G. Maciocco · S. Tagliagambe

People and Space

New Forms of Interaction
in the City Project

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Urban and Landscape Perspectives is a series which aims at nurturing theoretic reflection on the city and the territory and working out and applying methods and techniques for improving our physical and social landscapes.

The main issue in the series is developed around the projectual dimension, with the objective of visualising both the city and the territory from a particular viewpoint, which singles out the territorial dimension as the city's space of communication and negotiation.

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Concerned with advancing theories on the city, the series resolves to welcome articles that feature a pluralism of disciplinary contributions studying formal and informal practices on the project for the city and seeking conceptual and operative categories capable of understanding and facing the problems inherent in the profound transformations of contemporary urban landscapes.

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New Forms of Interaction
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Giovanni Maciocco and Silvano Tagliagambe

Giovanni Maciocco
Department of Architecture and Planning
Faculty of Architecture, Alghero
University of Sassari
Palazzo del Pou Salit
Piazza Duomo 6
07041 Alghero
Italy
maciocco@uniss.it

Silvano Tagliagambe
Department of Architecture and Planning
Faculty of Architecture, Alghero
University of Sassari
Palazzo del Pou Salit
Piazza Duomo 6
07041 Alghero
Italy
tagliaga@uniss.it

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Background: the Therapeutic Illusion of Space

The "therapeutic illusion of space", which traditionally characterised the urban planning discipline, can be considered to correspond to the formula according to which "the improvement of the *urbs* determines improvement of the *civitas*", a formula that in a certain sense subordinates actions on the second to actions on the first. But the *urbs* has deteriorated, perhaps precisely because of this subordinate role the urban planners have attributed to the *civitas*, tipping the balance towards the *urbs* and ultimately favouring the progressive loss of their mutual relations. In this hetero-directed role (which is also the "control command" heritage of the synoptic rationality of rational-comprehensive urbanistics) the *civitas* no longer has active relations with the *urbs*, and therefore not only receives no positive effects from it, but it suffers undesirable ones; at the same time it also worsens as *civitas* itself, becoming passive, fragmented and crystallised. All this, together with other phenomena, has produced what Françoise Choay has defined as the "divorce of *urbs* and *civitas*", which has projected the city into a non-place perspective, thus causing it to lose its relationship with place. There are structural phenomena which have characterised urban dynamics, towards which urban planning discomfort was quite clearly shown: the dynamics of technical networks are tending to substitute the statics of built-up places, to condition urban behaviours and mentality. It is a question of a mental and physical reference system made up of material and immaterial networks as well as technical objects, whose handling brings into play a stock of images and information, which echoes round a circuit linking the relationships our societies maintain with space, time and men. This operative system, valid and developable in all places, in cities just as in the country, in villages or in the suburbs, may be called "the urban" (Choay 1994).

The urban event dismantles the ancient solidarity between *urbs* and *civitas*. Interaction between individuals has now reached the point of being demultiplied and delocalised at the same time. It seems as though belonging to communities with different interests is no longer founded either on proximity or on local demographic density.

Transport and telecommunications involve us in more and more numerous, diverse relations, as members of collectivities that are abstract or the spatial installations of which no longer coincide or present stability over time (Choay 1994).

The American economist Melvin Webber wisely described with a lapidary formula, "the non-place urban realm" (Webber 1967), the delocalisation of the ancestral *civitas* and analysed the possible repercussions in an exemplary manner. He began in 1968 to propose the concept of "post-city age", the era of the after city, which it is ambiguous to translate as post-urban era, since it is better to use the urban to denote the new planetary culture and its way, simultaneously unique and polymorphous, of affecting habitable space. If we examine the lexis, we discover the hegemony of the urban, naming entities like urban region, urban community, urban district, urban field, which say quite a lot about the eclipse of the city and the anachronistic nature of so many terms like "commune", "village" "city", that will no longer return except in history or nostalgia. Since these unusual words also remind us of the unframeable reality of our natural condition, the fact that "whatever the immateriality, abstraction, multiplicity of the relations urban-dwellers engage in with each other across the planet, they are, we are, in spite of ourselves, cast into space and forced to live there and dwell in some place. But where and how?" (Choay 1994).

To explore this problem we can depart from the idea that in our contemporary societies the loss of the relationship with place has profoundly to do with the relationship between ethics and aesthetics.

The Crisis of Aesthetics and the "Death of the Landscape"

The reflection on the relationship between ethics and aesthetics proposed by Joseph Brodsky on 8 November 1987 on the occasion of his being awarded the Nobel Prize was both shrewd and profound.[1] "Every new aesthetic reality", says the writer, "makes man's ethical reality more precise." Since

aesthetics is the mother of ethics.[…] The categories of "good" and "bad" are, first and foremost, aesthetic ones, at least etymologically preceding the categories of "good" and "evil". If in ethics not "all is permitted", it is precisely because not "all is permitted" in aesthetics, because the number of colors in the spectrum is limited. The tender babe who cries and rejects the stranger who, on the contrary, reaches out to him, does so instinctively, makes an aesthetic choice, not a moral one. Aesthetic choice is a highly individual matter, and aesthetic experience is always a private one. Every new aesthetic reality makes one's experience even more private; and this kind of privacy, assuming at times the guise of literary (or some other) taste, can in itself turn out to be, if not a guarantee, then a form of defence, against enslavement. For a man with taste, particularly with literary taste, is less susceptible to the refrains and the rhythmical incantations peculiar to any version of political demagogy. The point is not so much that virtue does not constitute a guarantee for producing a masterpiece as that evil, especially political evil, is always a bad stylist. The more substantial an individual's aesthetic experience is, the sounder his taste, the sharper his moral focus, the freer – though not necessarily the happier – he is (Brodsky 1995, pp. 49–50).

As Salvatore Settis notes, in the Greek art evoked by Winckelmann, precisely because it is set in a vision strongly nurtured by current values, "ethical ideal and aesthetic ideal blended into one, in a vision based, with feverish tension, not only on the construction of a metaphysics of the Beautiful, but also on the certainty that from Greek art a new impulse should come, fit to transform the cultured person deeply, by illuminating and disciplining the intellect, giving him a fuller life and a richer interior world" (Settis 2004, pp. 46–47).

It is precisely in this applied, rather than Platonic, sense that we should understand Dostoevsky's remark that beauty will save the world, or Matthew

Arnold's belief that we shall be saved by poetry. It is probably too late for the world, but for the individual man there always remains a chance. An aesthetic instinct develops in man rather rapidly, for even without fully realizing who he is and what he actually requires, a person instinctively knows what doesn't suit him. In an anthropological respect, let me reiterate, a human being is an aesthetic creature before he is an ethical one. Therefore, it is not that art, particularly literature, is a by-product of our species' development, but just the reverse. If what distinguishes us from other members of the animal kingdom is speech, then literature – and poetry in particular, being the highest form of locution – is, to put it bluntly, the goal of our species (Brodsky 1995, p. 50).

This overturning of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics is interesting because it attributes to the latter, rather than to the former, responsibility for the confusion and disorientation that are contaminating the contemporary world and causing a crisis that is, then, primarily a crisis in taste, a crisis in the sense of beauty, a crisis in the "aesthetic instinct", a crisis of the glance, first and foremost, rather than a crisis in moral values. To hide what is an incapacity to see, a loss of the active glance over the landscape, which is then at the base of the project for the city, some speak even of the "death of the landscape".

Departing indeed from some reflections on the "death of the landscape", Eugenio Turri (2002a) proposes a strategy of the glance, an active glance which opens up perspectives for action in situations where the landscape reappears, reveals itself to men, pointing out that when this happens it is still possible to discover the tie between landscape and city and that in this sense it is still possible to build the city through a relationship between the action of men and the construction of the city. Turri emphasises that the first to announce the "death of the landscape" were the French, who in the 1970s of the last century lamented the death of the landscape, referring basically to the landscape built up by man, and spoke of the disappearance of the *bocage* (the field enclosed by hedges and trees, a characteristic element of the French Atlantic landscape), considered a loss of the most authentic values of the country areas. In its turn this was seen as an opposition to the city, so it happened that the rural territories began to lose, with the destruction of the *bocage*, their unusual aspects and "with this the peasant world, the peasant culture and the village died, symbol of *France éternelle*" (Bardet and Charbonneau 1972; Le Lannou 1977). In Italy the city had for some time been going into the country, with the occupation of landed property by the urban middle class, so there was less divergence between city and country. The latter had in a certain sense already undergone the attack of the city, the transformations that were polluting rurality and the landscape that expressed it. And, actually – Turri continues – when in the sixties the transformations involved in the economic miracle

set in, not many voices were raised in Italy to complain of the offence suffered by the landscape, if we exclude those of Antonio Cederna, representing the middle class culture and Pier Paolo Pasolini, on behalf of the Italian peasant culture, with all its values that were languishing (Cederna 1975).

And it was in that period of Italian history, though so important for the renewal it brought about, that our landscape began to die. By death is meant a series of transformations so deep that for a few generations reference to life scenarios, images and testimonies that were established as elements of identity faded on the territory, the loss of which therefore itself caused a sort of alienation, disorientation (Turri 2002a).

It is in this sense that the death of the landscape should be understood, namely rapidity of transformation and overturning that destroyed the picture of territorial references. It is clearly not just the landscape, or a certain image of the landscape that dies, but something important in the spirit of men (Turri 2002a).

Turri maintains that this was due mainly to the fact that with the industrialisation process the direct relationship between man and nature was weakened, in contrast with what happened in the pre-industrial world, where the reflection of human action in the landscape was to be found in a unified manner both in an inhabited zone and in the surrounding space. Referring back to the Latin root of *paesaggio* (landscape), which derives from *paese* (village), which in turn refers back to the Latin *pagense*, Turri associates the landscape with the territory of the *pagi*, villages, that the inhabitant finds again as his territory. "This territory of the *pagi* appears and functions as an organism, like a cell in which landscape, a complete, sufficient mediation between man and nature" (Turri 2002a), is created and produced, just as the other landscape, the *openfield*, refers to a unified extension of spaces deforested and used by the village and for cultivation, namely humanised. It is a case of two direct, elementary ways in which man has his say with nature, and humanises the world (Assunto 1976; Ritter 1994; Milani 2001 quoted in Turri 2002a).

According to Turri, this spatialisation of human work, this organised annexing of the space surrounding the village, the *pagus*, refers back to discrimination the Romans made between *ager* and *saltus*, between cultivated space around the inhabited zone and the wood, the space of nature, at the edge of the *ager*.

If we use this same rule of spatialisation to divide the world of today between spaces of nature, i.e. where the domain of natural forces is still prevalent, and spaces annexed by man, the *ager*, the ecumenical space

would be that occupied by the great conurbations, the megalopolises, the lands cultivated on industrial lines, subjected to and manipulated by technological agriculture. But also in the *openfield*, in the great space dominated by the technological and urban organisation of our times, man no longer has the chance to measure up to nature, there is no longer room for the creative act, the original act that had man trepidly encounter nature, and that transmitted to that man, through perceptive vision, the active glance, indeed, the sense of the work required and aesthetically inspired, the outcome of his action.

We now square up with nature on a global or regional level. The original act, that contained all the sense of the direct, inspired relationship of man with nature, now lies submerged under the successive transformations and is to be found only transparently, being made to emerge by research of the archaeological kind, unearthing it from the context of stratifications that form the landscape of today (Turri 2002b).

The landscape no longer exists in the sense of the old representations that were given of it; it can be found at the most as a fragment, a surviving strip. But nature is no longer part of the landscape, like a stage on which all building and construction finds a place. Architects and urban planners working in the cultural climate of post-modernity are used to "quoting" from nature, referring, for example, to the trees as symbols or elements to recall nature, in a certain sense, a simulacrum (Jameson 1989). From this angle, the other in our society is certainly no longer nature, as was the case in pre-capitalist societies, but something different that we still need to identify (Jameson 1989). Goss maintains that, in the society of the spectacular, individuals live in a world made to measure for them, where all that was once experienced directly is experienced as mercified representation or bureaucratically administered, basically preferable – as cleaner, safer and more sensual – to reality. In Baudrillard's simulacrum society (Baudrillard 1978, 1981) the real has been irrevocably replaced by the illusion, and the world is not merely represented in commercial images, but actually consists of these images. The image is therefore more effective than reality itself – it becomes hyperreal (Goss 1993).

Perhaps, as Eugenio Turri notes, it is not the landscape that has died, but something that has died inside and outside us, even though perhaps something else is waiting for us, something man has not yet found. So if we consider the marginal spaces, sparsely populated or not at all, spaces of nature that have survived, at the edge of more densely populated areas, with more incisive transformations of the natural environment, here perhaps the encounter with nature is still possible. Our cities are rich in these territories. Policies try to integrate them into the efficient, syncopated, busy, effective city, but sensitive people react to this type of

disenchanted policy (Maciocco 2008). They are, in effect, the places where we meet the present and past, the best places of identity, the only uncontaminated ground to exercise individual or small-group freedom (de Solà-Morales 1995; de Solà-Morales 1996). They are for the city the equivalent of what Gilles Clément calls *Third landscape* (Clément 2004a; De Pieri 2005).[2] "In the most remote and sometimes poorest countries the first thing you are shown is the latest *building*: it is a conquest. In a country like France, when a town council has abandoned areas, the mayor is alarmed; he is ashamed. These two behaviours go in the same direction. A backward move in the visible power of man is considered a serious defeat" (Clément 1994). Observe the residual remains, their functioning. Observe the behaviours that go on within these spaces, the people that make their home there. In the glance that rests on the Third landscape, i.e. on the reverse side of the organised world, there are cues for pertinent, original and subtly subversive criticism of certain planning techniques (Clément 2004a; De Pieri 2005). Gilles Clément's *Third landscape* is of a mental order, meaning that it places itself in the ethical field of the planetary citizen with permanent rights (Clément 2004a; De Pieri 2005). For its content, for the questions posed by diversity – the landscape as a store of the diversity of a city now become *generic* – for the need to preserve it and favour its dynamics, the landscape acquires a political dimension, in the sense that maintaining its existence depends on a collective conscience adopting it as the privileged place of unpredictable changes, which is the reverse side of predictable, controlled, fixed *a priori* urban life (Clément 2004a).

The Third landscape has no scale, it covers the set of situations able to ensure diversity is maintained. But how can a similar change be prepared? It is not enough to spread knowledge of ecological science, not enough to discuss theoretical questions. There is a need – as Clément writes – to "change the legend" (Clément 1994). "Each place on earth […] accepts a legend that associates man with his territory in a lasting manner" (Clément 1999). Inhabiting the planet is something that calls into play the categories of the sacred and the supernatural: "instead of setting faith in an order of nature against faith in a myth, we must think about how to make them compatible".[3] This is because the word *ecology*, too, no longer seems suitable since it takes us back to the *openfield*, to the "great space dominated by technological and urban organisation of our times, where man no longer has the chance to measure up to nature", where there is no longer room for the creative act. "I had chosen to speak of 'ecology' without using the word, brought to the lowest level of disaffection by so many battles, so much hesitation and radicalism. 'Garden' […] is a more suitable term" (Clément 2004b). Thus Clément would bring back to mind, some time later, one of the reasons that led him during the course of first

half of the nineties to coin that expression, "planetary garden", around which almost all the works of the last ten years have revolved.

It is a case of reappropriating some of the great themes of ecological thought and to do so without using hackneyed words like "environment" or "sustainable". "Behind the word environment a whole battery of machines can be seen to unfold […] destined to harvest knowledge and make haystacks of it – the French landscaper continues, stigmatising the reductive and machine-oriented attitudes of techno-environmentalism. Imagine a cow with which someone wants to speak of "green space" and you will get a good idea of my feelings on the issue" (Clément 1999).

It is a question of reappropriating a possible political dimension for our work, a dimension long refused in favour of supremacy of the solitary doubt, patient observation, the verification of hypotheses in the field: "the largest number of species in my herbarium was collected in the spring of 1968" (Clément 2004b).

It is the need for reconciliation between cosmopolitism and rootedness that are present in the city, but also the opposite traits – observation of a specific place and general scientific knowledge – that are amalgamated as well in the well-known figure of the "planetary gardener" proposed by Gilles Clément in his essay *Le jardin en movement* (Clément 1994), and which give origin to the two protagonists of the epistolary novel, *Thomas et le Voyageur* (Clément 1999). The first, Thomas, stays at home in Saint-Sauveur: a scholar and practical man, a teacher, he is used to managing/querying what he finds within the limits of his own vegetable garden. The second, the Traveller, is a man of science: used to abstract reasoning, to thinking globally about the functioning of life on the planet. His letters from Africa or Australia make Thomas' convictions waver on several occasions (De Pieri 2005; Clément 2004a). "We are getting ready", Thomas writes, "to reconcile the irreconcilable: on the one hand the state of things – the environment that you appear to know, and on the other, the sentiment that is drawn from it – the landscape, where I am more at my ease" (Clément 1999). These "traits" that oppose local-sentiment and global-science and, further, local-landscape and global-environment, remind us that the destiny of "practical reason" in our society has more and more, as a prerequisite, the assumption that our organised life is increasingly influenced by relations independent of physical distance, but they also bring us back to the need to construct new forms and modalities of the relationship between *ager* and *openfield* in the landscapes of our contemporary post-cities.

But the natural landscape has not died perhaps because we have never known it.[4] In the sense that we have only known a cultural landscape. As Pier Carlo Palermo writes, between the two families of positions –

Romantic or *scientific* – a vast strand of *cultural interpretations* of the idea of landscape emerges, which constitute by far the most interesting references, perhaps the only ones that nowadays deserve new in-depth research. The idea of the landscape is always *culturally determined* and this observation stands not only for remarkable landscapes, but for the whole territory, including its ordinary manifestations, as John Brinckerhoff Jackson has us note, when he invites us to look with interest and respect at any landscape created by human action, without judging it on the basis of preconceived ideas, but trying to approach it as it is, with the tolerant glance due to every expression of individual or collective life (Jackson 1984). This process is, however, a circular one, from the point of view that interpretations of the environment and the landscape, as ways of seeing and representing, depend on cultural factors that are produced by social and territorial organisation, but can contribute to modifying these factors and perhaps therefore to the organisation itself.

The culturalist position is supported by, among others, an authoritative landscape theorist, Alain Roger (1997). But the problem is how can the cultural landscape continue to evolve today and not simply become a common good to be considered an economic resource oriented in particular in the direction of tourism? In this sense, the evolution of the cultural landscape is fundamental for contemporary public space. We need, that is, to invent the landscape as contemporary public space, to continue history. This is what the quotation from Henri Cueco means, that Roger recalls at the beginning of his article: "*Le paysage n'existe pas, il faut l'inventer*" (Cueco 1982 quoted in Roger 2002). It is almost an apotheosis of the active glance, namely Roger is teaching us that the landscape is a way of seeing and it is this that we must work on, because only through the active glance, *active looking*, can we *see* the city and create projects to improve it. Roger is trying to fill a gap. In spite of the proliferation of publications on the landscape, we are lacking a real systematic, theoretic treatise. Thus Roger tries to set down the main issues that are raised these days by the notion, so badly treated, of "landscape", both using the figures of the history of western landscape – Country, Mountain, Sea – and through a reflection on the debates that currently divide the specialists: what are the relations between landscape and environment? What is this foretold death of the landscape about? What policy is it best to follow in this domain? This *Court traité* is not a hand-book to popularise, but the opposite. It does not disguise its cultural convictions. The landscape, our landscapes, are historic inventions due basically to artists. A "land" becomes a "landscape" through an operation that Roger, taking up a term from Montaigne, calls *artialisation*, like that which directly intervenes on the natural base, *in situ* – being the work of gardeners, landscapers, Land

Art – or that which operates indirectly, *in visu*, through the intermediation of models, which mould the collective glance – being the work of artists, writers, photographers. Homage to the artists, who, century after century, have invented our landscapes, is for Roger – who refuses all conservativism – also the sign of a fervent faith in all those who will pursue this aesthetic adventure, provided we do not remain prisoners of a frozen, patrimonial conception of the landscape (Roger 1997).

According to Roger, there is no natural beauty. Our landscapes are acquisitions, cultural inventions. Historic and cultural perception of our landscapes is brought about through what is defined – to use again Montaigne's forgotten term – *artialisation*. As we have seen, it is through *artialisation* that *paese* becomes *paesaggio* in Italian, *pays-paysage* in French, *land-landscape* in English, *Land-Landschaft* in German, *pais-paisaje* in Spanish, etc. Roger notes that the land is in some way the "zero degree" of the landscape; it is what precedes its *artialisation*, be it direct or indirect. But our landscapes have become so familiar, so "natural", that we tend to believe that their beauty goes without saying.

It is up to artists to remind us of this primary, but forgotten, truth: a land is not *d'emblée* a landscape and between the one and the other there is all the mediation of art (Roger 1997), understood as an interpretative glance intrinsic in projectual intention.

Notes

1 The speech-lecture read in 1987 at the ceremony for the Nobel Prize award was written in Russian and published bilingually in Russian and English by the Organising Committee. The lecture was distributed in the English version translated by Barry Rubin, published in the collection of essays by Joseph Brodsky, *On Grief and Reason: Essays,* Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, 1995.

2 The *Manifesto del Terzo paesaggio*, which came out in the French edition in 2004, goes over some of these positions. The expression "Terzo paesaggio" appears here for the first time and one of the possible points of interest of the concept lies in the fact that it provides Clément with more effective instruments to tackle a field of observation, the city, which has always represented a stumbling block for his thought. The shift is readable on the linguistic plane. One of the key-words of this text is *délaissé*, a term that can be translated by "abandoned", "neglected" and which in its few appearances in Clément's previous works was brought into the argument to indicate more the urban sphere than that of the agricultural landscape. *Délaissé* appears here almost systematically in the place of *friche*, a word at the same time more suggestive,

ambiguous, nearer to common language. Cf. De Pieri 2005; Clément 2004a.   In many of Clément's works the city appears under the sign of negative judgement. It is the place of the architectures of urbanistics, namely of the opposite energy, because in architecture not to use opposite energy "means to not exist". Cf. Clément 1999.

[3] If the problem is posed in these terms, it is not simply a case of "integrating the ecological paradigm, but also of experiencing it in its sacred dimension. What is missing, in great clarity, is a myth adapted to the new state of knowledge: we know well that it cannot be Gaia, but which figure, then, can be found for this rising ecosymbol?" Cf. Clément 1995.

[4] Cf. a great classic of the theory of the landscape like Roger (1997, 2002).

The Aesthetic Crisis as the Crisis of the Glance

This incapacity to *artialiser* and therefore *see* the landscapes of the contemporary period is a *crisis of the glance.* In this sense, the crisis of aesthetics is also a crisis of the glance at the city, manifested as a passive, not critical, glance. They are two types of glance which encounter two conceptual worlds: one reflects the "environmental image" of the city, the "outer covering" (Kaijima and Tsukamoto 2006) of the inevitable dynamics of the metropolis, the other making reference to what is in some ways the "counterspace"[1] of the metropolis, the space available for the project, the space that allows us still to design for the city. The active, collective glance at the city makes us feel we belong to a whole, it reveals to us the contemporary public space.

The active glance is a process of construction of the city. It is a glance that necessarily puts in order, that, consciously or unconsciously, enhances constant elements, references, lines of strength, charging the image with meanings. This we all do, of course, following different logics and aims.

The often banal divulgation of the Romantic idea of landscape usually constitutes the most common documentation of the passive glance (Palermo 2008). In banalising the vulgate, in the eyes of the Romantics, nature was beautiful and inspiring, restful and moving; better if framed, to form a harmonious, coloured picture, but immobile and embalsamed, of which no-one wanted or knew how to perceive the most secret mechanisms and hidden equilibriums. It only needed a rocky spur or dizzy crevasse to disturb this serenity, and the refusal of any panoramic view tending towards the "horrid" or the "dramatic" touched levels difficult to imagine today. The English of the eighteenth century went to the extent of observing the slightly rough mountains of the Lake District through a special lens, called a "Claude glass", to shrink them to the far-off, inoffensive dimensions of a postcard. Otherwise the beating of an excited heart, especially in gentlewomen, would have been unbearable.[2]

In the Romantic idea of landscape, Italy was the Country of the Utopia, of balance between history and nature. The conviction spread that "the key to understanding everything", the reason for so much charm, was hidden in the depths of the Italian landscape. The protagonists of this idyll have always been foreigners, capable of discovering the obvious beauty of

everything that to their eyes seemed to have been forgotten: the English perennially seeking Eden, enchanted islands and Arcadian valleys where the teachings of Capability Brown could be applied, Germans moving towards mythical views before which they would place their easels, Russians and Scandinavians bewitched by the light of the Mediterranean, having undertaken the journey to Italy precisely to be continuously amazed by it (Rocuzzo 1992).

Banalisation of this way of seeing is found in present times in the glance of the videotourists of the contemporary city. But if "the landscape is nature that reveals itself aesthetically" (Ritter 1994), the aesthetic contemplation that enables us to describe it cannot be translated into an autistic, solitary closure (which would isolate individual experience from the process of signification and from its relations with the social processes of the context), nor in a pre-ordained and in some way imposed rite, like in the stereotyped models of "videotourists" (Gambino 2002). Sterility, but also the dangerous quality of the contemplative glance is described in a masterly way by Wenders in *Lisbon Story*.

No more frontiers in Europe. All the doors are open and anyone can cross through as they like. [...] It is as though Europe has really become very small. Languages change, music, the news is different, but the panoramas speak the same language. They all tell the same stories of an old continent full of its wars and treaties. It is nice driving like this without a care and letting the events and ghosts of history meet me from one epoch to another... Hey! This is my land, my real land, my homeland.[3]

In the car devouring the road at great speed in the direction of Lisbon, the sound technician Winter looks through the windscreen – emblematic observation point of contemporary man – at the realm of the European urban more and more undifferentiated and giving in to the centrality of networks of mobility and communications. In these initial images of Wim Wenders' *Lisbon Story* is pictured the relationship with temporality that characterises the present urban condition, detached from the past and the future, just as it appears in Kundera's description,

the man hunched over his motorcycle can focus only on the present instant of his flight; he is caught in a fragment of time cut off from both the past and the future; he is wrenched from the continuity of time; he is outside time; [...] Speed is the form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man. As opposed to a motorcyclist, the runner is always present in his body, forever required to think about his blisters, his exhaustion; when he runs he feels his weight, his age, more conscious than ever of himself and of his time of life. This all changes when man delegates the faculty of speed to a machine: from then on, his own body is outside the process, and he gives over to a speed that is noncorporeal, nonmaterial, pure speed, speed itself, ecstasy speed (Kundera 1996, p. 1).

This is the behaviour of the "videotourists" that Wenders stigmatises: "focusing the glance is like aiming a rifle". Thus in Lisbon Story, Wenders carefully avoids the commonplace elements of cultural consumerism, the worn-out paths of the "videotourists", where the city is a scenic fake in the contemporary urban tide, places where the divorce between *urbs* and *civitas* has been accomplished. In effect, the Tower of Belem, the mythical destination of tourist pilgrimages, does not appear, nor does the Cultural Centre of Belem, a monument to the strategy of the image in the European top cities competition. Just as in the historic city there are no pictures of the Terreiro do Paço, almost condensed in the sounds of the maritime traffic of the legendary wharf. The Bairro Alto, the district of antique-dealers, offices and night entertainment is absent, and Baixa pombalina itself, the actual metaphor of the reconstruction and resurrection of Lisbon, is almost imperceptible, today besieged by jeans outlets. For Wenders Lisbon is the urban conviviality still rooted in its soul, which is Alfama, the ancient Arab quarter, a place thick in "triple communication involving the exchange of goods, information and sentiments" (Choay 1994).

The degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of oblivion. From this equation various inferences can be deduced, such as the following: our epoch abandons itself to the demon of speed and therefore so easily forgets itself. But I prefer to reverse the statement: our epoch is obsessed by the desire to forget, and it is to carry out this wish that it abandons itself to the demon of speed; if it quickens its pace it is because it wants to make us understand that it has reached the point of no longer aspiring to being remembered; it is tired of itself; it wants to extinguish the little flickering flame of memory (Kundera 1996).

Winter, the sound technician, seeks the city's memory through the rare sounds still present in the historic heart of Alfama and records with care the variety lost by contemporary amnesia. The sounds are the metaphor of sensitive knowledge, of *aisthesis,* the philological root of aesthetics, the sensitive knowledge that enables us to take in through sounds and smells ... that "tale of what by definition is not tellable", what Smailes calls the *sense of place,* the sense of the places of a city, that set of colours, sounds, smells that differentiate one city from another, a nucleus of sensations that "serve as access to something that is beyond the glance and the psyche, beyond the eyes and the intellect and what Bernardo Soares calls the soul"*,* the soul of Lisbon, the soul of each contemporary city made invisible by the flows of mobility and virtual communication.

For this reason, in the film director Friedrich's monologue in front of his friend Winter, the sound technician, there is the anguish of those who no longer manage to "see" the city, the despair of the men to whom the city

no longer reveals itself. The film director denounces the fact that the city, reduced to a mere object of cultural consumption, is dying. Here there is the despair of the film director on seeing his work, the images, as a chosen instrument, privileged vehicle, of cultural consumption of the city and, in this sense, of its death. "Look here, Winter, my library of images not seen... These images show the city as it is, not as I'd like it to be … images ready to be discovered by future generations with different eyes from ours." "Different eyes from ours", says Friedrich to highlight the importance of an appropriate, "different", glance, to scan the city and try to see it.

The city men's way of looking has become the glance of cultural consumption, the glance that kills the city, in that it cancels out the existence of men, their life of reciprocal relations, of *civitas*, since it is directed solely at the spaces indicated and ordered by the media, where, as Pessoa writes, "I don't think anyone really acknowledges the true existence of another person … others are nothing but landscape for us and, almost always, the invisible landscape of a known street" (Pessoa 1982). Friedrich reaches the point of denying contemporary men the role itself of looking, the need of it to understand the city, begging for the "different eyes from ours" of future generations. But the city may also offer itself today to a different strategy of looking, it may reveal itself to men who make the effort to understand the indissociability of spaces from the lives of men. But this is difficult, it does not always happen, the city may withdraw as happened to Friedrich. Only "on certain days, at certain times, when who knows what breeze takes me, that opens who knows what door – writes Pessoa – do I suddenly feel that the grocer on the corner is a spiritual entity, that the assistant who at this moment comes to the door above a sack of potatoes is a soul capable of suffering" (Pessoa 1982).

"Friedrich says that when these houses disappear, then all the stories they hide will come out into the light of day. He has met a lot of people there". The film director's glance at every man, at every story, is a glance looking for the human roots of *civitas*, "… I realise – writes Pessoa – that the assistant at the tobacconist's was, in some way, his jacket lopsided and all the rest, the whole of humanity" (Pessoa 1982).

In the glance of cultural consumption there is the banal replica of reality, the image and reality are reflected in a mirror that prevents interpretation, the mirror of the media society, in which things have in themselves the image that is imposed on them, the images are rubbish-images, as Friedrich calls them, because the city withdraws, does not let its soul be filmed, and "life detaches from things whose end is identical, for a privilege that also embraces rubbish".[4]

The "rubbish-images" in the library of images not seen by Friedrich are images detached from the reality of life, in that reality cannot be duplicated. Reality can only be interpreted; only the images that try to interpret reality are intrinsically tied to it because they show not only the external content, but above all include the form, the "structural organisation" and, in this sense, its evolutive principles: this is the cognitive conception of the project for the city and the contribution of images to it. In the interpretation there is the continuous project for the city, the exploration of possible worlds in which the city always acknowledges its structural organisation, in a certain sense its "soul". But reality can only be interpreted by adopting an intentional point of view oriented towards interpreting the evolutive, autopoietic potentiality innate in the soul of the city.

The absence of this point of view, the absence of this particular glance leads to cancellation of the city: the images detach themselves because the city itself – in that it embraces the unbroken projectuality of life – will inevitably die, if it cannot be interpreted and planned.

Dragged by the flows of mobility and accelerated time, Friedrich crouches down in the small cast-off car, incapable of reacting and having an effect on the reality surrounding him. The point of view is the fixed one of the windscreen, indifferent to the phenomena, reality is simply represented, the cine-camera celebrating the urban chaos by uninterruptedly filming an anonymous suburb that emblematically expresses it. The *car-man* and the *flat-man*, the apartment-men of the contemporary urban tide, reflect the reality in which they are immersed, dragged by the flows of mobility and accelerated time, incapable of interpreting it by activating their point of view, concentrating their look through the lens of the cine-camera, to see*:* "I have seen Lisbon", asserts the film director referring to the time when he filmed the city without a break, which had urged him to call his sound technician to listen to the sounds, so that he might try to see it again.

Notes

[1] As Ignasi de Solà-Morales has us observe, the category of *counterspace* refers to past time. Just as the introduction of public parks in capital cities in the nineteenth century aimed at bringing nature into the city as counterspace at the moment when the cities of the first industrial revolution were built, as an antidote to the new industrial city, so our post-industrial culture calls for spaces

of freedom, undefined, unproductive, but this time not linked with the mythical notion of nature but with the experience of memory, of Romantic enchantment with the absent past as a critical arm in the face of the banal productivist present. The theme of counterspace is nowadays connected with disenchantment for the modern city, characterising a critical tradition always in search of alternative spaces outside or within the city, real and acceptable compared with the everyday reality of aggressive, anonymous, ugly metropolises. A disenchantment inherent in the urban pessimism that characterises the tradition of city disciplines and considers the city of the present a foretaste of a better life (de Solà-Morales 1994).

[2] Franco Tassi, *Etica e natura*,
www.cartadellaterra.it/cgi-bin/LV/cartadellaTerra/Doc/etica.doc

[3] *Lisbon Story*, directed by Wim Wenders, Road Movies Filmproduktion/Berlin, 1994.

[4] *Ibidem*.

Projectual Intention and Collective Will

In the car-man image are reflected lone men of the urban without community, incapable of expressing the "collective will", which is the yeast of urban construction. In the frantic return to *looking* through the cine-camera lens, there is reconciliation with the city and the project, the refusal and abandoning of an inert position, the courageous adoption of a point of view and social responsibility.

The aesthetic meaning of the landscape comes to light through interventions tied with "making and organising the environment" and the territory. It is not simply a matter of proceeding after having analysed perception, of exclusively moving in the sphere of an image of the landscape, but of working out an organic plan for man in the environment and offering the givenness of that particular physical context. The active glance consists of seeing another landscape through the landscape. This also springs from the theme of doubling and the enigma, to open our mind to the images of what appears real, represented, symbolic. It is a theme described in the past by Leopardi:

> To the sensitive, imaginative man, who lives, as I lived for a long period, feeling continuously and imagining, the world and objects are in a certain way double. He sees with his eyes a tower, the countryside; he will hear with his ears the sound of a bell; and at the same time with his imagination he will see a different tower, different countryside, a different sound. In this second kind of objects lies all that is beautiful and pleasurable in things. Sad is that life (and life is commonly like this) that does not see, does not hear, does not feel anything but simple objects, just those of which the eyes, ears and other senses receive sensations (Leopardi 1997, pp. 2077–2078).

A *second image* is disclosed, capable of opening up wider, deeper horizons. An image explored with great acumen by the Russian philosopher Pavel Florenskij in his essay *Mnimosti v geometrii* (The imaginary in geometry) of 1922 and in a short article devoted to the explanation of the sleeve of the book containing this essay, created for the occasion by the painter Vladimir Andreevic Favorskij.

Here Florenskij departs from the doubling of the conscience into a "directly visual image" and an "indirect image", given by something similar to touch, which is realised in certain conditions of perception, for

example, when we look at space through a hole of small dimensions, being on this side of it, or we see a landscape through the glass of a window. In these situations, besides what is seen by the mind, the medium is also present permitting us to see (the glass, which we saw before the landscape, or the wall the hole is in, which we crossed to penetrate the depth of space, ceasing to see it once we had crossed it).

Both the glass and the wall in these cases remain in the visual memory, which does not abandon the mind and leaves in it a confused impression of an almost tactile type. In these conditions of perception *two* elements are present in the mind, or rather, two layers of elements, homogeneous as regards their *content*, but basically heterogeneous for their *position* in the mind, and from this point of view not coordinable, but mutually excluding each other. This example shows that

in the visual representation of the world it is necessary to distinguish, besides the actual visual images, images that are abstractedly visual, inevitably present, nevertheless, in the representation, due to lateral vision, touch and other perceptions that do not give pure visibility, but lead to this, allude to it. In other words, in visual representation there are visual images and there are also *'as if they were visual'* images.

It is not difficult to recognise, in this duplicity of visual representation, the double nature of the geometric surface; moreover, truly visual images correspond to the visual side of the surface, while those that are abstractedly visual correspond to the imagined one. The bilateral quality of the geometric surface really is a symbol of the bi-differentiated position of visual images in the conscience, but should be taken as the limit, i.e. when the thickness of the fractioned layers of the space is infinitely small, and the impossibility of uniting one and the other images is extremely large. If we *see* the anterior side of a surface, we only *know* the posterior one abstractedly. But to know a certain object image abstractedly, whose essence lies indeed in its being an object, signifies representing it with a *different* medium, not visual, adapting it to visibility by an abstract concept or through a mnemonic image. *Reality,* in this sense, is the embodiment of what is abstract in the actual material from which indeed the abstraction was obtained; the *imaginary* is, on the other hand, the embodiment of this same abstract material, but in heterogeneous objective material. We could say reality is the adaptation of abstract and concrete (tautology), while the imaginary is the symbolic (allegory). In this sense it is absolutely necessary to speak of *concepts of sensations* as *imaginary sensations* or *sensations of the imaginary;* this is the imaginary at its limit. Actually, the only content of the sensation is its own sensorial presence; a thinkable sensation is not only *a nothing,* but a different sensation (since each concept is bound to a certain sensorial substrate, which is the point of its application) perceived as a heterogeneous concept [...] These sensorial elements and imaginary figures that are situated in particular in the conscience correspond fully to the imaginary geometric figures of the surface. The presence of imaginary perceptions, in any concrete experience, urges art scholars to reflect on the *imaginary*: the theory of the figurative arts is forced, consequently, to make some statement on the interpretation proposed, in geometry, about the imaginary

(Florenskij 1990, pp. 138–139).

We have, therefore, already in concrete experience, the inseparable presence of the imaginary, that is a nothing, but a different sensation of a

symbolic type. Indeed, thanks to this presence already at a perceptive level there is a splitting into two of the conscience, which is displaced, so to speak, on two different levels, that of *directly visual* images and that of *as if they were visual* images, obtained by knowing abstractedly the image itself, i.e. representing it for ourselves with a different medium, not visual, and adapting this to visibility through an abstract concept or mnemonic trace. And the interesting aspect of this situation lies in the fact that the two faces of the image do not exclude each other as opposites, but each implies and presupposes the other.

The awareness that any perception that is the slightest bit complex draws fuel and substance from this double psychic requirement and the dual relationship with the conscience that is realised through it, has also had an effect on the appearance of the territory and, above all, on the representation of the landscape, through the centuries, especially the twentieth century.

We observe great mutations parallel to the deep modifications in human sensibility and knowledge. This occurred between the ways of culture and history, between the images of the symbol and criticism, between the values of tradition and evolution. Theory and experience blended in the time of transformations and memories. Nevertheless, it is always the "second image" of which Leopardi speaks, and the *as if they were visual* images Florenskij refers to, that become established in a plan of truth.[1]

The glance cannot but be active for, during the course of the centuries and especially in the twentieth century, the appearance of the territory and the representation of the landscape have changed appreciably. In the marvels of the garden as landscape and the landscape as garden, man has organised the shapes of his surrounding reality to set up an image and an experience of social cohesion.

The relationship between landscape and social cohesion was dealt with by Pier Paolo Pasolini in his films, which denounced the anonymous hybrid of the new cities, incapable of transmitting the simple quality of human cohabitation. Pasolini, whose poetic eye was trained to see reality as the cine-camera did, and thus as an *abstractedly visual image*, stated in a television documentary of 1974: "There is, in the image of the modern city, a sense of discomfort, pain, offence, anger, which originates in the deep upsetting of form and style. [...] Those who, like me, make historic films, perceive this contemporary horror of the fall of civilisation and of sensibility".[2]

It is a situation that is widespread throughout the world, but it is sending us a message: we have the task of defending the city-landscape relationship, to avoid the *second image* Leopardi spoke of losing its evocative and mental power.[3]

It is perhaps for this that nowadays virtual modalities are becoming established and creating a mystified landscape, typical of the societies of the spectacular, the *societies of the simulacrum* (Baudrillard 1978, 1981). It is the end of the so-called *genius loci*, it is the age of dizziness and simulation (Turri 1996, pp. 30–38).

The active glance considers the landscape in its morphological statute, not as an activity, but as something revealing forms consonant with man's material and immaterial interventions (Del Corno 2003, pp. 32–36). This type of glance thus reveals a position, a projectual strategy. For example, the glance of Hervé, Le Corbusier's favourite photographer, is an "architectural" glance: man is anthropometric, he is *only* measured by architecture, he *only* depends on architecture, the *urbs.*

The *Civitas* depends on the *urbs*: this is the position of the modern movement that is characterised by the therapeutic illusion of physical space: the quality of physical space that determines the reform of society. If, however, man is only anthropometric and depends on architecture, the *civitas* separates itself from the *urbs,* the city separates itself from life.

The glance of the photographer is always critical, active. From Marco Giacomelli's bright, blurred photographs of the sixties, pictures of a countryside that was disintegrating, up to the images of the last post-Gursky generation, an epochal, plurisecular transformation came about over a few decades. What remains, therefore, of that initial idea of a holistic Italy, the garden of Europe? (Detheridge 2002) Giacomelli's anthropological visions in black and white "Caresses given to the world", were, in the words of Walker Evans, the late witness of an archaic, choral world that had already disappeared centuries before in the other European Countries, the last appeal of a civilisation which eclipsed in a single stroke, less than forty years ago (Detheridge 2002).

The lesser Italy of Luigi Ghirri is that central Italy made of soft afternoon tones, a precarious beauty, a sweetness characterised by the experience of proxemic space, an all-Italian way of experiencing the environment, in a mix of house, street and countryside (Detheridge 2002).

The metropolis, a "dystemic" place *par eccellence* (Greenbie 1981), in that it is a "community of strangers", is perhaps little celebrated, maybe also because of a conventional ruling viewism always on the edge of the characteristic and the picturesque. Among the few who systematically devoted themselves to it is Gabriele Basilico who, in his vision rooted in topographic culture, gathers a variety of testimonies.

First of all, the most antique French "portrait of the city" as a single body, as it was developing via public clients of town councils from the nineteenth century onwards, such as the case of Marville and Atget.

But Basilico is also a careful builder of the repertory of signs, which are the elements of metropolis grammar. In his attention to the "average city", be it in the Milan belt or the periphery between Naples and Caserta, he carries out indispensable reconnaissance of places and typologies, amounting to a brand new vision (Detheridge 2002).

And it is indeed in the claimed objectiveness of the structured glance, minimalist and with no sympathy, that the thousand dyscrasias of the city can be discovered. In this sense Basilico's glance is one that is never contemplative, but projectual, in that it opens up perspectives for action for transforming the city. This look is clearly present also in the work devoted to the urban landscape of Monte Carasso, where, making Luigi Snozzi's architectures everyday and unexceptional, he highlights the value of them as a collective process, and not as individual objects. At the same time, not separating them from the context, Basilico adopts a projectual glance in that he highlights the interactive potential of these architectures, the potential for action. It is the active glance aiming at action.

He is, however, also seeking discarded, abandoned spaces, as they are available for the project, intermediate spaces where it is possible to create contemporary public space. It may appear strange that a photographer has chosen an abandoned area of Milan – the disused factories – as a station to begin his route, aesthetically perfect and unchangeable, but socially dead except for the memory of the activities that the structure of each building recalls to mind, as a sign of research increasingly centred on the equation city/living body (Leonelli 1994).

Since 1978, the year of "Portraits of factories",[4] he has found himself on various occasions immersed in the whirl of cities. For the love of it, for the inexhaustible richness of the theme. Brought in line with human existence, seeing the organic structure underlying its "mortal" destiny – the city, too, can die – the urban landscape has shown on each occasion what best corresponded to the state of mind of the photographer: luxuriance, splendour, poverty, suffering. In the apparent architectural poverty of the compositive elements, in the delicate nature of the sand in the shadow which for a moment lightens the dark surface of the road, the author is celebrating the *act of seeing*.

If, in effect, Gabriele Basilico's research initially concentrated on the heroic, solitary, majestic nature of buildings, nowadays it is the monumentality of the *vision* itself, independent of the subjects, that is the centre of his work (Basilico 1994). But it is above all the capacity to see with the *urbs,* the *civitas,* too. For this reason the distinctive title of Basilico's work refers to the term "portraits": because the factories here are seen as portraits of human work, portraits of the working *civitas.*

The centrality of vision and the actual way of seeing are taken as the nucleus of Pier Carlo Palermo's reflections on the landscape. He emphasises the uncertainty of the paradigms characterising the idea of landscape; indeed he adopts the expression *uncertain paradigms* to indicate the unyielding ambiguity of the idea of landscape, which "can be referred to profoundly different paradigms that often seem to coexist, in reflections or practices, without clear distinction" (Palermo 2008, p. 30).

On this subject he observes how by landscape can be meant the scrap of reality discernible from a particular point of view, but also specific modes of representation. "The latter, moreover, can be quite different: subjective up to the point of proving self-referential and ephemeral, mediated by the dominant culture, or concretely expressed according to the positive models of scientific investigation" (Palermo 2008, p. 30). If the Romantic vision risks always appearing contingent and arbitrary, the scientific one tends towards reductive simplifications. The conviction of the need of interpretation as a constituent element of the project and, at the same time, the acknowledgement of the impossibility of finding a basis for the interpretation and dynamic mediation of the cultural-historic context tends to exclude reverting to the traditional scientific paradigm.

The picture seems extremely complex: it is not enough to observe from the outside a state of nature, not enough to observe the world as a society that is spatially settled, *the way itself of seeing* and its development need to be inquired into (Palermo 2008). It is to this evolution that we must pay particular attention as it gives us a glimpse of the extreme transformations of our perceptive worlds and, finally, the landscape.

This is what Inãki Abalos defines as the "metamorphosis of the picturesque" (Abalos 2004). This author compares two images, on the one hand Frederick Law Olmsted and Central Park, his most emblematic work, seen a century after its conception through the eyes of a great contemporary photographer, Lee Friedlander, and on the other, a sketch by Le Corbusier, one of the many drawings with which the latter liked to illustrate his theories on the *ville radieuse,* which he drew while speaking during conferences or to illustrate his books.

Abalos points out to us that the two images present unquestionably similar elements: in the foreground a vegetation that might seem "natural", dominated by impressive trees that frame undulating meadows, crossed by paths or running alongside a lake. In the background, interwoven with the natural environment in a decidedly picturesque way, emerge some very high buildings that our trained eye immediately recognises: on one side, New York skyscrapers, on the other those of the city for 3 million inhabitants, the gigantic cross-shaped skyscrapers that Le Corbusier began to imagine in around 1920 and which a little at a time gave origin to the

concept of "Green City" (Abalos 2004, p. 142). In the first case nature is the figure, while the skyscrapers of Manhattan are the background. In the second image the artifice, represented by Le Corbusier's Cartesian towers, is the figure, while nature is the background. "Olmsted and Le Corbusier, two worlds that today touch each other but did not before, two ways of thinking of the city, from two different cultures and on different technical bases, and which still now, as if by magic, appear to approach each other, not only in these two images, but also for the way in which nowadays modern tradition is conceived as a whole. The American hero and the true European, the democratic American city of the nineteenth century and the European industrial city of the twentieth century are synthesised in these two illustrations as something similar" (Abalos 2004, p. 142).

Abalos emphasises that the reason why we like Central Park nowadays is because of the harmony in which trees and buildings have grown together, each nurturing the other, to give rise to a unique universal experience which then became a sort of genetic code for the modern city, Asian, Latin American or European as it may be. The true contemporary picturesque; trees and buildings that grow together: the only modality of public space in which we can move around without feeling ourselves manipulated, a whole that we recognise and identify as "our world" (Abalos 2004, p. 143). This deviation of the glance between background and figure, this identification of both figures in a single whole that we have called "our world" is what we have inherited, the relations between the ancient pipe-dreams and the daily forms of life of the present, the distance and the links between one and the other dream.

This "metamorphosis of the picturesque", shrewdly described by Abalos, which corresponds to the evolution of our way of seeing, is sometimes perceived greatly in advance by the particular sensibility of artists. This is the case of the anticipatory, *electromagnetic* glance of the great English landscape painter William Turner. Renato Barilli analyses his work in this sense, departing from a comparison between the two great conventional periods: "the great cycle of 'modern' culture, which as handbooks teach us, went from the mid-fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, followed by 'contemporary' culture, in which we are still immersed" (Barilli 2002).

According to the "strong" criteria suggested by Marshall McLuhan, culture, or the modern age, is above all a question of machines, to begin with that of Gutenberg, while the contemporary age was to be dominated by electromagnetism. "The scarceness of discriminatory power that binds the words modern and contemporary, which are practically synonymous, suggests we replace the second with a new-born term like post-modern, for

which, as is well known, a definition has never been found or, above all, a division in periods that might be considered really fitting" (Barilli 2002).

In this picture – Barilli continues – there is a landscape we may call "modern", which will then be replaced, from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, by a lived-in, experienced landscape, painted with completely changed criteria which gather at the new horizons of the electromagnetic era, and then the electronic.

As Barilli again emphasises, the England of the years between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and decades afterwards, gave us two artists like Constable and Turner,[5] champions, almost the same age, of these diverse sensibilities applied to the theme of the landscape. Constable was a master of the typical naturalistic view, where the human subject stands at the window or is opening it onto nature trying to see it with maximum objectivity, avoiding impressing the traces of his/her presence on it. "Man becomes really small and tries to take on maximum neutrality and transparency to let the external data, earth, water, cloudy skies speak, thus anticipating the response of the photographic medium" (Barilli 2002).

But – Barilli notes – photographic apparatus is a machine, leaning on the pattern of a "camera" rigidly based on the triumph of the right angle, with a flat surface summoned to let itself be impressed by rays of light, but deprived of any sensibility whatever of its own before the "impression", like the classic *tabula rasa.* "And Constable was praised indeed for his faithfulness, for the cleanliness with which he managed to guarantee this reflecting surface and carefully avoid it exerting any action that might deform the reflected image" (Barilli 2002).

Whereas, departing from modern heritage, William Turner was ready to impose on it the signs of a completely changed conception, which might be said to correspond to the philosophical revolution operated by Kantian criticism of reason, by which man invests and moulds space and time, with his forms and categories, resorting *a priori* to syntheses. Repudiation of the myth of objectivity and of a neutral approach derives from this, "of those who would claim to tiptoe up beside the data of the vision respecting them in their intrinsicness: here, on the contrary, a single system is set up between the perceiver and the perceived, one does not exist without the other, in a close, reciprocal involvement" (Barilli 2002).

Barilli has us note that we can find confirmation of all this in the extensive landscape painting of Turner, but a work that emblematically represents the "anticipatory glance" of the great English landscape painter is that entitled *Rain, Steam and Speed,* his most famous landscape painted in 1844 when, that is, the artist had already begun his last phase of production, "characterised by a slowly increasing degree of data corrosion, diluted in a sort of 'unfinished effect', due to the accentuated prevalence of

atmospheric effects, ready to disintegrate, crumble up the consistency of the objects coming into view, even if they were 'hard' buildings or metallic objects emerging from the workshops of the industrial revolution already underway" (Barilli 2002).

Barilli describes Turner's work with a crescendo of reflections that almost second the transition of an epoch from the modern, mechanic culture to the electromagnetic culture.

> We can glimpse there a convoy of railway carriages, damaged of course, corroded by the inevitable British fog, and also by the smoke emitted by the boiler that moves it forward; it proceeds along a bridge whose sides, built in solid brickwork, cannot allow themselves to violate the sacred principles of the pyramidal perspective, and which, as they gradually approach us, separate, or, on the contrary, if we observe them in the opposite direction, tighten up, converge in their tending towards an inevitable point of flight
>
> (Barilli 2002).

The great English painter does not limit himself to working with sandpaper, to corroding, shading, making outlines hazy. In effect, if we follow the course of the bridge and railway lines, these do not just languish due to the growing optical distance, but rush towards a huge abyss: in the distance, there is not just the inevitable strain imposed by greater atmospheric thickness, but also the lighting up of an uncontrollable explosion. "There is a thermonuclear plant that has become active, in the back streets of that landscape, there is a Chernobyl that has got out of hand, that is causing a change in state, liquefying every element, breaking it up and setting fire to it. And that tremendous explosion proceeds implacably, even if the poor railway convoy tries to escape being chased after" (Barilli 2002). But the fight is unequal for we know well that the speed of that machine, like any other conceivable and realisable, has unbeatable limits, "while the relentless pursuer proceeds at the great speed light phenomena have, which are also of an electromagnetic nature, and reaches some three hundred kilometres per second" (Barilli 2002).

The atomic explosion is devouring every object, condemning it to enter into an unstoppable process of transformation, from matter to energy. That railway convoy is leaving the modern age to enter the contemporary, or post-modern, one (Barilli 2002). George Steiner detects this anticipatory glance in a masterly way in Shakespeare, pointing out the premonitory capacity in the use of words that contain future meanings in themselves. This is the case of the word *yellow.* In Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* the "furious" (literally "yellow") Iachimo is worthy of note. The aura of evil is extremely clear.

> But what is being inferred? Though "green" is the more usual appurtenance of jealousy, Middleton in 1602 uses *yellow* to mean "affected with jealousy". Shakespeare does likewise in *The Winter's Tale*, a play contemporary with Cymbeline, and in *The Merry Wives of*

Windor (I, iii) "yellowness" stands for "jealousy" (could there be a false etymology somewhere in the background, associating the two words?). Iachimo *is* jealous, of Posthumus's nobility, of Posthumus's good fortune in enjoying the love and fidelity of Imogen. But does Posthumus know this, or does the dramatic strength of the epithet lie precisely in the fact that it exceeds Posthumus's conscious insight? Much later, and with American overtones, *yellow* will come to express both cowardice and mendacity – the "yellow press". Though these two nuances are beautifully apposite to Iachimo, neither was, so far as we can tell, available to Shakespeare. What latent undertones in the word and colour give rise to subsequent, negative usage? Shakespeare at times seems to "hear" inside a word or phrase the history of its future echoes (Steiner 1975).

This is a case of an interpretative glance, a glance forward to the future. It is what happens when photographers question the *way of seeing itself*, claiming the need for an interpretative glance, without which there is no project. It is in this sense that the active, transforming glance of the photographer Olivo Barbieri should be considered, who, in a series of night views of the Forum in Rome, has compared the remains of Roman civilisation with the out-of-scale monuments of globalised commercial building, bestowing on both one and the other the phenomenological colours of the fairy tale.[6] Just as, beside the extreme transformations of our perceptive worlds there are the "invisible transformations", like in the *Linea di Confine* project[7], by which various photographers have documented social transformations and the signs of such change reflected on the Emilia Romagna territory. Choosing Via Emilia as the central theme, the project has identified, through the work of Guido Guidi, Olivo Barbieri, Lewis Baltz, Franco Vaccari, Paola De Pietri and Walter Niedermayr, the violent, as much as silent, transformations of an Italy up till then invisible (Detheridge 2002).

These photographers refuse *ways of representation,* objectified following positive models of scientific investigation which tends towards reductive simplifications. From this point of view the first image handled by Andreas Gursky was emblematic, that of the harbour car-park in Salerno, from which he removed one single car in a thousand, where the German artist placed himself as a direct descendant of the viewists, ready to take up that function deserted by artists. The picture of Salerno, with white, red and blue cars lined up, though imperceptibly modified, conceptually approaches the photography of viewism, taking away the burden of veracity from the photograph (Detheridge 2002).

