

Wandering in Knowledge

ii inclusive interiors 01

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#01

Wandering in Knowledge

**Inclusive Spaces for Culture
in an Age of Global Nomadism**

edited by

Luca Basso Peressut Imma Forino Jacopo Leveratto

ii inclusive interiors Peer Reviewed Book Series

#01 | Wandering in Knowledge: Inclusive Spaces for Culture in an Age of Global Nomadism

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ISBN 978-88-916-1505-3

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Maggioli Editore è un marchio di Maggioli S.p.A.

Azienda con sistema qualità certificato ISO 9001:2008

Maggioli Editore is part of Maggioli S.p.A

ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company

47822 Santarcangelo di Romagna (RN) ■ Via del Carpino, 8

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Complete catalogue on www.maggioli.it/university area

Il catalogo completo è disponibile su www.maggioli.it area università

Finito di stampare nel mese di Maggio 2016 nello stabilimento Maggioli S.p.A, Santarcangelo di Romagna (RN)

Printed in May 2016 in the plant Maggioli S.p.A, Santarcangelo di Romagna (RN)

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ii inclusive interiors Book Series

ii inclusive interiors is a series of studies that – in the attempt to build the foundations of an adaptable environment that meets the need of intercultural dialogue determined by the current phenomena of transnational migration – aims at outlining the most relevant architectural experimentations on collective interiors, in order to highlight the most innovative strategies and tools of “inclusive design” in this regard. In doing that, it collects multidisciplinary critical contributions focusing on the new spaces and architectures that respond to the change of social sphere in a society marked by the intensification of the mobility of people as well as information.

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Volume 01

This volume of the ii inclusive interiors Book Series collects the first scientific outcomes related to the research project *Inclusive Interiors: Spaces of Sociability in an Age of Global Nomadism*, funded by the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano, as part of the FARB Programme 2015/2016.

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Introduction

Identity and diversity – whether cultural, ethnic, religious or political – mark our contemporary global context on a daily basis. We live in an age that might be defined by migration of populations, and by the movement of people, information and knowledge. From continent to continent, from nation to nation, from region to region, from city to city, individuals or groups of people overcome geographic borders and cultural or linguistic barriers in search of an economic comfort zone, as well as for study purposes, for tourism or to experience new lifestyles and social relations. Old and new nomads inscribe traces, invisible or real, on the places they cross and where they stop, generating linguistic, cultural and lifestyle contaminations. Today, the shared spaces of metropolitan life are vivified by the interrelationship and exchange between people in a very new process of global intensification. For this reason their definition today requires a total rethinking of the uses and meanings traditionally associated with them, in relation to ongoing sociocultural changes. Hybridization and multiculturalism, in fact, demand new forms of inclusivity from the spaces that, in the past, had mainly to reflect a sort of collective representation. From this point of view, the spaces of knowledge, due to their ability to develop cross-cultural intersections, represent the privileged places to investigate the relationship between global nomadism and sociocultural inclusivity. In fact, no longer exclusively devoted to contemplating art, or isolated places for reflection and intellectual analysis, museums and libraries have become open places where people meet and exchange ideas, *contact zones* of contemporary culture. As a result of the constant updating process in which they are involved, they have become the physical nodes where identity and diversity may come into contact and generate new perspectives – ideal places for transnational contemporary socialisation.

The first section of the book – “Questions” – is aimed at highlighting the particular relevance of these places in defining a cultural network in which people’s paths cross, and where ties are constantly knotted and loosened in ever new ways. In this regard, Luca Basso Peressut focuses his attention on the innovative role played by culture in the construction of an open and inclusive public sphere that meet the needs of a more cohesive and sustainable society. On the other hand, Imma Forino reads the changes that these places of learning have experienced over time, considering the actors who animate those environments, partakers of the erratic movement that crosses modern global societies, who metaphorically find a temporary “cultural *home*” in libraries and museums.

The second section – “Museums” – is specifically dedicated to museographical topics, with two essays that paradigmatically read the changes related to the actual knowledge system. In the first one, Margherita Parati focuses on a specific phenomenon affecting museum narrations and spaces, involving the use and re-evaluation of performing language based on direct actions and physical experiences. In the second one, Stephanie Carminati investigates Jewish museums, to provide an interesting and valuable example of the communication and exhibition strategies that can be put in place in order to communicate culture and history from a personal point of view.

The third section tries to outline a possible future for libraries in the light of the current phenomena of transnational migration of people as well as information. On the one hand, Daniele Mondiali examines the relationship between libraries and new technologies, focusing both on spatial design and the virtual dimension. On the other, Lavinia Dondi describes a sort of renaissance of local libraries, interpreted as meeting places open to the community, as well as key buildings that contribute toward forging the identity of the city.

Finally, the third section – “Hybrid Spaces” –, through Jacopo Leveratto’s essay, offers an overview of the institutional, functional and spatial relationships that have existed between museums and libraries, in order to provide the library a future still tied to the text, in a context marked by the dematerialisation of the information support. The volume is then concluded by a glossary on global nomadism, edited by Elena Elgani, and an annotated bibliography about the same topic, which integrates the reference lists provided by the authors of the anthology.

Questions

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Architectures for Wandering Cultures

Luca Basso Peressut

Nowadays we are all on the move. (Bauman 1998, 77)

There are two issues at the core of this publication: how can institutions, which are responsible for organizing and transmitting cultural heritages, such as museums and libraries, play an active role in promoting inclusiveness processes in an increasingly multiethnic and cross-cultural world marked by global nomadism? And what role do architecture and design play within this mission?

Migration and nomadism have come to permeate most, if not all aspects of the contemporary world. Although mobility is part of human history, only now have the figures involved become so relevant as to encompass more than one third of the planet's population. This type of mobility affects both the migrancy of people, or peoples who are forced to move in order to escape wars, extreme poverty or persecution, in search of refuge and hope, and the nomadism of individuals belonging to more privileged social groups, who move for study, work or pleasure (and who, in a certain way are also "forced" to move elsewhere to keep up with the global trends of production and consumption).¹

1 - According to The World Health Organization, "there are an estimated 1 billion migrants in the world today of whom 214 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants," that is 14% of the world population ("Migrant Health" 2015, http://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/health_of_migrants/en/). Illegal migrants or those officially unregistered – 30 or 40 million people as estimated by the International Council on Human Rights Policy – are not taken into consideration (http://www.ichrp.org/files/summaries/41/122_pb_en.pdf). According to the World Tourism Organization UNWTO, "over 1.1 billion tourists travelled abroad in 2014," that is a 4,7% increase compared with the previous year (<http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2015-01-27/over-11-billion-tourists-travelled-abroad-2014>).

The Heidegger philosophical conception of *Unheimlichkeit*, disorientation, “not feeling at home” (Heidegger 1927) and of *Heimatlosigkeit*, uprooting (“Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world,” Heidegger 1947) is gradually developing as the true existential condition of modern man, so that nowadays “being” means less and less “being rooted in the places of family genealogies” and increasingly more “being in the world” (*in-der-Welt-sein*), in a restless, wandering condition.

Of course there are different ways of being wanderers, and for many reasons: due to the availability or the lack of free movement between borders and barriers, the different speed of travel (by plane, by train, on foot, on rust buckets), the non-comparable levels of risk undertaken in the journey, the expectations of travellers at the end of the journey, but also and above all, due to the interrelations between “self” and “other” that inevitably set in between people of different origins, both during and at the end of each journey. As stated by Zygmunt Bauman, whether they are *vagabonds* or *tourists*, and being aware of the “profound differences which separate the two types of experience,” both cases represent the same reality that globally involves the current economic, productive, social and cultural processes.²

Still, regardless of the sociopolitical conditions of the migrant and the nomad, mobility always results in a meeting of people, and from such meeting in a reshuffling, which originates from the fact that people continuously participate in the various levels of negotiation and friction (and even conflict) involved in the many aspects of the public sphere. These processes define new interchange modes, whereby cultures, ideas, memories and identities are unequally positioned within increasingly less stable social structures. The interaction between people from different backgrounds has an impact on the individual and the collective sphere, and affects the social homogeneity that has long been a permanent feature of the geographic areas that today are affected by the more or less intense manifestations of global mobility.³

The traditional relationship between places, identity and memory is no longer univocal: mobility results in a time-space compression that leads to a deterritorialisation of identity, a separation between people and their

2 - See the chapter “Tourists and Vagabonds” (Bauman 1998, 77–102): “(In) the society of travellers, in the travelling society, tourism and vagrancy are two faces of the same coin. The vagabond ... is the alter ego of the tourist. The line which divides them is tenuous and not always clearly drawn. One can easily cross it without noticing” (Bauman 1998, 96).

3 - “If we rethink culture and its science, anthropology, in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term culture – seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, etc. – is questioned. Constructed and disputed historicities, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view” (Clifford 1992, 101).

native place, while a new territorialisation of places occurs, according to new multi and trans-cultural forms of identity.

In the current “age of migration” we can detect the shifting paradigms of social memory, identity, citizenship, cultural plurality, interchange and diversity, as part of a transformation of relations between people who meet in a world that never rests and is constantly on the move. Migration and nomadism imply instability, lack of permanence, uncertainty and a constant redefinition of (mental, philosophical, planning) paradigms that represent the legacy of Western culture.

Moreover, the reshuffling of cultures is influenced by the use of the Internet and of communication processes in the sphere of information, ideas and knowledge: the “virtual journey” opens up to exchanges through an interchange flow that is made increasingly faster and cheaper through the electronic traffic of data on PCs, tablets and mobile phones, thereby extending the access to information and knowledge to the less privileged groups.

Places where cultures meet

The scenario in which people meet and exchange ideas remains that of the physical space of the world that we populate, no matter what. The “migrants out of necessity” – people, families and groups looking for a harbour – just like the “new nomads” – students, professionals, workers, commuters, tourists – draw a trace through the land, leave a mark in the places they cross or in which they settle down, continuously affecting the way in which people use their private and collective living spaces. As Ackbar Abbas wrote “migrancy means ... not only changing places; it also means changing the nature of places” (2004, 129).

Although dissimilar in their erratic lifestyles, migrants and nomads are travellers in the space-time who perceive the world as a possible field of action in which they build and dismantle the space of interpersonal relations. In their wandering, and in their staying (permanently or temporarily), they trace new paths or travel through those already traced by others. By changing the way in which they live in the physical space, space-time travellers can retrieve the pluralism and multiplicity of their “roots and routes” (Clifford 1997) and through their *travel* they can create new relations and cultural meanings. In this sense, travel is metaphorically seen as a cultural movement that materializes through the meeting-confrontation between othernesses and which inevitably generates crossing processes, for which a “cultural translation” becomes increasingly necessary (Bhabha 1994; Clifford 1997) in order to give

effect to the policies and practices of social inclusion and to create new forms of citizenship.

The contradictory expressions of the cohabitation of diversity manifest themselves in cities and in the metropolitan territory: “here we find ourselves in the gendered city, the city of ethnicities, the territories of different social groups, shifting centres and peripheries – the city that is a fixed object of design (architecture, commerce, urban planning, state administration) and yet simultaneously plastic and mutable: the site of transitory events, movements, memories” (Chambers 1994, 93), so that the contemporary metropolis appears as an “open place of social identity, cultural memory and historical possibilities” (Chambers 2003, 144).

As explained by Michel de Certeau, the way in which we use the urban space is marked by the social practices of people in their everyday life (de Certeau 1980). These practices concern the relationships between people and places in which, besides the “strategies” put in place by the authorities (which plan and manage the space), people apply appropriation “tactics” and modes of use regarding their self-positioning in social hierarchies with respect to their multiple relationship networks.

Beyond the social dimension of exchange that defines the “third space” (Bhabha 1990), beyond the communicative virtuality of the “second space,” there is the “first space,” the physical space, the places that are actually inhabited by each of us, and whose urban and architectural definition is no longer based on a homogeneous experience of aggregate of buildings (as it was the case for the historical city), but on the system of networks and polarity of relationships that make up the city of today.

The contemporary city finds its meaning in a heterogeneous, discontinuous, reticular and speckled morphology that permeates lifestyles, spaces, objects and new architectural configurations, hybrid spaces that create new maps of the metropolitan life. The resulting idea is that of a system of contemporary living spaces that is less intimate and private, more collective in the modes of use, performative, technologized, but especially less confined within traditional conceptual borders and more open to various levels of interventions and disciplinary visions. They are reflected in a metropolitan image that is constantly changing in time and space, a space of information and communication flows, where social figures and structures are organized and reorganized in an incessant reshuffling.

We are faced with a pluralist cosmopolitan space that crosses networks and nodes: mobility places (stations, airports, undergrounds, port and airport terminals) intersect with workspaces (including homes), with buildings for culture and leisure (museums, exhibition spaces, media libraries, theatres and centres for performing arts, cinema complex) and

with the large retail containers and high permeability areas (shopping malls, arcades, department stores, mega-multi-stores). Cities and metropolitan areas, “places of global cultures and identity” (King 2004), are the preferred destinations of wanderers, nomads and migrants, aware of the opportunity offered by these places to best develop potential social and cultural interchange.

With the conviction that architectures and spaces for collective use are the quintessential environment in which the social dynamics materialize, and that the construction of an open and inclusive public sphere is an essential precondition for the development of a more cohesive and sustainable society, an expanded and innovative concept of culture has first to be established. Culture here is intended as a relational process in which diversities meet and act in the same places, pursuing shared, open and procedural goals.

Culture is the area where the systems of values, memories, languages and collective practices are based, created and evolve, and is also the ideal forum for testing new forms of creativity that respect and enhance mutual cooperation, differences and specificities, as foundations for innovation and social progress. As also argued by Catherine Wihtol de Wenden (2007), cultural institutions have a strategic civil function in the formation of inclusive processes and cultural interchange. At a time when the economy, society and culture become globalized, the issues of representation and inclusion become crucial. Ethnic and religious groups, political minorities, immigrants, subaltern communities are all social actors who seek and ask for recognition, representation and cultural acceptance. This strategy emphasizes the key concepts of multiplicity – of voices, points of view, theories – and hybridity – of forms, identities, physical expressions – which operate in contemporary culture and cultural spaces.

In the current situation, there is increasing emphasis on subjectivity in the selection, organization and processing of knowledge. There is a desire for freedom that is peculiar of our time in all parts of the world, in which access to culture and identity representations are interwoven with the awareness of the composite backgrounds and memories that characterise the personal and collective sphere. According to William Ray, “culture simultaneously connotes sameness and difference, shared habit and idiosyncratic style, collective reflex and particular endeavour” (2001, 3).

The dynamics of today’s multiethnic/multicultural societies ask for a shift from a national identity formation to the imperatives of today’s complex body of communities, rewriting the great national narratives to a more articulated transnational and transcultural scenario.

In this context, the *governance* of culture, of its heritage and use requires an approach that calls into question its belonging to a single territory, to a specific language or to an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983), and which, on the contrary, is capable of acting on the representation of segments of social structures that are widely diversified by age, culture, gender, and ethnicity, and, not least, which tends to reorganize the codified relationships between cultural institutions, social space and urban and architectural space on a new basis.⁴

Museums and libraries in the age of global mobility

Museums and libraries, part of the “exhibitionary complex” (Bennett 1988), have always had, and still have, a crucial role in establishing the values of the public sphere as agents of education and knowledge interchange. Museums and libraries today reflect the complexities of the globalized world: in these institutions, the world’s cultures confront each other on a level of interaction that goes beyond the surface, beyond behaviours related to the practices of the dominant cultures or the cultural consumerism of mass tourism.

As institutions that base their *raison d’être* in the conservation and in the historical, scientific and critical interpretation of heritage, museums and libraries are confronted with the need to rethink their areas of expertise and their actions in terms of meanings and values. This must be achieved at a scale that can no longer be confined to the traditional local regional and national spheres of influence. Now more than ever, museums and libraries address the issues raised by a wider and more varied audience of users: the audience of “world travellers” who cross borders and overcome barriers and whose cultural needs are expressed in diverse ways, the audience where the right of everyone to “be in the world” and to be a visible part of it is acknowledged.

Today the museum – and library – goes are characterised by a wide variety of attitudes, diversified cultural backgrounds, different personalities, identities and interests, by a multifaceted cognitive approach to the interpretation of culture. Everyone has access to a huge flow of information,

4 - It’s no coincidence that the call of 2009 EU 7th Framework Programme (“Reinterpreting Europe’s Cultural Heritage: Towards the 21st Century Library and Museum?”) outlined the future of European cultural institutions in terms of keywords and concepts like “democratic governance ... diversities and commonalities ... citizenship ... identities ... (and) multiple coexisting cultures.” Please see the research, that was funded within the same programme, *MeLA* European Museums in an Age of Migrations*, where these issues are intertwined with the investigation into new spatial forms able to make them proactive (<http://www.mela-project.polimi.it>).

resulting in a growing complexity of knowledge. Expectations about cultural proposals are increasing: more and more museum visitors ask to assert their individuality, to be protagonists in, and of the exhibition, to also participate in the development of its contents and its curatorial practices, thereby becoming co-creators of the museum.

Museums and libraries are similar in their function of preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage, but the way in which their assets can be accessed is different, as are their transmission/communication strategies and techniques.

In museums, the exhibition contents and forms affect the argument that the institution enunciates to visitors (and which may vary depending on changes in public policies, the curatorial approach, and so on). The way in which the heritage of libraries is accessed is more specifically linked to the research carried out by the individual scholars.

In libraries research facilities are built on the basis of the individual work and its ability for cross investigation, the limits of which result from elements such as knowledge of a language, or the accessibility or inaccessibility of certain books, such as old books and manuscripts, although computerization and digitisation can ensure access to the content of any document. Technological developments provide tools for a new approach to the content of libraries (and archives) that improves access to knowledge and in which the physicality of the book or document as a medium tends to vanish: the Internet makes the construction of an online universal library-archive more practicable.

Visiting a museum has a strong link with “civil rituals” (Duncan 1995) and with the direct relationship with the real objects, with the materiality of relics, artefacts and artworks.

Defined, from time to time as “contact zones” (Pratt 1991), “contested terrains” (Karp and Lavine 1991, 1), “political arenas in which strategies of confrontation and avoidance are calculated, diplomacy is practiced, and weaponry is tested, all in the service of divergent, and often conflicting, interests” (Piper 2001, 72) – precisely to show how the various actors involved in the ordering of collections and the creation of exhibitions are engaged in an intense debate and confrontation –, museums and galleries are mediating between their mission as guardians of the past and their active role as agents for the spreading of knowledge and the development of new social relations.

Today we perceive the discrepancy between the traditional museum as a selective fence of values and meanings, and the multifaceted confrontation/clash between cultural positions that tend to disrupt the preestablished order. As a result, the discursivity of museums reforms along trans-

disciplinary lines, under the influence of different forms and content. The artists participating in the galleries of ethnographic and archaeological museums “undermine” the disciplinary structures of the exhibitions and propose “other” interpretations and points of view; the most attentive museum officers who are aware of the new ways in which the public uses the museum and moves through the collections following unpredictable trajectories, reorganize the exhibitions along layered narratives that can be decoded by each visitor according to different cultural interpretations, individually managed in order to select subjective itineraries.

At the same time, in museums, just as in libraries, the emergence of information technology and the spread of knowledge through the Internet profoundly affect conservation and exhibition practices. As Tony Bennett pointed out, “museums now seem self-evidently to be parts of more globalized flows of information, people, and ideas. They reach out not only beyond their own walls but also beyond national boundaries through new practices of Web curation, and their audiences, at least in the case of major metropolitan institutions, tend to be increasingly cosmopolitan, reflecting the growth of cultural tourism” (Bennett 2006, 47).

We know that the “museum without walls” was prophesied, in the mid-20th century, by André Malraux as the result of a radical change in the exhibition phenomenology that was going to pass over the physical limits of buildings as well as the administrative-organizational limits of the institutions, involving an increasingly larger audience. According to Malraux, such spreading was allowed by means of images, namely the photography in its reproducibility (Malraux 1947). Nowadays and in the future, new technologies feature even more complex solutions that apart from allowing easier access to images and information also retroactively influence the organization and design of communication within museums themselves. Museums become the nodes and hubs of a network of increasingly more visible knowledge, in which the relationship between the reality of “things” (the collections) and the way to represent them is linked with a process of dissemination that abundantly uses digital images and virtualization techniques. Therefore, a resonance is created between places and space where the *real things* are and the widespread expansion of their communication through new information and virtualization technologies.⁵

Nowadays, the traditional “exhibitionary complex” can be less and less defined by distinct and separate architectural types. The traditional

5 - “At a time when museology is under critical reappraisal and renewal, we have the opportunity to reimagine museological discourse, raking it in new directions and creating new spaces for the inclusion of multiples voices and perspectives” (Kreps 2003, 8).

boundaries of the various cultural institutions are in fact crossed, both from the viewpoint of the spaces' organization and functioning and from the viewpoint of their forms. We now see museums, libraries and archives being developed according to new multipurpose models, that are more entrenched in a concept of involvement of people in the way they operate, more open to the city, as well as more inclusive and ready to represent the complexity of the different cultures included in their multiethnic and transcultural societies.

Some years ago Elain Gurian stated that "in twenty-five years, museums will no longer be recognizable as they are now known. Many will have incorporated attributes associated with organizations that now are quite distinct from museums" (Gurian 1995, 31).

In fact, today we must recognize that hybridization among museums, art galleries, cultural centres and libraries is a trend characterising (among others) the cultural institutions in terms of organization, offers to the visitors, forms of spaces and architecture. Shows are performed within museums; curators and dealers cooperate to evaluate and enhance artworks; cultural centres organize temporary exhibitions; drama performances are held in museum's rooms. On the other hand, libraries, which have always been a sort of special museum in that they accumulate and store books, in the digitisation era are managed as real museums with exhibitions, conferences and cultural events being held within their spaces. The collaboration between museums and libraries is an ongoing strategy and the hypothesis is being developed of creating "single-building library-museum hybrids, (focusing) on the interaction of objects ... and text-based materials," whose spaces prefigure "a new type of cabinet of curiosities ... in which meaningful knowledge acquisition, contemplation, critical inquiry, and a sense of wonder is predicated on an in-depth study of text-based materials and objects in close juxtaposition" (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 199; 217).

The role of museums and libraries as strategic public spaces aiming to encourage new knowledge and cultural relations within the communities stems from the idea of "heritage" meant as a complex that is not closed and fixed but, on the contrary, open and in progress. That means a role embracing values and meanings to be placed in a new social exchange space and over an idea of culture as practice of interchange, participation and community creativity. One of the key challenges aiming at a full recognition of the inclusive potential and the social effects of culture is exactly that for which this role is fully played as integral part of the mission and of the *modus operandi* of the cultural institutions disseminated in cities, regions and all aspects of the plural "social body" of our current nomadic era.

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Moving Figures (on Changing Backgrounds)

Imma Forino

On the background of a changing contemporary space-time scenario, the places of learning par excellence, such as museums and libraries, seem to have lost their status as motionless strongholds in the urban landscape. The cultural landmarks that dot modern cities are in a constant process of metamorphosis and adaptation: flexibility, adaptability, hybridization of functions have become the new and compelling dictats in the projects and use of spaces devoted to culture. No longer exclusively devoted to contemplating art, or isolated places for reflection and intellectual analysis, museums and libraries have become open places where people meet and exchange ideas, *contact zones* of contemporary culture.

Characterised by very different functions from their original and still surviving functions (collection, preservation, exhibition of finds and works of art, consultation of documentary resources), in recent decades in the majority of museums and libraries visitors can shop, eat, use play areas dedicated to children, listen to music, attend lectures, film screenings, theatre performances or parties. As a result of the constant updating process in which they are involved, museums and libraries have become the physical nodes of a cultural network in which people's paths cross, and where ties are constantly knotted and loosened in ever new ways. They are places of learning where identity and diversity, as embodied and reflected in each of us, may come into contact and generate new perspectives, thereby achieving the status of ideal places for transnational contemporary socialisation. Here the notion of culture as "appropriation" of knowledge, often experienced individually, extends to that of culture as "collective development" under the approach of *long-life learning*, which has marked the existence of each of us for quite some time.

By highlighting the changes that these places of learning have experienced over time and the way in which they interact with the needs and wishes of the public in the globalization era, the papers in this volume investigate some problematic aspects of contemporary museums, the issues that affect modern libraries or emphasise the ever more frequent hybridization process between museums and libraries, thereby creating a different way of conceiving or renewing those institutions. Such being the underlying spaces and use policies, in this essay we consider the players who animate those environments. They are not users in the traditional sense, but rather protagonists, who are changing those places according to their needs and experiences. Partakers of the erratic movement that, for various reasons, crosses modern global societies, they are like “moving figures” who metaphorically find asylum or a temporary “cultural *home*” in libraries and museums.

In the globalization era we have grown accustomed to the idea of ongoing movement, of moving flows – of people and ideas –, of a liquid mutability of living spaces. Leaving aside the massive migrations from places of conflict and poverty, which represent the most dramatic face of the contemporary world, an increasingly large number of people is criss-crossing the globe driven by various reasons: from those who commute daily to work or school, sometimes covering long distances, to others who travel across countries for business or pleasure. While in the past centuries, these “moving figures” were mainly part of a cultural and financial elite, today the phenomenon is broader and refers to the *cosmopolitan people*, who travel for study, work or leisure.

Cosmopolitan people use city places intermittently or temporarily, while immigrants – although they occupy them temporarily – mainly use them to build proximity, mutual help or exchange networks. The consequences of these movements are reflected in the city: by occupying the city spaces, the “new nomads” physically make use of the city, change it, bend it to their own habits or needs; on the other hand, the city itself can be considered as a complex of spatial opportunities for socialisation, or as a set of “inclusive interiors,” which include – in the sense of accepting – ethnic and gender diversity, promoting their mutual exchange and reciprocal learning. Compared to large mass movements, those who “*inhabit*” museums and libraries are a minority, who enrich them with their own identity and personal experiences. They do not merely use the facilities, they help orient their transformation. Alongside the modern stroller (*flâneur*) and the tourist, who occasionally visit museums and libraries, we have to acknowledge the growing phenomenon of the “*ubiquitous*

workers,”¹ workers on the move, both physically and virtually, thanks to modern information technology, for whom those places represent a more comfortable and stimulating work place or an opportunity for exchanging ideas and obtaining information.

Moving figures

A beloved subject in classical thinking since the days of Socrates, *flânerie* (city strolling) was cherished by late eighteenth-century Romanticism and nineteenth-century Decadentism from multiple literary, aesthetic and philosophical standpoints. During the twentieth century – especially due to the critical analysis proposed by Walter Benjamin, who pointed out its connection with the capitalist and industrial environment – the notion of *flânerie* acquired sociological, urban and architectural meanings in connection with the modern transformations of cities. At first, the *flâneurs* are intellectuals who walk aimlessly and in their “aimless movement” they capture the surrounding reality. The *flâneurs* walk along city streets, observing and collecting feelings, information and news. The emotional disenchantment of the *flâneurs* helps them find the meaning of places and critically describe the environment in which they live. From the age of Enlightenment to the early twentieth century, strolling as a ritual for its own sake, whether casual or reflective, also took the form of an educational or social practice, a love walk or a visit to archaeological ruins, a bucolic trip in “Rousseau style” or city strolling; over the last two centuries this aimless rambling has been a means for reaching understanding and knowledge, for bathing into or otherwise be submerged by reality. By projecting their thoughts on the places they liminally cross, the *flâneurs* inhabit them by “focusing on the surroundings” (La Cecla 1993, 50). With their gaze the *flâneurs* not only project their thoughts but they “can see history and the social issues of our country” (Nuvolati 2006, 63). According to Anthony Giddens (1990, 141) they are indeed the symbol of advanced modernity while also reflecting the sense of confusion and the desire to create new relations with the places we visit.

For today’s “lonely stroller” interacting with the city is more complex than in the past. In their urban discoveries, the *flâneurs* foresee the potential of

1 - It is a neologism I derived from the prophetic studies of Mark Weiser. The chief technologist of the Xerox PARC Science Laboratory predicted the demise of the computer as a centralised computing machine in favour of the *ubiquitous computing* or *ubicom*, where information processing is fully integrated into everyday objects and activities. Instruments communicate with each other and recognise the user: it is not virtual reality, but an environmental or pervasive intelligence, which may even go unnoticed to those who use several instruments and computing systems during the day.

the interstitial places of memories, of meditation or of waiting, where the social, economic and cultural mutations of the city will take place.

At the turn of the century and on the background of a changed social reality, the *flâneurs* became cosmopolitan, their urban references no longer being one-dimensional – as was the case of nineteenth-century Paris for Charles Baudelaire or twentieth century Berlin for Benjamin – but the entire metropolitan planet. Their experience is still mainly an individual experience, but the *flâneur* moves at ease as one who has been used to travel since childhood. The cosmopolitan dimension has multiple identities: the *flâneurs* are citizen of the world and they feel at home everywhere and at all times, their identity is “a state of becoming, in which the individual plays a constructive, protagonist role” (Nuvolati 2006, 99).

Although often subject to foreordained and predefined itineraries, the discovery and knowledge of places are among the leading features of the contemporary tourist. Incorporated into the phenomenology of mass travel – implemented by a transport system increasingly more affordable and spanning the entire planet – tourists interact with the places of knowledge extemporaneously, but not at random. Using digital devices, tourists may virtually get to know places before visiting them, and may select places and objects to be physically experienced according to their own interests. The personal discovery of museums and libraries, albeit concentrated in a short time, results in a compelling sensory experience, which activates emotional intelligence. This is the basis underpinning the feedback, identification, awareness and learning processes that guide cosmopolitan visitors in their mapping of the world according to their individual, yet shareable experience.

In addition to these moving figures driven by leisure and personal research interest, museums and libraries are increasingly crossed by the “*ubiquitous* workers,” for whom knowledge is a key strength and who have a professional attitude towards flexibility. As defined by Peter Drucker (1993, 8) the knowledge workers are intellectual operators. They focus, in fact, on knowledge and the production of ideas, thus operating intangible processes. There are lots of them in the advanced countries and their activity embraces fields of services, art, science and industry. Their exponential growth is associated with the birth and spread of computer networks geared towards sharing data and information, that since the 1990s have been breaking out in the world wide web globalized phenomenon featuring real-time communication, the coagulation of interests and projects, the growing out of the primeval Internet messy surfing. Compared with the ordinary goods categories, information becomes the key economic sector: the privileged access to data and its

control, as well as its accuracy and updating are the fundamental factors in the centralised coordination of financial and corporate interests and their decision-making policies. Furthermore, a vast array of services and specialist advice depends on information: due to knowledge, new work areas open up though, at the same time, the “usual” work changes and the number of jobless people rises as production increases while labour decreases. Even information alters the individual perception of reality as well as individual actions, the way of working and the relations between space and time. Workers devoted to research and innovation handily operate a packed scene of data and are always able to keep up-to-date as information rapidly deteriorates. Internationalism makes them less rooted in the workplace compared with standard workers, since they prefer the global network to which they are connected.

The flexible worker is a more recent phenomenon. Since the mid-1990s a dramatic downsizing in terms of both workplaces and skills has been affecting the manufacturing division of state-of-the-art companies. A class of pseudo-self-employed workers or pseudo-entrepreneurs goes hand in hand with other types of employees: it is characterised by a spirit of enterprise and creativity as well as by an ongoing condition of insecurity. The work standardisation typical of the Fordism society has been partially replaced with its individualization while the subordinate or wage-earning jobs alternate with those flexible and informal. The flexible man, according to Richard Sennett (1998), is the one that is equipped with a higher bent for risk and change, a self-taught person able to update whenever his qualification gets outdated. Furthermore, he is available to work on a part-time and lower-pay basis though he feels more vulnerable in terms of insurance cover and social contribution rights. European analysts (in particular Beck 1999) underline all the risks such a position involves in the world of work; others, including the Canadian Richard Florida (2002), instead prefer the vision of the self-employed worker as “one of the many examples of the *sovereign individual* that is praised as the heroic protagonist of the Net Economy revolution” (Formenti 2002, 163). It was a successful perspective that characterised the world of work until the panicking climate due to the terrorist attacks to the World Trade Center Twin Towers of New York and to the Pentagon in September 11th 2001, the economic crisis in the late 2001, the serious recession that started in 2008 and still has not seen its end in the European countries.

If the technological development that took place between the end of the last century and the new era was considered by many sociologists and management scholars as a powerful driver for great social changes, the economic crisis has underlined how the competitiveness among

the enterprises also depends on the creative factor underlying them. Richard Florida relates the birth of the *creative class* to industrial regions such as the Silicon Valley: those areas, because of their concentration of technology, talent and tolerance towards the minorities, are able to attract figures connected with creativity and innovation. Apart from engineers and computer scientists, the author also defines researchers, scientists, artists, musicians, fashion designers and architects as creative: their “economic feature” consists in the creation of ideas, technologies, new contents by solving complex problems (Florida 2002, 28). They are high-calibre professionals, in addition to whom Manuel Castells (1996, 140) includes the biotechnologists, actors, sport champions and political advisors. The creative workers generate a special added value that is crucial to the performance of the corporate, media and political networks. Compared with the information *surfers*, such manpower can interpolate data, create connections, build relations and combinations so as to give rise to a new project according to a smooth process of retrospective effect and self-regulation. The almost independent work adds to a sort of comparative group working through contributions or collaborations. As they are flexible in time management though operating in a steady work environment, the creative workers need a challenging scenario that can reward them through their research appreciation.

Changing backgrounds

Research and relationships drive the moving figures of the contemporary world: in addition to developing skills and knowledge, *flâneurs*, tourists and ubiquitous workers generate “flows of ideas” in the places they cross, aimed at developing creative relationships, physical proximity being necessary for a fruitful intellectual exchange and “innovation being fundamentally a social phenomenon” (Gladwell 2000, 62); “proximity” encourages interaction or, in other words, communication mainly depends on the physical position of people in space (Allen and Henn, 2007, 63). We have recently seen deep changes in social places, according to various forms of mutual hybridization: in cafés, in underground stations, in transportation and waiting rooms, in many public spaces people can work – somewhat precariously – using technological devices through which they can access wireless connections,² just as the new offices (*smart offices*) have assimilated the typical features of cafés, libraries and museums, by forming flexible co-working spaces within their areas.

2 - It must be said that working in cafés or in waiting rooms has a long tradition, especially in the literary milieu, preceding the advent of wireless connections.

With its social milieu and urban configuration, which facilitate social relations, interaction and creativity, the model offered by Hudson Street in Greenwich Village – developed during the mid-fifties and analysed by Jane Jacobs (1961) – seems to have become a directive for cultural environments, such as museums and libraries, just as it has been for work environments in recent decades (Forino 2011, 306). The places of learning have become like “*piazze*” or meeting places open to the community and, at the same time, media for social communication, where cultural, educational, social and entrepreneurial activities are hosted and launched. Compared to other public environments however, contemporary libraries and museums bring an added value: in the city seen as a set of inclusive spaces, they are the key nodes of an *emotional network*, a physical and virtual emotional network that triggers memories, identities and a sense of belonging in nomadic visitors. At the same time, they are inclusive interiors due to their ability to develop cross-cultural intersections. Libraries and museums are social and cultural spaces, they are the new active – though changing – *backgrounds* for the play of identities.

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Museums



Performing Museums

Margherita Parati

If we look at their history, museums can be considered as mirrors of the historical age that witnessed their establishment and of the society that designed them. The cultural role of museums is strictly connected to the knowledge system of the specific period in which they were established: the system of unconscious, productive and positive relations that is defined as “episteme” by Michel Foucault in his text *Les Mots et les Choses* (1966). As a consequence, museums are continually being transformed, facing the cultural and social changes which naturally occur throughout history. This essay investigates how museums are reacting to the contemporary age, the era of so-called Global Nomadism, which focuses on the time period from the 1980s to the present.

In the last twenty years we have witnessed a wide proliferation of museums on a global scale and, according to ICOM statistics, today there are around 55.000 museums in 202 countries, while in 1990 there were “only” 35.000 (Basso Peressut and Pozzi 2012, 27–28). Today, museums play a connecting role between local and global dynamics. They have a strategic role in the social, cultural, and economic networks that form the “geography of supermodernity” (Augé 2009) in which we live. A network of flows of information, people, objects and ideas. On one hand, a museum has an impact on the local area in which it is situated but on the other hand, it is also influenced on both an institutional and cultural level by the deep economic, political and social transformations that occur in contemporary society.

The essay investigates how museums react to these changes and focuses on the specific phenomenon of the use and re-evaluation of performing language, based on direct action and physical experience, in museum narrations and spaces. The phenomenon is framed from a theoretical point

of view, singling out the potentialities and criticalities of the language, leading to a reflection on the mechanisms of narrative construction and memory stimulation. The starting point of the investigation is the increasing necessity for museums to reconsider their communicative strategies, recognising how communicating toward society has always been the primary mission of every museum, a mission strictly related to the configuration of its interior spaces.

The essay is divided into four main chapters. The first analyses the theoretical framework of the discipline and it identifies three main points of reference in the broad, contemporary debate between museologists and museographers regarding the evolution of museums today. The essay refers to the interpretation by Roger Silverstone of the museum as a medium toward new publics. His point of view is enriched and compared with the opinion of the English theorist Eilean Hooper Greenhill, who has recently highlighted how the educational role of museums has dramatically changed during the 1970s in relation to the cultural shift from the general idea of education toward the one of active learning. In this framework the role of visitors in the exhibition environment becomes essential, so too the concept of *participation*, which is interpreted by the anthropologist James Clifford as a powerful opportunity to strengthen critical consciousness and the prospect of dialogue between cultures, histories and identities. We arrive then at the third point, which is the interpretation by Clifford of the museum as a *contact zone*.

The second chapter of the essay analyses the new competences that are currently required by cultural institutions, and in particular by museums. These are skills such as accessibility of the message, motivations towards learning and direct visitor participation. Institutions such as ICOM (International Council of Museums), which is active in the European context, and IMLS (Institute of Museums and Library Services) in the American outlook, are working to strategically orientate museum activities toward these new requirements. In this framework the essay recognises in the “performing strategy” a potential emerging answer to these needs.

The third chapter is thus dedicated to the analysis of how the terms “performative” and “performing” have recently been used by several museographers and designers which refer to contemporary exhibition activities. This leads to the clarification of how in the context of this essay the concept of “performative” is interpreted as a strategy, a designing approach that seems to positively react to the new competences required by museums today.

In the fourth chapter, different typologies of museums and their spaces are taken into consideration, and how the performing language is challenging the configuration of exhibition spaces is investigated. The aim of this essay is to analyse the emergence of the “performing paradigm” for museums, according to which the institution is interpreted as a critical laboratory, a social space to be inhabited by contemporary “nomad” citizens.

Museums, new roles and new publics

Setting a theoretical framework is essential to introduce the perspective adopted here to investigate the contemporary designing processes of both museum spaces and exhibition setups.

Among the wide and open debate in the field of the Museum Studies, the essay identifies three main points of view on the topic, which guide the arguments. The following chapter concerns the critical opinions of three selected authors, Roger Silverstone, Eilean Hooper Greenhill and James Clifford, who define museums as “medium of communication,” “educator” and “contact zone.” Under the more general interpretation of the museum as a medium, its educational and didactic role today is under discussion once more, and it recognises the contemporary importance of the participation processes that seek to involve the new publics addressed by museum. Museums, in other words, “are communicating environments in which complex meanings are negotiated” (Silverstone 1994, 166). The interpretation of museums as powerful *communication media* in contemporary society is a central concept in the complex field of the Museum Studies. Communicating is the primary function connected to the idea itself of the museum which, according to its specific historical period, can be directed towards exhibiting a private collection, celebrating political power or disseminating rational classifications of objects.

Between the 1970s and 1980s, the period of time under consideration in this essay, an important change was seen in the meaning of the act of communicating, in the transition of industrial production from material goods to information. The technological revolution that started in this period is currently in the process of accelerating to an even greater extent, and has a deep effect on an individual’s everyday life which is strictly influenced by the new media. Behaviour has changed and distances have been eliminated. We live today in a complex network of flows, information and images. In 1967 Marshall McLuhan had already prophetically described the global village in which we live today (1996, 63).

In this context, public cultural institutions become nodes of this network of flows and, moreover, they can be seen as *media* able to influence our process of learning about past, present and future situations. This is the

meaning that Roger Silverstone gives to the museum today, defining it as “*medium of communication*” in his text *The Medium Is the Museum: On Objects and Logics in Time and Spaces* (1994, 161). On one hand, comparing museums to communication media, Silverstone highlights their similarities, such as the ability to spread information to the public, to broadcast a message that is strictly influenced by the characteristics of the device itself while, on the other hand, he describes their differences, such as their spatial and physical configuration, highlighting the overlap of languages (the architectonic, technological and artistic) that occur in the museum space setups. According to Silverstone, the specific potential and richness of museums as media lies in this complex interchanging of languages.

In his essay Silverstone breaks up the communication process that occurs in all exhibition environments into its primary elements of objects-times-logics-spaces. The museum is thus analysed as a “text,” where it is possible to write and overwrite different narrations according to different logics. Silverstone highlights how a strict relationship has always been present between these principles that define the narration and the configurations of the exhibition spaces. This is clear if we think, for example, how the typical *enfilade* typology of the museums of the 19th century corresponds to their specific objective of ordering the collections according to rational knowledge classification systems. Moreover, Silverstone highlights the relevance of the physical embodiment of space provided by museums in both architecture and objects. In this perspective, Silverstone describes the museum architecture as a “territory,” where subjects and objects meet and confront each other.

Space in the museum, then, is a finite resource. It is also a territory, more or less jealously guarded and colonised. It is the object of considerable emotional attachment, as a result of which, for those who are responsible for it, the space becomes place, an intense meaningful location, which excites a whole series of proprietorial feelings and close identifications. And it is also, of course a phenomenological reality, a set of perceptions subject to constant structuring and restructuring in the imagination and experiences of all those involved in the museum’s mediation of the world. (Silverstone 1994, 172)

Analysing this encounter between subject and object in the territory of the museum, the author highlights the deep changes that they embody in the evolution of contemporary society. In the 1960s the birth of mass tourism, together with financial assistance for cultural institutions, led to a radical change in the museum public. The year 1968 can be considered

a watershed that represented a moment of cultural and social change, after which the issue of accessibility of culture became central in the public debate. In the 1970s the museum as an institution became aware of its crucial democratic and social role toward an enlarged middle class society. Museums are asked today to reinvestigate this self-consciousness, addressing contemporary nomad society, where people from different cultures and backgrounds cohabit. Museum publics are today plural, enlarged, multicultural and multi-ethnic and they are no longer a homogenous group of people unified by a specific national identity that the museum was asked to represent, as it was in the 20th century. Museums today speak to the masses and, from the masses, they have to find economic support.

In this context, reframing the nature of museums as a basic comparison between object-subject-space, as Silverstone does, seems to be key in being able to imagine potential new relations between these primary actors. New relations can lead to the design of new spatial configurations of the museum architecture and of its exhibition designs, both seen as territories and media, where these meetings occur. Once we have described the museum as a medium separating the primary elements (object-subject-space) of the communication process it generates, the next step is to question the goal and the purpose of this communication. The second concept that guides the arguments of the essay is the on-going debate regarding the educational purpose that historically has been associated with any exhibition activity.

The museum as a public institution was introduced between the 18th and the 19th centuries with the specific purpose of collecting and preserving objects and pieces of art ensuring a strict chronological method of exhibiting and allowing expert visitors the opportunity of widening their knowledge.

In the 19th century and in the Modern Age the role of museums was mainly didactic. In this way, they were the direct reflections and symbols of the identity of a society that had limitless faith in industrial growth. As has already been mentioned, events changed in the 1960s and 1970s when the explosion of the phenomenon of mass tourism and modified international economic settlements determined the new essential role of the public and of visitors for museums. Museums felt a strong didactic responsibility toward this enlarged public. As American theorist George F. McDonald suggests, up until the beginning of the 20th century the educational role of museum was still the dominant paradigm (1992, 111). The British museologist Eilean Hooper Greenhill highlights how, despite the evidence of the diversities in culture and number of museum

visitors, before the 1970s museums did not feel any urgency to compare their programs with the emerging new theories and debates regarding education methods that were being advanced at that time. The author discusses this significant shift from the so-called *behaviourist psychology* toward the *cognitive psychology* theories, from a learning method based on a positivistic approach, rationally asking for answers to specific stimuli, toward one based on the active engagement of the subject involved in the process, with no age restrictions (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 133–146; Hein 2006, 340–352).

While these theories had already been tested in schools, it is only at the beginning of the 1980s, due to economic restrictions, that many European museums became preoccupied with the educational impact of their mission and how it could influence the success of their activities in terms of attainable numbers of visitors. Between the 1980s and 1990s, visiting museums changed from being a hobby of an elite middle class to a mass activity, and museums stopped being public institutions funded by the state, to become real commercial enterprises in search of new ways of funding. The museums' activities began to combine the development of cultural marketing strategies with new educational programs, for which specific educational staff began to be part of the museums' employees. Moreover, in England, the first *discovery rooms* were designed to experiment with the spatial and physical opportunities of these new theories.

While museums began to react to this enlarged didactic role, a further step was made in the field of educational theories toward the idea of learning based in primary evidence and in direct and structured *experience* (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 133–146; Hein 2006, 340–352). According to this theory, the best learning method occurs when the subject has a direct experience of sites or places where they can physically touch and work with objects, interacting with others in a participatory process. It is at the end of the 1980s that a definitive shift is registered from the traditional concept of *education* to the one of *active learning*, based on personal discovery and gaming, and inspired by the environment of everyday life. Again, this new perspective enlarged the opportunities of museums to rethink their educational roles, taking advantage of the physical presence of their collections and creating new exhibition designs and spaces able to stimulate such an active learning process. Eilean Hooper Greenhill argues how a specific *Educational Policy* has to be included in the *mission* of contemporary museums, valuing their collections that can be re-read and re-interpreted in multiple and diverse ways. In this updated, interactive learning atmosphere the visitor gains a central role and they are asked to be active and dynamic in space and time and no longer only a passive listener

of a predefined message. Each person is thus also responsible for his own personal knowledge enrichment in today's fragmented multicultural and uncertain context.

In terms of how visitors are conceived there is a shift from thinking about visitors as an undifferentiated mass public, to beginning to accept visitors as active interpreters and performers of meaning-making practices within complex cultural sites. (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 363)

According to this view, in the last twenty years *Visitor Studies* have increased in number as a new research field aimed at the interpretation of the new demands of contemporary society and at orientating different museum activities according to visitors' expectations. *Participation* has become a central topic in the current debates regarding the potentialities of the languages, both technological and architectural, to be used to activate real visitor engagement. The rediscovered social and educational responsibility of museums puts into question its spatial configurations, and the museums are required to create the conditions to be able to activate participatory knowledge sharing and construction. These are the inspiring premises of the design activity of the Italian architectural and artistic company Studio Azzurro, which was opened in 1982 by Fabio Cirifino, Paolo Rosa and Leonardo Sangiorgi. The office specialises in designing sensible and interactive environments and experimenting with new technologies. Learning is one of the key words in their way of working and, in their recent (2013) publication, *Musei di Narrazione (Museums as Narrations)*, they define it as follows:

By widening its spectrum of meaning, it can also include that increasingly felt need for an even broader life-long education. Such a need is felt in order to improve personal understanding and awareness, but also to keep pace with an exponential development in a world whose meaning had never been so uncertain: in this particular case, in order to deal with the repercussions, referred to earlier, arising from the different ways of using technology, the languages of the digital architecture, computer archives and the expansion of the internet. This learning comes through experience, through discovery, experimentation, surprise, but also through collaboration and involvement, where we can also obtain practical benefit from other people, from the company of others, from using our time differently. Learning is the willingness to modify our own behaviour, which is based on experience and continues throughout our lives. It is an active process of acquisition and adaptation and develops into an attitude of participation. Learning takes place through the physical presence with

others in the museum, but also through the stimulus which it gives to pursue learning through internet resources. (Studio Azzurro 2010, 25–26)

The changed cultural and political conditions of our times make it necessary for museums to be competitive on a global scale but to be able to find a balance between their marketing activities and their social and ethical responsibilities. The relationship between object-subject in museum spaces can be updated by a new balance, new possible configurations of their roles and the museum can be the framework of this encounter by proposing different narrative structures which can be less authoritative and unbending, but more open and dynamic, fragmented and hypertextual. Interactivity, participation and engagement become key words in the process of designing museum architecture and its exhibition setups.¹ The shift towards a new idea of education as a learning process that is open and dynamic has led to the recognition of the active role of the single visitor and their need to *inhabit* public spaces, as the museums can certainly be considered.

