PRO JECT ANTICIPA TION

When design shapes
futures in
architecture
and urban design

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS   Edited by *Daniele Fanzini*   Foreword by *Roberto Poli*

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3

THE FUTURE IS BACKWARDS. RE-CYCLE AS DESTINY

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Re-cycle, eternal present, temporary reuse, event, design

Abstract

In Italy, past has a very strong and emotional presence and this influences the way we think about future. Territorial studies have always got wrong predictions, building beyond all limits, leaving a legacy of empty spaces, unsold edifices, disused railways and roads lines. Detroit represents a manifesto of the next urban condition. In a few years it became the American Pompeii, as a result of the same crisis by which it has been generated. Nevertheless, something has happened. New assets are replacing the traditional urban images, and they give the ruins back to narrative and nature by transforming Detroit into the real first post-metropolis. Citizens and urban-makers work with waste and remains. They recycle ideas and materials diffusing social innovation. The core concept of these activities is based on shift from a way of measuring to a system of values. Reducing, reusing and recycling seem to be the only sustainable social strategies capable of expressing innovation, of generating consensus and producing beauty. The event, as a labile and uncertain temporary happening, is a collective expression as a manifestation of a will and an intention, therefore, a reaction/interaction that becomes possible anticipation, as it stages a series of visions and shows that it is possible. While visions of the future are an abstraction, in the event the future manifests itself as a concrete possibility. Anticipation can be analysis and it can be activism. In this sense, we consider Recycle as destiny: it is the way in which, through his intentional acting, an individual meets the historical-social background.

75

1. Presence of the past

Adam composes electronic music at home in Detroit. He almost never gets out. Eve lives in Tangier and she leaves to go see him. They are educated, beautiful and vampires. Adam and Eve are privileged observers of the future of our world. They move trying to take bribes as little as possible from the ugliness of the present. In the crucial scene of the film, Adam accompanies Eve in a night trip around Detroit. He tells her how dark and welcoming is the city in ruin. This is the last place to be for those who never die. Only those who love remain alive; only those who know how to love forever; those who respect the world they inhabit, its art, literature, the progress of science, the sound of the names. The others, those who believe they are alive only because their heart is beating, those who have lost the taste, the gaze and the dictionary, are boring and dangerous creatures. They, the so-called human beings, are the real cannibals, the zombies. People who wake up always too late, that use and throw out, forgetful of the past, heedless of the future, mired in a present dark more than ever, even and especially in the light of the sun. Only Lovers Left Alive is a Jim Jarmusch movie with Tom Hiddleston and Tilda Swinton, participating in Cannes competition in 2013. It is the story of Adam and Eve, coincidentally, two vampires. The movie takes place in Detroit and is about those and the things that never die.

How many furniture pieces, houses or urban districts, that were designed and made in the 80s, are still relevant today? What clothes or shoes from that period can be worn without appearing old or out of time? Everybody can say almost all. In forty years the living spaces have not changed that much. Their projects have been modified even less. The way in which they are conceived and designed is almost the same. Fashion, architecture, and cities are the sensitive forms that better represent the people that generated them. They express lifestyles, a status and, in some way aspirations and expectations for the future. Is it possible that they remained so indifferent to the changes of the last decades?

These have been the years of the most profound technological revolution in history. More pervasive and effective than the one of the internal combustion engine at the end of the XIX Century that upsets not only the modes of production and the social hierarchies, but also the aesthetics and the solid shapes of living. When, with the second industrial revolution, material world changed very quickly, urbanism was invented. The architecture of iron and concrete generates new larger and larger cities. The art goes futuristic and abstract. Lifestyles change and clothes too. The modern world projects humanity in the future with its forms. The ideas of speed and of future express the zeitgeist in the design culture. As Zygmunt Bauman writes, "modernity is time in the era in which time has a story" (2000). In modernity *genius loci* coincides with *genius saeculi*, the forms of the city, of architecture, of fashion fulfil the epoch. At present, it is unthinkable to dress or to design furniture, houses or cities likewise in the previous century.

