

“Building the World of Tomorrow”: economy and society between crisis and war

This paper analyzes the interrelation between economy and urban culture as presented in the film *The City* (1939) directed by Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke and produced by the American Documentary, Inc. The film's commentary was written by Louis Mumford. The film constituted a visualization of Mumford's ideas on post-1929 urban planning. The film was presented at the 1939 New York City World Fair whose general theme was “Building the World Of Tomorrow”. Chronologically situated between the great economic crisis and the outburst of WWII, the film offers powerful insights into the future expectations that conditioned contemporary attempts to remodulate the relationship between economy, society and culture in the 1930s. The aim of this paper is to reconstruct, historically as well as conceptually, the horizon of expectations that rose under the impact of the economic crisis of the 1930s through an analysis of the urban visions, definitions of the nature/culture relationship and reconceptualization of the economy/community association as portrayed in this particular documentary film.