To know how to see the city nevertheless requires that the eyes of contemporary man, overwhelmed by the flows of visual messages, still manage to narrate-interpret the orientative signs of a coherent form of city. These eyes do not seek a *representational* image of reality, but a projectual interpretation of it, which sees its possibilities beyond reality.

The glance lacking in projectuality may in a certain sense be associated with the "with the 'glance meant to feel safe', which lacks abandon dreaming of afar and can reach the point of feeling a sort of pleasure in the humiliation of it." Benjamin recalls Baudelaire's observations on this subject (Benjamin 1955), who, in *Salon de 1859*, studying landscape paintings, concludes with this seemingly strange confession: "I would dearly like to be taken again towards the diorama whose brutal, enormous magic is able to impose a useful illusion on me. I prefer to contemplate certain theatre scenes, where I find, expressed with the wisdom of art and concentrated in tragic representation, my dearest dreams. These things, precisely because they are false, are infinitely nearer to the truth; whereas the majority of our landscape artists lie because indeed they neglect to lie".[8] The "impossibility of not lying" in depicting reality, asserted by Baudelaire, is rigorously analysed in Florenskij's criticism of naturalism, coherently with his idea of the deep and thus inseparable co-penetration of "visual images" with "as if they were visual images" that we recalled previously, and by using Cantor's well-known demonstration of the possibility of representing a square on its side, showing how the representation is unable to transmit the form of what is represented, of an object with an internally defined structure: "the content of the space is transmitted, but not its organisation" (Florenskij 1990, p. 120).

We have thus seen how the strategy of the glance may affect the capacity for designing the city, and how contemporary man who "sees without hearing", in some way retreats to a *representational* conception of reality, a replica of an ontologically given world that keeps him away from a *constructive* position in designing a new world.

This concept represents the end of the photograph as a document of truth and the official baptism of new creative vitality. With his gesture on the picture of the harbour of Salerno, Gursky brought to an end a cycle that lasted over a century and a half from Fox Talbot to Eggleston (Detheridge 2002). From then onwards the city could no longer be narrated with the alleged objectivity of the documentarist, but only following routes declared interpretative, and, therefore, projectual (Detheridge 2002).

To free oneself from the burden of veracity entails, however, the risk that the landscape, from *way of seeing*, be transformed into a dream. It is indeed a case for repeating what Calderón de la Barca, 400 years earlier, had Segismund say, in his confusion between reality and dream: "What is life? 'Tis but a madness. What is life? A thing that seems, A mirage that falsely gleams, Phantom joy, delusive rest, Since is life a dream at best, And even dreams themselves are dreams" (Calderón de la Barca 1873, p. 80).

As in a play of mirrors, and as Francesco Jodice stated in his work *What we want,* perhaps a landscape is nothing more than the projection of people's desires.

Notes

1. R. Milani, *Il paesaggio, l'arte, l'estetica*. Film e Letterature n. 4, http:www.almapress.unibo.it/fl/numeri/numero4/monogr/paesaggio.arte.htm
2. *Ibidem.*
3. *Ibidem.*
4. Basilico (1983, p. 27). "I have always thought that my 'portraits of factories' were born of the need to find a balance between a social mandate – that no-one had given me, but which was the consequence of the admiration I felt for the work of the great photographers of the past – and the desire to experiment with a new language, in great freedom and without ideological conditioning". Thus the author motivates his publication, aiming at freeing it from the idea of catalogue, and offers, in the form of a book, a reflection on his own way of looking at the periphery of the city.
5. John Constable (1776–1837) and Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851).
6. All the Italian photographers that deal with the landscape, including Basilico, use the optical bank, a medium that enables technically perfect views and prolonged opening of the diaphragm. From Olivo Barbieri to Armin Linke and Francesco Jodice, abandoning any claim to neutrality, the optical bank is used in an utterly experimental way. Above all in the case of night photography, leaving the diaphragm open for a prolonged period, the Italians are open to surprise effects, retrieving a sense of marvel that belonged to the first pioneers of nineteenth century photography which others have lost (Detheridge 2002).
7. *Linea di Confine, Via Emilia, luoghi e non luoghi 2*, 2000 (Detheridge 2002).
8. Baudelaire (1992, p. 265).

What We Want or the *Kitsch* City and the City of Conformism

This meaning of landscape as "projection of desires" reflects on our perceptive worlds and our behaviours (Vos and Meekes 1999). If post-modern landscapes are explored, like in previous epochs, in ours, too, there is no single direction in landscape development. A feature of our times is, however, the rapid change in production and information technology, as well as in the demands of society, which completely change the economic base of the types of landscape. All things seem possible: people go *shopping* in the landscape. The "unity of the world" has finally come to an end. In our post-modern universes man is at a distance from the landscape and with his multiple requirements designs a complete mosaic of it of different types (Vos and Meekes 1999), characterised by different intensities and styles of control. Thus we find landscapes of industrial production to which the *landscape as industry* corresponds as the desired product; the *landscape as supermarket*, from which the market requests food production, industrial use, recreation, residence, etc.; the *landscape as historic museum;* the *landscape as ruin* in marginalised situations; the *landscape as desert* of natural landscapes and wrecks (Vos and Meekes 1999). This desire for different landscapes is only an apparent struggle against the growing uniformity of landscapes, it is really a "fraud" (Clément 2002). All these different representations and images, that our society creates for itself of landscapes as "desired products" cannot, however, be separated from reality because if we lose their identities in images, we also lose them in reality. Thus we cannot entrust our life to images because this would mean really losing it.

The landscape as a desired product, as distance from reality, is what Milan Kundera associates with *kitsch,* an aesthetic category that well represents the contemporary city, even though the variety of uses made of it has by now blurred its outlines.[1] The German term *kitsch* has obtained a certain notoriety only recently and thanks to the novels of Kundera. Translated up to a short time ago with the "art of showiness" or "showy art", the term was completely deprived of its philosophical and existential meaningfulness to be reduced to a category of objects (Le Grand 1996, p. 13).

Kitsch is defined by Broch as the result of a process of imitation within the artistic system of values, like absolute, radical evil in art: "kitsch is certainly not inferior art, it forms its own system enclosed within itself, which is inserted like a foreign body in the global system of art, or, if you prefer, is juxtaposed to it" (Broch 1990, p. 195). Although it is not always simple to discriminate kitsch from art, there is a particular detail that distinguishes them clearly: while ethical systems, indeed including art, are open on the one hand, on the other imitative systems, including kitsch, are closed systems, they lack the vision of the ultimate value placed in the infinite. The ethical imperative, which aims at the absolute, is substituted by an injunction of an aesthetic nature. "Briefly: the 'aesthetic imperative' is no longer oriented towards value as an aim, towards the ethical, infinite *télos* of the system, but forms itself on realisations already effected by the system, on forms already existing" (Broch 1990, p. 150).

If extended to the city, these thoughts enable us to understand how the simulacrum city, the imitation city – which is a copy of the copy of cities that never existed and were never inhabited – are situations without an ethical *télos*, closed systems that confirm the "already become", artificially projecting it onto a background of desires.

It could be stated that if Broch defines art a conservative system in the sense that it always tends to depart from aesthetic results already produced and base itself on these, this is completely legitimate, in that, although departing from a reflection on its past, art tends, however, to go beyond it in its further aesthetic materialisation; thus the city, even if based on the accumulation of outcomes of the past, still tend to move towards the future. In kitsch, as in the *simulacrum city*, in the city as theme-park, we might say the *kitsch city*, the ethical imperative to do a good job is replaced by the injunction to do a good job, to act for the effect, rather for the good effect, to therefore degrade beauty in itself, the objective of the infinite, inexhaustible value of art and of the city, to a realisable condition. The *kitsch city*, which operates by following the dictates of the good effect, brings what has already been up to date, borrows its own content and techniques from past works, seeking guaranteed, tested methods of production of the "beautiful". Basically, if each system of values, including that of art, uses certain "words of reality" in order to construct its image of the world, combining them according to the laws and syntax of the system, it might be said that the *kitsch city* does not take its words of reality directly from the world, but uses prefabricated words which it transforms into *clichés*.

That kitsch found particularly fertile ground, according to Broch, in the historic novel of Romanticism is a confirmation of its reactionary character. The conservative spirit that nurtures the Romantic historic novel

looks to the past and its values, says Broch, because it sees historic continuity as an image of the eternal; kitsch degrades this spirit, subjecting it to personal aims, "when, as happens in periods when revolutions explode, it is used as a flight from the irrational, a flight into the idyllic world of the past where consolidated conventions still stood" (Broch 1990, p. 158). Kitsch becomes the most direct way to placate nostalgia for a safer world in the face of the anguish caused by the threat to traditional values. This example also reveals another fundamental characteristic of kitsch, namely its feeding on the personal need for affective appeasement, so much so, writes Broch, that "personal satisfaction with our affections constitutes the most abundant source of kitsch" (Broch 1990, p. 158). If the kitsch city is a lie, this lie falls back on those who need it, namely on those who use this mirror destined to make things beautiful and false to recognise themselves in the counterfeit image reflected back to them (Broch 1990, pp. 179–180).

At the same time there is, however, the unawareness of a contemporary society that, seeking desired landscapes, inflicts responsibility on itself that is greater than its own strength. Life inspired by kitsch will therefore be founded on "neurotic" conventions, to use a term of Broch's, that will not succeed in accounting for the complexity either of the real or of human existence, in the attempt to raise the worldly and the finite to an absolute, eternal dimension. The work of art that the kitsch spirit will produce will therefore, as Broch says, be the neurotic work of art, "a work that imposes on reality a completely unreal convention imprisoning it in a false plan" (Broch 1990, p. 198). If we extend the same synthesis and the same spirit to the project for the city, we can understand the project for the city better. Whereas in ethical systems, which are necessarily open systems, like the real city, the project has to formulate norms that conform, in proportion with the reality of the world and man, in imitative, therefore closed, systems like the simulacrum city or the city as a theme-park; formulation proceeds through precepts founded on mere conventions, degrading the ethical principles to rules of a game. A game, with its schematic quality, cannot, however, claim to be a universal image of reality, if not at the cost of a strong reduction in the complexity of the real.[2]

The kitsch city thus obeys "the fundamental imperative of kitsch, i.e. to reduce the polyphony of life to a single facet and each complex phenomenon to the single effect of it" (Le Grand 1996, p. 16). The images of the world founded on such norms will not be built with words of reality, but on conventions, representing an urban life structured on universal hypocrisy gone astray in a tangle of sentiments and conventions (Broch 1990, p. 198). But what Broch finds even more worrying is to note that the course of kitsch is not at all in a descending phase and that its capacity for

seduction is not an exceptional case: "to conclude that the world is making its way towards more and more acute universal neurosis does not seem at all unjustified" (Broch 1990, p. 198).

The modern city has opposed strenuous resistance against the wave of kitsch, though in the end it, too, has been overwhelmed by the dictates of the beautiful and the leisure industry. For Kundera, like Broch, kitsch, by refusing to know the real, realises a mystification of it in the direction of the "beautiful", which flows out, for both, in the affective satisfaction of the subject. If the concept is extended to the city, the compensatory desire for an impossible city emerges. Since it is beyond human possibility to remove imperfection and worldly separateness from existence, like in the simil-cities of theme-parks (Sorkin 1992), the solution prepared will be profoundly human and will consist of finding "powerful mechanisms of denial of reality" (Espejo 1984, p. 15).

This representation will be based on conventions, as Broch would say, which spoil its adequacy; it will be an image with theoretical claims of infiniteness and practical effects of reducing the complexity of the real. As Broch had explained, a similar conception of the world, which in art gives origin to kitsch, was born from the continuous effort to raise the banality of daily life to celestial heights. Kundera recuperates this idea and, above all, accepts Broch's invitation to consider *kitsch* a form of behaviour in life before being artistic degeneration. He does not worry so much about defining the statute of kitsch within art – he is perhaps less worried than Broch – as to exploring what kitsch means and what role it fills in existence. With regard to Broch, Kundera does not refer at all to art as a privileged field of expression of kitsch and, interpreting the latter as a possibility of existence in general, goes as far as to define it as the image of the world that adhesion to the principle of reality aims at realising: "the aesthetic ideal of the categorical agreement with being is a world in which shit is denied and everyone acts as though it did not exist. This aesthetic ideal is called *kitsch*" (Kundera 1984, p. 242). This is the aesthetic ideal of the simil-city, of the segregated city of the urban elites, the simulacrum city, a conception of the world which is born indeed from the continuous effort to raise the banality of daily life to celestial heights, and which masks unawareness of the distance that cannot be filled.

This irremediable distance reflects the powerlessness underlying the contemplative glance over the city. If the landscape is no longer an entity that presses for the project, if it no longer stimulates a critical glance intent on action, how can we rediscover the road to the project? The concept of *anti-landscape* comes to our aid, as an entity that opens up possibilities for the project, for the quest for different spaces. Ingmar Bergman's film *Persona* enables us to study this concept further. If it is true, as Jean

Mottet maintains, that each anti-landscape is at the same time a search for a *different* spatial reality (Mottet 1999, pp. 209–222), the landscape at work in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966) carries out this function in an exemplary manner. First of all, the film's investment in the landscape proceeds in the direction of nullifying the communicative virtuality connected with natural facts; the same place – the Nordic island where the two protagonists, Elisabeth, the actress, and Alma, the nurse responsible for assisting her, find themselves confined – rather than offering the recognisability and stability of the natural elements necessary for the *formation* of the "landscape as substance" (Cauquelin 2000), as an autonomous, well-delineated picture, in actual fact reveals enigmatic backgrounds, fleeting figures, glimpses, thwarted, fragmented images.[3] A landscape that nurtures within itself the seeds of its own denial: this is the characteristic code of an eminently twentieth century perceptive mode, modernist and conditioned by a "vibrant instability of the landscape image" (Vitta 2005). Adjacent to Alma's departure, the frame closes in on the basic elements of the coastal landscape, such as a rocky shore. The landscape goes back to representing a material base. But the empty, bare landscape, the embodiment of the anti-landscape, offers its real consistency as a warning, a discordant space, a constant tension towards a different, communicative landscape.[4]

The landscape as *active base* differs both from the Romantic representation and from the objectified scientific representation. Antonioni's films can explain perfectly the concept of landscape as an active base. In the films of this great Italian film producer the landscape is a sort of objective projection of the subjectivity of the characters (Tinazzi 1999, pp. 19–26), landscape as "transparency of sentiments" and landscape as "subjective projection". Thus, turning this reasoning upside down, we have the landscape as *protagonist,* which "determines" the states of mind of the characters, continually influenced by the "base", by the frame in which they move and through which they "run". The protagonist "slides into the background, ends up out of sight or even out of the film; other times we find him motionless, observing, or letting himself be looked at by invisible observers. Relations become fluid, the observer becomes landscape and vice-versa" (Bernardi 2002). It is thus this character/landscape, man/environment relationship, that is found at the base and centre of Antonioni's films. Landscape means relationship between character and space, between man and world, and simultaneously between different levels of glance.[5] A relationship based on the perfect balance between the so-called "glance inward" and the "glance outward" with which the film producer follows – "obsessively persecutes" – his characters on their paths, their journeys, their *adventures.*

In *L'avventura* (*The adventure*) – the first of four feature films that form the so-called "tetralogy of sentiments and uncommunicability" – the "disease of the sentiments" of the characters is filtered, especially in the first part of the film, through mystery, the unknown, represented by the rather ambiguous, uncertain concept of "nature" (Bernardi 2002). The *adventure* by boat is a journey to the edge of a world unknown by the unaware protagonists, who make their way towards an *enigma* – the disappearance of Anna, but also the *mystery* itself of nature – for them indecipherable. The eternal beauty of the sea frightens them: it is inconceivable for their minds, for they cannot control it or subject it.

"The more the characters try to find Anna, the more they find themselves faced with the force of nature, in its overpowering vehemence" (Bernardi 2002, p. 164).

The landscape covers a fundamental role also in *Il deserto rosso* (*The red desert*). Antonioni chose in this feature film, the last of the "tetralogy", to go back to directing outside large inhabited towns, in particular the industrial outskirts of Ravenna, where "modifications and overlapping of 'industry' over its ancient base and over nature were more rapid than elsewhere" (Ferrero 1964, p. 348).

The world portrayed by the film director is a broken up, dirty, dying one, in which Giuliana's twisted, haunted glance – and Antonioni's too – is irremediably lost. Right from the first sequence, alternating between long shots and close-ups, the film director shows a degraded periphery, where factories with their modern, falling-down structures force themselves on nature, which has disappeared, has been emptied out, disguised by the new industrial landscape, and on man, lost in an unnatural, disheartening world "where he wanders terrified, amid the unknown powers of the industrial-scientific world".[6] Man feels suffocated by this modern industrial plant, he is intoxicated by it and his neuroses are the dramatic result. Thus the *landscape* plays a fundamental role as *subject*, "almost protagonist", a sort of "superior character" that influences man, his habits, his emotions, his sentiments, his "non-communicability", transforming him into a "non-man", a sort of robot, that has finally lost all humanity and sensibility,[7] incapable of an active glance towards the future. This involution of the glance corresponds to the involution of the landscape in our contemporary post-cities, and represents a crisis of the project as the result of a passive, indeed contemplative, glance.

Brodsky, too, though with a different language, that of writing, and with different categories, speaks to us of this same crisis, which he considers, as we have seen, aesthetic first and foremost with respect to ethics, the outcome of the tendency to shun the complexity of the real, to banalise it, proposing improbable simplifications, and of the incapacity to put up any

kind of "private" defence against enslavement, i.e. as a lack of aptitude for enhancing individual experience and its richness in the face of the rising tide of homologation of hegemonic values and styles. The deepest root of this crisis, we might therefore say, lies in *conformism* and the lack of freedom and resistance deriving from it. It is an interesting "interpretative key" because it makes resistance – the gap, namely the friction between the self and the other and between the self and the world, and the critical distance that results – the indispensable constituent elements of aesthetic taste and the only dyke possible against the advance of a dissolving flood that, as it surges, erodes and crumbles everything that is solid.

Reproposing the shrewd interpretation Salvatore Settis offers of a culture historian like Aby Warburg (2002), we could say that what is being lost is what this historian recognised as

an inner, remote kernel belonging to human nature and therefore identical to what characterises the reactions to images (and to the world) of primitive man: an incandescent nucleus, which originally – in the most ancient phases of human history – made pictures one of the tools for man's orientation in the world, for his tiring quest for equilibrium by controlling the "other-than-self", and which has lasted, so to speak, phylogenetically, up to our times, though being deeply transformed (Settis 2004, pp. 97–98).

To study further the meaning and value of this crisis, analysed in an original, in-depth way by Brodsky, it is useful to refer to the short novel by Calvino *Il cavaliere inesistente* (*The inexistent knight*) and its two main characters, Gurdulù and Agilulfo.

The latter is a model knight, but inexistent, who manages to be present in the war against the infidels simply through willpower. He "inhabits" candid armour that distinguishes him from all the others, almost as if to point out his pureness and perfection, both in movement and action. Calvino describes him as follows: "... a knight with all-white armour; with just a single black line running all round the edges; otherwise it was pure white, well-kept, without a scratch, well-finished at each joint [...] his voice had a metallic sound from inside the closed helmet, as if it were not a throat but the sheet of armour itself that was vibrating with a slight resounding echo" (Calvino 2005, p. 957).

The second protagonist, Gurdulù, is presented thus by the author:

There was a pond. Ducks flying went there to settle on the surface of the water and with closed wings went lightly swimming away. The man at the pond threw himself into the water on his stomach, flailed around with discomposed gestures, making huge splashes, tried "Quack! Quack!" once more, which ended in a gurgle as he was going under, re-emerged, tried to swim, went under again. – But is that the duck-keeper? The warriors asked a plump peasant-woman who came along with a rod in her hand. – No, I look after the ducks, they're mine, he doesn't come into it, it's Gurdulù... – said the peasant-woman. And what was he doing with your ducks? – Oh, nothing, every so often he goes like that, he

sees them, gets mixed up, thinks he's ... – He thinks he's a duck, too? – He thinks he's the ducks... You know what Gurdulù's like; he's careless...(Calvino 2005, pp. 972–973).

A wise market gardener, met by Charlemagne's army a little further on, clarified for the Sire the mystery of this name.

> Depending on the village you go through, – said the wise market gardener, – and the Christian or infidel armies he tags onto, they call him Gurdurù or Gudi-Ussuf or Ben-Va-Ussuf or en-Stanbùl or Pestanzùl or Bertinzùl or Martinbon or Omobon or Omobestia or even the Beast of the Gorge or Gian Paciasso or Pier Paciugo. On some remote farm they might give him a completely different name from the rest; I've also noticed that everywhere his names change from one season to another. It's as if the names run off him without ever managing to stick to him. Anyway, as far as he's concerned, whatever they call him, it's all right. Call him and he thinks you're calling a goat; say "cheese" or "cakes" and he'll reply "Here I am" (Calvino 2005, p. 975).

Gurdulù is the *alter ego* of the inexistent knight, that is, he who exists but does not know he is there. He is a picturesque character, distinguished by his complete incapacity to understand and express his will, so much so that he often ends up believing he is what he is looking at, at that moment. He becomes part of the place in which he finds himself on each occasion and completely identifies himself with it.

He is overcome by the reality surrounding him and is incapable of grasping it, indeed because he cannot manage to distinguish himself from it, detach himself and critically assess it.

As Calvino himself says in the introduction to the collection *I nostri antenati* (Our ancestors), in which *Il Cavaliere inesistente* occupies first place, followed by *Il visconte dimezzato (The cloven viscount)* and *Il barone rampante (The baron in the trees)*, "Agilulfo took on the psychological features of a human type very widespread in all spheres of our society". He is the type of "non-existence equipped with a will and consciousness" (Calvino 1960, p. XIII). He is the symbol of a civilisation governed by formal rules which cancels out the individual in a Kafkian bureaucratic labyrinth. A civilisation suffocated by obscure mechanisms of which man does not manage to understand the meaning, being forced to live behind the screen of pre-established behaviours and norms applied mechanically.

Il Cavaliere inesistente therefore faces the problem of the total loss of self, of the "artificial man who, being totally at one with products and situations, is inexistent as *he no longer causes friction with anything*, no longer has relations (struggle and through the struggle harmony) with what (nature or history) is around him, but only 'functions' in an abstract way" (Calvino 1960, p. XII, our italics).

Gurdulù and Agilulfo thus embody, in opposing but in the end, converging, ways the lack of resistance and friction with regard to the natural environment, on the one hand, and the obscure mechanisms that increasingly govern our world, on the other. They are the unaware protagonists of letting oneself go and letting oneself be dragged by the current that are ever more widespread, as Calvino says, in all places in our society, and therefore the emblems, opposed but finally converging, of the spreading conformism that characterises it.

Notes

[1] See entry "kitsch" in Kundera (1988). Kitsch in Kundera's work was brilliantly researched by Anna Davini in her degree thesis, which has constituted a rich store of critical references for this chapter, enabling the implications of kitsch for the city project to be explored. Cf. Davini 2003–2004.

[2] Broch brings in the example of the player. A player will behave ethically well only if he scrupulously follows the rules of his game, but these limit his attention to the restricted ground for play. All the rest should not involve him. To be a good player, he must take no notice during the match of the man who is suffocating nearby.

[3] G. Iacoli, *Composizione di un anti-paesaggio. Persona, il montaggio, la coscienza insulare*, lo scenario negativo. Film e Letterature n. 4, http://www.almapress.unibo.it/fl/numeri/numero4/monogr/antipaesaggio.htm

[4] *Ibidem.*

[5] L. Pasquale, *Incomunicabilità e sentimenti nel, del e sul paesaggio, dal "primo Antonioni" al deserto rosso*. Film e Letterature n. 4, http:www.almapress.unibo.it/fl/numeri/numero4/monogr/incomunicabile.htm

[6] *Ibidem.*

[7] *Ibidem.*

The Loss of the Centre

This "letting oneself go" represents a loss, the loss of place. But it should also be added that what happens in "abandoning" behaviours, to the point of losing their reference point, is nothing more, probably, than the loss of the reference as such, the same loss, perhaps, that hits the city inhabitant when he tries to imagine the city.[1] We nevertheless need to recuperate the relationship with place because despatialisation of bodies cannot exist: we have to put ourselves somewhere! (Choay 1994).

In seeking the relationship with place, the contemporary city shows, however, all the diseases of false relations: aestheticisation, thematisation, segregation, discomposition, genericity are some of the diseases resulting from this behaviour. The relationship with place is faked, it is not dialogical, but analogical, in that it is characterised by an approach in which one is not separate from place and from abandonment, in the sense that one lets oneself go passively, cancelling out oneself in the place: this is the city as theme-park. As we have seen, it is also, however, simultaneously kitsch, in that it affects the unfillable distance between the desired city and the possible city, or better, the real city. The city risks becoming progressively a "city without city" (Sieverts 2002), a non-city, "a simulacrum of a city" (de Azua 2003).

This is the loss of identity that Gabriele Basilico tells of in his journey (Leonelli 2000) into the contours of the metropolis that the photographer began 20 years ago in Milan and which, during the course of important documentation campaigns and personal research, developed from Normandy to the Lebanon. But in spite of his fond subject, the modern city, Basilico's itinerary, illustrated in all its phases as if it were a great album in the Cityscapes (Basilico 1999) book, is carried out with the rhythms, meticulousness, insistence, the prerequisites of documentation even, of nineteenth century matrix.

Just as the edge of European exploration was of the nineteenth century – Beirut was, and perhaps still is, the most western of the oriental cities – similarly, the evaporation of human presence, which, if it appears in the first pages of the book, leaves its allusion to life to the idea of movement, here frozen in the parked cars. And again, like the positivist tendency towards the catalogue, the height in this case of all possibilities of survival

of man is tied to his nature of animal in its den. Four walls, a roof, and from there the skyscrapers of the Défense, the ruins of Rome, the chequered façades of Berlin, the new geometry of Bilbao, Lausanne's slip-roads, the unfinished periphery of Palermo, the port of Genoa, the Hamburg canals, the gutted blocks of Beirut. Eras of geological architecture placed one next to the other, stitched back together following a choice that scans obsessively and is only seemingly impartial and objective.

In the urban novel Cityscapes the narrating "I" of the author is very strong, classical, cumbersome, ancient in its dominant position. And though Basilico reiterates on several occasions the love that binds him, first as an architect, then as a photographer, to his cities, from this enormous, artificial metropolis life seems to have slipped away, as has identity, recognisability of place and with it the possibility to love (Leonelli 2000). It is the European city itself that has become formless, due to lack of identity (Gregotti 1999). This loss concerns those who are not separate from the place, the context, but have merged in with it.

Identity problems in the modern city are also due to the fact that spaces are configured departing from the logic of mobility, a logic that leads to the uprooting of places so as to permit universal mobility, global interchange, without restraint, of goods and information (Costa 1996).

This naturally also poses spatial, urban and architectural implications of great importance as the traditional city is assumed to be the constructed expression of stability and permanence, safety and defence. The destructive power of what is mobile contrasts with the solidity of the urban fabric. The stable, constructive, productive, hierarchising order of the city can only see itself threatened, undermined by a destructive order: this is the logic of the non-city, characterised by the uprooted, the destructive, unproductive, ephemeral and changing, ultimately what is mobile and unstable.

This logic also has in a certain sense to do with the carefree eclecticism that, according to Vittorio Gregotti, characterises accounts of contemporary architecture which, cancelling out the hierarchies of value, gives preference to language choices featuring vulgar pluralism, more aggressive in the media, but also more fleeting (Gregotti 1999). Turning his glance to the roots of European architecture, Gregotti seeks in the history of thought and practice the successive appearance of new models of inhabiting the city and territory that derive from the capacity to assimilate exogenous experiences, critically measures their differences compared with a context already full of diversities, and translates them into his own logical and spatial "syntax", drawing universal values and rules from them.

And it is indeed on this polycentric nature of "archipelago" that his inclination to critical appropriation is founded (Gregotti 1999). But the capacity for critically reinterpreting the new can only be born if the old order of discourse starts work again; if we accept to look a territory in the face that is proposing new rules rather than absence of rules.

A field of phenomena that probably reflects – mediated by a specific inheritance of persistent elements with intermingled signs of homologation – the establishment of a new dimension of social and urban life in Europe, which has nothing to do with the American or Asian antiurban ideologies, even though it reproposes some of their features. Territory that for the first time in history is conformed, even in its consolidated parts, by a multitude of individual moves, rather than by aggregated principles of rationality; that is affected by life choices that are erratic yet rooted in a precise place, where forms of socialisation are experimented that prove incomprehensible to a glance not wanting to give up rigid principles of "symmetry" and "discontinuous alignment" (Boeri 1999).

But we need to consider that apart from diffusion and individualisation of the rationalities of inhabiting, the modern world has also taken possession of a non-urban topological experience, namely the experience of places based on the trajectory, free circulation and unproductiveness – i.e. idleness, play – following a concrete model of spatial articulation, the "thematisation" of the city, realised by the theme-park figure: a model organised for a set of irregular, picturesque itineraries, which is also the model of the place of pleasure (Costa 1996). But the pleasure of the park consists of yielding, letting oneself mingle, be influenced and even intoxicated by the spatial experience. The park enables and propitiates losing oneself within it.

The park does not allow sedentary or permanent experiences, but those of transit and wavering back and forth. Distracted experience in the park is that of the wanderer, of disorientation, which corresponds to experience in a formless space. The visitor's abandonment to the place, this letting himself be led, suggests a weakening of the difference between the figure of the visitor-observer and the place being perceived, which in its turn entails a process of de-definition of the subject in relation to the place, in that the spectator tends to merge acritically into the context in which he finds himself.

This is a process that ties up with camouflage and disguise, meant as the subject's abandoning a laborious, constant task of definition/differentiation in relation to his surroundings (Caillois 1984). A specific condition of the formless emerges during this process, i.e. of that which is not distinguishable from the place it is in. In the formless outlines and limits have disappeared, the difference disappears or is disarticulated between

figure and background, subject and place, internal and external (Costa 1996).

We find this impossibility of separating subject and place, this contemplative glance that lets itself be transported, in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, the German painter "the rediscovery of whom has, in this post-war period, restored to art history one of its greatest protagonists, in fact a key figure to understand that period of change in western sensibility that Romanticism was. The Romantic label, which is often too restrictive for many, in the case of Caspar David Friedrich works very well, as if in his visionary landscapes – that are more projections of our states of mind, our expectations and anxieties, than real images of nature – are indeed concentrated all those motifs bound to what remains of our idea of Romanticism". In particular, the preparatory sketches and water colours, with which he designed and envisaged the effects of his painting, guide us through the complexity of a creative, never banal, process (Mazzocca 1998).

Friedrich "destroyed the structure of a vision of nature based on reason, to entrust it to sentiment, causing strong emotions in those observing his pictures, (...) that same sense of anguish that his figures, portrayed from behind, seem to demonstrate, facing a space that man no longer succeeds in dominating, such as his famous *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*" (Mazzocca 1998). Man is reduced to a wanderer who no longer dominates urban space, but abandons himself to it, while space is transformed into a theme-park.

Xavier Costa (1996) notes that the formation of the park coincides in time with the interest shown by modern science for the "effect of the fleeting", due to the Newtonian distinction between the two faces of nature: the *vis insita*, referring to the appearance of inert things, and the *vis centripeta*, namely the reference to intangible phenomena like gravity, magnetism, electricity, fields of force and gases (Stafford 1986).

Renato Barilli links this approach with the new frontiers opened up by electromagnetism, which are not just a scientific, technological kind of novelty, but also constitute a new aesthetic category. Electromagnetism has us understand that we are immersed, from beginning to end, in a "field" that encompasses us, involves us, makes the barriers between the I and the object disappear, synthesises them in an interactive relationship, a new energy outside the rigid patterns dear to the old Euclidean geometry, which reasons in terms of point, line and surface, one engendered by the other through the mechanical process of addition.

"The point does not exist, given that electrical energy always occurs with charges of a vast radius; and it certainly does not spread in straight lines, in fact its forms are also fitting for liquids or gases: waves, current

and curved, twisting lines" (Barilli 2002). It is in a certain sense the passage from the mechanical era to the electromagnetic era, a passage that – according to Barilli – is embodied in Turner's paintings.

The paintings of Friedrich or Turner suggest the culmination of this process of abandonment of stable figures or bright landscapes in favour of a new interest for the unlearnable and the widespread, ultimately for the fleeting (Costa 1996).

This immersion "in a 'field' that encompasses us, involves us, makes the barriers between the I and the object disappear", is a constituent feature of the theme-park that enables the "taming of the distant" (Rykwert 1980), i.e. assimilation of the foreigner, of those different from the self. From this angle it is not favourable for the project, for it is indeed recognition of the other that is a constituent element of the project. The incapacity to recognise the other produces an incapacity for planning the future. An exemplary demonstration of this is a book by Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child* (Lessing 1988), in which a serene family falls into a state of total demotivation, incapable of looking towards the future at the moment when the fifth child arrives with a strange disease, a different, "other" child, that the family does not acknowledge, a situation that makes them incapable of planning their future (La Cecla 1991).

This difference between the I and the other is explored by Giuliano Compagno[2] as the relationship between spectator and show or between an actor and an "other" world when we look at a natural landscape via the television screen. It is a case of a problem that affects the relationship between aesthetics, ecology and mass-media.

In order to define well-known virtual reality – Compagno notes – it would be better to avoid terms like fake or simulation. After all it is not a cartoon. Its specificity concerns the manipulation of the sensory data it realises. For, at the moment of fruition, the subject believes he is in a real environment. At that given moment he lives there, and no longer here. When he takes off his helmet and turns away from the screen, he returns to his particular contingent state. And yet, in perspective, technological progress promises something more: namely that in the near future virtual environments might extend even further into space, and thus modify images in real time[3].

The result – according to Compagno – will be that abolition envisaged by Jean-Michel Frodon, of a fundamental device: that of the break between show and spectator, and with it the play of recognitions, identifications and insights that accompany it. They also modify the relationship between the creative subject and his actual creation. In the end the virtual image brings the idea of otherness back into the debate. The relationship that is at the base of humanism and democracy, and ultimately, the project. We need, however, to ask ourselves if the distance between reality and virtuality is really measurable, or if we are immersed in a complexity that ontologically

surpasses our actual consciousness. When we annexe ourselves virtually to a landscape, the image annihilates the vision of the whole, of which we simultaneously represent the homogeneous and heterogeneous elements: the *same* and the *other*. In short, recognising ourselves as foreign amounts to *rediscovering* ourselves *personally*. It amounts to belonging to the same world in which there is no longer a subject and an object, where, to aspire to living in a new, more highly evolved society, a new relationship needs to be developed between human beings and the environment, and the latter needs to be transformed from object to subject, not because we let it do so but because we have learnt to listen to it speak. This means that the landscape builds us, it listens to us and that a long mutation needs to be accomplished to be able to re-establish a sort of democratic, affective communication between human beings and things. To design nowadays is to go beyond the window, project oneself into the environment, listen to it and speak to it, and construct through it a different dimension of public space, more involving, without useless reference models, also because "all evocation of models will lead us immediately to the point of departure, i.e. the landscape-object" (Abalos 2004, p. 147).

Recognition of the other happens at an exact spot, in what we have defined as an *intermediate space,* or *inter-realm,* which is the term adopted by Michel Corajoud to indicate the thickness of the world where the separate elements intersect and coexist (Corajoud 1982). Fixed elements do not exist in nature. Things give rise to an emanation that always surpasses their contingent limits. And it is indeed in this emanation that we are able to discern reality from virtuality. "The current difficulty in understanding the concept of landscape is related to a progressive, illusory liberation from territorial contingencies. The land is no longer the only foundation of our needs. Having entered the theatre of signs and images, we no longer know how to grasp the consistency of the world" (Corajoud 1982), we no longer know how to represent it, this is the loss of the landscape as a conceptual unit, a liquidatory operation of the landscape which, as an entity without identity, is no longer representable. This difficulty of representation extends to the city and endangers the fertile relations being established between city and landscape on the horizon of the project. Projectuality that is indifferent to contexts and places indeed has the danger of "reflective sliding" (Gregotti 1993), that does not recognise the "other", that does not start off a critical dialogue with it, but simply reflects its contradictions without facing them through the project, in a certain sense laconically accepting the world just as it is. This tallies with Gregotti's reflections – previously recalled – on "carefree eclecticism" and the "vulgar pluralism" of a large part of contemporary architecture.

Following post-modernism and deconstructivism, in effect, a projectuality indifferent to contexts and places has been asserted, which Hans Ibelings connects with "super-modernism" (Ibelings 1998). Here "super-modernism" seems to represent a new way of conceiving and carrying out architecture: a way that is largely indifferent to those concepts of place, context and identity recalled by post-modernism in its request for a return to the past. Compared with the post-modern cult of ornament and memory, super-modernism is recognised by sensibility to the taste of the neutral, the indefinite, the implicit and for the tendency towards an idea of space as a controlled void. The architectures proposed by Ibelings are satisfied with the abstract minimalism of simple buildings like orthogonal boxes, they prefer neutral, translucent surfaces that evoke a sensation of evanescent superficiality, are characterised more by the absence than presence of implicit meanings or explicit signs of recognition and define spaces within them that are simultaneously open and interrelated (Irace 1998). Fulvio Irace extracts some examples, like Peter Zumthor's Kunsthalle in Bregenz, Austria, which overlooks Lake Constance with "the hermetic peremptoriness of a shining lamp. Reduced to the basic essentials, this translucent cube to house the Mecca of contemporary art is exactly what it seems: a corpus of raw cement inside, protected externally by a fragile armour of glassy scales" (Irace 1998). But also like the Toyo Ito multi-media library at Sendai in Japan, an audiovisual complex with a library and art gallery imagined as "a machine with vertical and horizontal interconnections to simulate the metaphor of an electronic body inside the physical body of a structure of fluctuating planes" (Irace 1998). "The notions of unicity, authenticity and specificity no longer make sense in this kind of architecture, according to Ibelings, for it is laconic, realistic and attracted by the universal a reflection of that globalization which, good or bad, is the keystone of the economy and culture of the international society at the end of the millennium" (Ibelings 1998). Founded on the exuberant strength of the new media, contemporary globalisation resembles the technical realisation of McLuhan's "global village": cancelling out distances, it alters the perception of reality making its borders with the "virtual" become faint.

In the cyberspace era – maintains Fulvio Irace – the traditional notions of belonging weaken in relation to the emergence of new typologies: if the "non-places" of mobility and consumerism already have their evanescent monuments in the architectures of airports and hotels, shopping malls and supermarkets, media libraries, etc., "their more consistent effects are to be sought, however, in the enhancement of that culture of hybridisation and simulation that is, for example, at the base of the nomadism of the world architectural system, a projectual "impollination" that is not without effect

on the final image of the product and on the conditions of its reception outside the designer's context of belonging" (Irace 1998). The concept of authenticity is questioned, but also that of unicity, as if the adoption of a tone that is colder and less idiosyncratically marked might favour acceptance in such different cultural and social universes. Is there a danger of this determining flat homogenisation? That the logic of the product prevail over the assertion of differences? That the opening up of communication imprison the world in an impalpable but conditioning mental cage? And should architecture limit itself to reflecting the contradictions of this process or resist it with a stubborn defence of detail? To say that architects nowadays express a refusal of the symbol and metaphors certainly does not mean that their architecture is not seeking some significance: but "it is as if their sensibility had shifted towards what Ibelings calls a 'phenomenological approach to reality', which does not only mean laconically accepting the world just as it is, but an attempt to represent changes in it, adopting as a base those 'non values' external to the traditional culture of the historic city" (Irace 1998).

The task is, however, quite arduous for this cannot happen through banal simulation of formal continuity with urban phenomena. As Andrea Branzi observes, "the development of digital architecture over the last twenty years has concentrated on the possibility of representing highly complex forms that have favoured this strange baroque season, generated by a recurring mistake in the affairs of the modern project" (Branzi 2007, p. 42). This mistake consists of the naive certainty that a formal, immediate resemblance must exist between the physiognomical or technological features of an epoch and form of architecture itself. Electronics, in the current culture of the project, is not therefore interpreted as technology bringing a new general epistemology, but only as the producer of graphic services, which enable complex organisms to be represented which the old techniques of representation did not permit. "In other words contemporary architecture has remained anchored to self-representation as pure constructive poetry, which therefore excludes variants or creative interpretations, continues to self-interpret (and self-represent) as a formal code, as a constructive system able to give visibility to itself" (Branzi 2007, p. 44). It is a case of an attitude that excludes architecture from the general transformations happening within the city, which is no longer a visible landscape but has become an experiential territory where "the identity of place is not constituted by the buildings but by the cognitive experiences that those places make possible: by the information, products, services, the people that can be met there" (Branzi 2007, p. 44), which make the city a semiosphere. Because of this self-referential attitude – Branzi maintains

architecture begins today to pay for its past delay compared with all the cultures of the twentieth century, such as, for example, painting, music and literature, which courageously faced their epistemological crises, going beyond the traditional borders of their own disciplines, facing abstraction as the first, most evident signal of the fall of the old codes of the figurative function, to regenerate themselves through an interiorising process of their codes (Branzi 2007).

Modern architecture has not faced this epochal passage and has continued to represent itself, while the internal spaces of the city no longer have a definite function, but their use can be changed by simply substituting a piece of computer software (Branzi 2007). The therapeutic illusion of space is present in the ambition of architecture to represent the city, claiming an institutional role, no longer at the height of its possibilities, because an architectural catechism of the city does not exist.

The reason for this delay derives – according to Branzi – from the fact that in modern architecture research or experiments are no longer done on the city, which means that clients actually condition the growth of this discipline, which no longer attempts radical innovations, but only the brief margins of updating that the market permits. "This purely operative mentality eludes what Le Corbusier was permitted a few decades ago, namely to reflect on the deep mutations of the city, on the possibility of using the new technologies to imagine a new habitat, to design languages close to avant garde research: many of these experiments were not followed up in the builder's yard, but influenced the development of the entire culture of the project. Which demonstrates that in architecture ideas often count more than buildings" (Branzi 2007, p. 45). For this reason forms of disciplinary discomfort emerge when we try to think of the city. Like neonaturalist approaches that simulate formal continuity with phenomena in the naive certainty that a formal, immediate resemblance must exist between the physiognomical features of an epoch and the form itself of the city. "So to the civilisation of the machine an architecture similar to an engine should correspond; in the epoch of speed, an aerodynamic architecture; to the media civilisation an architecture similar to a fractal of detritus" (Branzi 2007, p. 44).

This is a form of "reflective sliding", an "acknowledgement" of the complexity perceived, so that the production of architecture and urban space is reduced to a spatial replica of daily behaviours, in which the behaviours themselves, the apparent manifestations of the social, become the primary content of architecture, often "at a level of evidence that transforms them into publicity signs of themselves" (Gregotti 1993). It is an attitude deprived of critical reflection that corresponds to the incapacity to be critically distinct from the context because of the tendency to blend in with it, be abandoned to it; an attitude that denies true adhesion to a

context, in that *true* adhesion cannot but be critical adhesion, and only in this sense may be projectual adhesion.

This problem of projectual adhesion, a central one, and of the critical distance that it presupposes, highlights the fact that when we speak of "projectual deficit", the defect found is not in adhesion to context, but rather in feeling oneself released from any residue with respect to it, in showing indifference and passivity with respect to the "grip" it exerts. To fully understand the sense of this deficit it is worth returning to the question of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, seen this time from the viewpoint of the penetrating analysis proposed by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus.* Proposition 6.421 of the latter thus states: "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. *Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same*" (Wittgenstein 2001, p. 86, our italics). To understand the sense and reasons for this identification of ethics and aesthetics, we need to go back to four preceding proposals of the *Tractatus*, namely:

2.151 "Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture" (Wittgenstein 2001, p. 10).

They tell us, firstly, how it is possible and what it means, *to portray:*

2.202 "A picture represents a possible situation in logical space".

2.203 "A picture contains the possibility of the situation that it represents".

2.172 "A picture cannot, however, depict its pictorial form: it displays it" (Wittgenstein 2001, p. 11).

They tell us, first of all, how it is possible and what it means, *to portray,* i.e. create ourselves any kind of picture: at the base of this possibility there is a logical relationship, namely structural isomorphism, which is the key to understanding how the picture does what it does. The pictures Wittgenstein speaks of are not pictorial as much as founded on what mathematicians mean when they speak of representation or isomorphic map. The notion of picture (*Bild*) namely has in the *Tractatus* the sense of "logical construct" or "model", and not that of pictorial reproduction of sensitive experience (*Vorstellung*). Thus, since it does not passively reflect the situation it describes but establishes with it a tie that is mediated by a function 'f' of any kind, specified beforehand, the "model" defined indeed as the ordered pair "D,f", where 'D' is the domain not empty of the things to be represented and 'f' the function of correspondence which connects each of these latter to an element of the said model, it does not have a univocal relationship with the reality to which it refers. On the contrary, the possibility exists of different models of the same fact, but "they are all constructed to a common logical pattern" (4.014) (Wittgenstein 2001,

p. 24). So pictures are not what they are because of similarity, analogy or any other vague notion of the kind, but because of logical structure. It follows that what Wittgenstein has in mind when he speaks of projection, translation, image, has to do more with a logical, non-pictorial symbolism than with authentic figures. And indeed because the picture is understood in this sense we have to appeal, to be able to produce and dominate it, not to the eye and the brain, but to the mind and thoughts.

Thanks to this character it has of close relations with logical symbolism, the picture can represent anything, real contexts or situations just like those purely possible, with a single important exception, namely "its own representational form". The latter, in effect, as Proposition 2.172 clarifies, cannot in its turn become "subject of portrayal" by the picture involved, which can only "display", i.e. show, it. "The picture" Wittgenstein specifies further in Proposition 2.174 "cannot place itself outside its own representational form": this is, therefore, "transcendental", in the sense that it cannot be visible in itself, since it is the condition itself of visibility; it cannot therefore be translated and projected, since it is itself the beginning of any portrayal. Logical form cannot, consequently, be said, since saying itself is obviously translating and projecting: it "shows itself" in the "fact" and in this sense is transcendental.

From these premises put so clearly, Wittgenstein coherently obtains a conclusion that is just as clear: "Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror image of the world. Logic is transcendental" (6.13) (Wittgenstein 2001). Each image is also logical, he says. But the logical picture is not another picture or category of pictures next to the common ones. It rather nominates a logical nucleus of each sensitive replica, each modality of representation.

Sini notes

To achieve the logical image therefore amounts to "amending the intellect", to "purifying" language from error, consisting of adopting the mere sensitive-incidental content as logical significance [...]. In this sense logic is more profoundly an ethical entity. Translation, projection, "showing itself" mirroring in logical use (in the use endowed with sense). We cannot "say", however, what they are. We can only show them as they are. Namely show them doing (Sini 1989, p. 248).

"Ethics" used this way refers therefore to something that is transcendental in the sense that it cannot be said or explained, but rather shown, in conformity with the shrewd explanation provided by another philosopher, Sören Kierkegaard, who specifies in his work, *The dialectics of ethical communication and religious ethics,* dated by the Danish editors as of 1847 "communication in the ethical field can only occur in reality, so that the communicator or master exists in what he teaches and in the situation of reality, and also in the situation of reality he is what he

teaches". And he adds, giving an example: "When someone gives lessons on ataraxia from the height of his lecturer's chair, then this is ethically not true. No, the situation has to be such that at the same time he shows ataraxia; like, for example, when someone, surrounded by a crowd of men insulting him, teaches *ataraxia* (the situation of reality is part of the teaching)" (Kierkegaard 1979, p. 60).

Understood in this sense ethics is thus closely connected with the Danish term *können* as a substantive infinitive, which means real possibility and, in particular, "possibility to do".

It therefore indicates the active capacity that becomes extrinsic in the will to do and in practice, and which demands education, exercise, instruction, that is, a set of skills that should be shown as "how", i.e. not talked about, but shown as they are done, by concrete engagement.

The expression and final outlet of profoundly assimilated and rooted behaviours, ethics, understood in this sense proposes itself, therefore, as the reduplication not of thoughts and concepts, but of existence, namely of competencies and capacities that can be learnt only if there is also a will to practise them directly.

Contrary to what might be thought at first sight, and remaining anchored to a superficial vision, however, this reduplication of the existing, of clothes and behaviours acquired through a long apprenticeship and therefore with deep roots, to the point of becoming almost automatic and mechanical, does not entail simple perpetuation of what exists, adhesion to it "as it is". Instead it flows beyond reality in its effectuality and in singling out concrete alternatives to the latter. This surpassing is actually already inherent in the sense in which the logical image can portray the world.

As Statement 2.201 clarifies: "A picture depicts reality by representing a possibility of existence and non-existence of states of affairs"; it therefore refers not to the *here* and *now*, to the actual situation I have at this moment before my eyes, but to the *potential* of the situation, i.e. to the same actual state seen and imagined in the light of its possible alternatives, namely filtered through the capacity of "seeing and imagining it *otherwise*".

To emphasise and study further the sense of this adhesion to the context in the entire range of the possibilities it can present, and not simply in its effectuality, and to underline the fact that this fundamental difference constitutes one of the leading themes of Wittgenstein's entire work and permeates all the phases, we can refer to a book by Hanson of 1958, entitled *Patterns of Discovery. An Inquiry into the Conceptual Foundations of Science,* in which the author, taking up some outstanding ideas contained in the second part of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, submits Berkeley's conception of vision to harsh criticism.

Departing from an analysis of the ambiguous figures which, as is known, though remaining unchanged in themselves, permit different readings, Hanson asks himself what changes in passing from one interpretation to another. His reply is that it is the *organisation* of the figure that changes, namely the set of relations that link the elements into which is divided, and the parts of which it is composed.

It is this mutation that leads us to see the figure differently, even if it has not actually changed at all:

Organization is not itself seen as are the lines and colours of a drawing. It is not itself a line, shape, or a colour. It is not an element in the visual field,but rather the way in which elements are appreciated. Again, the plot is not another detail in the story. Nor is the tune just one more note. Yet without plots and tunes details and notes would not hang together. Similarly the organization of (a) figure *(orig.: fig. 3)* is nothing that registers on the retina along with other details. Yet it gives the lines and shapes a pattern. Were this lacking we would be left with nothing but an unintelligible configuration of lines (Hanson 1958, p. 13).

At first sight it could be considered that this assertion is still compatible with Berkeley's conception, in the sense that organisation could be considered the result of the process of interpretation grafted onto the "original fact", constituted by what is directly recorded onto the retina.

But Hanson excludes this possibility immediately: However the object is constructed, its construction, its structure *is present in the act of seeing it.* One would be tempted to say "the structure is the vision".

The thread and its arrangement is the fabric, the sound and its composition is the music, the colour and its disposition is the painting. There are not two operations involved in my seeing fig. 1 as an ice cube; I simply see it as an ice-cube. Analogously, the physicist sees an X-ray tube, not by first soaking up reflected light and then clamping on interpretations, but just as you see this page before you (Hanson 1958, p. 23).

The hint to the process that leads a physicist to "see" an X-ray tube refers to an example previously given by the author: that of a competent physicist, indeed, and an Eskimo child put into a physics laboratory and faced with an X-ray tube.

Can we say that they see the same thing? "Yes and no", Hanson replies.

The answer is yes because they would both be visually aware of the same object, but no because they each have a very different way of being visually aware of it. Hanson refers again to the physicist:

Returning now, after years of research in university and research, his eye lights upon the same object again. Does he see the same thing now as he did then? Now he sees the instrument in terms of electrical circuit theory, thermodynamic theory, the theories of metal and glass structure, thermionic emission, optical transmission, refraction, diffraction, atomic theory, quantum theory and special relativity. Though the layman sees exactly what the physicist sees, he cannot interpret it in the same way because he has not learned so much (Hanson 1958, p. 16).

The seeing Hanson speaks of is thus the result of placing the object being observed within a *context,* which determines the *way of reading.* The subject with his accumulated knowledge at his disposal enters this context to become a determinant part of it, together with the "background" within which the said object is collocated. It is obviously not necessary that this context be indicated in an explicit manner, but it is its presence that determines different "readings" of the same figure or "thing". However, for Hanson, and this is the point, simply seeing something does not entail, as it does for Berkeley, the need to isolate it from the system of relations in which it is usually found, but on the contrary to respect this collocation, in that objects observable in ordinary experience, including macroscopic ones, are grasped in a much more complete and faithful manner the more numerous the relations binding them to others.

And to support this position we may refer to the embarrassment that any ambiguous figure can cause when it proves difficult for us to choose between the various possible readings of it. What is the best way, or even the only way, available to get out of this situation? That of "knowing more" about the figure in question, adding details, increasing information about it and capacity to discriminate, so as to have only one of the different alternatives emerge. In this sense we could then say that to see a single object, too, is not an immediate result that we can "grasp" without effort at the beginning of the cognitive process and without involving secondary thought processing instruments, but is instead an objective that presupposes the accumulation of all the information of which it is a source, of the entirety of its possible "views". I see the clearer, the greater the details I dispose of, and the greater the number of perspectives from which I manage to observe the object.

At worst, then, this process entails the need to not limit oneself to the specific context into which any thing fits "here and now", but to consider *all possible contexts* into which it could be placed, all possible points of view from which it could be looked at. Hanson emphasises in this connection that the vision of any image changes appreciably if, instead of being given as an isolated fragment by itself, it is fitted into its own context. This change is the result of an enrichment of the vision, due to the increase in information and the fact of having fit the said figure into an entire series of possible "views" of it.

The more details available and the more numerous the perspectives (or the past series) from which the object can be observed, the clearer the vision. Perceptive vision taken into consideration by him is, therefore, *at worst*, to *observe any object in all its possible aspects*, from all possible points of view. This also holds good for situations we find ourselves immersed in. To begin to see the same environment, context, actual state

from new, different points of view is the first, very important step in the direction of the capacity of innovation and creativity. And it also holds good for the relationship between individual subjects and the collective subjects (community, organisations or other) to which they belong. In this case creativity is manifest, first of all, as the capacity not only to "read" and understand the contexts into which we fit and in which we work, but also to analyse them critically and perceive them as "places" of processes, stratified, subjected to different rhythms of change due both to the spontaneous dynamics of practices and internal relations, and to the need for change that springs from the relationship with the external environment. At the base of the concept we are exploring there is the inclination not only to place oneself in a non-problematic way within a determined organisation or community, but also to critically focus one's experience within its sphere, to evaluate the problems springing from it and single out the means and instruments necessary to face and solve them.

This is the sense in which we should understand, concretely, the reference to an adhesion critically tempered by what we have called the "gap", friction and resistance, concrete expressions of the capacity to have sense of reality and sense of possibility converge. Innovation and the capacity to see the possible beyond the immediate and the actual can therefore spring (and in fact usually do) also from the plan of habit and familiarity. There is no contrast basically between what, at first sight, appear as two extremes of an irreconcilable tension, namely adhesion, if exerted critically, and innovation, in that, to quote Hegel, with a crisp expression: "What we are 'familiar with' is not intelligently known, just for the reason that it is 'familiar'" (Hegel 2004, p. 29), and we need *to be able to see* to know it. To immerse onself in a context and feel it as something familiar is not enough to know it. To transform it from *known* into *well-known*, this immersion must be accompanied and mitigated by critical distance, by a glance.

