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Re-writing borders: boundaries are getting tighter

Barbara Coppetti

Urban spaces such as squares, arcades, commons, galleries and promenades, sociality and community life places change their status as sensitive areas for possible attacks of various kinds. Events such as the recent massacres and attacks in Nice, London, Paris, and rapidly spreading phenomena such as the current pandemic lead to a rethinking of current development models.

The periodic and increasingly frequent emergency state involving subways, schools, concert spaces, and public spaces, together with the health urgency involving all the world countries, shows a global crisis that suggests the profound inadequacy of the forms and methods adopted from social interactions.

The ways of living in public places are radically changing because the forms of control of the spaces themselves are changing.

Barriers, obstacles, limits and safety devices are restored.

On the one hand, the domestic space opens up to virtual relationships by hosting the work and learning space, on the other hand, schools, theatres, cinemas, museums, offices and universities must close or regulate access, mark obligatory routes, block spaces of relationships, reduce expectations in compliance with the rules of physical distance.

The vital spaces of exchange, informal communication, sharing, movement, and play have become spaces of danger, places where our health and community's life are threatened.

Auditorium, meeting and conference rooms are in disuse and replaced by virtual spaces that allow communication in the absence. The proliferation in these months of online lessons in virtual classrooms, webinars and training sessions whose participation takes place remotely, exchanges of materials in real-time between users, between machines and between management systems, has exponentially implemented the use of digital technologies developed in the last twenty years. Films, videos, on-demand TV series at home, on one of the more than 40

platforms currently active, have replaced films' collective enjoyment in cinemas.

Mobile technology and social network technology have created the totems of the new millennium by initiating the colonization of the *overworld*, as defined by Baricco. Each of us intends the smartphones an extension of oneself. Simultaneously, social networks have produced a phenomenon of conquest and occupation of the ether: the digital world's sphere is increasingly present in everyone's life. It has allowed us to spread any image, gesture or word in the open ocean of a seemingly borderless community.[1]

During the twentieth century, the premises for this substantial and disruptive transition were realized: from the obsession with the border and the idolatry for any demarcation line moved by the intention to order the world by protected areas to the exact opposite, demolish the walls, reopen borders and promote circulation. The demolition of the 156 kilometres of the Berlin Wall, the Iron Curtain symbol, condenses its meaning. The European Union from 1989 onwards, based on integration and development strategies, has created many opportunities for mobility, sharing of knowledge and skills. In the last two decades of the last century, putting everything in motion seemed to be the antidote to a stale, closed and limited vision of work and democratic life in Europe, as well as an opportunity to support innovation, to reduce unemployment, to acquire new skills.

We measure ourselves with limitations and drastic restrictions in a health emergency phase. New borders block the movement of people and social mobility at all scales. Where are we? Asks the philosopher Giorgio Agamben. He confirms a sense of anguish for the present time. He expresses his concern for the future when the expansion of digital devices will replace the physical presence in schools and universities and in every public place, which will remain confined to the domestic private sphere. At issue is the pure and simple abolition of any public space.[2]

Indeed, urban spaces and collective places, which in recent months have become dangerous, ghostly and metaphysical, have shown how urgent it is to learn again how to inhabit the world we live. A new social order seems to come forward and the modification of our *habits* and the limitation of our movements are permanent.[3] We must substantially review the contents of each of us's *habitus* and rethink the spaces of human activities. *Habitus* correction, principle of social agents' action, would initiate a conscious project of modifying the

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[1] Baricco, A. (2018) *The game*, pag 136

[2] Agamben, G. (2020). *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, Quodlibet Macerata, pag.27

[3] In the last 20 years, the epidemic waves are Sars in 2002, the Nipah virus in 2005, the swine flu (H1N1) in 2009, the MERS in 2012, Ebola in 2014 Covid in 2019. I do not intend to address the reasons for the infections but the intensive farms and their locations and wrong models of global food consumption, increase the risk of spreading pathogens.

landscapes.[4]

Gloria Enzùalda's mature border thinking, written during the last decade of her life, engages in numerous contemporary issues. She valorizes subaltern forms and methods of knowing, being and creating, examining the in-between space. Moving from Borderlands' to Light in the Darkness's, both material culture studies and ecological anthropology in Ingold's studies, it is possible to define areas of cultural transformations.

Architectural research is thus involved in designing a new configuration of relational spaces so that relations between the human being unique. Close contacts, the very essence of the city, as Jane Jacobs reminds us, have been the centre of social and economic change for most human civilizations. Today they will have to be redesigned to achieve a sustainable lifestyle.

Therefore, Vittorio Gregotti had anticipated with realism the fact that in the squares, galleries and pedestrian streets at first reduced to places of shopping and global finance where exchange value triumphs, today there is no longer anything collective.[5] The new millennium scenarios to be designed must include the reconquest of a symbolic and civil function of public space.

The redefinition of physical boundaries in emergency conditions and the effects of digitization have already renewed their spatial and figurative qualities. The atmosphere's static nature and a new hieratic silence have temporarily restored the environmental balance and enhanced the places' beauty and their symbolic values. Their perception has been replaced by an austere fixity which has made their architectural and compositional qualities re-emerge.

It is possible to conclude by considering how the digitization of learning, e-commerce and a new sedentary lifestyle has initiated the revision of the way of life and being of the postmetropolis, acting in contemporary landscapes' depths. It is our task to start a process of remeasurement and rewriting of spaces by implementing, on a territorial scale, settlement strategies for the re-population of abandoned places and depopulated internal areas and at the same time, redesigning the physical-spatial structures of our streets and public spaces within sustainable urban scenarios.[6] The quality of life in urban and metropolitan areas could soon be based on proximity services and short-distance work, smart mobility, artificial intelligence.

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[4] According to Pierre Bourdieu, the continuous experience of a social position leads to the adoption of cognitive and evaluative structures connected to it. Consequently, a principle of production and evaluation of social practices, called habitus, is activated. Habitus is in tune with the social position to which social practices correspond. By adopting this perception and action pattern, social agents choose friends, food, travel, friendships, and more. Habitus regularly matches the space of social positions with that of lifestyles. Anelli A., Quaderni di Sociologia 15|1997 https://journals.openedition.org/qds/1560

[5] Gregotti V. 2011, *Architettura e Postmetropoli*, pag 88

[6] C40 Cities, Mayors agenda for a green and just recovery

Corresponding Author: Barbara Coppetti, barbara.coppetti@polimi.it

The profound innovations taking place in mechatronics applied to mobility systems and infrastructures, concretely open up to new scenarios, it is up to us to know how to grasp the potential by implementing political strategies that take care of our planet.

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