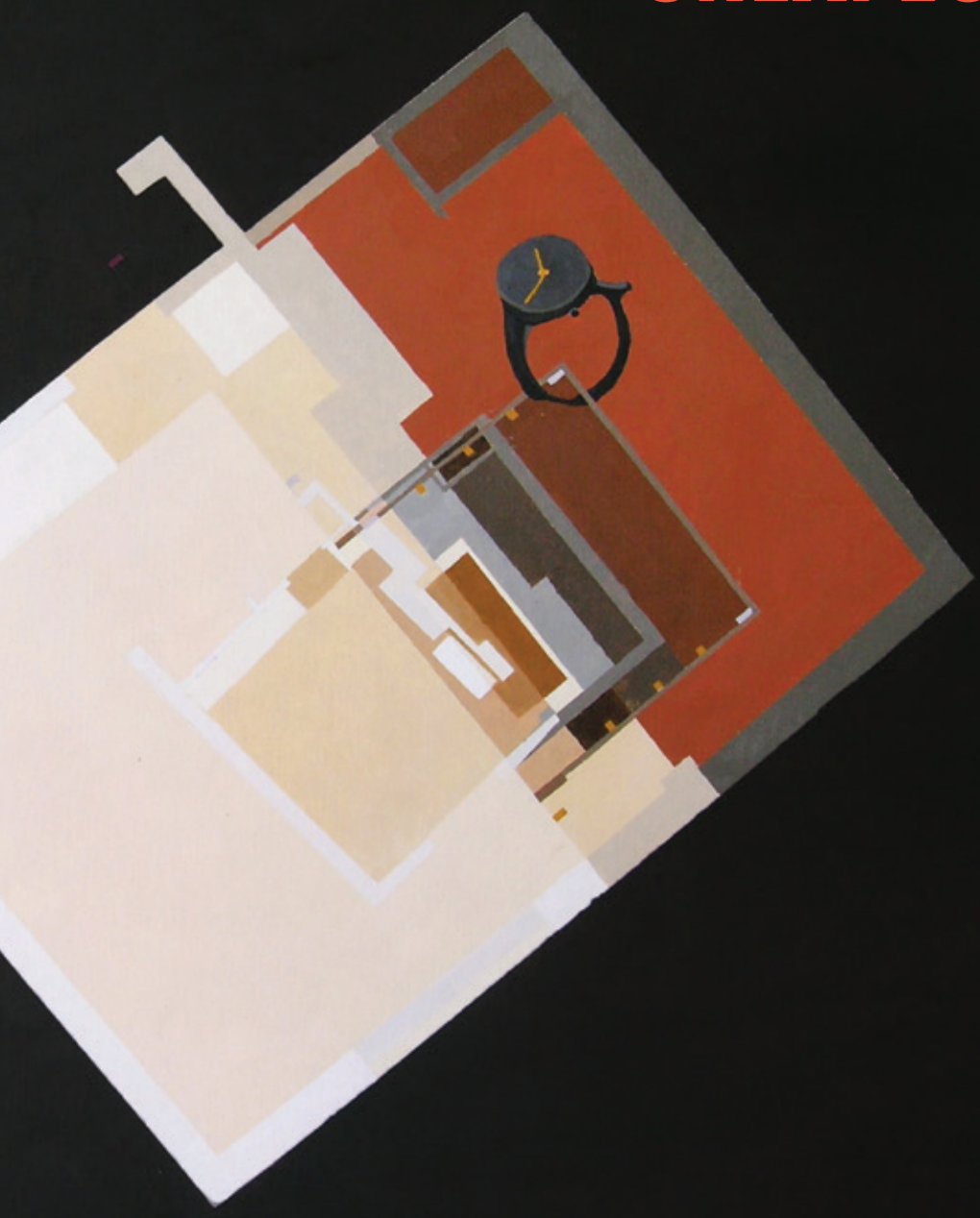
URBAN CORPORIS
UNEXPECTED



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UNEXPECTED - SPECIAL ISSUE

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A BOOK OF ARCHITECTURE, ART, PHILOSOPHY AND URBAN STUDIES TO NOURISH THE URBAN BODY

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01. Living on the periphey of time. Claudio Zanirato, Novoli District (Florence), 2019, property of the author.