After recognizing the role of participation for visitors in the museum communication processes, a further step is to reconsider its social and cultural value in a broader perspective. Museums are seen in this framework as catalysts of encounters and confrontation between the different cultures and ethnicities that coexist in contemporary society. These encounters that the museum can frame can be seen as an opportunity for sharing and negotiating knowledge. From this point of view, the museum is no longer considered as a simple repository of objects, but more as an arena of critical debate, where single individuals can compare themselves with one another. The museum becomes a place for dialogue, where each culture, despite its geographical origin, can be represented. The diverse narrations that the museum can build take distance from the modern model of linear storytelling to become open to contamination. A museum can give space to cultural connections, between countries and people, it can promote the social integration of minorities and historically marginalised voices, it can re-open a constructive dialogue

1 - Regarding interactivity as a concept of design and its cultural value in the museum context Andrea Witcomb has written: "Taken seriously, dialogue could become the basis for a new understanding of interactivity in museums. Such an understanding would break the association between a mechanistic understanding of interactivity in museums ... interactivity is too often understood as simply an outcome of interactives. Yet there can be a vast gulf between interactive (as an adjective) and the possession of interactives (as a noun). In that gulf lie not only differing pedagogical approaches but completely different ideas on the social function of museums" (Witcomb 2006, 360).

with the past proposing other interpretations and rethinking perhaps new, hopefully controversial and constructive ones.

The anthropologist James Clifford has introduced the expression “contact zones” to define those places where dynamics of unbalanced powers require negotiation, where distances do not correspond to a specific geographical location but more to a social behaviour (1997, 264–271). Museums face an open challenge to become space for inclusive dialogue, open to the participation of the critical attitude of individuals, apart from its geographical and social belongings. The museum seen as a contact zone would thus become a place of critical debate. The presence of the museum and its architecture inside an urban context is the symbol not only of a historical role, but moreover of a democratic one and this necessary links the institution to political discourse as well. The educational role of the institution, as previously described, is thus enriched with a new meaning. The museum as contact zone should stimulate the *critical consciousness* of the visitor, promoting a dialogue able to respect and include differences. In addition, this message is directed toward each visitor, with no restrictions of age or cultural belonging, who is asked to participate in the process of knowledge construction.

The increasing number of visitors and the increasing diffusion of museums on a global scale on one hand empower the dissemination impact of their activities but, on the other hand, create difficult competition between institutions. One possible risk that may occur would be overcoming the cultural role of the institution with market strategies aiming to reinvigorate, for example, the economic power of a single town, which would become more similar to entertainment parks (Purini 2006, 51–55). With this risk there is the need to keep museum activities focused on their cultural and social roles, keeping in mind its opportunity to be a real place for discussion and critical debate, between institutions and societies. Museums are required to offer conditions stable enough to let the visitor inhabit its spaces, but unstable enough to activate their critical participation. Based on the necessity of being aware of their social and cultural responsibility, German sociologist Ludger Pries (2001) suggests an intriguing definition of today’s cultural institutions, museums included, as “new transnational social spaces.”² This understanding of museums as

2 - “The term ‘transnational social spaces’ indicates social realities of growing importance ... Transnational social spaces can be understood as pluri-local frames of reference which structure everyday practices, social positions, biographical employment projects, and human identities, and simultaneously exist above and beyond the social contexts of national societies” (Pries 2001, 21–24).

“as pluri-local frames of reference” for contemporary societies lies as the background of further argumentation in this essay.

Guidelines and new competences for museums

Accessibility of the message, motivations towards active learning and direct visitor participation seem to be the key concepts that emerge from the on-going debate regarding the role of museums in our changing society. Due to the popularity, complexity and cultural relevance of museums as institutions at an international level, several institutions were created in the 1950s in order to study, map and guide the museographical experiences and to map the museological debates. Institutions like ICOM (International Council of Museums), ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) have become the benchmark for all who work in the field. Moreover, these organisations conduct continual research programmes and internationally publish statistics regarding the latest trends and requirements that public institutions, such as museums, currently need to confront.

In 2009, the American Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS) based in Washington began a project entitled *Museums, Libraries and 21st Century Skills*, which aims to analyse the new challenges required of museums and libraries according to the rapid changes in the global economy and society in general. The contemporary citizen is asked to develop new skills, such as the ability to deal with a large amount of information and communication media, being technology friendly, critical, adopting a problem-solving attitude, being creative and acquiring global awareness. Museums and libraries, among other public institutions, can play a crucial role in guiding their visitors in these directions. In order to develop the project, a Task Force was established in 2008 which, for a period of one year, developed the research strategy. A backdrop result of the project was to publish a list and a map of the existing institutions in order to implement dialogue and the exchange of information between them, and to foster positive competition for their future activities. A significant part of the research was dedicated to visitor studies, an analysis of their expectations of the programme and the spaces, both physical and virtual, of the institutions. The survey highlighted the potentialities of the web, of crowdsourcing systems and of the role of ICT in re-centring the cultural message toward each person in every local community in order to make them feel deeply involved in the process of making meaning. The detailed report of the project describes several approaches

these institutions should embrace in order to face the challenges in the current climate of social and cultural transformation. As an example:

- Combination of audience and content driven;
- Combination of tangible and digital objects;
- Multidirectional (co-created experiences involving institutions, audiences and others)
- Focus on audience engagement and experience;
- Emphasis on enhancing knowledge and 21st century skills;
- Acts in high collaborative partnerships;
- Embedded in community (aligned with and acts as a leader on community needs/issues);
- Learning purposeful outcomes;
- Content co-created among diverse partners and audiences; accessible in multiple ways. (IMLS 2009, 7)

To briefly summarise the content of the project, it could thus be said that it attempted to define new skills that are required today by museums and libraries, institutions which should orient their activities toward new methods of communication, inspired by the importance of promoting active learning processes, which can be informal and based on the direct experience of the subject, and of stimulating the direct participation of an enlarged public. Although the perspective of the IMLS is necessarily American, it embodies a common need to renegotiate the roles of such institutions and, moreover, the Institute provides and disseminates very practical tools and guidelines that can orientate the programmes of contemporary museums at the international level.

The on-going debate regarding how museums should react to contemporary changes in the cultural, economic and social context in which they are framed is, as has been described, enriched by the contribution of institutions willing to propose guidelines for best practices. Nevertheless, if the direction for museums to follow is widely discussed both theoretically and strategically, what might the practical tools be for orienting the activities of the institutions? The impact of the economic crisis on many public institutions lies as the background to the theories. Museums of today are to be found in the conflicting scenario of an increasing worldwide popularity combined with decreasing funding support from the States, beginning at the end of the 1980s. This is the reason why museums have begun on one hand to search for more private investors and on the other hand, to increase their advertising and marketing strategies in order to capture the attention of as large a number of visitors as possible (Deitch 2010).

The open challenge for cultural institutions is today to find a balance between social responsibility and financial need. The recent museum marketing strategies have activated more intense competition between different institutions, which we can certainly define as enterprises where, in the same areas as exhibition spaces, cafeterias and bookshops can be seen. The changing structure of museums also involves the need to overlap and combine areas of expertise in order to be able to work with different languages and media. Indeed, in the “complex machine” of a contemporary museum, a range of practitioners such as curators, administrators, directors, artists, educators, architects and designers have to collaborate. If it is agreed that the essential mission of a museum should be one of creating an environment for the human experience of conscious or unconscious dialogue, then this interaction between disciplines becomes a fruitful opportunity to enrich narrations which take advantage of language and media, both physical and ephemeral. The borders between architecture, technology, art and theatre are being blurred and museums require flexible and multiple spaces, both in their physical buildings and on the web, where visitor can play an active role. Museums need to rethink their communication strategies and, as a consequence, also to redesign their spaces, and to aim to propose open narrations. Hence we turn back to the need to think about new relations between object-subject-space, as the primary elements involved in the process of knowledge sharing.

Facing this complexity, we can identify two main trends, two fields of experimentation that are being tested in different contemporary institutions. On one hand, many museums are digitalizing their collections, taking advantage of ICT technologies and of the web. On the other hand, other practitioners are experimenting with the design of environments based on the direct and physical experience of visitors, a strategy based on the rediscovery of the power of physicality of the space, as well on the potentialities of gesture and body as powerful memory activators. This essay focuses on the second strategy, based on the physicality of the communication environment that a museum represents and where architecture has a central role. The field is certainly open to experimentation, involving both the architectural design of spaces and the mechanisms of narration building.

The huge proliferation of museums in the last twenty years makes it impossible to identify a dominant architectural typology or solution. As the museologist Karsten Schubert suggests (2004, 122), every single museum project is a balance between three factors: the nature of the collection, the independency of the institution and the dialogue between the architect, the curator and the artist, taking into account the economic restrictions

that we face. The essay thus seeks to investigate those best practices that foster innovation in the communication strategies with consequences in the design of the spaces, without neglecting the difficult balance between cultural and economic objectives that is always in the background of all contemporary experimentation.

“Performing” as a designing strategy

In order to develop the new skills that are required today, and stimulate active learning process and participation, museums should begin to question their communication strategies, experimenting with different and non-hierarchical relations between object-subject-space in the narrations they construct. As already discussed, the key point is to be able to consider the active role of the subject involved, while rethinking other and multiple interpretations of the object in an environment designed to be experience oriented. What are the strategies museums are already developing to foster these experimentations?

Alternative to the total digitalization of collections, *performance* is today discussed as a possible strategy able to answer some of the contemporary challenges museums face. This section of the essay analyses the meaning of the concept “performative” and its relevance to museums, quoting authors who theorise regarding its relevance. An example is an emerging “performing model” for museums as a strategy where exhibition design and theatre are strictly linked. Recently appointed as Curator for Contemporary Architecture at the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA (New York Museum of Modern Art), the architect Pedro Gadanho has highlighted that a “Performative Turn” characterises our age of transition and transformation, a shift that also has a profound consequences from the architectural point of view.

Over the last decades there were the *linguistic turn*, the *cultural turn*, and of course, also the *performative turn*, by likes of which the influence of performance over the artistic media was somehow extended and confirmed... Beyond the activation of program’s abstraction, and behind such a *turn* lies, as it would be expected, one relevant paradigm shift. And we may speak of a *return of the user* – not to say simply the *return of the repressed* – to the troubled horizon of current architectural concerns. (Gadanho 2012)

More than in the contemporary architectonic debate, “performative” as a concept has its origins in the field of *speech act theory*, part of the philosophy of language. The English philosopher John Langshaw Austin introduced this concept at the end of the 1950s to describe the difference

between “performative utterance” and “constative utterance.” While the latter describes or constates a reality according to a true or false positivistic filter, the performative utterance is neither true nor false but is part of the doing of a future action, and it can be judged according to its suitability as a reward for the action to come. The word “performative” has its root in the verb “to perform,” which means “to act, to do something” (Loxley 2007). This quick reference to the very philosophical meaning of the word is given only as a stimulus to highlight the strong link of the performative dimension with “the doing of an action,” drawing attention from the object to the subject, from the cause to the effect, of an action. This more abstract and general meaning of the term can be applied to different fields of investigation. At the beginning of the 20th century the architectural theorist Andrea Ruby included “performance” as one of the prominent concepts that have influenced contemporary architecture theories. In the text *Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture* he refers to “performance” as a contemporary paradigm, which does not describe what the shape of a reality is, but which refers to “what it does.”

Of all conceptual paradigms of architecture, performance is the one which seeks to evaluate the efficiency of its ambitions. Opposed to an architecture for the sake of architecture, it investigates the feed-back loops between architecture and the system it is embedded in ... Performance does not ask how a form looks like, but what it enables ... Thus performance shifts the focus of interest from essence to effect. The question is not what something is, but what it does. (Ruby 2003, 476)

The complex concepts of “performance,” “performative” and “performing” are part of the contemporary debate regarding architecture design and theory, which face a continual shift of the relations between objects and subjects in space under the large impact of new technologies. The performing dimension of an exhibition design draws our attention back to the dramaturgic quality of space, which is thus seen firstly as a “space for actions.” At the beginning of the 21st century the increasing interest in the performing dimension of space has also reached museum studies. The essay refers briefly to the research of two of the main authors who have investigated this topic. The American scholar Valery Casey focuses precisely on the relationship between object and subject. In her paper “The Museum Effect: Gazing from Object to Performance in the Contemporary Cultural-History Museum” (2003), she highlights the power that museums have in communicating a message to their public. Valery Casey acknowledges the priority of the visual component in the fruition of the exhibit: the eyesight is the most stimulated sense in the

media reality we live in, and the scholar takes it as the parameter to analyse the relationship between object-subject and the “screen” that is the “filter” represented by the exhibition space. Casey defines three possible relational dynamics that occur between the visitor and the exhibit which correspond to three “models” that, according to her, describe the evolution of museum typology through history. From the “legislating museum,” the model of *Wunderkammern*, the *Cabinets de Curiosités* of the 17th and 18th centuries, to the “interpreting museum,” typical of the public museum popular in the 19th century, which had a precise didactic purpose, to the contemporary “performing museum,” where the explanatory caption of the object is replaced by the *performance*. While describing the last model, the author refers to Living History, that is, those forms of musealization which occur through theme re-enactments, where the non-authentic object is concretely “re-used” and made known to the visitors by means of theatre acts in which they are invited to take part. Besides the heated and controversial debates that are triggered by these re-enactment practices, it is worth noting the importance attributed by Casey to the acknowledgement of the performance as an alternative and contemporary narrative “strategy.” The performance replaces the object, and the visitor is actively involved on stage.

This orchestrated performance of museum narrative is akin to performance art itself, where the viewer is confronted by the artwork, and meaning is derived through participation. As the traditional boundaries between these performers (the actors and the audience) are traversed, the process of meaning-making becomes the essential, central element of the interaction. This emphasis on the orchestrated narrative locates the mechanisms of museum practice as the focus of attention, and the interpretive performance becomes an analogue of the art object. That is to say, live performance in the contemporary museum has not only dispensed of the primacy of the object, but it has become the object. (Casey 2003)

Such reasoning leads to the interpretation of the performance as a “relational strategy” and the identification of the *performing museum* as a contemporary model to reflect upon. It is possible to talk about a change of paradigm, where the modes of representation based solely on the visual relationship with the object are re-thought, taking into consideration the centrality and importance of the visitors’ direct experience. The performing paradigm brings back into question the relationships among object-subject-space and the sensory modalities through which we experience content. Different degrees of participation can be acquired also according to the environment the space can create to stimulate direct and personal

involvement. In this framework, we can speak of immersive spaces, spaces for actions, which are able to involve the visitor in the knowledge making experience. It is the English designer David Dernie who describes these immersive spaces as “performative spaces,” which, according to him, are a new field of experimentation in the exhibition design practices focusing on the body-space-time relationship. The performative space, according to Dernie, is designed in relation to the actions and the physical movements of the visitor, on their ability to discover space through his body and perceptions.

Performative space results from the understanding of space in terms of human experience... From the studies on gesture it is possible to underline the strict relation between body movement and communication... In the performative space the body is considered as part of the exhibition environment, the landscape of objects, artworks and performance. In the performative space the traditional boundaries between subject and objects are cancelled... visitors become themselves performers, spectators but also objects of spectacle, they are bodies who move through a topography of sounds and images overlapped to the architecture which is based on choreographed movements. Everything seeks to activate and stimulate a vital memory in a dynamic experience through the exhibits. (Dernie 2006, 46–49)

Both Casey and Dernie refer to the performing strategy for museums as a particular designing approach, which breaks the traditional frontal relationship between object and subject.

In his analysis, museologist Silverstone proposes breaking the communication process of museum into its primary elements (objects-times-logics-spaces) and we can say that the performing strategy tests possible new relations between these elements. Stemming from the theories discussed earlier, the essay embraces the understanding of the performing strategy as a possible designing approach that seeks to create an environment with certain conditions, which works on better accessibility of the message, on interactivity and participation of visitors. By focusing on the role of the *action*, the performing strategy breaks the hierarchical frontality of the relationship between visitor and exhibit, using a kind of language, which is universal by its very nature, namely the language expressed by gestures and the body, which requires no translation. The real potentiality for triggering forms of constructive participation and learning, which are different for each individual owing to their uniqueness in the space and time in which they take place, lies in this subversion of the elements. This way, visitors become a key element in the development of the narration. Their physical engagements awake “other” forms of

memory – more intuitive and sensorial – rather than a merely visual mode of exploring spaces and contents.

In this way the performing strategy reveals the capacity to create a *displacement effect* with respect to the observed reality that turns such language into an opportunity to stimulate critical awareness-raising, by working on “other” communicative channels capable of encouraging participation. Moreover, the relation to the physicality of spaces and objects imposes itself as the opposite party to totalizing digitalisation, which is not denied and which it does not aim to replace, but rather at potentially integrating with it. Through this language it is possible to figure out forms of re-activation and re-reading of the collections from different points of view and with different voices, forms of stratification of the narration levels, introducing in the museum a transitional temporality. Based on these premises, the paper focuses on the specific phenomenon of the use and re-evaluation of performing language, based on direct actions and physical experience, in museum narrations and spaces. The essay seeks to investigate contemporary experimentation and trends to refocus attention on the dramaturgical quality of space.

Considering the attention on the movement of body in space, on gesture and experience as the starting point of the designing process, it is possible to recognise a point of convergence between architecture and theatre. Indeed, we can speak of an effective “theatralisation” of museums. The two disciplines meet each other in the experimentation of multisensory environments and in the research of subject participation. The common ground between exhibition design and theatre is represented by the concept of experience, of the direct involvement of body in space. Architecture and theatre can be seen as powerful filters on our own perception of reality and they can stimulate self-critical awareness, working on emotional, physical and intellectual levels, those borders that connect us to the environment in which we live. All our senses are involved, not only the eye. Thus, the evolution of museum typology can be fruitfully compared to the evolution of the discipline of theatre, revealing strong assonances. Likewise for theatre, in the second half of the 20th century, a shift is registered from a more traditional approach based on the eye and fixed observation of the stage, toward one based on action and experience, breaking the frontal confrontation between actor and spectator. The configuration of the theatrical space and scenes is strongly put into question and a correspondence can be found between its gradual fragmentation and the one occurring in our historical moment in exhibition spaces, in the search for non-linear and more open narration settlements (Greenberg 2005, 226–237). At the beginning of the 1960s theatre went through a deep

revolutionary transition. Directors such as Jerzy Grotowski and Luca Ronconi, together with many others, experimented new ways of staging and acting, forcing theatre to exit its conventional structure and physical space, invading squares and streets. In that period, theatre was found to be a strong medium for social and political debate, regarding stories that were very close to the everyday life of people. In addition, spectators were part of the evolution of these stories on the stage.³

This strong stimulus to put into question the modern structure of the discipline can also be found in the evolution of museum typology from the linear disposition of the exhibits, according to the modern way of categorising knowledge, toward a fluid map of spaces, able to be connected in several different ways through the change of exhibition design, which is able to give space to overlap and connections. In this open configuration, architecture acquires a rhythm integrating the scale of the building with the one of the exhibition design, in the alternation of wide and narrow spaces where the visitor can decide how to experience the exhibits. An example of this open structure is the Dia:Beacon Riggio Galleries in Beacon, New York, an art foundation designed by the architectural firm Open Office together with the artist Robert Irwin and that opened in 2003 (Serota 1996).

Interpreted as “spaces for actions,” museums can easily look at theatre to find stimuli, similar debate and experimentations. However, the comparison between these disciplines embraces both their experimental character as well as their risks. In fact, if on the one hand the research proper of contemporary theatre embodies the challenge that the performing strategy represents for museums then, on the other hand the theatricalisation of the museum experience can easily be misunderstood as mere search for entertainment. In this perspective, museums and theatre can run the same risk of being victims of marketing strategies, necessary to overcome financial crises, and becoming spaces for commercial entertainment, losing their real cultural mission (Newhouse 2006, 190–192).

The interesting challenge for museums is thus being able to find a balance between cultural and economic needs. In this way museum is, like theatre, a laboratory to experiment with different ways of narrative construction. The performing strategy should be interpreted as an opportunity to raise the question of the traditional structure of the museum practices, introducing doubt instead of evidence, making the museum a space for debate and multicultural dialogue. It could be said that museums and theatre are living today the same conflict facing the socio-cultural

3 - A detailed description of the evolution of contemporary theatre is presented by Franco Quadri in one of the first editions of *Lotus International* (1977, 110–130).

changes of the age of global nomadism, and this reveals the interesting contact between the two disciplines that needs to be investigated. The hybridisation between theatre and museum is not a matter of functions, but more a matter of imagining different and innovative uses of their spaces and tools, stimulating spectators and visitors to inhabit their cultural environments.

“Performing spaces” in the museum

Once the essay has defined the emergence of a performing strategy for museums as a possible field of investigation and experimentation fostering participation and active learning processes, the next step is to investigate the direct impact that this strategy can have on the architectural configuration of museum spaces. As the designer David Dernie suggests, performative spaces in museums are immersive spaces for actions, which are designed stemming from analyses of our gestures and movements. The exhibition design can offer possible uses and different paths, which end only when the visitor himself is part of them. Both the architecture of the building and the architecture of the exhibition design foster the physicality of the visitor experience of objects and spaces, and they both create a multi-sensorial environment that becomes the essential filter between museum and its visitor. Searching for innovation and best practices regarding the emergence of this performing model in museum narrations and spaces, the essay analyses different museum typologies in relation to their different collections. For every typology selected, the essay investigates both permanent exhibition spaces in new buildings and exhibition designs in pre-existing structures. The case studies analysed are divided into three clusters according to the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and EGMUS (The European Group on Museum Statistics) macro-classifications. Further, the essay analyses history museums, science museums and art museums.

History Museums

The category of history museums includes museums of history and archaeology, ethnographical museums, and local museums. All these museums have to deal with large collections of objects and finds, which are the physical material base of museum narrations. The structure, languages and interpretations used in the narrations determine the degree of the critical attitude of the institution in question. The performing strategy finds its space in the way these elements are combined and it can influence the degrees of control on the interpretations of the stories that are told. The configuration of the space is often a direct consequence of the narration

structure and it is designed to lead the visitor through the linear sequence of objects and information. The deep cultural and social transformations of the last decades have generated, as a reaction, a strong attachment of contemporary society to the past. This is what Pierre Nora defines as “materialization of memory” (1989, 7–24), and of which the proliferation of museums and the widespread musealisations of local territories are a direct manifestation. In the 1980s this phenomenon was called *heritage boom* (Ruggeri Tricoli 2000, 84). Indeed, contemporary individuals seem to look at the past with a nostalgic feeling for the stability of other times, which are perceived to be very different if compared to the uncertainty of the historical moment in which we now find ourselves.

A common trend for history museums has recently been the one to adopt a performing strategy that is able to insist on this nostalgic atmosphere and on the empathetic relationship with the events of the past, taking distances, at times, from the authenticity of the exhibits. In such a wide panorama of different institutions we can identify, however, some common trends, analysing on one hand the exhibition designs inside the museums and, on the other hand, experiences of musealisation of entire historical regions or areas.

The collections of historical finds are often hosted in pre-existing architectures, where the exhibition design has the role of creating the rhythm of the narration and dialoguing with the pre-existing configuration of the spaces. This is what occurred with the exhibition layout design by Ralph Appelbaum Associates for the United States Holocaust Museum of Washington in 1993. The exhibition design consists of a large permanent installation that occupies the three floors of the building. The museum is dedicated to the tragic facts of the Holocaust, which are narrated through a plot divided into three acts – “Nazi Assault,” “Final Solution,” and “Last Chapter” – one on each floor. The visitor explores the exhibits following a tightly controlled linear path. On the ground floor an elevator leads them to the third floor where the story begins and then they can walk down to the ground floor. The exhibits consist not only of historical finds and pictures, but also of non-authentic, everyday life objects such as books and shoes, which actualise the tragedy of history. The story has a very detailed and predetermined plot that creates a unique path the visitor is forced to follow, with the very clear aim of leaving no space for alternative interpretations of these tragic events.

Daniel Libeskind recreates the same strict control on the narration that Appelbaum demands of the exhibition design in the Holocaust Museum with the power of his architecture in the Jewish Museum in Berlin. The museum opened in 1998 and the intention of the architect was to create

a sensorial space and highly characterised architecture that had to guide the visitor and make them experience the tragedy of history through their emotional engagement. The building is fragmented in strictly controlled environments where the space itself guides your physical movements and sensations.

If these two first examples exemplify how architectural space can determine visitor behaviour, another space configuration is experimented with in open-air museums that are placed on heritage sites themselves. In these places the visitor is invited to enter and explore a real set that recreates the historical atmosphere using scenographical elements. This phenomenon is known as *living history* in the north of Europe and North America.⁴ The biggest and most famous living history museum in the West is the Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site in Virginia. The town of Williamsburg was a British colony in South Virginia and it was a very active site, famous for having given house to the fathers of the Declaration of Independence. Father Goodwin, with the financial assistance by John Davison Rockefeller Jr., initiated the transformation of this historical area into an open-air museum in 1927. Today the Williamsburg Foundation is a non-profit association funded by the Federal Republic of the United States. On the 301-acre site, 88 original colonial architectural structures have been restored, while 500 houses have been re-built together with several museums. All the inhabitants, professors and people working in the museums wear the original clothes of the period. Time seems to be frozen at the moment that Jefferson and Washington lived in the town. The visitor can attend traditional cooking lessons, or they can take part in the discussion in an old court regarding the freedom of slaves, or take part in traditional dances shows. In this perfect re-enactment, everything celebrates national American pride and the motto of the institution is "That the future may learn from the past." The museum opened in 1932 and today it has thousands of visitors every year. The model of living history began to spread to northern Europe at the beginning of the 1950s.

Another example is the Zuiderzeemuseum in The Netherlands. It consists of a town that was rebuilt in the style of the 17th century in order to commemorate the fishermen communities on the Zuiderzee, the large bay that was closed in the 1990s by the dam built in the north of the country. The first part of the museum was opened in 1948. It consisted of a traditional museum set in a monumental pepper house and five adjoining

4 - The term "Living History" was introduced by Jay Anderson in a paper written in 1982, where he analysed extensively for the first time the American museographical practice based on the theatrical representations of historical events.

buildings. In 1983 an outdoor part was added to the museum which then consisted of a park with an authentic old village factory from the former Zuiderzee region, including 130 traditional houses, a windmill, lime kiln, cheese store, sweet shop, church, school, chemist and harbour facilities of that period. Role-playing characters wearing traditional clothes of the 17th century inhabit the village. Guests are invited to look into the daily lives of the Zuiderzee fishermen and, by doing so, recreate a utopian atmosphere. Demonstrations of handicrafts, workshops and other activities are organised daily to attract the mainly young guests of the museum.

These re-enactment strategies have quickly become very popular and can be seen as having become pure cultural marketing strategies, which cast doubt on their validity. Considering the mechanisms of narration building, it is clear that the use of performance substitutes the presence of the authentic object and that history is interpreted through a fix plot in which the actors follow the controlled plan of a director. However, once again it is instructive to investigate the constructive ability of this strategy to involve the visitor directly, offering them the possibility to touch and to experience the past. This physicality of the learning experience is defined as a “hands on” strategy and it is based on the direct involvement of visitors, who are asked “to do” and “to act” inside the stage of the museum. Nevertheless, there is a risk that with this freedom to interact, the performing dimension involved can be a potential key element in unmasking the overall theatrical plot. This could be called a sort of theatre inside the theatrical fiction (Casey 2005). In all the examples discussed, theatre and performance are used in a narrating approach that maintains a high level of control on the interpretations of what is transmitted and communicated. Emotions can easily overcome the critical awareness of the visitors.

Between the choice of a highly present architecture that forces the visitor to follow a specific path and the total theatralisation of historical events, we can identify a third trend. It is exemplified by the case of the National Museum of American Indians, opened in 1993 and designed by the architect, Douglas Cardinal. The museum is dedicated to native American culture and it is structured in different spaces able to host both traditional exhibition set-ups and performances. The main circular atrium of the building (*Rasmuson Theatre*) is used as a central stage for events, discussions, happenings and dances. The fourth floor hosts another small theatre (*Lelawli Theatre*) where a multimedia show introduces and explains the exhibition structure of the museum to visitors. They can later delve deeper into the explanation by passing through the educational programme

of the *ImagiNation Activity Centre* or through the rich website and blog of the institution. Performative spaces and more traditional exhibition spaces alternate in the open structure of the museum space configuration.

Museums of Science

The category of museums of science includes a wide range of museum typologies, from the museums of natural history, museums of science and technology, to the more recent discovery centres. From their very beginning the narrative structure of these museums had to deal not only with objects, but also with the need to communicate concepts, explaining the processes of chemistry, physics and science in general. Spectacle has always been part of the designed space and atmosphere of these museums, from the moment they were established in the 19th century: “shows and performance characterise the narration of science through practical experiments and the viewing of wonderful science objects” (Basso Peressut 1998, 95–137). In the 19th century, in the enormous architecture of the Museum of Natural History, where huge skeletons were hung or occupied the main atriums, as well as in the discovery palaces, science was narrated through scenographical effects and representations, celebrating a positivistic faith in progress and industrial growth. Many museums of science that were built in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century hosted real theatres for public science experiments. This was the aim of the project for the Palais de Découverte in Paris, built in 1937, and where the architect Felice Fanuele designed *la salle électrostatique* in 1967 which housed a small theatre where the stage is occupied by machinery and not humans.

Probably the most famous and debated spectacular exhibition design for a science museum is the *Grande Galerie de l'Évolution* nel Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Jardin de Plantes, in Paris. The architects Paul Chemetov and Borja Huidobro, together with the scenographer René Allio, developed the project between 1989 and 1994. As an example of the typical architecture typology of the museums of the 19th century, a combination of metal structure and glass, the gallery consists of a huge central space surrounded by balconies on the different floors. The exhibition design has a very strict narrative structure and, as it was specifically requested by the panel in 1987, it is divided in four acts that celebrate the biological diversity of animals, the explanation of the beginnings of life, the theories of evolution and the relationships between nature and human beings (Bezombes 1994, 120). The central space, with its spectacular installation of a long line of wild savannah animals, attracts the visitor's attention from every floor of the museum. The atrium transforms into a real theatre occupied by the enormous scenography. The

exhibition design is hybridised by the use of scenographical effects and devices aimed at stimulating visitors' emotions and sensations. The atrium can be thus interpreted as a narrative and experiential environment, which creates empathy with the visitor, even if it still remains a static and frontal form of confrontation with the exhibits.

A more active role for visitors began to be part of the designing approach of these museums with the introduction of a new typology known as science centres. Here the visitors are asked to move, touch, and test objects and devices, and their sense of wonder turns into a sense of discovery. These interactive environments stimulate and experiment with those skills that, as described earlier, are required in a performing approach to design. The very first example of a science centre is the Exploratorium that the physicist Frank Oppenheimer wanted to build in San Francisco in 1969 as "a place for curiosity, as a forest of natural phenomena through which to get lost," as a "library of experiments" (Basso Peressut 1998, 95–137). The dominant aesthetic of these centres is one of a laboratory for experiments, rough and chaotic, where visitors can spend time, more as in a public square than in a public museum. The informal atmosphere of the space stimulates visitors to participate and interact with the exhibits. This atmosphere was successfully created at the beginning of the 1990s in the Museo de la Ciencia y el Cosmos, which was built in Tenerife from 1989 to 1993. According to the plan of the architects Jordi Garcés and Enric Soria, the space is designed as an urban open square where exhibits are divided into thematic islands similar to market tables, divided by the topic areas, "The Sun and the Earth," "The Universe," "The Human Body" and "How Does It Work?."

Science centres seek to recreate the informality of the urban context. Their architecture is characterised by large empty spaces, occupied by areas for activities through which visitors can move freely, interacting with the different devices. The presence of machines and technological devices is what creates the difference of what we might call interactivity rather than performativity of an environment – performance does not necessarily require a technological device. The learning process the science centres are working on is based on the direct experience the visitor can have of the content and it often uses games and play as the method of involving them in the experience. This approach makes these centres easily targeted at children. The learning experience they can have is direct and physical, but it is also always filtered by devices. The potentialities of these learning process based on the latest cognitive educational theories are studied and investigated by the association, *Hands on!* (International Association of

Children's Museums), which began in Europe in 1994 aiming to create a network of European institutions for children.⁵

Children's method of learning by experience is the focus of the exhibition design by the group Imagination entitled *Our Global Garden* inside Eureka!, the Museum for Children in Halifax, designed in 2002 by the architect Eric McMillan. The main topic on display is natural environments, which are explained from a geographical, cultural and climatic point of view. The layout is divided into seven thematic "gardens" that develop on two floors. Children can move freely from one area to the another where interactive furniture, movable walls, colourful floors and technological devices attract and hold their attention. As an example, in the "Ice Garden," they can build small igloos or they can draw different shapes of snow crystals on special tables using the *frottage* technique. The design of each garden includes sounds and projections. The exhibition design is oriented to the sensorial stimulation and the physicality of experience. The potentialities of this performing strategy are strengthened when the experience is collective, overcoming the one-way relation between man and a single machine.

Stemming from this analysis, it is clear how the performing strategy in the case of museums of science becomes an interactive strategy, which is based on the importance of gesture and body in the process of learning as unconscious tools of exploration of content, which is always filtered by the presence of an object or a device. These elements become the object to design and to deal with in the architectural project of the exhibition layout. In science centres, technology has an essential role, and its complexity and overall presence has increased rapidly in the last decades, leading to the design of immersive and sometimes completely virtual experiences. This is the direction that the English designer Casson Mann is exploring in his projects. An example is the spectacular and technological exhibition design that ran from 2000 to 2006 in the Science Museum's *Welcome Wing* in the London Science Museum, dedicated to the future of digital technology.

Museums of Art

Till the end of the 19th century, museums were expressions of the principles of classical architecture, without any strict relation with the artistic languages that were exhibited. The beginning of conceptual art in the 20th century undermined this unwritten rule, leading to experimentations of a more direct dialogue between art and architecture. The pilot exhibition

5 - On the website of the association *Hands On! International Association of Children's Museums* it is possible to gather more information and to check the list of museums that are part of the network. [<http://www.hands-on-international.net/home.asp?p=1-0>].

design projects of El Lissitzky and Frederick Kiesler in the first half of the 20th century are examples of this renewed field of research. From that moment the relation between art and architecture in the museum space has been the object of continual investigation. As previously mentioned, in the second half of the 20th century the requirements of the new artistic languages also had to be combined with the firm social responsibility that museums were charged with with respect to the their enlarged and diversified publics.

The Pompidou Centre designed by the young architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, and opened in 1977 in Paris, can be considered a symbol of that moment of economic, social and cultural transition. The mission of the institution was to become a democratic and open space for dialoguing, fostering the on-going social demonstrations that required widespread accessibility of culture. Beyond the criticised functionality of its spaces, which were contested for not being able to host traditional works of art, the Pompidou Centre broke the legacy with tradition, adopting multiple perspectives on the contents exhibited and was willing to become an urban public space.

While the Pompidou embodied the debates regarding the social and cultural role of public institutions with respect to a changing society, Tate Museum director Nicholas Serota describes critically the dilemma of art museums of the even faster developments of contemporary art practices. In his book *Interpretation or Experience* (1996), he compares two museum projects as examples of two different trends – the plan of the Tate Gallery in London of 1979 and the plan of the Dia:Beacon Foundation (2003). The first is designed as *en enfilade* of rooms while the second is a designed map of interconnected spaces. The first responds to the need to classify and lead the exhibition according to a linear and chronological way of ordering, while the second offers a variety of different spaces designed according to the specific needs of the artists on show (for example Richard Serra, Sol LeWitt, Fred Sandback or Donald Judd), who claimed it for their autonomous spaces. The artists were involved directly in the designing process of the museums, which was developed by the architectural office Open Office together with the artist Robert Irwin. This collaboration between the two disciplines led to a rhythmical composition of the exhibition spaces, which are separate enough to give autonomy to the single art installations, but which are also fluid enough to generate perceptibly different connections and confrontations between the different works. Serota wrote his book in 1996, at a time when contemporary art was asking architecture to adapt its spaces to host big installations and sculptural pieces. This challenge between art

and architecture continued with the evolution of new technological and performing languages in the art making processes. As it has always been, art embodies the socio-cultural transformations of the society, that today is nomad and multicultural.

Currently, many artists are re-discovering techniques and languages typical of those artistic practices that first became popular in the 60s and 70s with the epicentre in New York and which are grouped under the wide definition of “Performance Art” (Goldberg 1979). Body Art, Performance, Dance, Happenings, Video Art and Video Installation are only a few of the wide range of forms that this art can assume (Vergine 2000). The rapid diffusion of media and devices has led, on one hand, to the dematerialisation of art, as for example the Electromedia of Aldo Tambellini to the video installation of Bill Viola. On the other hand, it has led to the rediscovery of the physicality of the body and of its social value, as it occurred in the urban performances of Trisha Brown, or in the radical happenings of the Living Theatre. Body, music, time, sensations, are the materials of their artworks. The first artist who transformed the exhibition space into a space for actions in this way was Robert Morris at the Tate Gallery in London in 1971. His installation *Bodyspacemotionthings* occupied one of the museum’s galleries with large objects such as cylinders and platforms, creating a path that the visitor-performer-dancer was asked to explore with their own body. The decision of the gallery to close the installation four days after the opening for security reasons proved the success of the artist’s intentions (Rosenthal 2010, 12–14).

Many artists also invaded urban spaces and drew attention to details of everyday life and facts, which became the material of the artworks themselves. Such practices, along with experimentation on sensorial languages, on the body, gestures and the new media, have asserted a social and political value of making art which is strictly linked to contemporary cultural transformations, calling into question the museum space and even its role. Blurring the boundaries between the conventional spaces for art and urban dimension, contemporary artistic practices such as Relational Art (Bourriaud 1998) and “new genre public art” (Lacy 2005) find in “performance” a powerful medium through which to activate the processes of social engagement and participation. Thanks to the adoption of such language, questions of gender, race and migration – which have long been excluded from institutional circuits – are allowed to enter the museum spaces.

Imagining different solutions and possibilities to host these new forms of art, where performing language has a central role, is still an open challenge for contemporary art museums. Therefore, what are the spaces that such

renewed artistic performing practices require in the museum? How do they challenge not only the museum's programmes, but also its spatial configuration? How is the museum architecture influenced by these fluid dynamics that cross its urban fabric?

The rediscovery of the provocative potentialities of performing language in the arts is confirmed by the many exhibitions and events dedicated to it that have taken place during this last year. In the United States, the latest Biennial exhibition of the Whitney Museum in New York devoted much space to performers in 2012, the Dia:Beacon Riggio Galleries in Beacon has inaugurated a programme of performances by contemporary American choreographers, among whom Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Rainer. In the winter of 2011, PS1, the MoMA extension located in Queens, New York, opened the "Performance Dome" in the courtyard in front of the building. In spring 2012, after the successful personal exhibition *The Artist is Present* held at the MoMA in New York in 2010, Marina Abramovich, who is widely considered to be an icon of performance art, announced her decision to commission the Dutch design studio OMA for the conversion of a former cinema in New York into the first museum, or rather, Institution, where she will preserve, create and represent her art. Similarly, in a European context, many museums are currently widening their premises with the purpose of giving room to such artistic practices. This is the case, for example, of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, of the Tate Modern in London, as well as the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the new Centre for Contemporary Creation, which opens in Córdoba in early 2013.

The Palais de Tokyo in Paris is pursuing the aim of being a space of confrontation and dialogue. The building was built in 1937 for the Paris Art and Technology World Expo and it was later used as the Centre National de la Photographie and the Palais du Cinema. Today it has been turned into a "district for contemporary creation." When the Palais was opened in 2002, it already presented itself as an anti-museum, a "laboratory of experiences," where the participation and involvement of the public were the basis of the "relational art" exhibitions organised by the young curators Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans (Nicolin 2006, 1–3). In April 2012 the Palais de Tokyo opened another area of 14.000 square metres to the public, as was planned in the second phase of the project by the studio of architects Lacaton & Vassal. In a labyrinth of fluid spaces, where small and cosy rooms alternate with large ones, the prevailing aesthetic is "the un-finished." The designers have intervened in the space by subtraction, leaving visible the traces of its various uses over time and removing only what impeded its public fruition. This way, a dimensional alternation of

the spaces has been enhanced, where the *empty* space, the space where the actions will take place, is an integral part of the logic that is implied in the project. Light partitions in metallic or polycarbonate grids and movable furniture allow the exhibition layout to be easily reconfigured in a Piranesian labyrinth with a strong urban character. The third edition of the programme *La Triennale*, entitled *Intense Proximité*, which inaugurated the extension of the Palais in April 2012, gave large space also to the performing arts, with a view of creating a wide array of events, which are continually on-going and changing, on the four floors of the building.

A similar experimentation with new spaces for performing events and strategy has been carried out recently by the Tate Modern in London. In July 2012, the Gallery inaugurated the Tanks, the first space to be exclusively dedicated to performing arts in a museum at the international level. The conversion of the tanks, former hypogeal containers that used to hold oil for the Bankside Power Station turbines, is part of the wider project of the museum by the studio Herzog & de Meuron. The tanks are three circular spaces with a diameter of 30 metres and a height of 7 metres, to which it is possible to directly access from the Turbine Hall. Next to the *Collection* room, where works belonging to the museum collection are exhibited, it is possible to get to two of the three former tanks: the *Commission* space, which houses site-specific installations, and the *Live* space, which houses alternating events, installations, and performances. This space, in particular, has been the heart of the *Art in Action* Festival, curated by Catherine Wood, Kathy Noble and Stuart Corner, which inaugurated the tanks in July 2012. The festival revolved around an experimental programme of events, with the aim of offering to the visitors a space of dialogue and discussion, questioning the role of the museum today, as stated by the Tate Modern's director (Grant and Danby 2012). Before being an architectonic space, the Tanks aim at being a social space. Chris Dercon, in the *Open Manifesto* published in the programme of the festival, states:

(the Tanks) provide an entirely new space for Tate Modern, and for museums internationally ... They challenge many aspect of what has been important to museums – their collection and modes of display and archive – and ask vital new questions of what is to be a museum in the twenty-first century ... A further question that the Tanks bring to the forefront of discussion for museums is the changing role of the audience at a moment dominated by social media and new modes of broadcast. We can think of the museum in the twenty-first century as a new kind of mass medium. Many of the works presented in the Tanks address their audience directly, emphasising the visitor's

own physical presence, whether that be by being part of a crowd surrounded a performer, becoming part of a conversation, or walking through and around an immersive installation. (Grant and Danby 2012, 2)

The programme of the festival included a video installation, with the artwork of the Korean artist Sung Hwan Kim, light and sound installation, with the work of Lis Rhodes and Anthony McCall, and a performance of contemporary dance choreographers, with the “live projects” of Teresa de Keersmaecker. Therefore, the performing languages of these artists have found in the evocative architecture of the Tanks, where the traces of history are visible on the ageing walls and in the intense smell of oil, a powerful ally in triggering the intellectual and emotional involvement of the visitors. The interventions of the architects on the space have emphasised its theatrical character, simply replacing the old floor with a smooth, concrete one, underlying the centre of the space with new pillars and introducing the necessary equipment to ensure its potential and fast transformation. The titles of the works are projected onto the walls, while the captions with the explanations of the projects are simply written on paper attached to the rough walls, as if they were advertising billboards. One of the walls in the entrance hall is used as a big blackboard, where visitors are invited to write comments on their experience in the space, answering the questions projected onto the wall. The Tanks represent the challenge of the museums to open a specific space for performing practices, giving them room inside the museum, but aiming to make the room a open window to the world outside the museum.

Common architectonic themes can be found in the two cases described, as they unveil a hybridisation between designing processes in art and architecture. In both cases there emerges a clear need for flexible spaces in order to guarantee quick and continuous transformation. This leads to the integration of technological equipment in the ceilings or in the wall structure. In these new spaces, which are deliberately left rough and unfinished, the *void* plays a crucial role. These new areas are activated through actions and then left void again. With its ephemeral nature, performance introduces a rhythm in both museum space and time. The architectonic language emphasises the primary elements of the space – the floors, the walls, and the ceilings. In designing these additions, the architects focused on the surface geometry and their treatment, leaving visible the traces of previous use of space. Over these permanent and pre-existing layers, the exhibition design is composed of flexible and removable

furniture that, like a scenography, supports the gestures of both the artist and the visitor.

The Tanks and the Palais are examples of projects which reuse existing architectures. However, the same strategies, once again stimulated by the need to give room to artistic performing practices, also lie at the basis of the brand new project by architects Nieto & Sobejano for the new Espacio Andaluz de Creaciòn Contemporanea, which will open in Cordoba in 2013. Here again, the design of the space has to support the simultaneity of the production and the fruition of the works of art. The plan of the building is constructed from hexagonal rooms, which can be connected to create different paths. These rooms are covered with concrete panels and zenithally lit. The idea underlying the project is of the “urban bazaar,” as a place of encounter and exchange. It is interesting to note how both the Palais de Tokyo and the Espacio Andaluz de Creaciòn Contemporanea define themselves not as museums, but as “centres for the production of contemporary art and culture.”

Museums in transformation and possible research fields

The deep economic and social transformations that began in the 1980s were the premises of the evolution of a nomad society in the contemporary “age of migrations” (Basso Peressut and Pozzi 2012) in which we live and, as it has always been in history, they have a profound impact on the structure of museums. Today, museums are asked to react to this uncertain scenario, again casting doubt on their configurations and communication strategies toward their new publics. The spread of mass tourism, the multicultural stratification of society and the strong impact of technology on our everyday lives have dramatically changed the concept, and the sense itself, of communicating.

The essay started with the analysis of the primary elements and the meanings that charged the museums with the responsibility of also being a communication medium. Breaking down the structure of the knowledge-sharing processes to the essential confrontation of an object and a subject in a specific space is seen as a possible approach to imagining new formulas and new configurations. The essay analysed the open challenges museums face today. That of answering the need for accessibility of culture and fostering learning processes based on participation and confrontation. The essay has investigated the merging of a “performing model” as a possible answer to these renovated needs. A shift is required from frontal contemplation toward actions, including movement and time as essential elements in the design of museum environments. Visitors acquire an active role in the development of the narration.

The revaluation of the performing language in museum narrations and spaces is a reality. As described, the debate around this complex phenomenon has widened in recent years. The theories of Valery Casey or David Dernie regarding this emergent paradigm also highlights the complexity of such a language, which has always had an instrumental nature with respect to the meaning of the action and the content that is conveyed. Alongside its potentialities, the performance can be seen as a different and powerful form of control on narration, a sort of “direction” performed by a unique author, which runs the risk of becoming a pure form of entertainment or manipulation. In Museums of History and Museums of Science this strategy was already used in the 1950s, but the control of the institution on the development of the narration has usually been strong. In the specific case of Art Museums, art itself experiences the potentialities of such a language, investigating the social and cultural role of a public institution and experimenting with the potentials of body as a universal tool of memory stimulation.

The emphasis on the physicality of experience is certainly one of the reasons for the rapid success of this strategy. Performance addresses the visitors directly, making their experience of the content with which they interact more personal. In this sense, it could be said that the use of performing language transformed museums into being places for experience, overcoming cultural and linguistic differences. Museums, as strong points of reference in the networks and flows of information, ideas and people, have today a key role as public spaces for socialisation beyond their more traditional cultural mission. Performing language has the potential to generate a displacement effect, able to stimulate the critical awareness of visitors, leading them to question more deeply the reality of the content they see. In this way, museums experiment with more open forms of narration, leaving space for diverse and changing interpretations. However, a second reason for the success of such a strategy is definitely linked to the entertainment effect it generates. The spectacular effect of performance can easily be exploited for economic or commercial purposes. The challenge is to overcome the pure scenic effect and to understand the deep structural changes in the system of relations that this language can produce.

Beyond these more general considerations, these potentialities acquire different characteristics according to the collection and the content with which museums have to deal – more ephemeral, many times in the case of art, more tactile in the case of history and more interactive in the case of science. The essay attempted to investigate the possible architectonic consequences of the adoption of performing language in the process of

narration making. For museums of history, exhibition design becomes real scenography that tightly guides the visitor through re-enactments of the historical events. In the museums of science, the configuration of the space is designed as a territory to discover, where the furniture is often different varieties of technological devices. Museums of art have recently been adding new spaces for performing arts, which actually raise questions and invade the overall space structure of the museums.

The case of art museums reveals further interesting fields of research. The risky choice to modify their architecture, adding new spaces that work as laboratory for live events, as well as workshops and public seminars, becomes a new architectonic issue on one hand, as well as embodying a very strong social and cultural impact on the other. These spaces for performance seem to make the physical and cultural structure of the museum more porous and uncertain. Entire new rooms or a gallery, in the case of the Tate Tanks or the Palais de Tokyo, or even a completely new building, in the case of the Espacio Andaluz de Creation Contemporanea, are being designed and tested by many European institutions.

The architecture of these new spaces is a clear hybridisation between the typology of the museum with the one of experimental theatre. The two disciplines share the common goal of designing places for further actions and critical debate. Architecture does not serve as a functionalistic approach but it is asked to create conditions for different and possible uses of the space. These new museum interiors become more similar to urban public spaces with a strong informal character. The projects analysed in the essay are very recent, thus the debate on their effectiveness and their real potentialities is at the centre of on-going debates and discussion. What can the role be of architecture in activating these dynamics? How is the museum architecture influenced by these fluid dynamics that cross its urban fabric? What are the consequences of the hybridisation between theatres and museums? Is it possible to take stimuli from such recent experimentations in art museums, their programmes and their new spatial character and apply them to other typologies of museums, searching for different confrontations with visitors?

