

NEW KINDS OF URBANITIES

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DEBATE

New Kinds of Urbanities, Other Ways of Thinking about the Natural

Lucina Caravaggi

During the long months of isolation imposed by the pandemic, our relationship with the city was guided by compulsory perceptions, very different from the past. The domestic space was charged with new meanings and at the same time the city, beyond the windows, suddenly appeared desirable, full of public spaces and meeting opportunities, magically free from contrasts, inequalities and environmental degradation, as if the virus had given new life to the rheotropic tendencies already widely present in our societies.

But together with individual perceptions, isolation has encouraged many collective reflections aimed at imagining a more sustainable future, through exercises of re-imagination that have at the center the relationship between human and natural, a hybrid field in which neuropsychiatrists and biologists, naturalists and theoretical physicists, farmers and social observers meet.

It is a new research landscape, radically different from the past, generated by the crisis of the antinomies that have structured the Western way of thinking for at least two centuries. From the constitutive opposition between man and nature, to many other derivatives: wild and domestic, productive and unproductive, urban and rural, etc., which are joined by many other oppositions widely present within architecture and landscape design: starting from that between science and creativity, that in recent years exacerbated the contrast between scientific determinism of ecology and aesthetic drifts of urban and landscape design.

Living Urbanity. The *milieux vivants* Project in the Landscapes of Agence TER

Rosa De Marco

The experience of the pandemic, which since 2020 has dismantled the certainties of the modern Western world, has attracted even more attention to the relationship between the organization of territories – urbanized and non-urbanized – and the socio-spatial, health and environmental aspects. The binary categories such as urban/rural, natural/artificial, human/non-human, disappear and a new paradigm invites us to renew both the notion of urbanity and that of urban design.

Today, the vision and practice of the landscape design actively participate in the renewal of these notions by responding to the challenges posed by climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the social demand that increasingly requires a sensitive experience of urban space and a direct relationship with the “nature in the city.” Through the presentation of the works of the Agence TER landscape architects, it is proposed to retrace the evolution of the

role that the landscape design has assumed in the last thirty years in rethinking urbanity and urban design and in affirming a co-evolutionary approach between the of urban and natural living milieus.

Metropolis Archipelago

Stefano Boeri

Nature has proved to be a fundamental part of the life of our species: one small virus has managed to establish a frighteningly fast system of osmosis between all the individuals of that species on our planet.

The fragility of our species, that the current situation related to Covid-19 has transmitted to us, tells us that the size of those phenomena that we do not know – or which we are even not aware of not knowing – has expanded enormously. And it also tells us that we have to stop our aggressive controlling relationship with nature.

We really need to rethink our idea of cities and metropolises in a completely different scenario while at the same time coming to terms with the urgent and dramatic issues related to climate change.

So, what can we do to imagine a new future and more sustainable scenario, starting right from our cities? what can we do to ensure that cities become the leading characters in a vast planetary campaign to reduce global warming? What can do to forge a new alliance between cities and living nature?

Here a few ideas.

New Species of Healthiness. The Role of Architectural Design in the City of the Pandemic

Pasquale Miano

In the contemporary condition related to the Covid-19 pandemic, urban design becomes a very current topic as, through reconsidering distances and proximity, its main task gets reinvigorated by offering healthy, safe, wellbeing places, beyond the conditions of health, logistics and environmental difficulties in which the community finds itself.

In this perspective, the article offers reflections on new species of healthiness starting from the role of the architectural project for the definition of a city of care. On the one hand, one aspect deals with the grafting in the city of a dynamic of filaments, structural greenways capable to give new meaning to urban patterns. On the other hand, the second opportunity lies in the social utility of public facilities intended as therapeutic architectures, to be completely renovated.

Naples has been object of experimentation on these issues, through the definition of a type of approach based on the concepts of public nature, inhabited infrastructures, hubs of healthiness, for a new way of experiencing the city, but also of thinking about the city and its relations according a projection to the future.

Landscape of(f) Limits

Sara Protasoni

Between imposed distances and escapes towards depopulated places, the pandemic is jeopardizing the idea that the city is first and foremost a place for meeting and sharing, at times resurfacing anti-urban impulses and ideas of nature that have repeatedly marked some passages of the long and articulated reflection on the space of human experience. The essay reflects on this new condition, on the one hand posing some compelling questions about the intertwining of public health, personal freedom and social responsibility that the measures of containment of contagion have brought to attention through the sharing of the goal of care: on the other, by specifying how the urgency and the number of crises (including the Covid pandemic¹⁹) that must be addressed in the different regions of the planet demands a concrete transformative action that can never be separated from the project, in order to define its purposes, recognize and interpret its conditions, while verifying the degree of logical and technical consistency of possible operational proposals through what Maldonado called critical consciousness of technical processuality.

Rethinking the Meanings of the Void

Nicola Russi

The investigation of a term as broad and ambivalent as void has to do with the search for the very foundations of a design culture and with the identification of the epistemological boundaries within which it operates.

The void takes on different meanings in the various seasons of design, in the words of the individual authors and in relation to the different contexts with which they have been confronted.

This text does not aim to reconstruct a complete history of the void, but rather to provide a reasoned selection of recent interpretations that have variously oriented our gaze on contemporary urban realities and territories, underlining the relevance and possible roles of the void within them.

This reflection rereads these precedents by structuring them around three keys to interpretation: a question of terminology, the exploration of disciplinary boundaries and the void as an environmental theme.

The systematization of knowledge within these frameworks is the premise for the definition of new questions and directions of investigation, with respect to which contemporary design culture is called upon to take positions and formulate answers.

