

Parasite Strategies for New Cities

Society is located in a continuous “becoming”. Consequently the use of space modify itself depending on the changes in relations and behaviours. Human relationship’s texture is unavoidably linked with physical locations, inside which it evolves. The importance of “context”, of “space”, of “location”, becomes central in order to act. It’s fundamental for the project and to understand societies as a whole, as something that is spatially located. In this context the term “territory” assume a new physiognomy: it “is the use that is done of it” (Crosta) and any intervention intent to modify it, cannot prescind from the actors that live and animate it in its everyday life.

Territory has the characteristics of local space: it is concrete, material, tangible (made out of other beings, objects, constructions, streets, etc) and in the meantime it is also the intangible fluid and evanescent space of the invisible networks (internet, telephony, email, wireless, etc). The contemporary individual that act in space can be defined as a “territorial cyborg” that is *a body that simultaneously float between natural and electronic flow* (J. Pérez de Lama, Hackitectura).

Working on territories and cities today means to operate in a “multiscalar” perspective, while considering in the same time the local and the global, micro and macro, particular and universal. The processes that reflect themselves on territories are generated by global factors that have displaced governments typical of the Nation-State: *a national or local reality can be understood only by considering the international dynamics* (B. Theis). For this reason the horizontal communication is necessary between realities that act locally: realities conscious that they can continue to exist and to produce just by link themselves in a network, by exchange knowledge and competences, by put in practice interconnected modality of direct action.

Today the urban space and the metropolitan ecosystem are the “where” of the “systemic crisis”: in fact city on one hand is the main location of the biopolitical power’s actions, those who inhibit (and sometimes even cancelled) the self-management’s abilities of the individuals and of the communities, on the other hand it expand without intermission while generating uncountable aberrations, that take form in the “waste”. This “trash” assumes multiple characteristics: its scale isn’t limited to the object’s dimension, but it is included in the architectural and the urban scale too, while producing pure forms, lacking of functions and uses, and spaces that born already died.

Space and use, real or imagined, are not only the new paradigms of architecture (J.L. Mateo, K. Ivanisin), but also the paradigms of the others project’s disciples like art and urban planning.

...territory it isn’t a disposable container nor a consumption product that can be replaced. Each territory it’s unique, so it is necessary to recycle, to scratch it on one more time (possibly with the maximum care) the old text that humans have written on the irreplaceable matter of soil, to lay down on it a new one, that can respond to the nowadays need, before being in turn abrogated.

(A. Corboz)

The contraction of the times of transformation and change, that is linked to the ultra-speed and to the exponential acceleration in the development of technologies and production (and so of the "crisis"), has modified the schedule of the obsolescence of physical structures, functions, uses.

Then it is necessary to arrest the flood of "urbanity" (R. Koolhaas), it is necessary to give back meaning to the "waste", to the margin and in the meanwhile it is necessary to imagine formulas and actions to re-connect those parts of the social and physical texture that have lost the capacity to organize or re-generate themselves, while imagine new strategies. This ability is the one called "resilience", or rather the capacity of the social ecosystem to re-establish the "homeostasis", or the equilibrium condition of the system, after the external intervention (like the human beings' one) that could provoke an "ecological deficit", or rather the erosion of the resources' consistence that the system is able to produce in respect to his "load capacity".

Architecture declines parasite links with existing "guest bodies" to densify the city, to spatially translate requests that emerge from ordinary stories, "doing with what we've got" and using that which, in a very short time, has already assumed the characteristics of relinquishment. Parasite architecture is the reflection of an afterthought of the territories' value and of the necessity that the city grows up on itself and no more over.
(S. Marini)

Nowadays the enacting of laws, that limit the growth of the city and the soil consumption, forces the designers to confront themselves with new themes and spaces, new parasite modality of intervention on the existing. These "novelty", that are becoming a design approach, are nothing more than the contemporary re-declination of an ancient practice, that in our century, has often been adopted by the "bottom up" processes to satisfy emerging necessities.

In this context the practices of "squatting", re-appropriation and self-management of spaces, have proven to be visionary and today they have to be re-considered as purposeful and sperimental activities and to be devoted to propose new models that could be re-vitalized both the humans' relationships and the spaces where those relationship took place. In this it is necessary to step over the equation illegal = wrongful, while innovating or re-founding the norm with the direct action on the territory.

In the case of European cities, the resilience capacity should also allow for the preservation of specific democratic and cultural values, local histories and traditions, while adapting to more economic and ecological lifestyles. A city can only become resilient with the active involvement of its inhabitants. To stimulate this commitment, we need tools, knowledge and places to test new practices and citizen initiatives, and to showcase the results and benefits of a resilient transformation of the city.
(A.A.A)

Action on territory generate "solidarity networks" in micro-local contexts that could function as "welfare reserves", useful for society in order to protect herself from the difficult conditions of "crisis". Otherwise the "network society" lets people accumulate culture and trans-local connections able to produce resistance, antagonism and contra-hegemonies.

Action in physical and virtual space generates new rhizomatic points of view and alternatives to the nowadays "lifestyles"; besides, action leaning toward

the creation of "plural solidarities" in micro-local contexts that work as "resistance bags" for society, whose horizontality (possible thanks to the networks) allow humans to accumulate culture and translocal connections able to produce new "systems".

The designer who decide to come up with this modalities of intervention, with his work has to watch out in order to avoid to trivialize and expropriate a methodology born inside necessity, inside cultural, political and social motions: the danger is to re-conduct those practices exclusively within the theory or within the professional practice, while subsuming them and rendering them functional to the biopolitical power, with the risk of helping gentrification phenomenon.

Moreover the same term "parasite", together with others like "waste", "swerve", etc., create another problem. If they are mystified, they could tend to legitimate a poverty's aesthetic and to facilitate the contraction of spaces and of the existence quality: in this sense could urbanism, architecture and art act together as a "powerful tool" useful to go beyond this rhetoric or they are just instruments used to control the processes in action?