All these are currently open questions for investigation. If we are living a real “performative shift,” defining new roles for cultural institutions and, more generally, for public spaces as Pedro Gadinho suggests, then museum practices and architectures are certainly a hugely interesting field for further research. While questioning the emergence of this phenomenon, one project easily comes to mind – the provocative design of the experimental theatre Teatro Oficina, designed by the architect Lina

Bo Bardi in Sao Paolo in 1990, an interior space whose architecture and mission were strongly projected toward the urban context in which it is placed.

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Representing Supranational Identity in Jewish Museums

Stephanie Carminati

All people have culture but only some aspects of culture become the focus of heritage symposia. What ... sets them apart ... is the recognition that they are different. (Wobst 2010, 100)

The nation-state, generally characterised by an official and nationwide main identity, has been challenged by the ever-growing self-awareness of transnational, local and personal identities (Graham and Howard 2008, 8). Indeed, among the main developments of globalisation is an increasing interest in those identities once denied by the great national narratives. Excluding the more recently established countries, which have followed a path of a unique and univocal identity, the last twenty years have seen the emergence of new museums which focus on a more local, community or ethnic narrative: “cultural identity is one of the basic factors of national identity within a nation and, at the same time, a factor of universalisation, because relevant cultural areas are not always identical with national territories” (Marcoevi’s 1996, 31).

Because of the essential role played since their establishment in the definition and promotion of identity, museums are now more than ever the place in which to observe and examine on-going changes and claims (Macdonald 2003, 6). By being globally widespread and having closely followed the development processes undergone by museums in the last decades – from the need to strengthen the sense of *nation* and community in the aftermath of the tragic events of the Second World War to the recent years’ extension of their vocation to a more universal dimension (Swartz 2007, 5) –, Jewish museums provide an interesting and valuable example of the communication and exhibition strategies that can be put

in place in order to communicate its own culture and history from a personal point of view.

Being the other

Benedict Anderson defines nation as “an imagined political community” (Anderson 2006), as individuals belonging to such communities, however small they may be, will never know all the other members with whom they think – or imagine, to be more precise – they share the collective categories that define the very identity of communities. Therefore, it is not so much the place but rather the sense of belonging and sharing of several kinds – social networks, shared characteristics, common history, religion, work, customs, etc. – that generates communities: “through ‘identity,’ people define themselves as belonging to a specific group and, at the same time, they redefine and reshape the way that they want to be perceived by other groups” (Catalani 2010, 242). Thus, identity becomes a personal reconfirmation and assertiveness mechanism (“*mécanisme de réassurance à ses propres yeux et d’affirmation de soi au regard des autres*,” Chaumier 2005, 36), defining boundaries that are social, timely, temporary, and mythical constructions, providing individual and social benchmarks (“*limites qui sont autant de constructions sociales, ponctuelles, passagères, mythiques, mais qui fournissent des repères individuels et sociaux*”). The very concept of community defines boundaries that have to be recognised by both its members and non-members. Those who are part of it enjoy some degree of protection, while those who are excluded feel apprehension (Croke 2006, 173). As pointed out, moreover, by Philip Hammond, “identity is always unstable, fragmented and contingent, since it is dependent on the exclusion of that which is ‘Other’” (Hammond 2007, 3).

In her essay *Making and Remaking National Identity*, Flora E.S. Kaplan identifies three main aspects according to which identities are defined: ethnicity, religion – which can be both a cultural attribute of ethnicity itself and an independent attribute of identity (2006, 158) – and ideology. The first is certainly the feature that has mostly interested museums throughout the years. According to Kaplan, ethnicity has as its main quality “the accessibility and ready acceptance of the idea by diverse groups of self-definition usually associated with cultural behaviours, for example, language, custom, belief, history, dress, and material culture” (2006, 153). These are, moreover, often linked to an idea of a common ancestry – Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin warn us of the danger of a racist deviation that is too often hidden in such claims of common genealogical origin – or to a shared bond with a particular place that might have nothing in common with the geographical boundaries of the state to which one

belongs from an “administrative” point of view (Littler 2008, 90; Boyarin and Boyarin 1993, 693).

Victoria Dickenson, director of the McCord Museum in Montreal, further examines the very concept of ethnicity, making the complexity of the topic even more obvious, by stating that it “can be examined in a social sense, where it can be equated with a *sentiment d’appartenance*, a feeling of belonging ... in an anthropological sense, in that it is determined by specific descent from a particular genetically linked population” or “be equated with religious or racial grouping” (Dickenson 2006, 23–24).

As stated by Khachig Tötölyan, “diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment,” as “the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain” (1991, 4–5). As noted above, identity and sense of belonging are not strictly related to the places defined by the administrative boundaries of nation-states. As a result, being in a particular place does not restrain individuals from bringing back their own sense of identity elsewhere (Graham and Howard 2008, 8), especially since “displacement, movement and separation of people seem to be among the most prominent features of human existence” (Buciek and Juul 2008, 105). However, what makes it different from the straightforward migration that we all know? Firstly, “diaspora is a collective experience” (Chiang 2010, 36), unlike immigration which has a far more individual dimension. Furthermore, the integration of immigrants into the national narrative can somehow be easier (Clifford 1997, 250) and their future return to the motherland is, in any case, a likely and not so distant outcome. Diaspora implies quite a distance in time and space from the centre of reference, a degree of separation that, to some extent, makes it similar to exile, where the possible return is seen as far removed in time (Clifford 1997, 246).

Anthropologist Whitney Battle-Baptiste, who made African diaspora her specialisation, observes that the diaspora can be “a state of mind, a frame of reference” (2010, 26).

William Safran, in his essay “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” published in 1991 in the first issue of *Diaspora*, identifies diasporas as communities of expatriated minorities, which are detached from their place of origin in at least two peripheral locations, while keeping a common memory, vision and myth of their own native land. Generally, these communities feel they cannot be fully accepted into the host country and aspire to a possible return, albeit in the far future. Moreover, they show a particular penchant for the preservation or restoration of what is seen as their homeland, as well as a conscience and a sense of brotherhood, arising from this shared connection to their origins.

Thus, “diaspora does not only signify transnational movements but also embodies political significance – that is, the political struggle to define a distinctive community in historical contexts” (Chiang 2010, 38). For Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, in the text *Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity* (1993), it implies a renunciation of the principles of universalism and sovereignty. For diasporas, exile persists in coexistence, keeping the distinction as a nation in the daily exchange with the others. “Diasporas also connect multiple communities of a dispersed population” (Clifford 1997, 246), communities that are established from loss, yet working to maintain their own identity, selectively preserving their traditions, adapting and translating them according to the historical and social contexts within which they interact in continual mediation between the here and the wish for another place.

By rephrasing Paul Gilroy in his article “It ain’t where you’re from, it’s where you’re at...: The Dialectics of Diasporic Identification” (1991), Chih-Yun Chiang emphasises how “the appropriate question of diaspora identity is to ask not ‘Where are you from?’ but rather, ‘Where are you at?’” (2010, 39).

Bruno Zevi identifies the development of three distinct currents in contemporary Judaism. The first, that of the Hasidim, is marked by mysticism. The second, the Israeli, is defined as more pragmatic and deeply tied to the construction of the State of Israel. Finally, the third, is that of the European and American diaspora, problematic and intellectualist (“*quella della diaspora europea e americana, problematica, intellettualistica*,” Zevi 1993, 68–69), of those who chose to stay in the diaspora, who profoundly believe that it is absolutely necessary in the definition of their very identity.

Defined by Safran (1991, 84) as the “ideal type” of diaspora,¹ the Jewish one, which began with the second destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem perpetrated by the Romans in 70 AD, is still on-going. This is a particularly instructive element, especially when considering the existence, since 1948, of the nation-state of Israel. Along with the culture, the displacement,

1 - James Clifford (1997, 248) remarks on the rather questionable nature of the very existence of a Diaspora that meets all the distinguishing points previously identified by Safran. In particular, he highlights how some of these points – “they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return...; they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original land” (Safran 1991, 83–84) – are not properly detectable in the Jewish one, or, at least, not for a large part of its history. In fact, the return to the land of Israel, a homeland that did not exist as a country until 1948, was perceived in its eschatological dimension and not as a concrete prospect, since this would have been possible only in the advent of the coming of the Messiah.

which lasted for centuries, is among the cornerstones of Jewish identity. Moreover, one cannot ignore that most of the history of the Hebrew people is marked by their wanderings. Nomadic since the very beginning, with the patriarch Abraham himself having had to leave his land, it is only around 1.000 BC, with the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel, that the Jewish people truly settle down for first time. The first exile, following the first destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BC, ends abruptly this first historical period. A second phase, as settlers, although slighter than before, occurs between the late sixth century BC and the aforementioned 70 AD.

It can be noted that the first diasporic communities date back to the first Babylonian exile. Attracted by the wealth and intense activity of major cities of the time, the dispersion is at first due to the will of some to settle elsewhere. As early as the fourth century BC, small Jewish communities are scattered along the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Caspian Seas, up to the western shores of India. Contacts with Jerusalem, at first recurrent, continue until the fifth century, though increasingly fading due to the vicissitudes of history involving the Middle Eastern area. By defining the diaspora as a “cultural practice” and calling its being forced a “myth,” Daniel Boyarin highlights how “at the time of the destruction of the Temple, more Jews already lived abroad than ‘at home’” (Boyarin 1994, 3).

The very fact that the Jewish liturgical calendar, a key element in handing down and preserving the community’s history and memory, only recalls the destruction of the Temple – and, therefore, the beginning of exile and diaspora – but not the entrance to the Promised Land, is quite significant. Moreover, Jonathan Boyarin (quoted in Clifford 1997, 248) confirms how the wandering is an important and unavoidable aspect of the Hebrew historic identity consisting of “multiple experiences of rediasporisation, which do not necessarily *succeed* each other in historical memory but echo back and forth.”²

The Boyarins arrive at the denunciation of how Israel’s Zionism and its increasingly widespread rejection of the diasporic experience may be the subversion of Judaism itself – or at least of the historical rabbinic version, for which the return to Eretz Yisrael has always been linked to the future messianic age (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993, 719; Safran 1991,

2 - Statement in a personal communication to James Clifford in reference to the second loss of homeland endured by the Sephardi Jews of Spain with the 1492 expulsion. A similar thing could be said for those who, in the last century, were first forced to leave their homes, then gathered into ghettos and finally eradicated from the land where they had lived for centuries.

91). A similar concern prompted Nahum Goldmann – a firm supporter of early Zionism, yet conscious of the fact that in the diaspora, for as much as it may look paradoxical, the specific character of their history is expressed (*“per quanto sembri paradossale, si esprime il carattere specifico della nostra storia,”* quoted in Zevi 1993, 13) – to establish in Tel Aviv, in 1978, the Beit Hatfutsot, a museum that focuses on the diaspora and its role in Jewish history, in the attempt to reconcile the Israelis with a past they too often rejected.

“Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another,” since it has been, and for some still is, impossible to relate the Hebrew culture to one particular place nor to see it “as a self-enclosed, bounded phenomenon” (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993, 721).

Exhibiting the community identity

In the contemporary socio-economic setting, multiculturalism is often presented as a rather recent phenomenon. Actually, our societies have always been constituted by many different cultures, each of which has substantially contributed to the main economic and cultural development, yet without ever being truly acknowledged in the grand narrative of the nation-state. Even the attempt of the past few decades to increase awareness of this presence, eventually terminated with the use of such terms as “new” and “other,” which succeeds only to distance and not assist in the development of a real sense of common belonging. Referring to this overall superficiality with which this issue is being addressed, Jo Littler speaks of “multicultural tokenism” (2008, 94–95).

The museum, the place par excellence of the national narrative, has always played a key role in defining and disseminating the very idea of identity. According to Chaumier (2005, 22), at each stage of its history, the museum, mainly the ethnographical one, will be tied to the concern for self-presentation, proceeding by “identity strategies,” that is to say that it is involved in the identity building process, not without ideological content and political consequences (*“à chaque étape de son histoire, le musée, notamment d’ethnographie, sera lié au souci de présentation de soi, qui procède de ‘stratégies identitaires’ ... c’est-à-dire qui participe de processus de construction de l’identité, non sans contenus idéologiques et sans conséquences politiques”*).

James E. Young points out that “depending on where these museums are built, and by whom, they remember the past according to a variety of national myths, ideals, and political needs” (2004, 42). Thus the issue of who created this memory and for whom they did it is not a minor one, as “to control a museum means precisely to control the representation

of a community and its highest values and truths” (Halpin 1997, 52). Fiona McLean, beginning from the process of encoding and decoding, as theorised by Stuart Hall, identifies three levels in the negotiation of identity representation in museums (2008, 283–296). A first level, perhaps the most critical one since it has not yet been fully addressed, is the one of the identity of those *who encode* the museum representations. Every decision made about an exhibition display is a choice regarding the representation of the other, which has consequences on which meanings are produced and disseminated: “exhibitions ... contain spatial cues, deploy spatial strategies that, while unable to guarantee a given, preordained response in all visitors, can nonetheless privilege certain readings” (Sandell 2009, 186). The second level identified by McLean contains the identity of those *who decode* the messages, namely that of the museum public. It must be considered that visitors “interpret museum exhibits through their prior experiences, culturally learned beliefs, values and perceptual skills, as well as membership in multiple communities” (Karp and Lavine 1993, 79), and that “people from outside the cultures concerned may not be able to read the exhibits adequately” (Smith 2005, 431). Finally, there is a third level, the subject of the negotiation itself. It is that of the identity of those *who are represented*. Moreover, it is from the subjects involved in this negotiation that comes the strongest demand for change. Communities are increasingly asking for the right to speak for themselves and to control the representation of their own culture (Lagerkvist 2006, 54). Indeed, it should be borne in mind that “what an academically trained curator values may not be what the member of the cultural group or even of the larger society might value” (Dickenson 2006, 27). In order to solve these differences, communities struggle with the establishment and management of their own museums and archives, while curatorial teams of the museums are increasingly requesting the assistance of representatives of the displayed cultures in order to guarantee greater accuracy in the interpretation of their heritage (Bodo 2007, 3).

Although the new post-colonial museology increasingly deals with this sensitive issue, “Western institutions continue to maintain borders and to privilege particular ways of knowing. Consciously or not, those who staff museums and galleries have been trained and socialised to think and know in those ways ... Encounters between museum professionals and external individuals, particularly those from Diaspora communities, still bear traces of coloniser meeting colonised” (Lynch and Alberti 2010, 14). These very traces bring James Clifford to define museums – admittedly borrowing the term from Marie Louise Pratt – as *contact zones* (1997, 188–219), as places in which historically and geographically distant people

interact in a way that usually involves conflict and inequality. This very concept is furthermore highlighted by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett when she affirms that “museums are an arena for the performance and contestation of cultural citizenship” (2006, 376). In particular, professor Kirshenblatt-Gimblett focuses on the on-going transformations that involve contemporary museums, identifying four main strategies. The first deals with the progressive “reclassification what were formerly ethnographic objects as art” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006, 363), as perfectly represented in the Quai Branly museum in Paris. Objects that were once considered *artefacts*, valuable only from an anthropological point of view, are now seen as *art* and, as such, exhibited. The second strategy is “to extend ethnography to everyone, including oneself” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006, 364). That is, for instance, the idea that led to the *musée de société*. The third is “the heritage approach, which respects or even insists upon the relationship of the museum to those who claim the objects as their patrimony” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006, 364), as in the case of the National Museum of American History in Washington. The fourth, and final, strategy affects “museums that engage with their own pasts,” involving their historical collections in a critical self-examination.

The material representation of culture has always played a key role in legitimising identities. This is why the establishment of its own museum has often been seen by different communities as a vital factor in order to acquire greater visibility and authority (Kaplan 2006, 153–154): “members of ethnic groups may see a museum as a place to preserve and present their own material culture as defined by the community itself, a space in which to tell the story that the community sanctions” (Dickenson 2006, 27), contributing to the strengthening of the bonds with the places and the history shared within a community (Catalani 2010, 236).

The mission of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington – which ambitiously aims to contribute to the diffusion of knowledge, of a greater understanding of native cultures and “to protect, support, and enhance the development, maintenance, and perpetuation of Native culture and community” (Smith 2005, 425) – more than adequately illustrates how the museum can become a lively place, be fully active in the quest for mutual understanding, and essential to the elimination of stereotypes and prejudices. For this to occur, we must once again wonder at whom the exhibit is addressed, keeping in mind that, as pointed out by Kaplan, “the answers may yet raise more questions, and offer greater opportunity for appropriation and manipulation of objects and images for betterment or worsening of human relations around the world” (Kaplan 2006, 168). Whilst it is true that, on the one hand, the museum can go

beyond being a simple exhibition space or object repository, becoming a place of understanding and reconciliation, on the other hand it can also feed controversies and thus become what David Dean – exacerbating the concept of friction, intrinsic in the contact zone concept expressed by James Clifford – defines as *conflict zones* (Dean 2009, 1).

Rhoda Rosen, former director of the Spertus Museum in Chicago, stated in 2007 that the actual permeability of the very concept of identity implies that a museum that commits to being a representative of a culture should, above all, reflect and project other cultures on its own process of cultural definition (Swartz 2007, 11). Thus, “only a joint narrative of the hosting society and of the hosted group can provide a homogenous and complete perspective on a shared heritage and unravel the often forgotten stories and memories” (Catalani 2010, 244), in a delicate balance between a global perspective and the retention of their own local and individual vocation (Swartz 2007, 15).

Representing its own culture and memory

Can we speak of a Jewish architecture? Should the answer be yes, is it appropriate to do so only with regard to buildings especially made for the communities, or is the definition extendable to any work designed by a Jewish architect?

One cannot but consider the particular history of wandering of the Jewish people when addressing the question of whether a specific form of Jewish architectural identity exists or not. Bruno Zevi (1993, 10), in his speech at the congress of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities in 1974, highlighted how Judaism is in no way attributable to a conception of space (“*l’ebraismo da nessun punto di vista è riconducibile ad una concezione spaziale*”). Even Peter Eisenman, one of the most renowned architects of recent decades, affirms, leaving little doubt, “I do not think that there is any such thing as Jewish architecture or Jewish identity in architecture” (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 8). Looking at ancient Jewish history, a particular architectural language does not seem to be detectable. This is certainly due to the wandering nature of the Jewish people – settling being a basic requirement in building –, but also to a thought that refuses to stand still and mostly focuses on a spirituality that is more related to time than space.³

3 - The Jewish concept of time is neither exactly cyclical nor linear. The year is punctuated with specific rituals that do not affect the uniqueness of each moment. “The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals; and our Holy of Holies is a shrine that neither the Romans nor the Germans were able to burn; a shrine that even apostasy cannot easily obliterate: the Day of Atonement” (Heschel 1994, 8).

Zevi observes (1993, 13) that Judaism, in any artistic field, has always opposed three concepts: a) classicism, b) the Enlightenment, c) analytic cubism (*“tre concezioni: a) al classicismo, b) all’illuminismo, c) al cubismo analitico”*), all of which are guilty, to varying degrees, of having created and blindly followed ideological “golden calves.” Relying on the thought of Thorlief Boman,⁴ the Italian critic highlights how the concept of space implicit in Jewish culture is intimately linked to the use that is made of it. This cannot, therefore, generate other than

an organic architecture, living, modulated according to the needs of users, able to grow and develop, free from any formalistic taboo, from symmetry, from alignments, from the relationship between solids and voids, from the rules of perspective; in short, an architecture whose only law and whose only order are that of the change. (*Un’architettura organica, vivente, modulata secondo le esigenze degli utenti, capace di crescere e svilupparsi, libera da ogni tabù formalistico, dalla simmetria, dagli allineamenti, dai rapporti tra pieni e vuoti, dalle regole prospettiche, insomma un’architettura la cui unica legge, il cui unico ordine è quello del mutamento*, Zevi 1993, 29)

The holy books recount little of the first place dedicated to prayer, the Tabernacle, or the “tent of meeting.” As is expected by an essentially nomadic population, it is described as a mobile structure, assembled in the centre of a rectangular enclosure and divided into two areas, one of which, the *Qodesh ha-Qodashim* (Holy of Holies), guarded the Ark of the Covenant. It is only with the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel, around 1.000 BC, that a building known as the First Temple, Beit ha-Mikdash, is erected. Completed under the reign of Solomon, little is known of its appearance except for references to the presence of two freestanding bronze columns, *Jachin* and *Boaz*, at its entrance. In 586 BC, the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and the Jews were forced into an exile that lasted until the late sixth century BC. In 19 BC, King Herod rebuilt the temple on the same site, following Solomon’s previous architectural model. Known as the Second Temple, it would be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD and the Jews eventually condemned to what is broadly referred to as Diaspora.

The return to exile conditions calls for more adaptable and modest religious buildings: synagogues. In later centuries, the function of these buildings remain practically unchanged – praying, meeting, study – while the

4 - In his text *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (1960), Thorlief Boman, starting from the linguistic comparison, demonstrates how Jewish thought is characterised by dynamism while the Greek one proves to be more static. The Jewish world is constantly evolving, dynamic, and far from the Greek’s search of ultimate knowledge.

architectural languages used change according to time and place. There are only two elements that are essentials to a synagogue: the Aron ha-Kodesh, the closet – always oriented towards Jerusalem – in which the scrolls of the Pentateuch are guarded, and the Bimah, the pulpit from which the Torah is publicly read. There are no particular precepts regarding the structure of the synagogue, if not for the simple fact that nothing can be located above it. Even the spatial relationship between the aforementioned two elements is variable. From the Middle Ages onwards, access to crafts guilds is strictly forbidden to Jews. Thus unqualified to work as craftsmen, the Jews have to charge Christian architects with the responsibility of designing their synagogues. It is therefore easy to understand the reasons behind the general use of architectural languages in vogue throughout the ages. The only exceptions are the wooden synagogues of Eastern Europe, expressions of a more independent language inspired by Polish vernacular architecture.⁵

The French Revolution and the end of the 18th century bring civil equality and the opportunity to access the profession of architect. Nevertheless, the absence of historical perspective or particular architectural tradition leads many new Jewish architects to continue to follow on-going architectural trends. In addition, the persistence of an anti-Semitic prejudice prompts many designers to set aside their Jewish identity.

While most of the architects of Jewish origin remain in the shadows of architectural historicism, even after having crossed the threshold of the 20th century, there are many who see in the emergence of the modern movement and in its rejection of classical language, the opportunity to finally reach the goal of an independent Jewish language.⁶ Though some architects – including Michel de Klerk, El Lissitzky and Erich Mendelsohn – succeed in combining functionalism with the dynamism that characterises modernity, the majority joined functionalism, showing no expressionist drift. Such is the case, for example, of Richard Neutra, Rudolf Schindler and Marcel Breuer, who all emigrated to the United States in the years of Adolf Hitler's rise to power. Other Bauhaus members, such as Richard Kauffmann, Zeev Rechter or Arie Sharon, left Europe for what was then the British protectorate of Palestine where, in the 1920s and 1930s, they contributed to the spread of modernist

5 - It is important to recall how the persecutions they were subject to led Jews to a general concealment in the surrounding urban landscape. Only in those areas where they experienced a sufficient degree of safety an attempt to define an independent language can be seen.

6 - The desire for universalism and the absence of any manifest historical roots will be, among other things, one of the reasons why the Nazis will reject modern architecture, accusing it to be, precisely, Semitic.

architectural language, still particularly visible today in the city of Tel Aviv. Following the Nazi genocide, some speculate whether or not Jewish involvement in architecture, or art in general, is still advisable. In 1946, prior to Adorno's famous reflection on the rightfulness of making art after the Holocaust, Samuel Gringauz, survivor and, later, head of the Tsentral Komitet fun di Bafreite Yidn in Daytshland (Central Committee of Freed Jews in Germany), says:

We do not believe in progress ... (or) in the 2.000-year-old Christian culture of the West, the culture that, *for them*, created ... Westminster Abbey on the Thames, the wonder gardens of Versailles, ... the Uffizi and Pitti palaces in Florence, the Strassbourg Münster, and the Cologne cathedral ... but (that), *for us*, (led to) the ... gas chambers of Auschwitz. (Quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 51)

In the United States of America, to cope with the wave of immigration from Europe – and possibly even in response to the Holocaust – the aftermath of WWII saw a boom in the construction of synagogues. The issue on which architectural language should then be adopted emerges as a topic of critical debate. Once again modernism seems to prevail, as it is also shown in *An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow*, a sort of architectural manual intended for the new emerging Jewish communities, which Peter Blake edited for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1954. Still, the synagogues that have left a mark on architectural critique of the years to come, are the work of non-Jewish architects. Actually, it is rather peculiar how some have been designed by architects who in their then recent past had shown, whether openly or not, some anti-Semitic drift.⁷ Worthy of mention is Frank Lloyd Wright and his Beth Sholom (1959) in Elkins Park, which, although showing an overall tendency to assimilationism, displays a series of symbolisms – the pyramidal shape as a reference both to Mount Sinai and to the Tabernacle tent, the seven stylised menorah on each edge of the roof, and the fountain at the entrance – that are doubtlessly the result of the close collaboration he had with Rabbi Mortimer J. Cohen while designing the synagogue.

In recognition of this being a topic of interest, the Jewish Museum of New York organised the *Recent American Synagogue Architecture* exhibition in 1963, curated by Richard Meier. The lack of Jewishness in the architecture of these religious buildings, however, is felt as a deficiency. In 1966, Avram

7 - Examples include Frank Lloyd Wright (Beth Sholom in Elkins Park) and Walter Gropius (Oheb Shalom Temple in Baltimore). The most striking case, however, remains that of Philip Johnson (Kneses Tifereth Israel in Port Chester, NY), whose pre-war support to Nazi ideology has never been a secret.

Kampf in his essay *Contemporary Synagogue Art* complains that, although well constructed and fully functional, these buildings “do not feel like a synagogue” (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 75).

In Europe, particularly in Germany, the overall situation is different. Although at the turn of the 19th century synagogues had become rather strong urban presences, the post-war reconstruction produces quite negligible architectures. Jewish communities are trying to recover from the deep and, for some of them, fatal wounds left by the Nazi experience, and the problem of Jewish identity in architecture is a low priority. The post-war years saw the success of those who Gavriel D. Rosenfeld defines as “non-Jewish’ Jewish architects” (Rosenfeld 2011, 96–97),⁸ for whom their Jewish origin, if not ignored at all, seems to be of little relevance. Such is the case of the aforementioned Richard Neutra, Marcel Breuer and Rudolf Schindler to whom, among others, Gordon Bunshaft, Morris Lapidus and Max Abramovitz can be added.

An isolated case, but nevertheless worthy of mention, is that of Louis I. Kahn, born Leiser-Itze Schmuilowsky. Raised in a family devoted to assimilationism, Kahn, despite showing over the years a considerable interest in Jewish history and its mysticism, will never be part of any community. Still, it is very likely that his mother, who was the daughter of a mystic of Riga, introduced him to the Kabbalah.⁹ This form of mysticism seems to permeate the design for the Mikveh Israel congregation synagogue in Philadelphia (1962), which was sadly never realised. Ten brick-clad cylinders would have brought natural light to the central sanctuary. The octagonal arrangement of these ten elements cannot but remind one of a sephirotic tree.¹⁰ Several other assignments by Jewish communities lead Kahn to further investigate Jewish architectural history. Thus, the Temple Beth-El of Chappaqua, New York (1967–72), seems to be a clear reference to the Polish wooden synagogues, mostly destroyed by the Nazis. However, his perhaps most famous synagogal project, albeit not realised,

8 - Rosenfeld borrows this term from the definition of “non-Jewish Jews” given by Isaac Deutscher in reference to those Jews who saw in the creative rebellion a way of escaping the outsider status to which Western society has often relegated them.

9 - The Kabbalah, literally “received tradition,” is a Jewish mystical movement. The most important text, the *Sefer Yetzirah* (“Book of Creation”), deals with the creation of the world by God’s 32 mysterious ways—the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the 10 Sephirot (Brunetti Luzzati and Della Rocca 2007, 168–171).

10 - Diagrammatic representation of the 10 Sephirot dating back to the fourteenth century that represents the medium for the spread of energy in the cosmos. Each Sephirah, the letter-number representing an attribute of God, corresponds to an ethical quality to be achieved in order to restore the lost balance of creation (Brunetti, Luzzati and Della Rocca 2007, 306–307; Mandel Khân 2012, 24–26).

is the one he made for the Hurva synagogue in Jerusalem (1967–1974). Founded in 1701 and destroyed more than once, the synagogue owes its name to its state of disrepair. Kahn's design concept consisted of two concentric cubes. The innermost, the sanctuary, consisted of four cubic elements surmounted by roofing extending above the central space. The "tree" shape of these elements may yet be another reference to the Tree of Life (the aforementioned sephirotic tree). The outermost structure consisted of a series of sixteen pillars clad with Jerusalem stone, each hosting a chapel intended for smaller ceremonies. The twelve openings thus created recalled the number of the biblical tribes of Israel.

The emergence of postmodernism in the late 1970s calls into question assimilationist tendencies, which were until then relatively common among the Jewish communities. Stanley Tigerman, an architect who has never denied the influence of his Jewish roots in his architecture, claims, not without some provocation, that "Post-Modernism is a Jewish Movement" (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 140). He acknowledges therein a dualistic approach that is akin to the Talmudic thought, for which the study of opposites does not imply a new synthesis.

In Europe, the return of the classicist past, albeit in a modern or ironic interpretation, arouses critical debate. The main charge sees it as a way of forgetting the use made by the Nazis of this type of architectural language. The post-moderns, in response, accuse the modern movement of fascism, recalling the role played by modern and functional industry in the Nazi extermination. Leon Krier recalls how "industrial civilisation is unable ... to create meaningful and beautiful places. It erects suburbs, zones, transportation systems, ... and concentration camps. It is always concerned with mass housing, ... mass transport, ... and mass extermination" (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 151).

The rising Deconstructivism movement seems, however, to be the language most suitable of offering greater expressive potential to the Jewish identity of its architects. It is, therefore, not a coincidence that some of the greatest exponents of this architectural movement are Jews who openly reflect on their origin. Peter Eisenman makes it clear when he states in a 2006 interview, "I'm Jewish. I'm different. I'm other" (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 163). His point of view on Judaism is similar to that of Walter Benjamin: Judaism is a mental matter, rather than religious. The opinion on architecture is expressed in an interview in 1985, "(I believe) in an architecture which attempts to stand outside the Graeco-Christian tradition ... (and) talks about the condition of Diaspora ... (and) wandering" (Quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 164). From the 1970s, the Holocaust begins to appear among the themes he tackles. Eisenman

recommends an architecture made up of fragments, signs and traces of the past. An architecture of decomposition antithetical to classicism and modernism, both inheritors of a humanism that proved to be a failure in the concentration camps.

Daniel Libeskind, for whom the Holocaust deeply marked his childhood in Poland and exterminated part of his family, is perhaps the architect who has drawn the most on his Jewish identity in his way of thinking and designing architecture. A peculiar sign of this way of proceeding is the use he makes of the Hebrew language, often taking letters of the alphabet as a starting point for his projects.¹¹ A similar process is utilised by Manuel Herz in his project for the synagogue and the community centre of Mainz (1990–2010), whose profile follows that of the Hebrew letters forming the word *Keduchah*, or sanctity.¹²

The 1980s are also witness to the return of the language of the wooden synagogues of the Polish tradition, in a Hebrew version of post-modern revival. In Chester, Connecticut, Steven L. Lloyd achieves the Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek (2001) synagogue, following the design made by Sol LeWitt, artist and main backer of the community. LeWitt, who labels his style as *neo-shtetl*,¹³ designs an octagonal building featuring a series of sloping roofs, “inspired by the old wooden synagogues (that were found in) the *shtetls* in Eastern Europe” (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 320). Inside, the Star of David is formed by a series of intertwined beams and can be found on the colourful *Aron ha-Kodesh*.

Although the aforementioned names are internationally renowned and have left long-lasting signs in contemporary architecture, the majority of Jewish architects remains in the shadow of anonymity, showing no particular interest in the definition of an architectural language able to reflect the peculiarity of their Jewish identity.

Jewish museums appear for the first time in the late 19th century,¹⁴ in order to display Jewish history, religion and material culture. In the beginning, and up to the 1970s of the past century, these were mainly, if not solely, designed for their own local community or for the then increasingly

11 - The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet all have a numeric – there are no numbers in the Jewish language – and symbolic value. Essential to religious knowledge, they form the basis of Gematria, the system of permutation of words into numbers (Mandel Khán 2012, 24–26).

12 - In the same period, Herz works for Daniel Libeskind, at that time dealing with the project for the synagogue in Duisburg, based on the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, aleph.

13 - *Shtetls* were small towns with a large Jewish community in Central and Eastern Europe. They were mostly destroyed during the Holocaust.

14 - The Vienna Jewish Museum is the first one to open its doors in 1896. Closed by the Nazis in 1938, it is reopened to the public in 1984.

secularised Jewish bourgeoisie. As these institutions are often located in synagogues or in other existing buildings, their potential architectural relevance is mostly distinguishable in the exhibition design. The Berlin Jewish Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind at the end of the 1990s, represents a breaking point in this tradition. It is now the architecture of the building itself, purposely designed to house this very museum, to be the physical materialisation of the troubled memory of the Jewish experience in Germany.

With the birth of Holocaust museums in the 1980s, the museums of Jewish culture show a general tendency to adopt a temporary exhibitions programme focusing on cultural, aesthetic and social topics, as if to highlight how this tragic event has only been a small part of the thousand-year Jewish culture.

The Jewish Museum of New York, founded in 1904, reopens to the public in the new premises in Manhattan in 1947, with a rather innovative exhibition programme. Its permanent exhibition *Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey* enquires about what constitutes the very essence of the Jewish identity. While in the United States of America smaller museums linked to synagogues are officially recognised and the existing metropolitan museums expand, or new ones are opened, in Europe the overall context is in deep contrast.

Many local administrations attempt to compensate their past mistakes by hosting museums that recount the history of local communities, although these have been severely reduced, if not fully erased, by the recent past events. At the end of the 1980s, a first real twist occurs. Jewish communities step forward to actively take part in the representation of their own identity. Thus, Jewish museums in Amsterdam (1987), Frankfurt (1988), Vienna (1993), Paris (1998) and Berlin (2001), all quite remarkable in size and exhibition quality, open – or reopen – their doors to the general public. Moreover, the featured historical narrative is increasingly secularised. While in the Jewish tradition time is almost cyclical – yet preserving the uniqueness of each moment –, Jewish museums now adapt to the linear narrative typical of museums. The narration of identity arranged by themes becomes increasingly common and is often related to the many rituals that punctuate the Jewish year and life. In a time that witnesses a progressive decrease in its practicing members, the growing number of museums becomes for the largely secularised part of the Jewish community “their synagogue, where they relate to their past, meet socially, and celebrate secularized festivals and lifecycle events” (van Voolen 2004, 19).

The young State of Israel, in a similar manner to what nowadays occurs in the recently formed nation-states, sees in museums an ideal instrument

for the definition of its own national identity. Thus, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv Museum in Tel Aviv offer an overview on the Jewish contribution to the visual arts throughout the Diaspora in a perspective that highlights the differences with Israeli art. Archaeological museums such as the Shrine of the Book (1965), a wing of the Israel Museum established following the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, anchor the national history to the biblical past, thus legitimising its very existence.¹⁵

If the Israel Museum (1965), designed by Alfred Mansfeld and Dora Gad, is a modern interpretation of Arab-Mediterranean villages – thus allowing further expansion – the Shrine of the Book, designed by Armand Phillip Bartos and Frederick John Kiesler, shows a series of biblical references and symbols that bind the architectural container to its content (Levin 2004, 39). The Beit Hatfutsot, or Museum of the Jewish People, finds its origins in the increasingly common perception of a new diversity between the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora communities. The museum, strongly supported by Nahum Goldmann and inaugurated in 1978, aims to recount Jewish culture throughout the Diaspora in order to bring to light its most positive aspects, thus putting an end to the indifference and suspicion that the new generations, born and raised in Israel, seemed to feel towards a past mostly seen as negative and humiliating. It wants to be a museum intended as a coagulation of a network of communication and exchanges, orchestrator of relationships that ensure support, and cultural food even for the most distant communities (*“museo inteso come coagulo di una rete di comunicazioni e scambi, orchestratore di rapporti che garantiscano un sostegno, un alimento culturale anche alle comunità più lontane,”* Zevi 1993, 64). Being its mission not yet fully accomplished, the Beit Hatfutsot is currently planning the expansion and renovation of its core exhibition.

Daniel Libeskind has made no secret of gathering design concepts from his Jewish roots and his personal experience as wandering Jew. For him, as opposed to Peter Eisenman,¹⁶ a “Jewish museum ... should be Jewish” (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 195). No wonder, then, that one of the works for which he has worldwide recognition, besides setting a milestone in the architecture of Jewish museums, is precisely his Jüdische Museum in Berlin.

15 - For a better understanding of the role of the Bible and archaeology in the construction of the Israeli nation-state, see Shapira 2004, 11–41.

16 - Peter Eisenman, despite repeatedly expressing the importance of his cultural identity, is reluctant to talk about Jewish architecture. When questioned about how a Jewish museum can express its Jewishness, Eisenman answers by pointing out how “wrong” it is to ask such a question, since Jewish culture has always been overtly opposed to representation, and recalls how it has always been devoted to questioning rather than to expressing (Rosenfeld 2011, 172).

The first Jewish museum of the city opened in January 1933, on the eve of the rise to power of Adolf Hitler as chancellor, in a series of rooms on the Oranienburger Strasse, at the time the location of the synagogue and community centre. Like many Jewish activities, the museum did not survive the infamous Kristallnacht, between the 9th and 10th November, 1938. The will to establish a Jewish Department at the Museum of Berlin, located in the 18th century Kollegienhaus on the Lindenstrasse, allowed the museum to be re-established some fifty years later. According to plans, the *Judaicas*, prior belonging to the museum collections, had to be transferred to a new independent wing. The decision was not without controversy. As pointed out by James E. Young, “many also feared dividing German from Jewish history, inadvertently recapitulating the Nazis’ own segregation of Jewish culture from German” (Young 2004, 44). Daniel Libeskind’s proposal immediately attracts attention. His concept, *Between the Lines*, is based on two intersecting lines, whose interaction defines the inner space. The main line, of segmented pace, sets the peculiar shape of the building, which has been, from time to time, compared to a fragmented Star of David or to the *sowulo* rune widely renowned as an SS symbol. Six full-height voids¹⁷ are generated when the body of the building crosses a conceptual straight line. These are the symbolic core of the project, where the lack of matter cross-refers to the absence of the slayed Jewish community. Although not allowing any direct entrance to the museum, Libeskind detaches his building from the Kollegienhaus, making it accessible only through an underground passage. The former Museum of German History and, therefore, its historical narrative are the connective element between the visitor and the Jewish community history, thus suggesting the deep connections between the two stories.

Since its opening in 1999 the museum, despite not having any exhibit set up in the first two years, attracts many visitors. Among the first to visit is Frank Gehry, who makes a rather heartfelt description of his experience: “I’ve just been to the Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin ... What’s impressive to me is that it’s the angriest building I’ve ever seen ... By the time I got through it, I was crying. I was very moved by it” (Quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 214–215).

Although the Danish Jewish Museum officially opens its doors in 2004, Libeskind started to work on it in the beginning of the 1990s, when he was teaching at the School of Architecture at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. This is a refurbishment project of an existing building, the Royal Boathouse, part of the Royal Library, which, besides being located

17 - Daniel Libeskind literally fills these six voids in the *StoneBreath* project, his proposal for the Berlin Holocaust memorial competition in 1998 (Rosenfeld 2011, 192).

centrally, owns one of the most important *Judaica* collections in Europe. Inspired by the events of October 1943, Libeskind bases his design concept on the Hebrew word *Mitzvah*, translatable as “good action,” with reference to the rescue of the Jews by the local Danish population. Despite this premise, as stated by Bent Silber, Chairman of the administrative board of the museum himself, “the Danish Jewish Museum is not a Holocaust Museum, but in many ways the story of peaceful co-existence and successful integration” (Silber 2004, 7). Because of the limited available space, since the very beginning the architect focuses on defining a layout that can accommodate temporary exhibitions so that the whole collection can be displayed on a rotation basis. Thus, “the exhibition does not aim to give an account of everything, but to provide an insight that will stimulate the general public to want to know more” (Laursen 2004, 16).

The four letters *Mem*, *Tsadi*, *Waw* and *He* organise the internal pathway – a reference to the Talmudic “text within the text” – while four planes – named *Exodus*, *Wilderness*, the *Giving of the Law* and *Promised Land* – intersect each other and structure the section of the floor and walls, the eighteen cabinets and the exhibition path. A fifth oblique plane defines the tables, the plinths and the display cases, pouring out in the outdoor arrangement facing the entrance. The wooden floor, with its unsteady pace and tilted walls, bring to mind an image of the boats that brought salvation to the men and women who left Denmark for the then neutral Sweden in October 1943 (Libeskind 2004, 40–43).

Opened in 2008, the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, which hosts only temporary exhibitions since it does not own a collection, suggests right from the outset, its name and its mission,¹⁸ its vocation to the contemporary. Libeskind chooses as starting point for the project the Hebrew *L'Chai'm*, translated into the concept *To Life*. The reference to Hebrew is not here only theoretical, but it takes architectural form in the volumes structuring the inner space behind the preserved facade of a former early-twentieth-century power plant. These volumes are indeed structured according to the two letters forming the word *Chai* – *Chet* and *Yud*. Two long wings, the legs of *Chet*, host the exhibition spaces, the education centre and the auditorium, while the vertical space, *Yud*, is used as a gallery for special events. Furthermore, in Hebrew numerology the two letters, if added up, give 18 as result, a particularly lucky number in Jewish tradition. It is therefore no coincidence that the cubic volume

18 – “The CJM makes the diversity of the Jewish experience relevant for a twenty-first century audience. We accomplish this through innovative exhibitions and programs that educate, challenge, and inspire.” The museum’s mission and its programmes are available on the official website: <http://www.thecjm.org>.

inspired by Yud has 36 windows, thus acquiring a value of “double life.” In the entrance hall, located just behind the brick facade of the former plant, Libeskind cuts into his volumes, thus obtaining openings overlooking the hall, the letters *Pey*, *Resh*, *Dalet* and *Samech*, composing the word *Pardes*, Orchard or Paradise (Rosenfeld 2011, 194–195). Briefly examining a number of other Jewish-related architectural achievements in America, which widely lack specific cultural references, this kind of project seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

The Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, built between 1985 and 1996 and designed by Moshe Safdie, houses the Hebrew Union College local branch Judaica collection. Faithful to its mission of being committed to an integrationist vision of the Jewish experience in the United States, to the point that the Jewish culture is not even mentioned in the name, the building combines a series of modern and traditional elements, showing little evidence of Jewishness. Much the same can be said for the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies in Chicago, home of the Spertus College, the Spertus Museum and the Asher Library. Designed by Krueck and Sexton Architects in 2008, it consists of a ten-storey steel and glass tower, which lies in stark contrast with the surrounding exposed brickwork of the 19th century. Open to anyone wishing to learn about Jewish culture, the institute highlights its hospitality through the full transparency of its facade. Similar transparency – as much as a similar professed sense of trust in the society in which the community lives – is shown by the recent National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia (2007–2010). Here James Stuart Polshek and his firm Ennead Architects identify two four-storey volumes, one of which, besides being on one of the city’s main roads, is fully glazed. The museum’s mission, in this case too, suggests an opening to others by seeking to raise awareness of the Jewish contribution to American life, while remembering the experiences of other ethnic groups. Given the much-acclaimed sense of security, some critics have wondered why the volume actually containing the exhibition galleries seems to be hidden behind the glass volume that, besides being the museum’s main facade, does not seem to be particularly relevant to the exhibits’ narrative. Polshek himself raises further doubts by stating that the “amount of glass implies that one should not take for granted the freedoms supplied by a democracy” (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 334). Although in the past few years the English-speaking world has seen the word *Holocaust* with reference to Nazi extermination supersede the use

of *Shoah* (annihilation), the latter is still more suitable.¹⁹ In 1961, thanks to the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel, the previously avoided question of the Nazi extermination becomes a critical issue in the international debate. Converted since the early aftermath of WWII into memorials, in the 1980s sites linked to extermination are progressively turned into museums and memorials. Generally, the exhibits formerly located in several existing facilities of the camps are moved into new buildings in order to keep the remaining genuine parts as exclusively devoted to memory and recollection. Meanwhile in the United States and Israel, both far located from the original historical sites, museums exclusively devoted to the memory and narration of these tragic events begin to appear.

Located on the Western side of Mount Herzl, the compound of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority ideally situates itself as the extension of the nearby cemetery where the founding fathers of the nation of Israel lie. The 1957 original core included a library, an archive and an administration building, designed by the architects Aryeh El-Chanani, Arie Sharon and Benjamin Idelson. In 1961, the Hall of Remembrance, designed by Ohel Yizkor, is added. This architecture reservedly begins to show some symbolism, though the architectural language still remains bound to the modern movement. On a concrete square slab, four Jerusalem stone clad walls hold a massive, brutalist concrete slab. The architecture thus resembles a tomb. Furthermore, its walls, made up of piled stones, recalls the Jewish tradition of placing stones on tombs as a tribute to the memory of the deceased. Still, there is no explicit reference to the Holocaust, despite being the cause of the deaths remembered therein.

A few years later, in 1965, the complex is further enhanced with the addition of a synagogue and a Hall of Names. A first history museum opens in 1973 in a building that is still tied to the modern architectural language and clad in limestone. In 1982, an art museum is added and, between 1983 and 1993, the impressive Valley of Destroyed Communities (Lipa Yahalom and Dan Zur) is finally completed. In 1987, Moshe Safdie, who will later be responsible for reviewing the master plan for the whole compound, designs the Children Memorial. This is a dark room filled with mirrors that endlessly reflect the light of a single candle, while a voice

19 - The term Holocaust, brought into common usage by the television show *Holocaust*, refers to the ritual sacrifice through fire (from the Greek *holos*, whole, and *kautein*, to burn). The Shoah is traditionally remembered in the Jewish world during the Yom Ha Shoah, on the 27th of the month of Nisan – the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, which coincides with our March or April –, the day of the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943. A sad coincidence makes it also coincide with the destruction of Jewish communities by the Crusaders.

lists the names, ages and origin of the children killed in the Holocaust. In 1994, he adds the Memorial to the Deportees, a wagon once used to transport Jews to the death camps and now placed on a fragment of railway bridge, overhanging the void. The expansion is completed with the addition of the International School for Holocaust Studies designed by David Guggenheim, Daniel Bloch and Alex Mintz.

As mentioned, in 1997 Moshe Safdie is charged with the redesign of the entire master plan. Safdie keeps the administrative building, the Hall of Remembrance and the Hall of Names, and plans a new building that includes a new history museum, a synagogue, a visitors centre, a sunken courtyard and a café. The museum penetrates the western slope of Mount Herzl, emerging as a wound along the central spine of the building – a changing triangular cross-section – up to completely emerging at the conclusion of the visit. The route is strictly guided with the visitor having no choice – as the Jews trapped in the infernal Nazi machine had none – other than zigzagging throughout the exhibition rooms located on both sides of the central spine. As the visitor progresses through the narrative, the ceiling lowers and the floor rises with a 5% inclination, thus increasing the feeling of discomfort. At the end of the visit, when the tragedies of the past are behind the visitor, they reach the final part of the central spine, which vigorously throws itself towards the outside, literally opening up into the void and to the sight of Jerusalem's urban settlements. This climax of the visit is perceivable from the very beginning, but the visitor can never reach it, if not going through all the rooms.

If at first the Yad Vashem took into consideration only the destruction of the Jewish people, following the gradual acknowledgment of contemporary society multi-ethnicity, it has tried to include all the other victims of the mass murder committed by the Nazis – Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses, political prisoners, homosexuals, and the first victims of the Aktion T4.²⁰ Thus, by agreeing to see themselves as a nation of immigrants, "Israel's national institutions have begun to negate the traditional Zionist negation of the Diaspora" (Young 2004, 51).

Safe harbour for many survivors, the United States played a key role from the early 1980s in shaping this new subdivision of the museum, which are the Holocaust Museums and the architectural language they use. The history of the museums of the Shoah in America begins in 1964, when a group of survivors officially asks the Arts Commission of New York for a memorial to the tragic events of the World War II. The request is initially

20 - The real testing ground for the subsequent mass extermination, Aktion T4 was the euthanasia programme that consisted of the elimination of people suffering from genetic diseases or malformations.

ignored on the grounds that the events are not part of the American history. The question arises, then, if one can define oneself as American when the historical events that led one to search for a new life in America are not worthy of being remembered. Somehow, with the inauguration in Washington, in 1993, of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, America, *de facto*, acknowledges the prior experiences of its new citizens as part of its own history.