Communications and global peripherals

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Keywords: City, Transformations, Suburbs, Communications, Atopy,

Abstract

The current pandemic situation has led many to the widespread condition of the peripheries and also to the marginalization and lack of communication that distinguishes them, exasperated by new technologies. All this in the era already characterized by the progressive loss of definition of things, by perceptual contamination, by mechanical concreteness replaced by electronic intangibility and, finally, now also by social distancing. And "the inability to access telematic space is the condition for the establishment of new forms of marginalization, of a periphery that is no longer located along the urban limits but is located everywhere" *(Virilio, 1988, p. 19).*

The acceleration caused by the telematic-tertiary revolution already underway, promoting home teleworking and decentralization, at the same time leads to indiscriminate consumption of the territory and a growing impulse to the "urban hermitage". Electronic technology is altering the concept of limit and now no one can consider themselves isolated from a physical obstacle or from too long distances of time, thanks to the interface of monitors and networks.

In this perspective, the symbolic order of the city is embodied by the neo-Enlightenment model of the wired city, a reflection of the apparently hierarchical world of information technology, represented as a network that reaches everyone, in the form of collective intelligence, where the prevailing bargaining chips it is knowledge.

The meeting, the living, are not the very essence of the city, but the exclusive human accessibility to things, people, information, to which the form of transport / communication available is at the service. The latter tend to progressively free people from the need to concentrate in limited spaces, thus favoring the "physical distancing" and the affirmation of the peripheries.

Communicating versus meeting

Urban areas are increasingly inhabited by people who tend to dialogue with the outside world, even remote, rather than with neighboring citizens, producing widespread segregation. This is a form of home atopy, where the neighbor is discredited to the advantage of the distant, which leads to a crisis in the neighborhood, replaced by a presence-absence.

With the establishment of a virtual culture, our reference context tends to be time, the way to transmit and disseminate information, rather than the place where we live. In practice, "*the depth of time supplants the ancient depth of field of topology*" (Virilio, 1988, p. 31).

Thus it happens that the traditional networks of physical communication, inherent in the existence of centers of radiation of political and cultural power, of clots of economic and social relations (essentially points capable of establishing hierarchies of relational values, capable of conditioning the location choices based on the spatial and temporal distances of connection), immaterial networks have overlapped, with virtual paths and fictitious nodes, and some cities are already beginning to lose power, because they are cut off from these new logical dispositions. The progressive space-time condensation, induced by the latest communication systems, increasingly in real time, cancels the distances of the past and with this the weight of many cities.

The communication systems are aimed at expanding space and contracting time, tending to zero out space as a function of (real) time. Global communication, allowed by pervasive telematics, inevitably leads to the loss of reference to the places and forms of architecture that distinguish them, since the physical place becomes independent of the possibility of communicating, which instead originated cities (Indovina, 2017).

Since transmission supplants the population of space, inertia tends to replace the old sedentary lifestyle, the persistence of urban sites, in citizens for whom the freedom to come and go is replaced by the home reception of everything. The contemporary city thus tends to simply reduce itself to an information and communication system, ceasing to be a place of protection, becoming a communication, dislocation and transmission apparatus. The freedom conquered by the constraints of distance makes the model centered on material translations useless, undermined by a universe of information.

The city in which we find ourselves suddenly is no longer crossed by its citizens, but enters their homes directly through the media, which provide a virtual knowledge of it: it is the city that invades the home while it invades the territory, it is the city seen as a place of representation of itself. With the use of instant means of communication and drones, *"arrival supplants departure, everything arrives without having to leave"* (Virilio, 1988, p. 12) and therefore no longer the traditional spatial oppositions between citizens and non-citizens. It is the city that invades the home with new technologies, while the city as an exterior is running out, as a public space of life and urban activities are relocating according to invisible rules (Pisano, 2018).

What the city gave exclusively as a potential for meeting, social exchange, learning and comparison, the "square" in short, today is surrogately given by an antenna, a telephone terminal. The physical contiguity of city settlements, the *"massive proximity of the history of the population of space and the occupation of territories"* (Virilio, 1988, p. 59) is today in open conflict with the new telecommunications properties and is seriously risking to succumb.

