-allusive conclusions deserve further attention: “If politics is allowed to become little more than a commons on which competing coalitions seek mutual exploitation, potential value is destroyed and liberty is lost just as surely as in the rigidities of misguided efforts at collective command. Who, indeed, can be expected to be motivated to support such “politics as competition for the commons”? Where is the dream? Perhaps resurrection of the soul of classical liberalism is beyond realistic hopes for the twenty-first century. But those of us who think that we have glimpsed the shining city have a moral obligation to proceed as if that society [...] can become reality” (*ibid.*, p. 119).

message from a President who “is the Head of State and represents national unity”? Why did Einaudi, a “reference figure” and “Third super partes”, feel the need to point to a further third and symbolic ‘place’, a kind of aesthetic foundation of the good society? At a distance of six centuries, Einaudi seems to repeat the same gesture as the rulers of Siena, who chose to have Lorenzetti’s frescoes *visible* on the walls of the Palazzo *pubblico* [Civic Building], as a founding reference of their government. Reviving the contents of this ancient myth, the then President of the Republic seems to have called attention to it as, in a sense, a founding reference for a future European and, possibly, global society.

Yet these questions elicit more and yet more queries... Perhaps because the images depicted in Lorenzetti’s frescoes continue to tell us something of the complexity of the human:

- as a Founding Reference situated in a third and separate place, they testify to the circumstance that civilizations cannot conceivably be lacking in an organizational form that centers around reference points;
- in their representation of the multiple activities of mankind, from labor to trade to consumption, all the way to man’s architectural organization of space and to legal-political institutions, they speak (to us) of the infinite communicative-expressive registers of the human;
- in displaying the (visible) *effects* and not the (invisible) causes of good and bad government, they speak to us of the mystery of its (our) foundation;
- in their visible form, these images cannot but be made “in the image of” that Foundation and, mirror-like, they ceaselessly reflect the question back towards it...

Perhaps because cities are like dreams, and dreams are by no means the reign of the irrational.

[Polo: –] *from the number of imaginary cities we must exclude those whose elements are assembled without a connecting thread, an inner rule, a discourse. With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, its fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.*

*– I have neither desires nor fears, – the Khan declared – and my dreams are composed either by my mind or by chance.*

*– Cities also believe they are the work of the mind or of chance, but neither the one nor the other suffices to hold up their walls. You take delight not in a city’s seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of yours.*

– Or the question it asks you, forcing you to answer, like Thebes through the mouth of the Sphinx.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, Lorenzetti's depictions, appearing in their horizontal structure, elongated and dual – such that a path must be followed to pass from darkness to light, from bad government to good government – speak to us of our experience as fragile and *free* beings, everlastingly poised between good and evil...

5. ...This is the end of the story. Or at least so I thought. Yet, just when *Il buongoverno* was about to go to press, at the very last moment Einaudi inserted at the end of the first chapter, which likewise bore the title *Il buongoverno*, an article directing his (and our) attention again to the foundational issue, once more in a narrative perspective.

There was a post-war Italy that was called upon to rouse itself to action and reawaken to *new life*, get to its feet and start walking on its own two legs. This was the Italy that needed to heal not only the wounds inflicted by the war, but also those resulting from the Resistenza and the 'civil war'. In his capacity as President of the Republic, Einaudi held up to the Italian people the image of a symbolic resource in the story "*The Cervi brothers' father*" (1954). During the commemorations held on 17th January 1954, in which the nation celebrated the memory of the seven Cervi brothers put to death by the fascist firing squad in Reggio Emilia in December 1943, the President received the aged father of the Cervi family at the Presidential Building, immediately entering into warm conversation with him and establishing a sort of bond of affinity, almost a form of kinship; this friendly exchange of talk and feelings continued for quite some time.

Initially, in the story Einaudi seems to identify with the description of the sons as portrayed by the Cervi father, who tells of the experiments and innovations they introduced in crop management practices and land irrigation. Indeed, Einaudi himself was a great innovator who introduced a number of novel experimental methods on his estate.