2. An Eternal Present

Today it is no longer the case. A few times the distance between *gestalt* and *zeitgeist* was so dramatic. The paradigm that binds the aesthetics to the projection of time blew up. The overcoming of modernity especially lies in this. We live like an eternal present, where the sensitive forms and their representations in solid space no longer carry an idea of the future. They always seem to be more or less the same, immutable and increasingly deprived of sense in the rush of the revolution of sharing information technologies that is distorting the system of social relations and the way in which things and places are related to each other. Even today everything changes and so much faster than before. Innovation is conducted in the intangible areas of the net rather than in material spaces. The ways to experiment and disseminate information and knowledge are mutating in a vortex of accelerated change where tools and virtual synapses materials involve the activities and lifestyles linked to them while the more

traditional and unconnected spaces tend to remain inert, equal to themselves. Or they change slowly.

Douglas Rushkoff, professor of media theory at the City University of New York, describes the impact of the information technologies revolution on society as the present shock. Playing on the title of Alvin Toffler's influential 1970 "Future Shock," which sounded an alarm about what Mr. Toffler called "a personal perception of too much change in too short a period of time" Rushkoff analyses a crushing of the time in a myriad of parallel peripheries where everyone feels the need to live the instant in which everything happens. A disorientation that blurs past and future in a continue hyper-connection and creates an infinite present. "The future that we have pursued for much of the twentieth century has finally arrived. Today, the available technology allows to stay connected with anyone and to have at hand all sorts of information, at any time. But what will be the effect of this amazing compression of space and time in our lives? The era of the total access has a downside that we have underestimated. Social networks fuel the anxiety of a constant *here and now* without direction and priorities, fragmented and distracted. E-mail and instant messaging are now an assault; and we are overwhelmed by an illusory continuous present that always gets out of hand". (Rushkoff, 2013)

We live with our head in the Cloud. Objects are intended to produce information that is monitored and transmitted in real time. Everything is accessible and traceable. Control is based on knowledge. In the era of the Internet of Everything, all is destined to become another (Valsecchi, 2016). How the forms of living are changing, or will change? The architecture of the eternal present (Giedion, 1964) is still able to propose innovation trough projects? In other words, is it still suitable to express visions of the future for solid material spaces? And how those visions can and will make sense in the era of 4.0 technology?

3. The second machine age

The digital progress we have seen in recent years is certainly impressive, but it is only a clue of what will come. It is the dawn of the second age of the machines. To understand why this is happening now, we must understand the nature of technological progress in the era of hardware, software and digital networks. The rapid and always faster digitization will probably lead to more economic and environmental devastation as, with computers becoming progressively powerful, companies will have less need for certain types of employees. Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, economists at MIT, developed those concepts in the book "The second machine age", which tells us with great effectiveness the impacts of the revolution of sharing information technologies on lifestyles and work processes. The economic crisis is the first tangible result of the digital revolution that gradually reduces job opportunities and empties the built spaces of the western city featuring new metropolitan figures. Technologies for sharing information tend to transfer in the immaterial space of the Net functions and places, no longer needing physical spaces to be realised. Just think about how are changing the behaviours of consumers that now are more and more buying on the internet and there is less need for retail spaces in the city. You can meet, establish a relationship, give a talk via Skype or other social media without physically being there where it takes place. Now everything happens in the video, but soon our presence will be virtually expressed by holograms that can also simulate physical emotion and meaning. Anyone can become a part time taxi driver and sell his travels on Uber or share the car with Car to Go or even the political choices at the click of Avaaz. In a few years with a 3D printer we can produce construction components and whole buildings. You can make at home spare parts of any object in common use and in a basically equipped laboratory also blenders and other machines. While the new figures of the digital artisans are emerging the appliances factories in Friuli and Veneto have already closed. Computers become more powerful and smaller. New technologies have less need for physical space.