The task of philosophy, as the development of the aptitude to exercise criticism, is then that of *teaching to see* in this way, in the sense, namely, of what Hegel called the passage from the known to the well-known, which is anything but pacific and simple. The single individual, in effect, quickly takes possession "as stages of a road which has been worked over and levelled out" (Hegel 2004, p. 26) of the work of entire generations of men, for this has already been metabolised into *culture* and *language*. In this way thought has for man become more than second nature: now we think just as we digest, with the same *unconscious automatism*, with the same *instinctiveness*, so if we want to understand the meaning of the world again and assimilate it, those contents already unconsciously present need to be brought to light again, and a new light thrown on them, making them

the subject of reflection and understanding, and taking possession of them again in the form of thought no longer instinctive but conscious.

The same concept is expressed, in a terse form and with a series of particuarly plastic and efficacious images, by the best known of the Russian formalists, Viktor Sklovskij (1893–1984), who, however, attributed to art, and in particular, literature, the task Hegel assigned to philosophy. For, in his opinion, "the writer, with his plot, *washes the world.* The world does nothing more than blend in and be dusted by it. The writer, with his plot, *rubs the mirror of consciousness*" (Sklovskij 1984, p. 32, our italics).

The modalities of this operation of retrieval of the transparency and brightness of reality are the subject of decidedly the most revolutionary text Sklovskij wrote, the reference work for the whole Opojaz movement, the name referring to the *Obscestvo izucenija poeticeskogo jazyka* (Society for the study of poetic language), where the Russian theorists belonging to this group usually met. We are talking of the *Iskusstvo kak priëm* (Art as a procedure) of 1917, in which the laws of prose and poetic language were enucleated:

If we begin thinking about the general laws of perception, we see that as actions become habitual, they become mechanical. Thus, for example, all our experiences pass into the sphere of the "unconsciously automatic"; if a person remembers the sensation he felt holding a pen in his hand for the first time, or speaking a foreign language for the first time, and compares this sensation with what he feels now, repeating the action for the ten-thousandth time, he will agree with us. With the process of automisation the laws of our prose are also explained, with its incomplete phrases and half-pronounced words. It is a process whose ideal expression is through algebra, in which objects are substituted by symbols. In the rapidity of practical language words are not pronounced properly, and in the mind only the first sounds of the word appear very slightly. This property of thought has not only suggested the idea of algebra, but also the choice of symbols (letters, and to be exact initials). With this algebraic method, objects are considered in number and volume, but *are not seen:* we only know their first features.

The object passes close by us as if in a package, we know what it is because of the place it occupies, but we only see its surface. By the influx of this perception, the object becomes dry, first just as perception, but then also in terms of reproduction... And here to restore the sense of life, to "feel" objects, to make stone be stone, exists what is called *art.* The purpose of art is to transmit the impression of the object, as a "vision" and not as "recognition": the art process is the process of *estrangement (ostranenie)* of objects, and the process of dark form which increases difficulty and duration of perception, since the perceptive process in art is an end to itself and has to be extended; *art is a manner of "feeling" the object's "becoming", while the "already become" has no importance in art* (Sklovskij 1929).

These striking metaphorical short-circuits of Sklovskij's can help us to understand how we should behave in the face of the city, upon which we need to call up a renewed strategy of the glance, to avoid it withdrawing under the dazzling lights of an inappropriate glance.

There is too much light on the city: illumined by one-way reflectors, flooded by light from the pervasive, deafening flows of visual communication, the city withdraws, refusing careless observation which leaves the field to the explorers that have always been there, but that are always less powerful in the face of the accelerated time of the light that produces blindness, that prevents seeing. Perhaps what is needed is a "city in the shadow" (Maciocco 1996): shadow so deeply shrinks from the ultimate state of dilemma as it is the domain of doubt and all differences and alterity. Shadow therefore as perpetual movement, a state of feverish insomnia, innate in the project, which is not the dream Calderón de la Barca spoke of, for it does not liberate, like the dream.

It is instead the state of continuous vigil of the project, that for its cognitive nature does not allow sleep, sleep that never comes, like in Pessoa's *Livro do desassossego* (Pessoa 1982) which is an enormous act of insomnia. We might speak of "poetry of insomnia", in that it is *work in progress* without end, a project-book, like a process of continuous exploration of reality and its possible evolution, the unconscious and elusive stimulus that urges towards uninterrupted reading of Pessoa's poem,[4] as an interpretation without rest of reality, life as the impossibility of rest, where looking and listening express the strategy itself of the interpretative process that aims at grasping exactly the guiding elements of city construction that are effectively relevant for its "reproducibility". Perhaps for this – if we think of Wenders' research on Lisbon – in the final part of *Lisbon story*, the eye of Friedrich's camera and Winter's microphone go back together to look and listen incessantly, almost in a "feverish vigil", to try to "see" Lisbon, rediscovering hope in the commitment to the continuous projectuality ingrained in the human condition, which makes sure that each projectual experience, even the tiniest, is converted into a deed that makes the sense emerge of this indescribable web of relations between space and life that is the city.

The key to the secrets of the city and men is in the hands and eyes of the seers. With respect to light, shadow takes on in a certain sense a role similar to the void compared with the "too full" city. In Wenders' films the "voids" of the contemporary city have a crucial role, they enable the inhabitants to see little to be able to create an image of the city for themselves:

Berlin has many empty surfaces. Houses can be seen with completely empty walls because the house next door was not rebuilt after the bombing. The disheartening side walls of these blocks are called fire-breaks and do not exist anywhere else. They are like wounds, and I like the city for its wounds, which tell me its story much better than any book or document... When there is too much to see, when an image is too full or when there are too many images, you do not see anything any more. From too much you very quickly pass to nothing... (Wenders 1992, p. 90).

This capacity to reflect on the urban *essential,* which transpires from Wenders' words, is found emblematically in the Sardinian artist Costantino Nivola, who continued to look, on American soil, for "landscapes at the lowest level of chromatic parsimony" (Nivola 1993), taking with him a specific point of view innate from birth: the desire to listen to silence, to orient the glance to take in from the great environment-landscape spaces of the island the essence and sense of his path of research.

Thinking of Nivola, we recall his capacity to maintain a point of view innate from birth when he describes the first day of sketches in New York "starting from the ground – the first level", which makes him feel inadequate for the purpose due to the visual exaltation produced by Eighth Avenue: "Too much to see, too much to choose from" (Nivola 1993, p. 115) or when he portrays winter in the Vermont countryside, where "the snow, the trees without leaves, … reduce landscape polychromy to the lowest level of chromatic parsimony", where it is possible to draw trees "with great attention and humility" (Nivola 1993, p. 85).

The need to use all the senses to have a complete sensory experience of the city and not emphasise the visual function, but adopt a correct strategy of looking, is analysed, as we have seen, in a masterly way in the cinema by Wim Wenders. The theme is one of the leading motifs of *Lisbon Story,* in which the film director, Friedrich, one of the protagonists, desperately calls his sound technician Winter for help, so that by recording lost sounds of the city he will manage to help him re-see Lisbon, by now withdrawing more and more from his eyes.

The director Friedrich's monologue expresses in an extraordinary way all the tension between the dialectics of recognition and the city project. The act of seeing, meant as learning to see, a learning that, in its turn, is on the one hand assimilation and reproduction of what already is, and on the other, the capacity to detach oneself from the known and its prejudices, namely to problematise again what is accepted as obvious and a constituent part of projectual action.

It is indeed in this sense that we can speak of *coincidence of ethics and aesthetics*, which is thus at the base of the project and constitutes an irremovable presupposition of it. This "perspicuous vision" that has us imagine actual facts differently from what they are, that has us see reality with different eyes and that generates the amazement of aesthetics in the face of the world, is not a divine gift, or at least not only this, but is something to be cultivated and may emerge when knowledge and knowledge how to that have been acquired and become rooted, are not transformed into simple instinctive reason, guided operatively by its successes, but accompany taste and the capacity to think and continuously

reproblematise what is known. It is indeed thanks to this taste that assimilated, deep-rooted experience, which is an essential condition of discovery, is not transformed into obviousness, in dogmatic adhesion to the effectual, but has in it the seed of its own unceasing renewal and new burgeoning. This capacity to grasp the new, apart from being deeply tied to art, in the meaning denoting possibility and capacity for doing that can be given to this term, is also the result of the desire and will, and even need, to give a new sense to what on different occasions we do and say. It is therefore an expression of commitment to find for our existence and for the reality surrounding us meanings that go beyond appearance and consolidated values. It is a question, then, of an ethical condition that gives further credit to the connection between ethics and aesthetics of which Wittgenstein speaks.

Notes

[1] In effect, Soutif notes that the map of Debord's *Naked City,* Constant's *New Babylon,* without mentioning Brouwn's *This Way Brouwn,* Françoise Schein's *Dazibao pour la ville d'Anvers* and Daniel Cordier's *Chimigramme sur un plan de ville* push schematism, selectivity, condensation or uniformity to such a point that the reference to a territory is somehow radically absent to the advantage of an adoption of the urban cartographic sign as such. Christel Hollevoet rightly underlines that this type of "work" actually functions as an indication of a "situation that is ephemeral or of immaterial concept". Hollevoet 1992 quoted in Soutif 1994, p. 45.

[2] Giuliano Compagno, *La linea dell'orizzonte. Estetica, ecologia e massmedia*, http://digilander.libero.it/aperture/articoli/2.7/html

[3] *Ibidem*.

[4] "Poetically inhabits man": interpreting Holderlin's poem, Heidegger links up with *poiesis*, doing, grasping reality, the feverish state of vigil of existentialism, the vital energy connected with inhabiting a place, which is a different thing from simply living and circulating, cf. Heidegger (1971).

The Dialectic of Recognition: Places and Friction

Friction, resistance, residue are concepts that stand not only for individual subjects but also for collective ones (societies, communities, organisations of any type) and also for places, that cannot let themselves be crossed without an imprint or trace being left. In effect, the "non-places" shrewdly singled out by Marc Augé (1993), are the nodes and networks of a world without boundaries, the standard spaces and those of homogenisation. They are identical wherever you go, the repetition of structures all more or less the same as each other. Similar to each other, yet different, each with its own style which, however, does not "have an effect", does not create identity, in that the elements and aspects composing it do not operate any kind of synthesis, do not integrate anything, they recall and attract only for the fleeting moment of the route passing through them. They are the coexistence of analogous, distinct features, with similar specificities but different one from the other. Their distinctive traits constitute for Augé the "other side of the coin" of places, their negative side: the latter are *identity-making*, namely such as to mark the identity of those inhabiting them; *relational*, in the sense that they pick out reciprocal relations between the subjects as a function of their common belonging; and *historic*, because they remind the individual of his own roots.

In antithetical contrast with these aspects we may have "non-places of transit", such as airports, motorway slip-roads, store-houses, aggressive advertising, service stations, or the "non-places of the false simulacrum of the city", well represented by the *Forum des Halles*. Entirely built underground, this is the place where many things are exhibited and where the regional underground (RER) transports the inhabitants of the periphery who want to go not so much (or not only) to go shopping, but above all to consume images in the city. An even more paradigmatic and significant example is the project with which an architectural studio and one of the Disney Corporation have won (respectively as executors and sponsor) a competition announced by the Municipality and State of New York. This competition concerned various works: the realisation of a hotel and a shopping and recreation mall in Time Square, as well as the restoration of a hundred-year-old hotel, the "New Amsterdam", in Manhattan's 42nd Street. Disney Corporation is allegedly also going to develop an

entertainment programme in Central Park and open a large store at N°. 711, Fifth Avenue to sell all the sub-products of their films. As Marc Augé points out, "the project is striking for its spectacular nature: 47 floors and 680 rooms are envisaged for the new hotel. The building is bounded by a channel along which a galactic ray runs. The Disney Vacation Club, on the other hand, which presents itself as a huge container composed of a hundred apartments, will be covered by ten giant television screens (one per floor) and numerous luminous panels. The most important aspect of this project is that it places in the middle of the city, as if it were a normal urban component, the world of Superman, a world originally conceived indeed with the intention of creating an imitation of the city. The architects chose a "chaos aesthetic", but it is still however a comic strip, cartoon chaos. The project being realised in Time Square, on the other hand, mirrors the aesthetics of amusement centres that already exist. This form of aesthetics intends to remain alien to any debate concerning the sense of the work, which means that the "Disney effect" holds itself in high esteem, finds its reference point in itself, and establishes itself as self-referential for the future. Fake imitates fake".[1]

Thus the simulacrum penetrates reality more and more, conditioning it. Contemporary man seems to want to let himself be beguiled by illusion, for his world is moving towards its own spectacularisation. What is worse is that this now no longer seems to stand just for non-places; places, too, including all the great historic and cultural traditions, run the same risk, to the extent that their patrimony increasingly presents itself as an object for consumption, followed by a journey that sets itself up as verification and confirmation of what is already known as an image. So, for example, a tourist checks that Venice is exactly like the pictures in the brochure, postcards or photographs and films recalling a fleeting stay with friends or acquaintances. Once again we are faced with a perceptive modality that, sterilising the tradition and historic and social heritage it has passed on to us, deprives places of any friction, any capacity of resistance with respect to the routine representation accredited to it and which proves dominant.

This loss of "friction" has in a certain sense to do with the loss of the city as a conceptual unit (de Azua 2003). In the realm of the contemporary urban, what is incomprehensible is not geographical dimension or social dispersion but the essence itself, the actual definition of the city, which has become opaque and mysterious. The invisible networks of the informatic metropolis that are centred or decentred ramifying their terminals do not manage to form new *polises.* We must therefore ask ourselves what the new space is that is nowadays being constructed through these "invisible networks", what the societies are like that inhabit them and what urban forms represent them (Daghini 1983, pp. 23–26). These questions have not

only remained open but have become much more harassing. The appearance of non-cities and non-places, the privatisation of urban centres, the conversion of memory stores, like museums, monuments and historic centres in shopping malls, and the generalised construction of "true-life simulacrums" have converted urban life in the city itself into a labyrinth of images becoming more and more similar to the hundred television channels the remote-control gives access to.

We should ask ourselves the question if, and how, this city can be represented, for we have, nevertheless, in the city the principal store of our memory and the nerve centre of our civilisation (de Azua 2003). De Azua shrewdly notes that painting and drawing were sufficient for the ancient city; the word gave an account of the industrial city; the cinema and photography were sufficient for the twentieth century. But the city of the twenty-first century eludes these technical means of representation, perhaps because the city as a conceptual unit has disappeared. In the sense that the city, in its classical significance, already does not exist, but in its place and upon it a *simulacrum* of classical city is being built, meaning by "simulacrum" an urban construction that imitates television, photographic and film pictures, or what amounts to the same, mythical or fictional images, placing in the world a city copied from a model that was never inhabited by human beings (de Azua 2003). The simulacrum phenomenon is made to relate to the passage from an industrial economy to a consumer and services economy (Baudrillard 1970), so that the production of goods destined to cover needs has stepped aside to let the production of desires be the driving force of the economy (Ritzer 2000).

Cities also follow this *dérive* which leads from construction to cover necessities to the construction of settings of desire, of the way in which cities turn into non-cities, adopting an oniric countenance that coincides with the political demotivation of the citizens. The classical practices of representation are incapable of describing an urban model that is so volatile and abstract. Only a few virtual reality or digitalisation techniques seem to approach the phenomenon with adequate instruments, but they are still in a prehistoric phase, and the examples that are usually put forward only reduplicate the simulacrum. Thus, for example, the popular result of the non-city that appears in the film *The Matrix* (which occupies a place among us similar to that once occupied by Fritz Lang's *Metropolis)* has led to commercial spaces and fashions springing up that imitate *The Matrix* in the empirical space of cities (Ritzer 2000). "We could hurriedly conclude that non-cities are not representable. In this way, without a doubt, the problem should not even have been posed. The ambiguity is greater because – as we have already said – simulacrums are *naturally* true-to-life. Or, if preferred: being empirically inhabited, to tell the truth, they are

"real". Any place, whose construction defines a way of inhabiting the world, is architecture in the rigorous sense, and must therefore be representable. So that there is not only a virtual reality, but also a *real virtuality*" (de Azua 2003).

In a paradoxical way the non-city that nowadays conceals everything is again, once more, the true mirror of society and most faithfully represents it. But – de Azua again maintains – this would extend the matter to the "urgent study of the non-citizen, or the simulacrum of a citizen who believes he is free, living in the heart of a democracy and having a real decisional capacity within it, but with no ideas, no effort or struggle" (de Azua 2003).

Even if referred specifically to the city, rather the non-city, here the image is exactly the opposite of how Wittgenstein meant it. It has been purified of any reference to the sense of possibility, to "seeing and thinking otherwise", it is rigid and stereotyped, the same for everybody, lacking in density, not nurtured in any way by history or the culture of place. In no way does it let the traveller or tourist "put himself in the shoes" of those living there, to try out a sort of "empathy". It is not supported by any emotional reference points, able to take on an evocative capacity, be it symbolic or emotional. It remains cold, remote, a pure object of consumption incapable of realising any type of harmony between senses and reason. As it does not lend itself to diversified possibilities of reading, it can in no way become a "melting-pot of reflection", suggest any linkage, association, combination of mental objects with a different affective level and the most varied conceptual implications. The spectator, tourist or traveller thus remains in the state of passive user, slave of the consolidated, hegemonic modalities of experiencing, incapable of opening up spaces for imagination, recodification of signs that they receive, and in this way become creators, the actors of a strategy of continuous creation of possibilities, in which each choice, each act, all perception, implements a part of the possible and simultaneously creates a new possible.

An interesting aspect of this stereotyped modality of fruition, lacking in density and friction, is its relationship with time. In effect, it is the simulacrum offered to the tourist that "is in charge of" such perception, guiding and orienting it, the final result of processing activity that "sheds" all aspects considered unessential, in that they are seen and felt as elements of disturbance of the spectacularised image it is intended to offer and have prevail. So there is a sort of "turning upside down of time", determined by the fact that the synchronic structure of the place and the diachronic "slant" characterising it, i.e. its past, are completely reorganised departing from an impoverished representation that increases communicability, and therefore the capacity of attraction and possibility of fruition on a global

scale, at the price of a considerable reduction in complexity, and thus in uncertainty and indefiniteness. The speed with which the traveller or tourist have to assimilate the "product" presented to them is, obviously, incompatible with this complexity. As a consequence, what was originally one of the many options of reading the past and present of the place itself is "rectified", set within a univocal, compacted interpretative frame and "forced" into a linear temporal composition that grants it a proper shape and subjects all events of which it is composed to a "second reassessment application" which turns the casual into the inevitable. Following this process, marked by the reduction in indefiniteness and the increase in communicability, re-examination of all previous history occurs, so that what was originally unpredictable is retrospectively reconsidered as the only possibility.

To illustrate the situation that is thus created, we will take the explanation provided by Boris Uspenskij, connected with the matter of the relationship between the dream and wakefulness. "Let us imagine that in a dream more or less casual, dark (amorphous) images flow before our eyes, which nevertheless become fixed in our memory. It is a case, we could say, of polyvalent images, in the sense that they are easy to transform (reinterpretable) and are mostly able to combine (unite, intertwine) with each other in a great variety of ways. These images may not have any importance in the dream, but are stored in the memory, in passive consciousness. And then a door slams, and in the dream we perceive (interpret) this sound as a shot; in other words, we perceive the event as a sign and relevant; we link it to a precise meaning. This perception becomes, so to speak, the *semantic dominant,* which suddenly illuminates the previous events left in our memory, determines our reading of them, that is, connects them through cause/effect links, and in a flash weaves them into a string of narrative. This final interpretation (perception, attribution of sense) we could say establishes the point of view, the perspective in which the events are seen. It is like a sieve, a filter, through which the images that are not bound up with the final (relevant) event are discarded, and are therefore forgotten and disappear from our memory; all of a sudden it lets us see other images, as if tied to each other by a similar content, and lets us set them out in a succession of narrative. The events thus organise themselves almost instantaneously, and are set out in a linear series; in a flash we see them as if illuminated by the sudden lamp of a projector. Thus the semantic orientation (semantic code) is established which determines the reading of what has been seen: the events are perceived to the degree that, in the mind, they are linked with the final result" (Uspenskij 1988, pp. 14–15).

Before embarking on applying the concept of "semantic dominant" to our problem, clarification of a historical nature should be made. This concept has been taken, though Uspenskij omits stating it, from a fundamental work by the physiologist Aleksej Alekseevic Uchtomskij (1875–1943) (Uchtomski 1966). A student and heir of Nikolaj Evgen'evic Vvedenskij (1852–1922) and a follower of the ideas of Ivan Michajlovic Secenov (1829–1905) on biological determinism and the systemic character of central nervous system activity, Uchtomskij continued the research of these two very great scientists and, in the work quoted, put forward the hypothesis that the time-space relations of the environment are acknowledged by the body through the processing of the signals transmitted by sense organs (sight, hearing and smell), which is carried out in what he calls, indeed, "the dominant", conceived and presented by him as a centre of excitation of the nervous system, that determines the body's reactions to external and internal stimuli.

The dominant nerve centre (or group of nerve centres) possesses high excitability, accompanied by a notable degree of inertia, that is, by the capacity to maintain this state even if the initial stimulus ceases its activating effect. Adding to itself the relatively weak excitation of the other nerve centres, the dominant uses these to strengthen itself and at the same time inhibit the other centres: in this way it guarantees the coordination of the body's efforts in a single direction and quashes any elements of disturbance. At lower levels of the nervous system the dominant is manifest as the availability of a given organ to always be ready to go into action and as a capacity for maintaining this state of alertness for a long period. Whereas, going back to higher stages, we find ourselves faced with the cortical dominant, which constitutes the physiological base of a whole series of psychic phenomena, including, for example, attention, memory, logical activity, susceptibility. The possibility of concentrating attention on particular objects and the selectivity of learning are therefore physiologically determined by the characteristics of the dominant, which is a constellation that works at a particular rhythm, optimal for certain conditions, and is able to strengthen its capacity for excitation with constant impulses. At the same time, it is able, in relation to this increment in excitability, to inhibit the other reflexes present in common nerve-life termination. In this way, by inhibiting the other centres, selectivity of learning is determined; on the other hand, there is concentration of attention, favoured by stimuli of medium intensity.

The dominant therefore begins to take shape as the fundamental structure of human behaviour: but it is also something more, in that "each of us can notice, through introspection, that when it is present, the capacity to glean and observe particular aspects of reality is greatly accentuated

and, at the same time, insensitivity to other features of the environment grows. In this sense the dominant may be considered not only the physiological prerequisite of behaviour, but also the physiological prerequisite of observation" (Uchtomskij 1966, p. 126).

The inertia which characterises the activity of the dominant, is, in one way and up to a certain point, useful for developing and strengthening systematic, rational behaviour, since it is precisely to it that both the constant prevalence of one mechanism over all other possible ones, and the origin, strictly connected with this prolonged predominance, of an organising principle of intellectual life, are due. But it can also, in another way, and beyond a particular threshold, lead to behaviour and the personality closing up and fossilising altogether in a rigid structure, to the point of preventing the individual who falls into this "vicious circle" from opening up to the outside:

> Because of the very fact that I am inclined to act in a particular direction and that the work of my reflex apparatus is polarised in a particular sense, my reflexes prove to be depressed and transformed with respect to many phenomena underway, to which I would have reacted in a very different way in other, more well-balanced circumstances […]. At every moment of our activity enormous sectors of vivid, unrepeatable reality pass us by unobserved, without leaving any trace, just because our dominants were concentrated elsewhere. In this sense they stand between us and reality. The general colouring the world and people take on for us is determined to a very great extent by how our dominants are and how we ourselves are. A scientist who works quietly in his laboratory and enjoys great stability and calm, who is fully satisfied with his state of isolation, will tend to describe the world as a quiet, harmonic flow and, even better, like a crystal in its infinite stability, and he will presumably consider men an element of disturbance, whose presence jeopardises this so ardently desired quietness. A businessman, on the other hand, will see in the world and in history just an environment purposely pre-arranged for his commercial and financial operations […]. The dominant is often unilateral, and to much greater an extent the more it is expressed. This is why in the history of science the so typical phenomenon occurs of different abstract theories regularly following each other, then followed by a return to itineraries which seemed abandoned forever […] Two opposing abstractions are correlative and each recalls the other (Uchtomskij 1966, p. 90).

The remedy for this unilateral nature of the dominant cannot consist of the attempt to extract it from our physiological and psychic reality, in that "in a normal nervous system it is difficult to imagine a state characterised by the complete absence of any dominant" (Uchtomskij 1966, p. 102). But the route to pursue is a different one:

"To not be a victim of a dominant, we must manage to exert our dominion over it. What is needed is for us to be able to subordinate our own dominants as much as possible and guide them following a clear-cut strategic plan" (Uchtomskij 1966, p. 127).

Strategic design can, however, also be piloted from the outside. And this is just what happens in the case of the tourist city (in our example, Venice), which is offered for the traveller's enjoyment. To be able to subject the images and representations proposed for the recodification process guided by the semantic dominant, these need, as we have seen, to be easy to transform and reinterpret, i.e. not strongly characterised thanks to notable identity marks. They need, that is, to present themselves as amorphous and casual as possible, or at least polyvalent, and if, therefore, at their origin they do not present in this way, need to be subjected to a progressive process of *sterilisation* of all those traits that make them easily recognisable and linkable with a precise environment. Subsequently, into the historic and cultural context thus weakened, as regards its native meanings and values, at least in the eyes of those coming from outside, a strongly marked perceptive and cognitive style is introduced, able to impress itself easily on the memory and fulfil the double function of filter – which selects within the context in which it works the elements, factors, aspects and processes in harmony with the image of the latter which it wants to accredit, discarding and putting in a marginal position all the others – and of *catalyst*, able to easily and rapidly aggregate the traits selected and organise them according to a guiding idea capable of weaving among them a coherent and convincing string of narrative. To this same strategy responds the introduction of spurious elements that have nothing to do with the cultural styles of the territory on which intervention has taken place but which, perhaps through a process of assonance and analogy, may be linked, either on the linguistic plane, or on the perceptive one, with aspects that in some way refer to it.

To understand how this can happen and what the "key" to the success of a similar operation is, we need to refer to the analysis of the metaphor proposed by Max Black, an author to whom we owe the most in-depth study of the mechanism of functioning of this rhetorical figure, on the basis of the conception he himself calls *interactive view of metaphor* (Black 1962). It is a way of "reading" the rhetorical figure in question that begins with acknowledging that, when a metaphor is used, *two thoughts* are simultaneously activated of different things sustained by *a single word* or phrase, whose meaning is the result, indeed, of their interaction. In this way a new meaning is produced, different from the literal one, i.e. there is an extension or variation of the meaning determined by the fact that the word is activated in a new context. We therefore have a first element to take account of: the metaphor is always the result of interaction between a word (or entire sentence) and the context it belongs to; it is therefore always a piece, though small, of text. Any word may be used on its own, but, if used in this way, will never be able to give rise to metaphorical

effects. The word and the context constitute together, in an indissoluble unit, the metaphor. But what type of association between text and context produces the metaphorical effects?

To answer this question we need first of all to bear in mind that the meaning of a word consists, basically, of a certain expectation of description. This expectation is guided, so to speak, and conditioned by the semantic and syntactic laws that govern the literal use of the world, and the violation of which produces absurdities and contradiction. In addition to this it should be emphasised that the literal uses of a word normally require the speaker to accept a package of standard beliefs that are the common possession of a given community of speakers. The metaphor acts precisely on this system of ideas normally associated with a word: this, in particular, entails the transfer of the commonplace expressions usually implied by the literal use of a term and its use to construct a corresponding system of implications to refer to a second term, for which, in literal use, these implications are not valid.

> Let us try, for instance, to think of a metaphor as a *filter*. Consider the statement, "Man is a wolf." Here, we may say, are *two* subjects – the principal subject, Man (or: men) and the subsidiary subject, Wolf (or wolves). Now the metaphorical sentence in question will not convey its *intended* meaning to a reader sufficiently ignorant about wolves. What is needed is not so much that the reader shall know the standard dictionary meaning of "wolf" – or be able to use that word in literal senses – as that he shall know what I will call the *system of associated commonplaces* […] The effect, then, of (metaphorically) calling a man a "wolf" is to evoke the wolf-system of related commonplaces. If the man is a wolf, he preys upon other animals, is fierce, hungry, engaged in constant struggle, a scavenger, and so on. Each of these implied assertions has now to be made to fit the principal subject (the man) either in normal or abnormal senses […] Any human traits that can without undue strain be talked about in "wolf-language" will be rendered prominent, and any that cannot will be pushed into the background. The wolf-metaphor *suppresses some details*, *emphasizes others* – in short, *organizes* our view of man (Black 1962, pp. 39–41).

This authorises us to assert that "the metaphor creates the similarity that is to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing" (Black 1962, p. 37). The main subject, in effect, is "seen through" the metaphorical expression or, in other words, projected on the field of the secondary subjects. A system of implications (or "commonplace expressions") used within a certain field is used as an instrument to select, highlight and construct relations, briefly, to structure and organise, also in terms of perception, a different field.

This operation, which thus has an authentic *perceptive* nature, as well as *cognitive,* in that through the secondary subject it leads to features and properties of the main subject, till then totally unheard of, being highlighted and seen, can only be successful on two conditions: (1) that

both terms or subjects are simultaneously present in the operation itself and interact with each other; (2) that the implications that are transferred from one subject to the other remain, at least to a certain extent, *implicit.* For, if the metaphor "man is a wolf" were substituted by a literal paraphrase, making *explicit* the relevant relations between the two subjects, it would lose a large part of its efficacy, that is, its "illumination" value. The set of literal sentences thus obtained would inevitably end up saying too much and emphasising things different from the metaphor, with the result of nullifying the metaphor's cognitive content. Finally, it should be borne in mind that through the superimposed elements, the production of the metaphorical tie also modifies the system of implications associated with the secondary subject, and not just that connected with the main subject. If to call a man "wolf" is to put him in a particular light, then it should not be forgotten that the metaphor also makes the wolf seem more human than it otherwise would be.

We can therefore say, at this point, that the metaphor acts by violating the expectation of description predisposed by the meaning of a word and consequently generates an effect of surprise and a tension between the original meaning of the word itself and the idea now deliberately provoked by the context in which it is placed. If we call this process "counter-determination", to emphasise that the description provided by the context proceeds in the opposite direction from the expected one, namely violates the system of standard beliefs associated with the term involved, we may say, with Weinrich (1976, p. 89), that the metaphor is a word in a "counter-determining" context. This same aspect may be highlighted by speaking of the tension between significance (*Bedeutung*) and meaning (*Meinung*), where the first term indicates the habitual content of a word, considered on its own, and the second its conforming to the global sense of the discourse, to the context which, in its turn, expresses the meaning of the person speaking.

This conception of the metaphor is distinct from the traditional one, which has its origins in the classical analysis provided by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, which, though celebrating the faculty belonging to the rhetorical figure in question for linking terms unrelated to each other, nevertheless still associates with it a paraphrasable meaning in the language of the code. On the contrary, the metaphor Black speaks of is neither true nor false, i.e. does not constitute a good candidate for calculating truth functions, since by definition it represents a break with the ordinary language of the code. It proves translatable into the latter when it has lost its features of originality and novelty, or when it becomes literalised, giving rise to an ordinary, institutional language.

Precisely because it has nothing to do with true or false, with the authentic or inauthentic, this conception of the metaphor enables the grafting of that mechanism Dieter Lohmar calls the "as if" (Lohmar 2005, pp. 155–167) way, which is triggered when at the base of the explanation of the way in which we produce in ourselves the experiences of other people there is the "phantasmata thesis". According to this thesis, perceiving the sensations of someone else, feeling the other's sentiments, experiencing his will is based on the phantasmas of perceiving, feeling sentiments, wanting and acting that we have produced in ourselves. A phantasma is "something like" a sensation, which means it is given by a sensation. But it is not a real sensation, in that phantasmas occur where what the respective sensation normally leaves behind it as its consequence, is missing. We experience the same sensation as the other "almost in the same way" (as if) the other person is experiencing it. We do not need language to represent for ourselves the reasons and sensations of others. The phantasmas with which we perceive (or feel) other people's feelings, sentiments and coinesthesia, inasmuch as they are sensations, already convey a definite sense. The "voices" of others are really present in us: we feel them as though they were authentic sensations of our own, but they are weaker.

This "as if" way is indeed the mechanism by which a place rich in historic and cultural traditions of its own, that qualify it in a very definite manner and that, to be fully understood, would require a long process of assimilation, is turned into a "simulacrum", a sort of "phantasma" traced over experiences, phantasies, over the most frequent and consolidated styles of perception and thought, capable of finding an easy "echo" and arousing "resonant" phenomena in any visitor or tourist, regardless of their origin and culture. In this way the place visited directly may easily be "cut out" from what we already know of it as an image and recognised without effort. Thus on the city of stone and its past is superimposed an ephemeral city, dissolved in the statement of its spectacularised representation, made, more than of monuments, of lights and signs, a city uncertain of itself, incapable of opposing resistance and just for this reason, destined to be modelled by each one according to his interpretation.

It is interesting to remember that this conclusion had been, in some way, anticipated by Andrei Belyj (1922), a narrator and poet belonging to the Russian symbolists who, in his writing *O smysle poznanija* of 1922 contrasts an active, creative aspect of thought with a passive side, which he calls "abstraction", expression of "bad thought" and which, in its turn, generates the "bad world" as a world "not due", or not regulated by the ethics of value. The product of this deviating strand of thought is, indeed, the *phantasma* or *emblem*, "that which is not, but is visible, audible and

even tangible", i.e. the "reality of unreality". The tragic aspect of this situation comes down from the fact that "what today is an emblem, tomorrow is reality"; the falsifying force of the phantasma-emblem ends up emptying out the world.

Of this emptying, flaking process, referring particularly to the destiny of cities and urban contexts, Belyj had, moreover, succeeded in giving an admirable, prophetic picture in his novel *Peterburg,* set in 1905, at the height of the revolution of that year, and published in instalments in 1913–1914, in three issues, by the symbolist publishers "Sirin", then revised and amended several times, till the fifth, much shorter version compared with previous ones, appeared in 1922, in two volumes published by "Epòca" in Berlin, later reproduced in Soviet reprints in 1928 and 1935. It is a fascinating picture, which develops through continuous cuts and cross-cutting, of a city on the point of collapse and disintegration, under the weight and intensity of its traditions and its history, though short. This slow, unrelenting decline was, according to the author, due to the fact that the city stood exactly at the point of confluence of the two forms of Russian nihilism – the formalism of the bureaucracy of St. Petersburg and the rationalism of the revolutionaries – who, in their turn, embodied and expressed the devastating rationalism of the West and the destructive forces of the "Mongolian" steppe. Held tight in the vice-like grip of these dual aspects of nihilism, the life of the city fell spiralling into an ever deeper and irreversible moral and spiritual decadence. Born as a symbol of a mighty move forwards, Peterburg languished more and more. The story is based on an infernal bomb, that has to explode within 24 h. Belyj made this bomb, as well as the kernel, the actual rhythm of his story, and his prose is really extremely effective in giving the sense of an apocalyptic city, where man now lives perennially exiled, with a growing sense of anguish. Laceration is felt everywhere in his representation and the city desired and insisted upon by Czar Peter the Great, which is the authentic protagonist of the story, is now nothing more than a very thin, fragile membrane, a chaotic succession of visions exhaled by a dark delirium, of which it is said, not by chance, that "it belongs to the land of spirits". Belyj thus wipes out the boundaries between reality and the world of shadows, pure abstractions, between delirium and the real: "glimpses of doubtful reality that dissolve into nightmares that dissolve ... Desperate tape of feverish scenes.

Two different principles clash in the weft of *Peterburg*: the swarming mass of the formless crawls threateningly against the mechanical patterns of reason. It is a terrifying fray, like a struggle between an iguanodontus and a brontosaurus in an antediluvian landscape. On one side, the chaos, the amorphous jumble of flames from hell, of mire, nebulas, incandescent

spirals, an abyss into which absurd visions are thrown together, horrid landslides slip down and strange spheres swell till they explode. A chaos that is simultaneously Gehenna and slush, the home of swampy snouts, reptiles, that carry out mad, nauseating acts.

On the other the icy, circumscribed microcosm of reason, that weighs up, connects and compares the phenomena. Methodology and dialectic are for Belyj the only salvation from the spreading magma of chaos. Because, in spite of the turbulent, muddled character of his conceptions, Belyj is a rationalist: the most cerebral of the Russian symbolists, and at the same time the one who best throws light on the relationship between mystery and mystification" (Ripellino 1980, p. XXIII).

In this world where there is no trace of the solidity of the object, where the external world seems to dissolve in the air and disintegrate in wads of fog and the characters are whittled down so as to become pure shadows, in a continuous search for "volatility", crossing the barrier between the concreteness of the real and its reproduction in impalpable images and diaphanous, ethereal models, language, too, has the same destiny.

"The horror, the fogs, the disorder of the epoch are in perfect harmony with the vibratile 'going with the flow' of writing. Amorphous, incoherent, overflowing prose, all dripping and encrustations, a muddle of chaotic impulses, squiggles, slimy clogging, an inextricable mess. A verbal magma in which at intervals the cavils of reason resound with a cold, electrical crackle [...] Belyj's action-writing, full of glimpses, fractures, halts and hooking up again, is subjected to the whims of an exasperated cerebral mix-up. Belyj constructs the sentence like a ringworm, breaking it into segments of various lengths through an implacable series of full stops and commas; and each segment moves on a different semantic surface, so that the sentence takes on the appearance of an agglomerated hybrid of heterogeneous layers of fragments of dissimilar conceptual 'materials'. The frequent suspension dots and unremitting exclamation marks increase the indefiniteness. This asymmetrical structure of the phrase allows Belyj to magnify the details to the detriment of the whole, to flaunt that taste for the detail made gigantic, that we might define with Ròzanov 'fetishism of *minutiae*'.

The characters also seem to be *built up in segments*, with a process of gradual overlapping. They gradually take on an outline, as if in a spiral, through a succession of winding, passing through, setbacks, reversals, sudden explosions of monstrous details. And the episodes, too: they take shape by degrees, emerging from a maze of sinuosity and coils: each episode is shot from various angles, corresponding to the points of view and experiences of the characters that have lived through it [...].

The Soviet prose writers of the twenties took from him the tendency towards musical writing punctuated with leitmotivs, a *muddled writing, in shreds, 'gestaltos', full of semantic leaps and sonorous patches.* From the example of *Peterburg* they took faith in the photenic power of the word, the taste for ornamental *arabesque*, excessive details, heterogeneous fragments piled up like in a *'tableau d'assemblage'* (Ripellino 1980, pp. XXVII–XXVIII and XXX, our italics).

For its structure and way of considering and representing the city that is expressed through the plot and style used to describe it, *Peterburg* may be considered the worthy heir of that great literary tradition that was begun by Gogol', and in particular the *Tales of Peterburg*, characterised by the tendency, undoubtedly pioneerist, to represent reality with its fragility, distorsions and deformations through transfiguration of the city.

Here the life of Peter the Great's capital, in its bowels, in its mysteries, its troubles, with all its problems, is addressed and related in such a way as to make the deceptive, false aspect of life in the city and its atmosphere emerge, which is thematised and represented in a particularly explicit way in the conclusion of *Nevskij Perspective,* belonging, together with *The portrait* and *Diary of a madman,* to the cycle published with the title *Arabesques* in 1835:

> Oh, do not believe in this Nevskij Perspective! I always wrap myself up tightly in my cloak as I pass by there, and try not to look at all at the objects I encounter. All is deceit, all is a dream, all is different from what it seems!
>
> It lies at all hours, this Nevskij Perspective, but especially when night, like a thick mass, covers it and makes the white walls and the yellows of the houses stand out, when the whole city changes into a hubbub and brightness, millions of carriages pour down from the bridges, the outriders shout and jump on their horses, and the devil himself lights the lamps just to show everything with an unreal appearance (Gogol' 1995, pp. 70–71).

In this unreal atmosphere of falsehood, where, beyond appearances, the real is present in a tormenting, distressing form, and displays dramatic, terrible depths that crush the lives of the characters who move within it, that which Gogol' called *poslost*, vulgarity, emerges and asserts itself inexorably, as the typical "human condition", also constituting a profound theme of his merciless analysis of urban contexts and the daily experience that characterises them. Little men who have no qualities, sensibility or values, who are integrated into the flow of city life without friction, with no distinctive trait, without aims, lacking a sense of measure, colourless imitators of commonplace, stereotyped fashions and behaviours: the "wimp" merchant, the "sewer rat" dandy, the "amphibian" employee, the *cinovik,* the civil servant of Russian State bureaucracy, rigidly and

hierarchically divided by "cin" (degree), inhabitant of that "swamp-city", a concentration of self-satisfied vulgarity, ignorance and petty ambitions.

Vulgarity, like conformism, banalities and clichés, strongly disciplines thought and makes it inflexible, it thwarts the originality of the individual, mortifies and quenches his creative impulse, till it completely eliminates it. For this, as Brodskij rightly observes – born in 1940 in that same St. Petersburg so shrewdly represented by Gogol', and heir to the great Russian literary tradition following the latter, that of Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Gorky and Pilnyak, who managed to formulate and transmit to us so many successful figures of *posljaki,* i.e. carriers, of this daily vulgarity – kills aesthetics and simultaneously also ethics, of which it is the mother. The beauty Dostoevsky speaks of, as the unique possible anchor of safety of the world, is thus replaced by standardisation and homologisation, which inevitably entail nullifying all diversities, the prevalence of the formless, elimination of borders and their function of threshold of change and the passage from one code to another, one memory to another, one culture and tradition to other different ones.

This being the crucial problem that in the contemporary epoch we find in the relationship between the local dimension of urban life and the supra-local one.

Note

[1] M. Augé, *La generazione delle immagini,*
http://www.undo.net/cgi-bin/openframe.pl?x=/Pinto/auge.htm

The Local-Supralocal Relationship

The relationship between local and supra-local has been significantly affected by the extension of environmental sensibility, which began to strongly make itself felt at the beginning of the seventies, influencing the ways of organising the space of settled societies, as well as city planning forms. The contiguity of the environmental dimension with urban planning may be considered a recurring constant element in the disciplinary tradition[1] and is in a certain sense a constituent part of its "structural organisation" (Varela 1987; Tagliagambe 1994), even if the attention, which has progressively been almost exclusively concentrated on the compact city, has not favoured significant conceptual and operative development of it.

In recent years it has been possible to notice a growing influence of this dimension on the disciplinary evolution of urban planning, as has emerged from a provisional evaluation of the innovative contribution of some experiences concerning principles and ways of urban planning knowledge, forms of action, their legitimacy and efficacy (Palermo 1993), but it should be recognised that this influence has shown serious difficulties in changing into a unitary set of fundamental concepts and operative methods. For the environment still remains new material for the contemporary city project, while at the same time disciplinary discomfort grows in the face of the unusual outcomes of urban metamorphosis, a "mutation" (Choay 1994) proving to be a difficult test for the traditional instruments of urbanistics.

In this scenario should be placed the disciplinary tendency to revise these instruments and to abandon a kind of holistic reductionism ("the city is all that is of interest") to move towards a position in a certain sense described by the "idea of the synecdoche" (Benvenuto 1994) ("the environment is a part from which to begin to summarise and clean up the whole"). Here the difficulty emerges that urbanistics shows in trying to recalibrate on this new viewpoint. Disciplinary discomfort arises, in effect, when the spatial forms of the urban alter and different ways of imagining space for settlement open up. This change is characterised by the dilation – above all mental – of the urban onto the territory, which makes the contemporary contradiction emerge between the need for maintaining the relationship with places and the demand for mobility, which is indifferent

to it: an "extended use of the territory" (Secchi 1994) which produces important shifts in the area of urbanistics, pressing towards surpassing disciplinary paradigms that have the compact city at their centre, a refusal of the current assumption that it is indeed "all that is of interest", in a bitterly selective way.

Selective attention in respect of city territory is a concept that has undergone significant variations in the course of time. Nowadays we can acknowledge that attention is being given again to the differential features of the territory, an aperture towards the city territory: the world is a set of places to which value is strongly attributed, of "places that count", places that are highly selective. The need for urban ethics in the new forms of settlement urges the inhabitants to relate selectively with these "rich places", meant here not in the singular – though important – not as "things", but as "single, specific complexes of relations" (Cacciari 1990) that have lost their basic immutability to express invariance in an increasingly mobile reality, that show constancy in filling the gaps of our spatial experience, and take shape as "environmental dominants" of the settlement life of a territory, an idea that unites places and spatial concepts rich in nature and history.

If we examine the elements of inertia on the territory of the widespread city, of urban dispersion, the outskirts and vast regions, it is possible to find these "rich places", "places to which value is strongly attributed" (Secchi 1994). To grasp these meanings, explore these places, that are not only physical but cultural – "notional worlds", symbolic worlds of the inhabitants that affect perception of the urban form – requires a more aware appreciation of differences.[2] This encourages us to interpret all places, understand their meanings, decode them as representative of a network configuring a "supra-local" system, enabling relations to be maintained with them within the situation of instability and the demands of communication that are inherent in new urban landscapes. Each projectual experience at each operative scale, even the tiniest, may then be converted into an action making the pertinent, relevant sense of this weft of relations emerge.

As Cacciari has emphasised (Cacciari 1990), the advent of globalisation, accentuating the demand for communication and mobility and supplying the tools and opportunities to satisfy it and make it more and more convenient and rapid, increasingly places us in the face of the need and urgency to "transcend" the specific environmental context. "Urban life cannot but proceed beyond any traditional limit, any boundary of the urban. It will never again be able to be 'geometrically' circumscribed. It will never again be 'earthly'. Its dimension is mental. But indeed this has to be utterly realised" (Cacciari 1990, p. 44). From this point of view a

radically alternative idea of ethics, at least apparently, emerges and becomes consolidated, compared with that initially outlined. For ethics, in this case, is not a manifestation of attachment to a specific place and deep-rootedness in one's basic context. On the contrary, it is the expression of the need not only to look at the existing world in its globality, adopting it and considering it an integrated system with no boundaries or barriers, but even to experiment and put into practice ways of thinking that take mere possibilities as their object, though meant in the sense specified above of "contingency", "ideal" scenarios that have no equivalent in actual reality. This, too, in the contemporary society, is an indispensable moral imperative. The increase in processes enabling goods and services to be produced and distributed on a world scale is, in effect, progressively making the concept of "localisation" as a specific spatial ambit of reference of an economic system lose sense and importance. The latter rather becomes the critical place of an organisation based on circulation, a nodal point of the networks that connect, in an increasingly dense system of interrelations, the different areas of the economy and culture of the "world system".

Thus the relationship with the traditional basic territory (national or regional) is toned down to the great advantage of the capacity of opening up to the global territorial context and tackling it. With respect to this transformation, the concept itself of "space" within which the majority of the activities of an economic system are carried out, changes; it is no longer made up just of the actual spatial structure (i.e. the physical form of settlements and interactions, namely visible flows of people, but also of goods and capital between the various points of the system).

This concept has instead expanded to the point of coinciding with the grid, much denser and more articulate, of communication flows, which envelop the operators of the said system in a thick web and connect it to other systems near or far. Telephone calls, fax messages, enquiries to databanks, commercial and financial operations intertwine along the telecommunications networks, giving rise to transactions that evolve more and more (transmission of fixed and moving images, teleconferences, research in common by operators at a distance, and so on), as telecommunications gradually espouse informatics, making the vast field of telematic applications available.

Thus virtual space, as a network of interchange and cooperation fed on a net-organised configuration, overlaps physical space and progressively substitutes it. And how much this space, in its globality, is now the compulsory reference scenario for any analysis is demonstrated by the failure of attempts made in the eighties to reduce its extension and complexity by dividing it into a system of sub-systems in the sphere of

which it is easier to make forecasts. These attempts have given rise to unexpected results for the system in its entirety presents such a degree of interaction and integration between its parts as to render rough and unreliable the conditions set to enable and carry out the reduction. This interdependence between the different contexts into which the world economic system is divided, from the point of view of physical space, has led, moreover, to further demonstration of its character at this point indispensable, to a redefinition also of the concepts of city, or urban system, that have been reconsidered, notably accentuating the dynamic component tied to the idea of flow and processuality.

Not by chance do the indicators used as privileged and prioritary to define the urban areas usually refer to the capacity of the latter to produce services and put human resources into action, to *have a tertiary culture be born and guide it towards mondialisation processes.* Taken as a whole, they represent a notable detachment compared with the classical definition of city and urban functions provided by Max Weber, in that, compared with the relationship with the reference territory, they favour the net system. A city, from this point of view, possesses much more sense and value the more deeply and extensively it proves to be part of global economic processes. Which is like saying that the ideal metropolis is at the centre of a vast flow of quick cultural and communicative exchanges and is characterised by the importance and value of great events, great exhibitions, places of consumption and tertiary and financial centres. The model proposed is thus an "excellent city", perceived as a *node of a set of networks* within which there is a continuous exchange of know-how, powers, knowledge, and innovation. The first obvious consequence of this new model is that it takes on, as a horizon to look towards and become part of, not the geographical space and economic and political context of which it is the capital, that sketched out and limited by the cage of physical contiguity, but a wide territory, "expanded", sketched out by the tissue of relations and exchanges maintained with the external reality. Among these exchanges the immaterial ones take on increasing importance, tied to systems of transmission, not of objects and tangible products, but of knowledges and information relating to data and services.

This growing interdependence between diverse environmental contexts has appreciably changed the way of living in space for us all, and thus the way of "inhabiting the world". Whether we want to or not, each of us is forced to acknowledge this dilation of space and its projection onto the rarefied background of grid processes and immaterial exchanges and to think in terms and on the basis of the concepts imposed by this new "environment". Not only, but besides this "global space", a purely "virtual" space is taking shape more and more, thought up and constructed

through the integration of a number of ever-increasing variables which extends beyond the boundaries of the physical environment and the "world system" as it is now. And a trend of cultural, political and economic conduct that did not take into account this situation would be irremediably condemned to inefficacy and failure, and it would therefore be difficult to defend also from a strictly moral point of view, indeed in the sense of that "communication of power" (understood as the possibility and capacity to do) of which Kierkegaard spoke.

Any argument wanting to prepare the ground for a new "ethics" must therefore know how to face and solve, apart from the question of rootedness in effectuality and the context of belonging, of which we spoke before, also that of the projection beyond this, firstly towards places and spaces different from the usual ones and then beyond these, too, to press, with the mind's eye, as Cacciari invites us to do, as far forward in space as possible. The problem is *how* this is to be done, namely the way in which this projection is put into practice. For it is one thing to say that cities need to equip themselves to give incentives to and favour exchanges of their own territory with other contexts, even the farthest and most different, and a completely different thing (by the way, not necessary for the purposes of achieving the preceding aims) to theorise and practice the idea of a "formless urban", a new version of Hegel's "night when all the cows are black". To "hit" the first objective without having the heavy negative effects of uncontrasted homologation, we must make a serious analysis of the way in which, following globalisation and the connected, eddying movement of people, goods, data, information and knowledges, of real and virtual dreams, but also the dynamics tied to the flows of emigrant populations which stratify places more and more, favouring the complexity of relations and tensions of space and expanding identities and traditions, the concepts of community, identity and belonging are changing.

Notes

[1] "Environmental planning" is a very general expression that includes different experiences and veins of research which have a specific consideration for the environmental aspects of territorial and urban planning in common. One extreme corresponds to a conception of the environment cut out from categories of judgement mainly aesthetic, which are also tributaries of the pre-scientific experiences of the *Landscape Architects*, while at the other extreme we can assign the founders of the ecological approach to environmental planning and control.

Recent history shows an evolution with constant tension towards the drawing together of the two extremes, which is expressed, on the one hand, through the integration of environmental dimensions in landscape planning and, on the other, through a conception comprehensive of the environment, which associates with natural processes the material testimonies of the inseparable relationship between a territory's population, activities and places.

If we look at the prospects for treatment of the variables of the environment within the typical modalities of urban planning, in the history of environmental planning the theoretical and practical itinerary traced soon after the War by the American *Regional Planners* stands out; they represented a particularly significant point of view, as current as ever. More recently, this point of view, which has constantly influenced the disciplinary tradition, has in some ways been taken up by the *Landscape Planning* strain, which progressively urges planning with an ecological matrix towards more careful, extensive consideration of the socio-economic conditions of territories and the participation of local societies in planning. Other significant movements are: *Ecological Planning* and *Landscape Ecology*. The first trend, whose best known exponents are McHarg, Hills and Lewis, took shape in the sixties nudged by renewed environmental sensibility, but was initially characterised by ecological determinism of a naturalistic type. This drawing near of the sciences of man and environmental sciences is in a certain sense also present in the *Landscape Ecology* trend of Naveh, Godron, Forman and others, but the transdisciplinary approach – which moreover seems debatable from the point of view of the epistemology of relations between knowledges – tends to shift it towards lateral positions compared with urban planning (for an in-depth survey of these themes Cf. the recent Italian translation of the book *Living Landscape* by Frederick Steiner (1994), by Palazzo and Treu (Steiner 2004), cf. also Palazzo 1997).

[2] The "differential" quality of places is not to be seen as absolute, in that it is intrinsically tied to the *locus.* Places are not meant here necessarily as physical entities, but indeed as "single, specific complexes of relations" (Cacciari 1990), single, specific "notional worlds" of communities. Their differences are tied to processes of transformation and communication at different scales, which affect the sense communities grant to places and differences. But some of these places – using the meaning as mentioned above – with respect to the selection processes of the contemporary condition, are – in that they are lasting – more significant of space organisation than others; they represent the "environmental dominants" of human settlement (Maciocco 1991b).

Connective Intelligence and the Concepts of Identity and Belonging

In an article, today famous, published in 1948 with the title *Science and complexity*,[1] Weaver emphasised the need for whoever wanted to represent complex phenomena without compressing or distorting them arbitrarily, turning them into their opposite (oversimplifying), to give the greatest consideration to the potency of the essential feature of organisation. The link between the *complexity* of social and natural phenomena and *organisation* was thus placed explicitly at the centre of attention, and a strong tie consequently established between the science of complexity and the science of organisation. This link is expressed by the concept of "organised complexity". However, reference to this concept, inexorable and necessary, is not enough, in that the forms of organisation that little by little gain ground and become established have in the past been the result not only (and now not so much) of specific intrinsic properties of nature and the external world, but of the active intervention of mankind to change to his advantage the environment of which he is part. We must, consequently, take into consideration, besides the concept of "organised complexity", that of "organising complexity", as the result of man's efforts and capacity for designing and modifying natural reality. And since, to face and try to accomplish this huge work of transformation man never acts as a single individual, but as a collective subject, we need to take due account, in evaluating this passage from organised to organising complexity, of the specific, distinctive modalities of social organisation of collective entities (the single societies, but also their sub-groups, or any type of organisation that acts within them), engaged in this effort. Two important consequences spring from what has been said.

First of all the more and more obvious fact that complexity cannot be faced, managed and solved by algorithms, namely by a finite group of rules that steer the passage through an equally finite number of steps, from one or two statements to a new statement, so that nothing happens that does not comply with these rules, but must be "tamed" on the basis of a clear, well-defined project, the aims and objectives of which will be at the base of the process of reduction of complexity and able to justify and

explain it. Secondly, that the management of complexity requires the joint, harmonised effort of several subjects acting within a collective subject (be it a business, association, party and so on and so forth), endowed with its own specific organisation and rationality, which in some way pre-exists the rationality of the individual subjects that are part of it and condition it.

From this scenario indeed a new area of research has arisen and is becoming increasingly popular which originated in the interaction between logic and economy.[2] In this field the relevant areas of logic are above all two: *Belief Revision* and *Multiagent Logic.* The first started out from a work by Alchourrón et al. (1985) in which a logical formalism was proposed to model the change in beliefs in a rational agent.