Yet Einaudi also seems to hint, delicately, that despite the terrible tragedy and grief that has befallen the family with the death of the seven sons, something seems to *rise to new life* upon the entry of a new figure into the family circle, a "nephew". This was the son of the Cervi father's brother, and he had come to give a helping hand to the widowed daughters-in-law. Einaudi,

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<sup>48</sup> I. CALVINO, *Invisible cities* cit., pp. 37-38.

prompted by curiosity, asks whether the nephew now forms part of the family and whether he has a share in the family's "assets" (the question concerned the nephew's financial status within the family and whether he was recognized as a "relative"). The "nephew", answered the Cervi father, "*is not a son of this family but it's as if he were*".

We perceive here the replay of a story that harks back to the past, the same story from which we started out. This analogy has to date never been noticed: Einaudi had worshiped his uncle "like a father", and here there is an uncle – the father of the Cervi brothers – who welcomes a nephew into his home "as if he were a son". Einaudi seems to be spellbound by the story about how the father rearranged the question of the family inheritance after the death of his sons, granting this new son a "place" in the family and bequeathing him a share in the family's property and possessions.

The president [and the others present at the scene] listened to the father with astonishment [...]. Was he a rustic countryman from our parts, a Homeric hero or a patriarch from the Bible? [...] As they gazed at the father, they saw in him the patriarch who, in the shade of the sycamore, was dictating the inheritance rules for his family. They were witnessing the formation of the law, almost as if the Civil Code had not yet been written.<sup>49</sup>

"*Almost as if the Civil Code had not yet been written*". This pre-judicial and pre-political, but also pre-economic dimension of human relations embodies the 'sense' of the foundation of the good society imagined and narrated by Einaudi. The 'heritage' that is handed down from generation to generation is not (indeed, is never) only 'genetic', nor is it (ever) merely economic but rather, as this story testifies, highly symbolic. In the remarkable story of a father and a family that *withstands* evil, of a father who welcomes a nephew into the family home as if he were a son, of a nephew who leaves his own home to go to the help of an uncle-father, Einaudi testifies-tells-transmits the rebirth of life, the transcendence of life over death.

Once again: what, then, are the conclusions that can be drawn from this research-journey? Which route should we follow?

*The Great Khan's atlas contains also the maps of the promised lands visited in thought but not yet discovered or founded: New Atlantis, Utopia, the City of the Sun, Oceana, Tamoé, New Harmony, New Lanark, Icaria. Kublai asked Marco: – You,*

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<sup>49</sup> L. EINAUDI, "Il padre dei fratelli Cervi", *Il Mondo* (March, 16 1954), in ID., *Il buongoverno* cit., pp. 140-144: 144.



*who go about exploring and who see signs, can tell me toward which of these futures the favoring winds are driving us.*

*– For these ports I could not draw a route on the map or set a date for the landing. At times all I need is a brief glimpse, an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of light in the fog, the dialogue of two passersby meeting in the crowd, and I think that, setting out from there, I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them. If I tell you that the city toward which my journey tends is discontinuous in space and time, now scattered, now more condensed, you must not believe the search for it can stop. Perhaps while we speak, it is rising, scattered, within the confines of your empire; you can hunt for it, but only in the way I have said.*

*Already the Great Khan was leafing through his atlas, over the maps of the cities that menace in nightmares and maledictions: Enoch, Babylong, Yabooland, Butua, Brave New World.*

*He said: – It is all useless, if the last landing place can only be the infernal city, and it is there that, in ever-narrowing circles, the current is drawing us.*

*And Polo said: – The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space.<sup>50</sup>*

Whether and which ones of the many characters, images or experiences recounted in these few pages will strike a chord with the authors and readers of this book, I cannot say. Yet I cherish the hope that with this book – even though none of us has been able to “draw a route on the map or set a date for the landing” – we will all have shared in this mission and will continue, beyond this book, “to put together piece by piece... fragments... instants... signals...”. And “you must not believe the search for it can stop”.

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<sup>50</sup> I. CALVINO, *Invisible cities* cit., pp. 147-148.