In just 10 years from a 200 square meters' apartment (as the ASCI Red, the first product of the Accelerated Strategic Computing Initiative of the US government introduced in 1996) to a mobile device that takes up less than a tenth of a square meter. This story is emblematic. Just to make it clear, the shared information revolution not only incredibly reduces the need for occupation of physical space, but also cancels the necessity of specialization of physical forms -removing the rationalist principle of Louis Sullivan Form Follows Function- simply because by using small digital devices we can do almost everything almost everywhere. Anyone can find thousands of similar examples that show how you always need less functional space to live and work because many of the uses that occupied real volumes in the city have been transferred or will transfer in the virtual spaces of the Net. If all of this is about to happen or already happens, it is clear that many essential paradigms of modern times, not only that of the close relationship between function and form, are emptied of meaning. Everything resulted from the simultaneous action of three key factors: the economic crisis, the environmental one and the sharing information. The technologies' revolution is so deeply changing our lifestyles and the way we imagine and we want the solid forms of our future that all our design knowledge suddenly seems inadequate, both as an interpretative tool of the current condition and as a device capable of generating new environmental, social, economic performances and new beauty. If we look to the future, it could be said that one crucial effect of the revolution of sharing information technologies on the most advanced societies is the possibility of being able to live in much more physical space than in the past. A kind of space that it is not necessary to conform on the basis of pre-established specific fates. Simply, we dispose of a huge amount of built volumes that is no longer needed or do not yet know how to use. The same happens for infrastructure and open spaces.

4. Detroit

Detroit is the manifesto of the urban condition that identifies the new paradigm of recycling. Perhaps it is the most important in this phase of history. 15 years after the height of the disaster that has hit, Detroit is being revived. New materials and impalpable devices are replacing traditional urban figures. These are icons of change that reduce, reuse and recycle what is left of the city in a new landscape. The satellite views; the maps, the diagrams and the projects through which Stoss Landscape Urbanism suggests establishing recycling processes at the urban scale; the experiments of reusing burnt houses (Fire Break) and disused spaces (TAP) Dan Pitera, the reduction of the Michigan Theatre in a parking lot, *visions* focused on the practice of recovery told by Arens; build the epic of a city that experiences the possibility of another future after the metropolis. Today in Detroit no one wants to return to the metropolitan glories of the past. This is not a traditional process of urban redevelopment. Any attempt of regeneration of the last century's city of Detroit can be noticed. There is no idea of a lost urbanity restoration. What is happening in Detroit is the creation of new value through the reduction of traditional metropolitan functions, the re-use of derelict spaces and recycling of surviving urban materials. They are all obvious symptoms of a city that begins to live differently and to convey the innovation. Ultimately it is just this. A recycling process of urban figure that generates new value by assigning new meanings to what already exists.

81

5. Destiny of the design disciplines

Recycling means putting back into circulation, re-using waste materials, which have lost value and/or meaning. Recycling protects the environment and it is economically convenient. It is a practice that allows you to limit the presence of waste, to reduce disposal costs and to contain those of the new production. Recycle means creating new value, new way to begin a new cycle, in another life. In this lies the propulsion of recycling content. The very idea of recycling provides a vision. As detective of space the

architects are interested in the possibility to revitalize the existing, to find new meanings for it, to create new conveniences and new beauty by recycling built spaces that so rapidly are abandoning their characteristics of use. Recycle is an ecological action that operates pushing the existing into the future by transforming waste into prominent figures. In other words, as scholars of forms of physical space it is not interesting to adopt recycling paradigm because it is an ethical action - good and right -, but because today, in architecture, to recycle is to design. The new paradigm of recycle projects into the future the reassuring image of the eternal present and twists it in a vision of beauty.