In practice, *"the (bad) futurism of speed, of travel, of mass-in-motion, gives way to the"* contemplation *"of a space where expansion and contraction coincide, where the maximum temporal expansion can be made to coincide with the complete immobility"* (Cacciari, 1986, p. 15) (fig. 01).

An enzymatic action

The methods activated to deal with the latest epidemic have accentuated the concept of settlement / housing isotropy, demonstrating all the potential of this model already in place, contributing to its implicit strengthening as an unexpected enzyme.

Ultimately, the territorial settlement relationship and the known habitual urban values, the methods of transporting things and people according to individual and collective needs, the value assigned to space and with this the dynamics that govern cities, are radically changing, it is increasingly useful to imagine new transformative scenarios to be proposed and controlled as they become, especially for existing and historicized cities, which are more difficult to adapt.

The consolidation of transport and communication systems increasingly over the air and less overland, in fact, allow us to glimpse a revision (a desirable liberation) of the use of soils, together with a spatial rarefaction of the settlement compactness, as we have seen, not more in need of centralization. Therefore, networked or dedicated interconnections and 'on demand' public and private transport modes tend to prevail over local interdependencies, as traditional founding factors for urban development, no longer as communities with a limited territorial base (Benevolo, 2011).

Transmission / expedition supplants the populating of space, with a new sedentary lifestyle that limits direct physical relationships, especially of people, but increases in an inversely proportional way that of things and goods (Oberti, Préteceille, 2017). Basically, the type of vehicles that move around the city and the reasons for these movements are changing, and not the number of flows themselves: fewer people but more goods, fewer direct contacts and more remote communications.

The freedom acquired by the constraints of distance makes the model centered on material translations (based on urbanism) useless, undermined by an increasingly widespread universe of information and accessibility (Indovina, 2017). There is less and less need to 'go' to the city, since more and more often it is the city itself that 'reaches' anyone and everywhere, thus canceling the concept of suburbs because it has conquered the center, first with the shopping centers and then with the internet.

The unpredictable successes of individual mobility, instant telecommunication systems, teleworking, the decrease in production and the internationalization of distribution, have therefore favored the dissolution of the strategic role of cities, traditionally formed on the concepts of accessibility, proximity and variety of goods and services concentrated therein.

Conclusions

Instant and global forms of communication, drastically reducing the friction of distance, also attenuate the principle of centrality on which the urban order is mainly based (Benevolo, 2011). It follows that the means of communication that we are employing even forcibly manage, rather than transporting their users, to out-of-phase them with their immediate environment.

We have discovered in these months of forced confinement that much of the frenetic movement, which has suffocated the cities and extended territories in recent times, is perhaps superfluous, not entirely necessary and it can be done in large part at least, that the technologies we already they can help us live better, if they are oriented to assist us closely. Therefore, a hypothesis of a more "static" and egalitarian city is emerging, where people will move less and goods and things will have to find their own alternative ways to reach us.

Much of the man-made scenario, for more than a century, has been aimed at making people move faster and faster, above all independently, with roads, parking lots, service stations dis-

02. Mahler4 Complex. Claudio Zanirato, Zuidas District (Amsterdam), 2006, Property of the Author.

tributed in a capillary manner and large land consumption: now, this model of development will have to be re-oriented to serve people who have discovered that they can move much less and in other ways. The city can be reborn by reversing the suffocation factor and the frenzy of the recent era, gaining spaces already present but used for other reasons, for the new modes of exchange and corridors dedicated to new intelligent vehicles. The movement in the city, in practice, will necessarily have to be less than people and more than things, and this will lead to greater uniformity of citizenship with a widespread "peripheralization" (fig. 02).

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A BOOK OF *A*RCHITECTURE. *A*RT. PHILOSOPHY *A*ND URB*A*N STUDIES TO NOURISH THE URB*A*N BODY.

"Urban Corporis Unexpected", through different contributions, deals with the changing reality brought by the Sars-Cov2 pandemic. The book presents a series of essays, pointing out different perspectives upon dynamics and relation caused by this situation, underlining how the isolation period has affected both the domestic and the urban sphere, shaping a multifaced interpretation of the changed lives, spaces and routines.