Following the first draft made by a local architect, the Board of Directors of what will then become the first American Holocaust museum turns to I. M. Pei who, unable to accept, puts them in contact with James Ingo Freed. Although accidental, it turns out to be particularly fortunate circumstance. Born in Essen in 1930, Freed had been deeply scarred by the events of Nazism. A 1986 visit to Auschwitz led him to reflect on what architectural language was the most suitable to use when dealing with such a sensitive issue. Starting from the assumption that the museum should be “a building where the container has to join with the contained” (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 264), Freed addresses the past and its narrative without the nostalgia and irony which is typical of post-modernism.

Openly criticising the appropriation of classicism made by the Nazis, he chooses a neoclassical language and a limestone cladding for the main entrance volume and for the hexagonal Hall of Remembrance, where he bricks up some imaginary windows in reference to those once walled up in ghettos. The museum's main building visually stands out because of its brick coating and the set of towers rising on its profile, a clear allusion to concentration camp watchtowers. The Hall of Witness is a wide space whose industrial materials recall the train stations from which convoys departed. The asymmetry of the metal trusses supporting the wide, glazed roof and the offset nature of the main staircase, cause a sense of disorientation, while the tie-rods embedded in the masonry above the passageways bring to mind the gloomy image of the crematory ovens. The aforementioned hexagonal Hall of Remembrance is, by contrast, minimal and naturally lit by a large skylight. Here, as it will also later be for some parts of Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin, the emptiness symbolises the absence of those who never returned from the concentration camps. This is where the route ends: specifically designed openings allow a comforting view of the contemporary city of Washington. The United States, like Israel, has represented for many the return to life after death and, therefore, the choice of using visual snapshots of the city, seen as safe harbour, is not surprising (Rosenfeld 2011, 262–268).

As illustrated earlier, New York paved the way for further requests for official acknowledgement of the memory of the Shoah. In 1949, the

architectural competition for the American Memorial to Six Million Jews of Europe, won by Erich Mendelsohn, is launched. His proposal consisted of an approximately twenty-four-metre high granite sculpture, carved by van Mestrovich, depicting the two Tables of the Law, set next to a thirty-metre, linear wall showing a *bas-relief* portraying figures in procession towards the Decalogue. The project, approved in 1951, failed due to lack of funds (2011, 61–62).

In 1966, the Committee re-launches the competition but, once again, the project will not see the light of the day. Louis I. Kahn presents a highly symbolic project. On a black, granite platform of about 20 x 18 metres, a cube hosting a chapel is surrounded by six other three-metre high cubes made up of glass blocks. The transparency of volumes would have enabled the “sun ... (to) come through and leave a shadow yet filled with light” (quoted in Rosenfeld 2011, 126). Light is a key element in the Jewish Kabbalah, which places it at the very foundation of Creation. According to this mystical doctrine – with which, as already mentioned, Kahn was probably familiar – when God withdraws into himself in order to give birth to the world (*tzimtzum*), a flow of divine light pours into the empty space, giving birth to the first man (*Adam Kadmon*). He contained the light in ten vessels (the *Sephiroth*), which shattered because they were unable to contain it, and this gave rise to evil (*Shevirat ha-Kelim*). Since then, humans have as their main task to repair the damaged vessels and thus restore the purity of the world (*tikkun olam*) through good actions and by behaving according to the law (*mitzvot*) (2011, 125).

In 1984, the decision was eventually made for a museum to commemorate the lives of those who died and of those who found salvation in America. Located in Battery Park, the museum initially had to be placed side by side with a residential tower, in order to finance the entire project. The board of directors then contacted James Stuart Polshek, whose proposal owes much to that of Kahn for the memorial. Polshek suggests, indeed, as the climax of the visit, an eighteen-metre high cube made of glass and stone, separated from the main museum by a stone wall – clearly a reference to the remaining wall of the Jerusalem Temple. The questionable proposal to build a residential tower alongside the museum immediately created problems, first among which was the emotional impact that the museum might have on future residents. To make it easier to bear, the museum was then officially called the Museum of Jewish Heritage – a Living Memorial to the Holocaust, thus confining the Shoah to the secondary part of the title. Following the growing discontent that arose among the council members, this rather strange idea was soon dropped.

In 1993, the assignment was given to Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, the company behind the then recent renovation of the Manhattan Jewish Museum. The final design consisted of a hexagonal building, topped by a multileveled pyramid. Apart from multiple references to the number six, it is difficult not to notice the total lack of iconography that is generally used in these kinds of museums. In 2003, the same architectural company added a four-storey wing, housing a theatre, more exhibition galleries, an education centre, a café and the Memorial Garden of Stones, designed by Andy Goldsworthy (Rosenfeld 2011, 268–273). Between 1993 and 1996, the collaboration between Ralph Appelbaum, the mind behind the exhibition display at the Washington Museum, and Mark Mucasey leads to the realisation of the Houston Holocaust Museum. A sloping surface, on which a series of stone tablets engraved with the names of the Jewish communities lost in World War II are mounted, rises up to twelve metres in height, while intersecting at its base a truncated cone, clad with grey bricks – a gloomy reference to crematoria chimneys. At the very base of the plan, six steel columns connected by cables bring to mind the electrified fences of the concentration camps. The entrance hall acts as a connective element between the new building and the pre-existing structure, which now serves as temporary exhibition spaces. From here, visitors enter the permanent exhibition *Bearing Witness: A Community Remembers*, through a meandering passage leading to the highest part of the building, the point of departure of an exhibition that unfolds among a tightly arranged display that forces visitors into sharp turns. As one proceeds through the Holocaust historical narrative, the ceiling increasingly lowers, thus upsetting the visitor that eventually finds some relief in the Herzstein Theater, located in the conical volume, where the film *Voices*, a series of local survivors' testimonies, is projected. This is where the visit ends, and where visitors exit to the main hall that leads them towards the Eric Alexander Garden of Hope (Carlos Jiménez 1999) and the Lack Memorial Room (Murphy Mears), which is naturally lit by a glass wall overlooking the garden, where one can stop and meditate in front of the *Wall of Tears*, an installation by artists Patricia and Robert Moss-Vreeland (Rosenfeld 2011, 273–275; Sachs and van Voolen 2004, 58–63). Burdened with rather explicit references is also the Holocaust Memorial Centre of Michigan, completed in 2004 by the Neumann/Smith and Associates architectural firm in Farmington Hills, near Detroit. The large use of iconography clearly linked to the Holocaust – barbed wire, bricks, towers, blue and grey vertical striped wall covering – has led the structure to be often seen as too literal (Rosenfeld 2011, 275–277).

Particularly enriched by more subtle symbolisms is the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center by Stanley Tigerman, in the suburb of Skokie, Chicago. Opened in 2009, the main facade of the building looks as though it is made of two different edifices, linked by a connecting wing. The most particular feature of the museum is the clear separation between the entrance and the exit since, ideally, the visitor cannot but be changed after finding out about the Holocaust. The entrance volume, clad in anodised, dark grey metal, houses the part of the permanent collection covering the years before WWII and the extermination. This first building, whose shape recalls stables, brings to mind the camps' barracks where the inmates were forced to live. The linking volume, which is fan-shaped, is the very place of memory. Within it, a cylindrical room, whose walls are engraved with the names of the victims, and a freight car, like those used to convey the Jews, can be found. The second building, painted white and with vaulted roofs, houses the education centre and the final part of the exhibition regarding the liberation and the new life of the survivors in Israel and in the United States. The Hall of Reflection concludes the visit and leads to the exit. Two skeletal metal pillars, ghostly versions of Jachin and Boaz, stand in front of the museum as a warning against the illusion that assimilation, here symbolised by the evanescence of the columns, can bring safety (Rosenfeld 2011, 280). Both the main facades face east – more correctly, the grey volume faces the Wailing Wall, while the white volume is oriented fully to the east. The entire project also shows multiple references to the Kabbalah, first among them all, the division into three volumes – the central part, the grey and the white – as the three phases of the Lurianic Kabbalah – *Tzimtzum*, *Shevira*, *Tikkun* (2011, 277–280). If the museums mentioned so far feature more or less explicit references to the Holocaust, others choose to comply with an architectural language that is more consistent with the assimilationist tendencies and their avowedly universal vocations. Such is the case in the Beit Hashoah in The Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles, which is better known as the Museum of Tolerance. Brainchild of orthodox Rabbi Marvin Hier and designed by Maxwell Starkman, it opened in 1993 and its original calling to fight against anti-Semitism has since been universalised, giving rise to a building that shows hardly any signs of Jewishness or any references to the historical tragedy that is suggested by its name (Rosenfeld 2011, 281).

Communicating identity and memory: exhibition strategies and architectural languages

If at the very beginning, Jewish museums were mostly meant for local communities, recent decades have shown a growing penchant for greater

openness. However, the very fact that the increase in Jewish museum numbers coincides with a substantial decrease in the active members of communities leads to questions regarding whether or not this openness has something to do with the on-going assimilationism. As Hannah Swartz points out:

Today, Jews no longer strive to legitimize their existence or pronounce their individuality to the extent that it was important in a post-war backlash of antiassimilation ... With the complexities of cultures that are current in today's society, Jews are beginning to question who they are in context with their blended communities ... to help redefine Judaism in a global context, to understand what it means to be a nation made up of numerous identities. (Swartz 2007, 6)

This very contextualisation characterises the majority of recent Jewish museums. Although museums of smaller size, which are often located in rooms adjoining the synagogue, are often the repository of strictly liturgical objects, which are occasionally still in use, and hardly understandable in their true meaning by “Gentiles,” the most recently established or renewed museums tend, on the one hand, to display objects by tying them to those rituals and festivities that have punctuated everyday Jewish life for centuries. On the other hand, they increasingly give room to the history of a particular community by including it in the broader context of the local one, thus allowing visitors to learn about the complexity of Jewish culture and about the role it played in the development of their own culture. Multimedia and interactive devices are often added for a greater visitor involvement or for more in-depth information, while temporary exhibitions may offer a more current insight into a community that is more diverse than was once believed.

This tendency to universalism affects even some of the Holocaust museums. From the New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage (Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, 1997), to the more recent Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust (Belzberg Architects, 2010), explicit architectural references to their content – such as those of the United States Holocaust Memorial, among others – give way to a milder and less dramatic architectural language. What remains are the contents, sometimes widened to make room for other victims' narratives. While Jewish museums usually tend to limit the narrative of these tragic events to a chronologically framed historical account, those entirely devoted to the Shoah mostly rely on witnesses' memories and personal narratives. The use of family pictures, names, voices and personal stories all contribute to the identification process of the visitor. Since the visiting experience has to

be highly emotional, “the new museums are built using those values that were once deprived: they have been built using collective oral testimony, through processes of negotiation and participation” (Kaluza 2011, 159). In order to make the whole dimension of this tragedy more tangible, more and more exhibitions attempt to bring it back to a dimension that can be easily measured by an individual’s own senses. Thus, in the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (2005), Dagmar von Wilcken conceived her *Raum der Namen* (Room of Names), an dark, empty room where a voice repeats the names, along with a brief biography, of those who were murdered in the Shoah. A discreet sign at the entrance informs visitors that the whole list will take 6 years, 7 months and 27 days in order to be fully read. More recently (2013), the new *Shoah* Exhibition was realised in Block 27 of the former Auschwitz concentration camp. Sponsored by the Yad Vashem and designed by Studio de Lange – maker of the 2010 renovation of the Jewish gallery of the Israel Museum – the exhibition reaches its climax with the Book of Names, a peculiar and specially conceived structure containing the names of 4.2 million victims, listed in alphabetical order in 58 volumes, which is freely accessible to visitors. Usually culminating in more neutral spaces, inviting visitors to pause in a more intimate reflection – as a decompression chambers which bring visitors back to everyday life after a visit that is generally perceived as overwhelming –, museums and exhibitions devoted to the Holocaust, once considered as a purely American phenomenon, are increasingly spreading throughout Europe, where their fundamental role in keeping memory and education alive cannot but be enhanced by the forthcoming hundredth anniversary of these tragic events.

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Libraries



Library 2.0

Daniele Mondiali

This paper examines the relationship between the library institution and the new technologies. New ways of enjoying documents – which, once digitised, are released from the book’s material nature – imply new ways of using the text and, therefore, a modification of the interior space as well as the inclusion of new functions. The social role of the library is thus increased, while its role as “guardian of culture” seems to fade, as the opening up of its boundaries questions its very sense. The spatial and social impact of the library’s computerisation is here examined focusing both on the modification and refurbishment of existing structures, new designs and integration of functions, as well as the virtual dimension and the network.

The research aims to identify technologies and features that cause, or have caused, changes in the architectural space, analysing the spread of the library beyond its physical boundaries since the 1980s. The ultimate goal is to define the possible evolution of the library institution, highlighting the present and future phenomena of diversification, diffusion, change in functions and crystallisation.

Technology, document and society

The contemporary world is nowadays in many ways divided and united, globalised and localised. Sovereignty is no longer political but economic, and spreading globally according to principles that are internal to the economy itself, and no longer subject to hierarchical control but a kind of spontaneous self-control.

The characteristic of this system is to be widespread, as well as to be arisen in a different manner, diffused and local within the past national

and economic systems, sometimes upsetting them, but always remaining integrated in, and dependent on, the global market. In turn, this very same global market is deeply influenced by small local events, which may cause a “butterfly effect”¹ on the whole system. Alan Turing, in a 1950 essay entitled “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” declared that “the displacement of a single electron by a billionth of a centimetre at one moment might make the difference between a man being killed by an avalanche a year later, or escaping.”²

The world is therefore inextricably linked in a mechanism of relations that are increasingly mutually related, independent but influential, which characterise an increasingly nomadic and global society. Thus, we can no longer talk simply about nation, city or state, but more generically of “habitat” in which individuals move, namely a set of resources for action that define the possibilities for “the accomplishment of life.”

Global nomadism is not simply a physical phenomenon, but it is mainly linked to the movement and exchange of ideas in a culture, knowledge and melting pot. With this in mind, we have to imagine the “Information Technology culture” as a profusion of information, a dense interweaving of people and cultures in an open fabric, as if countless hands were writing a book made up of an unlimited number of pages.

Pierre Lévy, in his book *Cyberculture*, describes the phenomenon of “computerisation” as a flood. The biblical comparison, however, raises some questions. What to put in the ark? What to choose this huge container from? And who today is Noah? (Lévy 1997).

1 - Edward Lorenz was the first to analyse the so-called *butterfly effect* in a 1963 paper for the New York Academy of Sciences that was then officially presented on 29th December 1979 at the annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. According to this document, “a meteorologist remarked that if the theory were correct, one flap of a seagull’s wings would be enough to alter the course of the weather forever.” In subsequent speeches and writings, Lorenz used the more poetic butterfly figure, perhaps inspired by a diagram generated by the Lorenz attractor, which precisely resembles this insect, or maybe – although supporting evidence is lacking – is influenced by some literary precedents. “Does the flap of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?” was the title of a lecture given by Lorenz in 1972.

2 - In his article “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” originally published in 1950, Alan Turing (1912–1954) asks the question of whether machines can think or not. Turing’s name is now mostly famous for his analysis of computation processes in terms of an abstract machine, the so-called Turing machine. He introduced it in order to demonstrate that mathematical activity is not fully mechanisable – it is thus impossible to replace mathematicians with machines –, by discovering, on the one hand, a universal program-simulating machine, able to perform the tasks of any present or future calculating machine, while on the other, showing that even such a machine has its limits. In doing so, Turing introduced the notion of the modern computer and, at the same time, set limits on its theoretical power.

This new sense of global culture, which uses the network as a means and an active medium in favour of a new universal, remains in its development, tied to the local context in which it is written, almost as in a sort of glocalisation of knowledge (Bauman and Beilharz 2001). In oral societies, the dissemination of knowledge was linked to messages handed down in a specific context from fathers to sons, and for them the message had a different meaning from the one a stranger would interpret. With the advent of writing, texts separate themselves from the contexts in which they were written and assume a more universal value that often becomes anachronistic and loses or changes its meaning in new and different time periods and societies. The very translation of certain words into different languages becomes incomplete and often incorrect to the point that some authors, such as François Laplantine (2006), bring into question the value itself of the translated or decontextualised lexicon.

According to Lévy, digital culture assumes, at least partially, the characteristics of the oral message mainly for its immediacy, but also for its connection to the social context in which it is established and its ability to be “in the world” without the need to be translated or made universal. The advent of Web 2.0 seems to confirm this feature. The network structure is, indeed, changing, shifting from mediated to immediate. It is thus no longer based on the sedimentation of information, but on the freshness of results, as the more recent are the most interesting. A real-time search engine in the minds of people could be seen as a global brain where, thanks to search tools and social networks, one does not access a site, but the web itself, and the information, ideas and thoughts are available online at the very moment in which they arise.

However, if mistranslations, geographical, historical and social decontextualisation of the culture are categorised, catalogued and referenced, how can the new nomadic and collective idea flow be transformed from information chaos to a collective intelligence? How can the IT infrastructure become the container of the social thought? To what extent is it right to become the Noah of this great ark and to choose to eliminate, reduce or reference documents in a structure that was born free, and has then evolved in a weak, spontaneous and democratic way thanks to this very feature?

The great power of IT and the network then raises several doubts: if on the one hand there is great autonomy and speed of information, on the other, the problem of the quality of the information remains, since the net can become a virtual Babel, maybe mirroring the real Babel of the globalised world.

The network, as well as the library, is a large box of information, but in order to fully understand the complexity of relations generated by this new arrangement for the dissemination of knowledge, it is necessary to define what a document is, be it virtual or printed on paper, and what is its validity or function?

The value of a book lies in its content, but if the text no longer needs the very object in which it was once kept, or rather, this object can be in multiple objects, can the content be incorporated by all the objects at the same time?

A document is a composed set of information, organised according to one or more interpretative codes. The basic element of a document is the “data.” This has no content of its own but it works and is shaped by the context, in conjunction with other data. Examples of data can be numbers, digits, or letters, but also graphics, colours, images, etc. In order to be considered as a document, it must have content. Riccardo Ridi defines these entities as “atoms of information,” since their union, ordered in specific ways, originates the information that organises them into a context, giving them meaning (Ridi 2010).

Information, as opposed to data, may be used to originate what is called “knowledge.” These concepts may appear very abstract and hard to explain, but they are important in order to understand the mechanisms that underlie what has always been a key agent in the history of man, the knowledge and, above all, the need to pass it on.

A document is therefore the instrument of organisation and dissemination of information that is inscribed within it. As stated by Ridi,

any object can be considered as a document. Provided that it acts as a physical support for information encoded by means of known rules in the form of signs registered on the object itself ... every physical entity, of any shape and material, is a document when information is recorded in it. (Ridi 2010, 11)

Digital data, unlike other types of data, is made up of a series of zeroes and ones, and each datum is different from the other and may therefore contain only one entry. To digitise information means, therefore, to translate it into digits, into what is called binary. This structure has the advantage of working, thanks to the uniqueness of each datum, as a set of coordinates in such a way that it is possible, by using an algorithm, to find the required information in real time. The second main innovation in this system is characterised by the ability to copy and reproduce the contents over several media, rapidly and with no loss of information. We are now far from the days when scribes read, interpreted and copied ancient texts

in order to pass down over the centuries the knowledge of mankind and from the actual value of that process. Though it would be a mistake to think that this powerful tool we now have may be an enemy of culture. An information technology device is nothing more than a computer that encodes mathematical language and transmits it to other terminals that are able to read it. Behind it, there is always a human who programs “the machine” according to specific goals.

Once digitised, a book becomes an e-book, an identical digitised copy of the one on printed paper, which can be read and browsed through a physical medium, an example of such a medium being Kindle®. A document is then put onto the network. In the digital landscape, in addition to these texts, hypertext is also found. If for the forms previously described computerised tools were implemented only through research, conservation and rapidity in diffusion, in the case of hypertext, there is a total detachment from the classic document. This data container is characterised by multimodal information that witnesses the coexistence of written text, images, sounds and links, so that we can no longer talk of reading but more of surfing. The change is radical since the reader becomes a surfer and can thus “move” inside the text, a procedure that is only possible through an IT tool. David Le Breton argues that the technologies of the virtual make the body (text) disappear or re-build it. This metamorphic idea of hypertext also emphasises the “weak and diffuse” sense of computer memory, which is both dynamic and interactive, but also devoid of tactility, even if it is static, which is typical of paper and of all previous media.³

Since the second half of the 15th century, until the computer revolution, text has always been inextricably linked to its paper medium, linking information to a physical element more commonly known as the book. According to Fabio Massimo Bertolo, we can speak of book in a contemporary, Western sense of the term from the introduction of the movable type printing process of Johann Gutenberg (Agostinelli 2014). The power of this cultural and dissemination tool was not only linked to the content, but to its very physicality, to the point that today the oldest and most important volumes are preserved as museum objects.

The relation between the book and the document, between the medium and the content, today appears to be threatened by digitisation, which allows separation and clearly defines each range and boundaries. Approximately 60.000 e-books were sold in Italy in 2010. According to *Wired* the Christmas season saw daily sales of 500 digital books. E-Book

3 - David Le Breton teaches Sociology at the Marc Bloch University in Strasbourg. He is mainly focusing on the anthropology of the body, on which he has written many essays. Among his major works: *Anthropologie du corps et modernité* (1990).

sales in the UK exceed their counterparts and, according to Amazon, for every 100 printed books bought on the website, 114 are sold in digital format. This occurred for the first time in the United States in 2011.

It is thus clear that the choice between a printed book and an e-book is just a matter of personal taste. As the contents are the same, despite the different reading modalities and possibilities, both the printed and digital editions can be considered as books.

The subject of the discourse becomes the library. From an etymological point of view, the word is made up of two terms: *biblíon* (“book,” “work”) and *théke* (“chest,” “closet”). The *Enciclopedia Treccani* defines library as a “collection of books for study purposes, and also the very place (room or building) where they are kept: ‘library’ (*bibliothèque*), however, means, first of all, ‘shelf’: on which lay the rolls, thus the set of rolls too, and only as a consequence, the room (when the building began) in which they were placed.” Another contemporary didactic definition, from *Wikipedia*, describes it as a “knowledge chest,” as “an organised collection of information-carrying media, physical (books, magazines, CDs, DVDs, etc.) or virtual (access to databases, electronic journals, etc.) able to satisfy the information needs (study, professional development, recreation, etc.) of an end-user identified according to predefined parameters.” If these definitions are relevant from the point of view of the content offered by the institution, they are limited when considering the new technologies for custodial purposes and dissemination of culture that go beyond the physical limitations of paper.

The 2004 Italian Cultural Heritage Code, art. 101, defines the library as “a permanent structure that collects and maintains an organised set of books, materials and information, published or available on any media, allowing their consultation in order to promote reading and study.”

If the library were just a repository of books, the definition expressed by the Ministry would no longer make sense and the library would probably have little or no future. The “house of the book” fulfils a double purpose, both for the conservation of the document and its dissemination, carrying out a primary social function.

The National Library of Berlin built by Hans Scharoun during the Cold War, is an example from the very name that was given to it, “Haus 2.” The architectural work was located close to the wall separating it from the city and it had to be a symbol of culture, and although the purpose of the operation was clearly political, the sign of the institution’s social power remains. There are then libraries with more conservative aims, like a treasure chest protecting ancient texts, which are part of the World Heritage. These writings are seldom, if at all, consulted since the acidity

of the skin would deteriorate them, the ink would fade or they may be accidentally damaged in other ways, or even stolen. These tomes have completely lost their disseminating function and have become museum objects, thus increasing their artistic and documentary value but losing the function for which they were initially created. The content of these writings is copied and reprinted again or scanned and then made available, thus surviving the physical book itself.

Even the library seems to survive the book as object, evolving into new forms or integrating new features, at times taking a more social direction, and at others, more the direction of a museum of itself, as is the case for historical libraries where, as for ancient books, the aesthetic value prevails on the content, now easily extractable and available thanks to the new media.

Thus, libraries grow and integrate their services in total openness to technology, exploiting it to break their own physical boundaries and spread through the network. Speaking of e-books, libraries appear to be highly interested in the digital lending of books wherein a single library will be able to purchase a number of digital copies of a book and lend it to readers without duplicates. In this way, readers, in order to get a book, will not have to wait their turn nor even physically go to the library. The primary function of a library, as mentioned in the encyclopaedic definition is seen, therefore, as partially wrong or even outdated.

The world's digital heritage is preserved in huge databases included in buildings, whose surfaces can exceed 30.000 square meters, called data center. Since these technological devices request cooling, many of them are located in some large natural refrigerator near the North Pole, as well described in an article by Federico Guerrini:

The Iceland, for its strategic location on the border between North America and Europe and the particular area, contends with the Scandinavian nations the role of the most attractive location for the construction of data centers. Last year a new data center was opened, the Thor Data Center, in Hafnarfjörður, close to Reykjavik and when the Emerald Express – the new system made of fiber optic cables– will be completed, connecting the island to the United States, Canada, Ireland, the UK and Europe, one of its major handicap – the amount of time needed for the transmission of data, due to the geographical distance between the sender and the receiver of signals – should be resolved, or at least mitigated. The submarine cables made by the company Atlantis should be able to transmit information at a rate of 100 gigabits per second: to give you an idea of what this really means one just need to know that it would take no more than 23 seconds to transmit from one point to another all the books kept in the Library of Congress. (Guerrini 2011)

So, will these physically inaccessible places contain, in the near future, all human knowledge, as much as the Laurentian Library or the modern-equipped libraries of Northern Europe?

Producing and using information is an important part of everyday life for each of us. "Information literacy," a term that indicates the ability to find documents and sources online and offline, is an often forgotten issue, albeit at the root of a problem that is not only IT related. Libraries, in their historical and primary significance, not only being custodians of culture, but also producers of it, as scholars accessed referenced knowledge centres in order to generate new ones.

The research of the document is therefore crucial to the very existence of the text itself. The potential in information research has increased exponentially through computerisation with the help of powerful tools termed "automagical" by Fabio Metitieri. Examples are tags, labels with keywords, links, and word research, (often created by users more than by specialists) as well as evaluations and comments on the writings (Metitieri 2011).

To surrender to IT tools for research, considering that an algorithm is at the root of the result and not a conscious mind, in a world overflowing with information means wasting a great opportunity for both the user and society as a whole. More and more people, as part of the computer-literate population, only use the web as a research tool, without ever setting foot in a library, taking for granted that everything one needs can be found on the internet. This is significant because it tells us that for some people the net is the guardian of culture, thus playing a role that was once the prerogative of libraries and books. From this perspective, the importance of creating intellectual training and a cultured, referenced, intelligent computerised system becomes essential.

To limit or regulate a nomadic flow of information such as that of the web, which is very different both from printed and e-books, seems however to contradict the very spirit with which it was founded and this may cause possible rejection. On the other hand, in literary, university and institutional circles, web sources are often forbidden as a reference for publications because of the lack of reliability of the sources. Paradoxically, the web, while being easily accessible and potentially richer in documents than any library, and equipped with a much faster and more effective search system, is in danger of losing its cultural legitimacy because of excessive freedom in content publication.

According to Pierre Levy, digital information, in a typically postmodernist view, is a multiplicity of small claims fighting for their validity, thus

representing the end of the totality in a universal and heterogeneous perspective. In a very optimistic vision of the future network and its relationship with culture, Nicholas Negroponte envisions the “Daily Me,” a daily newspaper made up of readers according to their fields of interest, thanks to the overabundance of information that can be found on the web. With social networks, the active role of users on the network has been increasing and this participatory communication is substantially enriching and increasing the exchange of ideas within the global system. If it additionally increases in quality is something that remains to be seen. The user-generated content has always been a part of the network, even before the 2.0 era, and it probably represents the very essence of it. However, without an authoritative container it is likely to become “junk” that distracts and slows down the research for quality information on the web.

A symbol and an example of a participatory and computerised culture – but also of its limitations – is certainly *Wikipedia* (Cohen 2007). The “Free Encyclopaedia” was founded in 2001 with the anarchist idea of allowing users the freedom to create all the entries. This very spirit allowed rapid success and widespread diffusion among users. Later, however, a number of volunteers began to take issue with the sources as some “users” invented or modelled entries as they wanted. The online encyclopaedia has also obtained the support of the University of Washington’s libraries, by adding links to their digital collections, and the direction taken by *Wikipedia* has given rise to other sectorial projects such as Wikia, or Wikibooks. The balance between freedom and control of the sources by a repository, despite the unavoidable limitation of the opinions that are open to question, may be the future of the library in the network. This must not be confused with the digitisation of documents, virtual libraries or physical library websites. In 2009 an article was published in *Wired*, headlined “Farewell to the bookworm.” On that date, Google announced the upcoming digitisation of 16 million titles, including manuscripts and incunabula prior to the 16th century, which have been almost inaccessible to the public until now (Gervasoni 2009). The operation will take place in accordance with 46 Italian public libraries, including those of Rome, Florence, and the historic Braidense of Milan. Even the British Library, one of the largest in the world, will make available for free on the Kindle®, the popular Amazon e-reader, over 65.000 volumes of its large collection, many of which are now inaccessible.

The future envisioned by Pierre Levy in *Cyberculture* back in 1997, seems to have become reality and Google Books may become the *Library of Babel* imagined by Jorge Luis Borges (1941). In the same article mentioned

above, Mario Resca, Minister for the Enhancement of Cultural Heritage, describes as positive the agreement reached, both for the unlimited universal accessibility of the volumes and for their perpetual preservation from historical damage, such as the 1966 Florence flood. Another aspect, which should not be underestimated, is the saving cost. Given the high cost of digitisation, now fully covered by Google, such historical libraries have been waiting for years for grants that they still have not received. However, if the library now shares the custodianship of culture with data centres, it does not give up its leading role in the cultural life of cities as a physical and social place that, by definition, will never belong to the virtual world.

The commonly used term Web 2.0 refers to the transition from unidirectional virtual information to participatory and interactive information between users. The previously mentioned issue regarding the true existence or not of this distinction between web and web 2.0 is of no interest, since it is the concept that lies behind it. In 2006, the American Library Association entrusted Professor David Lankes of Syracuse University with a study on how the 2.0 services could be used within libraries. This research led to an important paper entitled, "Participatory Networks: The Library as Conversation" (2007). The most important observation that can be drawn from this is that the 2.0 goal is not technologisation or computerisation of the premises, but rather participation and a greater centrality of the user in the library, with greater personalisation of the service, thanks to, but not only, technological devices. Fabio Metitieri in a 2007 interview for the magazine *Biblioteche oggi* asked the professor if this has not always been the true purpose of libraries, but that it is only today, thanks to information technology, that such a thing is possible. According to Lankes, this statement may be correct, but the scale and power of the new instruments are such that everything is very different, since with digitisation, the very concepts of time and space are erased.

The library, as one of the oldest institutions, has undergone many technological innovations and has survived because it has always fulfilled its mission of creating and disseminating knowledge. Thus its social role will continue to keep it alive, though probably transformed or turned upside-down in both its physical and virtual spaces and the offered contents, which will probably become less and less physically printed.

Bianca Verri in her speech, "Leggere in circolo: esperienze di lettura in biblioteca" at a conference held in Milan on March 17th-18th, 2005 and later published in *Le teche della lettura: Leggere in biblioteca al tempo della rete* talks about the experience of collective reading in the library (Gamba and Trapletti 2007). In these examples, the very idea of participation by

comments and criticisms on books that have been read is no different from what happens on forums or Web 2.0 sites, without the need of any technological support. The only support that one needs is a free and flexible architectural space that allows meeting and the pleasure of reading. Currently, in Anglo-Saxon countries, according to data provided by the author, participatory reading involves more than half a million people.

The virtual world, as obviously created by man, is once again mirroring the real one, but beyond this tautology, according to Barbara Galik (2007), the real goal that can make a 2.0 library is to overcome the direct control of information, by radically trusting the reader and allowing them not only to change it but also to create it.

The library today

Social customs and public and private spaces radically changed following major computerisation. This required an adaptation of new and existing environments to the requirements of technology terminals, then lighter and portable ones that are almost completely free from spatial constraints. What does the library represent today? How does it develop? What is its predominant function: social, cultural, guardian?

The interior space of this ancient structure has undergone many changes throughout history as a consequence of smaller or greater revolutions mainly involving changes in support of the document. Several forms of library have always existed, distinguishing themselves and evolving differently because the tasks they had to perform were diverse. Some of these are private libraries of individual scholars or philanthropists. An example is the Morgan Library in New York, created by the billionaire John Pierpont Morgan, a collector of antiquities and manuscripts. Today, thanks to the expansion designed by Renzo Piano in 2006, the library has become a museum of itself and of the volumes contained therein, although we may say that since it was never designed to perform a public function, it had always been so.

Alessandro Baricco, talking about this very place, while the architectural work was in progress, says:

Think about it. Let's take as a concrete example the manuscript of Schubert's quartet *Death and the Maiden*. The Morgan Library has it, or the first two musical compositions imagined by Mozart, as a child, and transcribed by the hand of his father: just those very two sheets. They have it. Or the paper on which Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. They have it: with his handwriting, his ink, and the glance of his eyes across the sheets. Paper. On which is written where we come from. And why are we so. As the world goes crazy, and hijacked

planes hit the tallest towers, you take that paper, dig a hole in the ground and lay it there where it all begins to seek the shelter of the foundation, and the strength of the beginning, and the purity of each dawn, and the beginning of life that is in every root. It is not any old gesture. Nor it is only an architectural gesture. It is a symbol, perhaps unintentional, but still a symbol. To put Mozart, the child, down there is a confession, and a promise.

I think it's a way of confessing that we are frightened, and we feel the need to shelter that child. Because we do feel that the barbarity of war makes us go primitive and the acceleration of technology is transforming us into futuristic automatons: at stake there is the continual and normal time for human growth, but those two forces are pulling in opposite directions and tear at that time. That child is the thread that still holds together the edges of the ripping fabric. Maybe it's subconscious, but we all know that this is the thread that will save us. Thus, we shelter it, down there. And I think that it is a promise: a way to promise ourselves that those books, that paper, that history, that time, are the point from which we should start again: the foundation of the gesture that reconstructs a liveable world. Those are the roots, and from there we should start again the daily act of creation. I like to think that it is precisely Mozart, the child, or the small Dickens of *A Christmas Carol*, or the fragile beauty of a Schubert quartet. Here there was a little idea by man, so secular and simple, so beautifully imperfect, that it could really seem to be the only possible re-establishment of a humanity that is decent. Maybe I overestimate the value of the history of culture: but isn't that beauty the only living memory that we have to remember what we wanted to be? Neither warriors nor saints, nor supermen: simply men.

So now there's a construction site, but sooner or later, probably in a couple of years, there will be a library in that hole: Mozart, the child, in the veins of the stone that holds together the world's heart. And going there will be like visiting a monument. It will be like going to honour an idea. Madison Avenue, between 36th and 37th. Remember the address, please. (Baricco 2004)

There are other interesting examples of cases or vaults for culture, specifically designed by contemporary architects for the protection and the display of ancient manuscripts. The JFK Library in Boston, completed in 1979 by the architect I.M. Pei, is both a museum and a monument to culture. The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, designed by Gordon Bunshaft and built between 1961 and 1963 as part of Yale University Campus, contains ancient texts, and makes them accessible to scholars after some registration procedures. The most interesting observation that can be made about these two architectures is that they have the aesthetic composition of a monument. The former, of a large display case and the latter, as an attempt to formally merge the aim for which they were built. In these cases, interior spaces are very different from those of a public library, as their function, which is symbolic and

representative, the first, is conservative and the latter, prevails. Both the inside and the outside of these volumes are linked to their aim, and also for their functions and spaces.

Libraries have, therefore, a function that can be defined as primary, which often is, but not necessarily, the public activity of reading. Other components of this institution, and thus of the architectural space, are called “extensive activities” as defined by Paola Vidulli in an essay included in *Abitare la biblioteca* (1984) – such as exhibitions, debates and all things related to the library in which participation takes place. We should then not forget accessory activities, which are nowadays increasingly permeating new reading centres. These features may include bars/caféterias – reminiscent of the Parisian literary cafés – banks, restaurants, bookshops and others. Sometimes spaces have so many different functions that the library itself becomes one among the many functions of these perhaps more social rather than cultural containers. The library itself also becomes accessory to other multi-purpose spaces or something ethereal and ubiquitous thanks to the telecommunication network.

The more space required for additional services in libraries seems to be proportional to the increasing access to digital media books. This phenomenon is due to two different reasons. Firstly, the library, because of the web, has lost its role as primary source of culture, resulting in the decrease of physical users and the increase in the importance of its social function over that of the conservative. The second reason is the modification of the space as a consequence of the new technologies, media and opportunities offered by the network system. These processes have brought libraries to be multifunctional spaces more and more. Gianni Ottolini (1984), writing about furniture in public spaces, describes “comfort” as a set of features and confidence, as if it were in daily use. The public environment, in contrast with the private, has to adapt to a multitude of users and address a number of issues related to the decay, safety and flexibility of the space without focussing its attention away from individual demands. Beyond the on-going debate on open or closed shelves and issues related to safety problems or user control, it is important to consider the architecture of the library more as a container for other spaces that go beyond the concept of room to become technology, and spaces for groups of activities compatible or integrated with their equipment. In addition, microclimate technologies, soundproofing and lighting create a hierarchy of spaces, as can be seen in the Rolex Centre in Lausanne designed by SANAA and completed in 2010. For buildings designed *ex novo*, to follow the principles of flexibility and versatility of the environmental space, as well as their integration, it is easier, even if it is not that obvious, than it is for

the existing ones. The structural limits and the historical and architectural value of some libraries prevent their evolution in these directions and sometimes crystallise them, turning them into museums.

The introduction of the first computers in the 1980s has characterised the aesthetics, composition and changes of most of the contemporary libraries. The technological innovation, as described by Patrice Flichy (2007), often follows the needs of society, but requires time to evolve and improve. The very first computers were very expensive and large objects, so for years they were foreclosed to the public space and relegated to accessory environments. Their introduction into the environment of the library began, especially in Italy, quite late and has gone through two phases. The first was to function as an archive, helping librarians to store, search and check the owned texts and then, subsequently, manage networks of exchange between libraries. The second phase, with the spread of internet on a large scale, saw its integration as a service offered to the user. The success of the operation, due also to the initial cost of computers and Internet services, and the fact that a tool that we now consider essential was then perceived as an accessory, began a true revolution in spatial environments of libraries. Reading rooms were reduced to make room for increasingly longer and narrower multimedia posts. Not being able to face these changes, some libraries were the subject of spatial extension, while others were violated in their form and architecture.

The introduction of the computer is one of the many stimuli that have contributed to the change, birth, growth, fossilisation or demise of many libraries. The historical Boston Public Library, considered as the first library in America, is rather a good example. Following the growing lack of space, an increase in the number of collections and users, the institution decided to establish another location that could develop according to future dynamics in order to avoid any damage to its historic architecture. Today, this is largely implemented in its functions, including one of the largest computer rooms, and one of the largest DVD collections for loan in the world.

The metabolism and the evolution of libraries thus have architectural implications and social origins based on the new needs, which generate new functions or new objects. As a spinoff of the library, and thanks to the increasing ease in the digitalisation of data, new structures such as media centres – or media libraries in which video and audio documents are preserved, catalogued and made accessible – are established. The most modern example of this innovative container is the Sendai Mediatheque, designed in 2000 by Toyo Ito, but almost all libraries are today equipped with this additional function, which has often evolved forming

autonomous cells within the existing space. Such is the case of the public library of Delft in the Netherlands, where the workstations look more like individual spaces filtered by open partitions, so as to not create separate rooms, identifying these niches yet leaving them to be events of a single space. The tendency towards the integration of new features is typical of the whole of northern Europe, where the library plays an important social role, and tries to keep abreast of its users by offering play areas, collective TV spaces, etc. This contemporary British and Dutch attitude in the design and insertion of ancillary spaces forces the library away from its initial and primary function of a place for study, reading and research, turning it into a social collector. As is well described by Antonella Agnoli, the massive introduction of technology and virtuality has created a new habitat where we are all absorbed and is called “disintermediation” by sociologists, since it is the user who has direct access to the source without the need of a technician or an expert, (as the librarian once was) who currently is mostly a supervisor (Belotti 2011). The evolution of this phenomenon and technology will, according to the author, render the library superfluous as a means of culture.

On the other hand, the evolution of the network and its “everything at once and from home” is increasingly becoming more business-oriented. What was once “free” is now becoming a fee. Therefore, as computer technology entered the library for the first time when individual citizens could not afford to purchase a PC, technology is now meaningful in the form of free dissemination or sharing of content and proposals. The current form of the institution does not offer the PC itself but very expensive software licenses. In addition to this, libraries can offer an internal network rich in content, allowing access to pay-sites thanks to collective subscriptions and even the rediscovery of paper books for free, on loan and with no need of any additional support to function.

The process of disposal and reutilisation of interior spaces in the new libraries is more accelerating even more by the speed of the technological evolution of terminals and their new consumer base. Public computer stations, introduced in the 1980s, which are different from the terminals used by librarians for research, can now be considered obsolete due to the spread of the laptop. The growing presence of portable computers resulted in the need to multiply connection points to the electricity grid, a problem that may probably be solved in the near future since there are rumours regarding everlasting nuclear batteries. All adjustment, introduction and the subsequent disposal of equipment at the end of the life cycle – shorter and more complex than the one that saw the rise and fall of animal skin, papyrus or paper – creates wounds and an often-obvious inadequacy of

the architectural ingredient. Looking at the architecture of the Rolex Centre in Lausanne, one cannot help but notice that the whole spatial layout is largely free and open, and that the part dedicated to loans, with its returns counter, is rather small if compared to the several study rooms provided. The space is intentionally adaptable, the use of poufs and rugs, in addition to the sinuosity of the interior space, shaped as such for a wider dispersion of sound waves, transform the entire environment into a huge flexible seat, where students are to be found with laptops on their knees or with books in their hands. The infrastructure is then reduced to zero, while other functions are defined by specific self-sufficient islands and are organised following their own functional logic.

If the difficulty in adjustment is greater for historical architectures, it is so also for the relatively new ones. Taking the Utrecht Campus Library, designed by Wiel Arets Architects and completed in 2005, as an example, one can easily understand how rapid the aforementioned process of obsolescence can be. The hall, which was intended for the use of PCs, was one of the highlights of the project and was designed to integrate wooden seats equipped with monitors and keyboards. This choice was much appreciated since it concealed the presence of cables and other desktop computer equipment from sight. Unfortunately, nowadays, especially in university libraries, students work with their own computers so they can always have access to all their data, create their own customisation and directly save and store content. Thus, a classic table equipped with a power socket would be more convenient, useful and less expensive.

The downsizing of certain functions and ancillary spaces plays a key role within the interior landscape of libraries. Multimedia proposals, freer spatial possibilities and, thanks to wi-Fi systems, cabling and equipment, are even less subjugating. The digitisation of documents made it possible to reduce archives to a minimum and to free storage space for other functions, as well as giving the opportunity, through the e-book, to not necessarily possessing multiple copies of one book, since its content can be simultaneously read by unlimited users.

Delegating certain functions to the digital dimension may give new spatial opportunities within these architectural volumes, where places can be re-used for social and collective functions such as group reading or computer education. This is a trend that institutions are following even in Italy, in which there is a will to create a cultural district that is able to direct and to invite people to culture, research and education, and to provide physical spaces for these activities.

Another case, however, demonstrates just how alive the interest in the library is, beyond the content of the book – the Idea Store. These

spaces are very similar in size to certain contemporary local libraries in northern Europe, but they are much more technological and richer from the architectural point of view. Often privately funded, they differ from bookstores because their primary goal is not to sell books, since they are freely available and shelves are open. The opportunity for free reading attracts users that will then use the cafés, restaurants, retail outlets and so on. The private interest in libraries, now far from historical patronage, is a sign of how this institution is deeply rooted in the social fabric of the community and how the book as an object, in any form, is still an important item made by men for men.

Marco Muscogiuri (2012), an architect and expert in the economy of libraries, points out that in northern European libraries the number of loans has clearly decreased, but not the number of users, thanks not only to comfortable architectures, multi-purpose and social spaces, but also to strategic positioning within the cities.

Local libraries have emerged to respond to a need for literacy and socialisation, both in city neighbourhoods and in smaller towns. This important place of cohesion, not only in Italy but also in the world, has often been used as a tool to redevelop urban areas or neighbourhoods and to reduce the marginalisation of vulnerable social groups. The above-mentioned phenomenon of media store, on the other hand, moves this institution not according to real needs but where there is a strong turnout of people, such as shopping centres. This operation is, without doubt, economically favourable, but it still draws the attention of librarians, not only as means to a cultural sell-off. Shopping centres have often become the new squares and from this point of view, a “cultural garrison,” provided that it remains cultural, can only be a positive contribution as long as this is not at the expense of an abandonment or displacement of local libraries, as seems to be happening.

In this displacement of the library towards the user, once again technology plays a major role. In 2012, a very special type of shelf called *Wonderwall* was produced by 2CQR and launched on the market. This facility is equipped with interactive shelves and, by transferring the chosen book onto a player, one can instantly have access to all the information required. The device also offers web catalogues and search tools, guides, and videos, etc. Its purpose seems to be, on the one hand, the integration of paper book information with hypertext, while on the other, the creation of a tool that is able to replace librarians in order to create library spaces outside libraries. Other distributors in the same vein have already been adopted by English colleges. These devices, which are very similar to snack food distributors, allow borrowing and automated delivery of books

via a registration card. Since these machines take up a small space, the collection therein contained may be limited to a few best sellers.

Other more spontaneous phenomena and less commercially widespread libraries can be found in gardens and squares of New York, where it is possible to read a series of volumes, which are also limited in this case and are outside, weather permitting. For these borderline cases, they cannot be seen as libraries in themselves, but these are all phenomena that define a desire and a demand for culture, information and reading pleasure that goes beyond multimedia and e-books, some of which do not even require physical movement of the user in the media library, which is, by its nature, everywhere. The need to rethink cities as places that can integrate these technologies in order to make the urban environment itself information and, therefore, an educational environment, may be an interesting evolution of the library. Moreover, by simplifying and unburdening itself even physically, it might exceed its limitations without disappearing.

When the library goes beyond its borders walls, it becomes itself a functional integration of other spaces. The possibility given by computerisation to not only receive information on owned volumes, but to read entire books and to do this anywhere in the world opens doors to new scenarios in which the library can claim back its primary role as holder of referenced culture. With this idea of spots, i.e. small areas easily identifiable, placed all over the city and connected together via a telematics system, one can dream of a kind of "smart library." There may be no examples of this situation, but we have very often heard of widespread and shared libraries in recent years. The lack of flexibility of architectural envelopes and the resulting problems, described extensively in the previous paragraphs, highlights the need for a sustainable project that takes future modifications and applications into consideration and that it would be so much cheaper to be able to think of a painless disposal of what becomes superfluous with an increase in technological acceleration, which today appears only as a utopian vision.

Carlo Ratti, referring to Smart Cities, considers not only an intelligent network of connections and use of space, but more importantly, informed citizens. Thanks to the exchange of knowledge, habits and information, one can change the city. The collection and exchange of this data, when translated into a discourse becomes a form of writing that is useful for the self-improvement of the environment. The participated library leads to this concept, which is very different from simple documents digitisation, and finds in the network the most fertile ground to take root thanks to the advantage of having no physical constraints. Another feature that would have to be smart and that so far the 2.0 library does not possess, is physical

confirmation in reality. Whereas in the smart city virtual networks solve real problems, participated libraries, forums and network culture produce very little on a concrete level. Often the comments, called “posts,” have little meaning and do not add anything that may be useful or agreeable. Thus, the image of a book written by countless hands remains far removed from what is happening today on the net and it is still inconceivable to even imagine the preface of a book being written by users. If it is still premature to talk about smart libraries and library 2.0, it is certainly not the case to talk about the library in the network. Examples of online libraries are countless. Once again, it is preferable to make a distinction between the website of the library – i.e. a web page where users are provided with information on the physical institution as well as a catalogue of the owned volumes – and the virtual library. Google Books has become to all intents and purposes the largest on-line and off-line library in the world. Even the Vatican library, as other archives mentioned in previous chapters, is undergoing a process of digitisation of about 80 km of shelves. In this specific case, however, the contents will remain private. Many libraries have already equipped their sites for on-line e-book lending systems or for direct reading of volumes through links with Google. The safety and increased preservation of digital data, the ability to share it simultaneously with thousands of people, and the economic and social interest of the operation seems to have convinced everyone.

The future of the library

Digitisation is effectively making paper redundant. If culture is ubiquitous and libraries themselves, in order to survive, are transforming into multifunctional and cultural centres, can we still talk of libraries? If the idea we have of the library is to preserve and to pass on knowledge, stories and traditions to posterity, and to spread culture, the new library is the network itself and its architecture is that of the data stores. In an interesting paper, Sreten Ugričić (2012) addresses the issue of dematerialisation of the library and says that the technology is real while the institution is virtual. The virtuality can be considered as a kind of continuation and evolution of reality as has been described by Heinrich Popitz (1990). In this evolutionary context, the physical library also adapts and revolutionises in order to find the right space in what has always been its territory, i.e. information. According to Ugričić, the real crisis only involves the hierarchical and ruling apparatus which has been built over the centuries around “being the library” and that seems to be struggling hard to find a place in the new world. The institution justifies its existence

expecting it to be necessary, thus self-justifying itself proclaiming to be such, without actually producing anything.