A promising approach to explain these processes of change is that based on the notion of "epistemic entrenchment", which stems from the assumption that not all the statements a system of beliefs or scientific theory is made up of have the same value and the same importance when dealing with planning future actions and conducting a scientific survey or drawing up a project. For some of them have a higher degree of "epistemic entrenchment" than others, and this fact has an effect on the process of revision in deciding which to keep and which to leave out.

As Gärdenfors and Rott observe "logic alone cannot tell us how to revise a given database or belief set. We need some additional information, a *selection mechanism*, in order to be able to decide rationally which sentences to give up and which to keep" (Gärdenfors and Rott 1995, p. 61). A typical way of providing the extra-logical information necessary for the selection mechanism consists of asking the agent to specify an "a system of belief sets" (Gärdenfors and Makinson 1988), either on the whole of the revision allowed of a "belief set" (Alchourrón et al. 1985), or again on the set of possible worlds in which the beliefs prove true or false (Katsuno and Mendelzon 1991).

In the multiagent system logics – multimodal systems in form, that can also incorporate a temporal dimension – a very interesting aspect is the introduction of *common knowledge* operators, by which the fact is expressed that all the members of a group of agents know something, and each knows that the others all know it, too. *Distributed knowledge* operators are also introduced.[3] From this point of view, and precisely for the fundamental characteristics and functions of an eminently social nature attributed to language, the ideal problematic situation from which to depart to specify its nature is not that of "decision-making", in which a solitary reflective mind is at work, conscious and rational, studying complex alternatives and making use of systematic assessment techniques considered abstractedly.

The need for this "upsetting of perspective" is emphasised and given particular importance by Winograd and Flores, who try to reconsider and reformulate the bases of artificial intelligence using an approach intent on concentrating the attention indeed on the forms and modalities of collective intelligence.[4] For this purpose they depart from an idea of language as an exchange that presupposes the availability of a common context between speaker and listener and is placed in a background of assumptions and presuppositions shared by those conversing. That background that comes into being and is created in a privileged way within the sphere of organisations, considered as *networks of interactive exchanges and reciprocal commitments*, consisting mainly of promises and requests that develop between the members composing it.

This growing interest in organisations and the forms of collective rationality that are produced in them has stimulated various fields (philosophy of knowledge and action, logic, informatics, economics) to study from the eighties onwards models fit to represent interaction between several agents, capable both of knowing and acting. In these contexts it has proved essential to develop articulate rational instruments allowing these agents to describe knowledges, carry out inferences, apply various communicative modalities and, finally, to plan actions, as single agents, but also as a group, with the coordination problems involved. It is in this direction, for example, that the research is going that Derrick de Kerckhove, a student and cultural heir of Marshall McLuhan, dedicates to what he calls the forms of "connected intelligence".[5]

The latter is, according to the definition he provides for it, a form of connection and collaboration between different individual and collective subjects which is the result of sharing built on the basis of a dialogical exchange. The aspect characterising this way of thought, which distinguishes it from the typologies belonging to what could be called "collective intelligence" is that, contrary to what usually happens with the latter, within connected intelligence each single individual or group keeps their own specific identity, though within the sphere of a highly articulate, broad structure of connections. We are therefore faced with a process of *externalisation of intelligence,* which becomes a process supported and disclosed by the network. Reference to this type of intelligence shows, in the first place, how – also following the irruption of the "network" paradigm and its growing popularity – the image of knowledge changes, how it stops being seen as an isolated phenomenon produced inside the heads of individuals, to be considered more and more a distributed phenomenon, which englobes its environment and its culture.

The sense of this change of perspective has been properly grasped and expressed by Gargani, who emphasises the need to begin "thinking of

mental things in terms of a *different set-up*, a syntonic set-up, a solidaristic, relational set-up. Compare the mind not so much with an occult process going on inside each of our skulls, but think of mental things as an atmosphere surrounding us which we can also touch, in the same way as during the various phases of the day we experience moments of heaviness and then of relief. *This is the mind, this is mental activity, a context and space we share"* (Gargani 1994, pp. 71–72, our italics).

Compared with the usual ways of representing knowledge, this reversal has led to the acquisition of the following presuppositions:

- Knowledge is not static but indeed *dynamic and always incomplete.* It cannot be considered a *corpus* of ideas and/or skills to be acquired but as a capacity of the subject to see its limits, its shortcomings, failings, the need for further study. What is central is not, therefore, the notions (quantity) but the capacity to reflect on them, analyse them, criticise and adapt them, and above all, find a way through the intricate labyrinth made up of a *corpus* of information and knowledges continually expanding at a more and more rapid pace, within which the interrelations between the various components and different contents become impressively dense;
- Knowledge is important only when it accompanies the capacity to use it. If this is so, then it should express itself in the capacity for facing and solving real problems. The *operative dimension of knowledge* is thus highlighted, namely the need to give maximum consideration to the link between knowing and knowing how to, between acquired knowledge and the capacity to face and solve concrete problems successfully, in which that knowledge is in some way implicated, and therefore to translate the notions and concepts into diagrams for action and practical behaviour. This aim has a precise theoretical meaning and specific cultural dignity of its own, in that it comes under that epistemological horizon that tends to adopt, as a departure point of the cognitive process, not so much certain, indisputable *data* from which to start off, for example, the process of inductive generalisation, or to which to anchor the "sensible experiences" more as problems. A necessary reference as far as this shift of perspective is concerned is obviously Popper, who considers, as is known, that the subject of study and element of departure on the course leading to acquisition of new knowledge is always P, namely an initial problem, to which the agent dealing with it and trying to grasp it responds by attempting to draw up a TT, namely a tentative theory for a solution, which is then subjected to continuous control by EE, that is, procedures for pinpointing and eliminating errors which will

eventually lead to another problem P_2 that is more advanced than the previous one. From this point of view, therefore, to operativise knowledge means to pay due attention to the importance and essential value that – in the sphere of our cognitive processes – problems and *operative capacity* have, indeed, to face and solve them, which is a different thing from the simple availability of theoretic cognitions, the possession of which, obviously, constitutes a *necessary* but not *sufficient* requisite for the aims of acquiring the above capacity. It should, however, be remembered that already before Popper, Wittgenstein had emphasised that even in logic the general formula does not have a meaning independent from its applications, and that, therefore, "to understand a general formula" means *to know how to apply it in the correct way.* As Gargani points out, according to Wittgenstein "we understand the notion of identity, of 'doing the same thing' exclusively in relation to the steps actually taken in a procedure. It is by writing 1,4,9,16 ... that I understand what is meant by *doing the same thing, the identical thing* when I am told to square the series of natural numbers. For a logico-formal notion of identity cannot guarantee and discipline the steps of a procedure, decisions are required at each step" (Gargani 2003, p. 145).

- Knowledge cannot be considered as learning rules and concepts that describe the world; on the contrary it is the result of a process of social, collective construction. Therefore, the only form of effective learning is participation in such a process.

Following these developments *thought becomes more and more a form of connection and collaboration between different people,* the result of sharing with a family, with a business, with friends, etc., i.e. a group phenomenon. If, therefore, organisation is the most effective instrument we can dispose of to "tame" complexity, succeed in managing and governing it, and if it consists, basically, of *interactive exchanges and reciprocal commitments,* within which forms of distributed intelligence emerge, develop and consolidate that the agents pool to face and solve problems which alone they would never be able to manage, it is on this network of internal relations that attention should be concentrated if we wish to understand its nature and primary function.

Another important aspect, as has been seen, is that the intelligence that springs from this, though characterised by the availability of a shared background of premises, knowledges, orientations, objectives and values, in no way prevents each single individual or group from maintaining their specific identity, though in the sphere of a very articulate, vast structure of connections.

The fundamental problem is therefore to understand how we arrive at setting up and having available this common horizon, which, as becomes increasingly prominent, is the authentic patrimony of organisations, communities, societies. And it is indeed in relation to this process that the difference between "collective intelligence" and "connective intelligence" – fundamental for the reasons that will be seen for the aims of our argument – may be appreciated for its true worth and meaning.

When we speak of a collective subject of any kind, which has its specific identity and continuity, it is not essential that all its components have something in common: it is enough, as Wittgenstein clarified in *Philosophical Investigations* (1958) with his notion of "family resemblance", that they be in various ways *related* to each other. In this case what we see is

a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes similarities of detail. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of the family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: "games" form a family.

And for instance the kinds of number form a family in the same way. Why do we call something a "number"? Well, perhaps because it has a – direct – relationship with several things that have hitherto been called number; and this can be said to give it an indirect relationship to other things we call the same name. And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. But if someone wished to say: "There is something common to all these constructions – namely the disjunction of all their common properties" – I should reply: Now you are only playing with words. One might as well say: "Something runs through the whole thread – namely the continuous overlapping of those fibres"

(Wittgenstein 1958, p. 32).

Looking at games, then, it has not been established that something can be grasped that really is common to them all, and that therefore corresponds to the essence of the game, thus justifying application of the common name. For this reason the notion of "group" cannot be applied to them as it presupposes, as everyone knows, precisely the presence of a property that is common to all. Any possible identification of a property of this kind, common to all games, is countered by Wittgenstein with significant oppositions. If you say fun is essential to the game, I would quote cases in which you would speak of games though hesitating to characterise them as fun. Moreover, is the game of chess fun? Or Russian roulette? If you say winning or losing is essential to the game, it certainly is not difficult to quote games in which competition has no part, like patience. And so on.

What, on the other hand, can be admitted is that between one game and another there is, as stated, an *air* of family which shows common

belonging through fleeting resemblances. In the case of a notion like that of *game*, therefore, to the extent that we need it to illustrate a conception of language, we need it indeed to *keep* the concept *open*. If we were to close it – as we could do by having limitations introduced on the use of the term – we would lose something. We therefore introduce the notion of game through examples and then say: "this *and similar things* are called 'games'" (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 33). And further "One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way" (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 34). It should be highlighted that we have no right to indicate this illustrative introduction as an intuitive way, in the "vague" and "approximate" sense in which this term is sometimes used, almost as if this introduction were a sort of preliminary preparation to be necessarily followed by a rigorous definition.

The opening up of the concept should not be mistaken for its vagueness: for something is in effect vague with respect to the problem of rigorous definition. More clearly: only to the extent to which, for particular purposes, we require rigorous definitions, let us say that a certain way of proceeding is vague and approximate. Moreover, nothing would justify the idea that a notion not rigorously defined is *for this reason* unusable. In effect "we can draw a boundary – for a special purpose. Does it take that to make the concept usable? Not at all!" (Wittgenstein 1958). This could be maintained on the basis of a prejudice in which the request for exact definition be put forward disregarding the contexts and purposes pursued. "Here giving examples is not an *indirect* means of explaining – in default of a better method" (Wittgenstein 1958). There are not two levels, one "intuitive" at which we say things simply, excusing ourselves continuously with the listener, and one exact, rigorous, in which we recast things in the only legitimate way. But might proceeding by examples not perhaps put our interlocutor in a situation of embarrassing uncertainty? This may also happen. In accepting a method such as that proposed by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*, based on examples, on fuzzy images and not rigorous concepts and well-defined outlines, we must accept that we might be misunderstood.

This is part of the problem. If I say "Bring me this" and show him an oak leaf, perhaps 1. – my interlocutor will try to grab the leaf from me (or will stand there embarrassed); 2. – or he will bring me an oak leaf; 3. – or else he will bring me any kind of leaf. The leaf I show has different functions (as an instrument of language). In the second and third cases it plays the part of "sample" in different ways. In the first it stands for itself. However, there is no reason, and perhaps it is not even possible, to be assured of no misunderstanding whatever. There are misunderstandings that we may not have foreseen at all. And in any case misunderstandings happen, so to speak, one at a time, and presumably we will always be able to repair that misunderstanding (Wittgenstein 1958).

Thus, a *collective subject may also be formed through a family resemblance,* defined in the way we have seen, and consequently without necessarily presupposing the possession of common property by its components. If we reason, therefore, in systemic terms, it proves necessary to make a clear distinction between the systems existing in nature, which therefore have an ontological substrate, and those which instead are the result of a process of construction however defined. In the first case, which is that, for example, of the biosphere, we find ourselves faced, as Vernadskij writes, "with an *earth cover* clearly characterised on our planet, made up of a series of contiguous, concentric formations, that wrap around the whole Earth, called *geospheres*. It has a well-defined structure that was formed and has lasted billions of years, and which is due to the active participation of the life within its sphere. Life is indeed the factor that determines to a significant extent the existence of this cover, and first of all characterises the equilibriums, be they dynamic, mobile or stable, that are prolonged and last through geological time, and which, in contrast with what happens in a mechanical structure, here are instead changeable from a quantitative point of view, within well-defined limits, both as regards space and as concerns time. Biogeochemistry may be considered a *geochemistry of the biosphere*, of the external cover of the earth, to be found at the boundary of cosmic space. A similar definition of its investigational domain, formally correct, from the substantial point of view does not take into account all its content. The introduction of *life,* as a distinctive sign of the phenomena studied in the biosphere, grants biogeochemistry a very special character and thus expands with facts of a new kind, that to be studied require a specific scientific method, the sphere of its relevancy: from all this the opportunity of adopting biogeochemistry itself as a scientific discipline emerges. But this step, namely reference to this discipline considered as something autonomous, is not suggested only by reasons of opportunity or convenience for scientific work: it is *also imposed by the profound difference between phenomena of life compared with those of inert matter*" (Vernadskij 1994, pp. 81–82).

Here we clearly find ourselves faced with a system, the biosphere, that like the above-mentioned "geospheres" or an "ecosystem" certainly exists in nature: this system, in the case in point, is distinguished by the fact that those belonging to it show a distinctive, well-characterised property, that of life.

If we refer, on the other hand, to organisations and communities of various kinds, it is undoubtedly true that we still, however, find ourselves in the presence of entities created purposely to pursue particular aims, entities formed by human subjects that together carry out the operations envisaged, and we are thus dealing with a "collectivity", precisely because

the human subjects giving life to them have "working together" in common. What counts and is important in this case, is the fact that the above-mentioned aims are adopted and assimilated gradually by those called to operate within the said organisation, or become part of the community, or find themselves part of a specific "social fabric"; thus all these collective subjects prove to be characterised by an effective *common intent, though in the presence of the specific concomitant intent of each of the subjects or groups of subjects.*

The interesting problem, as we have said, is, then, to establish in what way, departing from heterogeneous and perhaps divergent interests, orientations, values and knowledges, we manage to reach this common ground and shared cognitive patrimony that constitutes the true wealth of collective subjects and their authentic strong point.

Notes

[1] Appeared in the review "American Scientist" n. 36, 1948, pp. 536–544.
[2] Of particular interest, for example, is the special issue of "Economic Theory", 19, 2002, entitled precisely *Logic and Economics.*
[3] These multimodal systems were introduced in the book by R. Fagin et al., *Reasoning about Knowledge,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996 (in particular cf. Chap. 4).
[4] See, for example, Winograd and Flores (1986).
[5] De Kerckhove developed this topic above all in the works *Connected intelligence: the arrival of the Web society* (De Kerckhove 1998) and *The architecture of intelligence* (De Kerckhove 2001).

The Relationship between Individual Subjects and the "Community of Practice"

We can define as "optimal" any kind of relationship between individual subjects and collective subjects characterised by the capacity of the former, on the one hand, to adhere to the contexts in which they operate, to "read them" and understand them, actively contributing to pursuing their aims, and on the other, to *critically analyse them* and perceive them as dynamic, processual "places", stratified, subjected to different rhythms of change due both to the spontaneous dynamics of internal practices and relations, and to the needs for change that spring from the relationship with the external environment. In such a case each of the single components of communities and organisations appears to be distinguished by the aptitude not only to place themselves in an non-problematic way within the latter, but also to critically focus on their personal experience within these spheres, assessing the problems that arise from them and singling out the means and instruments necessary to face and solve them.

This aptitude is the expression of what Hegel called the *amphibious nature* of man, the basic duplicity and ambiguity that characterises him:

Spiritual culture, the modern intellect, produces this opposition in man which makes him an amphibious animal, because he now has to live in two worlds which contradict one another. The result is that now consciousness wanders about in this contradiction, and, driven from one side to the other, cannot find satisfaction for itself in either the one or the another. For on the one side we see man imprisoned in the common world of reality and earthly temporality, borne down by need and poverty, hard pressed by nature, enmeshed in matter, sensuous ends and their enjoyment, mastered and carried away by natural impulses and passions. On the other side, he lifts himself to eternal ideas, to a realm of thought and freedom, gives to himself, as *will*, universal laws and prescriptions, strips the world of its enlivened and flowering reality and dissolves it into abstractions, since the spirit now upholds its right and dignity only by mishandling nature and denying its right, and so retaliates on nature the distress and violence which it has suffered from it itself

(Hegel 1998, p. 54).

Man's amphibious nature confronts him with the constant need to achieve and maintain an *active, dynamic equilibrium* with the world he lives in, even if this is not easy, avoiding falling, on one side, into the temptation of staying above reality, with the utopia, or on the other, below

it, with resignation. How arduous this challenge is, is shown by what Hegel considered the disease of certain manifestations of the Romantic utopia, hypochondria, the alternating between phases of projectual fury and exaltation and phases of depression and renouncement which, in his opinion, affects all those who, not wanting to face up to the "stubborn foreignness" (Hegel 1993, p. 36) of the world, with its surly reluctance, granting itself only to those who actually manage to dominate it, claim to leap beyond reality and project themselves into the ideal and the possible, without passing through present time and space in which, in actual fact, their daily existence unfolds. They consider the ideal to be at hand and consequently commit themselves to frenetic, feverish activity to realise it: just to conclude, however, after repeated, inevitable failures, that it is unreachable and to sink, thus, in total inertia and depression.

Even when he enters into an organisation or community that is already well-defined, for man it is fundamental to maintain active – as well as the capacity to "fall into" the internal "climate" characterising it and become part of it as best he can, interacting in an effective way with those composing it, including the capacity of "feeling" and "seeing" reality, not as something "already complete" and "definite", of which we limit ourselves to taking note, but as a process of 'becoming', that can take on forms and modalities that are different compared with those it currently displays and that therefore not only authorises but demands from those operating in its sphere – the tendency to *perceive it and think of it differently*. From this arises the orientation to have sense of reality and sense of possibility converge, with a consequent strong tie between perception and project. Competent, active and thus useful for the growth of an organisation and a community is he who is able to adhere to the context, which distinguishes them and to the set of rules, values, meanings and aims characterising them, and is therefore able to enter in harmony with a horizon of belonging and a shared world. This adhesion must not, however, be in any way rigid or static in that, as stated, it is not instinctive and acritical, but accompanies, on the contrary, the capacity to consider river-bed, the background, the community as aspects, atmospheres, environments that, at least partly, can be reconsidered and reorganised, in that they are based on changing conditions and are, precisely because of this, in some ways revocable and renegotiable.

Optimal insertion in an organisation fits, then, into the point of convergence between adhesion and innovation, between capacity to become part of a context, to feel at one's ease and act with efficacy within it and capacity to "put to the test" the stamina of this context, when faced with the novelties pursuing it. For the organisation can grow, get stronger and improve only in this way, through the contribution of individual

subjects able to espouse socialisation, practice, recognition and adhesion with the tendency to redesign and extend this experience, making it current and making it have a different meaning from the shared, hegemonic meanings.

As well as this first aspect, already essential by itself, another should be pointed out, recently highlighted in particular by the Californian school of anthropology of work (Lave, Wenger, Brown, Duguid), that studied various professional communities from the 1990s onwards, like those of the industrial product designers, informatics engineers and marketing experts, coining in this matter the concept of "community of practice".

This latter is the place, not always or necessarily identified with an equal portion of physical space, of production, but also of action and (nowadays more and more) of organisational knowledge, doing and learning, where it is essential to put knowledge, understanding and reciprocal understanding into circulation and have the projectuality and creativity of subjects, both individual and collective, emerge. And this knowing how to (and knowing how to think) in common is the more successful the more stable, deep, social ties mature within this place, and the stronger the involvement of the single individual in the total activity of the organisation, and the richer the meaning attributed by each component of the latter to work experience and action in that sphere.

It is in this sense that the concept of *organisational,* or *organisative, learning* is increasingly enhanced, the fruit of a single subject's entering into an organisation, indeed, into a network of interactive exchanges and reciprocal commitments between individuals whose decisions are strictly intertwined and who cooperate to solve the same problems. This is taken up again and enhanced precisely with reference to a whole series, concrete and clearly specifiable, of capacities that present a novel character with regard to the qualities, knowledges and skills of the single components, considered separately, and which emerge as the results of the interdependence being created between them within the organisation and thanks to its structures.

If, then, it is obvious and certain that each organisation lives and grows thanks to the skills, competencies and knowledges of its single members, it is just as certain that important feedback effects of the organisation in its entirety will occur on the individuals that belong to it. This organisational learning, considered in its totality, constitutes a background that places ties on the dynamics that can be realised within the organisation, that do not lead to all the effects and combinations theoretically possible but only to a restricted number of them, compatible with the nature and specificity of the said organisation. The fact that the single components and the single

branches are part of a self-organised system of relations, exchanges, interactions, namely what we might call a systemic order, favours certain relations and makes more difficult (or inhibits even) others. This is not the same as saying that these ties determine the actions, in the sense of channelling them in certain directions towards pre-established outlets because this would be to the detriment of the flexibility and the functionality of the system, of its capacity to grasp new signals and face unforeseen situations: but undoubtedly the organisation and the structures it divides into lead to privileged paths emerging (otherwise there would not be routines, standard procedures, stereotyped behaviours in form, actions with a fixed pattern, which instead characterise the internal life of these formal organisations). There is, therefore, within the latter, a partially canalised development, even if not rigidly determined, which presents the capacity to produce final results, definite and homogeneous in spite of the variability of situations and agents. The lines of this development exert the function of attraction for internal trajectories and relations and oppose a certain resistance to the deviations from what is considered the "normal route", the standard procedure.

The organisation is, therefore, also the place of learning, of developing skills, growth of abilities and knowledge: a context in which individuals know and experiment, and that can thus correctly be presented as a training space of an authentic common intelligence, that which becomes extrinsic in the activity of capable, efficient collective subjects.

Wenger picks out two cornerstones of the "communities of practice" concept: *participation* and *reification*. The first is nothing more than the experience of living in the world in terms of belonging and active participation in social enterprise and activities. Whereas by reification is meant the process by which form is given to personal experience, creating objects that give the latter the status of object or thing. Thus, the production of actual, real objects becomes a part of this process, but so do abstractions, symbolic systems, documents, instruments, etc.

Participation and reification are the two fundamental moments of the process of social and collective construction of meanings, and cannot be considered separately from each other. The first belongs to the domain of the implicit, while the second has to do with the sphere of the explicit. Therefore, by asserting that there cannot be participation without reification and vice-versa, Wenger maintains both that any explicit knowledge is accompanied by a portion of "unsaid" and "uncoded", and that no implicit knowledge is completely implicit: "From such a perspective, it is not possible to make everything explicit and thus get rid of the tacit, or to make everything formal and thus get rid of the informal. It is possible only to change their relation" (Wenger 1999, p. 67), namely

to transform part of one into a part of the other. In particular, to render something explicit, formalise it, is not a simple translation but the production of a new context in which both participation and reification, the relations between the tacit and the explicit, between formal and informal, must be renegotiated.

Practice therefore includes the ways in which the participants in it interpret those aspects of their activity that can be reified and integrate them into vital forms of participation in a community. A type of knowledge springs from this, the learning process of which is much more effective if based on direct participation. The only really effective way of transferring this type of knowledge (know how, practices that are not just knowing but also knowing how to) becomes the apprenticeship, i.e. introduction into a "community of practice", where it can, at least to a certain extent, be experienced directly.

This is because

availability of information is important in supporting learning. But information by itself, removed from forms of participation, is not knowledge; it can actually be disempowering, overwhelming and alienating. Looking at a very technical article full of indecipherable formulas can confirm in a very stark fashion our lack of negotiability […]. What makes information knowledge – what makes it empowering – is the way in which it can be integrated within an identity of participation. When information does not build up to an identity of participation, it remains alien, literal, fragmented, unnegotiable

(Wenger 1999, p. 220).

From this point of view,

educational processes based (like apprenticeship) on actual participation are effective in fostering learning not just because they are better pedagogical ideas, but more fundamentally because they are "epistemologically correct", so to speak. There is a match between knowing and learning, between the nature of competence and the process by which it is acquired, shared and extended (Wenger 1999, pp. 101–102).

Thus, according to Wenger, the apprentice does not just learn and acquire information but actually becomes a different person; his/her relations with the community and the world change, too. The acquisition of knowledge also gradually transforms identity. The apprentice learns information and skills but also a new way of giving meaning to his experience and the way he interprets his work (Wenger 1999).

In contrast with localised, concentrated knowledge, *distributed knowledge depends on where it emerges from and is manifest* (*synchronic dimension*) and on the events that previously appeared on the scene, took place and are at the base of its emerging, namely *on the dynamics and history of the organisations involved in its production* (*diachronic dimension*). The information and knowledge that each single organisation produces are the result of the cooperation and interchange between the

different levels it is divided into, none of which, taken and considered singularly, contains them and would be able to manage their development. It is certainly not by chance that formal organisations these days are presented more and more rarely as systems subdivided into parts, each of which superintends a specific function and pursues its specific objectives, to turn into a complex of systems and interactions between organised structures that reciprocally interact, integrate each other and give rise, though these relations, to reciprocal transformations and above all to the emergence of new features and properties typical of the global system and the specific organisation characterising it.

Nowadays a formal organisation will increasingly present itself as a complex that contains various intercommunicating structures; from their interaction a whole series of ties are determined for the development, regulatory controls, privileged routes, interrelations and equilibriums of an organisational type. It is precisely this wealth and variety of structures that enables the extension of the competencies and know-how of the single agents operating within its sphere. The presence of this internal "network of connections" conditions the modalities of receiving the information and signals coming from the outside, the typologies of relations with other collective subjects and systems, and in some way binds the one and the other to coherence with particular principles, values and internal rules responsible for maintaining the equilibriums (static and dynamic) of the said organisation. In this sense it therefore appears not only right, but productive, to speak of an "internal environment" that exerts, in interactions and interchanges with the external environment, a weight that cannot be ignored, in that it has emerge, as preferences, and selects, within the sphere of the latter, the aspects that best agree with the intrinsic demands of the organisation.

Further, important elements of reflection, as far as this aspect is concerned, are supplied by Nancy Dixon (2000), who concentrates her attention, in particular, on "common knowledge", i.e. that knowledge which is produced by the members of a certain organisation to carry out their work, knowledge that the authoress considers the only type able to provide competitive advantages for the organisation itself. What characterises it is the fact of being widely distributed through the whole "radius of action" of the community of practice and the organisation that, as has been said, does not always or necessarily coincide with a portion of physical space circumscribed and identified on the grounds of physical proximity.

City Project and Structure-Subjects

In the project for a city, participation cannot only be an incitement to do something, but to design together, *in practice.* It is a case of a set of practices realised in a cooperative work environment. Thus, the project should be considered a form of action of a society that should increasingly become a *community of practice*, a learning environment in which new subjects reveal themselves and construct new convergences between citizens and cities, reversing what Gregotti has defined as "the growing divergence between citizens and cities" (Gregotti 1999). An example might be represented by the operative method used in provincial planning, a way to vast area planning on a low-density territory like Sardinia (Maciocco 1999). It could be defined as an environmental project for the territories external to the great European metropolitan areas,[1] where urban perspectives have to cope with particularly serious phenomena on the level of interactions between "city and nature". The urban nebula that has affected the central band of the European area from south to north is characterised in many parts by very low environmental quality of urban life. Notwithstanding the reassuring images of spatial economy some numbers are pitiless: 100 billion Euros to reclaim 200,000 hectares of abandoned industrial areas.[2] Although an underestimation of the entity of European *wastelands* and of the energy necessary to recuperate contaminated lands is evident, these numbers put up a wall of impossibility against a prospect of worlds of cities that would be nothing more than the current ones "recuperated". A reflection comparing the entities of the phenomena and the energy to be employed reveals that efforts for recuperation in European urban areas are often oriented in a selective way, depending on urban marketing requisites.[3] On this urban horizon promising perspectives for constructing possible worlds seem perhaps to open up for spaces external to the European nebula, for the vast territories of nature and history, perspectives in which the environmental quality of the city is based on a much vaster context than spatial life. This does not mean temporary support of the European city while waiting for possible "recuperation", but rather the beginning of the construction of a new urban world that entrusts its possible perspectives to the involvement of external territories, ones that in the contemporary urban universe may be

considered "territories without a voice". It is a case of a process of deep change in aesthetic sensibility (Shepheard 1997) which will enable the world to be seen with different eyes and the positive ambiguity of marginality[4] to be recognised in the differential quality of territories, a different territorial subjectivity, recalling continuous experience of otherness in that it is a constituent part of the city project (La Cecla 1991).

These reflections are in the background of the planning activity of low-density territories, of "vast territories", which perhaps looks promising, even though the expression "vast territories" brings to mind an operative weakness recurring in the paths of tradition of the discipline, which, in glorious dreams of leaders and eponyms of regionalism, wearily sought in it the utopia of a new concept of city.

But a possible perspective is maybe taking shape on the territory of the European city for the vast territories, a new experience of their otherness in which the arguments for the "country" may be tried out for the construction of possible settlement worlds. "The city is of the country", Mumford asserted, to underline the ancestral bond of belonging of the pre-industrial European city to the country (Mumford 1938). In the contemporary city, in the dilation of the urban, "the country is of the city" for periurbanisation processes, for setting up infrastructures, for the new technological content required by the world of flows, but "the city is of the country" for the interdependence relations that the environmental dimension makes intrinsic in contemporary life and that surpass a concept of territory as an exclusive place of leisure, of survival and "ornamental economies", to move towards the understanding of the significant relations of nature and history essential for organised life, where it is possible to imagine a concept of collective good as associated with the inseparability of the biological and cultural dimensions of spatial life; a place where the economies of nature and history – that nowadays have a weak signal – can become the sustenance and fuel of structural economies oriented in an environmental sense.

In the face of this perspective opening up for external territories like Sardinia, with natural and historic potential sufficient to undertake the construction of an "urban path to be invented" (Choay 1994), planning work finds it has to deal with certain important processes of crises that make this itinerary quite arduous and constitute the problematic background to this work. These are the general crisis situations of low-density territories that planning has to face. In particular, one crisis affects the city, though it is actually a case of the crisis of a territory put to a hard test by basic logics tending towards new polarisation of activities, which presents itself via fresh spatial forms that clash with the classical idea of the city; traditional interpretative canons suffer discomfort, as does the

society, in the face of the incapacity to glean a new urban form from these phenomena, and new relations between space and sociality.

For low-density territories, too, in the crisis of the city arises the crisis of traditional urban organisation, the crisis of the hierarchical model of organisation of relations between cities, generally involving important problems of the passage from urban systems made up of single centres and their territorial surroundings of sub-regional dimensions, to systems with regional and supra-regional dimensions that loan themselves to a grid interpretation, the "network of cities". In these territories another great crisis has hit urban and territorial sociality and is manifest through the decline of the models and great works of socialisation of a nineteenth and twentieth century matrix; this includes the crisis of traditional models of organisation of services, recalling a non-standardised, non-hierarchical view, attentive to all those activities that are profoundly changing the relations between supply and demand for urban services.

Finally, another crisis is the environmental one, characterised by bewilderment of place, "delocalisation", a loss of human territoriality, a sort of indifference towards the physical context of organised life, increasingly dragged by the flows representing the new force of gravity of the contemporary city; this taking of distance from place can occur, due – apart from reasons concerning problems of environmental decay – to the fact that a place becomes alienated, both in that it is given settlement models not fit for it, or because it is given settlement models not fit for the economy of the activities, because it is "insularised", confined, as happens for some "non-places" of the contemporary city like shopping malls, the large entertainment centres, etc., but also for some closed forms of environmental protection.

This process of crises nowadays breaks out in unusual ways in the field of territorial strategies and policies, pressing them from different points of view, among which can be noticed the importance of the correspondence between environmental crisis and loss of human territoriality[5]; the outcome of this presents itself in the form of social hostility towards a context that is decaying, but also towards a context becoming alienated, an order of attitudes which confirms the inseparability of the biological and cultural dimensions of the life of the men inhabiting a territory. For the loss of human territoriality may occur due to the decay of places – a place that becomes ugly does not deserve to be remembered (Fyfe 1996) – due to problems of contamination, pollution, congestion, all those problems in a certain sense not resolved by technical knowledge, but may also be triggered by the fact that a place becomes alienated either because it is physically occupied by others, or because it is given settlement models not in line with the sense of the place, or because it is the subject of an

economy of activities that belongs to external models not revised locally, or again because it is set up as a "closed system" (Cellucci 1996) and confined, like the large shopping malls, technopolises and techno-poles, but also like the "islands of perfect environmental protection" that can lead to laceration of the fibre of territorial relations.

If we think of the territories external to the European urban nebula, this is reflected, for example, in the mechanisms of environmental protection at the moment in which the crisis of the extensive model of zootechnical occupation of the territory, which is a part of the pastoral economy and extensive agricultural economy, has the desolate lands emerge, the *wastelands,* which recall environmental reconversion problems of large areas of Sardinia. These are some of the principal features of the environmental crisis the regional territory is suffering, though this crisis presents recurrent features in a generalised way in the European panorama, as do the other crisis processes that put the regional territory to a hard test, like the great crisis that has hit urban and territorial sociality. This is manifest in the decline of the models that represented material infrastructure creation of sociality, a decline that is overwhelming small towns, for example, which, bowing to the economies of scale, are deprived of schools, post offices and other services of social relations.

As can be imagined, the geography of the crisis in these regions has a high rate of territorial equity; in effect, this concerns many territories and many aspects of the processes and has both general and local causes. The phenomena and policies go hand in hand and seem to produce together a separation between population and places that is taking on unparalleled proportions. This problematic background seems to target a space without territory in an almost inexorable process of loss of awareness of the relations between people and places.

Against this background, however, clues to vitality are present that seem to be precursors of new forms of territorial sociality, from deterritorialisation to reterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari 1996a), which are manifest in certain areas with new cooperative modalities between territorial subjects – municipalities and other subjects – in problematic fields where a new, local elaboration of external energies can be proposed, such as those represented by tourism flows, in an autopoietic perspective of durability of economies: in a certain sense the construction of a new model of urbanity for the vast, low-density European territories.

The activity of construction of a planning environment for a vast area in Sardinia has thus been steered towards favouring ways of deploying collective action in a project for the territory that will trigger a process of construction of new forms of correspondence between *socio-territorial figures* and *spatial figures* – between peoples and places to be taken care

of – adopting as the first nucleus of reference of the activity the representation of the environmental landscape potential, and of the density of nature and history, which management politics depend on considering its importance in respect of the new urban perspective that appears to be taking shape. On this process of regeneration of territorial sociality and constitution of new socio-territorial figures the spatial experience of the inhabitants, their *common sense*, acts, which makes their perception vary. At the base of our capacity to design the environment we live in, therefore, lies "a process of understanding and interpreting that cannot be taken as a set of rules and assumptions since it concerns our actions and our history considered in their globality" (Tagliagambe 1994, p. 67).

It is a case of what is generally called "common sense, that is nothing more than our personal and social history" (Varela 1987, p. 73). In this conception lies a fundamental order of change that affects the role of the context, which takes on a *subjective* nature and has a change in the project for settlement space emerge, projecting it onto a background that depends on the relationship between beliefs, mental states, expectations, hopes, desires and perceptive worlds of the settled societies. This mutation cannot be coped with by autonomous, indifferent positions of the habitual territorial policies, but there is a need to enter the sphere of actual action, ethics, social legitimisation, those categories that enable us to relate to common sense, to the collective intelligence of these territories, that constitutes the last and perhaps most practical question for every territorial strategy (Maciocco and Tagliagambe 1997).

The representation of the environmental landscape potential thus goes through a process of comparison between representation of space on the part of the planners and "space of the representation" (Lefebvre 1970) on the part of the inhabitants, a geography of places and spatial concepts of affective attachment, "environmental dominants" (Maciocco 1995) the settled life of a territory, which the inhabitants selectively relate with to share an urban ethic in the new settlement forms and a new economy oriented in an environmental direction.

It is this comparison between representation and self-representation that has oriented the opening of some significant windows onto the territory, as *problematic fields* of crises and potential, such as, for example, the *fields* of mobility in which to explore the potential of an environmental orientation of the project for the territory that is found in the ties between urban form and energy consumption in transport (Banister et al. 1997), or again, the *fields* of environmental crisis of urban areas in the management of water, which become fields of possibility for the external territories that are deposits of resources.

Having adopted these options, the plan singles out a set of fields of problems and resource potential by which the context, the territorial subjectivity represents itself, revealing its expectations and aspirations for a project for the territory that will put different forms and processes into relationships varying in a range between two extremes, with meanings that go beyond specific experience but are candidates to represent the span of problems these days assailing the different urban dimensions:

-   forms and processes in situations rich in nature and history, the management of which has characteristics – of processuality, reversibility, self-reproducibility, opening up of possibilities – that are part of a form of action placing the environment, being the strategic potential of the territory, as the central nucleus of a territorial policy that opens up promising perspectives for territories external to the European urban nebula. The creation of infrastructures will be prevalently light, economies are now marginal but will need to progressively become structural, the generative process is made up of the local capacity to internally revise and deploy external energy in the various components of the economic system – agricultural, industrial, artisanal and commercial – like, for example, that connected with tourism flows;

-   forms and processes in intensive urban situations, the management of which has the characteristics belonging to a form of action tied to the functioning of a consolidated urban machine, in which redevelopment actions that are still typical of urban marketing requirements and do not open up important perspectives, in the short and medium term, for urban refounding in the environmental sense, orient themselves in certain key directions – towards low energy consumption mobility, the fight against all forms of pollution, and towards disposal as a project of each form of deterioration to face the theme of refuse and waste in the life of men and city – which in the long term open up a field of possibilities for the environmental quality of spatial life. Infrastructure creation will in this case be aimed at rendering, in the short and medium period, the technological content of cities once again superior to that of the individuals, families and businesses. Single cities will be called to deal with renewed attention to characterising the dimensions of community life, facilities for people, *civitas,* the indivisible link of which with the *urbs* is inherent in the actual meaning of city and constitutes the culture ground for social and economic growth of the territory.

These situations, like many others, become part of the group of *fields of environmental project*, fields in which forms of action can unfold of the settled societies that are establishing their own life environment through processes that the planner participates in, contributing his specific knowledge and ethical intentionality to stimulate collective conscience-taking of the environmental dominants that preside over the formation of the settlement and favour the sharing of coherent outcomes on the organisation of settlement space.

For example, an *environmental project field* might be that of water, identified not just with the basins and sub-basins, but with the space of external infrastructure relations, too, where crucial nodes materialise of the injustice in the use of the resources and underestimation of the potential. This involves different actors in different provincial spheres, that can change not just depending on the field but also on the territorial sphere and that cooperate to have what may be defined as a *field agreement* arise from the project. The field agreement around this problematic field could configure coherence of behaviour over the management of resources and processes of acquisition and distribution, promoting projects that enhance the value of the resources in a sphere of territorial equity and environmental adjustment shared both by suppliers and users. It is indeed in this communicative sphere that effective ties of interdependence begin to appear with other fields of resources, that cause new horizons of meanings and promising perspectives to emerge for the environmental project for the territory.

Through the environmental project new spatial figures and socio-territorial figures progressively reveal themselves, but also new elements of equivalence, that are set up through a cooperative action between the different territorial actors involved in environmental project fields and in *field agreements,*[6] a legal perspective to which to entrust the statute of reciprocal territorial behaviours in an ever mobile reality. Spatial figures emerge from the activity that are perhaps no longer homogeneous or functional regions, and perhaps no longer persistent and disconnected,[7] and *socio-territorial figures* that can be considered a new unit of territorial analysis, that are not exactly communities, though nevertheless act as collective figures, whose ties of equivalence with the spatial figures are smoothly articulated, at different spatial and temporal scales of problems.

New relationships between society and territory may take shape in this sense, which make concepts of collective good imaginable, relationships in which the institutional dimensions of intermunicipality emerge together with other collective dimensions from the communicative process as units of reference of the project for the territory; new forms and units, but perhaps more suited to sustaining a difficult process of construction of a

new urban perspective. Surpassing any position tied to predefined patterns, the project for the territory moves towards an interpretative and formative position directed at representing the problems of the territory and hypotheses of solutions that are non-resolutive but linked with management of the significant processes. From this point of view the project is not the outcome of an action in which the collective subject pre-exists, but the instrument that promotes cooperative forms of action in which the subjects of the territory, taking on reciprocal obligations, create new forms of contractuality that trigger construction processes of urban and territorial texture and progressively new socio-territorial figures.

This proposal has recalled planning environment requisites favouring a communicative process. In the different phases of activity, contents and work methods have progressively been the subject of comparison and public discussion to include the various actors in a cooperative sense, the municipalities *in primis,* involved in the construction of the future of the territory in question: a necessary methodological, operative transition that sustains a process of progressive undertaking of reciprocal commitments and obligations for the same project for the territory.

In a planning environment configured in this way the planning process will not create ties but will rather – through an in-depth study of environmental, economic and social interaction and processes underway on the territory – reach the point of defining the problematic fields, or the fields of vitality, and solutions to them or their enhancement. The role of the province, via an interactive relationship with local organisations, will be that of providing elements of coordination and knowledge able to allow self-determination by the population of processes and directions of their future economic and territorial development. The role of the plan is, from this point of view, to create an initial picture pinpointing the field and the actors, present a range of possible solutions and set up field agreements, i.e. the groups of meta-rules and shared rules to realise the *environmental project* of the territory.

The *environmental project* will not only face the problems directly linked with changing the physical environment, but also those concerning the action of territorial societies that are building their own environment through consensual, shared organisation of territorial space. It is founded on hypotheses of solutions connected with the management of significant processes, and creates new forms of contractuality and interaction, triggering self-management processes. From this angle the *environmental project* does not shut out possibilities but continually opens up new ones.

This position is thus moving towards a perspective for solving the problems of the crisis of the territory that is not entrusted *a priori* to a specific institutional or inter-institutional level, but to new figures that

emerge from the territory through self-organisational processes that are not predictable. It is a case of *socio-territorial figures* that become established during the interaction processes between the different actors engaged in the environmental project for the territory. They are figures we can call *structure subjects* because they represent the ways in which society and territory *structure* new reciprocal relations that can, for example, outline new institutional forms of intermunicipality and, more generally, configure collective dimensions of the territory perhaps unknown but more suitable for coping effectively with the problems of its crisis.

With the necessary caution stemming from the history of recent planning, in institutional planning processes, too, adequate use of instruments possessed can create the conditions for starting off the environmental project which will unfold as an eminently local action. In this sense the provinces may configure their activity as a catalysing action of forms of cooperative agreement between local subjects for the environmental project on problematic fields of resources and uses that often have a supra-local character, favouring indeed the constitution of new elements of equivalence between spatial figures and *figures of territorial sociality.*

Up to now we have insisted on the analysis of various factors that give rise to the idea that nowadays a process of redefinition of the relationship existing between society and territory is underway: this has led to attention converging on a set of resources that may be defined as of a "territorial" nature, i.e. that represent *chances* for processes of enhancement of specific spatial spheres, at different scales. Now we need to shift the attention to processes by which this enhancement may be obtained, trying to specify who the actors are that are potentially involved and to define (in general terms) some modalities that these processes may take on. To begin with, however, we need to highlight a basic assumption: any territorial resource is what it is not so much thanks to its intrinsic nature, but because a social project exists that recognises it and founds a hypothesis of development on it, shared by several actors. In other words: whatever the characteristics of a resource (e.g. the fact of being the product of natural phenomena, or processes of anthropisation of nature, or of cultural sedimentation phenomena), a process of social communication needs to be started off for it, by which a group of subjects will agree to define those characteristics as an opportunity for development connected with a territory, and undertake to guide their own actions in this way.[8]

What is proposed here, then, is a non-objectivist conception of the idea of territorial (or environmental) resource: it is not a case of granting recognition to a reality in itself given, but to verify the existence of conditions for the construction of a project that will attribute reality and

efficacy (on the social, and therefore intersubjective plane) to specific elements of the natural environment or the anthropised one, understood, indeed, as "resources", i.e. as opportunities for individual and collective action.[9] Note carefully: the term "project" is used here in its widest sense and does not refer to a univocal modality of intervention. The reference to a projectual course only implies that several subjects establish synergies in their actions, on the basis of aims that are in some way shared and concern a spatial ambit. However, these synergies may be established in various forms. Sometimes the projectuality guiding them only has an implicit character: formalisation of agreements does not exist, nor does fixing objectives, but nevertheless the actors operate "as if" these conditions were present, namely they take for granted certain social norms that preside over reciprocal commitments.

This is, for example, the type of projectuality that prevails in the sphere of the informal networks, on which the endowment of social capital depends – characterising areas with an industrial district economy. Whereas, in other cases, projectuality takes on the form of a plan document; in its turn, however, this document may have strongly differentiated contents depending on whether it is a case of an instrument with directly normative value or the registration of a programmed agreement, the efficacy of which will depend on the effective action of those taking part in the agreement. In any case, whatever the nature of the project and its degree of cogency for the various actors, only the existence of a form of intentionality oriented towards a possible, desirable future will make a resource really be a resource, and be – so to speak – socially active (even though it cannot be excluded that elements of the environment may exist which are not affected at the present moment by such intentionality, but may be so in a relatively near future).

The presence of projectual intentionality, in the sense defined above, depends on two kinds of prerequisites. On the one hand, it is necessary to be able to pinpoint, with regard to a specific area and a set of potential resources, a group of subjects interested in enhancing the value of the latter, so that positive results can be determined for the whole area. On the other hand, the background needs to exist (or be able to be created) for the subjects to be "put into a network" in a picture making possible the setting up of synergic processes, in a perspective that envisages not simply sharing immediate objectives, but also the common definition of a medium-long term scenario.

The socio-territorial figure – as it has been defined in the previous pages – is in some ways an evolutive form that envelops the components of its environment, a "structure-subject" that emerges from the project and at the same time activates it. Close to the concept of *socio-territorial figure* there

is the concept of *implementation structure*. For Stefano Zan the imple-
mentation structure is that inter-organisational grid (or *network*), or group
of organisations united by relations, exchanges, transactions and
complementary/common logics of action, which is born and finds its
meaning in activating and implementing a project (Zan 1988; Hjern and
Porter 1988). Hjern and Porter maintain that it is not so much single
institutions or organisations that need to be analysed, as those these
authors define as implementation structures. They pick out two action
logics which do not always converge: an organisation logic and a
programme logic. The programme logic is typical of those plans for
intervention, prevalently public, which necessarily require the intervention,
more or less coordinated, of a plurality of organisations. "The resulting
total action will give life to an inter-organisational grid or, better still, an
organisational field, not definable or identifiable *a priori* and which needs
to be reconstructed through empirical research" (Zan 1988). The behaviour
of the entire organisational field as well as its structural articulation will be
determined not so much by the logic of each organisation, as by the
programme logic mediated initially by the implementation structures. In
general terms we may say that Hjern and Porter's analysis is an invitation
to "not concentrate attention on single organisations but on all those
activities that are determined in a direct manner by the organisation
through implementation structures and that respond to specific action
logics governing the field, which the researcher must reconstruct even
simply to understand the behaviours of a single organisation" (Zan 1988).

It should be said that with regard to the structure-subjects represented by
socio-territorial figures, the implementation structures, inasmuch as they
sustain the importance of the situated definition of processes and actors
carrying out a public policy, are focalised directly at an institutional level,
while the importance of micro-actors within programmes and practices of
implementation appears notable.

At the same time, if, on the one hand, they have started up a critical
analysis of systems of planning and carrying out public policies, nurturing
among other things the debate on top-down and bottom-up methods of
implementation (Meny and Thoenig 1991), they have, on the other hand,
contributed to an "implementative" interpretation becoming popular of the
actuation phase of public policies. Whereas the socio-territorial figures,
precisely because of the fact that they reveal themselves as subjects during
the course of action, tend to undermine any "implementative" metaphor
meant as the passage, to a certain extent linear, of a policy from planning
to actuation. For this reason the actor feeds the action, because processes
of signification are born from projectual action (Latour 1999), and tries to
encourage re-creation of local practical meanings for the development of

locally significant technologies, making new locally significant social figures appear.

Interesting research on a conceptual artifact similar to the socio-territorial figures, though oriented in particular towards the development of e-government, is the *drift laboratory,* that may be defined as a way of meaning and acting in the space created when a participative project for development is actuated. It is thus made up of "persons", "objects", as artifacts useful for the development process, "places", where relations occur, in that they are different resources from development, and "cognitive artifacts", useful in the process, like games, exercises, tests and simulations. It contains persons and "boundary objects" (Starr-Leight and Griesemer 1989, p. 393), namely concrete or abstract objects with different meanings in different social worlds, the creation and management of which becomes a key process for the development and maintenance of the relations creating coherence between social worlds that intersect and are modified (Botto 2002). However interested it is in the actual imple-mentation of e-government policies, the drift laboratory sees in the concept of "transfer" and "drift" the intention to undermine any linear passage of a policy from planning to actuation. If in a process of innovation the technological and the social practices constitute two phenomena that are unstable – and in the case of practices this is a desirable prerequisite for organisational change – and programmatically ungraspable, what can the researcher do "within" this process? He must certainly act, turning to advantage the partial configurations of technologies and practices through continuous reflection, but as a basic idea he will have to try to manage these two "drifts" so that the virtuous circle commonly called the "adoption of a technology in an organisation" is generated. He will have to look after the interstitial zone between these two entities staying "adherent to the field", or "following the actor" in his processes of signification (Latour 1999), trying to understand how to encourage re-creation of local practical meanings for technology and the development of locally significant technologies. A "hybrid" situation where myriads of unexpected elements and actors are involved in a process of change needs hybrid instruments (Latour 1995).

In this sense the drift laboratory is born to consider uncertainty as the norm beyond the – nonetheless necessary – projectual, political and administrative requirements of planning, in which a more open and "ecological" aptitude for development action will grow, and in which to develop continuous research on physical and conceptual instruments for e-government policies. To the fluidity of decisional *networks*, to their polycentric configuration and the importance taken on within them by "border roles", is to be espoused the tendency to bring about processes of

coordination of a collegial, rather than monocratic, type (Morisi 2003). Given the fragmentary nature of the spaces for contracting and the plurality of actors involved in them, the proliferation of typically collegial bodies should be emphasised, also and above all, in "actuation" – the so-called "implementation structures" (Hjern and Porter 1981, pp. 221–227) – where they act on a parallel with the classical mechanisms of coordination between the different hierarchical units into which the government of the territory is split (Héritier 1999; Hjern and Porter 1981). The implementation structures respond to the need for coordination of institutional boards (representative and bureaucratic) with interest groups, citizens' movements, *ad hoc* bodies (environmental, health, work-site, etc. control structures) and other polymorphous actors (e.g. general contractors of large "keys in hand" projects), difficult to identify along the public-private divide.

The *environmental project* – as defined in the previous pages – recalls the need for implementation to occur in the situation of large local society responsibility, but in a solidary, cooperative manner. In this sense the construction of new institutional orders can depart from the project for the landscape and from the new subjects that become established as they design it. The respective rules cannot be preconstituted, but are determined within the projectual process. The "institutional consolidation" that can derive from this process is connected with progressive awareness-taking of a new culture of the territory and the landscape. In this respect, Healey proposes a reference concept, given the name of the "institutional capacity of the place" (Healey 1997, 1998; Healey et al. 2002) underpinning a process of territorial transformation, a concept that is the result of the accumulation of "intellectual", "social" and "political capital", a capacity, namely, that becomes established through the formation of consolidated relational networks anchored to specific places and crucial problems. As is known, the three types of "capital" refer respectively to the availability of resources in terms of socially shared knowledges, reciprocal trust and the sharing of priorities and norms, of capacities to mobilise and act. It is, moreover, "capital" in that it is a case of "Goods" consumed only when not used and which accumulate, on the contrary, with greater use. This is an idea expressed by Hannah Arendt, who maintains that "the process is itself ungraspable, since – in contrast with instruments of violence, that can also be stored and used only when necessary – the potential of power exists only to the extent to which it is implemented. We are always dealing with implemented power when words and actions arise together, indissolubly interweaving, or when on the one hand words are not empty and on the other actions are not banally dumb" (Arendt 1964, p. 146).

Basically, then, "institutional capacity" implies the formation and stabilisation of particular network resources, the presence of which facilitates the enhancement of spatial and environmental resources, in the picture of forms of territorialisation belonging to contemporary societies.[10] It should be added once more that the building up of institutional capacity should be understood as a *learning process*: even though a series of initial conditions may count in favour or against the degree of capacity a network of subjects will manage to achieve, much depends on the aptitude of the various subjects to learn from mistakes and to select the most effective modalities of action. It is therefore a process in which new socio-territorial figures emerge from the project, understood as an eminently practical activity.

Notes

[1] The constitution of this vein goes back to studies led by Fernando Clemente on relations between university and territory in Bologna, Parma and Pisa, published respectively in books edited by Clemente et al. (1969, 1973, 1974). For more recent developments on the "environmental project", the following papers can be consulted: Clemente and Maciocco (1980, 1990) and Maciocco (1991b, 1991c).

[2] The Plan for European Space Development, to use the French acronym Sdec gives these numbers in a background of contradictory arguments which on the one side places the emphasis on the endless entity of the problems and on the other envisages a field of conventional activities for impossible all-out recuperation. Cf. SSSE, Plan for European Space Development (first official draft), Meeting of Ministers for territory order in member States of the European Union, Noordwijk, 9 and 10 June 1997.

[3] A position in which a business strategy is applied to the city, a strategy understood as minimisation of risk, of the loss the business city might suffer with respect to the external world.

[4] Rather than abandon the local situations to their apparent irrationality with regard to the "rational" logics of globalisation, almost as if they constituted interference, a stir in objective knowledge, in the sense used by the theory of information, one might think they belong to a different logic that can be studied for itself. They will therefore be evaluated as a sort of "raw material", a "mineral", from which it would be possible to extract essential elements for the life of humanity, especially its life of desire and creative potential. Cf. for these reflections Guattari 1997.

[5] Cf. in particular Sack 1986; Mark and Frank 1991; Frank 1992; Campari and Frank 1993.

[6] There is interesting correspondence between these concepts and the "collective concatenations of speech" treated by Guattari (1997).

[7] According to Fischer's well-known definitions. Cf. Fischer 1982, 1984.

[8] To some extent it could be maintained that the enhancement of resources always has, at least partly, the meaning of a prophecy that is self-realising, in that it is indeed the process of communication (the prophecy) that sets in motion a course that will have the consequence of producing actions directed at recognising and enhancing the resource.

[9] In that sense this ties up with what Maciocco and Tagliagambe state (1997) regarding the environmental image: "Surpassing a *representational* conception of the environmental image produces a decisive shift on the project for settlement space, which takes shape as a *constructive* operation of a new world and is not merely *representational* of an ontologically given world" (Maciocco and Tagliagambe 1997, p. 85).