Coexistence Attempts on an Infected Planet. Reconnecting Different Bodies, Natures and Urban Spaces

Anna Lambertini

This article proposes a reconnaissance of visions and ideas to rethink the notions of urban natures and open spaces of nearness, the key word around which revolves a substantial debate regarding the possible forms of urbanity to be

encouraged in the post Covid-19 city. Through a sequence of three basic actions strategies – Breathing Well, Cultivating Different Urban Natures, Testing Nearness Ideas – the contribute develops a critical itinerary by evoking the concepts of Landscape Democracy and Landscape Approach, considered particularly useful to nurture the contemporary culture of urban design. A concept recently defined, the Landscape Democracy recognises the effort to guarantee the quality of the landscapes as a value firmly anchored in the right of every human being to live in a condition of physical, cultural, emotional and mental well-being. The Landscape Approach, as it was defined by Jusuck Koh, considers that the design process is founded on concepts as “network, web, field or mat (mater and matrix)” and on the connectedness between humans being and the entire web of life.

RESEARCHES

No-Tourism and Mutant Cities in the Barcelona Region

Jordi Bellmunt Chiva

The tourism that invades the territories and even the cities in an uncontrolled way plunders landscapes and changes the urban lifestyle that we knew as ours. Urban centers are being emptied in an unstoppable way, gentrifying, to become containers for tourists or new buyers, occasional visitors to a city transformed into a theme park.

Barcelona is a clear example of this, in which commerce responds to the new urban life, creating an offer suitable for the temporary visitor and, therefore, depriving the city of its main essence. The metropolis changes adapting to this new growing industry at the cost of its own identity.

In this trend and in the urgent need for a change that reduces pollution, improves biodiversity, optimizes environmental parameters we need to reflect on a new urban formula to return the city to the citizen. The international pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus overwhelms us. Consequently the cities are confined, the streets and squares are emptied, the parks are closed and the visitors, the tourists disappear completely.

The next world changes scenery. The city must evolve from strategic analysis, from a new urban vision and from the search for an understandable, global and contemporary urban model.

Architecture and Landscape Project in Punta de Abona, Tenerife

Juan Manuel Palerm

The critical reflection on the places of contemporary tourism starts from the experience of the Punta di Abona project in Tenerife. In the last years of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, the relationship between Landscape and Tourism has undergone a radical change, reaching a situation of imbalance, generating tensions and conflicts. Tourism today is no longer a geographical experience in which the landscape is an essential element. Talking about Territory and Tourism in general and specifi-

cally in the Canary Islands means dealing with a stereotyped image, an idea of territorial and social identity that involves all citizens, generating a complex and contradictory vision of territorial development. The cultural reference today is that of holidays villages and resorts, enclaves disconnected from the territory and the landscape. Where is the line between tourism as an invasion and tourism as an economic, social and environmental resource? It is difficult to specify the margin between the two terms, especially since they are generally juxtaposed rather than complementary. In the current situation there is no room for complementarity without the commitment to the formal perceptual quality of the tourist space with the processes of modification, adaptation and transformation of the territory in coherence with the dimension and paradigm of the Landscape.

Urban Agriculture beyond the Pandemic Crisis

Silvia Beretta, Frank Lohrberg

Urban Agriculture refers to rather different practices and spatial patterns in urban and peri-urban areas. It is a renewed form of food production which takes place by means of a strong involvement of urban dwellers and which is combined with the provision of other societal benefits and ecological services. Although the Covid-19 crisis did not entirely disrupt traditional supply chains, the last few months have proved the importance of local food supply. Therefore, Urban Agriculture will have an important role in the future as it can act as a buffer against stresses. However, it is important to emphasise that most of the societal benefits of Urban Agriculture are intrinsic to its physical spatial dimension and linked to a complex interaction with the inhabitants that goes beyond the mere food consumption. A better management of the rural-urban fringe areas could lead, with modest funding, to a “co-production” of public spaces and it is therefore crucial in order to transform cities into more resilient environments. The Pandemic seems to have accelerated this trend.

Rediscovering Rome through GRAB

Cristina Imbroglini

The recent pandemic has brought significant changes in the relationship between urban space and its inhabitants. Smart working; reduction of transferring daily time;

increase in sustainable travels; rediscovery of open spaces as a place of sociality are modifications of behaviors and perceptions that could support new forms of urbanity that have long been desired. In this sense, the pandemic event could turn into what Edgar Morin defined as a successful deviance: an unexpected event that disorganizes the system from which it was born but at the same time allows for a new, hopefully better evolution.

The GRAB – Rome’s Great Ring Road of bikes – whose final design began during the lock down, represents an opportunity to rediscover Rome starting from the physicality of the urban experience, denied and at the same time made more desirable by the pandemic experience.

Starting from these considerations, the GRAB project tends to create a new kind of urban infrastructure, with complex services for different urban users (not just cyclists and tourists), interconnected with other sustainable mobility networks, capable of enhancing different contexts with significant improvements in both physical spaces and lifestyles.

Cultivating Health in Milan: Updating the Urban Park

Antonio Longo

Milan is the heart of one of the most polluted regions of Europe. The systemic issues that affect the health and quality of life have been mainly addressed in a sectorial, fragmented and emergency way or through environmental rhetoric. The lack of solutions has therefore increased the gap between the city and politics, unable to represent the city within the physical, civil, daily dimension. The ability of citizens to mobilize, sometimes in an innovative and creative way, has at the same time feed forms of active citizenship.

The pandemic has highlighted new geographies and new maps of cities by introducing neglected areas and spaces into the circuit of urban users, activating new daily practices and connections, both individually and organized.

However, bottom-up mobilization is not enough. The care, health of citizens and the quality of urban life depend on the political and technical ability to interact and enhance these attitudes and resources, through dialogue, starting from the evolution of some types of public spaces: in particular public parks.