Culture, like knowledge, has always been an intangible asset and written texts, as well as their media versions, are only ways of containing and securing through codes, techniques, thoughts and emotions. In this light, exceeding the limits of the physical library as architecture and as an institution is none other than a reduction to its true essence, to its pure content.

In this perspective, it is clear that books and libraries, which are seen as useful but not fundamentally necessary, are now destined to become museums. The secret of the new digital media is precisely the idea of being born empty. Websites, PCs and e-books are nothing more than containers that can be infinitely filled with different content, just like the network.

The dissemination of culture through computer support, in addition to causing copyright problems for publishers, brings with it the more serious problem of the manipulation and of the self-referentiality of the information contained therein. The printed book, especially scientific texts, on the other hand, gives a number of guarantees in the quality of its content due to research, references and on-going revisions for which, not only the author but also the entire editorial structure and eventually the library itself, take full responsibility.

This seems to point in favour of the library but it is clearly a purely technical problem that may one day be overcome. Referenced sites, such as *Wikipedia*, are indeed working in this direction. Once the issue of copyright and the authoritativeness of the sources are overcome, it will be very difficult to sustain the argument regarding the need for a physical library.

Besides the technical problems, the network library is winning from all points of view. It is infinitely wide, safer from the point of view of loss of content, it facilitates research thanks to its code and accessory tools that manage it, it is environmentally friendly, (one could argue this point since the technologies have a strong impact on both electromagnetism and power consumption) and it may be improved by individual users in a participatory process (hypothesis of a future library 2.0). However, most importantly, it is mostly everywhere.

What then survives in the real world of this ancient treasure of knowledge? Why, to this day, do we continue to build these structures, and why is the number of their users rising in some cases?

The reason is that the library is a museum of culture. The book itself is written to safeguard a message, a thought, and an idea, and to read it is often no different from looking at a marble statue sculpted 2.000 years ago. The

material essence of the book will always have value, as will the Belvedere Torso, though it may be incomplete and not fully comprehensible.

Books and libraries are, then, already museums, or rather they have always been that by their very nature.

If the building of a library does not have a high aesthetic, historical or architectural value, it risks being subsumed by time, reaching out to its inexorable end. The body of this architectural artefact sometimes keeps its name but, emptied of its function and being aesthetically unsuitable to evoke the spirit of time or memory, it houses other functions, becoming or implementing its feature as social collector. The collective direction of this institution, with the exception of the private library, has always been an element of success and it seems to be the only possible strength in its survival as a physical space.

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The Network of Local Libraries

Lavinia Dondi

The term “wanderer” effectively sums up the nature of present-day society. The willingness to move, spurred on by the economy of a country or by the desire to discover, is the author of a large part of the contemporary dynamics, connected correspondingly to an increase in multiculturalism, socio-cultural hybridisations and new perceptions of identity. Despite this mobility, which leads people to move more rapidly and with ease, the need to be tied to the one’s territory in a global society is still present and can be related not only to birthplace, but also more often to the place where an individual has resided the longest. People are further characterised by multiple territorial links, index of hybrid identities powered by very different cultural landscapes.

According to this view, a current topic of interest is the development of the sense of belonging to the community, often related only to ingrained local realities, in opposition to *non-places* that characterised contemporary actions. These are essentially represented by the dynamics of the prevailing media stores, inherited directly from the American landscape and in which large masses of people pour out, especially on weekends, to engage in consumer activities. The places of commercial activity, most of all set in peripheral areas, do not state the problem of identity. On the contrary, they tend to be rather anonymous, making material goods the undisputed stars of the space. Thus, even in Europe, urban public places, including squares and buildings that promote cultural initiatives, tend to empty gradually, especially in small and medium-sized cities, which are increasingly characterised by this new dynamic, which emanates from the American suburbs.

Now, in less than thirty years, the public square – the meeting ground for culture – has all but disappeared, swallowed up by a radical new concept in

human aggregation steeped in commercial relations ... The shopping mall has created a new architecture for human assembly, one immersed in a world of commerce in which culture exists in the form of commodified experiences. ... Even more important, these are the places where most people spend much of their leisure time.... These are the new domains where people live out much of their social life – where they engage one another in discourse or just in passing. (Rifkin 2001, 154–155)

Small city libraries and neighbourhood libraries are part of those public services that are linked to the place and are the promoters of belonging identity, which needs to be supported to reverse the on-going trend. Public institutions become one of the key factors for the rediscovery of urban places and their redevelopment. This process is effectively summarised by the term of *glocalisation* (Bauman 2010, 87–102; Latour 2004, 44–45), which is often linked to that of *globalisation*, reflecting the need to support local enterprises to be able to sustain global society which would otherwise seem to be problematic.

Therefore, the discussion focuses on the characteristics of a real renaissance of local libraries, which corresponds to a completely innovative architectural design, demonstrated by case studies collected in recent years in Europe, the context of the research. After a premise dating back to the 1980s and useful for identifying significant episodes to compare with present-day dynamics, the analysis of the contemporary debate regarding the salvage of such public institutions follows. The aim of the research is to outline a new way of living and thinking about the space of the local library, which becomes a real meeting place for citizens, as well as a key building that contributes toward forging the identity of the city, working in opposition to the anonymous business enterprises, which are situated mostly in remote areas.

A historical premise

A European reference framework is crucial in discussing the topic of libraries. To fully understand the present-day situation regarding libraries linked to the object of the research, the comparison between them becomes essential and allows the highlighting of both the positive aspects and the critical states in which they find themselves. In particular, analysis is carried out on the main characteristics of the cultural debate related to libraries in European countries where it has been of more interest and cutting-edge since the 1980s, the time period in which the research begins. Very different surveys are pointed out, which can be directly related both to the Italian phenomenon, immediately highlighting its deficiencies, and to

current occurrences in several European countries, where the institutions have marked out a clear course for development.

What, then, is meant precisely by cultural debate regarding public libraries? Reference is made to a number of cultural issues raised by various disciplines that contribute to the architecture of the library. Being a public building, it is strongly related to specific community funding, regulated differently in each country, and it depends indirectly on cultural debate, or on the specific idea of these institutions that people have constructed in different ways in Europe. If questions connected to public funding and to the idea of these cultural buildings really exist, the architectural debate around this space is also as important because it is related directly to the social changes that involve libraries, besides the variation in European architectural schools that seem far removed from the willingness to “internationalise,” which arises from the Modern Movement.

In Northern Europe, for example, the services promoted by public authorities have always been at the heart of the community. A city can exist and develop as a result of the efficiency, which may give a real contribution to building the social life of individuals where environmental conditions prove quite adverse. This is the cultural background in which the libraries by Alvar Aalto are conceived, destined to represent a turning point in the architectural design of these institutions. Here, there is a transition between architecture for public buildings conceived through monumental experience and not without a formalistic emphasis, to an architecture that instead chooses anti-rhetorical features and more linear shapes, linked, in the first place, to the experience of the Modern Movement. A clear choice regarding form that comes close to the forms of living usually experienced by the citizen, rather than to the contemplative and resonant vocation of buildings that usually host collective functions.

Architecture for Alvar Aalto is not something to contemplate but to use, and indoor spaces, in particular, to be experienced, and to be experienced not in exceptional moments, but in the context of daily activities, twenty-four hours a day. (Fusaro 1984, 156)

This architectural feature can be seen in the Viipuri Library in Vyborg, whose design begins in 1927 and lasts until 1935, and whose different phases of the project testify to the final transition to the organic Aalto language. The architect, winner of the competition, initially conceives a building with classical language, directly inspired by the work of Erik Gunnar Asplund, providing an austere entrance facing the street with neoclassical facades, which are nevertheless very simplified. Later, the

administration decides to revise the location of the building, planning to move it inside the city park of Turkellinpuisto, which leads to Aalto availing himself of the opportunity of making substantial changes to the project, taking it in the direction of the poetry of Organicism and setting it free from the constraints of the competition. The library becomes an organic body related to the city through a dynamic motion that connects the inside to the outside and no longer through neoclassical facades. The conceived space comes from the poetry of the Modern Movement but it goes beyond because it transcends functional schematism to deal with the real quality of the architecture and the value of space related to the person who lives and experiences it (Fusaro 1984, 158). It is an architecture in which spaces to read and to listen are defined time after time by the actions that take place there, responding effectively to the needs of the user. This is a significant architectural transition that interprets the social need, which can already be found in Northern Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, to bring the public institution closer to the citizen, pursuing the goal of widespread and customary public attendance.

Thus begins the developmental stage of the library institution, full of legislative processes and citizen participation. It will be the subject of analysis for other European countries, as well as a reason for pride in Northern European governments, which are the dominant position even in the 1980s and 1990s. The architects, who came from the experience of Organicism and who were supported both by a well-defined legislative system and by institutions linked to public libraries, continued to design spaces that were primarily close to the users. Besides, these libraries were conceived in strategic urban locations and they were always run by qualified personnel, as can be understand in an article that looks at the situation of Danish libraries in the 1980s (Krogh 1984, 132).

A new practice, concerning a design method that begins from a modular principle takes place, not only in Denmark, to ensure a sufficient size to carry out rational management of library services. The number of citizens, multiplied by certain standard values, adds further information, which is essential in these types of plans. In doing so, however, there is no intent to underestimate the individual initiative of architects, but instead the aim is to ensure a correct starting point for the project, making it able to satisfy the changing needs of the previously analysed library. Finally, the fundamental requirement that is demanded of these design solutions, already present in the 1980s, is the flexibility of the interior that allows a true rearrangement of the functions, besides an innovative approach aimed at the model of the “house of culture” (Krogh 1984, 135), a meeting

place on a human scale which is, at the moment, the image of the library of the future.

In France, the tradition of public libraries dates back to the years of the French Revolution, in which the first *dépôt littéraire* available to citizens is installed in Paris, in the Capuchin church of rue Saint-Honoré. Here begins a long and rich journey that French library institutions undertake, dealing effectively with the management of the immense paper legacy accumulated over the centuries by scholars.

It is only in the second half of the 20th century, however, that centralised systems focusing on the management of libraries in urban areas begin to develop, looking at the successes both in Northern Europe and in the United Kingdom. In the 1970s, the French central government sets the baseline development of the current system, formulating guidelines both on the specific functions required in the library field and on the construction of new buildings designed to house them. So here a new trend, which promotes suitably designed architectural buildings, begins to emerge in opposition to the common practice of placing libraries in existing complexes. The administration also states that the services offered to the public should be centrally located and be clearly commensurate to the number of citizens served. However, most importantly, a new model of the library, which tends to merge with other recreational activities, takes place in the 1980s, becoming a richer and more fortified space. This concerns the inclusion of small auditoriums, exhibition spaces or rooms for audio-video activities, made to complete the usual apparatus of the library, which tries to approach the new requirements of contemporary citizens, placing new media at the same level as the book. The importance of this has decreased considerably with the arrival of more immediate cognitive tools, such as audio-video and digital platforms, antecedents to the contemporary world of the Internet. The presence only of books is no longer considered enough to think of public investment for a service offered to the city.

These innovative buildings, which ride the media revolution of the late 20th century, are called *multimedia libraries* and involve an architectural review because the new functions that integrate the reading activity require specific places which undermine the usual identity of the building. This evolution of the space, as mentioned earlier, aims to promote an effective image of the service, thus discrediting interventions in pre-existent complexes (Barbera 1992, 15). The new trend, destined to amplify, has been well supported by French administrations since the 1980s who have inaugurated a true renaissance of the library apparatus, moving away from the traditional model of public reading to approach the more advanced

British model. The new *médiathèque*, whose idea is now extremely close to the cultural centre, also has unprecedented consent among citizens, both due to the quality of the spaces, and to the richness of the collections, not only the paper ones.

Once again, there is research of the public library model that may represent not only a place of knowledge but, more importantly, a place of meeting in which people are welcome, a rich and versatile space established through fruitful collaboration between librarian and architect, as already occurs in other European countries that boast an efficiency in the service: “this space has become multifaceted, building or screen, this modern temple cut out from the world to store up its representations, is rightly what we always call library” (Muscogiuri 2009, 47).

British public libraries instead were officially established by a law dating back to August 14th 1850, the Public Libraries Act, promoted by a strong reformist push supported by the aristocracy, merchants and men of culture who looked on with admiration at the French *dépôt littéraire*. However, if this cultural innovation is supported in France, mainly by the consent of the teachers and the people who, despite their lack of resources, succeeds in capturing the attention of the public by virtue of the episodes connected to the upheavals in the French Revolution, in the United Kingdom the reformist movement is supported by cultural and philanthropic initiatives promoted mostly by the noble classes. For this reason, British public libraries are destined for a quick and concrete development and this leading position remains unchallenged throughout the 19th century. In the second half of the century, a system of management and control for the reading rooms in urban areas begins to take place, while other European countries adopt it only about a century later. The assumption of British libraries is innovative and differs from that adopted, for example, in France, where libraries arise primarily because of the need to protect and preserve ancient documents. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, the service points immediately to the promotion and dissemination of topical culture, assigning a key role to the reading of periodicals and journals.

Newsrooms within the public library were established as a purely English space. Statistics at the end of the 19th century show them as vibrant places in the city: open to all ... and visited daily by thousands. (Atripaldi 2000, 18)

During the 20th century, library services continue to make progress, while library architecture remains anchored to a classical language, which does not seem even to grasp the new kind of space promoted by Aalto

in Northern Europe. Innovative services in terms of the evolution of library equipment are no match for a cutting-edge architecture capable of provoking a response. The ethical purpose of the building prevails over its aesthetics, highlighting the socialising and emancipatory ends which mark this type of architecture (Atripaldi 2000, 128).

Only in the last decades of the 20th century in the United Kingdom, when the new idea of neighbourhood library arrives, the architecture of the building radically changes, adopting a modern language in which citizens can immediately see themselves. The library institution becomes a place where a variety of activities can be carried out, not only reading and study, but also exhibitions that promote local culture and initiatives related to listening to music and to the education of children. Thus, the architecture assumes an important role in managing the coexistence of different activities in the same place, as well as in promoting library attendance through a well-structured entrance that mediates the relationship between the city and the inner reading room. The new idea of the open lending space and of the reading positions acquires great importance and becomes less formal and more flexible than in the past, while the design of the spaces for staff equipment is discussed directly with the librarians (Smith 1984, 182). Therefore, a fruitful collaboration between architects and library staff begins and goes hand in hand with surveys and assessments regarding the true needs of the population, as well as targeted market research, whose goal is a complete renewal of the English public library achieved only as recently as the 1990s.

After the achievement of the British model of the public library and the progressive libraries of Northern Europe, but before the French conception of *médiathèque*, the model of the *dreigeteilte Bibliothek*, a three-level library, expands in Germany, where the tradition of reading rooms is certainly more recent. It is a prototype designed in the 1970s by Heinz Emunds, director of the Municipal Library in Münster, which became the model of the German modern reading room par excellence.

The new idea of the public library, which grows throughout Europe, essentially deriving from the English model, presupposes the existence of an innovative space dedicated to non-specialised information which cannot be organised using the usual forms of cataloguing collections. Emunds starts from this concept to develop a new spatial and organisational model for the library in which the topical sector acquires a central role and even a new way of exhibiting materials. This part of the library space must answer a rather generic question, with no precise objective, which is difficult to relate to systematic arrangement on shelves, or to classic cataloguing by author or title. Therefore, the German librarian identifies a new

classification system based on areas of interest, bringing together different materials on the same topic, even if it is not on paper, and this assumes a more inviting setting, similar to a bookshop, with books displaying their covers on low shelves. The new space thus conceived is located near the entrance and welcomes the visitor who can go up from here to the other two traditional areas – firstly, the level with reading spaces and open bookshelves and on then the upper level containing the storage spaces. The main characteristic of this approach is that of directing the attention to the needs of the average user, whose interests lie mostly in the topical area near the entrance, which also includes periodicals. The segmentation of the proposition corresponds to progressively deeper and more specialised information needs, from more generic and less structured requirements, which imply the simplicity of the offered tools and easy access, to more clearly defined information requirements, connected to study and reading activities, which need more complex services and the possibility of use with no assistance. Finally, the third level, the one furthest from the entrance, is intended for in-depth and specialised studies and provides rare or infrequently consulted documents stored in the repository.

This organisation of the proposition permits superior service, guiding the users directly to what they are looking for but on the other hand, it would lead to excessive sectorialisation of the users, thus decreasing their ability to discover items of interest among the readings they are not used to. To avoid this eventuality, library spaces require continuous connections and cross-referencing between the different sections, mediated also by the architecture, to intrigue the reader, stimulating them to delve more deeply, and to promote promiscuity among users who have different needs at the beginning. The three-level library model, which emerges here, focuses primarily on topical interests, but without neglecting the needs of scholars and researchers. It introduces an innovative spatial articulation that seems to be led by a functionalist matrix, a way of conceiving a space that reflects the German tradition, which is often characterised by this kind of approach.

In Italy, in the wake of the great European practice, a renewal period for the organisation of public libraries, really backward than other situations on the continent, starts during the 1970s. What is to solve is first the deep imbalance in the public service that characterises the different places of the peninsula, due both to the lack of a comprehensive planning and to the absence of any strategy for the coordination of activities related to the public reading (Barbera 1992, 54).

The distribution of the largest libraries in our country does not respond to a national need and planning, but is the result of local circumstances determined by different historical developments in the various Italian regions and especially by states and governments that have dominated the peninsula before unification. (Cohen Pirani 1982, 13)

Thus, in the first half of the 1970s, general regulation for libraries is launched and subsequently it is entrusted to the respective regional powers, besides being registered at a central office for coordination and set up to have, for the first time, a complete picture of services all over the country. The situation is inadequate compared to the level in Europe and delegating services to regional powers contributes to the emphasis much more on the imbalance between the places for reading which is more developed only where resources allow for growth or where the attitude of the directors is particularly enlightened.

It is clear, therefore, how the structure of public libraries in a country is highly inconsistent and how it can be so difficult to restore the balance. For this reason, even during the 1980s, the general objective of the institution is to completely renew the network of knowledge, allowing indiscriminate access to information for all citizens. If other European countries can already allow investment that has a view to the future of the library, this is not true of Italy, where little available funding is used in developing the national library system to raise it to the standard of other countries and, as a consequence, it minimises resources for new buildings and specific arrangements. Together with this, Italian policy also excludes activities of public reading by any profit motive, even in long term, as opposed to what happened in France for example, where in the recent decades of renewal, there were business initiatives to assist cultural programmes.

The Italian architectural debate on libraries highlights the importance of working on an integrated system of basic public services to be developed within the city. Public reading rooms are not associated with the addition of new functions connected to them, as in the media library, but to programmatic coordination with other local services, such as schools, sports and entertainment. The intention is, therefore, to create a network of activities offered to citizens that is spatially controlled through careful planning (Baffa 1984, 67).

Accordingly, we have a solution regarding the problem of the image of the library that is far from most in the European debate, because here it is not the more or less attractive form of the building which contributes to the success of public service, but a series of spatial factors, controlled by planning and connected both to the location of the building, on structured

and customary routes, and to a good relationship between inner and outer spaces that depend principally on the structure of the entrance system (Baffa 1984, 72).

In spite of these positive points, however, Italian libraries fail to take off, and among the causes of this failure are to be found, for example, the inability to apply a policy of standards, a design that begins from technical data to ensure appropriate spaces to be provided for the reading activity. This is mainly due to the lack of a clear definition of the service, which can be seen each time in different ways, but also to the tendency to work on existing buildings, which has advantages, but certainly also a number of limitations. Along with this, the collaboration between architects and librarians has been lacking in Italy. It would have allowed, once the goal had been clearly focused, the realisation of certainly more efficient buildings (Sandal 1984, 77–81).

The contemporary cultural debate

The International Federation of Libraries Association (IFLA) is an international organisation that deals with the promotion of efficient library services and is conscious of the intrinsic value of those services. Its main goal is to support the freedom of access to information, ideas and knowledge. Freedom promoted, among others, by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Today the organisation operates within an international view in which deep differences emerge and where the gap between rich and poor countries is further emphasised by the *digital divide*, which is the digitisation of culture, promoted by rich countries, that excludes from the global conversation those who are not able to sustain a technological and multimedia approach to knowledge. Related to this problem, social compensation, linked to the new role of libraries, comes into play. The digital divide should be weakened and a democratic and balanced dissemination of culture through the offered services should be promoted. The goal, which emerges, also represents the main subject of the different editions of IFLA documents that have been published since the 1970s, concretely describing the terms of the changes to consider each time, and also offering possible developmental guidelines to make the library a true service to the democratic advancement of universal knowledge.

In particular, a recent and clear document promoted by the organisation is *The Public Library Service: IFLA/Unesco guidelines for development*, drawn up in collaboration with UNESCO and dating back to 2001. It has been translated into Italian by the Associazione Italiana Biblioteche (AIB), which also sponsored the promotion of updates in subsequent years. The

document is a revision of the *Guidelines for Public Libraries* written in 1986 and derived, in turn, from the *Standards for Public Libraries*, published in the 1970s. The 2001 edition was published as a result of the important changes introduced in the field of information and communication, which have deeply readjusted the environment in which libraries operate, compelling them to profoundly rethink their role. The document consists of six chapters, each of which investigates librarianship issues except the first chapter, the most wide-ranging one, which deals in general with the new objectives of today's public library and addresses all those who are involved in the process of change in the institution. Here, a model is outlined. It includes a number of innovative activities and is actively involved in the process of democratisation of society.

The primary purposes of the public library are to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure. They have an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas and opinions. (IFLA 2001, 2)

According to the document, libraries should cover a much wider range of services than in the past, which are related not only to knowledge, in the most classic sense of the term, but also to information and to those activities related to leisure. The first chapter shows, furthermore, how the library should become a place for the promotion and dissemination of local history, preserving and making available the material about the history of the community and helping thus to build and sustain a shared cultural identity. Local knowledge needs to be preserved in all its peculiarities and the necessities of the citizens should guide the choices of the library, especially in the field of information services. Therefore, besides reading activities, other cultural initiatives such as exhibitions, conferences, workshops and training courses, should be promoted, together with spaces for theatrical and musical performances. Activities for children and teenagers should also be promoted as part of the services offered to users, in order to educate to read and gain knowledge from an early age.

The most innovative social change, however, concerns the new idea of the library space, which is considered to be a meeting place and a real "living room" for citizens, especially where there are a reduced number of public spaces (IFLA 2002, 25). The institution thus becomes an agent of personal and social development and a positive growth factor for the community. A new "square" for the city, if the square is a fundamental social meeting place within an urban area, as well as a public space useful

in strengthening the sense of belonging in a community: on the one hand, as a laboratory for training and information, a gateway and guidance for the multimedia universe and, on the other, as a place for social gathering (Muscogiuri 2009, 36).

Libraries are considered as guardians of a cultural heritage that also testifies to the multiculturalism of the today's society they represent, and to which they offer their service. In the United States, even earlier than in Europe for historical reasons, research regarding cultural differences that animate society and consequently modify library equipment, is carried out, outlining a number of innovations from which public reading rooms cannot escape. The belated awareness of multiculturalism is destined, to change the nature of libraries, which have not only to rethink their identity, but also their goals, after a searching inquiry regarding catchment areas and multicultural needs. The inevitable social diversity therefore, if well managed, may be an opportunity for enrichment not only for the community, but also for the organisation of the libraries that, having recognised true pluralism, will as an example, provide for updates to collections on the grounds of the prevailing languages and adapt new services to actual local needs. Being able to actually satisfy cultural needs, which are in continual evolution, for each individual, it is also necessary that librarians recognise the different social groups to which the service is addressed, creating a heterogeneous staff able to understand the cultural backgrounds of belonging. A mixed staff has the characteristics of engaging with the community, in all its facets, in the initiatives promoted by the public institution and provides greater flexibility in problem solving (Buttlar, Caynon and Ruhig Du Mont 1994, 7–37).

Libraries thus play a fundamental role within multicultural societies because they should be able to provide the key to understanding social differences and their management, which is tied to a very specific cognitive process. Promoting awareness and understanding of cultural diversity within the community becomes one of the main goals of the library, as well as a further source of social redemption for them.

It is important to highlight how a multicultural society brings the need for dialogue and encounter as fundamental requirements for peaceful coexistence of different linguistic and cultural heritages: “affirming that respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantee of international peace and security” (UNESCO 2002, 62). Once again, the library has to renegotiate its *status* as a promoter of multicultural policies and it should also be a place of comparison between different identities, a space of relationship and dialogue in which, to the individuality linked to

the book or media, a more or less collective activity of mutual acquaintance is added, in unison with the contemporary idea of the library as a meeting place. This tendency is particularly visible in small cities or districts where the public institution really tries to support the life of the citizen. Far from resounding cultural vocations, it aims to meet the information and knowledge needs of multiple identity users. It is within small communities that people benefit most from library services by also mediating social discomfort, and thus establishing fruitful intercultural relations, which should be supported. It is precisely here that an education to pluralism is really needed, because it is often insufficient.

Multicultural activities include both information services for all users and library services addressed specifically at socially disadvantaged ethnic-cultural groups, to guarantee them equal access to library equipment. Multicultural initiatives are often considered as a benefit to only minority communities, while actually a part of the activity is directed instead to the community as a whole, to promote awareness of other cultures and other languages and to support intercultural dialogue. These multicultural services promoted by libraries should not, therefore, be added to commonplace activities or carried out only on special occasions, but rather they should constitute a vital part of the offer to citizens, to modify according to local needs. At the same time, it is essential that these activities have a global calling and are part of a network of initiatives to promote policies that ensure equitable access to information.

The arrival of the digital age seems to be another blow for libraries. There are those who say that by digitising a large part of the volumes and placing them on a collective network, these institutions no longer become necessary, or may even become almost obsolete. An American author, Mark Y. Herrings has published a paper on this topic, in which he lines up in defence of libraries as guardians of knowledge throughout the centuries that represents the history of humankind. This is why the Internet cannot, in any way, replace these institutions (Herrings 2007). In doing so, however, he does not underestimate the importance that new technologies play, or hide how they have been able to improve our lives over time. What he suggests instead is to reflect on the rapid and irrepressible on-going process of mass digitisation, which leads one to think of Internet platforms as an end and not as a means to facilitate the achievement of a much higher goal.

The decline of the library, however, is not only due to the advent of the digital age, but to a much deeper cultural change, on which Herrings also focuses, stating that if past generations built large libraries, the generation of today fails to understand their value and historical significance,

preferring partial and impoverished knowledge which is immediate and easily attained, knowledge that is achieved through the Internet. This cultural involution, supported in general by institutions and families, represents the point of departure for the reasoning regarding the fate of libraries and, in particular, of the book, the use of which decreases with the increasing use of multimedia information and the consequent arrival of the multimedia library. From here, the easy transition to the desire for a complete digitisation of the library, replaced by a web platform, which should only be a means to increase access and development. Such a transformation would be absolutely inconceivable, firstly because of the enormous differences between the two knowledge systems: on the one hand, the multiplicity of confusing information, which is unorganised and unfiltered by the Internet and, on the other hand, the knowledge we can find in a library, which is planned and selected by librarians. Furthermore, information from Internet links, unlike that which is gathered from a book in a library, is of short duration, it is not as “eternal” as printed physical paper, so topics researched via the Internet can only be about the present day. The library and the Internet therefore lead to two kinds of documentation with very different goals and for this reason they cannot merge or replace one another because one would distort the other. Their intrinsically opposed nature has to subsist because it is essential to the development of knowledge, but this dualism should be strengthened rather than attempting to foster a reciprocal fusion.

Having understood both the fundamental presence of the library for the dissemination of culture, and the importance of the roles assigned within the knowledge process, it is necessary to understand how the evolution of information technology can positively influence the development of the library. Through the use of new technological methods, two main innovations are triggered: the introduction of a *user-oriented* interface, through which the user interacts easily with existing operational tools of the cognitive process and, as a consequence, the active participation of the user who acquires the opportunity to modify data and multimedia content. This opens up a scenario based on “a social dimension of resource sharing as opposed to individual autonomy” (Muscogiuri 2009, 20), which previously characterised the process of knowledge. In general, the service is thus designed according to the satisfaction of the user, who interacts actively to the implementation of cultural proposals.

The role of librarian is also changing. They not only have to provide citizens with the information requested, but rather to convey to them the appropriate skills to independently perform their research, assisting them in the acquisition of the necessary tools to manage the increasing flow of

information. The librarian remains, however, the traditional intermediary between the document and the reader, but most of all they are a key figure regarding the choice of books and collections in the library. Careful selection represents the cultural direction of the offered service and the reading room still differs significantly from the network, in which the materials available are almost infinite and variable.

To survive to the present day the public library decides to revise its position and to introduce substantial changes to align itself with the new needs of society. It is an institution that has preferred to put its reputation at stake in order not to lose its importance within the information circuit. It can be seen how its role was modified from a mere space for culture into a place designed as a catalyst of urban life. How it managed to redeem its centrality through the implementation of multicultural policies, a fundamental step in globalised society and, finally, how it was able, at least for the moment, to control the technological evolution placed in its service. Libraries, beyond a mythical aura by which they seem surrounded which draws them as permanent bodies that are almost unrelated to the unfolding of history, have always been changing devices, in close proximity to the dynamics of society and bearers of a cultural mission which has unfortunately not always been disinterested (Battles 2004, 11–23). The evolution of this institution, therefore, reflects the evolution of culture and its mode of transmission with which it goes hand in hand.

Through the current compensation, libraries run the risk of obscuring their core values, which is also their goal of being the custodians of universal knowledge to which everyone should have free access. They preserve the collective memory of humanity and their history has always been the history of what men have decided to leave as testimony so that future generations may benefit from it. This means that the undisputed star of libraries should, even today, be the book, the primary means of the transmission of culture, as well as essential tool for the progress of society. Today library institutions should therefore be able to develop the services that revolve around knowledge, without missing the overall objective or reducing its intrinsic value. In doing so, the library of the future, beyond healthy forecasts, continues primarily to be a place dedicated to knowledge, but where services will be highly specialised and customisable and where access will be allowed to all media and, consequently, the acquisition of skills related to new technologies will become key. In addition, libraries will take shape as places to meet, socialise and converse, characterised by nonstop accessibility (Muscogiuri 2009, 22).

It is precisely in small towns or in neighbourhood areas that the symbolic value of the original institution is more unstable, threatened by the

prevalence of policies related only to information and commercial interest. In these peripheral scenarios that are very different from those of central libraries or university libraries, it is well understood that culture is often atrophied and other activities prevail. It is, therefore, in such situations that there is an urgent need for sound cultural proposals, which in some way “educate” the public. It is not appropriate, as so often happens in these cases, to lower the quality of the initiatives or collections, to have a larger membership to the services. On the contrary, the library has to guarantee selected and particular proposals to submit to users. If not, the library would lose its meaning, resembling the shopping centre, where the policy of the outlet provides a large number of attractive items, which have not been properly selected and are often of low quality in order to increase the number of purchasers.

From here, we arrive at the topic of communication strategies, which are often adopted by the most advanced libraries that follow marketing policies to increase the number of users and improve the service. What does not seem acceptable is the transposition of initiatives, which mostly derive from the commercial world, in the content of the library proposal. It should be clarified that the communication strategies that the public institution adopts, together with the technological tools to provide the service, are part of the means by which the library conveys the value of culture and the importance of knowledge. The latter are, in other words, the real content of the proposal that reflects the quality of the service and that symbolically represents the actual purpose of the institution.

The contemporary architectural response

The present-day model of the local library derives mainly from the idea of British and American public libraries, which were described in the first part. They are the result of a political choice made in the second half of the 19th century which promotes the diffusion of literacy skills and cultural integration of the masses. Libraries, together with schools, constitute a city network dedicated to knowledge.

Public library architecture is also linked to the city by the classical mark it has left, which correlates it with other cultural institutions and continues until the last decades of the 20th century, in which a profound renewal of the library begins, primarily involving local libraries. Their social role, which spreads in the meantime to other European countries, becomes exhausted, firstly because of the increasing level of literacy and subsequently because of the changes in cultural and technological surveys. For this reason, small libraries need to radically rethink their role within the network of knowledge in the last decades, much more than larger

libraries which conserve old documents, should do. The latter also suffer a severe decrease in users, but they still remain as custodians of collections representing universal knowledge, preserving their objective in society (Agnoli 2009, XIV).

Nevertheless, how do we exactly define local libraries or neighbourhood libraries? They are public institutions that have a reduced catchment area and are located in small towns or city districts. The main feature, which differentiates them from the larger libraries with old collections, is linked to a cultural proposal which deals basically with topical issues, as provided for the public library model from which they descend. The central theme is not, in this case, the maintenance and consultation of valuable collections, as usually occurs in a large library which promotes a high level of culture, but in general the promotion of popular culture, linked to the context and citizens, although they may not be devoid of vocations on a larger scale. The contemporary term *glocal library* (Muscogiuri 2009, 25), seems to perfectly capture the meaning of this proposal in our globalized society in which the value of local issues becomes essential in supporting the weight of a global culture. The service should thus provide citizens with materials and activities that satisfy their needs without hindering the cultural approach and, indeed, information is always selected by the library staff. Knowledge, which may be declined depending on the social context in which the library is located, has to remain the central objective, also in local situations. Around knowledge, other services can subsequently develop.

As in the large libraries, the local ones, in which the idea of a meeting place further develops, both the reduction of the digital divide, through policies of technological knowledge dissemination that are aligned with the citizen, and the development of multicultural services that promote dialogue and pluralism, are considered crucial.

Therefore, a new model of a cultural institution emerges in connection to the circuit of information and it inevitably states an architectural problem, which is especially related to the interior space, through which the peaceful coexistence of multiple services is achieved and new systems of relationship between users are introduced. Moreover, if the architecture of historical libraries is directly related to precise typological developments, that are to be found in many manuals that highlight an evolutionary course whose steps are represented by the architecture of famous libraries, the question is different for local institutions or neighbourhood libraries whose historic course has never been traced, and neither is there any literature on the subject. In spite of this, as a result of the social and cultural renewal at the end of the 20th century, the design responses have been clear and,

in addition, they are related to the cultural and architectural heritage of belonging and can be seen to have been satisfactory.

Indeed, the architecture becomes especially important where the public institution needs to find a new identity, which helps it to redeem itself and reintegrate effectively into a circuit of urban services. The identification of an architectural issue is attempted, both in connection to the city and the interior space, in which the popular culture of the citizens can be recognised, rather than the promotion of a cutting-edge architecture which should attract users through shiny surfaces and sinuous shapes. Building new belonging relations through the architectural design, with both the context and citizens who use the public service, thus becomes truly necessary.

If the local library is the place with which citizens can identify, or in which they find the popular culture to which they belong, it signifies that the local library should be the expression of a shared identity. The architecture allows finding oneself through formal experiences already lived, in this case by users of the institution, or through symbolic perceptions contained in space and connected to indelible events of the memory of oneself (Ottolini 1996, 137–182). Christian Norberg-Schulz points out that in identity given by form, we have the idea of character that represents

how things are, and gives our investigation a basis in the concrete phenomena of our everyday life-world ... On the one hand it denotes a general comprehensive atmosphere and, on the other, the concrete form and substance of the space-defining elements. Any real presence is intimately linked with a character. (Norberg-Schulz 1979, 10–13)

In light of this, it was decided to consider the model of the urban square as a typical place of cohabitation of citizens in a civil society, as well as an effective representation of popular identity of an urban centre. The square embodies the character of a place that we re-propose for the architectural idea of the contemporary local library.

This space, taken as a model, is described as the essence of the city, promoter of public opinion and driver of democracy (Amendola 1997, 176), and the beating heart of the neighbourhood or town, but what are the spatial characteristics of a well-designed square that lead us to the idea of the local library as a place of meeting and dialogue?

Surely, in both spaces, moments of union among citizens should be promoted cutting, within the larger space, clearly defined areas designed and sized for a prolonged pause. We often find here measurements related to human proportions, thus favouring the welcoming nature of these places,

which may also correspond to specific meeting points within the larger space, such as a water basin, a kiosk or a reception desk in the library, or again cafeteria spaces. Even the readability and clarity of the architecture, which is as true for the square as it is for the library, influence their living conditions – complex spaces and no immediate paths are not suited to the nature of these public places. Indeed, they seem to discourage and confuse the visitor who may often be occasional. This does not mean, however, that the design of these spaces is not also fuelled by the wealth of various experiences and by functional variations that lead to discovery. There may be, for example, public spaces where a small market is discovered or where there is an exhibition behind a completely unexpected corner, but their presence does not interfere with their inner formal clarity. Furthermore, citizens join in spontaneously in a public space, even when there are no special events, only if it is comfortable in terms of temperature or otherwise it contains high-quality materials and furniture.

Today the local library, as the town square, is thus essentially a meeting place around which multiple activities, sometimes unexpected, take place, and where citizens decide to meet thanks to the particular living conditions of the space and its inner vocation.

The parallel between these two places, which are seemingly far removed from one other, leads to further reflection regarding the decline of urban public spaces in the present day, which often succumb or even disappear because of business rationale. Perhaps, through the renewal of the libraries, a turnaround can be triggered, by attempting to restore the value of public areas of the city and restoring dignity to historical sites of exchange and dialogue, such as squares and reading rooms. Instead of these places, shopping centres are considered more and more often as meeting places, especially in small and medium urban areas, located in the suburbs, which are dedicated only to consumer activities, rather than culturally stimulating ones. In addition, the European context should be considered, particularly the English and the Nordic countries, where such a trend reversal has already been implemented, since the public sector in these countries is historically fundamental for the development of society.

In Britain and the Nordic countries, public libraries have been, and are, the most natural meeting places for groups of citizens engaged in bottom-up activities. They facilitate initiatives of all kinds, from the political, such as the organisation of a protest, to the most innocuous, such as sewing classes ... This range of activities certainly contributes to giving citizens a sense of belonging, provides places of knowledge and mutual aid, smoothes contrasts and softens tensions, and allows people to continually improve their skills and expand their interests. (Agnoli 2009, 80)

The architectural theme that brings together the contemporary idea of the local library and the model of urban square, which also summarises the spatial characteristics in common, is linked to the new living conditions that library institutions propose and these derive exactly from historical urban meeting places. Therefore, if public reading rooms have always been, especially in the culture of those less advanced countries in this issue, silent spaces to study and read, with a mainly individual vocation, now they are places where the living condition becomes manifold and, besides the more or less cosy areas, we also find spaces for social relations. It is precisely the mutual relationships between people that inspire a new architectural idea promoting a place of interaction well connected to the city, a network of connections that finds a new living condition to be adopted in the square. Buildings are no longer introverted but rather open to the city, as well as to the user, and boundaries are interrupted to generate dynamic correlations and new opportunities for architectural comparison.

This change also arises in parallel with the current transformations of urban centres, which promote the design of public buildings that are able to handle the new features of the society, linked to mobility, multiculturalism and new ways of learning. The architecture thus has to be able to interact, be versatile and flexible (Cacciari 2004, 64–69).

The design of the institution should therefore firstly represent an element of mediation with the city, in the case of neighbourhood libraries, or small towns, in the case of others. They develop a kind of space, which is typically urban but re-proposed here with the appropriate proportions, linked to the covered square or the covered road, used to emphasise the transition between the inside and outside, between the inner and outer spaces. Thus, libraries should embody today the so-called logic of the *passage* (Agnoli 2009, 94), because unlike other public buildings, they are considered places of transit, or to have a more or less prolonged pause, which may even be visited by chance, or be places for unexpected encounters, to intersect for the pleasure of discovery, besides many other reasons connected to study or reading. The link with the context, which is a prerequisite for the existence of local institutions, is not defined only through a true connection to the existing buildings, but also through the ability of the library to be perceived by the citizens as a real part of the city. This perception occurs not only by acquiring spatial dynamics of urban squares, but also by bringing outside parts of the library that can be integrated with the town, and proposing exhibitions for specific events that can benefit from evocative parts of the city: “in short, the future lies in making the public library a city and the city a library” (Agnoli 2009, 152). Regarding the construction of the interior space, the furniture plays a vital

role in commanding the nature of these places, which appears dynamic and changing and no longer predetermined but to be reorganised from time to time, following the renewal that involved library institutions. This is in contrast with other public buildings where the relations between people and space appear prearranged. The furniture meets the user, mediating the relationship between them and the architectural space around them, suggesting ways of using and configuring possible relations between them and the other users. It is important, however, that the organisation of the interior space is not permanent, but rather it should be able to convey a message that can be modified, which may also involve the ideas of citizens. As a result, the building provides fixed furniture to determine, together with the architecture, the permanent character of the building that is easily understood by users and connected to a strong, shared identity which they are able to recognise. There should also be movable furniture, easily manageable by both library staff and users. This would allow flexibility not only in organising the space in case of special events, but also to make citizens able to manage the small area they intend to use depending on their individual needs, thus allowing a temporary customisation that will even put the least assiduous visitor at ease: “finding the right chair means feeling good, feeling at home, watching the ‘different’ in a less aggressive or fearful way, reaching for a book or magazine, taking a child into one’s arms and reading a story to them” (Agnoli 2009, 125).

Architectural solutions

Through concrete references to planning, it is possible to analyse the results derived from the hybridisation between the model of the urban square and the space of local libraries. The presence of the features that refer to this model is easy to understand, even if it leads to very different architectural solutions. The proposed plans share the desire to pursue a strong link with the context, obtained through an intermediate place of connection between the space of the library and the city.

The first architectural solution dealt with is the one edited by the Catalan group RCR Arquitectes for the district library of Sant Antoni in Barcellona, completed in 2007 (*El Croquis* 2007, 192–211). The area is close to the oldest part of the city and it is structured by the grid of the Cerdà Plan, an urban plan, edited by engineer Cerdà and dating back to 1859, which is fundamentals for the city. The goal was to handle the expansion outside the walls of the ancient nucleus through the creation of an urban grid that generated a sequence of square blocks and rounded corners, which were designed to be built on only two sides of the perimeter so that they retained a central void passage. Throughout history, however,

these recommendations were not followed and, for mainly speculative reasons, the blocks became congested, increasingly reducing the parts of emptiness inside. This is also the urban situation today in which the Catalan group has to operate and which provides an opportunity to work on the central void, which is historically connected to the city.

For this reason, the library project consists mainly of a facade toward the street that connects the existing adjacent buildings, but that, at the same time, is designed to be crossed to allow access to the central void in which a real urban square appears. Around it are the spaces of the district library, which are fully glazed and turned toward the centre. The design of this public institution thus becomes an opportunity for the design of a square, in the perimeter of which, services to the citizens are located and whose central space becomes the point of connection with the city. What emerges, in particular, is an urban place regularly visited by groups of people with totally different needs. From the elderly, who use the outside square to rest, as well as the services given to them inside, to the children, who take advantage of the distance from the traffic for their outdoor games and who take refuge inside in winter. To this, we add the young people of the neighbourhood, who look for a secluded place to study or read a newspaper in peace and quiet. The spaces very close to the square are, however, the periodicals area, located near the entrance facing the street, and a recreation area, which is also used for games and activities. The more silent reading area is in the volume set above the entrance and overlooks towards both the road and the square below.

Another interesting architectural solution that reinterprets a connection with the city, making it a key point of the project proposal, is that adopted for the Jaume Fuster Library, again in Barcelona, but this time in the Gràcia district, to the north of the city centre (Muscogiuri 2009, 253–258). The plan is by Josep Llinas, one of the most famous architects in the contemporary Catalan scene, who assisted in the revival of Spanish libraries that took place from the 1990s onwards. As a result, both the number of institutions and that of users strongly increased. These libraries are of an innovative and contemporary design, as was previously illustrated, and this one by Llinas is dedicated to Jaume Fuster and built between 2001 and 2005.

The building completes the existing block and it also becomes an element of connection between the Plaça de Lesseps and the beginning of the linear park that would develop along the Avinguda de Vallarica, both next to the new library, the strategic crux of the urban reconfiguration of the neighbourhood. For this reason, the solution provides a place of mediation between the outside world and the inside of the building,

which also allows the connection between the square and the park. A place, which is, however, contiguous with the volume of the library and revealed only through a fascinating cantilever roof, with inclined planes and wood panelling on the underside, that takes visitors to the entrance and draws the eye to the adjacent public spaces. Under this portion of the roof, which represents the lowest part of the complex volume of the library, besides the main entrance, on one side there is a periodicals area, which is fully glazed towards the outside, and on the other, a cafeteria, which is directly accessible from the covered public space, without the need of going through the entrance, and which is completely glazed. The place of mediation that is outlined is related to the functions that are more connected to the square, and with its boundaries, it contributes to the construction of the public space. In addition, the cantilever roof houses the outdoor space of the cafeteria, so, when the weather is good, it becomes a covered seating space, as well as a space for non-instant access. The architecture of the library appears very rich, not only outside, but also inside, where a multitude of functions unfolds on both the ground and the first floor, creating spaces characterised by the movement of the roof and consequently by different kinds of natural lighting.

The design strategy found in the two examples solves the issue of the local library through a concrete relationship with the surrounding context, which is developed by creating an intermediate space that becomes the heart of the project proposal, as well as a place to meet and exchange. Outlining the structure of the two solutions, the place in question, which is similar to a square and common to both ideas, resembles a zip, with more or less visible boundaries between the city and the library, and between the outside world and the space for culture inside.

The local library can also be connected to the existing context and to the dynamics of the city through the adoption of another typical urban model – the covered road, which, unlike the more or less covered square, is set mainly as a running place, rather than a place to stay in. These are two ways of modelling a public space, pursuing a common goal, which is to identify a place where people can forge relations and share experiences, a place that is the expression of the democracy of a country. A covered path connected to the indoor space of the library, which also becomes an urban path, thus follows the logic of the *passage* (Agnoli 2009, 94), a disinterested way, without a specific purpose, which leads to discovery. The perception of the passer-by, which we refer to, is typical of the *flâneur*, who glances along the city, drifting through crowds and experiencing whatever they come across on the way (Benjamin 1995, 145–160).

A library project in which we find this kind of experience is the Mediterranean Media Library (Mediateca del Mediterraneo, MEM) in Cagliari, edited by OP Architetti Associati, a group of architects located in Venice. The building, opened in 2011, is set in the district of Stampace and it reuses a historical complex consisting of a long, narrow court and resolute facades in brick and travertine, where previously there was a municipal market. Only the court acquires a leading role in the project, through which it becomes an urban path, almost entirely covered by a glass structure, to which all the activities of the media library are exposed. This building is proposed as one of the cultural centres of the city, linked to the context and with cutting-edge initiatives. It houses the municipal archives on the second floor, the only level added and, therefore, covered in Corten steel on the outside, while the spaces used for the library are located on the first level. The main activities of the average user are on the ground floor, which also involves those who pass by, and includes a newspaper library, a film library, a toy centre, together with versatile spaces used for temporary exhibitions and conferences. The urban indoor path, therefore, consisting of two fully glazed, slightly concave walls, becomes the focus of the composition, also because it embodies the fundamental role of the media library, as a place of meeting, and dialogue and break, made possible by seating areas. The main entrances are located here, and right here the media library meets the dynamism and vitality of the glass covered court, which allows the citizen to have both a disinterested break, before being swallowed up again by the urban surroundings, and also to have the opportunity to use the cultural services, to examine the proposed ideas which they personally find attractive. In addition, two small squares, placed on the opposite small facades of the existing building, represent a further mediation between the context and the cultural centre, connecting the level of the city to that of the interior covered walkway, and emphasising the access through the two portals that characterise the facades toward the city.

Another library that pursues the logic of the *passage* is San Giovanni in Pesaro (Agnoli 2009, 85–97), built between 1996 and 2001, and designed by Danilo Guerri and Massimo Carmassi, who would not follow the final phase of the project. The complex is located within a portion of the old San Giovanni convent, dating back to the 17th century, and which, only in the second half of the 20th century, becomes a municipal property after having previously hosted military functions. First, the administration thought of constructing a generic social centre for the neighbourhood and, only when preventive work was completed, they decided to use the building as a town library, aiming for a cultural centre which was broader than those which

have previously been discussed thus far. The main idea of the project was to change two wings of the convent connecting the entrances of both the ends through a covered walkway alongside the existing building, re-evaluating the overall height. Thus, a new urban path was outlined, built with wooden trusses and a transparent cover, which connects the two parts of the city, as well as depicting the two entrances of the library, the one next to the information desk and the other, close to the cafeteria. Even in this case, as in the previous example, the purpose is to intrigue the passer-by, and considering culture as a way of meeting and discovery. The urban path, which is placed between the two wings of the building and a park, becomes a place of dialogue and relationship, both for the users of the library and for the citizens in general, shaping a fundamental element of mediation between the institution and the context. The rooms facing the covered area outside are dedicated to the quick consultation of books and reading, while, upstairs, more silent study areas, even individual, are located, and only one of the two wings houses a terrace, with a further reading area that overlooks the park.