[10] The "institutional capacity", according to Patsy Healey, refers to three dimensions, which are analysed here in a way partly disengaged from her analysis. The first concerns the capacity of a group of subjects (including planning units, local political institutions, stakeholders, etc.) to define themselves as a network, produce social capital enhancing and sharing the relational resources of the single subjects. In this picture, particular importance has to be attributed to the relations that become established between the various public institutions, not only as an effect of the actions formally undertaken on the basis of reciprocal competencies, but also – above all – as the product of the initiatives of networks of transversal subjects to the institutions, endowed with relative autonomy and innovative orientation. The second concerns instead the cognitive resources generated or, at least, activated for the aims of the shared action. These belong, on the other hand, to various types: on one side it is a case of explicit, formalised knowledges in the sphere of specialist knowledges (for example, those of the experts involved in planning, administrators, civil servants), while on the other, it is a case of implicit knowledges, widespread throughout the population or in particular social groups. Finally, the third consists of the capacity, on the part of the network, to widely mobilise interested subjects, to seek participation (also on the part of less favoured subjects), to create popularity of a vision of future scenarios, mediate in conflicts, translate the "vision" into projects and create continuity in their implementation, without generating rigidity and without making the power relations that take shape unchangeable (Healey 1998).

Dissolution of the Dual City, or the New Suburbanism

In spite of the fact that the process develops within the picture of the broad responsibility of local societies, it is not locally confined or confinable. The emergence of *structure-subjects* from practical action is not tied to the definition of borders, in the traditional sense of this word, nor does it create them. It is, in effect, important to point out that *practice does not just create borders.* As Wenger, once again, emphasises, "At the same time as boundaries form, communities of practice develop ways of maintaining connections with the rest of the world. As a result, engagement in practice entails engagement in these external relations […]. Joining a community of practice involves entering not only its internal configuration but also its relations with the rest of the world" (Wenger 1999, p. 103). Moreover, each individual subject usually belongs to more than one community of practice at the same time, and can use (and normally does use) this multi-belonging to transfer some elements from one practice to another.

To define this use of multi-belonging and the transfer that is a consequence of it, Wenger refers to the term "intermediation", coined by Penelope Eckert, to explain the mechanism by which students constantly introduce new ideas, new interests, new styles and new revelations into their circle of friends. Eckert points out on the subject that it is generally those who are on the edge of a group that introduce external elements (for example, a new musical style or new style of clothing), for the leaders are too tied up with what is keeping the group together.

The project for the city is also fed these days from the outside; it is above all external elements that nurture the project, such as, for example, the suburbs, that open up new perspectives for the city. We have reached the point of being able to register a phenomenon which may be defined as the dissolution of the dual city, a phenomenon that leaves the field to a new suburbanism (Maciocco 2007). The opposing pair centre-suburbs has for years represented a descriptive, interpretative category to evaluate the fairness of the distribution of urban opportunities that offer themselves to citizens to live the "good life".

In our contemporary post-cities this antinomy is not, however, sufficient to explain the new urbanistic geographies. Taking Los Angeles as an exemplary case, Edward William Soja (Soja 1986, 1988, 1996; Scott and Soja 1996) described the urbanistic strategies of the post-Fordist era have indeed led to the dissolution of the dual, centre-suburbs city and created new geographies.

This statement is reiterated by Robert Bruegmann, who, maintaining that since almost every thing these days considered central in a city has been at a certain moment in the past, peripheral, declares his scepticism regarding the discipline of the history of peripheries. If applied in an appropriate way, this field would coincide completely with that of urban history (Bruegmann 2006). If we could put aside the sterile debates on the uncontrolled development of the city, to concentrate instead on the very concrete specific problems of urban life, whether it be the centre, the suburbs or the extraurban zones with a minimum density, we would probably have more chance of finding new unforeseen solutions to the age-old challenges of the urban issue (Bruegmann 2006).

This incapacity to explain the city by means of a *dual* dimension is also tied to the profound change in the role taken on by what we have always called centre and suburbs. The centre is no longer the heart of urbanity, just as the periphery cannot be made to be the equivalent of the absence of urbanity. There are, in effect, phenomena that cross cities, which take no notice of centre and suburbs and which put our concepts of city to a hard test, or at least those concepts of the city we consider to be fundamental, such as: interaction between men, proximity between men and places, solidarity systems, social mediation between individuals and non-individualism, etc.

We nevertheless continue to associate an evil view of the city with the suburbs, its liquefaction; in the common opinion, the periphery *is* the city that has fallen apart, periphery *is* sprawl. But this is connected perhaps with the fact that we associate the logic of mobility with the spaces of the modern city, a logic that leads to the uprooting of places (Costa 1996), while the traditional city, the city organised in a hierarchical, geometric way around an *agorá*, or central space, is surmised to be the constructed expression of stability and permanence, of safety and defence. This traditional city depends not only on its *agorá* as the centre of organisation, but also on the walls that define its borders, distinguishing it from everything that is not city. It enables us to understand that the stable order of the city can only see itself threatened by a destructive order, which is associated with the logic of the periphery, characterised by what is uprooted, mobile and fluctuating, a logic that produces the *formless*, the city without shape, in other words that which is not distinct from the place

where it is situated. So the contemporary city finds itself immersed in a radical redefinition process, representing a further stage of the process of progressive dearticulation of the traditional city. In the sense that we progressively register an object that has burst, made up of buildings transformed into autonomous technical objects, freed from any contextual articulation or dependence, while the citizens have extended the field of action, transformed their experience of space, time and the structure of their behaviours (Choay 1994).

The discomposition of the city in the suburbs also appears to us as the crisis of the context of proximity, of relationship with place, that the historic city has always embodied as the *space of contact* (Choay 2003). This ethic linked with place is, however, getting weaker and weaker, for our behaviour is more and more influenced by relations independent of physical distance. This condition emerges just when the spatial forms of the urban are changing, and different ways of imagining the space of settlement are opening up.

A mutation characterised by the dilation – above all mental – of the urban condition beyond a classical concept of the city, causing the emergence of what Massimo Cacciari (1990) defines as the contemporary contradiction between the need to maintain the relationship with places and the demand for mobility which is indifferent to it.

It is a condition from which the principal theories on the destiny of our moral reason have stemmed, like the positions of Antony Giddens and Zigmunt Bauman which range from Giddens' "radical modernity" to the "post-modern ethics of distance and temporality" affirmed by Bauman (Giddens 1990; Bauman 1993).

In this picture peripherisation does not necessarily have a negative meaning. Joel Kotkin uses the expression "new suburbanism" (Kotkin 2006, p. 76) to define the positive prospects of the process of peripherisation of the city, linked with availability of space. He asserts that, since the suburbs are in a particularly primordial phase of evolution, they "represent not the end of urbanism but its triumph in a completely new form and dimension" (Kotkin 2006, p. 76).

Peripherisation is also considered to be spontaneous geography in which a continuous need for a city represented by the tendency of the territory to "metropolise" is evident, a different, more extended modality of constructing relations and interdependence (Indovina et al. 2005), in some ways the will to demonstrate that the experience of relations and inter-action that we associate exclusively with the space of contact of the past continues to keep intact an internal susceptibility to reconsideration in the space and urban language of our time. An "internal susceptibility" that exists for example in the *banlieu,* the "uncertain city", a place of instability

but also of social practices that contain embryos of *civitas,* the functioning of which presupposes a set of social mediations between the individuals, and not individualism (Agier 1999).

But the world of the city is dissociating itself while it is, at this turn of century, the principal habitat of the inhabitants of our planet, in which life in the city, as it is being formed in the world today, relates to three main models: the "generic city" (Koolhaas 1996), the "bare city" and the *ban-lieu* or the "uncertain city" (Agier 1999). The first, as much a minority in facts as it is dominant as a model, reproduces in a fractal way the same privileged forms of circulation, communication and consumption, standardised and sterile, all over the surface of the globe. The second is, on the contrary, the space of extreme spoliation due to an increasing number of persons abandoned.[1] Between the two, finally, the "uncertain city" is a zone of ambiguity, of precarious social paths continually oscillating between failure and success.

Over-equipped, watched over and competitive, reducing interpersonal contact as much as possible, the *generic city* multiplies the zones of multiple solitudes and the technical instruments of distance communication. It is recognisable from one end to the other of the globe by all those who circulate in it and is increasingly identified with *the city.* Compared with the "bare city", which is a desolate area, a *wasteland,* and compared with the "uncertain city", which is the periphery, the generic city is *the centre.*

But it is the *centre* nowadays to be involved first in the process of involution of the city towards the simulacrum of itself, no longer representable. This is "the unexpected revenge of functionalism" (Chung et al. 2001), a "liquidatory" utopia (Cherchi 2001)[2] of the city which, as an entity without identity, can no longer be represented. The generic city, always the same as itself, cannot be represented, or better, is not representable using the forms and modalities with which we have represented the city over time. Painting and drawing were enough for the ancient city; the word gave an account of the industrial city; cinema and photography were sufficient for the twentieth century. "But the city of the twenty-first century escapes these technical means of representation (...). The city, in its classical significance, now no longer exists, but in its place and upon it a *simulacrum* of classical city is being built that is notably convincing. This simulacrum is *truthful* and this gives rise to our bewilderment" (de Azua 2003, p. 13).

The contemporary city cannot be represented because it has become a "simulacrum" of the city, light, fake, and as such, consumable, a copy of the copy of cities that have never existed, were never inhabited by any man but depended on mass consumption (de Azua 2003). Such are the shopping

malls, the theme-parks, everything that leads to the simulacrum-like panoramas into which the social imagination is being more and more incorporated. There is in some ways a significant correspondence between the *centre* of the city and the simulacrum city, the loss of the city as a conceptual unit. This possible horizon of modernity is a "liquidatory" vision of the city, which through pretence is masked by a conservative vision of its "historic heart". We could affirm that in general the majority of the European cities have, on one side, a "historicised", rather than *historic* heart, simply a ghostly scene of what the patrimony of their past seems to represent, according to their imagined ideas of their role in history, and, on the other, a periphery that is growing in a rapid but not systematic way, in which modernism has been the prevalent criterion in the division of the "free space" beyond the historic walls (Bruegmann 2006).

The obvious conclusion is that the clash between tradition and modernity was the mental scene of the peripheries in a much more radical way than it ever was in the historic centres of European cities. Since these peripheries did not receive any direct influence from the more emancipated cultural institutions, the populations of the suburbs, characterised by a rapid rhythm of growth, had to try to fill this gap. It is obvious that the outskirts underwent a much more direct influence of the mass media and became post-modern even before they had the chance to be modern. Strong individuals coming from the outskirts underwent radical initiation to alienation from any idea of the city as a refuge. The young people who grew up in those vulnerable contexts were trained to endure many more risks and nowadays tend to redefine cultural values in completely non-historic ways (Bruegmann 2006).

The recent riots in Paris demonstrated that there is a void among suburban youth − it is that of the centre − and that it consists of a socio-cultural void. This fracture will be the cause of further tension, but will also highlight an evolution in which the suburban contexts will perhaps obtain an advantage from their problems, and even take on a guiding role in thinking out social structures for the future (Bruegmann 2006). We should therefore wonder whether it is worth pursuing such a long, costly process of restructuring, from the city to recreate a centre (Sernini 1989), or whether we should work on the entire city, to improve the widespread geography of the centralities that already exist and work all around them. Work, for example, on the "uncertain city" of the outskirts.

Faced with the *centre* that opens up the way to involution of the city as a simulacrum of itself, the "uncertain city" of the outskirts shows, apart from its problems, the potential for regeneration of the city. This all suggests that the city of tomorrow will be shaped by the ties, struggles, passages and counter-balancing between these three paradigms, the uncertain city,

the bare city and the generic city. We wonder whether they will shrink or expand, if they will grow nearer or, on the contrary, move farther and farther away. But it is the uncertain city of the outskirts that is the *intermediate space,* in which the citizens reinvest their city in their relationships, their paths, their occupation of space. Survival strategies are always experienced in the intermediate space perhaps because there is an equivalence between intermediate space and public sphere, where everyone tries to smooth things out with reciprocally civilised behaviour, where all the citizens are certain of being able to live in reciprocal trust (Dahrendorf 2005).

The creation and location of public space is one of the lenses with which it is possible to penetrate these types of issues. At this moment we are experiencing a sort of public space crisis, deriving from its comercialisation, privatisation and *theme-parking*, which mixes up the space accessible to the public with public space. But we must not fall into this muddle. Public spaces need to be created by the practices and subjectivity of individuals; with their practices space users end up creating various types of "public dimension" (Sassen 2006).

In these places of intermediate space constituted by the outskirts the first steps of a new "public dimension" are still possible, of a social tie of proximity, a "minimal social life" (Agier 1999). It is the energy of hope that nurtures social and cultural creations and lays some frontiers open to debate, like those of the ghettoes, whether they be true or false.

Lewis Mumford defined the outskirts the "anti-city" but the outskirts are actually the reinvention of the city. It is probable that, compared with those of the city (the centre), suburban inhabitants will be more inclined to accept involvement in the school and the community. We should also remember that the outskirts are in a particularly primordial phase of evolution, and try to make "them represent not the end of urbanism but its triumph in a completely new form and dimension" (Kotkin 2006).

As Richard Sennett notes, in the modern city each social group has found its territory, a territory which over time has become strongly locked within itself. "There is still the false conviction that by mixing different functions or putting different people in the same place they will begin to interact. But how to get communities to effectively recognise, accept each other and interact is in the end a problem that requires visual meditation. It is a question of project" (Sennett 2006).

And the project should inquire into the concept of "public sphere", meaning a space in which individuals enjoy relations with strangers, where they meet people different from themselves and interact with them. It is commonly thought that the classical place where they can have such encounters is the densely inhabited centre of the city, but it is certainly not

the only one. According to Sennett, the *edge* between two communities of any type – be they differentiated in terms of race, economic condition or objectives planned – could be a site where people interact. The centre may also be a space in which many individuals similar to each other are concentrated, but it is the *edge* that becomes the true encounter zone (Sennett 2006), in that it is a space of *intermediation.*

Intermediation, in this meaning of the word, is thus a common feature of the relations between any community of practice and the external environment: it is a decidedly complex "activity". It requires transfer, coordination and alignment processes between the perspectives. It presupposes sufficient legitimisation to influence the development of a practice, mobilise attention and manage the conflicting interests. It also requires the capacity to bind practices, facilitating transactions between them and favouring learning by introducing the elements of one practice into another. To this end intermediation provides a participative link.

This need to coordinate the perspectives of various communities in order to achieve a particular aim and for more complete, harmonic development of the individual subjects operating within collective subjects gives further reason and strength to the idea that nowadays the tie between the first (individuals) and the second (organisations, communities, etc.) should be treated, rather than in terms of mere "belonging" (and therefore through a classically "groupist" approach) with a different perspective, more oriented towards the idea of Wittgenstein's "family resemblance", on which we previously dwelt.

Set theory has certainly provided an important, serious contribution to the analysis of organisations, though it proposes – as Lawvere[3] already began to point out in the sixties – an excessively *conceptualist,* if not *reductionist,* view that hinders acceptance of a plurality of basic universes. The proposal Lawvere himself made, followed increasingly by others, within the sphere of formal logic, to substitute the universe of sets with *topoi* was motivated by the need to admit that different *topoi* exist and this diversity does not mean it is impossible for us to grasp closely with a linguistic description and a conceptual interpretation the only universe we intend to refer to: the plurality of elementary *topoi* is a *datum* from which to depart which reflects the possibility of different contexts. As Mangione was already writing in 1976

the situation is completely different from the one that arises in the case of the theory of sets, where the uniqueness of the universe is sought in that it is conceived as the universe of mathematical concepts. The existence of set propositions in decidables, from this point of view, has a fundamental significance which in our opinion causes the idea of the universe of sets as the only universe of all concepts to run into a crisis. On the other hand, to accept, as some have done, the plurality of the theory of sets, seems to us to necessarily entail

abandoning the notion itself of set as a founding notion. In effect, it is not clear for what reason, once sets are no longer seen as concepts, each mathematical object should necessarily be *reconstructed* as a set object [...]. The concept of *topos,* or in general that of category allows, on the other hand, *direct* study of mathematical objects, that takes into account the fact that their properties result from the consideration of morphisms and transformations (Mangione 1976, pp. 426–427).

The theory of sets permits an application of mathematical concepts to the external world only via a reconstruction of the latter based on the presupposition that the context we are dealing with is unique, well-defined in outline and already "assimilated" and understood in its fundamental traits by theory, so that it does not prove easily compatible with an idea of reality as articulate, complex and moving (in the dual sense of reality that varies and knowledge of reality that changes). Within it, therefore, the acknowledgement of a plurality of fundamental ideas and contexts proves to be problematic.

The use of the set theory approach in the theory of organisations and communities has the defect of crushing too much the relationship between the individual and the collective subjects he is a member of onto relations of belonging, thus leading into the improvident and dangerous temptation of considering that relationship to be the only one we can and should deal with. Now it is clear and even too banal to say that a theory of collective subjects, however understood, whether organisations, communities or social structures, cannot but concentrate attention, in a decidedly prioritary way, on this type of relation.

This does not mean, however, not taking into account the fact that the individual, too, seems nowadays to be a more and more complex, we might say systemic, reality, the fruit of multiple (and ever growing) belonging to communities and different collective subjects at different levels and with different meanings and values which, as we have said, retroact on his nature and personality, modifying and articulating it. As Bachtin has written, in a very effective way: "Not the analysis of the conscience in the form of a unique, single I, but the analysis indeed of the interaction of many consciences endowed with equal rights and full value. A single conscience is devoid of self-sufficiency and cannot exist. I am aware of myself and become myself only when I reveal myself for the other, through the other and by the other. The most important acts that make up self-awareness are determined by the relationship with the other conscience (with the you); detachment, disunity, closing oneself off as the principal cause of loss of self. Not what occurs inside, but what happens at the *border* of one's own and the other's conscience, on the *threshold.* And everything that is internal is not self-sufficient, it is addressed outwards, dialogised, each internal experience reaches the border, meets others, and

in this encounter full of tension lies all its substance. It is a higher degree of sociality (not external, not of things, not internal). In this Dostoievskij opposes all decadent and idealistic (individualistic) culture, the culture of radical, desperate solitude. He asserts the impossibility of solitude, the illusoriness of solitude. The existence of man (be it external or internal) is *very deep communication. To be* means *to communicate.* Absolute death (not being) is the impossibility of being heard, recognised, remembered. To be means to be for the other, through the other, for the self. Man does not have a sovereign internal territory, but is always and ever at the border, and, looking inwards, he looks *into the eyes of the other and with the eyes of the other*" (Bachtin 1988, pp. 323–324).

The relationship of alterity is thus a constituent element of the I, in that it is found again within the subject, that is itself dialogue, I/other relationship, which develops and builds itself up indeed in the relations and constant interaction with the other individual subjects and collective subjects he belongs to. Thus, the relations between man and the organisations and communities he is a member of is different from the relationship between the insect and the swarm, which is exclusive and marks not only deeply but fully the being and the behaviour of the ant, rather than that of the termite or the bee. And this difference should not be denied, hidden, neglected or in some way toned down, but must be given the maximum importance, in that the wealth of collective subjects, the depth and efficacy of their cognitive patrimony are indeed in this variety, determined by the fact that each single individual becomes part of them with their whole set of ideas, knowledges, premises and values that come to him from this multiple belonging.

In that case the "two by two" relations between these different communities and "family resemblances" that the subject involved manages to obtain from them, his efforts in thinking and constructing "intermediation" relationships between the different collective subjects he belongs to, from which later projectuality will spring, that which we have defined as the capacity "to see and think differently" and therefore creativity, cannot be conceived as obstacles and "deviations"; they are, on the other hand, essential constituent elements of the life itself and activity of the said collective subjects, that cannot be ignored. Here lies indeed the deep sense of the difference between *collective intelligence,* which presupposes the non-problematic availability of a common nucleus, in which everybody recognises themselves and can therefore be taken as a departure base for relations between individual subject and community of belonging, and *connective intelligence*, which is an expression that tends on the other hand to enhance and emphasise courses of dialogue, exchange and encounter between different flexible subjects, capable of linking together,

integrating and making converge forms of life and production of very different types of knowledge. This difference is nowadays further amplified and necessarily exalted by the dynamics tied to the flows of emigrant populations, which render communities more and more complex and "hybrid" and, multiplying and intensifying the contacts and interchange relationships between different cultures and traditions, expanding their respective identities and articulating them to a notable extent, always more varied internally. It is precisely thanks to this uncompressable (and at this point insuppressible) heterogeneity between its components that the "shared background" of knowledges and objectives is the result of tiring, complicated and not always fruitful, construction that cannot be unnaturally simplified or accelerated. This background is, in effect, the fruit of the internal relations and capacity for dialogue and interaction of these components which, as is increasingly frequently and rightly stressed, constitutes the authentic wealth of all collective subjects, however meant.

Notes

[1] The second figure adopted by Agier is the *bare city*, which represents the space of extreme spoliation due to the increasing number of persons abandoned, a world that is in some ways the opposite of the generic city, the reciprocal that excludes. In the farthest peripheries of the world we find populations subjected to exodus or uprooted, often scorned by their immediate neighbourhood. Cf. Agier 1999.

[2] Placido Cherchi (2001) refers in this essay to an article by Caillois (1975).

[3] See, for example, Lawvere 1963, pp. 869–873, 1966, pp. 1–21, 1973, 1975, pp. 135–156.

Changes in the Communication Model:
from Jakobson to Lotman

This growing internal stratification of the social and community fibres, with a consequent multiplication of the codes and memories present within them, is notably affecting communication processes and the ways in which these become extrinsic within collective subjects, determining a consequent variation in reference models.

We have just emphasised, when speaking of the "intermediate" relationship between different collectivities and organisations, that the multiplicity and great variety of contexts into which the daily experience of each of us is articulated, amplifies and expands enormously the possibility an individual subject has to belong simultaneously to various communities, some of which close-knit and others more ample. This variegated belonging is also facilitated by the common background which, thanks to the increasingly frequent, stable and effective possibilities of contact and interchange, is being built up between these communities. It is a case of something that oscillates clearly between a maximum, which is the shared platform tying each individual to his most personal, close-knit circle, and a minimum, which is what is required to communicate with the components of the networks of greater extension and universality.

This background, or "horizon of common sense" should not therefore be seen or thought of as a static, homogeneous whole: it is actually a deeply stratified, dynamic aggregate, the embodied coexistence also of socio-ideological contradictions between present and past, between the various epochs of the past, between the various social and cultural groups of the present, between the ideals, interests, vocations and expectations of which the "notional world" of each individual is the expression and at the crossroads of which it is defined and gradually articulated. And it is indeed their internal dynamics and stratification that give these "points of view on the world" the chance to enter a reciprocal relationship and weigh each other up; for thanks to these features of theirs, they can integrate each other, be dialogically correlated, contradict each other, meet and coexist in the minds of the single individuals and communities they are part of.

It should be recalled on this subject that these days we are finding ourselves faced more and more with a profound change in the way in which social relations are established and interweave and groups and communities are formed. What counts in these processes of aggregation is no longer an already available identity, which in some way picks out and already describes collective subjects and thus constitutes an element of attraction, around which to construct and consolidate interpersonal relations. With the network and in the network relations are established that have no regard for age, sex, race, appearance and other characteristics that are obvious when one is physically present, while they simply do not prove to be perceptible in a dialogue conducted by computer, and will however be guided by a common interest, whatever kind this be, which is tied to what is said on the spot, to how it is said and to the conditions in which we tend to say something, all contingent elements, which indeed due to this give rise to the formation of temporary, unstable communities, that are made and unmade with great ease and rapidity as regards the motivations and interests of a specific, particular instant.

It is precisely for this reason that, with regard to this new typology of groups, we speak of *adhoc-cracy,* a term that indicates a way of constituting collective subjects, guided, indeed, by spontaneous factors of aggregation, linked with the moment and with occasional convergence, set up *ad hoc* to encounter each other on a particular, specific theme which attracts the attention in a phase of life just as particular and circumscribed.

Socialisation processes are consequently more and more characterised by this coexistence of real communities and groups, tied by common belonging to a *place* and to an identity, however understood and defined, and virtual, *ad hoc* communities that are built up on the basis of what is said on the spot and also lead to the formation of fictional personal identities, adopted exclusively for the purpose of participating in the internal life of that virtual community, in the manifestation of "as if" personalities, just as *virtual* as the communities within which they are displayed. In the face of this multiplicity of heterogeneous points of view, opinions and assessments that, moreover, do not necessarily rest on a homogeneous tangible entity (for example, on the same portion of physical space) that might act in some way as a bonding agent and first base of convergence and thus of dialogical exchange, Jakobson's traditional communication model, schematised in the following diagram, shows the limits and shortcomings that actually make it unable to be applied (Fig. 1):
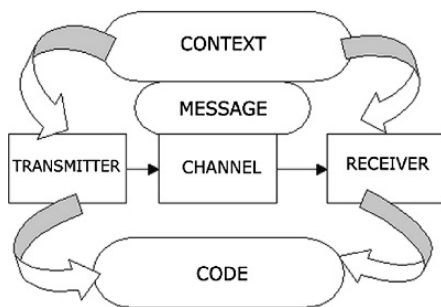
Fig. 1. Jakobson's communication model

In this model, in effect, it is taken for granted that the sender and addressee (or transmitter and receiver), due to the fact that they are in the same context and use the same code, which obviously takes into account the distinctiveness of the channel being used, can exchange messages in an unproblematic manner. Reality is usually, however, much more complex. As Lotman in fact observes

The addresser encodes the message with the help of a set of codes, of which only a part are present in the decoding consciousness of the addressee. It is for this reason that all understanding, no matter how many developed semiotic systems are used is partial and approximative. But it is important to emphasize that a degree of non-understanding cannot be interpreted as only "noise" – a harmful consequence of an imperfection of the system, which is not present in the idealized schema. The growth of non-understanding and/or inadequate understanding may bear witness to the technical defects in the system of communications, but it may also be an indicator of the increased complexity of this system, its capacity to fulfill ever more complex and important cultural functions. If one draws up a scale, according to the degree of complexity, of systems of social communication from the language of traffic signals to the language of poetry, then it becomes obvious that the growth of ambiguity in the decoding cannot be ascribed only to the technical faults in any particular type of communication. It follows that the act of communication (in any sufficiently complex, and consequently culturally valuable, instance) should be seen not as a simple transmission of a message which remains adequate to itself from the consciousness of the addresser to the consciousness of the addressee, but as a *translation* of a text from the language of my "I" to the language of your "you". The very possibility of such a translation is determined by the fact that the codes of both participants in the communication, although not identical, form intersecting sets. But since, in the given act of translation, a certain part of the message is always cut off, and "I" am submitted to a transformation in the course of translation into language "you", what is lost is just the individuality of the addressee, that is, what, from the point of view of the whole, is the most valuable thing in the message. The situation would be hopeless if the received part of the message did not contain indications as to how the addressee should transform his personality in order to understand the lost part of the message. In this way the non-identity of the partners in the communication turns just this fact from a passive transmission into a game of conflict in the course of which each side aims to reconstruct the semiotic world of his opponent according to his own model, and at the same time is interested in the preservation of his partner's individuality (Lotman 1979, pp. 90–91).

Communication is possible only if this shareability of notions and beliefs is presupposed or if, when it is lacking, instead of ignoring its absence, an effort is made to start off and gradually develop an activity of working out a common, shared group of ideas and points of view on the "world". Language cannot therefore be considered the prerequisite of believing, but the two aspects are to be considered in parallel, in the sense that language becomes all the more efficacious and communication all the more successful, the more the beliefs of the speakers are "registered" and brought into tune together.

The crisis of the traditional communication model has been further accentuated by the impact of information technology and communication on complex socio-economic systems which has imposed more and more, through the network model, the diffusion of a paradigm, that of *distributed intelligence,* of which the Internet represents the expression and, so to speak, the "materialisation". It is in effect the result of spontaneous cooperation, not guided by any higher level or by any "production room", of local components, including small ones, giving rise through their interconnection to an intelligent system, the power and efficacy of which grow in relation to the quantity of messages exchanged and the interactions that develop within it.

As has been seen, from this springs a way of conceiving and understanding intelligence characterised no longer by privileged reference to a single subject, or to several subjects distinguished by the fact that they see things from the same point of view and consequently adopt the same initial hypotheses and premises, but instead to several agents, that operate concurrently, made up of open conceptual systems. From these relations between different agents a process of *exteriorisation of intelligence* emerges, that becomes a process supported and disclosed by the network, giving place to a form of intelligence (connective) that can produce (and usually does produce) learning and innovation, improving skills and services not only of the system in its entirety, but also of the individuals belonging to it. Precisely for this reason the digital society, as Granieri (2005) has recently pointed out, in contrast with all the other great epochs of history, was not born of intuition, of the will and action of few, but from the collaboration of millions of people. In this scenario today perspectives open up whose future effects are difficult to foresee. The Weblog network, for example, which is a space where any individual, even without technical skills, can publish what he likes on the Web, is modifying the network, changing it into an authentic "public sphere", which is stimulating new forms and modalities of participation within which a "shared background" is being built up and is gradually extending of opinions and knowledges, and relations of reciprocal trust between the various subjects are established

and consolidated. When "connective" or "distributive intelligence" is spoken of, as we have just done, we are not, therefore, referring to abstract concepts, to interpretative patterns, but to concrete processes underway, the manifestations and effects of which are at this point visible and tangible, and have not by chance reached the point of becoming the subject of study of entire waves of researchers, who are actively making efforts to understand its mechanisms and describe the logics governing its functioning. The growth of these processes is fed and sustained by infrastructures that are inexpensive and easy to install, like Wi-FI wireless which has at this point reached performance levels exceeding those of cabled networks, achieving a theoretic speed of 240 Mbps, or by technologies like WMAX, PowerLine Communication, the earth digital, that enables that internal "digital divide" to be surpassed which runs on the thread of economic convenience of the first generation broadband (optical fibres and ADSL).

In this scenario the possibilities that are opening up as regards the development and generalised diffusion of learning processes have now reached a situation finding its limits only in projectual capacity and initiative: suffice to think of the fact, to give a single example, that a prestigious university like Berkeley, has made entire courses and events available live and on-demand on IPod (The Ipod University, webcast. Berkeley.edu). All this is well known, it is the subject of numerous analyses differing in depth. What is spoken of less and is, however, of the greatest importance and worthy of the highest interest, is what the consequences and implications of this growing hybridisation of the organic and the technical will be. We can get a first suggestion of response to this question, in many ways crucial, from some recent reflections by Marco Susani, Director of the Advanced Concept Group, Motorola Cambridge and ex-Director of Domus Academy Research Centre in Milan and, in particular, his reference to what he calls the "era of the aura".

Susani's thoughts also depart from the concept of space, but they revolve around the "space of communication" rather than that of action, and they move in a specific way towards a "border space", an intermediate space that *lies between* that of person-to-person communication (one-to-one, like the old telephone), to that of more extended communication (one-to-many, like mass media).

This *third space* is that of the world of mobile wireless communication which, in a future that is ever nearer and the outlines of which are clearly taking shape, will support forms of multiple communication. It is neither identified with material space nor digital space, but is instead the result of "digital extension of physical space and is thus configured as digital space linked without end to real space".[1] It is not, therefore, a virtual space that

would like to reproduce and substitute real space through the creation of a hyper-realist analogy, but "a threshold-space, which includes real people, material information, representations of people presented in some way in the shared environments created by telecommunications, and production of documents (way of expression of distance information).

The space comprising these existences and this kind of relation will constitute the other space, the objective of which is not to represent the space we suppose to be real, deriving from linear perspective, but that of working out an original point of view, fresh dynamics and fluidity".[2]

Thus the idea is questioned according to which space can be reduced exclusively to its material and metric dimension, made of forms and architectures that are silent and measurable. What is referred to is, on the other hand, a space informed by the presence of individuals, groups, fluid subjectivity, networks of relations. This is a physical and relational space at the same time: a *third space* (Soja 1996)*,* worked out and experienced from physical representations and mental perceptions. A *lived* space.

What we have called here the "third space" is thus the fluid space of social interactions, communication flows, and is continuously fed thanks to the whole set of information on existing relationships between the various social agents that produce unlimited spaces: those perceived from different points of view and those that are generated through the various, multiple relations between the agents themselves. Nothing, therefore, it is worth repeating, to do with "virtual reality"; what we are talking about is rather the *reality of the network,* which has nothing to share with virtual reality in the true sense of the expression, as it is in fact in opposition to it, in that it is the result of the social linking that is increased and extended more and more through networks.

This space of the networks becomes a set of places thanks to the fact that within it new forms of "tribal" communities are incessantly formed and act which, once more, are not necessarily characterised by *physical proximity* – a group of friends in the same city – but by *proximity of interests,* the fact, for example, of sharing a passion for the same type of music, or habitually exchanging images, like photographs or video clips, texts or information of any other kind.

Mobile communication equipment like cell phones, apart from multiplying these possibilities of linking and creating social relations obviously also renders them more and more independent from the physical space where people find themselves; they favour the continuity of communication of everyone with everyone else and consequently increase the possibility of self-organisation of these new forms of aggregation and social cohesion, which become alternative but complementary to the existing social groups. If compared with the computer, in effect, wireless

mobile equipment, since it can be used anywhere, has a less disgregating function compared with the existing social environments in physical space, for it does not isolate the users in a context of interaction separated from the habitual social environments.

They can consequently be considered catalysts of social linking for they "increase" relationships and interpersonal relations, extending them outside physical space, too, but without compromising the continuity of communicative flows and the interactions within such flows. This possibility of *increasing relations* is obviously destined to grow with the availability of mobile solutions and instruments for transmitting images, videos, music, texts and information of all kinds that are ever more powerful and easy to use. The territory of our life is therefore destined to become more and more hazy.

We can at this point place the concept of *proximity* into this complex scenario, as the "space of relations around us", around our body and person, and ask ourselves, as indeed Susani does, what impact and incidence the panorama we have briefly outlined has on this concept. His reply is that the latter must necessarily be updated and reviewed according to the increasingly invasive presence of "third space", which marks the arrival of what he calls, indeed, "aural technology", or "the era of the aura". The aura is the *communicative pattern,* the form of the space of communications generated by the various typologies of interaction and information exchange between different individuals and by the variety of modalities of internal structure of communities, which may be, for example, symmetrical, without dominant roles, or asymmetrical, with someone exercising a superordinate function compared with that of the others. The spreading, fed and supported by wireless media, of the possibility of everyone continuously communicating with everyone else, beyond the traditional one-to-one and one-to-many patterns, produces modalities of diffusion that Susani calls "viral", in which the transmission of the message of the message of the message gives rise to a kind of social space that multiplies, that is infinite. It is a case of a type of *fractal* space, which represents the greatest combination of physical presence and distance communication mediated by the technologies currently available.

Each single individual − at the moment in which he communicates, depending on how he does it and on, the type of community he belongs to − "emits" an aura of information and messages, consisting of the baggage of interpersonal relations he has available and is able to activate; each single subject contributes not only his own patrimony of personal, contextualised information, but also that which De Kerckhove has recently[3] called *reputation capital*, or the value of personal reputation he takes into the space of communication to which he has access (in the case

of the network, for example, through *personal* publishing, forums and blogs). At the same time he has access to different services and information depending on where he is; he also belongs simultaneously to many different spheres or auras of communication.

The mechanisms of interaction between the latter can, according to Susani, provide new interpretative keys to the influence technologies have on society. In particular, instead of entrusting ourselves to the simple spontaneity of the potential communication between everyone and everyone else, it proves not only possible but desirable, especially for the aims of extending and enhancing *governance* and the capillary diffusion of mechanisms of management and government of the territory, to progressively structure the informative flows articulating them at several levels. If, for example, the fundamental role of *strategic planning* is referred to, which, in the opinion of many, constitutes the main instrument for relaunching projectuality both public and private through new forms of decisional coordination, it is easy to establish how this instrument requires articulate and differentiated forms of communication.

Strategic planning may, in effect, be defined as the collective construction of a shared view of the future of a given territory, through processes of participation, discussion, listening; a pact between different administrators, actors, citizens and partners to realise this view through a strategy and consequent series of projects, interconnected in various ways, justified, assessed and shared; and finally, as the coordination of responsibilities taken by the different actors in realising such projects.

It thus:
- privileges perspective and scenario analyses;
- leads local complexity and specificity back to a single strategic plan;
- operates in an openly pragmatic dimension, aware of acting in a context of limited rationality, and consequently adopts dynamic, flexible behaviour in relation to the definition of objectives and actions;
- trusts iterative learning processes and revision;
- promotes extended participation and consultation of interests and the civil society, evaluating projects on the grounds of their coherence with the general strategy and (current) principles of urbanistic compatibility and sustainability;
- attributes strategic relevance to the implementative phases of the plan;
- assigns an eminently persuasive, promotional function to the plan documents.

Within it, therefore, communication carries out a primary, indispensable function; but to be able to prove effective, communicative processes have to perform different functions in the various phases of planning development.

For example, a first moment of free, little-structured communication, dedicated to generalised listening of opinions, evaluations, needs and objectives present within the context in question, with the aim of paying due attention to all the various components into which the community is divided and their legitimate interests, should be followed, if it is hoped to reach the desired, necessary convergence of evaluations and decisions within a shared background, by more organised phases, during which listening and reception begin to be structured around the first macroscopic aims that have emerged as priorities in the preceding stage.

Naturally, also as far as these aims are concerned, different approaches may be registered that lead to hypotheses of alternative solutions, and thus the projectual effort in this phase should be that of working out a first spectrum of possible hypotheses that take this variety of orientations into account as much as possible. On the plane of communication this is obviously the most delicate stage since it requires the availability of instruments and initiatives (forums, blogs, chats, on-line events, etc.) that favour surpassing the partial views and interests and their framing within a more general view and perspective. It is a case of activating on-line interchange and dialogue environments that are simultaneously *open* and *oriented* around well-defined themes and at least partly pre-elaborated and tending towards the progressive construction and strengthening of a community to which each individual subject feels he belongs, accepting therefore to take on its general interests, too. Once the necessary spirit of cohesion has emerged and is consolidated, it is possible to proceed with the development of an authentic project, focalised around the elements that mostly prove to be shared, to then be submitted for a final encounter with the community in its entirety and their assessment.

These different typologies of communication must always take adequately into account the presence and growing influence of the new spatial typologies, which are developing following the digital extension of our physical bodies and cannot, as said earlier, be without consequences as far as concerns the definition of the space of our proximity no longer only physical but social, and understood therefore as a space of relations around our bodies. Thus, just as architects have always influenced and extended our perception of physical space by using light or sound, or the dynamic sequence of environments with different proportions, in the same way interactive means and telecommunications systems, relating to the mobile devices and wireless media, must somehow affect our organisation of space and *increase* (in the sense of dilating and enhancing) it.

On the modalities and courses of this impact Susani is, rightly in our opinion, very cautious, in the sense that he considers the impetuous development of information and communication technologies, the growing popularity of networks and the more and more ramified diffusion of their use, all to be *necessary* conditions but *not yet sufficient* to produce the above result. In his opinion, in effect, a sense of actual belonging to the "third space", which is the prerequisite for speaking effectively of its progressive embodiment within the space of what we may call our "social proximity" (i.e. the space of our interpersonal relations), may occur only if the design, planning and realisation of new devices, information services and new interactive means manage to interpret and make mature the need for a common, social, digital space. This will be able to happen, in its turn, only on condition that the theme of mobile devices, wireless media and respective support and services proceed in harmony with the creation of new social and collective environments that might be reached using these instruments and with the emergence, through collective learning, of a culture which is, too, suitable and appropriate for this willingness and opportunities. An interesting analogy can be proposed on this point, suggested by the results of some scientific experiments. After training some monkeys to retrieve some small pieces of food using a little rake, researchers "noticed that during repeated use of the tool the visual receptive field anchored to the hand expanded to the extent of including the internal space of the hand *and* the rake – almost as though the image of the latter were incorporated in that of the hand. On the other hand, when the animal stopped using the tool, though still holding it in its hand, the receptive fields went back to their normal extension. Holding out the hand due to using the rake entailed a widening of the space the monkey could reach, and therefore *readjustment* of *near* and *far:* the neurons which are activated in the presence of objects in the peripersonal space also responded to stimuli which they previously had not codified as they were *far* (or *outside* their space), but which now, by using the rake, became *near*" (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2006, pp. 72–73).

The analogy we were speaking of consists of suggesting a possible link between the small rake the monkey uses to pick up morsels of food and bring them towards itself and the products offered by the new technologies. Just as the first has to be "incorporated" and felt like an extension of the hand so that a corresponding widening of peripersonal space can be achieved, thus the second and the networks, that are their most "tangible" expression, in order to have an influence on the space of our social relations, and widen it considerably so that the result of this extension is felt as a "place" we can "inhabit" and where we can invest and channel meanings and symbols so as to make it "ours" and recognisable,

must be assimilated deeply and also conceived as an actual extension of our mind. In its turn the latter has to be conceived and felt not like something detached from the body, or even alien to it, but instead, on the one hand, an extension of it and, on the other, the result of a process of "projection" outside it, through the potential inherent in the project (in Italian *pro-getto, gettare* = to throw, throw oneself ahead, ideas, plan, proposal to carry out a job or a correlated system of lines of action and interventions aimed at a predetermined objective) and in all the capacities this activates.

Notes

[1] M. Susani, *Le tiers espace*. Alliage, nn. 50-51, *Le spectacle de la technique*, http://www.tribunes.com/tribune/alliage/50-51.

[2] *Ibidem*.

[3] This intuition was presented by De Kerckhove during *brainstorming* for the project "Mondi Attivi", organised by Carlo Infante.

Intermediate Space as the Space for Effective Communication

Apart from the meaning Susani provides for it, the "third space" can, however, also be described in close connection with communicative and strategic processes, in particular with Lotman's model of communication. The latter's idea of communication as a fundamentally *bilingual* process, which therefore requires "translation" from the addresser's language to that of the addressee, and vice versa, makes a dual need emerge for the two subjects involved: on the one hand, that of managing to communicate, namely to *make* their information *common,* and, on the other, to make sure their communication has maximum *value* and *efficacy,* i.e. that it leads to the generation of new information for both. The first requirement leads to communication being seen as *transmission of messages* and to the mechanism of creating *metalanguages* being accounted for. The latter have a precise function, well exemplified by the process of affirmation of the standard national languages: when a cultural or social system acquires structural maturity, on the part of the sub-systems into which it divides, the need to affirm their autonomy is manifested. It would be useless and dangerous to try to oppose this tendency by limiting ourselves simply to reaffirming a unit organised in a hierarchical, centralistic way. To avoid autonomy turning into a "tower of Babel" it is necessary to proceed with

the creation of a metalanguage for the given culture. On the basis of the metalanguage there arises the metalevel on which the culture constructs its ideal self-portrait. The self-description of culture is a legitimate stage in its development, the significance of which lies partly in that the very fact of description deforms the object described by giving it greater organisation. A language, when it gets a grammar, is by this fact put onto a higher degree of structural organization compared with its pre-grammatical stage (Lotman 1979, p. 92).

In the case of a language, for example, this level of secondary structuring emerges and matures when a grammar is made for it, thanks to which a higher degree of structural organisation is imposed than the preceding one. "The metamechanism of culture establishes a unity between the parts that strive for autonomy and becomes a language in which internal intercourse inside that culture is carried on. It contributes to the

unification of separate structural nodes. Through it the isomorphism of the culture as a whole and its parts comes into being" (Lotman 1979, p. 93). By simplifying the complexity and variety of the real, metalanguages confer unitariness and existence on the cultural collectives, and concretely facilitate communication. The second requirement, that of maximising efficacy of communication refers to the fact that the value of the latter lies not in what the addresser and addressee share at the outset, but in the possibility of comparing and creating dialogue between the respective differences, memories and languages that are not shared. As Lotman underlined on several occasions, the *paradox of communication* lies in what makes it difficult, at worst impossible, precisely because it is in this situation that the need to *translate the untranslatable* is imposed, thus generating new meanings and, if it comes to it, a new *hybrid culture*.

What is touched upon here is an extremely important point as far as communication is concerned, the presuppositions it requires and its relationship with language. What Lotman highlights is that non-fictitious communication, which can and must be realised between two subjects who start off with a different "package of beliefs", and between whom there are not, therefore, the same codes and memory that enable smooth, transparent communication, depends on the possibility that each of the two speakers is able to recognise the beliefs of the other in relation to the same context, simulate them and incorporate them in his own "semiotic world", constructing a reliable model of them.

In the sphere of the communicative process that arises between the two subjects in question, what, following La Cecla (1997), we might call the space of "misunderstanding" is inevitably interposed, i.e. the place where the "border takes shape" (La Cecla 1997, p. 9), which becomes "intermediate space", precisely because it is through the initial mis-interpretation, and the misunderstanding that is a result of it, that the differences, the various ways of seeing the world and the variety of styles of thought are defined. In the space of the encounter/clash the misunderstanding becomes a stimulus and occasion for translation of languages, a sort of compromise aimed at achieving understanding. As Vladimir Jankélévitch writes, quoted by La Cecla himself, "the misunderstanding carries out a social function: it is society itself; it fills in the space between individuals with cotton wool, feathers, absorbing lies" (Jankélévitch 1981 quoted in La Cecla 1997, p. 30). This initial border from demarcation line ends up progressively becoming "a neutral zone, where identity, reciprocal identities, can face each other, remaining separated indeed by a misunderstanding" (La Cecla 1997, p. 9). The misunderstanding is thus strongly correlated with the idea of encounter, namely with the possibility that two different people, through messages not

fully understood initially, neither by one nor the other, gradually manage to know and understand each other and establish a reciprocal balance that gives place to a third entity, intersubjective and of a systemic type, within which the best characteristics of the two original subjects may emerge and progressively gain ground. From this picture, then, two types of communication arise that are quite different, as far as their value and meaning is concerned and the contribution they can provide in terms of creativity:

- the one we can define, in slightly extreme terms, with the purpose of highlighting as much as possible its distinctive trait, *banal communication,* which develops entirely within the background shared by the addresser and the addressee, in the space we can call *intersection* between their codes and memories, which thus does not in any way extend its range and is not a harbinger of truly innovative knowledge and information;

- and *efficacious communication,* which happens outside the above-mentioned shared background, in a reciprocally extraneous space and thus entails an inevitable *twist of meaning,* its translation, from which that "space of misunderstanding" La Cecla speaks of cannot but emerge, at least initially. In this case the boundary between addresser and addressee, which takes on such importance as to rise to being a key concept, takes shape first of all as a *line of demarcation* that seems almost insurmountable. It is only with the practice of interchange and through reciprocal dialogue that this boundary takes on bit by bit the appearance of a porous limit that is permeable, like the sheath of a cell, and from the cultural point of view is to be considered a place of continuous processes of translation, a sort of set of *semiotic filters.* In this way it progressively turns into an interface that non only permits a translation that is at last reliable, but causes the space of misunderstanding and initial reciprocal extraneity to be replaced little by little by a background at least partially shared.

Reference to this distinction and the clear option in favour of the second modality of communication enables Lotman to characterise his approach in terms of a substantial upsetting of perspective with respect to both of the two main western semiotic traditions, that of the Peirce-Morris current and that of the line going back to Saussure. In spite of their undeniable theoretical differences, according to Lotman they are actually united by a very similar analysis perspective, which favours the search for the *atomic, simple* element, to reconstruct from it the complex fact, as results, for example, from the centrality attributed by both to the concept of sign. An approach that then led to the whole being considered in a tendentiously

ontological way as the sum of its parts. Whereas Lotman's orientation departs from the assumption "that systems made up of elements that are clearly separate one from the other and functionally univocal do not exist in reality in a condition of isolation. Their division into parts is only a heuristic necessity. None of them, taken separately, is able to really function. It only does so if immersed in a semiotic continuum full of formations of different kinds placed at various levels of organisation" (Lotman 1985, p. 56).

This continuum that makes the social life of relations and communication possible, Lotman calls the *semiosphere*, by analogy with the concept of *biosphere* – the ambit necessary for biological survival of the living being – introduced by a scientist who greatly influenced his thought, Vernadskij (1863–1945), the founder of a new evolutionist trend in mineralogy and biogeochemistry. This organicist metaphor in fact enables the semiosphere to be conceived as a single large *ambience:* "the primary role will not belong therefore to this or that brick, but to the *great system* called semiosphere. The semiosphere is that semiotic *space* outside which the existence of semiosis is not possible" (Lotman 1985, p. 58), and therefore of communication itself.

With the passage from the classical communication model, that of Jakobson, to the alternative one proposed by Lotman, the barycentre of the communicative process shifts from the centrality of the message and the subjects involved in this process (addresser and addressee) towards the intermediate space between them, which can be more or less full, in the case of the presence of a shared background, acting as ground for intersection between the respective codes, or entirely empty, in the case of reciprocal extraneity of the two.

This empty space is not, however, a simple nothing, a simple absence or lack, the non-being that cancels out the being, but the place belonging to communication, i.e. a *nothing that excites and stimulates the latter* and from which its actual possibility springs. To properly understand the sense of this apparently obscure statement, it is sufficient to go to the origin of the term "*symbolon*". This is, as is known, an ancient Greek term indicating a precise object, which might correspond to a modern identity card. It is based on a specific object split into two parts: each half is a *symbolon*, the whole joined together is totality, completeness; and it may be a pot, a vase, a seal or any other thing. *Symbolon* derives from *symballo*, which means "to put together"; therefore the symbol is one of the two parts, half of the whole, which needs the other half and must be put together with it to recreate unity and trigger recognition, and therefore communication. The opposite of *symbolon*, still in the ancient Greek language, is *symbolon, diabolon* from *diaballo*, which means "to separate,

divide", and indicates a falsified card, i.e. the half that does not fit properly and has therefore been forged, the false part that does not create unity.

The "symbol", therefore, stands for what is not valid just for its content, but for the *possibility of being exhibited.* It enables the other to be *recognised*, even though not personally known; this power of recognition it has, and therefore its meaning, is not in either of the two material halves into which it was originally split, nor in the persons owning it, but in the *dividing line* that is the result of their separation and in which lies the possibility of confirming or not the perfect fit of these two halves. The dividing line, from the material point of view, is a nothing, but a nothing that is not a simple absence, but something where indeed the *symbolic function* lies, which coincides with its own being and happening. This line originally refers back to itself, and grants meaning both to the presence of the reality of the designated (the material *object*, each of the two halves of the seal split into two), and of the presence of the designatory intentions of the bearer (the *subject* who keeps it as a guarantee of hospitality given or received and who can therefore perennially remember those who gave him hospitality, or vice-versa, those he gave hospitality to, by looking at his fragment and thinking of the missing part of it).

In the same way, even if the two protagonists of the communicative process, who do not yet have a shared background acting as a space of intersection of their codes and memories, find themselves, due to the fact of being in a communicative stance, in a situation of *distanced co-belonging* to the same process, this makes the space separating them (the intermediate space) begin, at the same time, to place them in a reciprocal relationship and therefore unite them. So this space which separates and unites at the same time, or rather constitutes the division which *therefore* unifies, is the matrix, the original place and privileged space of communication, which finds, consequently, its most appropriate collocation precisely in the intermediate space, on the border that initially separates and is the line of demarcation; it gradually takes shape and becomes a "buffer space" with two faces, one facing towards the addresser and the other towards the addressee, the seat of those continuous processes of translation, a sort of set of *semiotic filters* of which, as we have said, Lotman speaks.

Mundialisation, Globalisation, Localisation

It is worth working further on this notion of "intermediate space" and exploring its nature of border space, which introduces the interface into the often chaotic process of coexistence and interchange between different codes, memories and traditions, i.e. the threshold of the passage and gradual translation, of change to some extent controlled, which is configured therefore as a surface of accumulation of experience and knowledge, thanks to which the border itself may "take shape" and little by little become structured, taking on the function of "line of friction and resistance". This, however, does not exclude all things but selects and bit by bit assimilates what may prove useful for reciprocal comprehension and dialogue between the parties involved. It is worth it, as reference to it may provide a way out of the wilderness of contrasts, as radical as they are unproductive, between the needs of the "global" and those of the "local".

The acceleration without precedent of the development of informatics and the change in forms of communication brought about by the telematic revolution, which we have spoken of above, are producing the phenomenon generally named "globalisation of processes".

With regard to similar changes that we have already known for some time, such as internationalisation (the process of commercial exchange between different nations) and multinationalisation (the transfer and delocalisation of resources from one national economy to another), globalisation is distinguished by a substantial *simultaneousness of the events* that happen from one point of the planet to another and by a parallel *spatial indifference* of the phenomena that affect each other regardless of spatial difference. As an immediate consequence, a substantial *homogeneity of places* derives from this, with no place, so to speak, outside the systemic space.

To fully understand the nature of these phenomena which uniform and deterritorialise technology and economy and accompany, as we will see, a concomitant process of differentiation and reterritorialisation of identity, we need to grasp the specific features differentiating it, at least in an initial phase, from situations and developments that have already been underway for some time and are only apparently similar to globalisation in the true sense of the word. We mean to refer, in particular, to the mundialisation

objective of many issues characterising the existence of humanity, which indeed for this reason cannot be faced and solved successfully by this or that people (and the governments that guide them). This state of affairs, which marks the current phase of development at an international level, still appears "critical" for it has not yet been possible to launch efficacious supra-national institutions, able to face such questions with adequate powers and instruments, or to give a new, more functional order to those that already exist.

In effect, it is unthinkable to set in motion a solution, through the differentiated commitments of some single nations, to the general problems of humanity, such as the elimination of the possibility of wars, "control" of demographic expansion, decay of the human environment, prevention of the unparalleled violence on religious, ethnic or other grounds, the extremely poor economic condition of tens of millions of human beings, non-ethical use of science and technology and the proliferation of dreadful weapons.

On the other hand, that humanity has undertaken, though it has only just started, with, however, insufficient results and too long realisation periods, the route of cooperation between people, may be demonstrated in various ways. Here it appears sufficient to refer to the following:

– the creation firstly of the Society of Nations and, following the Second World War, more adequately and efficaciously, the Organisation of the United Nations;
– the internationalisation of economy, science and technology is a reality that has now been acquired and is almost irreversible, witnessed also on the plane of commercial cooperation and freedom first by the GATT agreements (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and then by the Conference of Marrakesh that gave rise, indeed, to the WTO (World Trade Organisation);
– in Europe integration between States is an irreversible reality that has now reached the level of the economic and monetary Union;
– in various parts of the world the creation has been achieved of important spaces of cooperation of various types between States, like NAFTA between Canada, the United States and Mexico, Mercosur comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, Anzcerta created by Australia and New Zealand, and Ansean established between various South-east Asian countries.
– the need to belong to a common human context is also affirmed through the growing increase in univocal references to "human rights", to a "world culture", to "universal citizenship", etc.

It is also true that over the last decades attention has developed with growing intensity for what is happening beyond the boundaries of one's own State and, above all for the events that have a universal range, be it with reference to facts and circumstances concerning the natural environment, be it with reference to moral ones (Frosini 1999). It is in this picture that, for example, on the one hand, the search for international agreements for protecting the environment needs to be considered and, on the other, the institution of a war crime tribunal.

The decision to hold regular meetings between the representatives of some Countries of the Earth (those called G8 meetings) is certainly an expression of the acknowledgement of the existence of need for cooperation that characterises the whole of Humanity beyond the moments of competition. The problem is that the latter find it hard to be put aside and to actually take a back seat compared with the reality of powers that argue for economic and technological supremacy on a world scale.