In these two solutions, however, the local library issue deals with the connection to the city, seizing the opportunity to think about a contemporary cultural design centred on the urban scale. Visualising the relationship between local institutions and cities, the spatial organisation does not appear much different from the two design solutions analysed previously, because what emerges is still a place located between the adjacent space of the city and the interior space of the cultural centre. Once more, it is a hinge, a place dedicated to the stitching of two different worlds, but what changes is the nature of this semi-urban space as has been outlined at the beginning. In general, the run of the flows prevails here over the stop, unless it is quick or the space is specially prepared, as the image of the media library in Cagliari suggests, showing the covered urban path furnished for a city event.

There are libraries, however, whose meeting place, which follows the dynamics of the square, does not represent a moment of connection with the city, but rather an interior space, which is well defined and involved in a variety of uses, and which is a meeting place more or less introverted. This is what occurs in the Álvaro de Campos Library in Tavira (*Casabella* 2007–2008, 102–109), a town in southern Portugal, where the library designed by the Portuguese João Luís Carrilho da Graça was built between 1999 and 2005. The idea deals with the reuse of the old prisons of the city, which is also the birthplace of Álvaro de Campos, one of the most well known literary heteronyms of the poet Fernando Pessoa. What remains of the old building is the main facade, the outside walls of the lower level

and the stone used to cover the ground floor. This level is the crux to which the library is addressed. Here water basins and green areas, which trace the original plan of the existing complex, pinpoint a patio, which becomes a place for meeting, outdoor reading and rest. A space that is enclosed by walls but faces the sky, with its stone seating plans used in a variety of ways reveals what would seem to be a very sheltered, small town square in a region where wind is often a problem. In front of the patio, there is an entrance area that, with its white walls and Corten steel elements, offers protection from the surrounding context. The library spaces are located in the new area, next to one side of the old prison and to the rear, and they comprise all the functions that a contemporary cultural centre requires, including a well-organised training space for children and young people. A further patio in the new portion of the complex is designed to give light to the rooms. Its nature, however, is quite different compared with the one that represents the heart of the composition. The first is a space to be admired mostly from the inside, as well as being functional for the organisation of the building. The second, on the other hand, reveals its importance as a place to stay and forge relationships, which is the point of impact on the ground floor of the historical building, the most precious part of the complex.

Another architecture where the main meeting space is introverted is the Holmsbladgade Neighbourhood Centre, in Copenhagen, which was completed in 2001. The design of the building is by Dorte Mandrup, a Danish architect who has been able to continue the tradition of Northern Europe, providing good-quality spaces for an exemplary cultural service, particularly in Denmark, where the design of the library has always been a subject of research and investigation.

This is a centre that focuses on the activity of meeting and connecting people that goes beyond the usual activities of a district library, changing the nature of the place. The new complex is placed in an existing building, dating back to the second half of the 19th century. Along with this, the architect provides a prismatic volume, connected to one of the two ends of the building, and a series of niches that protrude outwards and that are inserted in a metal grid placed near the entrance. The focus of the composition is also that which we are interested in exploring, i.e. the space inside the new glass parallelepiped supported by concrete pillars which allude to a forest, a typical landscape of the North. This is actually the only part of the building not to be designed for a specific task, but rather designed to welcome new and diverse activities, and which is anyhow a space with a definite character. The area, where people meet and share opinions, is highly customisable and manageable by users, a true public

space in the city, even if it is not directly accessible from it, where users discuss, organise workshops or plan. This place of relationships, similar to a small square, is suspended and protected from the cold. It is equipped with a modular wooden grid that traces the perimeter making a series of useful shelves, and with easily stackable wooden chairs. The other functions of the city centre take place instead in the existing building in which we see, besides the spaces of the library, a youth centre, several rooms designed to accommodate neighbourhood associations and a cafeteria near the entrance, in a triple-level foyer with wooden niches that protrude from the facade.

Summing up the two design solutions described above, they clearly differ from the previous ones, whose meeting places represent a semi-urban space, a mediation between the inside and outside, while this kind of place, still seen as the centrepiece of the solution, is quite different. The link with the city is no longer immediate, but rather subtended, or represented only by the emphasis of the path that leads from the outside to the heart of the architecture that is not identified as a transition space but rather as a clear part of the building whose nature is opposed to the rest of it. In the Portuguese case study, the space in question is the only one placed in the pre-existing part of the building and it is announced by large vertical surfaces, while Dorte Mandrup situates it in the only added part, specifically designed and reachable by walking longitudinally through the industrial complex. The identified places preserve the main features of a public space, despite being introverted but, because of this, they are even more efficient regarding the climatic characteristics of the context.

The furniture plays an important role in declaring the nature of local library institutions which is emerging as a result of the social and cultural renewal in progress. It is important, in this regard, that the interior space presents a balance between fixed and movable equipment which allows, on the one hand, the construction of a well identified place in which citizens can recognise themselves, while in the other hand, the opportunity for users to customise their area, which is capable of guaranteeing multiple uses.

A solution that focuses on these needs is that of the library of Villanueva de la Canada (Muscogiuri 2009, 293–294; *Casabella* 2007–2008, 84–93), a small town near Madrid, designed by CH + SQ Arquitectos. These two architects come from the Spanish capital, where, as in Catalonia, a strong revival of cultural institutions took place, leading rapidly to large improvements. The library, finished in 2002, was designed primarily as a meeting place for local citizens, as well as a place of learning and knowledge, represented architecturally through ascending stages of a

spiral path that connects different spaces through a system of ramps. Therefore, we start from a children's area, to get to the more specific study rooms with advanced equipment, experiencing an interior arrangement that plays on differences in height and on the continuity of the paths. The space, characterised each time in a different way, is evenly pervaded by a comfortable and cosy atmosphere, provided by natural materials, continuous finishes and the right balance of sunlight. Besides a well-defined overall perception of the place, single episodes can be identified in which fixed furniture, characterised by multiple uses, are related to movable furniture that are more specific and easy to move. This is the case of the children's area situated in the star-shaped volume, where the wooden shelves, which become large steps to sit on in the lower part, are put together with little tables and chairs scattered randomly. The variability of use of the large steps is easy to see as the child uses them both to reach for the books and then to sit down to read, while the round tables can be used mostly for group activities, or even to encourage dialogue between the young visitors. A large flight of steps also characterises another part of the building in which the multiplicity of use of simple horizontal planes of wood, to read, converse or watch a little show, prevails over the addition of movable equipment. However, these fixed and more relaxed seats are balanced by a series of movable furniture which characterise the entire volume of the partly filled reading room, in which lightweight chairs and rather large tables can be easily managed by the individual user, thus allowing customisation of their work area.

Another interesting architecture from this point of view is that of Studio Archea, a group based in Florence, for the Nembro Library, near Bergamo, which ended in 2007 (Muscogiuri 2009, 415–416). This reuses a courtyard building, dating back to the late 19th century and established to be used as a school, to which the Italian architects add an extension required for the role of local library. The new volume is a glass parallelepiped that closes the central space of the court, but allows a side passage that separates the new intervention from the pre-existing architecture. The two buildings are connected only through a basement, located underneath the courtyard, which hosts an area for relaxation, which also contains computers. The quiet reading rooms, the specific areas for children and teenagers, together with the service spaces, are located inside the 19th century building, while the added volume, which is accessible from the basement, contains the local library collections and some spaces for reading. The interior arrangement is characterised, on the whole, by the use of wood which enriches areas, making surfaces continuous and warm and, in a different ways, it relates to movable furnishings and glass partitions, outlining cosy

and well-measured places. The idea of the space appears decisive in the basement, where the place is conceived mainly for people to meet and enter relations, even before glancing at a book or doing internet research. It is simply distinguished by two lower shelves that contain computer equipment and limit a space in which easily assembled, comfortable, red pouf seats can freely move. So they relate to the fixed wooden furniture but allow great freedom in configuration as well as in customisation. In the added volume, a fixed skeleton of wood replaces mobile equipment, and it contains books and configures a continuous space in height, in which the user turns around a central leading element. Through the correct balance between the objects, spaces can be identified and bestowed on the nature of the places, which are on the one hand easily customizable and, on the other, give a strong identity to the place.

The two architectures described show an approach to the theme of the contemporary local library that does not focus on the relationship with the city but, on the contrary, it begins with the organisation of the interior space, assigning to it the architectural resolution of the main issue. Edges and equipment then configure the required kind of space, bestowing its inner idea through meticulous work done on the scale of the interior design and achieving the result that the previous solutions enhanced towards an urban approach.

After having analysed the different ways of connection to the urban structure, together with the importance attributed to the fulcrum of social and sharing relationships, and having determined the fundamental role of furniture in the transmission of the revisited nature of a place, it is instructive to understand how even the clarity of the designed space affects the configuration of a new habitability. An easily understandable organisation and a correct location of the roles have to correspond, however, to various activities on which the contemporary library feeds, especially at a local level. The richness of the initiatives proposed by the institution has to go hand in hand with a space whose dynamics appear immediately comprehensible by the user, as happens in a public square.

An architectural solution that achieves this goal is the MedaTeca, realised in the town of Meda, near Milan, and opened to the public in 2012. The building was designed by Alterstudio Partners, a group of architects including Marco Muscogiuri who understands the contemporary debate regarding public libraries, and who is also author of several texts related to this issue. The MedaTeca appears as a space that is entirely addressed to the citizen and to the indiscriminate promotion of knowledge and information, a meeting place structured vertically by distributing the functions of the complex over five floors, two of which are filled. The

location of the activity is clear, as is the access to the different levels, made possible through a spiral staircase, which leads only to the lower floors, and also a central volume that contains the stairs to the upper floors and the lifts. The functions do not appear “sectorialised” however, because the different levels communicate with each other through the double height parts of the space, which allow the visitor to understand what is happening on adjacent floors, as well as through the glass facade and through the blocks with stairs and lifts, which play an important role in the composition. What emerges is a kind of “vertical square” in which the activities of the media library are available on each of the different levels, enjoying a very flexible space, ready for new configurations and accommodating unexpected initiatives. The variety of use, which joins a fundamental clarity of the designed spaces, is also made possible by the furniture, which includes moveable shelves with wheels that are able to organise the space, alongside the mostly movable chairs. This architectural configuration seems to derive from the German idea of the three-level library because here, as that model of space predicts, we find a ground floor dedicated to the reception and to the presentation of the initiatives that may interest citizens while, going up, and in the case of MedaTeca also going down, the activities become more specific and dedicated to a more restricted audience. From reading rooms, where glancing at a book or resting, dedicated to children or teens and next to the entrance level, in the complex of Meda, we have reading areas for adults on the second and third floors, while on the second basement floor there is a library storeroom and an auditorium.

This solution, like the other Italian ones presented, reflects the situation in Italy in which, though later than in other cutting-edge European nations, significant events have occurred in recent years and the public library issue is being developed by following its most important contemporary implications, promoting interesting architectural solutions.

Another remarkable building from the same point of view as the previous one is the media library in Corbie, a town near Amiens, designed by the French group Béal & Blanckaert, and built between 2007 and 2009. This architecture, which, unlike those previously treated, is set in a natural environment, continues the tradition of the French media libraries developed at the end of the 20th century, and interprets the theme giving a stimulating solution. The volume is designed as a plastic element that crystallises the landscape and its individual wings go towards the green area and close to the ground, as if they are continuous with it. The Corten steel plans, composing this volume, identify spaces that are often brought forward by covered places which are, however, still outside, and which

mediate the relationship to the park and protect large windows through which we have a direct visual connection to the context, another true leader of the project. The entrance is between the two portions of the building that stretch out onto the road, and leads to a central part of the volume in which the information desk is located and from which four distinct portions of space depart, hosting different activities. Despite this, the functions do not appear isolated in confined spaces or away from one another because they are visually open towards the common central part and from which the other parts of the complex can be seen. Moreover, all the spaces are connected to the landscape through large windows and outdoor covered places. The clarity of the distribution, from the centre to the four wings, seems immediate and, at the same time, the areas of the media library, the reading area, the children area, the small *atelier* and the conference room take advantage of wide and versatile spaces, whose simplicity and brightness are suited to many normal or unexpected uses.

Even in these two solutions, the problem arises and is solved from the inside, considering the characteristics both of the location and the context. In the first case, it is a small portion of a site, while in the second, a large green area. If in the immediately preceding examples the interior space aims to have different degrees of variety and customisation, which are possible because of the coexistence of fixed and movable items, here it is the spatial clarity of the solution, linked to functional variety, which represents a possible design strategy.

Finally the English experience of Idea Store is essential, both in understanding the real needs of contemporary local libraries (Agnoli 2009, 85–97) and in analysing the architectural responses that began in that context. In the 1990s, the public library system was in crisis and the government decided to allocate funding to raise the standard of operation and efficiency and to start concrete projects through which the role of local libraries could be re-launched. It is in this context that the Idea Store experience began, gathering interest not only for the results which were achieved, but also for the methodology which was applied to discover the new needs of users. Through surveys and market research, an investigation was conducted, outlining the new features that library institutions should adopt. These arose from direct dialogue with citizens, which showed that the main reason of the decline of these centres was due to lack of amenities, as well as to inconvenient location, which was often distant from the usual shopping routes. Thus, the administration of Tower Hamlets, a suburb in the East End of London, promoted the investigation, deciding to invest in libraries to cope with the serious problems of social exclusion and unemployment. They soon realised that these public institutions should

be located in places that are more appropriate and they should have a new, dynamic image, given both by the form, and here the architecture comes into play, and by the content or the offered services. Thus, the first solution for seven Idea Stores began. They were placed in strategic areas of the city and appeared as bearers of an innovative idea of knowledge and information, as well as places of socialisation for citizens, to cast off the antiquated image of old libraries.

Two of these seven buildings, the one on Chrisp Street and the one on Whitechapel Road, were designed by the British group Adjaye Associates, between 2001 and 2005 (Muscogiuri 2009, 425–428; *Casabella* 2007–2008, 128–137). Here the architecture follows a logic that is not that of the public space, on which the solutions analysed above are based, where the meeting place for citizens becomes the focus of the composition, whose dynamics are easily associated with those of a town square. The model to which these architectures refer is instead the *store*, or a space for undifferentiated consumption, which promotes buildings characterised by a strong communication strategy to attract people and encourage them to buy more disparate goods. Coloured and flashy containers can be seen, with instantly recognisable and repeated images. Are we really convinced that this is a good alternative for small libraries from an architectural point of view? If store communication strategies can be helpful in improving the service and establishing a dialogue with the user through a language, linked to the consumer culture, which they recognise, the architectural parallel is not so immediate. The discipline has to answer the needs arising and connected both to the city and to the organisation of the interior space. It has to establish a link with the context, a basic prerequisite for a local institution that the policy of the store definitely puts in second place. Moreover, if the district library intends to define a place that is able to mend popular identity that citizens recognise, the model of the mall, called par excellence a *non-place*, is likely to be misleading, at least in architectural terms. Using the dynamics of the consumer spaces in cultural institutions, which by definition have the opposite vocation, sounds unusual and it should lead to reflection.

The two Adjaye buildings with their shiny and colourful surfaces, certainly represent a winning strategy from the social point of view, but examining the architectural value we understand that they are far from the comfortable spaces of the libraries in Northern Europe, or from those built in Spain in recent years. The debate is whether the glow of Idea Store is designed to last, or whether it represents only a temporary phenomenon. Perhaps only with the passing of time, will it be possible to answer this question and today we can only raise doubts regarding such architectural proposals.

The library as an interface

In response to the wandering society, characterised by phenomena related to the mobility of people, multiculturalism and the consequent socio-cultural hybridization, the library radically changes its configuration. After its redemption to survive to contemporary dynamics, it confirms, especially in narrow contexts, its importance not only as a cultural centre but also as a meeting place for citizens. Indeed, just where there are no valuable collections to be preserved, the users, with their initiatives, are those who define the nature of the place, who are no longer granted only access to books and to their subsequent location in space.

The “square of knowledge” becomes the new architectural way to connect the library, as a place of knowledge, to citizens and the surrounding city, outlining a natural evolution for the local institutions which, arising from the English public library, have always considered this topical issue as one of their strengths. It is necessary that these cultural centres still represent a place in which citizens can express their identity, as well as an expression of the new needs of a population that is multicultural and hybrid, a *glocal library* for a glocal society that needs a global vocation, but also a strong connection to the different contexts, which remains the basis for the existence of local institutions.

Architecturally, this idea is expressed through a new spatial configuration – a space conceived as *interface* is opposed to an introverted building. This kind of space lives by relations that constantly pass through it, making connections with the urban context and citizens. The mutual relationships between people becomes the basis for this architectural idea which re-proposes the logic of the urban square, as the mentioned case studies highlight. The dynamics of a public space appear convincing, buildings that face the new needs of society have prevailed, especially at a local level, setting themselves up as interfaces between topical culture and people, between the city and a meeting place dedicated to the community. Books are no longer the object around which the space is organised. If earlier their location established the spatial layout, today the focus of the composition lies in the place of the relationship between citizens, at times an urban passage, at others, an introverted square, or the whole building that takes the logic and the flexibility of a public place.

Spaces conceived as interfaces are considered representative of contemporary society by Paul Virilio, who talks about an architecture that becomes a bundle of connections and works on the decomposition of the edges rather than on their continuity. Threshold spaces and limited-surfaces take place, showing their hybrid nature that goes hand in hand with the public space of a society in which contaminations occur daily.

“The delimitation of space becomes exchange/transformation, radical separation becomes a necessary step, transit of a continual activity of incessant exchange, transfers between two environments, and between two substances” (Virilio 1998, 14). Here is how the space of public institutions in urban contexts is destined to take shape, considering its urgent revision due also to the evolution of suburban situations linked to shopping centres, which drive large numbers of people out of cities. The local library, if conceived as an interface, thus represents one of those cultural services that would enable a real turnaround, thanks to which city centres would again be able to attract people, and rediscover a sense of belonging to a local community, which is essential in a globalised society.

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Hybrid Spaces



Libraries and Museums Hybridisation

Jacopo Leveratto

Two recurring issues are encountered when attempting to track the evolutionary changes of the spatial and functional models of libraries from the early 1980s to the present – the need to identify the lower limits of the size of a library system that is widespread but rich enough in terms of the number of books, and to define the specificity, which may even be symbolic, which libraries cannot afford to lose in light of recent technological and economic changes (Borioni 1984, 20). If the first need, which is essentially a problem concerning the spread of basic services, is a political one, the second issue is at the heart of the international cultural debate. Given the progressive digitisation of the operations concerning the production, transmission and use of knowledge, it seems that the role traditionally ascribed to the library, of preserving and providing access to the written memory, has gradually been failing. For this reason, over the past 30 years, design has been globally orienting towards the concept of an institution that is typically Anglo-Saxon. In this vision, the library should no longer be just an institutional cultural service, but rather an extension of social space (Van der Werf 2010). This would be, according to a large majority of the cultural establishment, the best guarantee of the survival of libraries in the face of the dissemination of knowledge that digitisation determines. Thus, from the architectural point of view, the crucial point is not so much the prediction of the existence or disappearance of this institution, but the understanding of how the change in the transmission of information changes the place where the transmission occurs. This perspective, however, is closely linked to the recognition of a specific functional and symbolic feature that the library does not always show, at least not everywhere. Moreover, it does not help to clarify the possible change in the relationship between library and document.

In fact, even if the full digitisation of the entire library collections in the world were taken for granted, the decision of what to do with the books currently owned by libraries would still remain. The most obvious risk is that the library becomes a mere legal store, excluded from cultural life. A risk that the museum does not demonstrate, due to the rarity or uniqueness of the collections gathered. Apart from this specific feature, however, museums and libraries share the institutional mission to select, preserve and guarantee free access to knowledge. In addition, if we consider that they are probably the only cultural media critically selecting the information they transmit and, at the same time, allowing the individual to choose the time and the type of information to be accessed, then nothing prevents libraries from borrowing spatial and functional strategies, typical of museums, to value the artefacts they keep. For this reason, the following essay offers an overview of the institutional, functional and spatial relationships that have existed between museums and libraries for 30 years. The primary objective is the identification of the interactive modalities able to provide the library – as a place historically established and spatially located – a future still tied to the text in a context marked by the dematerialisation of information support. To understand, in other words, whether cultural institutions can react to the migration of ideas by emphasising the physicality of the documents they offer, and if this type of response can still be relevant for a process of identity construction in continuous evolution. All this, with the ultimate goal of highlighting a contemporary trend in the design of interior spaces, and in the display of museums and libraries, which respond to this particular form of global nomadism.

New forms of institutional collaboration

During the last 30 years, widespread access to the Internet – and the dissemination of knowledge which it led to – has changed the environment in which cultural institutions operate. It has given them the opportunity to make their collections accessible from anywhere in the world and at any time but, in the meanwhile, it has laid the foundation for an increasingly competitive cultural market, a digital arena in which museums and libraries are only two of the many channels of information (Allen and Bishoff 2001, 60). This is a market in which the above-mentioned institutions enter late, with no clear strategy and no adequate awareness of the potential of information technology (Martin 2003, 3–4).

As individuals increasingly rely on Internet-based information sources, museums and libraries have had to adapt to the redefined service expectations

of patrons by providing their resources and services online ... As museums and libraries expended time and money to develop resources and services that coincided with the new technology-based structures of both traditional and distance learning, they faced another challenge: how to remain a physical presence in their communities ... (contending) with competition from countless entertainment venues. (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 1)

An increased competitiveness that is even more pressing, given the gradual but significant decrease of state subsidies to cultural institutions, whose performances are no longer evaluated by the contribution they give to the public sphere, but only in economic terms (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 8). This “environmental” change drives public institutions and associations to consider a revision of the traditional role of museums and libraries. In 2008, the International Federation of Library Associations, collecting information from the cultural debate and international best practices, highlights the fact that cultural institutions today cannot merely wait for the customer to come to them, but they must seek new ways to be more relevant in the life of the community, especially through the concept of “experience,” which is almost as important as the institution’s collection (Yarrow et al. 2008, 5). Moreover, the main tool to implement this experience is mutual co-operation. From a simple marketing strategy, collaboration suddenly becomes an “imperative” (Bishoff 2004, 1) for libraries and museums in order to achieve the goals that society assigns to them: “support and enhance lifelong learning opportunities, preserve community heritage, and protect and provide access to information” (Yarrow et al. 2008, 5). Despite, however, a shared institutional mission, the differences that exist between library and museum services are far from negligible:

The differences between the two types of institutions can be outlined by comparing their different practices: libraries tend to be open-access and support freedom of information. They have even-handed collection policies on all subjects and perspectives. They list and advertise all items of the collection through a catalogue. The library users interpret information with little intervention by the librarian and there is compatibility between catalogues of different library lending systems. Museums, in contrast, have developed different cultures in several major areas. There is an emphasis on the protection of the intellectual property rights of objects and the protection of confidentiality. Ninety per cent of the collection is in secured storage and is not accessible. Museums collect unique, monetarily or intellectually valuable objects that require significant attention to issues of security and preservation. The searching systems are designed for the staff and not the public. (Gibson, Morris, and Cleeve 2007, 56)

These, among others, are the reasons for which it is impossible to speak abstractly of collaboration between museums and libraries and it is necessary to define precise solutions for healing or taking advantage of these differences. For more than 15 years, we have been witnessing the somewhat conscious development of programs, projects and instruments intended to foster co-operation between cultural institutions. There are many possible ways in which they can work together – from reduced short-term projects to extended long-term programs – which can drastically change the way in which people consider them. They can simply make institutions save money, allowing them to share resources and staff and to operate through synergistic marketing strategies. Nevertheless, in addition to increasing the number of visitors, co-operative projects often have a strong impact even on the institutions not directly involved and on the cultural distribution of a community, which acquires an important pole of attraction (Diamant-Cohen and Sherman 2003, 102). Indeed, it seems clear that the development of such relations between cultural institutions, almost exclusively thought to meet certain economic needs, is providing more opportunities, in terms of cultural offers and freedom of information, than the separate services do (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 143), which is an essential possibility in facing the challenge with the modality of accessing the knowledge that the network guarantees.

Approximately 15 years ago, the government of the United States, recognising the potential of institutional collaboration between museums and libraries, established an independent agency, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the IMLS, which is responsible, among other things, for the promotion, the evaluation and the financing of such operations. For the first time, the collaboration between cultural institutions legally enters the sphere of public planning. Indeed, the IMLS was founded because of a federal law, the *Museum and Library Services Act* (1996), which restructures the programming of federal support to museums and libraries, transferring the competencies in this regard, from the ministry of education to the new institution. This restructuring arose from the simple recognition by Congress that museums and libraries share a fundamental role in supporting teaching and learning. The mission of the IMLS is, therefore, to build the institutional skills of museums and libraries in order to find the resources and the services required to support learning beyond the limits of formal education.

Since its inception, the IMLS has done much to expand the role of libraries as cultural institutions; to encourage the development of cultural partnerships of libraries, especially with museums and archives; to expand the use of library

buildings as community cultural centres; and to promote the important role of libraries in changing cultural environments. (Martin 2003, 1)

A similar role is played in the United Kingdom – the only other country that has officially established forms of public subsidy for institutional collaboration – by the MLA, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, established in April 2000. However, despite the rich debate on the subject, the collaborative effort is far removed from that of the American one (Gibson, Morris, and Cleeve 2007, 55). The difference lies in the strong and peerless support the US Congress offers for these types of operations. The study *Museums, Libraries and 21st Century Skills*, conducted by the IMLS between 2008 and 2009, clarifies the importance that cultural institutions can play for the growth, even economic, of a nation. At a time when the global integration of markets, labour flexibility and an increase in travel opportunities have completely changed the necessary skills that each individual needs to succeed in life and work, museums and libraries may provide a place for the informal and self-directed construction of continually changing skills. The transformation of the labour market, in particular, in addition to global competition and increased professional flexibility, leads to idea of an education model centred on the individual and not on the establishment, in which lifelong learning substitutes formal education concentrated in the early years of life (IMLS 2009, 2). How should museums and libraries evolve, then, not to be overwhelmed by these changes? They should first focus on a multidirectional information system which involves different players and is centred on the public experience. A model in which the contents, tangible and digital, are identified by different partners and different users, and are focused on the issues and the skills of the 21st century. The way for this to occur is that museums and libraries that are fully integrated within the community, should act with forms of institutional collaboration (IMLS 2009, 7). In this context, institutional collaboration is essential, not only to allow libraries and museums to compete with digital information offers, but above all for the creation of widespread cultural centres that are able to provide citizens with the tools to address socio-economic change. The program is probably too ambitious, or maybe it is too anchored to the specific American cultural scenario. What is important is to understand is how the redefinition of the roles and institutional contexts changes the physical structure of the terms involved. In other words, how the quality of the service changes the spatial shape of museums and libraries. The experimentation of forms of institutional collaboration encouraged by the IMLS has been evolving over the years through a series of heterogeneous

attempts, an evolution that can be divided into two different phases, the first of which, between 1996 and 2003, shows a clear predominance of government funding for co-operative forms of collaboration (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 40). The fact has already been mentioned that there are many different ways in which institutions can work together: the terms, co-operative collaboration or collaborative programming simply signifies the most immediate operative tool in establishing institutional relationships, represented by forms of collaboration to a shared cause or to a community program. These operations are characterised by a clearly determined period of time and purpose, which bring two different institutions — typically a library and a museum — to work for a precise goal, through the features and the tools typical of the single institutions. They share that part of their resources referable to the common cause, without sacrificing the specificity of the service they represent (Yarrow et al. 2008, 10). The added value of these operations is the mutual difference of these functional specificities which allows the user to access a composite cultural product subject to different levels of analysis and interpretation. In the face of little investment for the implementation of co-ordinated management, the outcomes expected from these forms of co-operation are considerable (Allen and Bishoff 2001, 59; Diamant-Cohen and Sherman 2003, 102; Gibson, Morris, and Cleeve 2007, 58). They range from the attraction of new audiences, with the expansion of the market related to the single institutions, to the improvement of their collective perception, from the identification of new ways of valuing cultural heritage to the comparison of different resources and policies for conservation, and from the sharing of knowledge and staff to that of financial resources for training and digitising the documents held. However, although the institutions involved work together by pooling economic and intellectual resources, they do not share the same space. It is therefore a way of collaborating that does not include the design of a dedicated building, but uses the existing architectural heritage of museums and libraries.

In 2005, research by Loughborough University, addressing the identification of the forms of co-operation between museums and libraries in the United States and the United Kingdom, unsurprisingly highlights how the relationship between the institutions involved is more balanced and effective in those cases where they share the same space (Gibson, Morris, and Cleeve 2007, 63). These forms of collaboration in co-location add the savings given by the shared use of space and materials to the outcomes expected from the institutional forms of co-operation, by halving the costs of management and maintenance and by more efficient co-ordination of the staff. A similar survey had been introjected

by the IMLS two years earlier, on the occasion of the ratification of the *Museum and Library Services Act*. Since 2003, approximately half of the total subsidies for US libraries and museums have been allocated for collaborative projects that provided for a shared space (Gibson, Morris, and Cleeve 2007, 58). The sharing of space seems to square the circle as it guarantees the preservation of the promotional ability that the forms of co-operation have shown, halving their costs. It also seems to be a particularly suitable method for the construction of cultural centres for lifelong learning, capable of providing a good place to informally build constantly changing skills. The model can follow the joint-use libraries model, a particular type of service — based on an agreement that specifies the relationship between the two suppliers — in which two or more distinct library services, usually a public and academic library, serve their customers in the same building (Bundy 2003, 129), a service that has begun to be tested in collaboration relationships between university libraries and museums (Diamant-Cohen and Sherman 2003, 102–105). This type of model is based on the coexistence in the same building of a museum and a library which, while maintaining the specificity of the individual services taken separately, may have different levels of sharing. In this case, therefore, the architectural space of the building becomes an integral part of the process of institutional collaboration. Its shape and its definition affect, and are reflected, in the type of service offered. Unfortunately, the collaborative experimentation often collides with the actual results obtained from these sharing programs. The literature on the subject tends to emphasise, *ex ante*, the positive outcomes that such collaborations may reach:

Publicity for the collaborating services had a high impact, which led to the libraries and museums improving their public profiles. There was a greater awareness of services ... New and updated displays and exhibitions, using more professional display techniques, attracted greater numbers of visitors and new groups of users, on first and repeat visits. The educational and heritage roles of participating libraries and museums were highlighted and the public response was enthusiastic. (Gibson, Morris, and Cleeve 2007, 63)

However, if we attempt to review the expected results, such as the increased promotional capacity, the cost savings and the growth in the number of visitors, there is a discouraging lack of data. By analysing the experiments case by case and ignoring the collaboration in the digital environment, we can agree with Juris Dilevko and Lisa Gottlieb that “museum-library partnerships are, for the most part, a marketing-based relationship driven by outcome measures that have been conceived in such a manner as to

generate the highest possible attendance figures” and that “the intent of these ventures is to increase the visibility of both institutions by producing and then successfully selling a product” (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 143). The increased availability for the users of information resources seems to be an almost incidental consequence. In addition, this marketing relationship is not balanced in terms of contributions given and benefits obtained. Indeed, these experiments are not immune to criticism because they often end up favouring one of these institutions, and it is almost always the museum that, with its ability to attract visitors and to raise funds, relegates the library to the role of simple teaching support (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 144). Despite these attempts, none of the forms of collaboration presented is able to build a kind of community service where it is possible to benefit from a cultural, interactive multimedia offer. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine an integrated educational centre, with no real integration of spaces and involved services, because the only basic characteristic that unites all the mentioned initiatives is the belief that something new can spontaneously emerge from the simple combination of two already existing things. An idea reflected both in the type of service offered, which does not reflect a position regarding the differences that exist between the two services, and in the space that accommodates it, which is basically divided into two sections, and calls to mind the architectural typologies of museums and libraries. Hence, how can we expect that the forms of the above-mentioned collaboration to compete with the integrated and real-time access that the Internet guarantees? How can institutional co-operation or simple co-location define a new tool to access the cultural offer? It is not just a functional problem, concerning the possibility of access to resources, but it overall regards a new way of relating to information. It will be necessary, therefore, to individuate a different form of institutional collaboration that begins, this time, by the strategic requirements to be met.

A hybrid architectural model

The forms of collaboration that have been examined, rather than define the operational tools to achieve their goals, seem to define these goals in relation to the specificity of services called to collaborate. However, the dissemination of knowledge, which the widespread access to the Internet has led to, has been introducing new ways to approach the information product. It has allowed users to find, access and enjoy information, regardless of support or physical location, thanks to the emergence of multiple vertical and horizontal connection, permitting everyone to be able to create, edit, and share such information (Castells 1996). This is

the reason why multimodality, interactivity and active participation must appear in the features of a cultural institution that wants to be truly competitive, if compared to the information offer that new technologies provide. Adding to the already mentioned favours the ability of critical selection and cultural validation the network cannot constitutionally meet. The same characteristics are both claimed by the IMLS and the IFLA for museums and libraries of the 21st century (IMLS 2009, 7; Yarrow et al. 2008, 5), in order to represent places of self-directed life-long learning for everyone. Places where learning does not hinder learning, in order to achieve the formation of conscious, open and flexible subjectivities that are able to face the challenges and changes of contemporary life. However, if we can agree that libraries and museums are perhaps the only cultural media that allow the users the freedom to choose the kind of information they need and when to get it, it is difficult to identify these fundamental features in the forms of collaboration presented, which do not show a real integration of space and functions. Simply a real mixture of spatial and functional typologies of libraries and museums would probably make people benefit in an interactive and experiential way from multimedia cultural information. This would represent a sort of hybridisation which, despite having a rich history behind it, today is not so consciously explored. The contemporary rediscovery and revival of historical forms of hybridisation between museums and libraries is at the centre of the creative efforts of Juris Dilevko and Lisa Gottlieb, researchers at Toronto University. Noting that the proliferation of online initiatives raises the question of how co-operation can meet the needs of museums, libraries and users, the authors go in search of alternative forms of institutional collaboration to those promoted by the IMLS, which is responsible for depriving the library of its social role in favour of museum needs (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 4). An imbalance that allows Ray Lester to state that, “we are not facing the ‘convergence’ of libraries and museums; we are instead facing the ‘takeover’ of libraries by museums” (2001, 191). For these reasons, the cited authors call on library institutions to leave the position of museum partner to conquer its role, through the rediscovery of their common roots. A rediscovery that can also be useful to define a pattern of hybridisation that meets the requirements identified.

A convenient place to begin to trace the relationship between museums and libraries is the foundation of the cabinets of curiosities, the private collections established in Europe in the 16th century also known as *studioli* or *wunderkammern*, which historians have recognised as precursors of the modern museum (Impey and MacGregor 1985). The first evidence regarding this typology is probably represented in the engraving by

Constantino Vitale from 1599, depicting the collection of Ferrante Imparato (1550–1631), a Neapolitan naturalist, pharmacist and author of the personal *Historia Naturale* (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 146). The image represents four men in a small room full of natural objects and artefacts. The contents of the lower shelves of the cabinets is hidden by doors decorated with a sort of visual register of what is inside, on the basis of the decoration applied to the cabinets of Francesco I de Medici's *studiolo* (1541–1587). The first two figures, Ferrante Imparato and Francesco I, give an idea of how the demography of the first collectors is as varied as their collections. On the one hand, we have the aristocrats' collections, such as those of Rudolf II in Prague (1552–1612) or Peter the Great in St. Petersburg (1672–1725), which show the comprehensive effort of a program aimed at representing the universality of the known world, through a great allegory of the absolute power of the prince (Daston and Park 1998, 153). On the other hand, we have the study collections of the professional classes like those of Imparato, the ecclesiastic Antonio Giganti (1535–1598) and Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605), whom Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon would consider as the first modern naturalist (Olmi in Impey and MacGregor 1985, 7). As their name suggests, study collections have a didactic function that corresponds to the personal inclinations of the owner. Even in this case, however, the attempt to represent the universal world is reflected in the interaction between art and nature manifested by a display integrating *naturalia* and *artificialia*. In addition to the mentioned classes the cabinets often include *antiquitas*, artefacts from antiquity, *exotica*, *naturalia* from Asia and Africa, and *mirabilia*, real or fake natural oddities from all over the world. The new and rare materials displayed are not only intended to expand the knowledge of the collectors towards new fields of knowledge, but to provide proof of this knowledge to the whole world. These objects, connecting the natural philosophers with universities and courts, can be the engine of a social mobility, which, until that moment, was reserved only for artists. In 1577, for example, Pope Gregory XIII wished to subsidise the works of Ulisse Aldrovandi, displaying to a whole class of scholars that their work could earn some fame. Thus, from this period, collectors feel an unprecedented need to open their workrooms to the public, providing the ideal foundation for the emergence of public museums.

With the proliferation of collections accessible to the public in the seventeenth century, collectors develop marketing campaigns to attract visitors. One component of these campaigns is the publication of catalogues that would draw attention to the wonders on display ... Another component of collectors' marketing campaigns involve how the curiosities are displayed ... People not

only want to see the curiosities, but also want to identify and learn something about them. (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 152)

The new emphasis on the attraction of the public does not affect only the construction but also the typology of material that can be found inside. Books begin to play a significant role in the transformation of cabinets of curiosities into a source of entertainment and education for visitors. Their addition arouses a sense of interactivity for visitors, as while the books provide the most relevant information related to the objects displayed, they give a physical representation of the information contained in the books. In addition, even the spatial organisation of these environments becomes more and more sophisticated – while in aristocrats' collections, books are simply kept in shelves with other artefacts, a more elaborate idea of display is reflected in the study collections. Antonio Giganti, to cite an example, of which we unfortunately have only indirect descriptions, organises his own studio in two adjacent rooms, connected by a small corridor. In one, there is a library and in the other a museum. Everything is, however, brought to unity owing to the expedient of using the ceiling of the library as an exhibition space and the free space in the centre of the museum as a reading room (Laurencich-Minelli in Impey and MacGregor 1985, 18).

By the 18th century, European cabinets of curiosities complete a gradual metamorphosis towards the form of public museum. In some cases, *wunderkammern* and *schatzkammern* (rooms of treasures) are converted into public institutions under the patronage of aristocratic owners, such as Peter the Great who, in 1719 opens the first public museum in Russia. The most striking examples, however, are represented by the transformations of private collections of curiosities from certain middle-class families. In 1628, John Tradescant the Younger (1608–1662), botanist and naturalist by family tradition gathers his collections based on the Italian model, in a personal cabinet, the *Musaeum Tradescantium*, or simply, The Ark. His will provides for the collection, at his death, to pass to Elias Ashmole, a founding member of the Royal Society and distinguished antiquarian who, in 1683, to accommodate the materials collected by Tradescant, founds the Ashmolean Museum within Oxford University, which would be the first public museum in England and probably in Europe (Welch 1983, 45–46). Ashmole certainly does not need to go so far to find a spatial and functional model, since he founds his building a few metres from the Bodleian Library, which, established exactly 80 years earlier, includes a dedicated cabinet of curiosities. The cabinet has already probably influenced the design of the entire library, which shows an embryonic type

of wall system — shelves integrated into the perimeter walls of the room — that basically ignores the classical arrangement of libraries that use the one typical of natural artefacts collections (Pevsner 1986, 121). Ashmole, in planning his museum, uses a similar spatial model even though, in defining the display system and he divides the collection of books and that of the objects into two separate areas (Welch 1983, 45–46); laying, perhaps, the foundations for a functional specialisation of knowledge that will be brought to completion after more than a century. However, during the following years, the example of the Oxford Ashmolean Museum will be instructive for other cultural institutions, such as universities in particular, in recognising both the economic and the symbolic value of integrated collections. Students can benefit at the same time from the physical representations of the topics and the co-ordinated bibliographic insights. The library becomes one of the founding parts of modern and contemporary universities. That of St. Andrew's University in Scotland in 1795 is the first to acquire different collections of books and objects to display them in its own cabinet of curiosities (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 155). Moreover, we use this term again simply because, even in the early 19th century, in many cases it is impossible to define a museum architectural typology different from those used for libraries. The reason is that text and object are considered to be identical and, therefore, do not require different methods of storage. Before the industrialisation of the printing process, books are still in such a limited number to equate with the value of *mirabilia*. The same principle of integrated knowledge that is at the root of academic library-museum leads, in years later, to the creation of specific museum libraries, of which the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is probably the first example.

In 1837 the British Government creates a School of Design because it feels that design in Britain is inferior to other countries. The School of Design aims to educate artisans of all the crafts and to do so it collects both plaster-casts of objects and illustrated books ... After the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, the Government decides to set up a Museum of Manufactures and to this end purchases a large number of the best artefacts from the Exhibition so that craftspeople can study actual objects from many nations. But because it is desirable that artists and craftspeople view as many objects in their trade as possible, a library of illustrated books is an essential extension of the Museum's collection. It is therefore decided to incorporate the Library of the School of Design into this new museum. By the time this museum establishes its own home in South Kensington in the mid-1850s the library begins to be called the National Art Library. (Van der Wateren 1999, 192)

From this moment, each museum has a dedicated library, because, while it may collect a limited number of pieces, it is necessary to be able to study a much larger number of examples for comparison. The museum library, however, will be increasingly seen as a tool in providing support only to the museum scientific staff and, in the majority of cases, it continues to maintain the character of a private library. Despite this fact, until the end of the 19th century, after the first physical separation between library and museum spaces introduced by the Ashmolean Museum, this typology of the library represents one of the two forms of resistance to functional differentiation.

The other “resistant” typology is represented by library museums, which arise at the end of the same century mainly in the United States. Here the cabinets of curiosities begin to appear only in the second half of the 18th century, certainly to a lesser extent than in Europe, and only thanks to a number of people who maintain close relations with the old continent (Bell 1967, 1). Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), for example, the third president of the United States and signatory of the Declaration of Independence, as amateur architect designs his library in the Rotunda of Monticello in the style of a European cabinet, importing the models he knows in Paris while serving as a diplomat. The American cabinets, however, have a different destiny, as they never turn into public museums. Indeed, the museums begin appearing independently of private collections, by the philanthropic donations of some of the richest families in America. The Smithsonian Museum, for example — the nucleus of today’s Smithsonian Institution — founded in 1846, is the first institution of this kind not to gather a cabinet collection (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 161). It seems clear, therefore, especially at a time when the two types of service begin to be perceived as separate, that the relationships between museums and libraries, with no common history, are destined to fade. These relationships, however, are resumed by the library institutions, which begin to develop their own collections. In 1876, in the heyday of functional specialisation, the United States Department of Education commissions the publication of a book entitled *Public Libraries in the United States of America: Their History, Condition and Management*, consisting of several essays on the planning and design of libraries in the newly formed confederation. Among others, a text by Henry Simmons Frieze immediately stands out, in which the author promotes the fusion of art museums and public libraries into a single basic service. Following the fundamental principle at the root of the American Public Library Movement that public institutions, such as museums and libraries, can improve society, Frieze argues that the new institution can serve as both an innocent diversion and as a

centre of education for an entire nation. Moreover, since libraries and museums share the same goals, their union under one roof would follow their mutual relationships (Frieze 1876, 437). Principles that the great American architect Henry Hobson Richardson must have known when, three years later, he designs the Woburn Public Library in Massachusetts (1879), the first to host an internal museum. The resulting museum, however, shows a marked division from the library space by the inclusion of a deep, octagonal plan atrium, which is spatially distinct from the longitudinal development of the library, a distinction that is a reflection beyond the theory of the difference that is truly perceived between their functional services. Indeed, the Frieze-Hobson model is replicated only once in 1887, in the Newberry Library in Chicago. It would be a few more years before the most influential example of this approach to the problem of spatial and functional hybridisation is realised by John Cotton Dana, director of the Newark Public Library from 1902 to 1929, who uses the tool of people involvement to make the library a cultural centre for the local community (Penniston 1999). One of Dana's innovations is to open a real museum within the library, a space where, in about 15 years, he hosts 74 temporary exhibitions, visited by more than 300.000 people. What is truly revolutionary about Dana, however, is the method of relating to a cultural institution. While the principles that guide the construction of the collection are generally aimed at elevating public taste to an imposed standard, Dana requires that the institution reflect the interests of the community. In addition, it is precisely the idea of collecting and displaying materials which meet the needs of society, that prompts him to use the library as a museum. Unlike the Woburn library, his model does not house a collection of artefacts in a separate wing with books and objects being exhibited together by the library staff, in a system that recalls the configuration of cabinets. Instead of just sharing space, as suggested by Frieze, Dana creates a model in which the physical space and the functions of the museum are used by the library. The same model that characterises the construction of the US presidential libraries which preserve books, artefacts and archival documents of former presidents. The model, despite its success, has very few descendants.

The spirit of the times initiates change more than a century earlier, when text and object start to require separate treatment. The engine of change is in France and concerns the problems that libraries face in receiving and distributing a huge mass of publications. Immediately following the French Revolution, there is a dramatic increase in the press due, in large part, to specialist scientific, technical and political publications. An increase favoured by the industrialisation of the printing process

which occurred owing to the development of steam engines. In addition, during the 19th century, the provision which widens the national law of release to all the major libraries of the state, the so-called legal deposit, is repeatedly confirmed. The display of books along the walls of a reading room, which marked the hybrid model, arising from the cabinets of curiosities, suddenly becomes totally inadequate (Pevsner 1986, 126). In this context of uncertainty, architectural design culture addresses the issue with unprecedented vigour.

Educational programs change with the end of the Académie Royale d'Architecture ... and its indirect replacement with the two new big institutions that will characterise the entire pedagogy of architecture throughout Europe for the whole 19th century, the Ecole Polytechnique and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Educational books change. No longer late-Renaissance treatises or collections of views of Roman antiquities, but courses, theoretical essays, collections of examples, dictionaries and encyclopaedias entries ... But in the more general tumult, the new times demand new spatial solutions ... The times in which public space is meant as a single large room are finished ... As the audience hall, the theatre, the art collection, the scientific laboratory, the library as well starts a new tradition as an autonomous building, with its own floor plan consisting of different rooms. (De Poli 2002, 33–34)

In the prefiguration and development of this spatial model, an important role is played by the authority of the architect Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760–1834), who, following on from the theories of his master, Etienne-Louis Boullée, defines a library type in which the spaces of deposit, loan and reading are rigidly differentiated. The first and most important example of this kind is the building designed in 1843 by Henri Labrousse in Paris, to gather the collections by Mazarin, Arsenal and Pantheon in one place. The design of the library of S.te Geneviève is based on the very simple idea of a long rectangular plan, with an entrance on the ground floor, located in the middle of the storage and office areas. The vestibule through a monumental staircase leads to a reading room on the first floor, which is completely separated by the archive spaces, which are inaccessible to the public and organised according to the principle of the maximum economy of space, and have nothing in common with the almost free plan characterising the reading room, which also has an independent structural system (Pevsner 1986, 126). Libraries after this building could no longer be the same as 20 years earlier. The new solution was the perfect answer to the practical problems and the ethics or aesthetics which characterise that era, an era that sees the establishment of the functional and spatial features that will characterise the development of the library institution until the 1980s.

If we exclude John Cotton Dana's experiment and the specific case of the US presidential libraries — too bound to the nature of the housed private archival collection — it seems difficult today to identify contemporary forms of spatial and functional hybridisation between libraries and museums. The specialisation just described has enabled libraries to achieve the indispensable efficiency for the control of such a large number of books that show specific functional needs. However, there are some forms of sharing between the museum and library spaces that, although they do not represent cases of actual hybridisation, show a certain continuity with the historical tradition previously traced. Today, almost every museum owns a library dedicated to the specific topics of interest. If the first example of this kind, the National Art Library in London, has represented a sort of form of resistance to the functional specialisation until the end of the 19th century, today, however, the role of the museum libraries has drastically changed:

The museum library supports research into the object and its context; into the methodologies for conserving the objects; and finally it supports research relating to the display of the object, and into exhibitions ... Since the museum library supports research related to a specific collection of objects museum libraries develop deep and uniquely focused collections of research materials. The museum library provides the context within which an institution's specific collection of objects can be researched, documented and interpreted. Thus, if the public was allowed into the museum library they could complement their experience of viewing and studying an individual object with printed information about the object as well as other related objects which were not available in the museum. (Van der Wateren 1999, 193)

Unfortunately, however, museum libraries are rarely open to non-specialist audiences, and are almost never part of the exhibition. In most cases, the original function of integrating the museum collection is lost. Even the most sophisticated examples of programming and design show results which cannot be ascribed to the hybrid category. The New Art Museum in New York, completed in 2007 thanks to a SANAA project, is a perfect example of this fact. It has a library on the top floor — which also houses a small permanent collection on the museum and the city — designed to provide reference texts for temporary exhibitions. Physically separate from the rest of the path, this space is an independent nucleus in itself, little more than an accompaniment to the lower floors. From the point of view of the service, borrowing is not allowed, neither is access to the library free. Despite the attempt to unify the spaces through the same treatment of the surfaces, the two areas, as well as their respective services, are clearly

distinct. The books here do not seem to represent anything more than captions of the exhibits, but just a little larger. From an architectural point of view, the New Museum is a highly valuable example but nothing different from the case of co-location of which it appears to be one of the most successful attempts. A mirror of this type is the contemporary establishment – at times, informally, at others, consciously designed – of exhibition spaces within libraries, recalling the ones opened by Dana in the Newark Public Library (Robotti 1994). Again, there is probably no library that has not equipped over the years, a hall for temporary exhibitions. They are often multifunctional spaces obtained in existing rooms that can be set up to host exhibitions, public lectures or readings. Nevertheless, while Dana used the display and the functions of museum to create, along with the library, a hybrid educational model, in these cases the treatment of the text and the object are highly differentiated, as well as the display which follows the respective traditional types of museum and library. This does not mean that museum libraries and library exhibition spaces are marginal or useless spaces. Excellent results of spatial and functional hybridisation have been produced by temporary installations in areas such as the New Museum in New York, and the new *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* by Dominique Perrault. The fact is that these types, despite the cultural tradition that supports them, are not automatically cases of hybridisation. Moreover, the difference between text and object, between museums and libraries, has become appreciable in the last century.