An emblematic example of this conflict, still anything but resolved, between the needs of humanity in its entirety and the local egoism of single nations consists of the harassing events of the Kyoto Protocol. Signed in December 1997 by the greatest industrialised countries, this Protocol indicates the international objectives for reducing the six gases considered responsible for global warming of the planet. The "destination" established envisages for the 2008–2012 period a mean reduction of 5.2% of the 1990 emission levels. For some Countries a greater reduction is envisaged: 8% for the European Union, 7% for the United States, 6% for Japan. For other Countries, considered developing countries, lesser objectives have been set. For Russia and the Ukraine, for example, the objective to be achieved is stabilisation at 1990 levels. It establishes, furthermore, that for entry into force at least 55% of the signatory countries, responsible for emitting an equal percentage of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, ratify the agreements within the deadlines. The achievement of this objective has been made quite problematic by the complete closure of the current American government to the agreements signed by the previous Clinton administration. Without the adhesion of the country that holds the record for greenhouse gas emissions, the intention to cool down the planet's fever risks being ruined, also because possible reaching of the threshold foreseen by the Protocol for entry in force would only involve the Countries that have ratified it. It is therefore true that mundialisation may be considered an inevitable stage in the face of problems like those mentioned, which take on a vaster and vaster scale so as to now involve the entire planet. The scientific community can be considered a significant example of this evolution and it was the first to put mundialisation into practice. The internationalisation of science became established almost as a natural need, sustained by the fact

that the laws of nature are clearly universal and expressed with a language and network of common concepts provided by mathematics. It is precisely due to this simplicity that such a model constitutes a useful reference point. If you look with reference to this example, which indeed refers to the case of the history of science and the progressive widening of the scientific community, many of the worries usually expressed in relation to the consequences of this process reveal themselves to be without foundation. For example, mundialisation in the sciences has undoubtedly expanded the efficacy of research to an exceptional extent. Another more important fact is that this has not eliminated diversity, but has created a picture in which the greatly intensified competition between individual and collective subjects improves the quality of results and the speed with which they can be reached. To achieve these aims it is, however, necessary, as has been said, to have common, universal recognition of languages, procedures, laws, networks of concepts: and it is precisely this that we are not able to do in other fields and in relation to other types of problems. For example, the issue of global warming should be faced by all countries with the same rules and with the intention of achieving the same objectives. And it is on these aspects, as has been seen, that difficulties have been registered that, at the current moment at least, seem unsurmountable.

Added to these problems regarding mundialisation considered by itself, there is the fact that the latter is more and more interwoven with a process of a different kind but not always easily separable from it, namely *globalisation*. With this term – behind which a group of often heterogeneous slogans is still present, rather than a correctly enucleated meaning, the fruit of a well-stated and explored series of problems – reference is made in a specific way to the condition in which humanity has come to find itself in the current reality. In this sense it has become considerably widespread and is actually used frequently in mass communication, as well as in a number of environments where political and cultural commitment[1] is realised (or should be realised).

The very high index of notoriety of this word is not matched by a similar degree of popularity, in the sense of a positive evaluation of what it speaks of. In effect, the term "antiglobalisation" is just as common, and perhaps more widespread and "popular", used by many to indicate a series of controversies on various elements of reality considered at a world level especially for economic and political aspects.

In effect, to speak of globalisation as a synonym of mundialisation is a source of misunderstanding, ambiguity and even instrumentalisation, not intentional but not however less negative. In contrast with the second, as a matter of fact the first term has a precise technical meaning, in that it refers to a specific business strategy (Praussello 2000), in particular of the larger

companies of world-scale importance. These businesses realise a *strategic approach of a joint type to the world market,* in the sense that they propose an offer, not specified and differentiated on a single-country level, as instead happened for the so-called multinational businesses. The latter were called so indeed because they took on different configurations in each single context where they operated (though keeping management generally at a central level) to adhere better to specificities, including legal ones of the single realities. Through the globalisation strategy, on the contrary, it is supposed that the world market does not present significant features of differentiation at the level of single state or context or, at any rate, work takes place and marketing choices are made as if these differentiation features did not exist.

We mean to affirm that those who use the term "globalisation" as a synonym of mundialisation, though not explicitly realising the technical assumption expressed above, refer implicitly, however, to the economic aspect only of the problem of mundialisation, as seen by the large world businesses, with respect to which the political representatives (who often constitute the subjects of antiglobalisation contestation) take on a position of guilty acquiescence or at any rate of unmarked independence of judgement and action.

It is a fact, which it would be difficult to deny and short-sighted to underestimate the importance of, that what is felt by many as worrying and threatening is indeed the fact that, in the contemporary world, ever stronger pressures are found converging towards the tendency to eradicate social and cultural diversities and produce an unnatural assimilation and integration of traditions and civilisations that in the past established their relationship with the natural environment in a dissimilar way and arrived at different modalities of organisation of inter-individual relations. These pressures, in the opinion of many of those who contest them and try to check them, are nowadays involving more and more not only the world of international politics but also that of science, which indeed for this reason, from positive expression of a mundialisation process is risking more and more becoming an active agent of the tendency towards globalisation.

The fact that nowadays in the organisation of research the reference is increasingly common not just to the use of market instruments, but also to concepts and terms borrowed from the economic world, which make science take on the outline of a "bridge" activity between economy, politics and society, provides a strong argument in support of the idea that these days in many ways the scientific community does not limit itself to putting mundialisation into practice as it has always done, but collaborates with the businesses most active and engaged in the globalisation strategy, understood in the technical, specific sense, as stated. The following concur to further

reinforce this impression: stock exchange listings for scientific enterprise, the growing recruitment of highly qualified university staff by private companies, direct financing by private entities of laboratory activity and academic research, elements and factors that make concrete work of research, including that traditionally classified as "basic research", a much hazier terrain than the traditional one, where it is becoming difficult to distinguish between public and private, but also between lecturers, researchers and business-people.

In effect, it happens more and more often that the scientists involved in important projects have personal economic interests in the research they are conducting, a fact that has among other things nurtured a debate which has become very heated and intense on the so-called "conflict of interests" between the aspirations and objectives of science alone, and the private ones of single researchers and has induced the main scientific reviews to ask authors to fill in a standard declaration on any financial interests of those involved in the research spoken of in their articles, to be published at the bottom of the text; in the case of refusal, this choice will be made explicit at the end of the article.[2] What the antiglobalisation movements denounce and fight against is indeed this growing intertwining of politics, economics, science research and technology which heavily conditions problem analysis with the result of leading either to the rejection of solutions even when considered vital for the welfare of the planet and humanity on the whole, like in the case of the Kyoto Protocol, or at any rate to slowing down the respective decisional processes, or to agreements or resolutions like those often taken by international congresses such as the WTO, with a secret, hard to control nature, spoilt by the prevalence of economic interests that "crush" the need to govern the processes underway politically with a clear strategy, aiming at the long-term objectives and the common needs of all the peoples of the Earth.

> The contradictory co-presence of legitimate, but weak and not very representative national political systems faced with global problems, on the one hand, and supra-national organisms and networks considered hardly or not at all legitimate or representative but capable of influencing the destiny of countries and populations, on the other, explains to a large extent a mobilisation that, moving from many points on the planet, speaks out against the international technocracies. Here again the issue of globalisation crops up (Ceri 2002, pp. 32–33).

On one side there is therefore a growing mundialisation of the most important problems to face, which require a widening of the field of observation and a capacity to conceive scenarios on a global scale, inevitably putting the national executives and parliaments elected by citizens of each single country out of the game. On the other, there is the lack of

international institutions that are really representative or endowed with effective decisional powers to be able to govern these problems in the interest of the whole of humanity, and not just of one part of it. In an interview for *Corriere della Sera* of 16 June 2001 José Bové, the charismatic head of the French *Confédération Paysanne,* defending Roquefort cheese and fighting against transgenic foods, expresses this concept with vehemence: "We will come from France and the whole of Europe to deny the powerful of the world the right to decide in the name of everyone, to the detriment of those who have nothing [...] These private clubs are to be abolished." But it is not only the contesters that express themselves in this way. In an interview for "Newsweek" on 30 July 2001 the founder and chairman of the World Economic Forum also admitted that "the global institutions we have built up with such care over the last half century – the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation – are being investigated for many problems we have to face". Their inadequacy has been demonstrated as much by the deficit of efficacy and efficiency, as by the deficit of representativity, which in the case of the UN, for example, has been dramatically denuded by the impossibility of taking the role of effective arbiter for international controversies and avoiding armed interventions without authentic legitimisation from its own bodies, such as the General Assembly or the Safety Council. This situation does no more than sharpen the sense of inadequacy of the bodies that should be designated to deal with the increase in scale of the most relevant issues, which we find ourselves more and more frequently faced with and for which, by the way, refined and reliable instruments of analysis are nowadays available. Examples that can be quoted are the model created during the cold war period on how the atmosphere would behave following any possible use of atomic weapons, with the terrifying perspective of the nuclear winter, or the so-called *global change* model, which still sees a number of scientists engaged in the description of interactions between oceans, earth and atmosphere, with the aim of predicting in accurate terms climate changes due to the greenhouse effect.

Through the growing, at this point, unstoppable, intertwining of politics, economics, science research, culture and technology characterising the whole set, often muddled and heterogeneous, of phenomena and processes grouped under the "globalisation" label, more and more convergence and intertwining is being realised between globalisation and mundialisation, which, though referring to different symbolic ambits, now show so many common traits as to cause problems for any operation pinpointing an absolute threshold or a longitudinal fracture between them.

A deeper, interesting insight into these relations is supplied by Giacomo Marramao with the analysis he proposes of globalisation as a "passage to the

West" (Marramao 2003). The title of this book refers to the fact that globalisation is seen as a *becoming* that simultaneously clouds over the continuous and the discontinuous, the process and the change. According to Marramao, never, before the advent of the stereoscopic view of the world-society, did the multi-sided nature of the process of civilisation and the plurality of the possible ways to modernity appear so clear. In this new perspective *Mundus* and *Globus* establish between them (as a syntagma of the various linguistic perspectives that form the mundialisation and "globalisation" abstracts) a paradox that leads to concentrating together on expansion of the world and closure of the globe. Mundialisation is a term overweighted with symbolic implications, before even semantic ones, of the Latin *mundus,* with its inevitable reference to the idea of "*worldly*-isation", thus "secularisation". Expressions like "worldwide" and "worldly" contain an impregnable reference to the concept of "worldly life" and consequently to the field of tension between transcendence and immanence, heaven and earth. Whereas globalisation conveys the idea of the spatial completeness of this process, the idea of a world become globe finally circumnavigable, an idea that has, however, been described in the most disparate and controversial ways. Unlike those who consider globalisation a post-modern phenomenon, a new film with a *toto coelo* setting different from all those seen before, Marramao considers it unacceptable to assert that a *caesura* exists, a precise border (which, exactly? and marked by which precise event?) between a modern space and a completely new space, the current one, to be considered for its intrinsic nature "global". In his opinion it is essential to understand that global space, in its genesis and structure, is not conceivable except as a *consequence of modernity*. To maintain this, let it be perfectly clear, does not mean to affirm that breakage points are not given or cannot arise. It simply means that, precisely to grasp the effective novel aspects of global space, we need to consider it in a close relationship with the modern process of secularisation, the dynamics of which have gone from being endogenous, namely within the developed countries of the West with a Christian-Judaic matrix become exogenous to the point of affecting the most remote socio-cultural realities and religious experiences.

   The distinct etymological matrix, *globus* and *mundus,* makes the two terms called upon to define the same phenomenon anything but synonyms. Thus between globalisation and mundialisation a field of tension is set up that not only complicates any easy, immediate acquisition of the phenomenon itself, but above all, thanks to the different symbolic horizons the two terms evoke, make it philosophically debatable. "The differential analysis of the constellations of meaning of the terms mundialisation and "globalisation" – understood as derived from *mundus* and *globus* – therefore lets the different profiles of the influential metaphysics acting behind the

respective genealogies and "narratives" surface, as well as the inevitable reciprocal contaminations of their prognoses. To go to the root of one or the other, of the divergences and interference, appears to be a *conditio sine qua non* to raise the term globalisation to a concept, without in the meantime sacrificing its wealth and polyvalence of meanings" (Marramao 2003, p. 20).

The two terms globalisation and mundialisation must therefore be maintained in a state of co-presence and constant linking which, though it will never be able to result in a unifying synthesis, will, however, enable their "common root" to be singled out and always kept alive in the field of reciprocal tension between "expansiveness and completeness", between discovery and final appropriation of the outside which, though referring to different symbolic ambits, characterises both aspects of globalisation.

We therefore have an "interface relationship" that clarifies how both terms can converge, even though not in the way of synthesis, as we have said, to determine the same phenomenon, thus excluding any form of clear division of the field that assigns, for example, globalisation to the competency of economists and considers, on the other hand, mundialisation a category for philosophers. No unilateral view, then, no dialectic between inside and out, but an aperture to a new paradigm which is also the key to constitutive dynamics that discover in globalisation the traces of the *passage,* to be adopted in the dual sense of *journey* and *change,* of *risk* and *opportunity.*

Starting with the *exergue* of the first chapter, "Nostalgia for the present", borrowed from Jorge Luis Borges and the *incipit,* picked out from a context of *"Regards sur le monde actuel"* by Paul Valéry, in which the accent is placed on the "unprecedented change of scale", represented by globalisation, Marramao chooses the view, speculatively high, of further inquiry into all the polarities of metaphysical tradition, identity and difference, contingency and necessity, as well as, to begin with, that of local and global. "Globalisation" thus imposes, in his opinion, radical rethinking of all the specific conceptual categories and structures of the philosophical and political tradition.

A reformulation that permits interaction between the two views of globalisation and secularisation to subtract them from the two opposite risks, and is represented in an exemplary way by the antithetical readings provided by Francis Fukuyama (1992) and Samuel Huntington (1996). In the first case we are moving towards the risk of homologation and compulsory unification, prejudicial in those interpretations that adopt modernity as a given, preconstituted universal plan, rather than a problematically open terrain of conflicts. In the second the risk cannot be avoided of the separation and dissociation typical of all dual patterns that adopt the idea of mundialisation depending on an essentially dichotomic image of the

global/local pair. Once both these risks have been avoided we may prepare and open up a "universalist policy of difference", to be kept rigorously separate, on one side, from the politics of identity of the Illuminist school, and on the other, from the anti-universalist policy of differences, developed in America by communitarian tendencies and in Europe by localist, regionalist or ethno-nationalist identitary temptations. A proposal, this of Marramao, that cannot however be confused with a form of banal eclecticism, but that takes the theoretically sophisticated path of *disjunctive synthesis,* as the author himself suggests in the last paragraph of the first chapter: "... in this moment of passage to the West we should still obey at length a double injunction: preparing to write with one hand the word universalism, with the other the word difference. And resisting the temptation to write both words with one hand. For it would, however, be the wrong hand" (Marramao 2003, p. 77).

A proposal that, by choosing not a generic form of "heterophilia", or even less one of paradoxal "xenocentrism", but, adopting positively the ideas of "limit" and "contingency", leads to a conclusion the criticism of the identitary *Logos* of western metaphysical tradition.

Turning completely upside down the widespread prejudice in this regard both among its supporters and among its adversaries, who would like the globalisation process to be aimed at progressive extinction of the symbolic dimension, Marramao blames globalisation for the production of *new symbolic identities* as a specular reflection of the homologising expansion of modernity of a western matrix. Thus, the term globalisation itself needs to be made to include both the vectors, techno-economic and politico-cultural, which interact within it. *Globus* and *mundus,* technical dimension and symbolic dimension, define together the field of tension of glocalisation: "The glocal is configured, at this point, as conflictive cohabitation of two lines of tendency: the 'synergic' trend of the global, represented by the techno-economic and financial complex, and the 'allergic' local one, represented by the turbulence of the different cultures [...] From here onwards deep faults are produced, conflicting fracture lines that, with Huntington's acceptance, do not separate the 'civilisations' as if they were homogenous identitary blocks, enclosed within themselves, but rather cross all the societies of the planet via internal vectors: from the western democracies to the world of Islam itself. And nevertheless, to transfer the category of glocalisation from the descriptive plane to the conceptual one, a further passage is needed. The phenomenon should not be understood as an inert resistance of traditional communitary forms to the expansive trend of modernity [...] But on the contrary as an authentic *production of locality*" (Marramao 2003, pp. 38–39), as we have seen in the project for external territories in vast area planning for Sardinia (Maciocco 1999).

   Particular attention is due, in our opinion, to this idea of *production of locality* in the wide scenario constituted by the establishment of globality. Here we are not actually in the presence of the conviction that the appeal to the local should be configured as a resistance to globalisation processes and as simple defence and reproposal of its distinctive traits against the advance of homologisation and standardisation. What instead is being emphasised and proposed is the need for locality to take on a new dimension in the context of globalisation processes, which cannot but be creative and display traits of innovation and originality that are anything but secondary and banal.

   To manage to express and justify this conviction the argument departs from the *centrality of conflict* as the necessary phase to make possible and recognise as true the passage from globalisation to *glocalisation*, thought up and adopted not as a simple slogan but it its most original, authentic meaning. This key-word since the nineties, is an expression strongly tied to "micro-marketing" in that it is used in the invention of consumer traditions, but it is the Japanese agricultural tradition and the use of the term in the field of business (glocal from "dochaku", i.e. "live in your own land") that may now be useful for us. The principle in agriculture to adapt a technique to local conditions has been taken on by the Nippon managers, becoming "have a global view fit for local conditions". It is a case, therefore, of learning something from a culture, the Japanese one, that has always had almost obsessive attention for the particular-universal issue.[3]

   The conflict, as we have seen, is inevitable in that it is an expression of *incommensurability* (and therefore *untranslatability,* at least in the immediate sense) of values, objectives, presuppositions which, however, should not lead to surrender and being classified as insuperable "incomparability". Before cultures enter into contact, getting over the gap that divides them, and before they begin to build up bit by bit, through this first form of proximity, a relationship of reciprocal communication, albeit in the absence of a single measure for assessment, they inevitably encounter misinterpretation and misunderstanding in their relations. This, as Marramao specifies, is natural and unavoidable, at least if we take seriously the "Copernican revolution" brought about by the great eighteenth-nineteenth century anthropologist, which in simple words means taking as the facts of departure for each analysis and each political project the rigorously contextual (and thus relative) nature of cultures and the destitution of any aprioristic claim to universal validity of our values and lifestyles. This is what, moreover, we already find cleverly anticipated, in the atmosphere of the religious wars and the conquest of the New World, in that extraordinary *ouverture* of modern disenchantment represented by Montaigne's *Essays*: it is easy to say "cannibals"... Each culture is a world, a constellation of

symbols and values to analyse first of all *iuxta propria principia:* without projecting our cultural parameters on that symbolic universe. All this is sacrosant – and belongs to the great acquisitions of the century behind us. It has similarly been established, however, as we have seen in the case of incommensurability of scientific theories, that the absence of a neutral language or a single measure for assessment of cultures does not necessarily have to be considered equivalent to their being incomparable or uncomposable. On the contrary: indeed realities or cultural cosmoses responding to different "measures" are sometimes capable, as Lotman never tires of pointing out, of giving rise to creative compositions that are much more lasting than many ostensibly homogeneous symbolic forms.

Instead of thinking, therefore, of the unlikely formation of a global civil society, or a future advent of the cosmopolitan republic predicted over two centuries ago by Immanuel Kant or the *civitas maxima* postulated during the last century by a jurist like Hans Kelsen, we can start work, as Marramao indeed suggests, in a medium-period perspective, to recompose the various "diasporal public spheres" (as Arjun Appadurai calls them, another significant exponent of *postcolonial studies*) in a global public sphere based on the *universalism of difference.* Such a public sphere (which will initially develop through macroregional areas, departing – though it is nothing more than a hope – from our Europe) should not restrict the comparison between the *Weltanschauungen* – between the visions of life and the world – of the different groups negotiating procedural rules, according to the intersection/ overlapping consensus method envisaged by political liberalism. But neither should it limit itself to acting, as postulated by Jürgen Habermas, as grounds for comparison – aimed at agreement – between argumentative schemata and patterns tending to justify the various value options.

For such a proposal, though constituting indisputable progress compared with the strictly proceduralist versions of democracy, has the inconvenience of implicit discrimination between subjects endowed with communicative-argumentative competences and subjects who are not. And anyway even subjects with a strong deficit as far as the logics of rational, discursive reasoning are concerned, may be able to talk about their ethical choices or the consequences that the autonomous or heteronomous adoption of certain norms and lifestyles entails for their existence.

In Marramao's opinion the communicative-relational dimension created by the public sphere cannot therefore only concern reasoning but also narrative. There may in fact be subjects who, though they do not have the possibility to produce a reasoned justification for their own values, their culture, their vision of the world, are nevertheless able to relate the experience they have of these same values on a daily basis: an experience, with all manner of evidence, not just rational but also emotional. An Islamic

girl of the Paris *banlieu* – to give the most obvious example, but also the most dramatically close – will not perhaps be able to give arguments for her own (more or less free) choice to wear the veil, but not for that will she be unable to talk about the *rational-emotional experience of the value* that this decision entails and its existential implications. In the public sphere the right of citizenship does not belong only to the formal procedures of law (of course, essential and unrenounceable: since without them we could not say we are effectively free), but neither to the logic of reasoning. The space of the Cosmopolis, of the global city, must – transgressing Plato's interdict – extend the rights of citizenship also to rhetoric, to talking about oneself, to the experiences of narrating voices. Which does not, however, in any way authorise – it should be strongly emphasised – narrations to be assumed with no benefit of inventory. In effect, nothing guarantees that a narrative strategy not have self-justifying and self-apologetic effects on the same level as an argumentative strategy of an ideological kind. In the unavoidable blend of reason and experience, argumentation and narration, which affects the relations between the different human groups in the "glocalised" world, a democratic public sphere may admit, well, yes, rhetoric; but – as Carlo Ginzburg has appropriately emphasised – on condition that it is a case of *rhetorics with proof*, not rhetorics without proof. This is the step to be taken if we want to leave behind us both the ethnocentric versions of universalism and the nihilistic trends of that historic relativism that takes as an *a priori* the forms of self-comprehension of each culture, actually making incommensurability a synonym of incomparability and uncomposability.

It is a matter of becoming "good listeners and translators", of knowing how to handle competently not just the codes and languages of signs, but also the symbolic and emotional dimensions that show they contain meanings, even though they are not able to express them fully by argumentation. For cultures live and are animated by what these days is increasingly called "multiple intelligence", made up of a mixture, with percentages varying from one to another of cognitive and emotional aspects, and which precisely for this reason always include, some more some less, the active presence of symbolic elements to adopt and present as "ciphers",

that is, something that, enclosing within itself a meaning, does reveal the presence of this but, at the same time and perennially, hides its nature. In such a sense the symbol does refer to something, though not in the way a signifier refers to the signified but in the way a signifier warns the interpreter of the presence of a hidden meaning. *Aliquid obscure aliquid in se ipsum abdit* (Trevi 1986, p. 55).

The symbol understood in this sense, as something characterised by semantic intransitiveness, in the sense that the meaning is kept within it, cannot be made explicit, is not separable from the expression of the symbol itself, has, as Trevi emphasises on the wake of Jung,

the character of syntheticity or, better, of the "composition", where to this term is given the meaning of "put together", "keep united" *(componere).* What the symbol keeps together are the opposites that rational, diriment thought keeps legitimately separate and, in this mutual exclusion, detaches and keeps distant. This feature of such a type of symbol, highlighted in particular by the Romantics, makes the symbol itself inaccessible to reason and configures it as the product of an intuition that *crosses and lacerates the logical tissue of the normal, rational order of thought.* In this sense the symbol expresses *tension and creative antinomicity* but also union and connection (Trevi 1986, pp. 50–51, our italics).

For this reason, too, the practice of reciprocal comprehension and translation from one semiotic world to another is everything but effortless: to be started off initially a game of mirrors needs to be concentrated on, in which one tends to take on the prerogatives of the other, until they manage to work out little by little, by trial and error, a model of the semiotic world of their counterpart.

Only if this willingness and the openness resulting from it are kept firm can the gateway to the passage to the West be crossed so that from both directions the passage will be a zone of transformation and change, as Marramao indicates in explaining the title of his book:

Once we have left behind us the *discordia concors* between the mercantile-individualistic homologation thesis and the thesis of the clash between civilisations, will globalisation show itself in its true features: not as "westernisation of the world" [...] nor as mere "dewesternisation" and "desecularisation", but as a passage to the West of all cultures – as a transfer towards modernity destined to produce deep transformations in the economy, society, lifestyles and behaviour codes not only of the "other" civilisations but of western civilisation itself (Marramao 2003, p. 24).

The philosophical concept on which this passage is based is therefore that of *difference.* As Marramao rightly emphasises, western metaphysics has thought insistently not only about identity, but also difference, and yet – even though it did not consider it an "accident" to be overcome in identity – it has always subsumed difference under the paradigm of unity:

How, then, is difference meant? Difference not as a dialectic negativity, nor as merely the reverse side of identitary logic. But difference as a cipher of the unidentifiability of being. Being does not tolerate identification, it does not have an identity card. If it is true that that strange complex of events that we call "world" is, being a possibility, made of differences, it therefore ensues that differences never identify being, but indeed always differentiate it (Marramao 2003, p. 215).

It is in this sense that the contribution should be meant, which – in defining an identity of this type, able to treasure differences, instead of hoping to cancel them out, can be provided by reference to the idea of "family resemblance", of the dynamic, processual type suggested by Wittgenstein, in the sphere of which the possession of distinctive traits common to all the components is not a *condicio sine qua non* for belonging to a collective subject and for the non-problematic identification of the latter.

Here, moreover, is the deep meaning of the passage from the idea of "collective intelligence" to that of "connective intelligence", meant as a *patchwork*, the result of patient work of linking and sewing parts that, though each maintains its specific features, still manage to give rise to a final motif endowed with harmony and a unitary configuration. And here, above all, is what is authentically "at stake" in the passage from Jakobson's model of communication to that of Lotman. The first, in founding his theory on communicative action between different subjects (individual or collective), makes what they have in common his base and aims in actual fact to exorcise and neutralise the differences. Whereas Lotman, rather than identify the place of agreement, tends instead to enhance the function of conflict, in that it is precisely in the conflict of identities, not hidden nor toned down in its importance, that recognition of the differences occurs, and it is the appreciation of the latter that makes significant elements of novelty and creativity emerge in the communicative process. On one condition, however: that this conflict, as Marramao indeed highlights, always take place on the threshold of the passage to the West, which imposes on each identity to not feel final and irrevocable, but transient, contingent. The opening to "seeing and thinking" differently even our own identity and values is fundamental, in that it enables us to anchor our styles of perceiving and thinking and our forms of life not in the way, perhaps univocally determined, in which they are lived and practised in the reality of a specific historic phase, but to project them into the sphere of possible meanings that could be granted them without however betraying their nature and inspiration. This is a matter on which, rightly, Marramao insists: the passage to the West should not be overstepped in the direction of that island far away from the world that is Utopia, the prototype of all "realisation of the virtual", but should instead be adopted and understood more productively in the sense of the "virtualisation of the real" by he who puts his own identity as a contingency, who remains at the "border" of the passage and is indeed, thanks to this, predisposed to look not only at possible alternative interpretations of his semiotic and cultural world, his personal codes and memory, but is – also and above all due to this – ready to assimilate, paying authentic attention to the contributions that may come from other, different experiences and realities.

To live at the border between different semiotic worlds and to evaluate, precisely because of being placed in this transitory position, the conflicts between the parties that are on each side of this line of demarcation, without trying to "sweeten them" or even hide their nature and depth, but trying to work towards the transformation of this line of demarcation into an interface and have the border itself take shape and structure, is the only resource we can realistically dispose of to get out of the double grip of unnatural

homologation, on the one side, and the perennial conflict with no outlets between civilisations, on the other.

Notes

[1] The difference between mundialisation and "globalisation" proposed here is taken from Tagliagambe and Usai (2001, pp. 201–208).

[2] A clear expression of the growing discomfort caused by this conflict is an editorial in which the Director of "Science", Donald Kennedy, drawing up a balance of his first year of office, expresses his worries for the future, due to the fact that "their frequency appears to have increased. I think I know why. The universe is larger, and in the 'hot' fields like molecular biology the competition – for funds, for appointment, for tenure, and for prizes – is more intense. And the advantages that accrue to publication in a prestigious journal are correspondingly large (…) In some respects research competition is healthy: it can accelerate progress, as it did in the case of the two human genome projects. It can also exact costs (…) Our task is to maintain a level playing field for all who publish with us. When we discover transgression, we can of course take action, as we have in some past cases: by rejecting a paper, by communicating with the author's institution or the funding agency, or by barring future submissions. But we'd rather not, preferring instead to work with our authors, readers, and reviewers to sustain a scientific community in which the good news far outweighs the bad" (Kennedy 2001, p. 761).

[3] It is interesting to remember that Kato Schuichi, in what was his most famous work and became a classic, his *History of Japanese literature* now translated into seven languages, which came out in 1975–1980, states with regard to Japanese culture how "the indigenous world-view" has maintained authenticity and pre-eminence in the process of assimilation of the imported ideologies (Buddhism, Neoconfucianism, Christianity and the various modern European currents) that during the course of the centuries have contributed to forming that hybrid, stratifed side that characterises this culture. To remark on this aspect the author used an expression he is very fond of, "the native view of this world" which leads him to coin a new term in Japanese, *dochaku sekaikan,* indeed a "local, native *Weltanschauung*".

The Border "Takes Shape"

As it takes shape the border is gradually structured, consolidated, takes on the configuration of what Arendt calls "infra", which is, then, the "intermediate space" on which we are concentrating our attention. This process, in which at least two different cultural worlds are involved (two codes, two memories, two traditions, two cultures and so on), departs from a situation of reciprocal extraneity, in which the intermediate is a sort of hollow gap, an empty space that separates and prevents contact between the two parties involved.

It is a situation that is also seen in the relationship between two scientific theories, which we can adopt and examine more closely as an emblematic case of the situation we wish to describe. As Kuhn observes on the subject,

> The point-by-point comparison of two successive theories demands a language into which at least the empirical consequences of both can be translated without loss or change. That such a language lies ready to hand has been widely assumed since at least the seventeenth century when philosophers took the neutrality of pure sensation-reports for granted and sought a "universal character" which would display all languages for expressing them as one. Ideally the primitive vocabulary of such a language would consist of pure sense-datum terms plus syntactic connectives. Philosophers have now abandoned hope of achieving any such ideal, but many of them continue to assume that theories can be compared by recourse to a basic vocabulary consisting entirely of words which are attached to nature in ways that are unproblematic and, to the extent necessary, independent of theory. That is the vocabulary in which Sir Karl's basic statements are framed. He requires it in order to compare the verisimilitude of alternate theories or to show that one is "roomier" than (or includes) its predecessor. Feyerabend and I have argued at length that no such vocabulary is available. In the transition from one theory to the next words change their meanings or conditions of applicability in subtle ways. Though most of the same signs are used before and after a revolution, e.g. force, mass, element, compound, cell, the ways in which some of them attach to nature has somehow changed. Successive theories are thus, we say, incommensurable (Kuhn 1970, pp. 266–267).

To speak, as Kuhn and Feyerabend do, of "incommensurability of theories" means, if we use the language we have derived from Lotman's communication model, to state that they are separated, initially, by a "gap", namely an empty space that prevents reciprocal contact and mutual translation. For example, the development of Dalton's atomic theory

introduces, with respect to the previous theories worked out, a new way of seeing chemical combination, with the result that alloys, which before this revolution were considered compounds, begin after it to be seen as mixtures. Theories before and after Dalton therefore give a different slant on the world and chemists do not have at their disposal for their reports neutral sub-linguistic means that can act as a reciprocal comparative element and be adopted as a common base, which will act as a "buffer zone" and "interface" between the theories involved and from which a reliable translation may therefore be made.

What is missing, then, at least initially, is that reciprocal contact that must be patiently constructed through compromises between incompatible objectives, compromises that inevitably alter the communication but have the value of at least setting it in motion. With the fading of the illusion that a single foundation of knowledge exists and that the contribution of the various theories may harmonically be composed in a single "image of the world", coherent and harmonic, the need for and hard work of becoming *good translators* from one theory to another emerges more and more, thus acknowledging the specific contribution that each of these, often in competition with others, provides, without, however, giving up the need to have them carry on a dialogue and communicate reciprocally.

Having acknowledged the fact that researchers may legitimately arrive at different conclusions and evaluations without violating any accepted criterion or rule, and that this variability of opinion and orientation not only does not hinder scientific progress, but actually stimulates and promotes it, to the point of constituting one of its essential factors, the objective that we pose ourselves is to manage to build an "*infra* space" between the theories, namely a symbolic context of components held together by a background that is accepted, agreed on and shared by the entire scientific community.

First and foremost, men experiencing communication breakdown can discover by experiment – sometimes by thought-experiment, armchair science – the area within which it occurs. Often the linguistic centre of the difficulty will involve a set of terms, like element and compound, which both men deploy unproblematically but which can now be seen they attach to nature in different ways. For each, these are terms in a basic vocabulary, at least in the sense that their normal intra-group use elicits no discussion, request for explication, or disagreement. Having discovered, however, that for inter-group discussion, these words are the locus of special difficulties, our men may resort to their shared everyday vocabularies in a further attempt to elucidate their troubles. Each may, that is, try to discover, what the other would see and say when presented with a stimulus to which his visual and verbal response would be different. With time and skill, they may become very good predictors of each other's behaviour, something that the historian learns to do (or should) when dealing with older scientific theories (Kuhn 1970, p. 277).

Here that aspect of the process of communication emerges very clearly, which, as has been seen, Lotman has particularly highlighted, thanks to which each of those involved in the reciprocal exchange of messages has to begin creating himself – in order that the exchange may reach its aim and prove effective, without giving rise to excessive misinterpretations – a *model of the semiotic world* of his counterpart, on the basis of which to work out the information to be sent, so that it results as comprehensible as possible. The construction of this model is clearly the fruit of a process of attempts, exposed to errors which are refined by degrees and to compromises that are gradually smoothed down, with neither one nor the other able to be completely eliminated. By this route, however, the initial hollow gap little by little becomes "contact", then "intersection" and shared background.

> What the participants in a communication breakdown have then found is, of course, *a way to translate each other's theory into his own language* and simultaneously to describe the world in which that theory or language applies. Without at least preliminary steps in that direction, there would be no process that one even attempted to describe as theory-*choice*. Arbitrary conversion (except that I doubt the existence of such a thing in any aspect of life) would be all that was involved. Note, however, that the possibility of translation does not make the term "conversion" inappropriate. In the absence of a neutral language, the choice of a new theory is a decision to adopt a different native language and to deploy it in a correspondingly different world (Kuhn1970, p. 277, our italics).

Using the case of two scientific theories that are initially in a situation of incommensurability and reciprocal extraneity, due to the fact that they have a "different slant" on the world, Kuhn thus begins to properly exemplify the process by which the border progressively takes shape. The outset situation from which this process starts and develops is always the *antinomic tension* between two ambits, each unyielding to the other and immeasurable, being devoid of the possibility of resorting to neutral sub-linguistic means and, therefore, of the availability of a common background. This tension triggers the effort to overcome, in some way, the opposition between the domains involved and to cast some kind of bridge between them, though aware that the "gap" and mutual "friction" will never be able to be eliminated altogether. From this attempt, however, an "intermediate world" emerges and gradually takes shape creating little by little an authentic reality in itself.

This notion of "intermediate space" was suggested and explored in a particularly significant way by Pavel Florenskij,[1] a philosopher of science, mathematician, physicist, electronic engineer, art theorist and theorist of the philosophy of language, researcher in aesthetics, symbology and semiotics, a philosopher of religion and theologist, born near Evlach,

Azerbaijan on 9 January 1882, arrested by the KGB in February 1933, condemned to 10 years' hard labour on charge of being a counter-revolutionary and shot during the night of 8 December in a wood not far from Leningrad. In a work entitled *Magicnost' slova* (The magic value of the word), written in 1920, he spoke of the need for men who want to inhabit the world in an authentic manner, to manage to activate a "mediating" role between the external world and the internal one and trigger a transitive capacity from one to the other. To achieve these objectives the most effective instrument man may dispose of is the symbol, due to the fact that it presents itself as "an *amphibious entity*, which lives both in one and the other, and weaves specific relations between this and that world" (Florenskij 2001, p. 51).[2] In the opinion of Florenskij, who has studied its nature in depth and made it the cardinal point of his philosophical and scientific reflections,[3] it is a binomic unity, unity in diversity, in which concrete reality and invisible mystery, finite and infinite, signifier and signified, but also knowing subject and investigated object, find themselves synergically fused, though not muddled. As he himself had already emphasised in his essay of 1904, *O simvolah beskonecnosti. Ocerk idej G. Kantora* (*The symbols of the infinite. Study on the ideas of G. Cantor*), which may be considered the initial nucleus of his theory of the symbol, the structure of the latter is inseparable from the presence of the *skacok*, i.e. the intermediate zone, where conceptualisation of the mystery of the invisible should be realised. Reference to this "zone" is one of the most problematic questions, as it is difficult to define with the rational instruments at our disposal. Nevertheless, we are dealing with an essential entity for interaction between the two dimensions, apparently irreconcilable, of the existence of man, the visible and the invisible, daily experience and the insuppressible leaning towards an *"al di là"*, to something "further" compared with this.

Notes

[1] On the thought and works of Florenskij see Tagliagambe (2006a).

[2] Florenskij (2001), p. 51. The same essay is present, entitled *La natura magica della parola,* in the Italian translation by Treu (2000, pp. 165–211).

[3] To study Florenskij's conception of the symbol and his "epistemology of the symbol" further see Tagliagambe (2006a).

The City Project: intermediate Space and Symbol

From the wealth of ideas of Pavel Florenskij we can draw some concepts that enable us to face, interpreting their insights, problems of crucial importance for the project for the contemporary city. The urban world is immersed in a process of slow de-articulation of the traditional city, characterised by phenomena whose interpretation may show significant intersections with the fertile intuitions of the Russian philosopher. One of these phenomena is that defined as "thematisation" of the city, in the sense that, as has been seen, due to the difficulty of transforming the inherited city into a modern city, there is a tendency to recreate it as supervised stage-sets that, from the theme park to the large mall, are often a caricature of the city, reducing its complexity (cf. for example, Sorkin 1992; Warren 1994; Jacobson 1998; Augé 2001; Glaeser et al. 2001).

Experience in the theme park is distracted experience, the experience of the wanderer, of bewilderment. But it is also the experience of the formless, the visitor's abandoning himself to the place, this letting himself be led that surmises a weakening of the difference between the figure of the visitor-observer and the place perceived, between figure and background, a glance turning everything into a show, that tends to blend in with the surroundings present (Costa 1996), but in the end takes shape as a form of *detachment* from reality.

Social imagination is being more and more incorporated in simulacrum-like panoramas such as theme parks, historic quarters and hypermarkets, that are cut off from the rest of the city. These problems, which find a fertile conceptual anchorage in Florenskij's thought, call upon the city project to record its position with respect to a new conceptual geography.

"Thematisation" of the city has many causes, but one in particular has to do with the processes that have reduced its "differential quality": diversity as a constituent value. "Division of lots, dispersion of settlements, variation in relief: all this forms an apparatus rooted in geography and society, able to face long-term the mechanisms that press towards a merging..." Referring in particular to the loss of the mixed farming quality of the landscape, the *incipit* of Gilles Clément's *Manifesto del terzo paesaggio* strikes out against precisely the "power of reduction" of the landscape caused by global policies, that has brought to light the artificial character

of what seems "natural" (Clément 2004a). A landscape where the many "configurations of mixed farming have disappeared to yield the domain to just two riches: the trees and the grass" (Clément 2004a).

We can take Clément's *incipit* as the metaphor of the loss of the differential quality the city has suffered in its drift towards the "generic city", a phenomenon of reduction of diversity, standardisation of life and the space produced by shopping, which has become "a primary way of urban life", "the apotheosis of modernisation" (Chung et al. 2001), the foolish outlet of the doctrine of form (of the city) that follows the (consumer) function in the same way throughout the world, the "unexpected revenge of functionalism" (Chung et al. 2001).

Linked with the "generic city" is the process of "thematisation" of the city, the transformation of the city as a theme-park, an experience of places that is also the model of the place of pleasure (Jacobson 1998), a model that requires a glance turning everything into a show, that tends to blend in with its surroundings (Caillois 1984) and that produces an absence of reference point, like the space of a labyrinth, spectacular and supervised, making the contemporary city uniform (Bataille 1970). But it is a desired labyrinth, that represents a complete mosaic of different types of landscape that make up, indeed, the "dark object of desire" of society (Vos and Meekes 1999).

The representations, images, our society creates for itself of landscapes as "desired products" express *detachment* from reality. In this detachment between reality and representation lies the contemporary incapacity to "represent" the city, to "see it". What is projected in images aberrant to the point of losing their reference point is nothing more, probably, than the loss of the reference point as such, a loss affecting language, the same loss that affects the inhabitant when he tries to imagine the city (Soutif 1994). If we do not go to meet the real, the *lived in* space, unsettling pairs of opposites like real city/simulacrum city and citizen/non-citizen (de Azua 2003) will become established, where the figure of the "non-citizen" will correspond to the loss of the urban collective conscience and, with it, the loss of the city as a conceptual unit.

About that "lump thick with meaning" that the mind is, we can refer, as has already been done elsewhere (Tagliagambe 2001), to some fine research, recalling how we have to thank Cesare Segre, and his capacity for interpreting Michail Bachtin's texts in an innovative way – influenced in his turn by Florenskij together with other great Russian thinkers – for the origin of a trend of research on the novel that enables the "space of the mind" to be explored. The figure of the "chronotope" in the novel has a central position in this research; it is adopted as a filter in the light of

which to reconstruct the specific modalities of taking possession of the world, as well as society, of which all novels are the expression (Tagliagambe 2001).

In effect, the analysis of this fundamental instrument enables the characters to be defined on the basis of the relations established by them with the external world and on the basis of the temporality into which these relations, and their history, are distributed. The narrative space ends up enormously dilated, in that it is no longer just the place where the action is carried out, but also and above all, the total organisation that governs inclusion and exclusion relations, those of belonging and of difference, as much at a psychological and moral level, as at a social one, of these different topochronologies (Tagliagambe 2001).

What interests us here is indeed the space of the mind that gradually develops as the subject understands, in his acting and often after he has acted, the sense of his actions and those of others and that, in this sense, opens up to the world of relations that feeds the *collective conscience.* It is a matter therefore of reappropriating a possible political dimension for our work, a dimension long refused in favour of a supremacy of solitary doubt, patient observation, verification of the hypotheses in the specific disciplinary field (De Pieri 2005): "the largest number of species in my herbarium was collected in the spring of 1968" (Clément 2004b), writes Clément, stating, with the reference to 1968, the *political* dimension of his work as a landscaper. But this collective gaining of awareness, necessary for the city project, cannot but pass through a process of symbolic construction. A "symbolic process almost independent from the designer himself" needs to be started off, as Diana Agrest has written.

On this subject, the reference to a passage on the city as a symbol (Tagliagambe 2006b), made in Italo Calvino's *Lezioni americane* (American lessons) is significant:

A more complex symbol, which has given me greater possibilities of expressing the tension between geometric rationality and the entanglements of human lives, is that of the city. The book in which I think I managed to say most remains Invisible Cities, because I was able to concentrate all my reflections, experiments, and conjectures on a sinlge symbol; and also because I built up a many-faceted structure in which each brief text is close to the others in a series that does non imply logical sequence or a hierarchy, but a network in which one can follow multiple routes and draw multiple, ramified conclusions

(Calvino 1988, p. 71).

Authors like Debord, Lyotard and Baudrillard have thrown light on how in post-capitalism the exchange of goods has been gradually substituted by the exchange of symbols. "Even though the terms diverge many philosophers have found themselves in agreement in detecting a fall in interest in material and necessary goods, whereas the passion of attention has shifted to objects full of symbolic and simulacral worth" (Vettese 1993).

The expressive strength of the symbol is essential for collective gaining of awareness of the elements that preside over our spatial life. In the

current epoch, too, permeated by rationalism, the language of figures and images keeps its expressive strength intact (Tibaldi 1986). Reflecting, for example, on the myth, Gianni Tibaldi notes that this "alludes perhaps to a mysterious "progress of decadence"? But are these not the most current, dramatic questions humanity asks itself, through the voices of science, ethics and common thought, on the sense of the evolution, on the relations between nature and culture, the ambivalent meanings of civilisation and progress and, finally, the destiny itself of the species? To these questions definite, conclusive, decidedly reassuring answers are not (nor can be) given: our arguments are full of conjectures, discordant and contradictory, and over time, of theoretical "stuttering", of "scientific" assertions, the more arrogant and dogmatic in style, the more insecure in their foundations. In all attempts to reply, the need prevails for the unexplainable and the ineffable, the temptations of phantasy, the desire not to confine memory and forecasting within the schemes of reason "of a single dimension" (Tibaldi 1986).

As Gilles Clément writes, this is particularly important in our times because there is a need to "change the legend" (Clément 1994). And, referring to the pervasiveness, but also the scientific reductionism present in the ecological paradigm, Clément states that it is not a question just of "integrating the ecological paradigm, but also of experiencing it in its sacred dimension. What is missing, with all manner of evidence, is a myth fit for the new state of knowledge: we know well that it cannot be Gaia, but what figure can therefore be found for this nascent eco-symbol?" (Clément 1995).

These reflections of Clément's, interpreted by Filippo De Pieri (2005) refer to the deep meaning of the myth so that we do not limit ourselves to seeing but go "beyond" the vision, seeking a sense that is never completely enclosed by the surface of appearances. "The sick mind deforms visions into sterile hallucinations, but the healthy mind deforms visions to understand reality by 'inventing' hidden structures 'alluded to' by the apparent parties, revealed always "beyond" the visible" (Tibaldi 1986).

This is the dimension of the myth and the sacred, which is composed of gestures and images, i.e. "silent" symbols. And the symbol, unlike the sign, does not "indicate" but "alludes". By nature it refers to the unreachable, the intangible, the ineffable. Thus it represents the language of the sacred. The symbol represents, always, "something else", it refers, always, to "something different". It is never actually uncodifiable. From this point of view, psychoanalytical symbols are not symbols in the true sense either, even though the psychoanalytical theory of the symbol clarifies exactly the meaning, when it makes the symbol substitute an unconscious meaning (Tibaldi 1986).

The deepest etymological meaning of "symbol" is a "bridge cast" between the universe of visible phenomena and the invisible, between reality and possible worlds. This is why the basic inaccessibility of the symbolic, instead of cancelling out the communicating function intensifies it, adding the sacred to the vital reality of human language which "associates man with his territory in a lasting manner". But *this association cannot but happen through the project,* and this makes the relations constituent between the project and symbolic language (and not elusive, as many still insist on believing).

"The inevitable cohabitation can thus be demonstrated of men of all times and cultures with the sacred, by showing their necessary use of symbolic language. Men have to inhabit with symbols" (Tibaldi 1986) because – as Maurizio Ferraris writes – "in a world struck by disenchantment, the expectation grows of a new salvation and new mythology able to resuscitate the fullness of the early times. But it is precisely on this defeat that the attraction of the symbol is built, ever renewed and all the more seductive when lacking" (Ferraris 1993).

The passage from the symbol to the project, from reality to possibility, with the symbol as collective gaining of awareness of reality and the possible: this is one of the cardinal points of Florenskij's thought which most attracts us, as urbanists, for the perspectives it opens up for the city project. It should be observed (Tagliagambe 2006b) on this subject that indeed due to its amphibious nature, that constantly guides it towards the consideration not only of the external world, but also of the internal world of man, the symbol has, jointly and irremovably, this dual character of binding reference to the sense of reality and, at the same time, of constant openness towards the sphere of things possible. Precisely because of this it is simultaneously itself, something that is in the order of physical reality, and something that is more than itself and transcends this reality. It is a window towards "furtherness", towards the invisible, towards another essence that is not directly given, a "different" essence of the phenomenon". What is this tension if not projectual tension as a quest for possible worlds, but not all possible worlds, only those departing from reality. "Thus art, authentic art, the primary expression and manifestation of the projectual capacity of man presents itself, according to Florenskij, as an access to the sources of meaning, sought following the route of *flight,* that is of the transit across the frontier of worlds, that of the visible and that of the invisible, that of external reality and that of man's internal world" (Tagliagambe 2006b), a flight that is "due either to rising from below or descending from above, which is a return to below" (Florenskij 1994a, pp. 18–20). But the flight towards meaning is successful if *it culminates in the return* and integrates itself within the presence of the

invisible in reality, and in this way *makes the latter grow*, discovering in it new forms and attributing new meanings to it. Therefore in the project we select from the possible worlds "only those that are possible departing from reality". This "growth of the sense of reality" is obtained if and when the artist, rather than limiting himself to presenting to the spectator the image of reality that he already knows, perhaps deformed, but still in the form of the habitual modalities of spatial organisation, manages to propose to him an effectively new image, which enriches him and shows him spatial organisations unknown to him, that have the power of reorganising space and transfiguring reality (Tagliagambe 2006b).

The symbol as the art of *projection* is equal to the symbol as the art of *designing*. Florenskij defines as "magic" "any action of the will that has an effect on the organs of the body" (Florenskij 1969, pp. 39–42 quoted in Tagliagambe 2008, pp. 41–42), such as, for example, the simple *will* to eat something, that triggers a chain of a whole series of concrete acts going from taking the food, chewing it, swallowing it, digesting it, transforming it and putting it into circulation in the body, etc. In this sense we can define magic as "the art of moving the boundary of the body compared with its habitual position" (Tagliagambe 2008, p. 42). The symbol is magic indeed in this sense of the word, as are artistic production, scientific theories, and in general the world of objective knowledge. All these products, the fruit of particular volitive acts, are in effect capable of triggering specific effects on/in reality, and therefore moving the boundary of the body: this is why they are, indeed, magic. This "magic" function of the symbol is heightened when it becomes a "linguistic symbol", when it is raised, that is, to the level of the word, fully adopting and interpreting the role of craftsman in the art of "moving the boundary of the body" (Tagliagambe 2008, p. 42).

Project as Social Action: the Art of Moving the Boundary of the Body

"A female silhouette descends the stairs leading to the swimming pool. The second floor cannot be reached but in a theatrical manner. The body is thus inevitably on the set before it is immersed in water and light. After the swim, the nude body intercepts its reflection on the surfaces of the glass surrounding it, at the same time as it is seen from the other side" (Brayer et al. 2002). Thus Marie Ange Brayer comments how in this house the stretches of water and light have transformed privacy into a show, in the sense that the body is on show, offers itself to be viewed.[1]

This device, that was developed by Adolf Loos in 1928 for Josephine Baker, without the addressee's knowledge, shows how the context, as a "covering of inherency" (Deleuze 1988, p. 31)[2] may arise as interaction between the body and the active field constituting it. Modern space reformulates the conditions of interiority and exteriority with reference to the body in the sense that what matters is now the changing point of view of a body that not does not stop moving (Vidler 2000, p. 2). Vidler recalls the notion of "warped space" (deformed space) to try to understand the epistemological revolution of the nineteenth century (Brayer et al. 2002), according to which space is no longer the passive container of bodies and objects, but a relative, mobile, dynamic entity (Brayer et al. 2002), created by a moving body (Vidler 2000, p. 6). In this sense, urban space cannot be designed except as an entity of relations of the body, i.e. as an extension of the body, namely as effective action, as active practice, that has the city emerge as a "community of practices". This makes us understand the importance and indispensable value of corporality in the construction of urbanity, in spite of the recurrent references to the "loss of place" in contemporary post-cities. These references concern, moreover, not the loss of place in itself, but the fact that our actions are increasingly indifferent to the customs, the *mores* that have characterised the history of a place. Loss of place does not mean, however, loss of body, because intersomaticity is at the root of social action, which should indeed be understood as extension of the body. It is when the body "abandons itself to the place", when it "loses itself", that body extension is missing and thus social action.

This is in a certain sense what happens in the thematisation of the city, which favours a world of inert citizens, incapable of mobilising themselves in social action, in a certain sense non-citizens. The above-mentioned thematisation should therefore be taken very seriously and with worry commensurate to the outcomes it produces, in that it is in some ways an encouragement towards non-citizenship. The space created by the body in movement has an acontextual space emerge, in which internal and external are reversible – a space that we cannot but cross. Perhaps for this reason, since the outskirts are the crossing and the centre is the halt, the city is more and more present in the outskirts.

These spaces without a paradigm, animated by the implicit movement of the body, are also the dismembered spaces of *montage*. As Brayer notes, time-space shaken by the *montage* technique is inoculated into all artistic production. The first to acknowledge this change in the representation of the city was – as is known – Walter Benjamin, who asserted in his writings of the thirties that the metropolis could only be represented by the cinema and photography. Benjamin knew intuitively that editing was not just a specific technique of the new mechanical visual arts, but a new aesthetic category that arose from the essence of the industrial metropolis (the juxtaposition of images, the assembly line as the condition of the factory worker, etc.). It is the city itself that equips itself with the instruments necessary for its representation (Vidler 2000, p. 6).

When we fly in a hot-air balloon with Felix Nadar, the city seems simultaneously real and unreal.[3] The spectacle offered from above is no longer false, like in panoramas. Distance neutralises details and transforms space into a mass of roofs similar to the cogs of a machine (D'Elia 1994). Representation of the city is a *montage* of stills. "The environment not only conditions and acts on objects but is contained by them" (Kwinter 2001, p. 64). There is no longer exteriority or interiority but a context of inherency, a simultaneity in the action of the body and of space, an immediate effectiveness that will later resound in a new multidimensional spatiality (Brayer et al. 2002). Brayer recalls on this subject the "blob", Greg Lynn's topological monad, that merges continuity of the global and the heterogeneity of the local, considering space in terms of "relational structures that exist between bodies and environments" (Lynn 1998, p. 103). The "blob" is an evolutive form that envelops the components of its environment. The new body that moves through these spaces is no longer conceived without tension: from architecture to the new communication media everything competes to make up its deficiencies, its insufficiencies. Space at this point "mediatic" becomes a prosthetic body, the production itself of its extension (Wigley 1991, 1995, p. 19). It is the body and its cognitive capacity that transforms the environment. It is in this sense that

Brayer refers both to Ionel Schein, who, from the fifties, maintained that "built forms will have the air of being wrapped up, like portable shelters", and Reyner Banham, who defends the notion of environment, discredited by the historico-sociological arguments of the post-moderns. "Architecture … can only be defined as the provision of fit environments for human activities … but it still does not necessarily imply the erection of buildings" (Banham 1996, p. 49). For Banham, "human environments" are "built environments", more or less permanent, but reference to them no longer conveys a global thought, but a will to reconsider locality, outside any hierarchy between industrial production and natural environment. It is action itself that produces the context, meant as a locality, often heterogeneous, that does not make sense except in its immediacy, its effectiveness. The body is the ever mobile instantiation of this context (Brayer et al. 2002). From this point of view the context is the capacity to qualify, in a renewed, simultaneous way, the domain of the positioning of the body, which is no longer a *parergon,* an inert accessory, nor a way of referring to the outside, or a normative system, but a site of emission and reception that creates localities, environment (Brayer et al. 2002).

All is context, inside as outside. For the Bow-Wow Atelier in Tokyo urban production lies at the crossroads of categories like architecture, engineering, urban planning, advertising, agriculture and geography. Brayer has us note how their research on Tokyo has enabled urban objects or "environmental units" to be picked out that are *pet-sized objects,* that are the interface between the city and the body, mediation between public space and private. In Atelier Bow-Wow research, these objects (vending machines, karaoke cabins, parking metres, panels) have developed a unique size for moving through interstitial spaces. They are too small to be architecture, but a bit larger than a movable object. They are big enough to exist as a fragment of a part, or at the corner of the city, making a sort of "super-interior" of the urban environment. Thus, in Tokyo, "bodies and the environment have become inextricably entwined" (Atelier Bow-Wow 2002).

For Didier Fiuza Faustino (Brayer et al. 2002) we need to act on the context, to conceive the project as an extension of the body in an environment that gives it a hard task, consider the project for space as social action. We are confronted with a "corporeal" space, capable of "contextual conscience" which exchanges information with its environment (Palumbo 2000, p. 66). When describing the transformation of the world in the electronic era, Palumbo speaks of a whole field of interdependent events open to social participation; we are thus "present" in real time at every event but also constantly able to be reached from any locality whatever (Palumbo 2000, p. 74).

The world is from now on a body "starred" with mobile hyper-localities that designs the fleeting galaxy of the context (Brayer et al. 2002).

What context might there be, then, that is no longer anchored to a place and conceives of an "erratic" subject? This subject without place is nevertheless not exactly atopical. Its lack of positioning has laid it open to *inclination,* to interaction with multiple localities (Brayer et al. 2002). This *inclination*, which opens up to multiple inclination, has to do with the art of moving the body, it is a "flight towards sense", that is the symbol. But the "flight towards sense", like the symbol, needs the word, it involves us because at its centre there is the incommensurable value of the word, the "magic value of the word" that has perhaps never been explored in a perspective able to merge, like that of Florenskij, scientific, spiritual and religious conscience: "All that we know of the word confirms how greatly it is charged with the occult energies of our essence; energies that are stored in the word and with each use of the word accumulate further" (Florenskij 2001). To reconstruct the collective conscience and design the city "new words are needed". This is the expression used by Clément in his essay *Thomas et le Voyageur* to highlight the need to enquire into a linguistic patrimony that is inadequate for the project of a possible world.

Thomas and the Traveller have a project in common: to study the "planetary garden". To do this they must first "discover what meaning the words of the garden can take on, ordinary everyday words, at the moment when they are referred to the planet. This is why the Traveller travels: to put to the test an entire linguistic patrimony" (Clément 2004a; De Pieri 2005). *Thomas et le Voyageur* turns into a philosophical dialogue in which new characters appear, positions become more hazy, meetings or unforeseen events suggest various possibilities. A first list of words is drawn up but immediately questioned; others are added, yet others ("red", "desert"…) will remain on paper. The final list ("horizon", "grass", "erosion", "city", "legend", "fire", "garden") spells out the chapters of the book and also the stages of possible progression towards the construction of a knowledge (De Pieri 2005).

This debate on a linguistic patrimony brings along the change in symbolic worlds. But is there anything that is not a symbol? (Ferraris 2001). As Maurizio Ferraris notes, "Hegel was already saying when he spoke of Egyptian art, that for him it has the reputation of the paradigm of symbolic art: when you see a sculpture or painting of a phoenix, you always ask yourself if it is to do with the image of a bird or the symbol of life rising anew from its own ashes. The game may be repeated with many objects, including less noble ones.... the difficult part lies not in recognising a symbolic function, but in distinguishing what belongs to the object in itself and what, on the other hand, is added by symbolisation or (the same thing) interpretation. It is a primary ontological need, otherwise

everything fades into everything else, as happens in mythical thought" (Ferraris 2001).

We can therefore infer that the whole of reality is a symbol. In this sense the film *Andrej Roublev* is exemplary, the work of art of the Russian film producer Andrej Tarkovskij, certainly influenced by Florenskij's thoughts, which sends out his "signs" far beyond the objective function of cinematographic "truth" or critical history, and transforms them into metaphors of an invisible reality, being convinced that not all real life is really visible, on the contrary, that only the smallest part of it is, that *the whole of reality is rather a symbol.*

The structure of Tarkovskij's tale thus takes from Florenskij not only the symbolic interpretations of Roublev's icons, but also important narrative nuclei, like the motif of the "regal gates" between visible and invisible (Zizola 1992).

Vladimir's destruction is thus the allegory of the oppressed city each time "truth is lost from sight" (Tarkovskij 1992), and the icons that burn signify the loss of civil language, in a symbolic interpretation obtained directly from Florenskij's iconic theology (Zizola 1992).

The structure of Tarkovskij's tale shows in a masterly way how reality is a symbol. If reality is a symbol, the process of symbolic construction that activates the collective conscience cannot but depart, consequently, from a rediscovered relationship with reality, through which to encounter a new concept of public space. Such a process cannot, however, be developed in the thematised, simulacral space of the contemporary post-city which, being "a copy of the copy of a city that never existed and was never inhabited by any man" (de Azua 2003), represents a figure of *detachment* from reality. A detachment that is individual and rejects the perspectives of urban conviviality.

How, then, is it possible to recuperate a relationship with reality? Nurture the perspectives of new urban conviviality? These questions link up with the need to consider a concept of public space, especially at a time like the one we are living in, characterised by a deep crisis of this category deriving from its commercialisation, privatisation and theme-parking, from the form of the "city without a city" (Sieverts 2002), of the non-city that is taking shape in our contemporary post-cities (de Azua 2003). The search for the various dimensions of *contemporary public space* asks what, nowadays, is the *true* public sphere in contemporary societies.

The French revolution in some ways ratified the end of public space as the space of representation of power, but also of the space of identification with power. With a brilliant argument, Alberto Pérez-Gómez maintains that the significance of public space will never again be an undisputable fact, in the sense that it is to be considered a cultural reality under

transformation, intimately related with the historicity itself of culture. This is why contemporary public space can neither be conceived as the "space of representation" of power (for example the mediatic power of the *simulacrum* city), nor in a simplistic manner, as a typology of public squares or "designed" areas of the city, however attractive they may formally be (Pérez-Gómez 1996).

Perhaps it is possible to demonstrate how our tradition might offer other alternatives (Pérez-Gómez 1996). Public space derives in the first place from the human condition of plurality, the preliminary requisite of that space of appearance that is the public sphere, the space of visibility in which some appear to others and they acknowledge each other, which basically constitutes the condition of possibility of *being-together* (Arendt 1964). If the *agorá* was the unequivocal space for public speaking, there is nevertheless a tradition of alternative public space related to the Greek theatre, where catharsis took place, a purification that allowed each citizen to discover a sense of purpose or belonging. This recognition that made each spectator "a whole" took place, not so much through the predictable actions of the actors, but through the mediation of the chorus, a group of men who sang and danced, acting on the circular dance platform, the platform of the orchestra, a liminal space, a "threshold" space, given its nature of place of interaction between the chorus, which represented the public, and the actors moved by the will of the gods. The orchestra platform was not the space of the spectator or the actor, it was the centre of attention for everybody, it was an *intermediate space* (Pérez-Gómez 1994, 1996). A space for the mediation of messages, an intermediate, uncertain context and therefore propitious for transformation, where it was possible to carry out the transformation of the gods' messages, a new concept of contemporary public space, where it was possible "to move without feeling manipulated" (Abalos 2004).

Like in the Greek theatre orchestra, in the *intermediate spaces* it is possible to mediate and transform the messages coming from the immense visual flow of competitiveness and commercialisation of the contemporary city (Wenders 1992, p. 89). In these spaces we have the chance to "move without feeling governed from above and outside", and to try to surpass constituted mental and cultural orders. The border areas, obsolete, forgotten by development, present themselves with this character and seem to offer possibilities for new participatory situations to emerge (de Solà-Morales 1995). The introspective spaces are becoming more and more the only environments that manage to communicate a sense of truth to our society. Their nature is such that they allow us both social contact and the idea of the "individual isolated in the midst of a crowded environment" (Abalos 2006). Only equal attention to both the values of innovation and

those of the memory of the absence will be capable of keeping faith alive in a complex, plural urban life (de Solà-Morales 1996). Our cities are rich in these territories, which are for them the equivalent of what Gilles Clément calls *Third landscape* (Clément 2004a). The intermediate spaces are therefore the places for the contemporary city project.

They are the places where the uncertain city lives (Agier 1999), where one can act, where one can be self-directed, not hetero-directed by mass organisation. They are the places of wonder, the same type of wonder that is established between a man and a woman and that Wim Wenders[4] considers inherent in reproduction, the wonder that for the city is an introduction to the project and to regeneration. *Intermediate spaces* are the places where the city is still invisible, but that precisely due to this, encourage and stimulate the project.

In general, the idea of "intermediate world" springs, as we have seen, from the conviction that the whole domain of experience acquires a meaning and a value that are the deeper the more the domain links up with the invisible world, drawing from it continuous strength, nutriment and stimuli. Between internal and external, subject and object, terrestrial and ultra-terrestrial, reality and illusion, there is therefore a dynamic process of continuous interaction characterised by a high level of flexibility and interactive exchange, thanks to which the game of opposites does not separate, but integrates. Roles and functions are continuously turned upside down and reciprocally give each other meaning. "Thus two worlds exist", Florenskij writes, "and *this* world of ours is troubled by contradictions if it does not live with the energies from the *other* world. In opposing moods and tendencies; in contrasting wills and desires; in contradictory thoughts and ideas. Antinomies fraction all our being, the whole of created life. Everywhere and always contradictions! Vice-versa faith that conquers the antinomies of the mind and manages to breathe among them, offers us the stone foundation on which we can work to overcome the antinomies of reality. But how do we get access to this stone of Faith?" (Florenskij 1998, p. 551).

Certainly by acknowledging, is the reply he gives, the dilemma – *finite* or *infinite* – and the antinomies that spring from it, without forcing them beyond all limits and unilaterally and affectedly reducing one of the two dimensions to the other, to the point of devitalising the sense of the dilemma itself and compressing, till it is hidden, the reality of the antinomies themselves. This means, concretely, that we need to refer to a space that is a part of the real but distinct from reality, in which "immanence and transcendence, depth and height encounter each other, the things of this and the things of that world, the absolute and the relative, the corruptible and the incorruptible". This space is *a window in our reality*

from which the other worlds can be seen. It is a breach in terrestrial existence through which currents from the other world burst, nurturing and strengthening it. In short: this space is the *cult*" (Florenskij 1999, p. 270). When we enter this dimension

> that which is invisible and mysterious is perceived by sensitive contemplation; clad with the empirical, it sets itself out following the lines of the invisible. By entering the sphere of the cult, sensibility lives and interweaves not according to the ties intrinsic in it, but according to others, becoming part of a different, transcendental structure, that has its *own* laws and its particular connections. Sensitive reality is progressively drawn towards other links, unusual and unconceivable, towards unexpected relations and, from that moment onwards, it is as if sustained by other forces: detaching itself from the spheres of terrestrial attraction it ceases to be of the earth and *only* sensitive. In the same way that we cannot define as simply superficial and inert the food that enters to become part of the body and, once assimilated, sensibly manifests its vital form up to that moment invisible, thus what is earthly, entering the sphere of the cult, ceases to be earthly.
>
> Yet still being, from a material point of view, essentially earthly in its particular features, within its own view of the cult, in the aura of mystery that surrounds it, something else happens and takes shape, something holy, consecrated, transformed, transubstantiated: it is mystery itself. But I repeat, the cult, strange and incomprehensible when looked at from above, seen from the top downwards, appears in all its integrity and unity. It is as if the elements of sensitive reality were destroyed by the turbine that has struck them, bent by an incomprehensible force, dismembered and recomposed to then be reunited in new signs, yet indecipherable, never before seen, of the mysterious world. Only by raising ourselves upwards may we contemplate their picture in its entirety. A transcendental strength enclosed in them has structured them according to laws that did not come from their essence, though were underlying it; this strength is the *thread* that links the celestial and the terrestrial (Florenskij 1999, pp. 299–300).

A concrete and particularly significant example of how this *transformation and transfiguration of the elements of sensitive reality* works, thanks to which what we have previously called the *virtualisation of the real* is concretely implemented, to be distinguished and opposed to virtual reality, is given by that particular technical process of representation of the icons, constituted by the so-called *razdelki* lines.[5]

These are "done in a different colour from the basic colour in the place corresponding to the icon, in most cases with metallic reflections made to shine by *assistka*[6] in gold, more rarely in silver, or by gilding. This emphasising of the *colour* of the *razdelka* lines means, in our opinion, that the icon painter applied himself to it with awareness, although it may not have corresponded to anything physically visible, i.e. for example, to some similar system of lines on the clothes or chairs, but was only a system of potential lines, construction lines of a given object, similar, for example, to the lines of force of an electric or magnetic field, or systems of equivalent or isothermic curves and such things. The lines of the *razdelka* represent, with greater strength than that of its visible lines, the metaphysical pattern of the object given, its dynamics, but in themselves are not visible at all

and, being drawn on the icon, constitute, in the idea of the painter, the total pattern for motor activity of the eye contemplating the icon. These lines act as a pattern for reconstruction in the mind of the object contemplated and, if the physical principles of these lines are sought, we discover that the lines of strength, of tension, in other words, do not represent the folds deriving from the tension, or at least not yet the folds, but folds only as a possibility, potential; whereas now they are the lines according to which the folds would lay if, in general, they began to form" (Florenskij 1990, pp. 78–79).

We are thus faced with what we might call, to all effects, a specific *increased reality*, innervated and strengthened by the resources of the possible, of seeing and thinking actual reality differently, and which precisely due to this manages to expand and magnify the meaning both of the single elements it uses for representation and their general organisation. It is an enhancement that art already manages to implement, in that "the artist fills a given region of space with a certain content, he loads it forcibly with a content, constraining the space to yield and contain more than it usually contains without this violence" (Florenskij 1995, p. 53). But it is above all with the cult and in the cult that it manifests itself fully, indeed because the cult is that place where "this world delivers itself, so to speak, to other higher worlds, becomes their representative, and in a certain sense, their bearer; refusing self-assertion, existing for itself, it becomes life *for a different world.* With this itself, such a sensitive world 'having lost its life', having become the instrument of another world, with its body takes it *into itself,* incorporates the other world within itself, or transfigures it, spiritualises it. [...] *This* world, following this loss of autonomy and its self-sufficient nature, shining with the *fire* of the other world, becomes fire itself; it is as if it were mixed with fire" (Florenskij 1999, pp. 101–102).

To be able to acquire and fully deploy this power of transformation and transfiguration of the elements of daily experience and foundation of the transitive capacity of the visible world to the invisible world, the cult, with its rites and religious services, but also with reference to the environment in which it is carried out, has, however, to take on the role and dimension of an *organic and artistic totality*, in which each part adopts a specific sense and is gratified only with reference to the entire context. This is indeed what happens in orthodox liturgy, where "Word *slovo,* Icon (*ikona*) and Music (sung psalms, *cheruvim*) are reality intimately tied to the sense of profound correspondence centred on the *image* or *representation.* Both are oriented upwards towards the spiritual world, towards celestial harmony, the absolute: *icon* 'window on the absolute', *word* 'window on the absolute'.

The icon of the great festivities completes the liturgical texts and during the sung liturgy the priest puts the icon on a book-rest. *Sight* and *hearing* are thus united: the ear sees and the eye hears. The icon is to be *listened to* so that the word is manifest. The image of the icon and the sound of the word are enhanced by the musical notes that substantiate the *experience* in total synaesthesia" (Ferrari-Bravo 2003, pp. 620–621).

Through the example of the cult, in this case, Florenskij highlights how antinomic tension between the visible and the invisible gives place to an intermediate world that bit by bit acquires autonomous form, structure and configuration. It is essential that this autonomy be preserved and that the original tension between the two dimensions that generated it never be extinguished or hidden. Precisely for this reason the relationship between the two worlds cannot be put in terms of absolute "transparency" of one with respect to the other. Florenskij does not tire of emphasising and reiterating this aspect, in fact his essay *Ikonostas* is based on the idea of the real value of separation, of the diaphragm, that the iconostasis has in the orthodox world and on the greater adherence and significativeness, indeed to highlight this detachment, of the gilded opacity of the plane of the icon compared with the transparent glass of the perspectival Renaissance "window". In its turn, however, this detachment must not be emphasised and be translated into an idea of incommensurability and contrast so radical as to prevent any attempt to start off a communicative process between the two terms of the antinomy, otherwise the idea itself of intermediate world would lose all sense and the effort to build it would be mortified and extinguished from the start.

This world is thus the expression and result of a *creative capacity* that may be, at least in the first instance and approximation, defined as the awareness of the presence of contrasting ambits and domains, the acknowledgement of their unyielding tension and aptitude to establish analogies, devise connections, cast "subtle bridges" between them. Components and aspects like flexibility, freshness and elasticity of thought are essential for its development. In effect, Florenskij wrote in a letter to his daughter Ol'ga from the Solovki lager, dated 13 May 1937, a few months before being shot:

The secret of creation lies in conserving youth. The secret of geniality in conserving something from childhood, infantile intuition for the whole of life. It is a certain constitution that gives the genius objectivity in his perception of the world, but without tension towards a centre: a form in its way of reverse perspective and precisely for this integral and real [...] The most typical for their geniality are Mozart, Puskin and Faraday, who are children as far as their internal structure is concerned, with all the wealth and insufficiency of this structure (Florenskij 1992, pp. 438–439).

This same idea, not by chance, is the constant leading theme of the cinematographic production of the already quoted Tarkovskij, from *Ivan's infancy* (1962) to *Andrej Rublev* (1966), from *Solaris* (1972) to *Stalker* (1980), all characterised, though in different forms and expressive modalities, by a *bipolar, antinomic structure,* which counters the world of effectuality and its closed, rigid organisation, based on univocal truths, and constantly oriented to refusing what is different, ductility, unstoppability, the dynamism of an antiworld, domain of the possibility and the alternative. The following monologue of the stalker is significant, from the film of the same name: "When man is born he is weak and flexible, when he dies he is strong and hardened. When the tree grows it is tender and flexible and when it is dry and strong it dies. Rigidness and strength are the companions of death, weakness and elasticity express the freshness of being; what has become rigid will not overcome" (Tarkovskij 1980, p. 37).

This monologue, which is also the quotation of a passage from Lao-Tze, proposes a clear opposition between the rigidness of adult age, tight within the bonds and conditioning of a limited cycle, and the vital, free flow, open to experiments and the exploration of the new and diverse, typical of infancy. The constant presence of this *leitmotiv* authorises us to see in the planet Solaris, the mysterious protagonist of perhaps the most genial of Tarkovskij's films, a ductile, magmatic thinking mass, an antiworld rich in unlimited possibilities that counters a mechanical world governed by iron laws, an effective metaphor of the *project*, understood not as calculation, a plan for implementation and execution of what should be done to achieve the pre-arranged result, but as an intent, an aim addressed to something that can be done in a non-foreseeable future. And this "reading" is further endorsed by the fact that the planet appears to the astronaut scientists who explore it as an entity that is at the same time *outside* and *inside* them: the space base, in effect, orbits above the waters of Solaris, but the thinking magma mass is simultaneously englobed by its temporary inhabitants, when it creeps into their minds during sleep. From this original location, which makes the relationship of the astronauts with Solaris simultaneously that of guests and hosts, the planet carries out its attempts to communicate, transmitting mental messages and also managing to materialise them. It thus proves clear that the antiworld rich in unlimited possibilities that scientists explore has its authentic centre not outside but inside them, at a depth that limiting terrestrial experience has never allowed them to reach.

The dialogue with the other different from the self therefore turns into a *self-communicative* relationship urging them to take into account the diverse, the elsewhere, the thinking in an alternative way, from which it is not possible to take one's distance or escape, precisely because it is rooted within oneself. Exactly what the project is and does, which in its most

authentic meaning is, as has been seen, the result of a close, effective combination of "sense of reality" and "sense of possibility".

"To design" means, literally, "cast ahead"; in this term, as we have already had reason to anticipate, is thus inherent the invention of a proposal, a plan for the execution of an action, or a correlated, coordinated system of actions, aimed at realising a pre-determined *objective.* The unusual type of relationship and link that becomes established between the initial ideation and the final objective is indeed the distinctive trait of the project idea.

Applied both to individual subjects and collective ones and their respective development, this idea takes on board an inevitable reference to the concept of *complexity.* And it is interesting and instructive to understand why. If we adopt the antithesis simple/complex in its etymological root, we find that *sim-ple* (Italian: sem-plice)*, semel plectere,* to fold once, evokes a process whose evolution at a certain point "takes a direction" and follows it. The word *simple* therefore implies and evokes the enucleation of an idea, following which there is a reduction in the preceding symmetry, with a consequent passage from a homogeneous, undifferentiated situation to an oriented state, which takes a precise direction and aim. This passage is genially illustrated by Calvino in one of the phases of his *Cosmicomiche*, that entitled *A sign in space.* Where it is narrated that Qfwfq, having realised that the Sun takes around 200 million years to complete a revolution through the Galaxy, and fed up with wandering through an abyss of emptiness without beginning or end, sickening, in which everything was lost, and where there was nothing that *was distinguished* from anything, decides one fine day to make a sign at a point in space, that he will be able to find again at the moment of passing through on the next round. What the sign was or should be, was not very clear to him.

> I intended to make a sign, that is so, rather I intended to consider as a sign anything that came to me to do, thus having, at that point in space and not in another, done something with the intention of making a sign, it turned out that I really had made a sign.
>
> Summarising, this being the first sign that was made in the universe, or at least on the path of the Milky Way, I must say it came out very well. *Visible?* Yes, clever, and who had eyes to see in those times? Nothing had ever been seen by anything, the question was not even asked. That it was recognisable without the risk of making a mistake, that is so: because all the other points in space were the same and undistinguishable, whereas this one had the sign (Calvino 2004, pp. 108–109, our italics).

This simple gesture radically changed not only the situation of the environment in which Qfwfq circulated, but also his own internal state: "the sign served to mark a point, but at the same time it marked that there was a sign there, an even more important thing, because there were many

points whereas there was only one sign, and at the same time the sign was my sign, the sign of me, because it was the only sign I had ever made and I was the only one that had ever made signs" (Calvino 2004, p. 110).

That sign therefore had the effect of "giving a direction" to a context previously completely undiscernable, the only significance of which was, indeed due to this, in its *symmetry.* By tracing a sign in space, Qfwfq had dissolved this symmetry: each point in this space, no longer homogeneous and undifferentiated, had lost its role of centre of symmetry; with the exception, at the most, of that where the sign had been traced. Contextually, with the *reduction of the original symmetry,* a criterion emerged to *put in order* the points of the galaxy on the grounds of their distance from the point where the sign had been traced:

> However things went, I knew that the sign would be there waiting for me, still and quiet. I would get there, I would find it again and be able to continue the thread of my reasoning. More or less, we ought to reach it halfway through the route of our galactical revolution: we needed patience, the second half always gives the impression of passing more quickly. Now I did not have to think of anything but the fact that the sign was there and I would be going through there again (Calvino 2004, p 111).

In the homogeneous, isotropic structure of the galaxy, in which the sign traced by Qfwfq had created a *reduction in symmetry*, an element of survived symmetry thus emerged, associated with the *establishment* of an order indeed departing from that sign, which had in some way become the element of reference to put all other points in space in order depending on their distance from it. Symmetry and order, far from being synonyms (as we have seen, in effect, the second appears following a radical reduction of the first), co-present, seek our attention, raising stimuli that evoke references in variants that are in equilibrium.

A project, whatever its nature be, always causes a break in this equilibrium, and *reorientation,* more or less abrupt, of thought. It is thus characterisable, in the first instance, as the passage from a static situation, of quiet and fulfilment, to a dynamic process. These considerations enable us to begin to focalise the prerequisite, the indispensable condition for all authentic, efficacious projectuality, the first, indispensable root of the capacity to "give shape" to the boundary between opposing domains, in this case the "sense of reality" and the "sense of possibility": the capacity to "hear" and "see" the "here and now" not as something "already complete" and "definite", which we limit ourselves to acknowledging, but as a becoming process that may take on forms and modalities different from those it currently manifests and that therefore not only authorises but demands on the part of the observer, the capacity to *perceive and think otherwise.*

On these grounds we can therefore take up again and make our own, to develop and further, the definition of 'to project' proposed by Celestino Soddu and Enrica Colabella, as the capacity to "activate a logic of development capable of controlling the evolution of the system towards an objective. We do not yet know this objective, or better, we know a few of its attributes to be able to define in a negative sense its degree of quality, but we do not know how these attributes may become explicit in the artificial form we are creating. We can only hypothesise some of the qualities of this possible outcome as responding to the subjective imagination in question, itself also under transformation" (Soddu and Colabella 1992).

This definition has the merit of emphasising the co-presence, at the moment of triggering of the project, and subsequently in its development, of three *dynamic components:*

- the reference context, in which the new event, the fruit of projectual creativity, whatever its nature be, will be collocated, a context already in evolution and which, unequivocally, finds itself in a dynamic growth situation;
- the project that, in its turn, grows and develops and in its maturation process obviously has to take into account the dynamics of the reference environment;
- the subjective imagination of the designer, this too under transformation, a transformation fed and sustained by the tension towards an objective that, initially, is not yet well known and can, therefore, only be defined negatively.

To think of the project as the result of the evolution of three parallel stories (that of the reference environment that is evolving, the project itself that is growing and the psychic structure of the designer which is being transformed), stories that will later have to converge, interweave and enrich each other, transforming, for example, what initially appeared as an "external" context into an internal dimension, profoundly assimilated and incorporated, prevents this concept being associated with the notion of simplicity, as we have previously characterised and defined it (*semel plectere,* fold *once*). The fact of being in the presence of three dynamic developments relating with each other till they blend into a single dimension, that of the project, indeed, as the interface between internal and external, between internal world and environment, in effect obliges us not only to note and take duly into account the interaction between these moments and aspects, but to assign absolute priority to these relations compared with the components at play. It is therefore impossible for us to

follow separately the single, horizontal sequences of development of each of these three dynamic processes considered individually; we find ourselves on the contrary faced with the need we cannot ignore, of taking into consideration also and above all the "vertical links" between these three sequences and the way in which the development of each *is retroactive on the others*, modifying them. The continuous sliding from one plane to another and from one process to another that derives from this causes a "variation in meaning" of the verb *plectere*, present, as we have seen in the root of the adjective "simple", but also in that of "complex". "Complexity" derives in effect from the Latin adjective *complexus* ("what surrounds", "what envelops"), which is originally a participle of the verb *complecti* ("to surround", "to envelop"). The simple verb is, indeed, *plectere,* the meaning of which, from the original "to bend" and "to twist", begins to point in an increasingly marked manner towards the idea of "intertwine", "interweave", and therefore to join aspects and planes together that were initially separate.

This dynamic interaction between three planes or processes only initially (and for convenience and needs of analysis) separate, each of which, in turn, is in an evolutive phase that characterises the project, makes a multiplicity of ideas emerge which collaborate and compete, the result of the quantity and quality of the relations or interactions triggered between the different components at play. A variety of courses and outlets (or directions) spring from this, which in turn cause a situation of uncertainty and consequent confusion and stasis that is not resolved until a winning idea is asserted as the objective of the project.

To clarify how this process develops and the nature of its dynamics, we can usefully refer to Dennett's (1991) theoretical bases, the foundation of which is the idea that what we call "conscience" is nothing like unilinear, rigorous, consequential discourse, but a complicated, polyvalent, articulate system in which heterogeneity and ambivalence predominate, from which it draws fuel and wealth. This system consists of narrations within which there are ramifications that correspond to the casual game of possibilities and contingency and provide alternative versions competing with each other of the history of the "I" in the world and what this "I" can and wants to do in relation to its world. Only the tales that have the majority of areas of the brain/mind in agreement reach the conscience; it is only after this selection and choice that a well-marked out route and line of development can emerge. A single flow of conscience does not exist, but many, and precise instants in the conscious life of an individual do not exist but on the contrary overlappings and reconstructions whose real temporality may not correspond to that which "we tell ourselves" in our conscience.

It is, therefore, an approach that exalts the function of narration, in that it hypothesises that the conscience is nothing more than the emergence of a tale that has won over many others competing with it, an interpretation that asserts itself in a complex, intricate world of ideas, hypotheses, suggestions and alternatives, that are restless, fermenting and interacting in our mind at a subconscious level. From this point of view the unit underlying the conscience is a narrative "centre of gravity" towards which the descriptive multiplicity converges, which is not an irritating epiphenomenon, an appearance destined to fade away once it has reached its arrival point. Each "I" narrates itself and acts itself out, does nothing more than narrate and interminably tell itself a story of itself in the world, it "stages" itself, is self-representing. Usually, from this representation an "identity" springs that is relatively stable in time and in the different scenes, the fruit, indeed of the process of selections carried out between the "multiple versions" available; but a subject may also take on various identities in different situations or, at worst, even in the same. What we call "I" is therefore the internal, subjective correlate of the "staging".

This conception of the I is interesting because it sees in the reality corresponding to the term in question a complex, differentiated *unum* to be faced and managed not only on the plane of temporal development, but also from the point of view of spatial coexistence between different *multa*. Namely, the articulation of the subject and his complex nature are not only the result of the following on and alternating of his various "identities" and tales in different scenes and phases, distributed over time. They are, as we have seen, also and above all the outcome of a structure in space not only of single elementary activities, in conformity with the "grid" model of the brain and the mind, but also of different "experiences of self" and of the events of which the "author" himself has been a participant, in the subjective interpretation that is provided through the different tales of them that can be proposed.

The idea that emerges is thus that of "interpretative Darwinism", according to which within the perceptive and cognitive apparatus of the subject different processes are simultaneously present, which read the situation he is faced with in alternative ways. Within this range of possible options the interpretative route is selected which appears the most effective in the sense that it seems to interact best with the stimuli received and manages to construct theoretical sets that are more and more ample and coherent. But beside this, other types of process continue to exist, which remain submerged for the whole time the hegemonic interpretation is functioning, though continuing to carry out their activity of deciphering and reading stimuli-information.

Only when the answers coming from the external reality prove to be in contrast with the expectations and schemes of the principal process, to the point of jeopardising their internal coherence, for them to be grasped, or requiring recourse to theoretical and computational resources too costly to maintain this coherence, will one of the competitors take over, the one that seems to serve best the dual requirement of conserving the still valid, significant results of the preceding work and keeping account of the new elements that have emerged.

"Interpretative Darwinism" thus considers the possibility of maintaining co-present elements and selecting different, competitive interpretative routes: precisely for this it is useful for explaining in an effective, convincing way the capacity of cognitive subjects to not remain prisoners of a single view of the world and to change their point of view, gradually adopting what seems the most suitable for a reading of the context in which we operate and the situations it proposes.

As has been seen through the reference, though rapid, to the conception of conscience proposed by Dennett, the model of multiple versions may be effectively illustrated by reference to the modalities by which stories are understood. In listening to a story, first of all we construct a stereotyped representation of the situation and then bind the actors to a role within this situation. The implicit, the understanding of the future actions of the characters, and even a certain capacity to make forecasts or be surprised, derive from the fact that once the roles have been established things seem to "go ahead alone", and there is no need to have information arising in a banal way from such allocation, but only that which modifies the canons of role or situation established at the beginning.

In this way the stories are also theoretic artifacts that only seek confirmation of their structures or a widening of their "scope" by the introduction of new stage elements. If a perturbing element were to intervene, namely one capable of having the whole fabular-theoretic structure collapse, a new significant structure would need to be prepared, capable of holding together the various significant elements, or a superstructure showing that the whole is devoid of sense.

Interpretative Darwinism, therefore, though departing from the hypothesis that man always thinks and acts under the conditioning influence of a "dominant", which monopolises his attention and shapes the course of his perceptions and concepts to the needs dictated and imposed by it, in line with Uchtomskij's conception referred to previously, is concerned nevertheless with highlighting how the I has in any case, if it wishes, the possibility and capacity to free itself from this influence, when it realises that its relationship with reality is becoming rigid and preventing it from perceiving its nuances, internal articulation and variations.

The richness of personal identity, from this point of view, thus appears linked with the availability of a vast range of interpretative registers and versions and the capacity to pass from one to another, when the conditions, internal and external, require it.

This, it is worth emphasising to avoid misunderstanding, has nothing to do with eclecticism or, even worse, with opportunism, that is with the tendency to change sides and, depending on how the wind is blowing, change direction and flag. The variety of which we are speaking is, in effect, something that depends on a specific organisational modality, and the type of identity that springs from it, the flexibility of the way in which the I perceives itself and the borders it outlines around itself. It depends, that is, on the decision to pick out these borders and sketch them in a certain way and keep them localised there, rather than elsewhere, and on the orientation to perceive as homogeneous and in harmony with internal organisation and the identity arising from it, certain signals coming from the external world and from relations with others and consequently to accept them, introjecting and incorporating them, while discarding others, considered discordant with respect to this organisational modality. This is why, as we were saying, this approach, in itself, has nothing to do with eclecticism or opportunism; in effect, it limits itself to postulating that each "I" is the result of the coexistence of a large number of different versions which, however, are the results of a selection carried out on the grounds of a choice of a specific internal profile, from which a clearly outlined, precise identity derives, subject certainly to variations, but within a range of possibilities compatible with the pre-chosen projectual strategy and the type of self it is intended to realise. To widen this range, so as to include projects that are not easily compatible, to select on the basis of an opportunistic calculation, is a further choice that may be made, but is everything but a consequence necessarily arising from "interpretative Darwinism".

The consequence we must draw from all this is that the project, indeed as the expression of the capacity to see and think otherwise and the aptitude to create relations between sense of reality and sense of possibility, welding them in a single perspective and making an "intermediate world" emerge from them, must constantly keep itself open to new options, be it under the constant guide of a dominant idea which, up till the moment it is considered valid, should guide its process of development and ensure its coherence and cohesion. We may express this "dialectic game" between dominant, which as long as it "rules" takes on the function of tie, and tension towards other possible options borrowing the language of "Lakatos' methodology of research programmes" and thus speaking of relations between "central nucleus", to conserve and develop,

and "protective belt", which having above all the function of safeguard of the first, can and must constantly be reviewed and "adapted", so as to carry out its role in the most effective way possible. We might also speak, with perhaps more appropriate terminology, of "organisation" of the project, understood as a basic idea, to which its specific identity is tied, and that cannot therefore be changed without jeopardising and "revoking" the latter, and of "families of structures", namely of projectual components and relations between them, compatible with that specific organisation, from which the project-maker is free to choose the sub-group he "feels" and judges to be more in harmony with his approach and perspective.

Notes

[1] See the analysis by Colombina (1998). Or, on the subject of a work of Dennis Adams, from the maquette of Loos' house, Brayer (1997).

[2] Deleuze 1988, p. 31. "On dira que ce qui est plié est seulement virtuel, et n'existe actuellement que dans une enveloppe, dans quelque chose qui l'enveloppe".

[3] Felix Nadar, *Photographie de la place de l'Etoile*, 1898.

[4] *The Sky above Berlin*, directed by Wim Wenders, Road Movies, Filmproduktion/ Berlin Argos Films/Paris, 1987.

[5] The draping lines of the clothes or of the body under the clothes, mostly gold-coloured but sometimes silvery.

[6] The gold shading, applied in parallel lines or strokes, present above all in the latest icons.

The City as an Intermediate World between Global and Local

Family resemblance and connective intelligence are, as has been seen, an attempt to construct the identity of collective subjects, whatever their specific nature be, starting not from the relations of belonging to a set, based in its turn on the idea of common denominator, but on the criterion of difference, which means, as Marramao emphasises, the reconstructive principle of the universal in terms of a *disjunctive synthesis.* The global, from this point of view, comes to be considered the result of relations between *unyielding and reciprocally unassimilable singularities*, exactly the opposite of the conception of social tie understood as belonging to a common substance-identity (Community, State; but also Reason, Humanity, Language...). By activating the criterion of difference it is possible, moreover, to break another false equation: that between incommensurability and incomparability of cultures.

   In practice, how can we manage to bring about this form of dialogical relations between incommensurable cultures (though not for this, as we have seen, unconfrontable and impermeable to dialogue)? Granted that to achieve an outcome of this kind it is not possible to restrict the encounter between the *Weltanschauungen* – visions of life and the world – of the different groups negotiating procedural rules, according to the method of intersection/overlapping consensus, envisaged by political liberalism, nor limit oneself, for the reasons already set out, to the single argumentative dimension, seeing that in communicative relations it is impossible to separate the narrative sphere from the symbolic one, how then is it possible to achieve a creative combination between the global and the local, where the first does not subject, flatten and bend the second, but the two elements mutually change each other, giving origin to a new compound?

   If the problem is to have emerge and consolidate what we have called the "interface relationship" between global and local, increasing the power of local communities by linking them with global knowledges and resources and simultaneously strengthening their internal cohesion and sense of identity within the picture of a system of innovative international relations, the first question to face and resolve is that of singling out the

"place" where this interface relationship may develop with greater efficacy.

This interface relationship, as we have seen, involves on the one hand, globalisation as techno-economic and financial-commercial uniformity with the consequent phenomena of deterritorialisation and growing interdependence between the various areas of the planet; on the other, a just as accelerated trend of differentiation and reterritorialisation of identities, of relocalisation of the processes of symbolic identification.

Beyond the originality and efficacy of the *glocal* oxymoron, in which the sociological lexis tends to summarise these two not necessarily convergent aspects, it is obvious that, in order that the relations in question may function and deploy positive effects, a "medium term" needs to be picked out that will manage to tone down and in some way put in order the opposing pressures that are at play here. As Marramao again observes, the traditional intermediate ring of modern international order, which came out of the secular bloodbath of the civil wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants and was ratified halfway through the seventeenth century with the Peace of Westphalia, was made up of the nation-State and the structure that up to then supported it: *isomorphism between people, territory and sovereignty.* At this point this ring tends to "fall" and reveal itself more and more unfit for its function in the global scenario because the single sovereign States prove *too small* to cope with the challenges of the global market and *too large* to control the proliferation of themes, claims and conflicts induced by the various localisms. Here, what Marramao defines in his book *Passage to the West* as the *"pincers" of localisation* are produced, that cause as defence-response to this globalisation, the proliferation of communitary identities, recognisable and characterised *per differentiam* from all the others – with the consequent crushing of the global society into a plurality of "diasporic public spheres". We are therefore in the presence of a globalisation that homologates but does not universalise, compresses but does not unify, and so stimulates under the false pretences of the "politics of difference" a constant proliferation of identitary logics that are not the expression of the capacity to square up with the processes underway, but a desperate attempt at defence and closure with respect to them. Instead of trying to produce a new, more advanced level of *locality,* that takes account certainly of memory, culture and previous tradition but also knows how to project them onto the ample scenario constituted by the success of globality and to develop and consequently innovate them, we cherish the illusion of a safe "return home". It is a case of a solution undoubtedly comforting and reassuring against the chaos of a modernity that often seems simultaneously dispersive and homologating, but which has the serious limit of exorcising

the conflict that inevitably originates from the comparison between different cultural worlds and from avoiding the duty of settling up with its own past and style of thought and life.

The only concrete way out of this situation of closure and deadlock is to avoid, in the face of the inevitable "antinomic tension" between global and local, falling into the "trap" of two opposing temptations, equally unproductive: that of "extinguishing" this tension, considering one of the two terms (in this case the "local") now entirely absorbed by the other to the point of having to be reduced to it, and that of exalting it in an acritical manner, considering impossible and useless any effort to find mediation (that could never have the nature of "synthesis" for the ample reasons we have seen) between them. In this case, too, therefore, the effort must be to pick out and work on an "*infra* space", that can act as "buffer zone" and "interface" between the two extremes. With the idea having faded away, for the reasons we have seen, that the State might take on this function, the idea is increasingly making headway that to provide local communities with the chance to positively address social change within their areas of direct influence, and to become a part, not in a passive or subordinate way, of a system of innovative, fairer international relations, would need a special role to be attributed to cities − considering them international actors − and to city-city cooperation as an instrument to respond to global challenges and promote economic development and reconciliation activities.

At the base of this trend is the conviction that glocalisation implies a change in the international system: from a structure based on the balance of power between nations and states, to a balance found between cultural interests and local needs on the one hand and global opportunities on the other, though always bearing in mind the importance of the local actors as agents of change. Through the enhancement of forms of connection, networks of cities can access the resources of the public and private sectors directing them towards local needs and in this way reduce the costs and increase the efficacy of development projects.

To understand why the city can legitimately aspire to this role it is worth starting with two alternative ways of "reading" and "interpreting" its nature and function which were popular in the past. The first refers to the classical definition proposed by the Encyclopedia of Diderot and D'Alembert, tied to the idea of a compact mass of buildings inside a closed circle of walls. This conception, still considered valid by Max Weber,[1] was contested by Simmel at the beginning of the last century, who, in a work with a title already in itself significant, *The metropolis and mental life*, wrote in 1903: "a city consists of its total effects which extend beyond its immediate confines. Only this range is the city's actual extent" (Simmel 1950, p. 419).

From this point of view the city is thus understood as a "sphere" consisting of functions (effects, as Simmel calls them), largely immaterial, so that it no longer constitutes a protected place where one can shut oneself up to separate and defend oneself from the surrounding environment, but is a "thick lump" of activity and energy that exerts a field of force on the territory which, however, is not continuous but variegated and discrete. And among these effects, as the title indeed shows, those that have an effect on mental life cannot be neglected.

In another short essay *Metropoli e personalità* comparing metropolises and small cities or rural environments, Simmel (1968) pinpoints further essential aspects of metropolitan phenomena: from the psychological point of view, the rhythm with which stimuli, impressions and images arise and alternate in the minds of the inhabitants of the metropolises is much more rapid and pressing than it is in a rural environment and their variety and wealth is incomparably greater. Life is consequently less subject to the incidence of habit and routine and much less uniform. From an economic point of view, the large city is the centre of the monetary economy, the place where all exchanges are regulated by money. Bartering and the direct exchange of goods disappear; those who produce, work for the market, for a consumer they do not know and will never meet directly, a consumer who makes his purchases at a variety of commercial outlets, intermediaries who, thanks to the existence of money, can easily speculate on purchases and sales, obtaining personal earnings without having realised any product. A radical change in the typology of social interactions thus results.

The city, meant as the metropolis, is investigated by Simmel from several points of view: as the place of modern alienation, a source of energy and vitality, a place inspiring the artist, but also as a place of increasingly accentuated loneliness where individuals are isolated. This is because external contacts are too many to be dealt with and managed also on an internal plane, so that what suffers is, inevitably, compactness and social cohesion and the sense of belonging to a community. Thus what is nowadays called the theory of the three cities emerges, namely:

– The city as the highest expression of a collectivity capable of "organising physical space" for its own needs and objectives that are evolving over time (the so-called "city of stone", concrete and material);
– The city as the place of maximum concentration of functions and relations, where the levels of intensity and velocity of "exchanges" reach higher and higher values (the "city of relations and flows");
– The city as a privileged semantic space of the psycho-perceptive relationship between man and his habitat (the "lived-in city").

Taking, obviously, for granted that it is impossible to leave out, for the purpose of analysing the concept of city, the first of these definitions, we currently tend – following the idea itself of "urban space" – to give more and more importance to the second and third aspects.

Extending and deepening Simmel's insights, Javier Echevarrìa recently proposed that the city of relations be called *Telepolis* (Echevarria 1995). It is the new telematic city, that has neither borders nor limits, that can neither be seen nor represented; it is pluridimensional, spherical, its structures consist of telecommunications networks that can be expanded and inter-connected *ad infinitum.* It is not localisable, nor characterised by the fact of being, in that it develops in the virtual space made of flows and exchanges at ever greater speeds. This space, which overlaps the physical one and intersects with it, is the result of the long-range exponential growth of relations that each city keeps up with many others, regardless of the effective distance separating them. It is thus a network in which each "node" is virtually next to every other, and what counts is no longer the nearness in space, but the degree and dynamics of functional linking. We therefore have a *restructuring of space*, steered by what are called the *worthy urban functions* (in particular research, technology, high-level training, specialised services, finance and connected instruments) and by global dynamics, which affect local contexts more and more and determine the fall of time/space friction. It is because of these dynamics, indeed, that the financial plazas of Wall Street and the City of London, though separated by the ocean, operate as though they were contiguous, while they are socially and operatively very far from other physically near places, like the black ghettoes of Manhattan or the poor quarters of Lewisham in London.

These features of the global cities have been studied further by Saskia Sassen (2001), who adds an analysis of them to the picture of the growing loss of meaning and incidence of the national economy as a unitary category, being taken over by a division and ever-greater disassembling into a series of subnational components, some of which deeply established within the global economy, others not.

This change in scenario obliges us to focus on the cities to outline a "new geography of centrality", founded on strategic places at a global level, tied to each other by the dynamics of economic globalisation following which a new transnational politics is emerging, based on the practice of global control. Sassen observes and analyses cities as the places where the principal service industries of our times operate, with the purpose of picking out the infrastructure of activities, businesses and jobs that are necessary for the advanced businesses sector to function. Global cities are the centres of servicing and financing of interchange and national

investments, the head offices of business companies. That is to say that nowadays the many specialised activities present within them are essential for the optimisation, rather the hyperoptimisation, of capital. In this sense these cities act as strategic production sites for the current leading economic sectors.

This function is reflected, moreover, in the predominance of these activities in the advanced economies. New York, Tokyo, Paris, London, Seoul, Peking, Shanghai and Miami and the other global cities in the world (some forty altogether) are globally connected but locally, physically and socially disconnected to the point that it is fair to wonder to what degree, in their case, there is any use in continuing to speak of cities in the traditional sense of the term. Yet they, too, are crossed by two opposing dynamics, though tied by an internal dialectic. On the one hand, they are the space where globalised, electronic, elusive, absolutely private capital becomes the new engine of aggregation, redesigning the spaces of social reproduction, in this sense taking on, as stated, political worth. On the other hand, however, it is in this same urban space that the variety and heterogeneity of the persons excluded from these processes, or at least at the margins of the latter, the poor, the migrants and more in general all those layers of the population that, for various reasons, are outside the channels of official recognition, find the chance not only to express themselves and appear, but also to become a social force at a level that is apparently pre-political.

Sassen calls these modalities of aggregation "being present" processes; they have little or nothing to do with the traditional category of "public opinion", but lead at any rate to a public sphere and space surfacing and gradually becoming consolidated, based on a mutual recognition that induces and accustoms the layers of population involved to feel themselves affected by the said dynamics of exclusion and to consequently glean, each from the others, analogies and recursiveness. Cities thus become, even more than they were in the past, "the place of politics", of dialogical exchange, reciprocal recognition, of the construction of fresh modalities of aggregation, the capacity to resist homologation, the effort to construct from the resistance to the latter and the friction that arises from it, new forms of social identity, new "connective" subjects, that draw their awareness not from the identity of the component subjects, somehow taken for granted, but from a play of mutual relations and interchange that is triggered by the common awareness of being at the margins of the hegemonic processes and the attempt to optimise this situation of weakness and exclusion, transforming it into an occasion for deliverance and opportunity.

This analysis is interesting because it confirms the centrality of the concept of "connection", from which, as emphasised previously, the idea

of "connective intelligence" springs, which is more and more taking the place of that of "collective intelligence". The fundamental difference between these two notions is that within the first each single individual or group maintains its specific identity though in the sphere of a highly articulate, extended structure of links and ties, which enables it to assert its existential condition in its unshakableness and "be present" in the public space displaying and optimising the latter.

To take an example from Sassen herself: the mothers in Plaza de Majo in Argentina are not simply citizens that are fighting for their rights: the whole sense of their battle lies indeed in not presenting themselves as political subjects, but as mothers, and, in particular, as mothers of *desaparecidos*, and as such requesting legitimisation and justice. This also stands for gay people, "queers" and all movements of this kind, among which, as stated, processes of reciprocal recognition are established based on the analogy of their condition of exclusion, which do not, however, lead to the constitution of a "collective subject" founded on the availability of any nucleus of common distinctive traits.

Nevertheless, the fact itself of beginning to grasp the elements of analogy, retraceable to the common sensation of not feeling adequately represented and protected, presses towards the quest for forms of synthesis different from the usual ones, that Sassen herself gleans and enhances, making them become part of a category, that "multitude" considered useful once purified of its abstract nature and above all of its tendency to "ghettoise" the phenomena it intends to describe. Behind this category, in her opinion, lies the concrete and uncontestable fact that there are today three billion people outside any channel of social integration. If we enter this huge submerged world and observe it at close range, we discover that it is swarming with political microstructures that work creating, indeed, early forms of synthesis and overlappings. They are what Sassen calls "the practices of the excluded", departure points from which connections and networks can begin to be woven. In these practices *communication* and *narration* are essential, telling one's little experiences of asserting rights, because this enables others to recognise themselves and memory to settle which is able to produce experience. Through this narration subjects even with insufficient capacities for rational, discursive reasoning may be able to talk about their ethical choices or the consequences that the adoption of certain norms and lifestyles entails for their existence. Though they do not have the possibility to produce a reasoned justification for their own values, culture, their vision of the world, they can thus manage, by relating not just rational but also emotional experience that they have of these same values on a daily basis, to assert their right to presence and their own space

in the public sphere. The latter therefore continues to extend, to the point of feeding on a mixture of reason and experience, reasoning and narration, cognition and emotion, which does not, however, mean indiscriminately adopting any form of self-comprehension or any modality of experience.

This would in effect once again mean to actually render incommensurability a synonym of incomparability and uncomposability. In the "glocalised" world a democratic public sphere may certainly allow, therefore, narration and rhetoric, but – as Carlo Ginzburg has appropriately emphasised – on the condition that it is a case of *rhetorics with proof,* not rhetoric without proof, i.e. rhetoric by which the "practices of the excluded" can become practices of reciprocal translation, comparison of experiences, discovery of analogies, however imperfect they may be, but such however as to have points of contact and recursiveness emerge.

In this way the concept of multitude, though not moving certainly in the direction of a political synthesis in the usual sense, of the party, the trade union or any other kind of traditional collective subject, may begin to grasp and describe a process of diffusion by network and passage from a space of reciprocal extraneity to a background in some way shared, which is the only departure point possible in these contexts to begin to get history on the move again.

It is significant and important, for the purposes of our argument, that this process happen in cities and, in fact above all, in global ones, which apart from being the privileged seats of the dynamics of economic globalisation and the new transnational politics springing from it, are also becoming the places for experimenting new modalities of aggregation and novel forms of constitution of a public sphere, based on the communication processes and "practices of imperfect translation" that have constituted the central object of the analysis proposed here.

This fact clearly indicates, in our opinion, that conceptualisation, even before edification, of the city of the future must depart from these practices, tackle them and settle up with them. Nowadays the "practices of the excluded" risk generating a space that is more and more the "space of misunderstanding", misinterpretation of the clash between individual and collective subjects. But these practices, as has been seen, can also become a resource for interesting syntheses, for lasting, enriching encounters. Provided they are not taken as the subject of pity, compassion, a purely charitable "bigoted" attitude, and that we begin to look at them in their actual reality without expecting to force them into a dimension of uniform assessment. It is certainly not said, nor can or should be taken for granted, in effect, that the encounter between the views and needs of different groups and between cultures may happen only in conformity with a common measure of judgement of life situations, with an available shared

background. On the contrary, conflicts, misinterpretation, misunderstanding (even if not in all their forms), can become the space in which these views and cultures are deployed and encounter each other, finding themselves different. In this case the intermediate space takes on the form and function of a neutral zone, a *terrain vague*, where reciprocal identities can face each other, remaining separate but each beginning to experience the *alterity* of the other. It is important to feel this alterity and make of it a positive instrument for relations, in that it obliges us to respect the space of the other, to have a "non-invasive" attitude to it, to advance cautiously in the relations we wish to establish, experimenting and practising first of all forms of contact that try to overcome the situation of the gap and the void between the respective semiotic and cultural worlds, without adopting attitudes that might be felt, rightly or wrongly, as "aggressive" or at any rate as undue interference, and consequently provoke a defensive withdrawal into subjectivity. Only on this condition can the "space of misunderstanding" begin to become a *buffer zone*, where simplified, superficial forms of "encounter" can be experimented, to avoid irreparable conflicts, or (if the latter arise) perhaps be a way of "giving time to time" to "cool them down" and sometimes to heal them.

This space of misunderstanding, through processes of communication and translation on which we have amply dwelt previously, should be transformed into what Arendt calls the "infra space", emphasising that "public is the common world, *the infra,* things and men" (Arendt 1964, p. 37). In her opinion the crisis of politics has to do precisely with the destruction of this space between men, this *infra* where laws and constitutions have their origin. The single person, in his isolation, is never free and freedom, therefore, always originates in the *infra* which is only created where many people meet and can only subsist as long as they stay together; thus, in the Greek world, it was spatially limited by the walls of the city, it coincided with the *polis*, outside which it was not possible to be political men. For this reason "the *infra* is that which is authentically historico-political; it is not man who is a *zoon politikon*, or a historic being, but men, to the extent that they move within the ambit that *lies between* them" (Arendt 2003, p. 32). The concept of plurality as the possibility of existence of the *infra* is therefore important for Arendt to define political freedom and, negatively, also to define totalitarianism (as an absence of plurality, i.e. as the absence of space between one individual and another).

In "Ideology and terror" – the last chapter of *The origins of totalitarianism* – Arendt (1996) theorises precisely the destruction of this *infra* as a distinctive feature of totalitarianism, which substitutes the limits and channels of communication between individuals with an iron bond that keeps them so tightly united as to make their plurality disappear into a

single man of gigantic dimensions. Its distinctive trait, therefore, lies precisely in the fact of abolishing the boundaries between individuals, pressing men one against the other. Due to this the intermediate space, this space *between* men, may be legitimately considered an indispensable prerequisite and precondition of freedom and consequently becomes a more and more important, fascinating theme for the idea and vision of the city, since it is precisely this gap that ensures plurality, the existence of individuals not crushed one against the other. The *infra* is a space that keeps individuals related; they are together, but are also separate from each other. It is the character of contemporary public space that allows us both social contact and the idea of the "individual isolated in the midst of a crowded environment" (Abalos 2006). We might say that the representative role of public space combines a collective ideal with an individual ideal.

We must, however, avoid confusing the space accessible to the public with public space. The latter needs to be *external* to the public space simulated by contemporary post-cities, in that it has to be created by the practices and subjectivity of individuals; with their practices the users of space end up creating various types of "public dimension" (Williamson et al. 2002). To design the city in the surrounding urban means to assert this *externity* (Maciocco 2008) of public space, which enables us to reveal the spaces that have innate in them the possibility to cover the various dimensions of *contemporary public space.*

The purpose of the project for space is to reveal in the places of the city these meanings that "we drag along with us and which drag us along with them" (Piccardo 2001). Where these meanings are revealed, there *contemporary public space* is manifest, which – as we have remarked in the previous pages – enables each citizen to discover "a sense of purpose or belonging", but also makes each citizen "a whole", an individual in a crowded space, a recognition similar to what came about in the Greek theatre, and which took place in the *intermediate space.*

Through their individual subjectivities and social practices citizens can create a new public sphere fit for the contemporary condition. Therefore, every gesture, even the smallest, has the task of revealing the meanings of this common world.

The perspectives that, on the basis of the theoretical approach proposed, can be drawn for the immediate future of the city refer to the need for the latter to start acting again not only on the basis of the traditional, objective localising advantages, like the agglomeration economies, its internationality, its connotation as a node of global networks, but to return in a certain sense to its origins of *civitas*, a cohesive society capable of strategic *action.* The urban society must therefore get back the sense of collectivity,

the will for definition or redefinition of its identity, relaunch opportunities for integration and internal synergy; it should go back to take seriously into consideration the aspects that tie it to place, to the specific conformation and organisation of the latter, its history, culture, traditions, its objectives and values. From this angle it cannot but be the space of *friction* and *resistance* compared with the advance of globalisation and the processes of homologation that this entails from all points of view.

This is why and in what sense the city can be defined, with regard to the tension between global and local, as an intermediate world, which has to manage to glean the appeals and needs of one and translate them into the language and culture of the other and vice versa. A similar prospect is not only encouraged, but made in some way compulsory by the impressive and at this point unrestrainable dynamics of urbanisation phenomena. In 1950, in effect, only 30% of the world population lived in the urban areas with a total of around 700 million people. These days this figure has almost doubled, reaching 3 billion individuals. It is envisaged that in 2030 approximately 60% of the world population will be distributed in over 1100 metropolises, with an average of around 4 million people per city. Gaining strength from this expansion, above all in the developing countries, and more and more aware of the decisive role they take on in globalisation processes, cities have undertaken many initiatives to assert their role in the world and develop intense, lasting and reciprocal ties. Suffice it to think of the Global Forum, a non-profit organisation founded in 2001 by the Ambassador Uri Savir, with the objective of giving power to the local communities, linking them with global resources. For this purpose he developed a network of cities that nowadays joins up 124 urban centres throughout the world and facilitates the creation of alliances of the nodes of this network with public institutions and private companies. Thirty-five of the 100 largest cities of the world are present in his network: their mayors officially represent 248 million citizens. Considering, too, the inhabitants of the remaining 89 cities belonging to this network, almost one billion people resident in the urban areas benefit from the effects of the inter-municipal relations developed by the Global Forum.