While trying to find a way for closer institutional co-operation, Juris Dilevko and Lisa Gottlieb are not able to identify any spatial or functional references belonging to the contemporary era. The authors, despite the open suggestion that rather than co-operating, libraries should strengthen their exhibition functions to take on the role and spirit of the cabinets of curiosities, they do not mention the possible concrete modalities of this operation (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 161). It is certainly not an easy task as the identity between text and object is lost but the architectural definition of the two spaces also seems almost irreconcilable. The vast number of types able to define the term cabinet of curiosities has as common denominator a unique space – or conceptually unified as in the case of the Antonio Giganti's studio – in which it is possible to collect and display texts and objects on the same subject as part of an undifferentiated exhibition. It could hardly be envisaged that today there were a single analysis for two classes of elements so different in need of cataloguing, storage and use. It is difficult to even imagine – given the number of objects owned by the individual institutions – to be able to unify the functions and the spaces of storage and exposure within the same museum

or the same library. The attempt to recover this functional integrity, which is one of the central themes of speculation in recent decades, collides with the problems created by the complexity and dispersion caused by the exponential growth of knowledge (Rayward 1998, 213). Thus, the survey of the contemporary forms of hybridisation, rather than being limited to the search for an exact replica of the historical models described, should begin by the re-evaluation of the validity of some of the parameters that led to the typological and functional differentiation of museums and libraries. Not to build a contemporary variation of a *wunderkammer*, but to find out what type of hybridisation can realistically be realised. Indeed, spatial and functional specialisation is not necessarily an inevitable process, but rather a deliberate choice based on a historical interpretation, which is certainly not unequivocal. The same interpretation, which has represented the theoretical basis for contemporary forms of institutional collaboration, has never questioned the inherent separation between the museums and libraries involved. It is certainly true, that this differentiation has responded to the needs of managing different types of collections when they grew in size and had to meet the needs and interests of a growing number of users. But it is not so obvious that modern museums, archives and libraries are different mainly due to the nature of the materials they house (Rayward 1998, 211). Robert Martin, for example, former director of the IMLS, gives a very different reading of the theme.

The distinction between library and museum and archives that we now accept as common is really a matter of convention, a convention that has evolved over time. That convention is predicated on a perception that libraries and museums collect very different kinds of things. In fact, however, from one perspective or frame of reference – one school of thought – libraries, museums and archives all collect precisely the same things. They all collect documents. (Martin 2003, 3)

Moreover, information technologies highlight the indifference for the physical support of these documents.

Digital technology has enabled the creation of large-scale digital surrogate collections, which has again dramatically enhanced knowledge about, and access to, library collections ... People who formerly used such materials on-site in the respective institutions are now frequently (if not exclusively) consulting them online. Even more important, large numbers of individuals who heretofore made little or no use of these materials – who perhaps were even unaware of their existence – are now frequent users of the digital collections. And these new users do not care, and may not even be aware,

whether the original materials are in a library or a museum. The boundaries between libraries, museums and archives are blurring. (Martin 2003, 4)

What really differentiates the two institutions, if we omit for a moment the kind of documentary support they are dealing with, is their way of cataloguing and providing access to information.

In the traditional non-digital environment, libraries organise their collections and present them for use in response to a user's specific need or inquiry ... Conversely, museums traditionally organise selections from their collections in topical or thematic interpretative and didactic exercises we call exhibitions. In the digital environment, these behaviours are almost precisely reversed. Museums for the first time can present their entire collection, catalogued and surrounded with metadata, retrievable in response to a user's specific interest or inquiry. And libraries have begun to organise selected items from their collections in thematic presentations that tell a particular story, and even call these presentations exhibitions. (Martin 2003, 4–5)

Hence today, the functional hybridisation between museums and libraries that, as recalled by Boyd Rayward, is at the centre of the international debate, is largely achieved in the digital environment, only because of the widespread and uncoordinated efforts of the individual institutions, which try to meet the demands of a market that is increasingly interested in the direct use of multimedia information, regardless of its location or physical medium. A hybrid that basically consists of the integration and exchange of usage models typical of museums and libraries. It is only necessary to determine whether, in the traditional non-digital environment, there are analogous cases to those described by Robert Martin and to understand how they are able to respond to global technological and cultural changes. However, more importantly, to understand how these modalities of functional integration change the idea of space, the architectural design and the interior definition of libraries and museums.

Emerging forms of museum/library

The gradual digitisation of information, which is now in progress, is leading to a true dissemination of knowledge that is expressed by the almost unlimited possibilities of accessing and reproducing documents. Possibilities that, in turn, are rapidly promoting decisive indifference to the physical support of such information. Papyrus, incunabula, oils and frescos are constantly accessible on the Web in the same format, regardless of the physical location of the institution that makes them available, and often also regardless of the institution, as the same file can be offered

by hundreds of different websites. All this tends to blur the boundaries that distinguish museums, libraries and archives in the digital arena, also suggesting a way for similar forms of institutional hybridisation in the traditional non-digital environment. The problem, however, is that the same digitisation that opens up these new scenarios, seems to put the physical existence of cultural institutions at risk, especially those of libraries, whose collections are exposed to greater risk than those of museum, as the physicality of the artefacts is not an added value. If a text is online there is almost no difference between the digital and printed versions, with the exception of rare books and manuscripts (Dilevko and Gottlieb 2004, 145). Hence, there may be difficulty in the identification of some forms of spatial and functional hybridisation of museums and libraries, starting from the same premises that threaten their physical existence. According to some commentators, however, there is no risk because the transformation has already occurred. The most radical proponent in this regard is that of Sreten Ugričić, director of the National Library in Serbia, according to whom the virtual has become more real than the physical for efficiency, speed and scope.

For thousands of years culture has been established, maintained and developed through materialisation. Now the direction of this process has been reversed – culture is produced and reproduced, the culture becomes real and transformed and distributed, through *dematerialization*, in the form of information-communication technologies and digital media, networks, domains, fields, spaces, algorithms ... As regards time and space, the library is no longer just a physical building which requires certain time and means of transport to be accessed within the limited time-frame of daily working hours, but an aggregation of services and resources that are available at any time, at any place and for every need. (Ugričić 2012, 110–113)

This would not alter the social role of the library. Indeed, according to the author, this could lead to a revolution in accessing information, which is not only purely cultural, but also political and economic. We should just concede that the library has lost its physical characteristics. In this view, then, taking for granted the full digitisation of the entire global documentary heritage – which is far from be obvious (Herrings 2007) – it would seem that the book as a cultural object and the library as a historically founded place, have no added values if compared to electronic documents and search engines. Curiously, though, it is precisely Ugričić, perhaps inadvertently, who highlights this value, a value that lies in the relationships between museums and libraries, and in their common history.

The printed book, today, according to the very act of production, belongs to the museum, not to the library. The book in its core has already mutated and integrated itself in the digital medium ... What we are holding in our hands while leafing through a book is a sort of a living fossil, a nice shell from an epoch that faded out. (Ugričić 2012, 116)

The critical spirit of these words in relation to the printed book is clearly evident. According to this interpretation, however, it is possible to imagine that the direct interface with the documentary support can become an unprecedented value of which to take advantage for the spatially defined library. A value that is still tied, however, to its traditional functions of selection, storage and promotion of knowledge. The book, from anonymous container, rediscovers, the documentary importance of its physical consistency thanks to digitisation. The only form of contemporary hybridisation that we can probably expect in the physical realm is that in which the library, while maintaining its traditional characteristics, uses museum strategies of collection valourisation to highlight the indispensability of direct contact with documents. A form of hybridisation based on the valourisation of the library artefacts that can certainly be contemporary, but not unprecedented. To delineate its feature, it is necessary to go back to the 17th century, to what is probably the first case of intentional musealisation of the text and library space. A hybrid model that rightfully belongs to the historical forms described, but which deserves a more accurate treatment.

As a result of the Roman Church changed role, in direct response to the lacerations left in every sector of society by the Luther's Reformation, for the first time it is attributed a new importance to the culture ... The movement of the Counter-Reformation, with its commitment of dogmatic and disciplinary rebuilding, is very conducive to the formation of new library collections. No longer for a pure show of philanthropy ... but for the full awareness of the ideological and political value of culture, of dissemination and control of information. A new model of library grows up: a place of study, with texts of all the disciplines accumulated in great quantities, and not a simple beautiful collection of precious artefacts. (De Poli 2002, 24-25)

Built from 1603 on a design by the architect Lelio Buzzi, the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan is strongly supported by Cardinal Federico Borromeo to represent a bulwark against the advance of Lutheran Reformation in Southern Europe. The cardinal, considering public and centralised access to the cultural orthodoxy of the time, wishes to found a library, open to all those who come to study (Pevsner 1986, 120). In addition, although it is

only the fourth public library ever established, it is the first truly used by the common public. What is really interesting is that the representation of this new modality of access, together with that of the merit and the intrinsic coherence of the belief of the Counter-Reformation, is reflected in the architectural definition of the interior and the display of the library. This is a definition that draws a completely innovative hall-type library, consisting of a single, large and very high room, open at the centre of one short side and illuminated by a barrel-vaulted ceiling. This is a large free room of 79 by 39 feet, which shows a good degree of flexibility in the organisation of the reading stations, and is favoured by zenithal lighting. Each wall, divided into two floors served by overhanging balconies, is totally covered with shelves, according to the system of arranging books called “wall system.” Since the end of the 16th century, it becomes clear that the increase in library heritage given by the printing press will soon require more capacious solutions than carrels or benches. It seems that the first library to be equipped with shelves along the walls around the perimeter, around 1570, is the Escorial, but these shelves are only six feet high to permit easy access to books. The Biblioteca Ambrosiana has, instead, shelves from the floor to the vault, accessible via balconies and instructions regarding bibliographic cataloguing engraved on the same shelves. The result is an easily accessible place for each user but at the same time, gifted with overwhelming authority. The book — or rather, the unusual number of books arranged in compact rows — is a subject of exposure, as well as consultation, an object of worship useful in reinforcing the faith of the people. From the architectural point of view, then, the book is also a kind of constructive module of space. The library walls are made of books, as if they were the bricks upon which the Counter-Reformation orthodoxy is based. This form of musealisation of the library space is a model of institutional hybridisation much more contemporary than past centuries lead us to believe. It is based on a mechanism of integration and exchange of using modalities typical of museums and libraries, resembling that which is currently occurring in the digital arena (Martin 2003, 3). It gives the opportunity of direct interface with the documents and unmediated access to the collection, which is typical of a library service, and at the same time it shows a valourisation of documentary support and a thematisation of the collection which only a museum can guarantee. The architectural definition of this integrated space is the operating instrument through which these meanings are materialised. However, despite the international success of the Ambrosiana model, its application lasts only for a little over a century. The functional specialisation, which in the late 18th and early 19th centuries touches the relationships between

museums and libraries, soon begins to affect the relationships between spaces and functional areas within the same institution.

The 19th century functionalism marks the entire system of new libraries: the books, hidden in the storages, lose their role of decorative element, replaced by the solemnity of the large size made possible ... by new technologies. A greater attention is addressed to the reader, now mass, small individual ... standard place that is repeated for hundreds and hundreds of times. At the same time design carefully addresses all the technical and furnishings problems that pop up as a result of the quantities involved ... The library becomes a big machine of science and for science, while its dimensions go beyond the understanding and control of individual users. As well as they go beyond the ability to control of the library staff. (Boriani 1984, 15–16)

As an example, it is possible to consider the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, built between 1860 and 1867 by Henri Labrousse. As in the library of the Pantheon, the archives are on the ground floor, clearly separated from the reading room on the top floor. Here, however, this separation is rhetorically emphasised by the shape of a space that communicates a grandiose idea of functionalism. The interior space of the reading room, through the use of cast-iron columns and arches, has an unusual height for the time, while the umbrella domes accentuates the feeling of lightness. The reading stations, which are also exceptional in number, are arranged in a panoptic system, around a central area dedicated to the staff, which provides for the control of the readers and the distribution of books. The texts are housed in the archives below, structured on four levels through a series of galleries in metallic carpentry, organised as on the decks of a steamer. Everything here is designed with the maximum economy of space and a proto-industrial aesthetic to signify the attained efficiency.

It would be necessary to wait until the second half of the last century for the model defined by the description of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana to be rediscovered. Its use, very understandably, is in fact updated in some interventions intended to accommodate study collections, manuscripts and rare books in general. Until that time, collections of this kind had been housed in the same building that had seen their establishment. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, however, the progressive importance that universities in the United States are beginning to have in the international arena, forces these institutions to adopt buildings dedicated to house collections donated by wealthy alumni. The most important case, from the point of view both of the collection housed, and of the quality of the architectural intervention, is represented by Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in New Haven, Connecticut. Completed

in 1963 on a design by Gordon Bunshaft of the group Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the building houses a study library with an extensive collection of rare books and manuscripts, directly accessible by showing academic credentials and registering at the access counter. Admission is free to the public who can access the free temporary exhibitions on the ground floor and the exhibition areas on the main floor, which houses some cases with rare manuscripts. What is truly interesting, however, is the calibre of the architectural intervention. The building, which occupies the centre of a square, resembles a box of five floors, which is closed, raised on *pilotis* and divided by a grid in concrete with infill panels in stone. This stone, which is alabaster, represents the only source of natural light to illuminate the focus of the project. Reversing the position of the perimetral wall system, Bunshaft collects books in a glass case, completely isolated in the centre of the building, which connects the basement where it can be accessed — a reading room that extends under the whole square — with the roof. Defined by a very light, metal grid the shrine protects and exposes the collection as if it were a single artefact, giving back the archive area its dignity, which here takes the aesthetic value of an art collection. The library, too, perfectly accommodates both the specialised public interested in the consultation of rare texts and the general public of museums, attracted by the same building that, like in the Ambrosiana, uses the physical consistency of books as element of spatial definition. The recovery of the Ambrosiana model is even more compelling in the case of another university library, this time in Toronto, Canada. The Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library, designed in 1973 by the local firm of Mathers and Haldenby, displays externally a composite brutalist shape. Inside, however, the space opens into one large, elongated hexagonal-shaped room. The walls, from floor to ceiling, are covered with shelves divided into four overlapping layers, served by hanging balconies that run along the entire perimeter of the walls. Aside a huge central chandelier lamp and low ones on the reading stations, the lighting system consists only of directional spot lamps directed at the shelves, accentuating the attempt to aesthetically valourise the collection. The building, which is dark and silent, almost looks like a church. Clearly, the choice to emphasise the symbolic nature of the rarity of the collection is a priority over other functional considerations. Nevertheless, there is another meaning that the designers wished to emphasise. While in the Beinecke, the shrine, like any other museum case, is also a filter, a sort of screen between the user and the texts, the space here is completely accessible.

Unquestionably, the design process that has characterised the two case studies presented has no connection with digitisation or possible responses

to on-going global changes. In these examples, the hybridisation of the modalities of access and the use that is typical of museums and libraries has been pursued only because of the rarity of the artefacts collected and the peculiar nature of those institutions. An academic library, indeed, despite the attempts to musealise it, hosts a study collection which requires a high level of accessibility. Things change in the majority of the cases in which these interventions are aimed at exhibiting private collections. The attempt to highlight the documentary value of the book as artefact over the last 50 years has been focused on an operative form that is completely different from the ones just described. Museums of books have gradually sprung up all over the world, and particularly in Europe (Gregorio 2006), to fulfil this task of restoring the dignity of the physical consistency of the text. In practice, however, they have turned out to be only one specialised type of art museums. The cost of entry, the impossibility of consulting the books, and the lack of a true direct interface with them determine the unique identification of the text as artefact, while the content remains unknown to most users. There is no hybridisation of any sort between museums and libraries: the book — or rather its shell, to use the words of Ugričić (2012, 116) — is presented as the vehicle of artistic value or as the finding of a material culture that has now disappeared, with the constant risk of repeating the idea of museum as simple storage of cultural artefacts. Any form of interaction with the object is in fact prevented, not only for the lack of a physical contact, of course, but also for the impossibility of appreciating the content, which, for any other art collection, is instead intrinsic to the physical media of the work. For these reasons, the museums of books soon realised that this functional model is inadequate for their intended purpose.

An example of this awareness is represented by the story of the *Bibliotheca Wittockiana* in Brussels between 1983 and 1996. Commissioned by the Belgian industrialist and bibliophile Michel Wittock, the library is opened in the building designed by Emmanuel de Callatay, as a museum of bindings. However, the increasing demands of scholars interested in accessing the texts, leads the administration to change course. Thus in 1996, completed the project is completed by Charly Wittock, son of the founder, with the opening of a second floor for a consultation room and an archive with open stacks. The lower floor today houses a permanent collection of precious bindings and an exhibition space for temporary displays. A type of service offered that, in some way, gained a following featuring the best interventions of library musealisation of the last 15 years, as in the case of the enlargement of the Martin Bodmer Foundation in Cologny, Switzerland, headed by Mario Botta in 1998. This incorporates

a library with an exhibition space dedicated to the most precious books, allowing at the same time, the opening of the library to a wider audience than to specialists, and the display of artefacts, which until then had been jealously guarded. Another example is the refunctionalisation, between the renovation works entrusted in 2000 to Norman Foster of the British Museum Reading Room, once reading room of the British Library and today exhibition space and open stacks information centre. Yet another example is the relocation of the collection of manuscripts and rare books collected by John Pierpoint Morgan, with the reopening in 2006 of the Morgan Library and Museum featuring, thanks to the expansion designed by Renzo Piano, new reading and consultation rooms as well as new areas for exhibitions. A modality also declined in several recent examples of temporary displays, such as the *Librocielo* project by Attilio Stocchi, presented at the Salone del Mobile in Milan in 2012, thanks to which, through a unique sound and light installation, the books of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana reveal part of their contents to the visitors, “talking” between them. These, like many other examples, identify a very unique type of institutional service. A service that is on the line between co-location and functional hybridisation, because if it is possible to find those characteristics of direct interface, unmediated access, aesthetic enhancement and theming of the collection, it is also true that this fact concerns only a part of the housed artefacts. Because of the rarity or uniqueness of the artefacts presented, these institutions are somehow obliged to maintain a certain differentiation between the library functions — that cannot be extended to all audiences, and for each type of artefact — and the museum functions. This is a reason for which each model of musealisation of a contemporary collection of rare books can only be a partial attempt of functional hybridisation.

Similarly, the spatial configuration and the architectural definition of the buildings that house these collections show the same degree of functional separation, certainly because of the differentiation of the service, but also because of the fact that the musealisation interventions are brought almost exclusively into the body of existing buildings showing large historical value and often, considerable architectural quality. The first spatial characteristic common to all the cases cited, therefore, lies in the type of intervention that — if we exclude the newly constructed Wittrockiana — only concerns examples of expansion, redevelopment or temporary installation. As a result, the architectural typology of the musealised space is closely related to the pre-existing structures found by the designer. The Reading Room of the British Museum continues to be a circular room with the panoptic system that Sidney Smirke drew up in 1873, as well as

the Morgan Library still retaining the distribution designed by Charles McKim in 1902, characterised by a sequence of closed rooms that resemble an Italian Renaissance palace. The size of the intervention, therefore, varies in the same way. While Foster simply integrates the reading room with the museum thanks to unified coverage, Piano endows the building with a new lobby, an auditorium, a reading room and an exhibition space. Going back to the similarities, the various degree of separation of services, combined with the architectural constraints due to the pre-existing structures, determines a rather rigid functional distribution, which tries not to interfere with the previous spatial system. Typically, the library collection is maintained, using the existing display system, in the same spaces that originally housed it, instead the exhibition spaces and modalities are often subject to new interventions, whose affinities with the rest of the building vary from architect to architect. Mario Botta, for example, with the intervention in the Bodmer Foundation, a complex formed by two neo-classical buildings, creates a sort of unique basement to define the new access to the foundation and an exhibition space for the rarest texts, which stand out in the darkness of the space within their individual display cases. Whereas Botta play with darkness, Piano uses light, exposed concrete, pale stone and white, painted steel to illuminate the environments without detaching too much from the building of McKim. The specialisation of the functional program is, however, reflected by the division of spaces and the different forms of lighting and construction. Even in the Wittrockiana library, the only example of new construction, the space reserved for free consultation is on a different level from the one for exhibitions. More generally, the spacious and bright areas for the consultation of books, features a classic shape with shelves along the perimetral walls or in the centre of the room. The exhibition spaces, instead, show a freer plan and are always equipped with crystal cases for the display of manuscripts with dedicated lighting. The book, in these spaces, is almost always presented open, thanks to a Plexiglas support, through the display system introduced by Massimo Quendolo for the exhibition *Brouillons of Ecrivains*, held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in 2001.

What really seems to unite the interventions mentioned, which more clearly refers to the theme of hybridisation, is the noticeable attempt to give unity to the existing architectures. Foster, using a huge glass umbrella canopy which branches off from the dome of the Reading Room to connect to the museum, creates a covered square that has its fulcrum in the library, Botta digs in another layer able to combine the existing buildings, and Piano, with his lobby, closes the gap between the library

and the residence of J.P. Morgan to define a single entrance and mitigate the rigidity of the spatial and functional distribution. There seems to emerge in each of these cases, a desire to create a more fluid and organic space, forming a counterpoint to the existing articulation, a space able to demonstrate an effective continuity between the different rooms, such as between the preservation and the exhibition, which would otherwise be difficult to perceive. Even the installation of Attilio Stocchi, *Librocielo*, is an attempt to give unity to a space and its functions. The hall of the Ambrosiana, criss-crossed by laser and populated with sounds, thrives on new relations between its parts and leads to the discovery of the contents of the books that their rarity had inhibited. It is this centrality of the text, to summarise in one sentence, which is the basic criterion at the base of the experiments carried out in this direction. The contemporary musealisation of rare book collections tends to represent, a kind of valourisation of the book as artefact, and the shape of the space, as well as its own architectural definition, is aimed at highlighting the irreplaceability of the single object. The functional differentiation, the quality of the exhibition spaces, the setting and the same individual presentation of the books, help to identify a symbolic hierarchy, of which the individual text is central. From the museographical point of view — and, consequently, also from the spatial one — this represents the character of greater discrepancy from the identified historical precedent: the distance, in other words, that exists between these examples and the achieved cases of hybridisation. The quality of the collection housed in the cases of musealisation of rare text libraries, in some way, has determined the partial abandonment of the modalities of service, spatial typology and museological conception that the historical precedents had revealed. An abandonment which prevented, in other words, the achievement of full spatial and functional integration that is reasonably expected to be found. The rare book has attained such historical and artistic value that it would be difficult to think of changing course. If it were true, however, what Ugričić claims, namely that with on-going digitalisation, the printed book, today, belongs to the museum and not to the library (2012, 116), nothing would preclude the use of the Ambrosiana, the Beinecke and the Fisher models also in cases of common library collections, configuring the age of global nomadism as the moment of maximum spread of these hybrid forms. Indeed, there is some evidence to support the fact that things may go in this direction.

In 2000, Tadao Ando presents to the authorities of Higashiosaka a project for the construction of a memorial dedicated to the Japanese writer, Shiba Ryotaro. His plan is to expand of his house to house a museum to open up to the public the extensive library of the writer, a library that, in the

project, is at the same time exposed and made accessible to anyone with an open stack service. To this end, Ando, recovers the typological and display models characteristic of the cited historical precedents, and designs a hall whose walls *are* shelves, a space that seems defined only by the enormous number of books stacked one on another. Commonplace books that are neither old nor rare are united by the mere fact of having been owned by the writer. What is here musealised is no longer the text, but the whole collection, whose exhibition, in turn, gives meaning to the whole space. A space which shows an overwhelming power in perfect balance between a museum and a library. The critical success of this intervention leads Ando to use the same model for another hybrid solution, the Picture Book Museum in Iwaki. In this museum of the illustrated book, completed in 2005, the possibility that the children may access part of the collection needs to be considered. For this reason, Ando proposes making all the books theoretically accessible through an open stack system, suggesting the positioning of the most valuable books on the top shelves, out of reach of children. Children that can easily reach those placed on the lower shelves, go on to browse on the large stairs. A method used, five years later, by the Dutch study Platvorm in setting up a temporary exhibition in the Children's Book Museum in The Hague (2010), which is also marked by maximum accessibility to the books, and which was so successful as to be permanently adopted. This model, now set in stone — with the necessary formal variations of the different cases — is adopted for other types of institutions, such as the Musashino Art University Museum and Library, which is completed in the same year by Sou Fujimoto, the temporary Booktower installation within the Victoria and Albert Museum, designed a year later by Rintala Eggertson Architects, and the project by MVRDV for the China Comic and Animation Museum, under construction in Hangzhou. Perhaps, however, the most curious case is represented by the Bidoun Library, a travelling library that, since 2009, exposes and gives access to a collection of texts on the issues of the Middle East and the Diaspora, from New Museum of Art in New York to the Serpentine Gallery of London, and from a private gallery in Cairo to a garage in Beirut.

Each of the cited cases, from the functional point of view, shows some features of integration and exchange of the library and museum services, similar to those taking place in the digital environment, namely the ability to directly interface with documents, unmediated access to collections, the valourisation of documentary supports and the theming of collections. The user, both in the case of museum and library, has complete access to an entire, unique and thematised collection, which can be directly

experienced without the necessity of referring to the staff. In addition, while in the cases of rare text musealisations, the spatial configuration was determined by the value of the collected artefacts, in the examples just presented it is the quality of the architectural intervention which gives value to the collection that would otherwise be devoid of historical or artistic significance. The specific formal materialisation of course, changes from intervention to intervention, but it is possible to highlight certain features common to all cases. The first is the design of a unified space, which combines the functions of storage and display, through which the book is presented in the dual role of bibliographic finding and cultural artefact. A space in which the user can freely decide whether to *investigate*, that is to exercise the typical library activity of finding targeted data, or to *explore*, the information discovery type, and other unexpected relationships that a museum provides. Ando, for example, in the case of the Shiba Ryotaro Memorial, designs a single, continuous library space with a curved plan, whose walls, about 27 feet high, and are treated uniformly by the use of wooden shelving with rather dense square mesh, which houses the collection of books from floor to ceiling. Nothing, excepting a few tables, a ladder and a suspended gallery disturb the perfect homogeneity of the room. In the Picture Book Museum, he only changes the plan, which is determined by the intersection of two squares, but the effect is the same as the Memorial, thanks to the continuity of the space and to the same treatment of the walls. a treatment that, although with a different mesh, also uses Fujimoto for both the interior and the exterior walls of the Musashino university library. Moreover, with this in this case, the size of the intervention and the lack of strict collection theming would have made it difficult to consider a single, large room, the architect draws a spiral plan, defined by a single curved shelving system, to mark the continuity of a path on various levels. The other functional areas — such as reading and reference ones — are simply located along this path in scattered groups, with no real spatial or functional specialisation. With different scales, even the small Children's Book Museum in The Hague and the colossal China Comic Museum, despite presenting an articulation given by a sequence of cellular spaces, show a winding and undifferentiated path, based on the volumetric intersection of their basic units and on the same surface treatment, which unifies the exhibition spaces. Here, as in all the other cases, the service spaces and those dedicated to the staff are simply placed outside the main room, while the functional accessory areas are integrated along the way without, however, affecting its continuity. Curiously, the attempt to give a new unit to the library and museum space leads designers to the recovery of typological solutions that had long been

abandoned such as the single hall system in the case of Ando, or the 19th century continuous spiral model of Fujimoto. Not to mention the use of a floor-to-ceiling display system that characterises each proposed project. Clearly, the regular unity of the environment and the continuity of the exhibition, combined with the substantially undifferentiated treatment of the perimetral surfaces, determine a certain level of closure towards the exterior. This is particularly true for the last two cases that are characterised by a curved volumetric development — when not completely spherical as in the museum by MVRDV — which is completely closed. Furthermore, the Ando buildings, however, while presenting some openings towards the landscape, show this particular feature. The longitudinal curved hall of Ryotaro Memorial has a single-windowed wall that extends for two-thirds of the height of one of the short sides, which is, moreover, partially hidden from view by a shelf. Even in the Iwaki museum, one side of the basic square is open, but it is again hidden by the volume of the staircase. The only building really open to the outside is the one by Fujimoto who, for obvious safety reasons, having to provide radial paths that cut off the spiral, inserts some large, windowed sections at the end of these visual axes. In addition, using the interior treatment on the outer walls, he offers the look of a completely reversible space, which is also able to appropriate the surrounding tree-lined garden.

What really changes the dimension of the interior spaces of the examples described is the particular way in which the book is offered. A modality that completely resides in the display quality of these buildings. Ando reuses the floor-to-ceiling wall system to treat the surfaces of its perimeter — continuous wooden shelving with no mouldings, about 20 to 30 feet wide, and divided into regular square modules of about 12 inches. The suspended balcony has a light, metal structure and is almost invisible from below, while a single mobile staircase, whose box-like structure houses the archive, represents the only way to reach the shelves up to 18 feet in height. The effect is impressive even without the books, because of the density of the mesh, which seems to assume a constructive nature. The size of each module is fundamental in transferring this character on the collected texts. The measurements are perfect to completely saturate every single space with books, as if texts were real bricks. The low spotlights positioned on the ceiling and the lamps on the reading tables do not emphasise the book display, just as they fail to mitigate the variability of natural lighting. Architecturally, everything seems to give the text the same structural significance that there should be in each person's life. Here, it is not the book to be musealised, but the entire collection, which is the mirror, or rather the essence, of the writer's life. The intervention, because

of the quality of the collection, does not try to emphasise the historical or artistic value of the texts, but aims to enhance their symbolic meaning through the aesthetic valourisation of their physical consistency. What is offered to the user, from the exhibition point of view, is not an artefact, although they are gifted with certain documentary importance, but the same space, which appears integrally made of books. A structural meaning that is taken up, albeit in a more playful way, by the group Platvorm for the *Papiria* display made of huge columns of books. A materialisation that, however, at least in part, empties Ando's deep meaning, denying access to those texts that make up the columns, which are used only as wallpaper. The shelving, indeed, is important to ensure a true interface with books, even because the size of its module is also useful for a further display system, which the staff of the Shiba Ryotaro Memorial had already identified. In some sections, the book is presented transversally as if the cover, even that of a paperback, could have the same dignity as a painting. In addition, it is again Ando who uses this system for the Iwaki museum of illustrated books, in order to shift the focus of the exhibition on the artistic character of the books, not only on their number. However, it is still the whole collection that really counts, because it gives shape and meaning to a space that is based once again on the book. This new way of presenting the book also marks the history of the Bidoun Library (the travelling experiment of the Bidoun Project began in 2009). This display system turns a poor, mobile library into an event for many museums around the world, where the pictures of the temporary exhibitions at the New Museum and the Serpentine, clearly show the attempt, reiterated in a different way, to aesthetically valourise otherwise unattractive texts. At times stacked, at others, hung like paintings, they are almost always in a mixed conformation that seems to draw the composite geography of the Middle East. The library, thanks to this simple expedient, while maintaining the characteristics that distinguish each library service, becomes a graphic art exhibition able to attract even reluctant audiences to read about certain topics. The curious thing is that, from the valourisation of a small institution such as the one just described, we can go on to, through the same display system, a giant like the comic museum of China. Once again, as in the Iwaki museum, wanting to guarantee the users maximum accessibility to museum exhibitions, it uses the same display system.

Of course, the character of the institution in some way influences the type of display used, although not as much as one would expect. Fujimoto, for example, uses the same system as Ando, varying, however, the form of the basic grid, which is rectangular in shape, and seems to have the

dual purpose of resembling more closely a typical library shelf and which, furthermore highlights the direction of a spiralling path that appears almost infinite. Here, however, the mode of presentation of the book goes back to the classic transversal position, for reasons of space of course, but also because it is once again the number that is important. The fact that the building is not really subject to growth, such as the spiral might suggest, is almost secondary, because what really matters here is the symbolic significance of the endless and evolving value of knowledge through the spiral display. The same kind of idea is expressed by the Norwegian group Rintala Eggertson, in 2011, in setting up the temporary art installation, *Booktower* inside one of the stairwells in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. From the outside, the wooden lattice structure and the white pages lead the visitor think of scaffolding for renovation. Inside, the tower is equipped with its own ascending stairway, enclosed by four walls lined with books, this time in an upward spiral. What seems clear, despite the small number of experiments in this regard is that some ways of spatial and functional integration similar to those that spontaneously arise on the Internet, already exist. In addition, the valourisation of the physical consistency of books is not limited to the rarest artefacts, but rather, from the architectural point of view, it appears to be more fruitful in the current musealisation collection attempts.

A changing scope

If cultural institutions still want to represent a centre for lifelong learning in response to on-going global socio-economic changes, if they still intend to be a place for self-directed construction of complex and multi-layered identities alternative to the digital identities, they should allow visitors to make use of cultural multimedia information in an interactive and experiential way. This can be achieved only through an effective integration of spaces and services typical of museums and libraries, through a sort of spatial and functional hybridisation that, despite having a rich history behind it, today is not so consciously explored. The only area, in which this phenomenon is appreciable today, is represented by the digital arena. A space characterised by the widespread establishment of spontaneous initiatives concerning the exchange and integration of traditional ways of using cultural information. Attempting to individuate similar forms of hybridisation, and assuming that the residual value of cultural institutions lies in the possibility of a direct interface with the documentary support of this information, the investigation has to focus on cases where a library institution implements a conscious aesthetics valourisation of such an interface, or where a museum provides for

a direct, unmediated access to its collection. It is possible to highlight two main modalities of spatial and functional hybridisation. The first, related to collections of rare books, which is not so different from cases of institutional co-location, and the second, which is truly innovative and concerns common book collections. These examples, the only ones it is possible to find traces of in the traditional non-digital environment are, in all probability, a form of uncoordinated response to the expectations of an audience that is increasingly accustomed to a free and direct fruition of cultural information, rather than a programmatic response to global socio-cultural changes. Moreover, it is not even possible to say that these modalities can structure a true convergence of lifelong learning. However, it is important to emphasise the fact that they are an effective means of avoiding surrendering to the dematerialisation that digitisation has established and preventing the possible disappearance of libraries as historically founded sites, which appears as one of its direct results. The musealisation of the library space, adds to the traditional service an identity component that it has never had. The theming of the collection and the aesthetic valourisation of the documentary support make, in other words, each library different from the others, and not by virtue of its ability to be a community centre or its degree of integration with other basic services, but thanks to its traditional activities of selection, preservation and distribution of knowledge. More generally, it is instructive even only to note that new forms of hybridisation do exist, and that there is a space, therefore, to consider possible operative proposals that satisfy the criteria identified by the IMLS. Moreover, if the problem of the research is that the paucity of case studies makes it currently impossible to define a real statistical trend, it is possible to state that the existing cases represent a viable clue.

To highlight, instead, what changes there are from the spatial point of view, it is necessary to define on what today the design of a library is based. To individuate an operative model from the point of view of planning, the problem is always the search for a balance between the need for widespread distribution and the necessity to activate economies of scale, and between the will to preserve the specificity of the library service and the need for major integration within the broader system of collective services (Borini 1984, 20). A basically urban dimension that also appears in the design phase:

The contemporary design of a ... public library follows the same vicissitudes of the design of a new square, a shopping centre, a museum complex or even an important trading company site ... Thus it is possible to define the latest model

of the library configuration, the architectural layout of the present time, when the library has become a city ... It is composed of several functional realities, rapidly changing and looking not yet fully coded. It is crossed by a path free as a pedestrian area, it shows a series of rooms and indoor plazas, where you can pleasantly stop getting stimuli and information. (De Poli 2002, 46)

Aspects that, in the configuration of interior spaces, result in the identification of different environmental units, from a centre constitute the services to the user, to a periphery of quiet reading, and passing through an intermediate zone for research and prior consultation (Ottolini 1984, 58). To this requirements it is necessary to add the necessities introduced by digitisation that, if on the one hand require an almost continuous adaptation of ICT services, on the other lead to an increasingly restricted search for the implementation of the social role of local libraries, to ensure their physical survival (Van der Werf 2010). All these instances are developed into the complex and stratified functional programs and symbolic requirements which characterise the contemporary design of libraries. For an architect, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a certain control over such complex material, as it is increasingly difficult to continue to have real influence on the general quality of the intervention. In other words, a good architectural design will never be able to remedy the problems which can be determined in the planning stage. If a library is included within an area which is already served, if it is underequipped in terms of texts, Internet stations or community programs, if it is isolated from other basic services, or if it presents a theming inadequate to the social fabric of the neighbourhood, no architectural project, no matter how excellent, will be able to guarantee an adequate audience for its sustenance. Architectural design plays, instead, a prominent role in the last type of interventions analysed, those concerning the musealisation of common library collections, and they sometimes play the only possible role. The aesthetic valourisation of the collection — and therefore the success of the intervention — is only entrusted to the quality of the interior design. Computer technology and the presence of commercial or community-integrated services are unimportant, and the collection in itself has relative importance. What matters is that architectural and display design is able, at the same time, to ensure the most complete access to the text and enhance the essence of the book as artefact and not just as an abstract document. This is where the real novelty of this form of musealisation lies. A form which does not imply the crystallisation of the documentary value of the text, but means the rediscovery of the physicality of its support, also in a structural sense, given that the book becomes the constructive module

of the shape of the space. It is the space that is the protagonist, using the collection as a significant element. For this reason, architects working on this topic do not need to deal with highly complex functional programs, but with a museographical idea that may rediscover pre-contemporary architectural typologies, or revise more current shapes, and is able to confer onto the library space the individuality it needs to survive.

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Apparatus

A Glossary on Global Nomadism

Elena Elgani

A glossary (literal translation from the Greek γλῶσσα), as defined in the Zingarelli Dictionary of the Italian Language, is a list of specific terms peculiar to a field of knowledge. The aim behind the editing of the glossary of contemporary terms was to create a critical classification of the concepts, routines and main participants affecting the changes and occurrences that define contemporary *global nomadism*. This glossary will not be a mere list, but it will try to examine the basics and give a definition thereof in order to establish a terminology and a common conceptual apparatus. Despite being a collection of terms, a glossary differs from a vocabulary, because the classification of the former encompasses given fields of interest. Moreover, the classification available, thanks to this tool, will focus and will try to answer questions that emerged from the analysis of the contemporary situation, allowing the expression of its own conceptual tools, in order to appreciate the changes in space and in the way of living it.

Due to the difficulty and variety of the contents in this project, a multidisciplinary approach was chosen – which allowed the definition of 72 entries created via several analyses of the contemporary environment with the help of the single disciplines. The glossary was completed with critical processing of the main concepts that emerged from the bibliographical selection, dealt with during the project. Each entry is the result of the comparison and evaluation between single sources – this process led to a detailed definition developed through the several contributions – in some cases these contributions have been extended by direct quotations completing the definition. Alphabetic ordering allows rapid consultation and, at the same time, the glossary lends itself to cross reading thanks to referencing of topics shown by mutually related entries.

The foundation of the glossary is the identification of significant complex situations, illustrated by concepts and the keywords that embody them. These concepts form the contemporary scenario and have a direct or indirect influence over the way of inhabiting spaces and the architectural project.

In the first place, the transformation of the socio-cultural context has been examined. It is influenced by economic internationalisation of markets, by technological changes in communication and by the establishment of new methods of social inclusion. All these elements redefine the dimension and the value of mobility. Subsequently, the roles of itinerating and new varieties of participants, acting in the contemporary scene for different reasons, have been examined. The definition of the identity building processes of the individual and the explanation of how encounters occur – which lead to new social behaviours – has created an additional set of entries which have been analysed. Specific terms concerning transformation of spaces have been entered, from global and virtual spaces to the contemporary wandering city, where it is possible to observe the spreading of new hybrid spatialities.

A

Alliance

In anthropology, this term has substituted the word *relation* in identifying the complex of interpersonal or intercultural relationships between two subjects. In a global background, in which the locations of the subject are multiple and changing, the dynamics of the encounter cannot yet aim at the definition of identities and differences, but to the individuation of strategies for a synergistic action. The relevant question is less, “what fundamentally unites or separates us?” and more “what can we do for one another at this present conjuncture?” with an emphasis on shifting locations and on the tactical affiliations, which explicitly recognise the political dimensions of ethnography, that can be hidden by presumptions of scientific neutrality and human relationships. But “political” in what sense? There are no guaranteed or morally unassailable positions (Clifford 1997, 87).

Indeed the term refers to a strategic action, a common goal, which goes beyond mere cohabitation. Moreover, it highlights the procedural and evolutive feature characterising the identity construction, even during the encounter with the Other.

B

Body

The body represents the experience of living as self-expansion. As the space-time projection of a physical dimension which completely coincides with the human essence. Beyond any doubt, it is only a part of the world-wide experience. However, in its particularity, it represents the original data, able to condense in its primary modality the whole meaning of existing *in* the world. The space of living, which coincides with the one of the human body, does not only identify a *location*, a *being-here*, but it also describes a *situation*, a way of *being-for* the rest of the world (Vitta 2008, 24).

The body is both the key parameter and the primary project site, for all the forms of living the mobility. It is gradually being equipped with prosthesis and shells, which mediate contact with reality through instrumental perception. These prosthesis are not determined by a physical lack, but which lead to an increase, a strengthening of human ability. Clothes, technological accessories and our own behaviour constitute a personal shell, which is intangible but expressive, which expresses our identity more than does the neighbourhood in which we live (Craven and Morelli 2002).

Boundary - see **Frontier**

C

Citizenship

Historically, the term represents the condition of the individual for whom the state recognises civil and political rights, setting up both personal *identity* status and the legal relationship between citizen and state. If the extension of this legal formalisation, together with the increase in integration in global migration flows, is now at the heart of the international debate (Miles and Thränhardt 1995), the contribution of citizenship to the process of identity construction has seen a gradual decline. Within this process, the emergence of mass consumption has allowed the development of cultural attributes based on the possession of goods and information, which are no longer exclusively tied to territory or ethnicity (Righetti 2004).

Coming back

The return is part of the experience of travelling and is an occasion to detach oneself from reinforced certainties and to achieve others, which are sometimes unknown. These certainties are fulfilled through meeting with the Other and self-knowledge. It is necessary to both discover what is unknown and see things already seen: “retracing one’s steps, following the same paths and carving out new ones,” since “there are

places that fascinate because they seem radically different, and others which enchant because, already at first sight, they are familiar, and are seen almost as a hometown. Knowledge is often, platonically, recognising. It is the emergence of something maybe ignored up to that moment, but accepted as our own. To see a place we should review it. The known and the familiar, which are continually re-discovered and enriched, are the premises of the encounter, of the seduction and adventure; ... this is also related to places. The most fascinating travel is a return, an odyssey, and the usual places, the daily microcosms crossed for many years, are a challenge worthy of Ulysses” (Magris 2010, XXI). Seeing again places with new awareness and enriched with new knowledge can strengthen one’s identity but, above all, it allows the discovery of human precariousness and the fading of certainties.

Community

In contemporary society, the concept of community, linked to *identity*, takes on the characteristics of flexibility, impermanence and mutability. For this reason, Bauman suggests the term “community closet” (Bauman 2000), alluding to a social organism that is so changeable as to be reconfigured “for the occasion,” changing clothes, as if the individuals belonging to the same community shared only an

attitude of mere surface, which is completely interchangeable. A community is organised with the same ease with which it can be dismantled, setting aside the ability to be a permanent body in favour of a provisional attitude (Bauman 2010). Another sense related to the community, but not to the character of localisation and direct interaction, is that relating to *distance communities*. Today, these are developing almost in opposition to “community closets,” as they tend to pursue a distant, durable link, which develops through the network, with no physical meeting points (Amin and Thrift, 2002).

Consumer

A subject identified only by a non-social contract but established on their need to purchase that, through the possession of goods, retain the opportunity to express new forms of citizenship, based on cultural affiliation or social status. However, at the same time, they show a structural weakness, against a market to which they are individually addressed. The gradual replacement of the citizen with the consumer, whether they represent extraordinary freedom rather than a compression of their fundamental rights, prompts an increasing willingness to customisation, re-customisation and accumulation of contemporary identity (Righetti 2004).

Contact zone

Historically, *contact zones* identify, in the colonial context, specific relationship areas “in which social groups, geographically and culturally separated, come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (Clifford 1997, 192). Decontextualising the term and using it in areas marked by the formation of transnational entities, e.g. European, we can identify those areas of contact, concerning intercultural relations, within the same state, region or city. In this sense, the differences existing between groups are more social than geographical, considering that traditional social segregation based on “natural” evidence, is a historico-political product (Clifford 1997, VII).

Contemporary city - see Global city

Cosmopolitanism

Mass-culture brings with it a conflicting need that is tied both to individual affirmation and to cosmopolitan participation, as well as introducing a cultural homogenisation bound to syncretism and integration. “One of the bases of the mass-culture cosmopolitanism is given by the universality of the processes of the human mind ‘fund archaic’ and by the imagined

man universality. But mass-culture cosmopolitanism is also the promotion of a kind of man who is universalised, a type of man who aspires to a better life, a kind of man who seeks personal happiness and affirms the values of a new civilisation. Mass-culture intimately unites in him the two universals, the universal related to elementary affectivity and the universal of modernity. The two universals rely on each other, and in this double movement the strength of the mass-culture, global spread is accentuated.” (Morin 2002, 114)

Cyberspace

The conceptual space in which words, human relationships, data, richness and power are expressed through telecommunication is defined as cyberspace (Rheingold 1993). Used for the first time in the sci-fi novel, *Neuromancer* (Gibson 1984), cyberspace locates a sort of second reality that is *virtual*, not subject to real world models and allows living and fulfilment through the creation of new social status. A virtual world would represent a more versatile reality, able to offer shelter from a choking and congested one (Lévy 1997). In this sense, the *net* represents a space for the development of new social nuclei, the *virtual communities*, constituting subjects who totally or partly shift their interpersonal sphere in cyberspace (Rheingold 1993).

Cyborg

The term means *cybernetic organism* and, in science fiction, indicates a hybrid entity between man and machine. Cyborg, at large, is a metaphor of the bond, in rapid and complex development, between person and machine, nature and technology, reality and virtuality. In other words, this figure represents a new size and location of modern techniques, which directly operate in a person's physical body, through the form of inter-organic intrusion (Zanini and Fadini 2001).

D

Difference

In general, this refers to an identity attribute distinguishing two terms of a comparison in the same conceptual category. In the field of sociology, “the practice of differences” is the basis for intercultural strategies (Demetrio 1995), as experience of encounter, transformation and synergistic hybridisation (Rutherford 1990, 10). For an anthropological definition, see *otherness*; opposed to *identity*.

Distance Community - see **Community**

Drift - see **Psychogeography**

Duration

The temporal concept of duration is one of the basic parameters of contemporary architectural design and requires a conscious cultural approach which, extending its meaning beyond the traditional identification with the physical resistance of a building, guides appropriate technological choices. If we assume it is a controlled variable and not an attribute that refers to an alleged eternity of the architecture, it may become one of the design program goals that is able to determine appropriate evaluation of useful resources. "The definition of the duration, the life expectancy of what we build, becomes a conscious choice and a structural factor in the design, to be taken during the formation and the operation of the program, the design of building, the maintaining, the readjustment: intervening instead of letting go, must be an integral part of the building process culture and of all its actors" (Raiteri in Giachetta 2004, 24). However, if the term itself is no longer of value, we are forced to recognise that a duration extended beyond the program schedule, may become a negative value.

E

Encounter

A relational model between two parties that are individual or so-

cial, who reject both closure and integration, based on the inability of a complete mutual understanding, an inability that represents the proxemic space where the differences of two subjects takes shape, without determining a conflict. Because, on one hand, the misunderstanding manifests the will to communicate while, on the other, uncertainty prevents radicalisations (La Cecla 1997).