Much as it is important, however, to work on linking up cities, constituting lasting networks between them, it is within urban contexts that we need to work intensively so as to transform them from places of reciprocal extraneity into intermediate worlds, predisposed to dialogue not only between individual subjects, but also between cultures. It should, in effect, be remembered that with the growth of migratory flows all the principal western metropolises, some more, some less, have become border territories between different worlds. In Lombardy, for example, according to ISMU data, in 2003 there were around 60–65,000 Subsaharan

Africans (24,000 of which Senegalese and 9,000 Ghanaian), 35% of which proved to be concentrated around Milan, while strong nuclei were observed in the provinces of Bergamo (17.8%) and Brescia (23.1%). These migrants *live and act simultaneously in two spaces,* that of the territory they come from and that of the one where they have settled. For the purposes of the internal climate of the city, its cohesion, the atmosphere breathed there, the relationship that becomes established between these two worlds is decisive. This relationship may be of reciprocal extraneity and also hostility, like that expressed fully by an etymological example pointed out by Natale Losi in an interesting work of his (Losi 2000): illness, *beshita,* in Amharic originally meant "to not have settled things with the ancestors" and therefore to live in a context alien to one's roots and traditions. That the tie between illness and exile is not purely an etymological trace is demonstrated by a fact gathered from a report of April 1995 for the European Union, which estimated that of four million refugees or evacuees calculated by the UN, some seven hundred thousand were suffering severe psychic trauma just in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. According to Losi, a doctor, psychotherapist, anthropologist and sociologist, this situation cannot and should not be dealt with simply using the weapons of "scientific" psychiatry, in that we find ourselves faced with widespread psychic malaise, the roots of which are mostly in the incurable laceration between the original world and the one in which people are forced to live. To treat this, the best weapon is the *return,* which may always be real, but may also be accomplished in the person's imagination by positive recuperation of their world and the values they had before. Not by chance, Losi put as an epigraph to the chapter on "western psychotherapy adapted to the migrant", this cutting and in many ways disturbing phrase of a North-African immigrant in France: "For ten years my Arab brain, thinking in Arabic, has been grinding European concepts in such a ridiculous way that it has transformed them into bile and become ill from it itself".

If situations and sentiments of this type prevail, the city will inevitably become the place not only of spreading and perpetuation of spaces "of misunderstanding", but even of hostility and rancour smouldering to the point of risking explosion. To make the city become an "intermediate world" internally means, on the other hand, to have immigrants become a sort of "informal ambassador" for their countries, giving them the chance to create economic and social relations between their homeland and the land they have come to, and to stimulate and facilitate first dialogue, and then, hopefully, contamination and hybridisation between cultures.

To make the city an intermediate world between cultures and peoples means to use glocalisation and transnationalism as opportunities for

increased interrelations between specific territories which require new regulations and political action, not only to cope with the inevitable negative aspects of this situation (for example, with regard to the struggle against criminal organisations trafficking in human beings), but also to be prepared, mentally and culturally, to use the opportunities for development that come from the migrants, who are not only actors of the economic growth of the countries accommodating them, but also promoters and facilitators of trans-local integration between the country of destination and of departure and cooperative relations with the cities and villages of their origins. The idea that needs to make headway to avoid immigrants being confined to dormitory quarters of cities, devoid of quality and services and indeed for this easily predisposed to rebellion and violence (as recently happened in Paris) is that they can be important actors for contextual development both of our territories and of the ones they have come from, as much in a cultural ambit as in the economic one. A pact, a trans-local partnership between city and migrants "here and there", could represent an innovative political act to construct shared development. But this, as well as the definition of a new policy of co-development at various levels, requires reconsideration of the role and function of cities and, consequently, their order and internal organisation. And this is the crucial problem to face if we wish to assure cities of a better future than that which is currently being outlined.

Apart from these measures that we might define as "minimal policy", the authentic question to face and solve is that at the base of the concepts themselves of "family resemblance", "connective intelligence" and "respect and optimisation of differences" on which, not by chance, we have so much insisted. What emerges from these concepts, if they are interpreted in their authentic meaning and their true value is given to them, is that the city, more and more at this point, is made up of differences, of "relational matrices", and therefore groups and collective subjects that encounter each other and whose paths cross, more than any kind of "strong nucleus" that could legitimately aspire to being recognised as a majority or reference point for recognition of a presumed political, social or cultural identity of the city. The latter is consequently today already and destined to be more and more the space of minorities, of diverse rationalities, without a majority. The intermediate spaces, not being manipulated by the dominant messages and "strong powers", are the spaces where the minorities can have their say. If all this is true, we must begin to acknowledge the fact that cities should be designed for minorities, suitable for their active involvement, and that the chosen place for the urban project should be the "intermediate world", the one placed between dominant messages and absent, indifferent, disheartened, defeatist inhabitants.

Improvement of this world and its adoption as the privileged place of the thought and activity of the planner is the only hope we have to be able to succeed in stemming, if not opposing completely, the formation and diffusion of states of generalised passivity and isolation, where there is no longer room either for participation or criticism. This is rightly considered the authentic and fundamental ethical battle of our time: a battle that aims not only at fighting inertia and indifference, but also at avoiding that the differences in orientation, values and beliefs degenerate into confusion, aggressiveness, violence, oppression. As unfortunately has already recently happened, continues to happen every day in front of our eyes and risks happening more and more often in the future, if adequate counter-measures are not adopted. Departing from that, obvious and banal as it may be, but still reluctant to assert itself concretely, of avoiding that the discussion of these themes dry up among specialists, rendering the language not only abstract and sometimes abstruse, but also haughty and above all poor, as it is narrow-minded and sterile, devoid of the numerous creative contributions that could come from those who, though not being specialists, continue to invent and modify the space of their daily life.

Note

[1] Weber conceives the city, in fact, as "agglomerated, circumscribed settlement". Cf. Weber 1978, p. 3.

The Eye and the Brain

To accept the challenge of integration of differences, instead of betting everything on their exclusion, obviously means to accept that the city live (and suffer) oppositions in terms of demands, requests, functions and interests that position themselves as antithetical and mutually exclusive. The wager innate in this challenge is faith in the capacity, on the part of the *social city*, to mediate and gradually find new equilibriums, becoming the place of "[transcodification] of information" (Camagni 2003, p. 95).

This latter concept is particularly important and useful for the analysis made here, in that it points out the fact that "the shared view is not a project fulfilled at the table, and even less by illuminated, paternalistic technocrats, but a social construct that will prove valid only if surpassed by the wealth of interaction, experiments, planning of the sector. Thus, in strategic planning the vision appears *logically* as a prerequisite and *historically* as the outcome of the entire process of metropolitan *governance*" (Donolo 2003, p. 111). For these aspects transcodification, which takes the city as the expression of difference, of the multiplicity of the various voices inhabiting it and staunchly affirms the need that, from these voices and their encounter/clash, it be possible to have a convergence emerge, a harmony that makes co-habiting possible, banishing the temptation that the various voices have to destroy each other, is at the antipodes of what we might call "Utopian logic". In the various forms and expressions in which the latter is manifest, not by chance, the gift of languages is present, but never the figure of the *translator*. And this is symptomatic, in that only by starting from the problems of translation can the possibility be imagined and realised of "really letting yourself be inhabited by various languages – as Walter Benjamin underlines in an essay entitled *The task of the translator,* included with his translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*[1] – respecting their differences so as not to "compress" their large number and the internal complexity of each, nor reduce the dignity of the various different voices with a leniency that risks ending up in assimilation. A logic of transcodification may therefore, and must, be seen as a sort of subversion of the Utopian logic. The inhabitants of the Utopia believe they are the bearers of the only possible, effective perspective, the only way to understand the world and its enigmas. They

are therefore oriented towards *assimilation* of the other cultures, *rather than actual understanding of them*.[2]

To acquire this function of transcodification of information at a local level and its convergence towards a package of premises, values and objectives able to become the basis of a shared background as regards its future development means, for the city, to be prepared and equipped, through an integrated approach to governing the complex relations that exist within it between economic, social, cultural and environmental dynamics, to face the problems of strategic positioning in the context of world economy. It also means, for the city, to acquire a new way of seeing itself and seeing the world, in which the problems are not caused by isolated events, but by systemic interdependence, which we need to recognise to construct an organisational architecture founded on shared values and guidelines.

Transcodification is the necessary prerequisite of *cohesion*, namely of achieving that value which departs from recognition of the fact "that the city is constructed of differences, economic and cultural, residential and occupational specificities, variable time elements, often overlapping and intertwined; it is also full of diversified social diseases, chronic ills, malice, hostility between groups forced to interact in necessarily shared spaces". In this picture to aim at cohesion means to understand that "differences can evolve towards polarisation between incompatibles, or be treated and enhanced as a resource of the plural city, that can guarantee enough for everybody and – if it still does not succeed – will undertake to sew back together the lacerated edges, recuperate the edges, constantly reconnect centre and periphery" (Aresu 2006, p. 112). Here is the "border that is taking shape" and materialising in this work of sewing up the edges, guided by the conviction that "the non-cohesive city is ugly, dirty, bad, becomes impossible to live in even for the privileged, and also becomes inefficient and unproductive. The cohesive city – which stands on the virtuous path of cohesion as a permanent undertaking – is enriched with possibilities, is much more open to the global and diverse, it is the right city that enjoys fair fame" (Aresu 2006, p. 112). Nevertheless, it should be reiterated once more that

sharing has nothing to do with unanimity, but with developing differences and constructing a plural society. [...] The conflict must be translated into negotiation and this must not be a partitioning compromise, but learning of better preferences and abandoning of bad habits. Centres, moments, communication are needed for this and databases for decisions, formalisation of alternatives, assessment. We need to succeed in recognising that in the city many opposing interests are legitimately present and also different cultures of use of the city, that have to find times and spaces for adaptation. No city is monotonous, but each has more than one vocation and potentiality. There has to be recognition and recognisability for all (Aresu 2006, pp. 113–114).

Cohesion, though it is recognition and enhancement of differences and does not imply homogeneity nor, even less, standardisation, is, however, at the antipodes of the widespread tendencies for urban dispersion without limits and without internal coherence, determined by the

growing double speed of the urban manifested both by the thick fibre of the metropolis, where central or pericentral quarters improved by important projects for function substitution oppose edge zones, abandoned to progressive economic, social and environmental decay, and on periurban territory, more and more characterised by "spirits of excellence" and "spirits of decline". In both cases, the choices of the local administrations, in the absence of shared reference pictures defined at a supra-local level, have often favoured practices of very selective public/private interaction, and have been prevalently conditioned by the inclinations and expectations of the property market

(Gibelli 2003, p. 57).

To these tendencies should be counterposed the enhancement of a projectuality based on picking out important shared objectives and the consequent definition of "strategic axes" regarding the city and the surrounding territory, oriented towards raising the level of urban quality. This type of projectuality has little to do with "beautiful projects" or "large projects" which we rely more and more frequently on as "flagships" to respond to the imperative for improvement of the image and competitive positioning of the city. The latter, in effect, in the best of cases satisfy the eye, while the projectuality referred to here is the result of "an exercise of reasoning, 'inclusive' of the collective imagination, aimed at building alternative qualitative scenarios, picking out important objectives and the principal lines of strength of action of the plan coherent with them and assessing *ex ante* the possible outcomes" (Gibelli 2003, p. 60).

This difference is fundamental and deserves further study. At stake here is a diversity of approach and orientation that, to simplify, we may as a first approximation express by reference to the opposing pairs "eye/brain" and "representation/discussion". The "beautiful projects", the great works of radical social and function substitution in abandoned areas, the "symbol-buildings" that aspire to "capture" and "condense" the image of the city, becoming a sort of icon, a stenographic portrayal of its identity, address the eye. The latter, as Donolo observes, "is conscious, but in the fragmented, dispersed city glances diverge, images are not superimposable, the eye does not have a common conscience (glances should not coincide in communitary unanimity, but should pick out the areas of possible, tolerable, desirable overlapping)" (Donolo 2003, p. 114). The projectuality of which we are speaking here is, on the other hand, a *strategy,* a process of communication, argumentation, reasoning, optimisation of the possible, anticipation of the future and the unexpected that may be called "vision", though meaning vision not as glance but as

work and action of a rational nature, that depends on the brain in its entirety and not just the eye. It "should be constructed by interpreting the signs offered by the actors and the trends themselves that invade quarters, activities, use of the city. The vision is born from the hermeneutics of good practice, the identification of those practices that are bad and damaging for the city. [...] Useful for the vision that there be some prophet, who looks into the distance towards some urban utopia. Important that he is not left alone with his hallucinations and his prophecies" (Donolo 2003, p. 114). This contrast between "representation" and "vision" (in the sense this term has been defined and used here) may further be understood and investigated by referring to the different worth and depth of reference to the symbolic component we have in the one case and the other. Let us take, for example, the tendency to make museums, purposely preconceived, the driving force of the capacity to attract tourists on the part of the city, which is increasingly gaining strength following the success of Frank Owen Gehry's renowned Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, realised in 1997 and now forcefully part of the collective imagination, as is demonstrated by the fact that it has managed to turn the Basque city into the second most visited destination in the whole of Spain. Here it is not the quality of the works realised that is being debated, but the way in which they interpret and embody, so to speak, their function of symbol of the place in which they are situated.

Speaking of Florenskij and his conception of cult as "intermediate world", we have seen how, within the latter, the elements of sensitive reality, namely time and space, in which it is placed and the whole of the experience springing from it, are in fact "bent by an incomprehensible force", dismembered and recomposed to then be reunited in new signs, as yet indecipherable, of the mysterious world they refer to. The strength of the symbol lies indeed in its capacity to act as a *thread* linking different ambits and levels of the real, understood in the wide sense, in this case the celestial and the terrestrial, the invisible and the visible, and to stand as a place of difference and simultaneously of reciprocal communication, revelation and co-penetration of them, placing itself as a hyphen between what glitters and what shines through, between what is seen and perceived directly and what is thought and felt. For this reason the symbol, as Florenskij reconfirms on various occasions, is not a simple representation or allegory, and even less a pure sign or reference, but "a reality that is more than itself" (Florenskij 1999, 2001, p. 28).

> The symbol is something that is greater than itself. For example, the picture as a reality consists of the canvas, colours, frame and mount, but it is more, as an essence, than what it is in the order of physical reality. It is a window. The metaphysical symbol is an essence

whose energy brings with it the energy of an 'other' essence that is superior, dissolved in it, united with it, and what is manifested through it, reveals a superior essence. The symbol is a window towards a different essence that is not directly given (Florenskij 1995, p. 356).

Thus it inhabits the border between the external and the internal, between the phenomenon and the noumenon, between form and significance, witnessing in its manifestations and expressions the unity and difference of the two spheres. It is therefore the "place" of revelation of what is being symbolised, it is in some way part of the alterity and ulteriority to which it refers. "It is an entity that manifests something that it, itself, is not, that is greater and yet reveals itself through this symbol in its essence [...]. The symbol is a reality whose energy having grown together, or rather, flowed together with another being more precious than itself, contains the latter in it" (Florenskij 2001, p. 28).

This is indeed why it does not counter the concept, it is not "the other" of the latter, but it is the concept itself that, having acknowledged its limits, opens itself up to its *al di là*, trying to "break down" in some way the borders of rational thought.

In the light of this precise information concerning cases like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the many "symbol-buildings" now scattered throughout many cities of the world, it is right to wonder if this further dimension exists – and perhaps what it is – to which they should refer to fully exert their symbolic function, or rather, if it is not true that they draw all the attention to themselves, to their specific presence and effectuality, without referring to anything else and without managing therefore to be that "reality that is greater than itself", of which Florenskij speaks, and to place themselves as a link and bridge between different spheres and levels. The diriment issue, in other words, is to establish whether these buildings communicate in an immediate, direct way meanings innate in them, like a designer piece of clothing, by which the person wearing it wants to show a certain status and transmit to others a belonging that should prove straightaway clear, or are capable of linking up with the past and present of the cities in which they have been realised and in some way refer to their meaning or link up with it.

In the first case, obviously, they are certainly not "ciphers", in the meaning Jung gives to this term, i.e. they do not present as something that, enclosing within itself a meaning, does reveal the presence of this but, at the same time and perennially, hides its nature. Their tie with the city becomes, therefore, wholly conforming with the modality typical of the sign, by which a signifier refers to the signified, and not with the way, strictly symbolic, that a signifier warns the interpreter of something "lacking", namely the incidence of a hidden meaning, and manages to make a reference to it. What gets lost, in such a case, is the *presence of a*

context of an antinomic type, in which two worlds are available and deploy their efficacy, though perhaps in different forms and values, two different realities (in this case, that of the building in itself and of the place where it is collocated) and the capacity of the symbol to express tension, but also union and connection between the two extremes at play.

To clarify and explore further the sense of the contrast between "representation" and "vision" which we have been concentrating on here, we might refer to Maturana and Varela' s theory of autopoietic systems, which exalts the capacity of biological and cognitive organisations to *produce* and *inform* (in the sense of granting form and order) the surrounding environment, as the domain of distinctions inseparable from the structure embodied in the said system, instead of limiting themselves to representing and reflecting it.

Once we have set ourselves in this perspective, in effect, the problem of perception can no longer be exhaustively focalised in terms of undifferentiated reception of information coming from a world endowed with given, reconstructible properties. Perception from this point of view is not something that points towards a pre-defined world, independent of the perceiver, but is actually the result of an activity based on the motor-sensory, perceptive and cognitive structure of the agent. As Varela points out:

> If [...] we were to try to go back to the source of a perception or an idea, we would find ourselves in a fractal moving farther and farther away, and wherever we decided to delve we would increasingly come up against an abundance of details and interdependence. It would always be the perception of a perception of a perception ... Or the description of a description of a description ... There is no point where we can put down the anchor and say: the perception begins here; it begins in this way (Varela 1988, p. 269).

From this stems the proposal to take as departure point an *autopoietic system*, namely "a dynamic system that is defined as a composite unity, as a network of production of components that: a) through their interactions recursively regenerate the network of processes that produce them, and b) realize this network as a unity by constituting and specifying its boundaries in the space in which they exist" (Maturana 1980, pp. 52–53).

A system of this kind is *autonomous:* though being obviously open to interaction with the environment, in the sense that it exchanges matter, energy and information with the latter; it is, however, characterised by what we might call "operational closure"

> … the result of its processes coincides with the processes themselves. The concept of operational closure is therefore a way of specifying classes of processes that, in their functioning, enclose themselves to form autonomous networks. These networks do not fall within the class of systems defined by external (heteronomous) control mechanisms but, on the contrary, in that defined by internal self-organising (autonomous) mechanisms

> (Varela et al. 1991).

This "closure" is the circular mechanism defining the class of self-organising systems in general. Autopoietic systems are a particular case of a larger class or organisation that can be called *organisationally closed.*

"The operational closure of the nervous system then brings forth a specific *mode* of coherence, which is embedded in the organism. This observable coherence is a *cognitive self*: a unit of perception/motion in space, sensory-motor invariances mediated through the interneuron network [...] the cognitive self is the manner in which the organism through its own self-produced activity becomes a distinct entity in space, but always coupled to its corresponding environment from which it remains nevertheless distinct" (Varela et al. 1991, pp. 79–107).

Maturana and Varela suggest each living system be considered as an autopoietic organisation on the basis of the internal activity of which there is, as a fundamental operation, a function of recursion. They have applied this approach to the study of the nervous system, considered for this purpose as a closed, neural network, the changes in which are fully specified by its *connectivity,* in the sense that each variation in its structure originates from a change in the properties of the neurons composing it. From this point of view it is not possible to trace back within its organisation any characteristic trait that will enable discrimination between internal and external causes that act on the dynamics of changes of state. This discrimination may only be made by an external observer who looks at the nervous system as a unit.

As a closed neuronal network, the nervous system has neither input nor output: since the specific product of its work is the reproduction of its internal organisation, by changes in the structures in which it becomes extrinsic, there is not, in its case, any difference between producer and product, and therefore, its being is inseparable from its acting.

Autonomous systems, precisely because of these features, *do not represent the world for themselves* as something endowed with pre-established properties, but "produce" a world as a domain inseparable from their *incorporated organisation* and from the diverse, changing structures into which this organisation ramifies. This is where the indication of a *middle way of knowledge* comes from, a perspective that breaks with the realism-idealism contrast, and tries to free itself from the secular "Cartesian anxiety", from the continuous oscillation between subjectivism and objectivism, tied to the concept of representation. This perspective is defined by the term *enactivism* (or *Constructivism)* and among its many meanings also has that of "to produce", in the sense of promulgate or emanate, and "represent", but not in the sense of "reflect", or "construct an image of", but in that of enact, e.g. a show. An enactive approach to

cognition or enaction is founded basically on two fundamental points: "cognition depends on the type of experience deriving from owning a body with different motor-sensory capacities" and "these individual motor-sensory capacities are themselves contained in a wider biological, psychological and cultural context" (Varela et al. 1991, p. 206).

The original enactive approach to cognition or enaction (Varela et al. 1991) can be regarded as a general theoretical framework on the nature of biological organisms that spawned a variety of strains of research, in particular:

- an account of how biological autonomous systems constitute themselves across their history of interaction with the environment;
- hypothesis on perception as built upon structural couplings between sensory patterns and motor activity;
- a critical appraisal of the functionalist approach to the study of phenomenology.

As Varela puts it: the enactive approach underscores the importance of two interrelated points: perception consists of perceptually guided action and cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided (Varela et al. 1991, p. 173). To better understand this characterization, it is worth recalling that one of the tenets of the enactive approach to cognition and perception is the notion of *structural coupling*: "Structural coupling" refers to the history of recurrent interactions between two or more systems that leads to a structural congruence between them (Thompson 2007, p. 45).

The concept of structural coupling refers to the fact that living systems maintain their identity in a permanent interaction with the external environment so as to preserve their internal organization. Perception and cognition are specific dimensions of the activity in virtue of which and cognition are specific dimensions of the activity in virtue of which biological systems control their relation to the physical world and their own identity. As Varela concludes: "we found a world enacted by our history of structural coupling" (Varela et al. 1991, p. 217).

For a cognitive system the importance of the body in which its mind is inserted, and the need, moreover, to take into account the total environmental context in which this body is immersed, steer us towards an idea of perception as action, guided in its turn by perception, and towards a way of conceiving cognition as activities articulated in structures that "emerge from recurring motor-sensory patterns which enable action to be guided by perception".

One of the outcomes of greatest interest of Maturana and Varela's theory for the aims of our argument is therefore the passage from the idea

of knowledge centred on the concepts of symbol and representation to the idea of knowledge as *enaction,* namely an *approach to cognition in terms of effective action*, the problem of which is not the reconstruction of properties of the world already given, but rather to determine the common principles or legitimate links between the sensory and motor systems that explain how the action can be *guided by perception* in a way that is *dependent on the subject of perception.* So in a similar approach perception is not simply put into the surrounding world and bound by it, but it also contributes to the effective activation of this surrounding world. Thus the body gives rise to the environment and is simultaneously formed by it, so it proves necessary to see the body and the environment as tied together in reciprocal specification and selection, in a relationship of *coevolution*, thanks to which they not only condition each other but also end up converging more and more, taking on configurations and structures that increasingly resemble each other:

> The environment selects the structural change in the organism and this, by its own action, selects the structural change in the environment. What structural change takes place in the organism? A change that is determined by its structure. What structural change takes place in the environment? A change determined, this too, by its structure. But the sequence of these changes is determined by the sequence of the interactions. The environment selects the course a living organism should follow to encounter, during its existence, a transformation in structure. There are, it is true, structural transformations that are the result of the dynamics belonging to a system, but those that have to do with the environment are selected by interaction with it […] Thus, in the particular relationship of two systems possessing different structures and independence with respect to their interaction, each selects in the other the way of structural change belonging to the other. If this history of interactions is conserved, the result is inevitable. The structures of the two systems will have coherent histories, even though in each system the structural changes will be determined by the structure. Thus, after a certain history of interactions, we will note, as observers, a certain correspondence in the structures of the two systems, and this correspondence will not be accidental. On the contrary, it is the necessary result of this history (Maturana 1987, pp. 65–82).

Within such a theoretical frame it is clear why a single function cannot be assigned to representation and why relations between signs and what they refer to cannot be univocal. And it is, consequently, just as clear why "reality", however meant and defined, must be seen as something that is plurivocal, open to various "readings" and interpretations.

This theoretical picture has analogies with the change in the concept of spatial context, which is evolving more and more in the *coevolutive* sense. In effect, it no longer denotes the external circumstances into which a fact is introduced, but rather the whole of what it is contributing to, in order to make sense, and which is constructed above all internally. Pierre Chabard links this concept of "context as internal dimension" with the linguistic theory of intertextuality. Although this kind of migration is difficult to

pinpoint precisely, one of the most probable hypotheses is that it was borrowed from the linguistics of the sixties (Chabard 2002). At that moment the theory of intertextuality, proposed in particular by Julia Kristeva, opened up reflection on the context of the literary work and, beyond that, the possibility of a more general theory of the text (Kristeva 1968), such as Roland Barthes was to synthesise in the seventies.

Intertextuality for Kristeva is "textual interaction that is produced within a single text". It is a matter of the way a particular text is woven from other texts or fragments of texts, and the way in which it absorbs and transforms another text. No longer denoting the external circumstances into which a fact is introduced, the context takes on a fundamental coevolutive nature. This linguistic meaning of context paradoxically frees any spatial intervention from sacralisation of the place (*locus*) and its immutability, which made it the target of an authentic ethics of the local (Chabard 2002).

In these conditions the selection operation that establishes the context opens up both to coevolutive dimensions and to creative dimensions of context, as the space of social interaction.

Some examples can help us to explain these concepts better. The coevolutive dimensions of the context can clearly be understood if we refer to the architectural project. As the French architect, Manuelle Gautrand (Brayer et al. 2002) emphasises, the context is not an external element of the project, but a strong element in the process of projectual creation. A building cannot be autistic, it necessarily weaves relations, as much with the place as with those who use it. The architect is responsible for bringing to the moment of the project an answer to a programme, thus to a use, but also to a place. This should not, however, encourage conservatism in us, it does not compulsorily impose respect for what exists, nor force a blending in with place. On the contrary, it makes us create true relations, not easily given, extending those that already exist. A project gives structure to a site, whatever it be, and the word "structuration" implies that action is taken on the site. "This action – Manuelle Gautrand maintains – may sometimes consist of violently livening up a site to make it react; sometimes, on the contrary, it may oblige us to guard its identity, very simply transforming it. It forces us in any case to accept that it is evolving, for it could not be otherwise" (Brayer et al. 2002, p. 33).

For Manuelle Gautrand we need to explore the context with a phenomenological approach to the places of intervention, immersing ourselves in their specificity to take possession of their features and develop a contextual project that will lead most of the time to re-examining and reconsidering the programme.

An emblematic project in this sense is the *PAC* (*Plateforme Autonome Culturelle – Autonomous Cultural Platform*), a complex situated along the

Seine in Paris, which contrasts with a "respectable" approach to the problem of "contextualisation" of interventions. The ancient buildings are often left abandoned, conserved and made sterile, most of the time stripped of their sense and their soul, emptied out with a respect for the conventional past that can be more and more often identified with "façadism", an attitude that saves the façades, leaving "carcasses" of buildings, for the conscience to be at peace. The PAC project, with true reflection on the cultural programme, places itself on an obsolete building – a terrace of 200 m on the Seine waiting for a better future – and strives to work with time. It does not want to transform the place, for inside this building there is already a mingling of a large mixture of functions, but it has set itself above, looks inside and, when everything is ready, will be able to expand, progressively taking over surface areas of the existing building (Brayer et al. 2002).

On the same coevolutive side are ranked the projects of the dZO Studio, a group of young architects who joined up in 1998 between Paris and New York. Their projects are the result of "a subtle negotiation between the programme and the context". Topography is not considered a simple spatial context, but an active element in the process of conception. The *Domestic Topography* project of 2001 regarding the expansion of the city of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, emblematically represents the dZO's points of conceptual processing: negotiation between project and context; gradual opening of the form to the city or territory; context neither as frame or framed but as an active element in the process of conception that is applied to leave room for indefinite evolution; reciprocal malleability of form and context (Brayer et al. 2002).

The concepts of coevolution and enaction, or "embodied knowledge", that are at the base of this type of approach regarding the context thus highlight how cognition depends in the first place on the types of experience that come from having a body with various motor-sensory capacities and, in the second place, on the fact that the latter are introduced into a more comprehensive biological and cultural *context*. This dual order of ties is at the origin of that complex of *microidentities* and corresponding *microworlds* that constitutes the base of the phenomenology of ordinary experience of each of us, in the sense that it gives life and substance to the normal widespread way of living, made up of certain types of immediacy of given situations in which we operate without needing to make decisions. These situations are, that is, characterised by a "readiness for action" that makes our lived-in world appear so near to hand as to not require, on our part, any decisionality on what it is and how we inhabit it. When we sit at the table to eat with a family member or friend, the whole complex of technical skills relating to the manipulation of table utensils, body

positions and pauses in conversation is present without any specific decision. After lunch when we have returned to our workplace, we enter a new "readiness", with a different way of speaking, of assuming a tone and observations. We have a new readiness for action that belongs to each specific situation lived and thoroughly tested. In this context the new ways of behaving and the passages or punctuation placed between them correspond to *breakdowns,*[3] namely surprises, situations of interruption of this readiness and progressive emergence of a new world, of which we continually have experience.

Being capable of an appropriate action is therefore a way in which we embody a flow of recurrent microworld transitions, the typical ones, that is, within which we move naturally and spontaneously during a normal day. They are historically constituted: each of us disposes of quite a large repertory of these already constituted microworlds, which concur to give shape to our usual way of living and which fill our identity with content.

The relations between microworlds and "appropriate action" are interpreted in an unusual way in Didier Fiuza Faustino's "topomorphic" approach, which combines his research on architecture with *performances,* videos and texts (Brayer et al. 2002). The project is the result of an experience of the body and its physical and political bonds, its topomorphic exploration, almost as an extension of the body. *A Stairway to Heaven,* the public space for individual use at Castelo Branco in Portugal, is a project of 2001 that faces the theme of contemporary public space, in which collective and individual ideals are inseparable. At the same time, the project is an invitation to appropriation to each individual and offers the possibility of dominating the territory just momentarily (Brayer et al. 2002, pp. 84–85). For Didier Fiuza Faustino it is necessary to act on the context, to conceive the project as an extension of the body in an environment that puts it to a hard test, conceive the project for space as a social action. *A Stairway to Heaven,* with its symbolic content, urges the project to individually explore public space and, in this sense, *projects* us towards new forms of communion. Now, if we pass from the single individual to the collectivity of men who carry out their social and economic life in a certain geographic space, guided by nature and history, it proves quite easy to understand in what sense the idea of knowledge as "embodied action" can favour the explanation of the emergence of "common sense", i.e. microworlds/identities characterised by a common "readiness for action" and by moral and material interests shared by the individuals belonging to the said collectivity. This community of interests, where the environmental circumstances suitable for its ever more incisive realisation and manifestation recur, should press men towards living a life that is less fragmented, compartmentalised, divided, devoid of elements of

effectively felt and experienced solidarity.

From these premises a research programme has arisen that, instead of considering thought processes forms of processing elementary symbols, looks above all towards the *production of knowledge* conceived as a *cognitive activity* which, under particular conditions of cooperative interaction, can make a set of regularities and new meanings emerge in the context, if between the single elements appropriate networks of connections are set up. In this sense the meaning of the symbols cannot be predetermined, nor concentrated in single elements, but depends on the evolutive history of grid connections; it is thus a *global* (network) property and *emergent* (not strictly foreseeable *a priori*). Cognitive activity consists of progressive generation of ever new connections, following rules of partial modification suggested by experience and reflection: any conception that appeals to the concept of "representation", understood in the usual sense given to this term, should, therefore, now be considered surpassed and unproposable.

"Beautiful projects" and stimulation of the eye, rather than the brain, which often constitutes, explicitly or implicitly, their strong point, are however oriented towards a *representational* conception of a world already given, towards the will to *represent* the instability of the metropolitan city, in the sense that the architecture tends to reflect, *to represent* indeed, the uncertainty of the contemporary city. If we refer, for example, to Rem Koolhaas, who is certainly one of the most committed researchers of the renewal of contemporary architectural culture, it can certainly be affirmed that from his experience a *representational* position emerges.

Even if it is interpreted through a tension oriented to responding to the challenge of the widespread contemporary city, such a position can be read both in the "celebrations of chaos" in Euralille, where it *reflects* the culture of contemporary congestion through the programmed heterogeneity of the urban intervention, and in his "critical modernism", in that it is *representative* of the spatial revolution of the Modern Movement, at Villa dall' Ava in St. Cloud (Paris) and the Kunsthal in Rotterdam. It should nevertheless be pointed out that Koolhaas himself shows in his most recent positions an attitude tending more towards the quest for a role of architecture that will contribute to an order – though minimal – of urban space. The suggestion of the "*forteresses de l'architecture*", recalled by Koolhaas to mean the relevant nuclei endowed with urban sense, beyond the rhetoric of the metaphor, stands to demonstrate an appreciable shift in this direction compared with the classical positions of *deconstructivism* (Ingersoll 1994; Koolhaas 1994).

We believe that here a point of fundamental importance is in fact being touched upon. If absolute value is granted to the spatial context and

territory, if it is considered that it "communicates" on its own, regardless of the past meanings it has taken bit by bit on board following experience accumulated and the traditions of those who have inhabited it and the needs of those currently settled there, if we are convinced that stimuli come from it which seek univocal replies, the tendency to reflect this communicative "impact", ontologically given, cannot but gain ground, becoming fixed in mental images to which, from the point of view adopted, it seems entirely legitimate to grant the same absolute meaning. Things change radically if we take on a "constructivist" approach, within the sphere of which the essential constituent elements of this construction are "socio-cultural components", and which enhances the internal dimension of interpretation and fruition, compared with a claimed absolute, binding value of the structures and forms characterising external reality.

Notes

[1] The essay *Il compito del traduttore* is contained in the collection (Benjamin 2006).
[2] On the opposition between "logic of translation" and "Utopian logic" the penetrating observations of Aresu (2006, pp. 101–104).
[3] The term breakdown literally means the interruption of a course of activity due to a type of non-usability. The breakdown theory derives, at least in part, from the analyses conducted by Heidegger in *Being and time* on the manipulation and usability of tools, the lack of which has the tool emerge in all its facticity. But it is indeed the thorough knowledge of how the tool – which previously we only used in an immediate, transparent way – works to inspire innovation that avoids the event being repeated or exploited to advantage. In the sphere of communicative interactions that the members of a cooperative network engage in with each other, the onset of breakdowns (unforeseen events, exceptions) arises when the normal process of communication is stemmed: people react to these unforeseen events creating new communicative situations by which they try to eliminate the breakdown produced with the aim of enabling fulfilment of the commitment previously made.

Civitas Alone can Save the *Urbs*

The difference and contrast between "representation" and "vision" (in the uses of these terms that have been introduced, defined and employed here) and the reference to the inseparability – when we wish to move within a symbolic dimension, of the presence of a "context of an antinomic type" which is, precisely due to this, inherently *ambiguous* – recalls and places, in an immediate manner, the theme of *ambiguity* of the figures used in a particular way of treating and using the *figure-background* relationship.

The *ambiguity* and the *problematicity* of figures of this kind springs, as proves immediately clear as we look at them, from the fact that two different contexts are co-present in them, each of which claiming, as regards the eye, hegemony and exclusivity, so much so that it is impossible to see them simultaneously.

What interests us here, however, is the inseparability of the *figure* from the *background* and the need, for proper fruition of both the images offered, to maintain the simultaneous presence of one and the other, without which there would be no *ambiguity,* which is the distinctive trait of each of the two representations proposed.

This matter of the figure/background relationship is important because more and more often, with the establishment of *Sculturarchitettura*, that has gained ground in various parts of the world, and of which the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is one of the most emblematic, significant expressions, the relationship between these symbol-buildings and the city proves problematic, if not completely absent, with the result that these buildings take on the appearance and function of "figures without a background", placed almost at random within a context that seems, for them, entirely indifferent.

The city in its turn is looked at and conceived as a "museum place", destined to passively accommodate works that are more or less monumental and engage in the same relationship with the natural, historic and cultural environment in which they are "set", as a sculpture with the hall hosting it, inside a museum.

The "lived" aspects of the city, its inhabitants, their needs, their patrimony of knowledges, their expectations do not come into this matter in the least.

We are therefore faced with an *aestheticisation of space and the city*, which is exactly the opposite of the reference to its aesthetic dimension, of which, as was said at the beginning, Brodsky speaks. This is an extremely important aspect upon which therefore it is worth pausing to reflect.

Brodsky tries to glean and define the ethical reality of man and the space due to him and to trace the lines of the relationship between the aesthetic categories of "good" and "bad" and the ethical ones of "good" and "evil", and above all underlines the fact that, thanks to this relationship, in ethics not "everything is allowed" precisely *because not* "everything is allowed" *in aesthetics.* Aesthetics therefore has its ties and space and has to respect them and know how to keep within the sphere of the latter.

This is not all: aesthetic choice is a strictly individual business and the aesthetic experience is always a private experience and cannot therefore do without referring to the *life* of individual subjects rather than collective, to their daily experience, also because it is indeed aesthetic reality that makes individual experience more private and constitutes, because of this, if not a guarantee, at least a shield against the subjection and bewitching flattery of political demagogy in all its versions.

Even more peremptory in seeking and defining the space belonging to aesthetics and the meaning of the aesthetics/ethics relationship was, as has been seen, Wittgenstein, for whom not only is aesthetics part of the same thing as ethics but, like the latter, it cannot be formulated, is transcendental, in that the image cannot be placed outside its depicted form and this, therefore, being "transcendental", cannot be visible in itself, since it is the condition itself of visibility, cannot thus be translated or projected because it is itself the beginning of all depictment.

Linking up again with Wittgenstein and providing an interpretation of his work that is in many ways innovative, Cora Diamond clarifies further the ideas of "resistance, friction, ulteriority and transcendence", insisting on aesthetic and ethical experience through sharp criticism of the relationship "container/contained", by which it is usually presented and felt. "What interests me there", writes Diamond, "is the experience of the mind's *not being able to encompass something which it encounters.* It is capable of making one go mad to try, to bring together in thought what cannot be thought: …" (Diamond 2003, p. 2 our italics). The example to which the authoress refers to illustrate this attempt is particularly significant for the purposes of our argument. It is a poem by Ted Hughes, composed halfway through the fifites, entitled *Six Young Men.*

The speaker in the poem looks at a photo of six smiling young men, seated in a familiar spot. He knows the bank covered with bilberries, the tree and the old wall in the photo; the six men in the picture would have heard the valley below them sounding with rushing water, just as it still does. Four decades have faded the photo; it comes from 1914. The men are profoundly, fully alive, one bashfully lowering his eyes, one chewing a piece of grass, one "is ridiculous with cocky pride" (l. 6). Within six months of the picture's having been taken, all six were dead. In the photograph, then, there is thinkable, there is seeable, the death of the men. See it, and see the worst "flash and rending" (l. 35) of war falling onto these smiles now forty years rotted and gone (Diamond 2003, p. 1).

The experience that Hughes' poem evokes is, for Diamond, an example of what she calls the *difficulty of reality,* its friction with respect to thought, that residue of opacity that prevents the latter from dominating it, rendering it completely transparent to itself and containing it, representing it in its fullness.

They are experiences "in which we take something in reality to be resistant to our thinking it, or possibly to be painful in its inexplicability, difficult in that way, or perhaps awesome and astonishing in its inexplicability. *We take things so.* And the things we take so may simply not, to others, present the kind of difficulty – of being hard or impossible or agonizing to get one's mind round" (Diamond 2003, pp. 2–3).

It is indeed in this difficulty and in this agony, *in feeling things in this way,* which prevents the mind from containing them, that the deep sense of ethical and aesthetic experience resides: and indeed for this reason these experiences express and grasp

the sense of a difficulty that pushes us beyond what we can think. To attempt to think it is to *feel one's thinking come unhinged.* Our concepts, our ordinary life with our concepts, pass by this difficulty as if it were not there; the difficulty, if we try to see it, *shoulders us out of life*, is deadly chilling. [...]. In the latter case, the difficulty lies in the apparent resistance by reality to one's ordinary mode of life, including one's ordinary modes of thinking: to appreciate the difficulty is to feel oneself being shouldered out of how one thinks, how one is apparently supposed to think, or to have a *sense* of the inability of thought to encompass what it is attempting to reach (Diamond 2003, p. 12, our italics).

To feel this difficulty, this separation between thought and reality, means that it is an emotion that is, precisely, felt and cannot simply be described, represented or pondered, exactly because "it belongs to flesh and blood" (Diamond 2003, p. 25), and thus to the body in all its physicalness: we all know these moments and feel that the perception we have of them is profoundly rooted and innervated within our limbs, so that the type of knowledge emerging is not conceptual and abstract, but *embodied.* To feel the fact that in Hughes' poem young people are profoundly alive and, *simultaneously, absolutely dead* means to refuse the linguistic game in which there is no contradiction between these two aspects, in that they are placed, as successive moments, in the time

sequence of before and after, which tones down and eliminates all dialectic tension between them. The aesthetic and ethical sense of Hughes' poem is lost completely if it is introduced into this game, which deprives it of its capacity to refer to "presences that may unseat our reason" (Diamond 2003, p. 22) and to "experiment nothing" (Weil 1957). This nothing is the result of the capacity to keep together, maintaining them co-present, the two contradictory dimensions of life and death, the visible and the invisible, and to project them onto a space (the intermediate world between them) in which the boundary crossing them is not the line of demarcation that separates them, but the interface that takes shape, takes on consistency and has us feel we are in some *other place* that thought does not manage to contain. Language, on the other hand, has this capacity, in that it has the possibility of letting itself be questioned.

From Diamond's works on Wittgenstein this is exactly the interpretation that emerges of his mature reflection as the capacity to explore the idea that language involves a variety of possibilities so open and complex – not pre-established from the beginning but largely to be determined – as to include even the option of its own conceptual horizon being questioned and being as if thrown out of it. According to this reading, the *Tractatus* itself already establishes, as a work, this type of overthrowing and emptying out, when it asks the reader to abandon the sentences composing it and to manage to acknowledge them as senseless, once he has followed them and has gone back up them like climbing a stairway.

The coincidence of ethics and aesthetics, which we have dwelt on previously, suggests and requires, from this point of view, a type of experience based on the awareness that words are not enough to express an intermediate world like that at the centre of Hughes' poem, which therefore contains "what is mystical" (6.522), and that we "will see the world aright" (6.54) only once the sentences we used like a stairway in order to go back up the various steps of conceptual understanding are surpassed and we manage to get out of the horizon and the context arising from it and be thrown outside them.

Through this experience, instead of proceeding with images that replace the life we have with the words, thoughts and perceptive and cognitive style construction that we force on reality, we come to dissolve this tranquillising *adherence* of reality itself to our linguistic expressions and conceptual schemes, to rediscover its resistance and friction in respect of the latter, without however falling prey to panic or yielding to the flattery and traps of recurrent forms of scepticism. These are satisfied to take note of the acknowledgement, in itself quite banal, of the fact that reality and our thought may not meet each other, not adhere one to the other. The

difficult and the beautiful lie in the challenge of *placing oneself in the impossible and living it,* of feeling the co-presence and coincidence of life and death, which is the centre of Hughes' poem, "not to be thought of as outside life with the words we use for thinking of life and death" (Diamond 2003, p. 25), but as something that is fully part of that linguistic game.

This type of game, in order to succeed, obviously has to be made of *opacity* and *transparency,* of the *expressible* and the *inexpressible*, kept in constant reciprocal dialectic tension; it is indeed in this capacity to assure the presence of both these dimensions that the strength of the symbol lies compared with the sign and its irreplaceability when it is a question of living and rendering these experiences by language. The symbol is *translucent*, it enables us to feel the presence and perceive the image of something that is beyond it, without distinguishing its outline or form and without being able to represent it.

The symbol is the instrument which thought and language use while the mind undergoes the experience, as Diamond writes, of not being "able to encompass something which it encounters" (Diamond 2003, p. 2). Its efficacy lies in the fact of not aspiring to presenting itself as a container that encloses a content within it in such an exhaustive, complete way as to be able to substitute it and represent it totally, but of offering itself as the expression of a relationship between container and content that may never be put aside and extinguished, in which the container, precisely for this reason, may never be put in the place of the content. This relationship in the symbol is not, however, only the *potentiality of an encounter not yet realised,* which thus gives the prospect of a situation of perennial waiting, like that of the shipwrecked person in the sea who sees a ship pass on the horizon and wonders whether he will be seen and therefore saved. In this case the wait may be transformed into anguish and become an authentic situation of panic. To place oneself in the impossible and to live thus means to realise an encounter thanks to which not only the content is transformed, but also the container: this transformation is the result of the capacity to shift the frontier between opacity and transparency more and more forward, to the advantage of the latter, though in full awareness that we will never be able to completely demolish it. The symbol is thus the expression of consciousness of the fact that nothing can be contained without there being a relationship, and that the latter can and must offer us the possibility of transforming both our emotions and sensations, and the words and thoughts we express them with.

Aestheticisation suffocates and dissolves all this. With the growing, galloping aestheticisation of space, of the city (and even more of society itself), which we are witnessing and of which we are victims, the aesthetic

comes out of its field of pertinence, pervades everything, expects to become not only collective experience, but shared, universal background, leaving out, precisely for this, reference to any type of specific life experience, loses its transcendental connotations of perennial reference to ulteriority and changes into a perfectly visible, transparent outline that does not expect to be questioned, interpreted and understood, but is content to be *seen* and appreciated by the eye; by anyone, in an undifferentiated way, with no breadth or depth. It is, as has been seen on various occasions, thematisation of the city, the city as a theme-park, territory of pleasure and, later (Debord 1970), of spectacularity, a condition that is the paradigmatic expression of the figure of the *flâneur* described by Charles Baudelaire, this inhabitant of the new boulevards who strolls along without stopping, half distracted and half stunned by the sight of the shop-windows, department stores, landscapes and the splendour of the Second Empire.

Contemporary spectacles recreate this erratic, amused experience of the city: the views offer an unembraceable image which suggests the abolition of a single, privileged point of view. In the panorama the observer who dominates the image with precise limits and background, leaves room for a spectator who encounters an image that surpasses him, confuses him and obliges him to keep walking continuously (Costa 1996), an experience of absolute abandonment to let himself be taken by the city and its flow. This is what Guy Debord meant by *dérive,* a spatial experience of the city which departed from the figure of the *flâneur*, but proposed a new condition, a route dictated by indefiniteness and chance, an indifference that enables the city to be explored following someone else's map, as was the case told by Debord of those who undertook a journey in the German Hartz region with the help of a map of the city of London, of which they blindly followed the instructions (Costa 1996). In the *dérive* proposed by the Situationists the modern condition of the city was celebrated, in which public spaces ceased to be *agorá* where power found its privileged scenario before the tidy congregation of citizens – and moved on to being an aleatory fabric of multiple, directly diffused itineraries in the logic of mobility.

The urban space that permits the *dérive* also seems to be modelled on the pattern of spatial experience of the labyrinth, which for Georges Bataille (1970) is the space that makes the contemporary city uniform, like a body without hierarchy, in which everything is intestine, a *locus* without end, without reason. Just as architecture is the organisation of a place, its representation and permanent domestication, the labyrinth is the place where we get lost. To get lost is to not know whether you are going in or out of the labyrinth, even if you are in it or out of it, since at no moment can we identify its limits (Costa 1996).

At our present moment, notes Xavier Costa, we must nevertheless recognise the dissolution of the city in terms of order and limits. The impact of technologies for access to information necessarily entails the transformation of the apparent city – the inherited, constructed city – into a ruin, a place of artistic attraction ready to be consumed. Perhaps due to the difficulty of transforming the inherited city into a modern city of pure mobility and pure distraction, there is a tendency to recreate it as supervised stage-sets that, from the theme park to the large mall or to the airport city, often propose a caricature of the city, thus reducing its complexity (Costa 1996).

Thematisation of the city produces over-exposure of it and this originates in perception of uncertainty, in the sense that the city recognises it does not fully control the multiplicity and overlapping of the channels of distribution and fluctuation that weave it and organise it behind the apparent surfaces (Virilio 1991), transforming it into an unproductive city, dictated by the logic of the game, the game being an unproductive, destructive activity. From this perspective the modern city always tends to be less the place of accumulation and multiplication of wealth to turn into the place of spending and wasting energy (Costa 1996).

In the over-exposed city the problematic, ambiguous tie between the figure and the background thus gives way to acritical exaltation of the figure, which loses all dynamicity and plurivocity, in that the cutting of the tie with the varied, multiple, heterogeneous and also contradictory context in which it is placed, deprives it of all facets and the possibility of giving different, ever new answers to those who are able to ask precisely with reference to this wealth of stimuli that could arise from its inexhaustible link with the background. The symbol becomes a sign, loses mystery, charm and life, sacrificed to a transparency that then proves illusory, being based on stereotypes and modalities of fruition channelled by the fashions and styles of hegemonic thought.

This radical aestheticisation, which transforms the city into a work of art where each building is separated from the others and represents a reality of its own, makes the connective tissue that should hold together urban typologies and morphologies lose all consistency, creating tension and reciprocal connection between the singular aspects and objects into which the urban context is articulated, and transforming it into an empty space incapable of becoming denser, putting into contact, structuring and organising, taking on the role and function of "intermediate world", of that *infra* of which Arendt spoke, namely public space able to make a "connectival matrix" emerge from the complexity, conflict and disorder, a set of relations from which specific modalities of self-organisation can spring and slowly take shape.

Aestheticisation of the city recalls the importance the glance has on urban life. Though the glance should not be the passive glance of aestheticisation, but an active glance, for from this alone descends projectual action. This action, indeed because it is *projectual*, cannot but concern the whole landscape of our spatial life, including its ordinary manifestations. This means that the idea of landscape is still *culturally determined* (Jackson 1984), in the sense that – as Pier Carlo Palermo (2008) notes – the positions – *Romantic* or *scientific* – that crystallise the glance at eminent landscapes have now been surpassed. So it is necessary to inquire into *the actual way of seeing* and its evolution, because the possibility of designing the city depends on this. The way of seeing can highlight emerging changes in form and meanings of contemporary urban landscapes: dynamic features, often contingent, that can cause many traditional models to enter a crisis and require new interpretations, both descriptive and projectual. It is a question of a (modern) conception of the landscape as a *(critical) vision at a distance*, understood, that is, as a condition of the active glance oriented towards city projectual action. In this way the landscape, from *sphere of belonging,* a background almost, of a society, becomes – as "public space of the active glance" – a constituent condition of the projectual capacity a social system disposes of to have its way of living and its life in space evolve.

The territory may be the subject/object of an active glance and therefore of a projectual action perspective, because it makes us understand better the relationship between glance at the landscape and action perspectives, being *external* to a contemporary city that has made us inert and inane. The territory takes shape in a certain sense as the place of *reconstruction* of the city. "Reconstruct" is a word that is denser and more fertile compared with "construct", for if "construct" means to collaborate with the land, to impress the sign of man on a landscape that will result in being changed forever and contribute moreover to that slow transformation that is the life itself of cities, "reconstruct" is a word that includes these meanings, but also englobes that of collaborating with time in its aspect of the "past", grasping its spirit and changing it, holding it out, almost, towards a long future; it means "…to collaborate with time gone by, penetrating or modifying its spirit and carrying it toward a longer future…".[1] From this point of view the project for the city starting with the territory constitutes a fundamental field of application, both due to the growing importance environmental policies have nowadays, and because this approach influences territoriality, namely the forms and modalities by which the pact between society and space is established and becomes concrete. Thus, an idea of future emerges that is identified with a *great reconstruction*: a huge process that tends to rebuild settlement space and,

at the same time, place itself as an itinerary of reconstruction of the environmental counterspace of the city, attracting low-density territories of the urban world to a horizon of urbanity, which sets itself up as a form of spatial conviviality alternative to the dense metropolis. A different city therefore begins to be outlined for, in the face of the ecological crisis and the quality of urban life environments, the concept itself of city is changing, with consequent reconsideration of the approach to the project for it.

In the low-density territories if, on the one hand, the project is oriented towards exploring the modalities and communicative processes that favour the creation of urban and territorial conviviality models able to overthrow situations of environmental crisis that produce exclusion and marginality, on the other, it is steered towards the construction of scenarios in which the evolutive contents of environmental processes contribute to regeneration of the urban machine, activating routes of collective learning, recuperation of environmental knowledge and new motivation pointing in the environmental direction. It is, therefore, a question of favouring the setting up of new *ecologies* as representative figures of fresh relations between society and territory, figures that emerge in cooperative planning environments oriented towards the project for the territory, but are also the result of the deployment of planning activities addressing the quest for environmental quality. This reconsideration brings the territory into play on many fronts: it expands our concept of inhabiting; combines nature and artefice in new ways; reveals different, unusual forms of inhabiting; opens up new points of view; has urban quality correspond to territorial or supra-local environmental quality; it opens up to planetary environmental problems, like a window on the world that unfolds interactions, including virtuous ones, is sensitive to new environmental identities compared with those that have isolation as their distinctive trait. Above all it takes shape as spatial anchorage of the city and takes on a role that reinforces and consolidates this anchorage.

It is not, however, as has been seen, only the territory to be involved in the above reconsideration and to take on a new role and a function of protagonist. The society suddenly assumes importance, too, not as an idealised system, characterised by an alleged compactness and idyllic cohesion, but as a fragmented "multitude", divided, dispersed, ramified and broken into pieces, yet capable of finding and hunting out unusual modalities of comparison, convergence and mutual recognition, often based on the awareness of exclusion, rather than the illusion of inclusion. From this point of view, as we have seen, a crucial role is played by "subjects without a voice" and border experiences, which emerge and are consolidated in the intermediate spaces, like *terrains vagues,* peripheries,

suburbs, but also spaces of the city that are waiting for other meanings, that include people and "border objects", or concrete or abstract objects with different meanings in different social worlds, whose creation and management becomes a key process for the development and maintenance of the relations of coherence between social worlds that continuously intersect and change. They are marginal subjects and objects, minority groups, that acquire, however, authentic protagonism in cities that no longer have a nucleus of identity that is well-defined and "majoritarian", and whose social fibre is made up more and more of "relational matrices" which are different from each other only because of their greater or lesser aptitude to express relational strategies effectively open to the other, and practices coherent with these strategies that are.

This *relational matrix* and the complex of strategies that it is able to set up comprise the essential constituent nucleus of the *civitas* as a complex system, articulated in generative structures that target social organisation – with variable geometry too – of the city. With the analysis proposed we intended to point out that only a strong, convinced reference at this level can enable us to save and relaunch the *urbs*, as a organisation of spatial generative structures – relating to processes and not objects – which form the spatial structuring of the city.

Note

[1]   "To reconstruct is to collaborate with time gone by, penetrating or modifying its spirit and carrying it toward a longer future. Thus, beneath the stones we find the secret of the springs" (Yourcenar 1984, pp. 126–127).

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