Errancy

Errancy in contemporary society is defined as the ability to dispute terms of knowledge, ranging from the projecting tendency of the subject to their creative propensity towards the unlimited. It amounts to a complex and uncertain itinerary to be applied to knowledge practices in order to pursue an exploratory dimension of research and listening. The exercise of reflection and critique is used as an antidote for the dominant approval and for the automa-individual affirmation, which the contemporary age tends towards. The art of errancy also requires the ability to lose oneself as a prelude to renewed understanding, against the use of old rituals: "Expression of the self-belonging, movement of a deep reflection that makes the nomadism possible, the art of errancy, of the openness to a new research ... The automaton cannot go through these paths, he belongs to predetermined routes, his footsteps belong to a mapped

territory, technologically described, virtual, and therefore that cannot be caught" (Villani, 1992, 31).

Ethnicity

Community aggregation, characterised by a shared culture and language, specifically linked to the territory and blood ties among its members. This is a representative form of social identity, which takes the shape of an organisational container, whose boundaries are subject to variation depending on the society to which they belong, and which enhances its cultural difference as a basis for interdependence or for symbiosis between different groups (Barth 1994).

Exile - see also **Migrant**

The exile, figure of errancy, forced to leave their home, lives in a type of limbo, neither a part of the community which adopts them nor able to go back to their homeland. Representing a nomadic life, the exile must leave their own country of origin, and lives precariously. They do not belong and take part in the life of the community where they have been received, and cannot go back to their native land. Their roots are ideas and memories, rather than lands and material goods. "Who is this person? An Exile. This must not be confused with other words that people use indiscriminately: émigré, expatriate, refugee, immigrant, silence, and cunning. Exile

is a dream of glorious return. Exile is a vision of revolution: Elba, not St Helena. It is an endless paradox: looking forward by always looking back. The exile is a ball hurled high into the air. He hangs there, frozen in time, translated into a photograph; denied motion, suspended impossibly above his native earth, he awaits the inevitable moment at which the photograph must begin to move, and the earth reclaims its own" (Rushdie 1988, 71).

F

Flâneur

The *flâneur* is someone who walks through city streets, observing and collecting feelings, information and news. An outsider who feels at home in the crowd, but manages to maintain a certain degree of detachment that allows them to grasp the true meaning of places and to critically describe the metropolitan context in which they live. This Parisian figure of the 19th century, usually refers to an intellectual or poet, who is generally young and rich, and can spend their time strolling. Described in the literature of Charles Baudelaire, the *flâneur* is the undisputed star of the Parisian *passages* (Benjamin 2000).

Today, the term is used "to describe practices concerning travel and the exploration of places, a conscious relationship with the people and

contexts" (Nuvolati 2006, 11). This kind of individual also has sociological significance because the *flâneur* is an emblematic figure of a changing society, which is particularly related to the processes of territorial self-identification. He also "testifies to loss, but also to the desire to create new relationships with the visited places. New relations, even though provisional and source of insecurity. The travel modality of the *flâneur*, his style in dealing with the places, determines a new hierarchical order that denies the practice of mass consumption and enhances the intellectual dimension of the relationship between the individual and the visited place" (Nuvolati 2006, 18).

Founding/Modern nomadism - see Nomadism

Frontier

Defining a frontier means establishing an opposition between two categories or entities, giving the space a symbolic value and splitting it (Augé 2010). The concept of boundary is based on the same need for space subdivision and symbolisation, but it differs in intensity and sense. The frontier is something in continuous evolution, ... it is unstable, and this uncertainty is felt not only on the political and spatial level, but also in the language, habits and customs of a society. Establishing a boundary, on the other hand, means es-

tablishing a space, defining a fixed point to begin and to refer to, a certain and stable line, at least until the conditions that created it are profoundly changed ... The boundary splits two spaces, two people, two ideologies, and more clearly than the frontier does. The first is a decisive and strong sign, the second, with its large and small fringes, creates a third space that the boundary ... tends to minimise (Zanini 1997, 14).

For this reason, breaking the boundaries does not necessarily mean crossing frontiers. It identifies the act of expansion of the margin, the third space in which differences can take place. Living in the threshold, indeed, means building and inhabiting this place of meeting, in which diversity can take shape.

In the contemporary city, in morphology, however, the boundaries can appear as "dynamic devices" able to continually redraw the urban networks of relationships. Despite today's physical space appearing smooth and passable, despite the communication networks that expand the relationship possibilities and the flow of goods, people and ideas are strong, and moving implies going beyond an increasing number of boundaries and control systems. Flow is not free, but constitutes a sequence of "stops and starts." The boundaries take on different appearances and multiple identities, disrupting everyday life

and influencing contemporary city lifestyles (Boeri 2011).

G

Global city

Cities show a high degree of internationalisation in terms of economy and social structure. More precisely, the term indicates those metropolitan areas which, in the international economic system, perform four basic, new functions: “first, as highly concentrated command points in the organisation of the world economy; second as key locations for finance and for specialised service firms, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading economic sectors; third, as sites of production, including the production of innovations, in these leading industries; and fourth, as markets for the products and innovations produced” (Sassen 1991, 3). Contemporary centralisation of global economic and financial resources would prompt the establishment of a new kind of physical agglomeration – a new urban environment expanded to cover wide portions of the surface around and between cities, incorporating large parts of “natural” landscapes, sectors of the infrastructure networks, and many old centres. A *metropolis* that is characterised by the presence of complex, multiple relationships between the living spaces and

the forms of social organisation (Zanini and Fadini 2001).

In this sense, the global city is a mirror of each city participating in the process of world globalisation. For this reason, it is impossible to give a spatial model that fully represents the **contemporary city**. “Rather, we should say that it is in many aspects, omnipresent, but for that very reason it is also an entity in constant and unpredictable evolution, which now seems to escape any attempt in defining its boundaries and permanent characters” (Amin and Thrift 2005, 8). The space in the “non-places city” is not defined by rigid social patterns or architectural symbols that are able to define and delimit it. In this situation of lack of regulation, new kinds of space can spontaneously arise (Ilardi 1990). We can imagine the contemporary global city as “a great camp, home for temporary stops and moving life projects. A large territory that thousands of people live for hours, periods, intermittent, or cyclical phases of their lives” (Boeri 2011, 43). A temporary way of inhabiting the city that invests in a very broad spectrum of urban areas, which overcomes the traditional places of living and defining spaces with variable geometry. We are witnessing a revolution in lifestyles that, on one hand, tend to isolation and, on the other, open up the opportunity for new forms of common living (Boeri 2011).

Globalisation/Glocalisation

The term *globalisation* allows for so many interpretations that it can be considered polysemic. In the economic setting, it refers to market liberalisation and to deregulation of capital flows around the globe. From a political point of view, the term represents a sort of westernisation, i.e. the spread of the capitalist economic model around the world, comparable to a new form of imperialism. In production, the word takes on the characteristic of work virtualisation owing to digitisation of production systems and a new global workforce (Zanini and Fadini 2001). The term globalisation is often compared to *glocalisation* to highlight how the globalised world is actually nourished by numerous localisms due to the eradication tendency that indeed generates a strong attachment to the ground, hence the success of the word glocal, which identifies the addition of identity conflicts linked to the phenomenon of globalisation (Latour 2004). Contemporary places are therefore rooted in the dimension of localism and, at the same time, they are global through network connections, which also affect the quality of the space itself. The phenomenon of glocalisation was first detected by Zygmunt Bauman who, in his texts, addresses the topic of how different localisms strengthened in order to solve issues of a global nature. However, this showed a series

of failures, because a coordinated global action was necessary, against the perpetuating state of universal vulnerability due to a growing introversion of social nuclei (Bauman 2010). The theme of globalisation is inevitably tied to glocalisation as if it were intrinsic. However, this is due to a misinterpretation of the universalisation phenomenon, because what we call global reality does not take anything away from the national character. On the contrary, the two subjects should coexist and reinforce each other (Sassen 1988). However, global and glocal continue to maintain their opposed dialogic nature as if they were the result of a hybridisation (Asher 2000).

H

Heterotopy

“There are also, probably in all cultures and in civilisations, real places, actual places, places that are outlined in the same institution of society, and which form sort of counter-places, kind of actually realised utopias in which the real places, all the other real places that are located within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and subverted; kind of places that are outside each place, though they may actually be localised ... I shall call them, as opposed to utopias, heterotopies” (Foucault 1994, 14).

According to the concept of heterotopy, we can individuate certain established places, which ignore geographical reality, sites associated with institutions, realised utopias in the form of other-places, outside any place. The reading of these different spaces is based on well-established principles, the first of which defines the historical existence of the heterotopies in all cultures, in which they have evolved from heterotopies of crisis to heterotopies of deviation. The second says that a heterotopy does exist in the evolution of cultures and that it changes its procedures according to them. The third principle, however, identifies in the heterotopic space the ability to juxtapose inconsistent and contradictory places. In addition, a fourth principle establishes a relationship between time and heterotopy. When a place has to do with an absolute break in time, it automatically generates a heterotopic space. These spaces are configured according to the fifth principle: isolated though penetrable. Finally, the sixth principle refers to the close relationship between heterotopy and function (Foucault 1994).

Identity

We can define identity as a process, either individual or collective, regarding the “construction of

meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning” (Castells 1996, II: 6). Setting aside the logico-philosophical meaning, then, when we speak of identity in the field of sociology, we are talking about auto-representation of social groups. It is possible to distinguish, among the forms of identity construction, the “legitimising” one, introduced by the dominant institutions to rationalise the power division, the “resistant” one, generated by actors in marginalised positions, and the “projecting” one, imagined and built ex-novo from a set of common attributes, to re-define their position in the society (Castells 1996, II: 6). In any case, the “we” constituting identity is an imaginary construction, which may be idealised and of something indefinable, but commonly recognised by the community as a part of identity. For this reason, its definition is often fleeting and more easily understandable in its absence. Therefore, we often speak of loss of identity as a loss of ties (Zanini and Fadini 2001). In addition, its central position in contemporary political debate only testifies to this difficulty in the attribution of meaning. Identity becomes an issue to be discussed only when its meaning is in crisis, when something that was assumed to be stable and coherent, is replaced by the experience of doubt

and uncertainty (Mercer 1990, 43). Turning to the personal sphere, we can think of identity as a feeling that refers to a sense of belonging, to something in common with certain people that makes us different from others. In these terms, it is also something that refers to our past, or rather, it is the relationship between our past and the socio-cultural context we live in (Rutherford 1990, 19). Identity shows how we are positioned and how we position ourselves in the narrative of the past (Hall 1990, 222). It provides, at the same time, the basis for our personal position and for an opening to the Other. It is an action that cannot be considered “neutral.” When we define who we are, our needs and our desires, we open ourselves, not only to the relationship but also to a possible conflict (Weeks 1990, 88–89). Today, the possibilities of conflict are on the increase. If identity was a tightly bound default factor in the past, first to the concept of nation and then to the concept of class, today it is an individual responsibility. This challenge progressively grows together with the “liquefaction” of social institutions, with growing institutional indifference for the choices concerning identity, and with the subsequent dismantling of indicators. Therefore, identity only represents something to be invented rather than discovered. It represents the goal of effort, a ‘target’,

something that is still to be built from scratch or to be selected from alternative offerings, something for which we must fight and that must be protected through other struggles again (Bauman 2010, 13). In modern society, where nothing is permanent and mass consumption allows us to change our perspectives every day, identity is seen as an item of clothing to be displaced as soon as it is no longer suitable to represent us, allowing us to choose something more “hip” (Bauman 2010; Righetti 2004).

Incubator

The word defines a type of building, a flexible container designed for activities, which is not always definable in functional terms. A result of the slipping process of the contemporary city from the functional zoning upon which it was programmed, these architectures participate and stimulate the “weak and widespread” transformation of urban space use. “Many new professions have found places in abandoned areas, whole creative districts were arranged in abandoned factories, finding privileged spaces in this apparent under-market, adequate services and advanced forms of incubator” (Branzi in the presentation of Farè, Piardi 2003, XXII). New kinds of spaces that can stimulate new forms of sociality and a creative appropriation of the contemporary city.

Information economy

In the macroeconomic sphere, the term refers to a system dominated by industries that produce, manipulate and disseminate information (Sassen 1991). More specifically, it includes the advanced service production sector, business units dedicated to the evaluation of information regarding production and market, the institutions responsible for implementing economic policies to operate under uncertainty, and the agents involved in the creation of a new technological know-how (Hepworth 1989).

Installation

Synonymous with temporary architecture, the term refers to any form of space creation whose configuration is not stable, but aimed at “temporary use, as a place of spatial and social experimentation of the existing urban environment, then handed back to the early stage (Giachetta 2004, 85). The fact that architecture can be defined, not only by the construction of durable artefacts, but also by “the organization of human movement in its environment ... means extending the tasks of the architect to design time as well as space” (Giachetta 2004, 85). Designing removable architectures means performing functional flexibility, demanded by users who increasingly tend to be more discriminating in their own needs for urban space use.

Interculture/Interculturalism

In opposition to multiculturalism, as a “welcoming” modality, the term defines an “interacting” social strategy for the approach to otherness through a model that is able to stimulate the synergy of different points of view, valuing one another’s uniqueness. It indicates the quality of a social microsystem that is more than the sum of its parts. In sociology and pedagogy, it is the field of study of the relationships that exist between the members of a system (Demetrio 1995).

In the political sphere, interculturalism is the attribute most frequently used to describe contemporary complex societies in which cultural minorities are “integrated” through the pursuit of national common goals. Since the dream of a global *melting pot* has certainly failed, to define these societies, we can borrow the terminology proposed by the Mexican artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, who speaks of *menudo chowder* (fish soup). This new model appears to be closer to social reality and he points out that, although most of the “ingredients” tend to mingle, there are always stable elements that are able to withstand contamination and tend to re-emerge unchanged (Bhabha 2004, XI).

Interface

In the field of industrial design, it is the space in which the interac-

tion between the human body, the tool and the purpose of the action, takes place. A part of this tool allows the relationship between biological and technological bodies, both from the physic-ergonomic and from the cognitive-symbolic points of view. With increasing technification of the object, which widens the gap between the technological ratio of the object and the cognitive background of the subject, the design of the interface, as the area of the relationship between the two, becomes a priority compared to the development of the technical attributes. "The concept of 'function' is now taken for granted ... otherwise, the operation is now central, which involves a close collaboration with the user's body" (Vitta 2008, 79).



Liquid modernity

The concept of *liquid modernity* was introduced by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, and it alludes to the metaphor of a liquid which, in contrast to a solid, does not maintain a given shape but assumes the shape of the container, so as to be associated with the themes of mobility, temporality and variability of this modernity. Thus, we see a growing "liquefaction," firstly of the solid institutions belonging to societies which are resistant to change,

then of the imposed framework where political life was held. The powers of liquefaction have moved from "system" to "society," from "politics" to "life politics," or they have diminished from the "macro" to the "micro" social cohabitation model (Bauman 2000, XIII). The resulting product is a society model where individuals who are abandoned by the state, are responsible for themselves and for their own self-identification and who are in contact with multiple and conflicting ways of life, which are ephemeral and flexible and linked to an "individualised and privatised modernity" (Bauman 2000, XIII).

Living cell

Much like in an aircraft, a cockpit represents an exclusive modality of inhabiting and, in the strictest sense, an act of moving. A contemporary metaphor of nomadic wandering, a cockpit is a technological space and it is equipped and integrated, wrapping the user as in a shell, supplying the essential tools to carry out their needs. Moreover, the cockpit portrays the privileged space of the relationship between person and machine, between nature and technology, in a complete and essential cohesion for the functionality of the instrument. As a matter of fact, "the exchange between biological sensations and those of the machine ... ended up modifying both the technological body of the machine and the

reactions ... of the biological body which uses it ... The encounter of the human being with the technical artifact takes place on two levels: On the one hand the object offers itself to being read by the user, who must understand its functioning through an “instrumental perception,” on the other hand, user and technical object “work together “to read” the external reality” (Vitta 2008, 283–284). The gradual acquisition of technical peculiarities made the technicalising of the user necessary. Thus, they find that their cognitive apparatus has been changed by a series of sensorial prostheses. A cockpit is the space of this integration between biological and technical body, and the space of the integration between stability and movement.

Logical spaces

The term refers to all the spaces generated by the hybridisation of real infrastructure with products, services and information and they are portable so they can be physically relocated or even re-created in a series of subsequent moves. The spaces are introduced by the minimum functional units of the Archigram, for instance, and improved by Toyo Ito in the modules for nomadic women, towards the modern *wearables* that hybridises the idea and the functions of a dress with those of a portable shelter (Craven and Morelli 2002).

M

Mass-culture

It is after World War II that American sociology discovers the Third Culture, recognises it and calls it *mass-culture*. It is produced according to the rules of mass industrial manufacture and disclosed by means of mass promotion (that the odd Anglo Latinism calls *mass-media*). It also addresses the concept of social mass, which is a huge agglomeration of individuals seen beyond the internal structures of society that are made up of classes, families, and others (Morin, 2002, 30).

Mass-culture is added to national and humanistic culture dominating the scenario of knowledge, becoming a promoter of modern *multi-culturalism*, of a society in which different cultures can live together and stimulate each other. The new cultural apparatus is configured both as a well-defined corollary of symbols, myths and images related to practical and imaginary life, as well as to a system of specific projections and identifications, and as a fluid and irrepressible apparatus tending to cross, invade and affect the background of other cultures, as soon as there is the opportunity to do so. The Third Culture, for the first time, presents us with the concept of universality, the dominant feature of that cultural apparatus that feeds on cosmopolitanism

and on global dimension (Morin 2002).

Mente locale

The expression is used by the anthropologist Franco La Cecla to identify living as form of knowledge. More precisely, it indicates a user's innate and irrepressible ability of conformation and appropriation of space, an ability that has been progressively devalued since space was merely intended as a social device, to a lesser extent belonging to those who lived in it (La Cecla 1993).

Despite the gradual devaluation in the meaning of "public space," this concept in a contemporary urban context, finds a new social procedure through psychogeographical and orientation practices, of which the nomadic subject – the *flâneur*, in particular – would be the privileged interpreter. In addition, the *terrains vagues* of the global city – the marginal spaces which escaped rigorous urban planning – are the field of implementation for the re-appropriation of the social space (La Cecla 2007, 140).

Metropolis - see **Global city**

Migrant

Migration phenomena are the result of a complex system of economic and geopolitical processes, prompting the physical movement of one or more subjects. Despite

historically having had specific structural and temporal characteristics, which allowed their classification (Sassen 1996), today migration flows show a diversification and subtlety that do not permit the effective portrayal of migrants. After the end of the mass migrations of the late 19th century, it is impossible to simply define a migrant as a person who leaves their hometown to start a new life in another and able to ensure a better standard of life for themselves. Settlers, *refugees* and *exiles* are the new figures of international flows (Miles and Thränhardt 1995), updating the moving modalities, from a linear to a circular configuration, which foresees the possibility of multiple displacements and resettlement (Naso 2010).

Today, we recognise new forms of movement within the sphere of migratory flows: *circular migration*, identified by the repetitive nature of the displacement between two or more countries and by the freedom of movement granted to the subject and *temporary migration*, identified by a specific purpose, by a period of time and by the specific intention to return to the country of origin, or to move further (Juhász and Makara, 2011, 8). By attempting to find common features of several phenomena, we can say that the typical mobility of migration is determined by need, especially related to the labour

market and to geo-political instability (Sassen 1996).

However, even if it is difficult to give a reliable description of the sociological figure of a migrant, it is easier to analyse on-going transitions in the labour market. International mobility flows are indeed polarised in the models induced by the policies of the richest countries in the continual search for skilled migrants, whose training has not been paid, and open to unofficial tolerance of illegal immigration that meets the needs of cheap labour (Lucas 2008). Nevertheless, the need to welcome immigrants, given the aging of western populations, contrasts with most national policies aimed at exclusion, if not racism. In Italy, for instance, a critical situation has been created over the years, dictated by prejudice. The immigrant has an atoning role. They are responsible for social crisis, for urban decay and for the loss of traditional identity. Fractures in the social order are always attributed to the immigrant. No matter what they really do, they are always and necessarily a stranger, an intruder (Naso 2010).

For this reason, the identity of the migrant finds difficulty in expressing itself freely. "Most migrants learn, and can become disguises. Our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invented about us, concealing for reasons of security our secret selves" (Rushdie 1988, 58). On the other hand,

migration and the experience of the dispersion of the people may become in other places a "time of gathering: gatherings of exiles and *émigrés* and refugees; gathering on the edge of "foreign" cultures; gathering at the frontiers, gathering in the ghettos or cafés of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present" (Bhabha 2004, 199).

Mobility

The term in this analysis simply identifies the ability and the attitude to movement, which is the fundamental attribute of the figures linked to contemporary errancy. In other words, it represents the sum of all inter-regional or international human flows, "associated with the flexibilization of labor market and with the demographic change, favored by more economic means of transport and by the information revolution" (Juhász and Makara, 2011, 9).

Modern mythology

The rise of a modern mythology is tied to the success of modern mass-culture, and subsequently to the

meeting between the imaginary and the real, through which the self-realisation myths, the heroes and a standardised ideology linked to love and happiness, are generated. The myths become, in this case, television, film stars or celebrities whose lives becomes a public domain, whose existence becomes an icon for the rest of the population. These “mythological figures” communicate with humanity through mass-culture and, more accurately, through the mechanism of projection that is intrinsic and that can permit the self-identification of individuals with public figures, joining the nature of their circumstances to those of normal citizens. The new “*vedette* Olympus,” considered the most original product of modern mass-culture, becomes the product of “inimitable ideals and imitable models,” with the affection of the people who closely follows their implications (Morin 2002).

Mondialisation

The term, far from being a synonym for globalisation, refers to the uncontrolled, and uncontrollable, phenomenon caused by global human expansion across the globe. It represents both the terminus of the human ability to colonise new environments because of their exhaustion and the closing down of the Earth's field of development (Virilio 1998).

Multiculturalism

This complex term, mainly identifies the phenomenon of the coexistence of different cultural groups within the same society. It often seems to signify, however, the set of conflicts and claims that arise in this context, or the militant activity in favour of a society that welcomes the differences (Semprini 2000). It represents, from the strategic point of view, an attempt to answer and control the dynamic process of cultural difference articulation, administering a consensus based on a rule which advocates cultural diversity (Rutherford 1990, 208–209).

This rule has entered the political debate only in recent years. This is because, until the early 1990s, liberal systems, in the name of alleged universality, had always rejected the idea concerning the permanent differentiation of *rights* and status that are granted to the members of specific groups, even if they are aimed at the acceptance of cultural differences. The problem is that rights are the product of human associations, social organisations, historical definitions of needs and duties. Despite any claims concerning their universality, they are limited to the philosophical system they belong to and to the sociopolitical context in which they are formulated (Weeks 1990, 96). Furthermore, the rights of minorities cannot belong to the matter of human rights, since this category

simply does not respond to the raised issues, such as those related to the language, education or the degree of integration required by a state. For this reason, the greatest challenge for all contemporary multicultural approaches is represented by the formulation of a liberal theory of minority rights, showing how it can coexist with human rights and how it can be bound by the principles of individual freedom, democracy and social justice (Kymlicka 1995).

N

Nation

The concept of nation has been examined within this analysis as a product of culture, a creative process of social human imagination, through which a specific type of social organisation gradually produces new symbolic and cultural materials. These materials are the answer to social and individual needs, strengthening and enlarging the social organisation itself. According to Benedict Anderson, the creation and reproduction of a nation is the result of cultural routines, which stimulate members to build their own identity and self-understanding within the nation itself. Therefore, nation can be defined as “an imagined political community, and imagined as inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the inhabitants

of the smallest nation will never know, meet or hear about most of their compatriots, though in their minds lives the image of there being a community ... The nation is imagined as ‘limited’ because even the largest, with a billion inhabitants, has its limits, which ends even if it is elastic, beyond which other nations exist ... The nation is imagined as ‘sovereign’, since the concept was established when the Enlightenment and revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the dynastic reign, which was hierarchical and based on divine law” (Anderson 1996, 24–25).

Net

This is a communication system, consisting of a set of electronic devices and their connections, enabling the transmission and reception of all types of information, between users who are geographically located in different positions on a global scale (Rheingold 1993). At the same time, the term refers, at large, to the contemporary social morphology, cultural basis and technical means for production, experience, power, and cultural processes (Castells 1996, I). Endowed with a multi-polar hierarchy and established by the number of active connections that meet in each node, the network identifies a model of global interconnectedness and the opportunity of unmediated participation in social,

economic and cultural processes (Flichy 1995).

New economy

A Post-Fordist economic model, defined as *informational*, *global* and *networked*, since it is characterised by a “competitiveness of units or agents in this economy (be it firms, regions or nations) that fundamentally depend upon their capacity to generate, process, and apply efficiently knowledge-based information. It is *global* because the core activities of production, consumption and circulation, as well their components (capital, labor, raw materials, management, information, technology markets) are organized on a global scale, either directly or through a network of linkages between economic agents” (Castells 1996, I: 66).

This “new economy” is based on non-material elements, such as information acting as a commodity, and the spread of innovative computer technologies, which are able to deeply influence production processes and future social development.

New nomad

A sociological figure, resulting from the contemporary socio-cultural changes that seem to steer global society toward new forms of nomadism. These are new because they are linked to technological development and to on-going

changes in the labour market and in the geopolitical world. Moreover, because nomadism had influenced the history of humankind since its origins, it was gradually substituted by a sedentary lifestyle, functional to the development of the industrial society and of the Nation-State (Macioce 2006). A new kind of outlook that is so pervasive in creating new social categories that the *new nomad* represents a category that dominates nomadism and that makes it its personal and professional horizon (Attali 2003). The new nomad speaks more than a foreign language, they use the latest technologies on a daily basis, and they are generally self-employed. Endowed with a wandering, metamorphic and multi-identity subjectivity, the new nomad has a rare cross-cultural ability, a cosmopolitan and flexible sensibility, which leads them to confront, absorb and continually adapt to cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences while maintaining their identity (Dagnino 1996). However, if this new mobile social subject is the effect of transnational postmodernity, now most communities have diasporic dimensions. Setting aside professional categories, the new nomadic subjectivity, which is an existential metaphor for the person who will come, regards the simultaneity of complex and multi-level identities (Braidotti 1997). This is a complexity that gradually characterises any subject

of contemporary society, regardless of its degree of physical mobility (Bauman 2010; Righetti 2004).

Nomadic routes - see **Space of nomadism**

Nomadism

Traditionally, the term identifies an anthropological model representing, not a principle of eradication, but rather the repetition characterising any new foundational act in any cultural context. Essentially indifferent to a specific geographically fixed place, nomadic identity is therefore based on self-orientation and on the continual search for the centre of its own world. In this context, it is able to give meaning back to the place, through a construction process of hybrid identities in continuous evolution through shifting (La Cecla 1988, 23–24). A *founding nomadism* is “a recursive process, which, cyclically re-emerges in the collective memory. It serves as clinic (sic) history of the founding act ... revitalizing this entity and giving it energy and new life” (Maffesoli 2002, 52–53). In the contemporary age, the concept of nomadism amplifies and develops itself, so the question spontaneously arises: but what must the term “nomadic” mean today? In a world that is increasingly being presented as known, nomadism defines a deep need for a relationship with it: a relationship of discovery. The magnitude of the

research and attention it receives indicates a willingness to listen, which seems to be denied by the outcomes of postmodern nihilist thought. (Villani, 1992, 9)

Thus, the term has a new relevance, as a representation of the global society that feels “the urgency to find an opportunity to live that undermines the dominant approval” (Villani, 1992, 10). If the nomad, in common language, is often confused with the *exile* or the *immigrant*, *modern nomadism* represents something similar to a form of resistance to be assimilated to the dominant mode of self-representation. It is the subversion of the established conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the mere action of physical travel. It is a form of intransitive becoming, which produces a set of transformations without a final product (Braidotti 1997).

Non-lieux

If places are identity, relational and historical spaces, the non-lieux, or non-places, are those places of the contemporary age, related to transportation, trade or free time, with none of the mentioned properties and which the citizen accesses, through a contract and as a user, leaving its individuality in exchange for the anonymity and the satisfaction of their needs. However, the term non-place, as well as place, never indicates a pure form,

but a polarity the space tends towards (Augé 1992).

But non-places are also, in another sense, spaces of the city in which “erratic living” develops, those that once stood outside the walls and symbolised “the other face of the city and technique” (Villani 1994, 88). Undefined and provisional places, where a different and actual mode of living, linked to research and exploration, does exist.

O

Otherness

A philosophical notion that signifies the complete difference between two entities or the sum of their differences that determine mutual estrangement. In anthropology, however, the term identifies a form of identity difference between two or more members that were historically subject to relevant variations in strength and degree of proximity. During the 20th century, from Existentialism to *ethnologie du proche*, it seems that the idea of the Other begins directly from the Self (Augé 1992), disavowing the attempt to make the term represent a model of social relationship and identifying substantial socio-cultural differences (Elias 1986). For the definition of sociological form, see the term *stranger*.

P

Post-fordism

Post-Fordism represents the crisis of Fordism as a production, economic and contractual model, based on the division of labour, increased productivity and long-term employment contract. In this system, demand is directly determined by wages, established by the markets of individual countries. However, each national market is constitutionally too limited to allow increase in productivity through the use of scale economies. Thus, internationalisation of markets, required because of this crisis of demand and enabled by new technologies, has led to increased global competitiveness and, consequently, to the internationalisation of the production process and to the complete transformation of the labour market, prompting a re-evaluation of the Fordist system. An end caused by the same internationalisation the system had required for its survival (Lipietz 1997).

Post-tourist

Nowadays, the post-tourist represents a tourist aware of the implications related to pretence, which the experience of tourism involves. The post-tourist – unlike the tourist – is consciously taking part in a game whose result they already know and they willingly accept

such a condition. They often do not leave their own home to observe other contexts, but observes them through TV channels and websites, arbitrarily choosing the content of a pre-packaged experience as tourist. If they decide to visit a tourist attraction, they will prepare by choosing among the activities offered, since “there is not an authentic tourist experience, but there are only series of plays and scripts that can be interpreted” (Urry 2002, 149). In their experience, the post-tourist looks for the comforts and services they wants during their stay, without being influenced by the differences and peculiarities of the places they visit, in effect the post-tourist “stays at home even when it is not there” (Augé 2010, 62–63). In juxtaposition to the post-tourist and to their feeling at ease everywhere, the role of the *stranger* emerges, whose peculiarity is eradication, which leads them to not belonging anywhere and to have fleeting bonds of identification.

Psychoeogeography

This term refers to a set of techniques used for environmental analysis, introduced and tested, since the late 1950s in the context of the Situationist International. Specifically, psychogeography studies the precise effects of the geographical environment, consciously or not designed, acting directly on the affective behaviour

of individuals. Mainly tested to read the modern metropolis, it has served to advocate a strongly critical outlook on urban space use and design, seen from the Situationist movement as a form of coercion by the ruling classes. Indeed, psychogeographical techniques aimed to deconstruct the sclerotic urban areas and to simultaneously construct new spaces, marked by short duration, mobility and permanent change. The primary method of exploration was represented by the *drift*, a sort of aimless wandering, a “wanting to lose themselves” in the interstices of the city, guided by the instinct (Careri 2001). Close to the practice of *flânerie*, drift, as a form of relative orientation, is an alternative and literary way of operating one’s own *mente locale* that is able to give a sense to the marginal spaces of contemporary cities and to build an alternative and personal map of the reality we live in (La Cecla 1993, IV).

R

Refugee - see **Migrant**

Rights - see **Multiculturalism**

S

Self-identification

Self-identification is one of the main consequences of *liquid mo-*

dermity, theorised by Zygmunt Bauman, and comes from the displacement of social responsibilities, which were previously delegated to the sphere of the state and to the individual, who finds themselves with no pre-established guidelines to follow, and in an area of total indifference towards the nature of the choices they face. This change is precisely related to the progressive “liquefaction” of state bodies, to the decreasing influence of the latter regarding the definition of individual identity, delegated to a self-identification, through which we are able to relate within society. *Self-identification* is one of the challenges of contemporary society (Bauman 2010) since individuals, with too much freedom of choice, argue for a flexible identification, which is temporary, changeable and endowed with an intrinsic weakness bound to important sociological questions.

Space of flows/Space of places

Manuel Castells introduced these expressions in the attempt to assign a spatial dimension to *globalisation* and *glocalisation* phenomena that are leaving a mark the contemporary society (Castells 1996, I: ch. 6). Space, defined as the material and symbolic support for social processes, the author identifies the *space of flows* as the area of the dominant processes of society. In other words, the space that makes the simultaneous articulation of

financial and information flows possible. More concretely, the term defines the physical circuit of electronic exchanges and the nodes of this global network. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, it also represents the spatial organisation of the ruling classes. The *space of places*, on the other hand, would be the scope of social practices for most of the global population, linked to a concept of place whose form, function and meaning are self-sufficient within the boundaries of physical contiguity. Two modes of reasoning that are so outstanding that they threaten the emergence of a social identity split into parallel universes, “unless cultural and physical bridges are deliberately built between these two forms of space” (Castells 1996, I: 428), bridges that are between the global flows of communication and power, and their local roots.

Space of nomadism

The space of nomadism is configured as homogeneous, fluctuating and boundless, in opposition to sedentary space, which is consciously fragmented and closed, and has always tried to subdue the former under its control (Vidler 1992). The space of nomadism also becomes a metaphor of research, listening and discovery space, which develops in opposition to the usual anestetisation of doubts and anxieties that are typical of modern society that is accustomed

to the practice of the meta-narrative. This space is configured in the making and is generated through the abandonment of the usual and compulsory tracks, in favour of new paths that highlight the crisis of prevailing acceptance. New *nomadic routes* are also outlined, which turn away sedentary places to adopt the practice of disorientation to finally reach the space of nomadism (Villani 1992).

Stranger

This is a social form of human interaction, characterised by the simultaneous presence, in the same person, and in their relations with groups of people, of opposite polarities, such as stability and mobility, emotional closeness and distance. This coexistence determines ambivalence in the relationships between foreigner and hosting society, with the form of a very particular way of being part of a group. Tied to a geographical area, to which they do not belong, the stranger is an integral part of the community without being assimilated, only because of their cultural diversity. Included and excluded at the same time, not linked to the duties of political participation or to the social bonds of solidarity, they occupy a marginal, though very important, position (Simmel 1986). Moreover, they strengthen the internal cohesion of the group, promote socio-cultural changes,

or perform an economic function that the social group is unable to do (Sombart 1986).

Surmodernité

A term introduced by the anthropologist Marc Augé to indicate the contemporary stage of the evolutive concept of modernity, in opposition to the term *postmodernism* in the description of the social, economic and cultural phenomena related to the emergence of complex societies and to the development of globalisation. A condition, a hypermodern one, determined largely by technological evolution, in which the prefix denotes an excess, which has developed in the recent past and now rapidly increases: excess of time, caused by the overabundance of simultaneous events that leaves a mark on the contemporary world; of individual references, with the progressive relativisation of social indicators; but especially, with the development of the means of transport, excess of space, and producer of non-lieux (Augé 1992).

T

Territoriality

Territoriality is a form of identity based on the bond between a subject and its place of origin or choice, which is historically interpreted, together with the concept

of ethnicity, as a basis for the individual and social identity. Only in the recent years, thanks to the *ethnologie du proche*, can we see the scaling of localistic determinism, which saw the social group fundamentally represented by its link with the territory. Given the emergence of a new kind of nomadism, the idea of territoriality is defined, in a contemporary sense, as a place of negotiation between the identity constructed from the bottom, from the recognition of differences, to that imposed from the top, from the universal desire for integration (Bromberger et al. 1989, 145).

Time

As a category of the real, time, together with space, is the scope and the location of each architecture. However, there are several ways in which time becomes part of the architectural design – different dimensions in which it is taken as a project parameter: “The first, quite simply, is the duration of urban facts, the duration of the artifacts, of the objects the city hosts and this is actually a term that varies a lot ... Then there is another time that is the time of the designed architecture: that, compared to the lifetime of a building, is a ridiculous time, in the sense that, what we do when we develop a project, is to participate in the life of a building that starts much before we do – because it starts from the demand, from the user needs, from the administra-

tion which is responsible for the issue, from the invested capital, and so on – and that lasts much more than us ... Then there is a third time, more difficult to control: referring to what De Carlo said, we can say that the architecture must represent his own time and that there is, then, a problem concerning the relationship between the architecture and the present time ... Any architecture having not a certain density of content and a certain firmness, in terms of outlook on the reality of his time that it is able to propose, starts an insecure and uncertain life” (interview with Stefano Boeri and Giancarlo De Carlo in Giachetta 2004, 298–299).

Transformation

Architectural design is the conscious and oriented *transformation* of each human environment, made through the cultural, economic and technical means that the historical period, in which it takes place, provides. Contemporary society gives the design a variety of means and a stratified physical and social context to determine the birth of new complex transformative configurations.

“The processes of transformation, in fact, not only express themselves as rapid *transformations of transformations* (rehabilitation of industrial wasteland, centralization of peripheral areas of the city, transformation of urban centers and harbor in “theme parks,” overlaps

to the existing built [sic], continuous changes of use, reuse, re-styling and make-up of trade buildings, etc.), but they often find in themselves a sufficient justification for a *transformation for the transformation* (temporary structures, installations, architecture as urban and media “events”), involving more and more players in this implementation, through a progressive specialization” (Giachetta 2004, 37).

Transnationalism

The growth of workers who, aided by the processes of globalisation, have developed strong transnational links with more than one country, beyond the congruence boundaries between social and geographical space and who characterise a more increasingly common phenomenon. These operators generally have a high level of education and expertise and are part of a network of professionals able to live in more than one place (Juhász and Makara, 2011, 8).

Transnational social spaces

Transnational social spaces can be identified as multi-local configurations of social practices, objects and symbolic systems, which simultaneously exist above and beyond the social contexts of national societies and have higher density and stability than have the territorially identified social spaces. Although they are largely determined by the phe-

nomena of contemporary *mobility*, transnational social spaces are not a mere spatial extension of the original migrant communities, but they affect, to different degrees, the entire society. Indeed, if *globalisation* and *glocalisation* tend to orient the political reality towards a post-national form, social space conformation must necessarily follow this trend because, although the social relations may become more fluid, they will not disappear or be limited to the virtual space (Priers 2001, 24).

Travel

Travel can be seen as a preamble to something that has yet to happen, to something that we expect and to which we are going. It represents an experience “committed to the sense of likelihood rather than to the reality principle” (Magris 2010, XV) and for whose taking up the journey, it presumes: movement, dynamism, ability to explore, willingness to research and a precarious situation typical of the spaces of nomadism. It is a developing travel route, which is drawn step by step in the moving, because “traveling means moving our own center of gravity, looking for a dynamic equilibrium. Attention and awareness are the normal requirements to travel in a responsible way” (Canestrini 2001, 8). Travel can be considered as a nomadic path as it tends to move away sedentary

practices in pursuit of discovery. Through the lability of travel, we can dispute the stability of individual ego and consequently we are led to deconstruct and to analyse our identity, to carefully reflect on the characteristics of our personality. These are operations that identify “a new anthropological stage, beyond the classic individuality” (Magris 2010).

exploration and research (Villani 1992, 33–34). 8

V

Virtual communities - see **Cyberspace**

Virtual space - see **Cyberspace**

U

Uprooting

The trend for uprooting, inherent in the phenomenon of *globalisation*, leads to *glocalisation* in the contemporary age. This represents an attachment to the earth prompted by an opposition to the growing loss of the feelings of belonging (Bauman 2010). Uprooting, which is “the most radical modern experience,” is the typical condition of the *stranger*, who always lives somewhere else and does not belong to a place. A condition that is witnessing exponential growth in the contemporary world, where the bonds of belonging and recognition have become unstable, and can lead to two diametrically opposed situations. On the one hand, to the approval of modern society, characterised by the narrative and, on the other, to the typical condition of the stranger, who haunts nomadic routes associated with

W

Wearables - see **Logical spaces**

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Annotated Bibliography

In the definition of the contemporary architectural space, the ongoing debate and research about interiors are increasingly deeply involved with issues related to the spaces for social and collective life, which are leading to a profound re-evaluation of the concepts of “interiority,” “interior space,” interior design, and architecture. In fact, during the last few decades, a particular interior space has gradually taken place outside the traditional domestic one, involving the public or semi-public spaces of metropolitan mobility, communication and mass consumption. However, this series of new urban polarities does not seem to be determined by the emergence of unprecedented spatial typologies, but linked to a new location of the “dwelling project” that develops across the urban territory. Today, in other words, leaving home does not mean interrupting the experience of inhabiting, but represents the point of departure of a metropolitan way of inhabiting that simply ignores and overcomes all the positional values and the dimensional relations which structured the pre-contemporary city. Mobility is the real face of the contemporary city and the transition between two places has, today, the same value that contiguity had in the past. In this sense the terms “migration” and “nomadism” are not only referred to diasporic events, but they also represent the complex social and spatial condition of contemporaneity, resulting from the accelerated mobility of goods, people, ideas and knowledge. For this reason, in order to summarily define this condition, this bibliography collects a series of texts that reflect the economic, political and cultural changes affecting the contemporary social context. The following four sections are respectively meant to identify, thanks to an interdisciplinary critical chronology, the background, the actors, the dynamics and the spaces through which the idea of global nomadism seems to be materialized.

The sociocultural context

Since the end of the last century, a technological revolution – essentially informational – has begun to redefine the material basis of society. The gradual global interdependence of the national economic systems has introduced a new relational model between economy, state and society, which is characterised by a variable geometry. Meanwhile, the production processes have been fundamentally restructured on the base of a greater management flexibility, a progressive decentralization of industrial systems and an increased global competitiveness. This has progressively contributed to define a framework in which information economies and advanced services have ended up generating the four-fifths of the richest countries' gross national product. And while politics seems to stagnate in a chronic crisis of legitimacy, the development of telecommunications offers new and direct ways of social participation.

These features, summarily sketched, are only a part of a complex framework whose understanding is essential to identify the actors and the practices that give the spaces of global nomadism a shape. In this regard, in fact, many questions are still open. Is it possible, for instance, to define in detail the political and social transformations of the last thirty years? Which is the role played by economy and technology in reshaping the concepts of mobility and communication? Are we assisting to the rise of a new global geography?

In an attempt to propose a multidisciplinary analysis of these questions, the bibliography concerning this first section is composed by three parts, dealing with three complementary aspects of the problem. The texts included in *Globalization and glocalization* take into account the political reverberations of the growing interdependence of international markets, to identify the social changes linked to the ongoing macro-economic processes; by contrast, *Society in the Net* highlights the transformations in contemporary relational models, which have occurred due to the information revolution; finally, the texts included in *Surmodernity geography* have been chosen for their ability to suggest a new global contemporary geography.

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The actors of contemporary itinerancy

The crisis of Fordism was the inevitable and structural crisis of a productive, economic and contractual model, which determined the end of the industrial process based on the division of labour, a greater productivity and the long-term contract. In fact, as this model was based on a demand that was directly determined by wages, any national market was constitutionally too limited to increase productivity through the use of economies of scale. Thus, the subsequent internationalization of markets has led to a greater global competitiveness, the decentralization of production processes and a complete transformation of labour market. For this reason, the recent economic transition to the post-Fordist model and to its new reticular and variable geography has been accompanied by a similar social shift towards a system of greater personal mobility. Whereas globalization seems to firmly require a complete reconstruction of the labour market, the end of mass migrations, the population aging in developed countries, the crisis of the traditional family and that of the long-term employment seem to imply the sedimentation of a more unpredictable migration model. Furthermore, as the reduction of time and costs for transportation turns mass tourism into an almost universal ritual, the accelerated flows of information together with the possibility for direct participation and customisation offered by the Internet could completely change the very idea of travelling.

In order to face these issues, this bibliographic section is composed by five parts describing the most emblematic actors of contemporary mobility. The first part, *Territoriality and belonging*, is a sort of introduction concerning the relationship between identity and environment, while the *flâneur*, the *tourist*, the *traveller*, the *new nomad* and the *migrant* represent the metaphors of a gradual distancing process from a traditional idea of territoriality.

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The dynamics of the encounter

The characters of contemporary itinerancy draw a heterogeneous picture of actors related to mobility. Some of them refer to new practices – which may be related to the latest technological development, or the ongoing changes in the labour market and the geopolitical order – while some others have solid roots in the sociological or in the literary archetypes of the past. In any case, these actors seem to orient the global society towards new forms of nomadism. In fact, if we consider the nomadic character as a metaphor for a social behaviour, the nomadic subjectivity can be referred to the simultaneity of complex and multilayered identities that today is present in every person, regardless of his/her degree of physical mobility. In this sense the nomadic state is determined not only by the act of physical travelling, but also by the subversion of such established conventions as ethnicity or nationality, in defining individual and group identities.

Therefore, in order to analyse the places of identity and difference of the contemporary sociocultural background, it is necessary to carefully read the relational models generated by these new nomads. In other words, it is necessary to understand whether identity today represents a project of self-representation or a cultural attribute objectively detectable in concepts such as ethnicity, nationality or citizenship. Moreover, it is also necessary to define the threshold beyond which the cultural difference is a repulsive factor rather than an attractive one.

In order to face these issues, *Identity and difference* proposes some texts that explain the cultural effect of the encounter between two subjects, while *Nationality and nationalism* tries to deepen the topic from the point of view of collective identity and self-representation processes. Finally, *Integration and multiculturalism* collects essays on the modalities of coexistence of differences and on the reverberations they have in the construction of contemporary complex societies.

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The spaces of nomadism

In the last decades, the fading of ethnic and national identities due to the growing global economic and political integration has widely been predicted. Today, however, we can affirm that globalization has made the myth of culturally homogenous state even more unrealistic and has often improved the opportunities for minority groups to preserve their singular identities. What has really been changing in recent years is the approach to these issues. While the possibility to implement ethnic rooting in the concept of nation has already been discredited, ethnicities are no longer seen as homogeneous islands, but rather as organisational containers characterised by their own variable boundaries, which enhance their cultural difference as the basis for the interdependence or the symbiosis between different groups. Furthermore, the self-representational component of the identity construction process has increasingly evolved over the last century, building a scenario in which identities may be more easily adopted and discarded.

Within this fragmented framework, based on an individual construction of meaning, the dynamics concerning the encounter and the exchanges between people and cultures could be difficult defined, especially when it comes to the confrontation with “the Other”. This may entail the acknowledgment of the multicultural dimension of society, characterised by the coexistence of different cultural groups, and the development of intercultural strategies aimed at enabling and fostering the synergy of different viewpoints, and the respectful evaluation of diverse subjectivities and specificities. In this regard, from a spatial point of view, several questions may be open. What kind of spaces, for instance, can suit these dynamics? How has social space changed in relation to mobility and multiculturalism? Is it possible to design a space for nomadism? How can architecture respond to the process of self-representation? How can it respond to the processes of integration, hybridization and contamination of differences?

To answer these questions, after a first analysis of the role of a *New kind of spaces*, the texts presented in this section look at the *Metropolis of the encounter*, in order to extrapolate an operative model for spatial analysis.

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Graduated in Architecture at Politecnico di Milano with a thesis proposing the redesign of the Lummus Park in South Beach (Miami, FL), after a short working experience in an architectural studio, she started to collaborate as teaching assistant with Prof. Luca Basso Peressut and contemporary art Prof. Jacqueline Ceresoli, and with the EC funded project *European Museums in an Age of Migrations*. She is currently a PhD candidate in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design at DAStU Dpt. of Politecnico di Milano, working on a research thesis on cultural and memory representation in Jewish and Holocaust museums. Meanwhile, she collaborates with LUCE AIDI Journal and some art galleries.

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Arch, she got the PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design at Politecnico di Milano with the thesis *Around Neighbourhood Library. The Design of the Spaces for Cultures: Ideas, Contexts, Architectures*. From 2010, after her graduation, she has collaborated with Politecnico, supporting research activities focused mainly on the Italian figure of the architect Carlo De Carli and on the architecture of spaces for culture in European cities, topic that she is still developing also with the students of the course she holds as teaching assistant. Now she is part of a research team within Politecnico, dealing with the renewal of urban outdoor spaces placed along a river in the North of Milan and read through the relationship between the big and the small scale.

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Arch, graduated at Politecnico di Milano, he holds a master certificate in Strategic Planning and Innovative Management of Archeological Sites. Currently he is running his personal studio, focused on interior design and environmental sustainability. He combines his designing activity with collaborating as teaching assistant at Politecnico di Milano.

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She studied Architecture at Politecnico di Milano and at TU/e Technische Universiteit of Eindhoven, and she graduated in 2008 proposing the reconversion of a U-Boot bunker of the IIWW into an open food market and cultural centre, in Saint Nazaire. From 2008 she has been working for art galleries, such as the Prada Foundation, and architectural studios specialized in interior and exhibition design. From 2011 she is combining architectural practice and research. At DPA Dpt of Politecnico di Milano she worked as Research Fellow for the EC funded projects *Mela – European Museum in an Age of Migrations*. She is now Architect and Quality Manager for Rimond Srl, collaborating with international studios like Foster and Partners (London) and Ray Chen International (Taipei).

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