What is the destiny of the design disciplines in an age that seems to consider only - or at least with absolute priority - the development of non-material spaces and the interconnection devices? What if today - and in the future more and more - the theme of city development is no longer about growth, but about the resilience and environmental quality? When not constructing new architectures, but retrofitting and re-signifying the existing ones is to become the central issue of the building production?

6. Operating by practices, designing activities

Design is advancing beyond the classical disciplines. Design turns out to be a practice that is not limited by its products. It passes from images and graphics to film, animations, data, sounds and materials; from products to actions. Design practice is defined by the following qualities:

-Synthesis: design pull together wildly disparate practices and orchestrate the synthesis within an existing context.

-Activism: design is doing, characterized by thinking and it takes burden of responsibility for action.

-Education: It's about experience growth

-Boundary-less: based on inside content, transgressive emergent;

-Multiscale: using the same approach generating any object

-Cooperation: enriching by searching for partners, enhanced by open source

-Cross-disciplinary: practices into play with one another.

The anticipation process is orienting design, by designing not only products, objects, architectures or exhibits, but also activities. New activities arise by experimenting new professional rules, still not defined and thus next design abilities are developing. It doesn't matter what we are designing, but how we are positioning ourselves in front of design quality.

Design concreteness relates with designing concrete actions and is able to influence people's thinking, mind and behaviour.

7. Methods. Footprints, actions, reactions, interactions.

83

Like footprints in the sand, traces of the past remain in the present as evidence of past times. But "not everything that will exist has existed or does exist" (Bell, 1996, p. 12). Back from what does exist, that is the footprints, we *act*, by mapping and documenting. We *react*, by designing scenarios and vision to rehabilitate places and situations, defining goals, objectives, intentions. Thirdly, we *interact*, by involving people, creating platform and participation processes, collective actions. The designer's role in anticipation is expressed through proposing future goods and services to be placed in scenarios, so that they can be expressed visually. Through these prototypes and realistic models, an idea of the future can be shared by a large number of people with no special skills or attitudes to representation. (Celaschi, Formia, 2014)

Traditionally, most future visions have aimed to portray the world of tomorrow. Forecasting often involves the analysis of weak signals at the edge of the contemporary world and pitching them far forward, for long times, to outline a comprehensive portrait of the future city. But what we are proposing is not to portray tomorrow. We can use design designing activities and experimenting possible investigations and propagations of thinkable futures. The method goes through two main steps:

- Imagining "what it could happen if" analysing any need.
- Sharing the subsequent ideas, involving people and activating a dialogue.

As Fuller said, "The function of what I call design science is to

solve problems by introducing into the environment new artefacts, the availability of which will induce their spontaneous employment by humans and thus, coincidentally, cause humans to abandon their previous problem-producing behaviours and devices." (Fuller, Kuromiya, 1992). Objects evolve as technical culture progresses: that is, designers introduce mutations to improve a function or enable a new capability. Designers produce mutations, but the energy of the crowd drives those ideas to realization. (Ratti, 2015) Depending on several channels and technologies, actions and practices bring ideas from designers to people, by generating alternatives.

84

8. Social significance of practices and events

Cities are not just made out of buildings and streets, they are mainly built of actions, events and practices, shared knowledge. The social significance of events, meets with representative and promotional needs. In the twentieth century, festive occasions, outdoor performances, exhibitions and mass demonstrations taking place in the city, assume a social binding function. They provide an opportunity to establish collective relations, to sensationalize, to stage contrasts and languages of a community that needs, in some sense, to be reconstituted. Events, temporary happenings labile and uncertain, become the expression of a community that is rebuilt in the same place simultaneously. They are collective expressions as manifestations of a will and of an intention. Designing events in abandoned or underused places temporary gives life to provisional spaces. However, they fully enter into the processes of urban identity creation, aimed to innovate the product-system cities. They are a way to stage and test possible uses, to put back into circulation spaces and environments by using installations, products, signals, messages. Thus, the possible function of an event is expressed as an anticipation action.

An event can be considered as a specific design tool or technique for experiencing in the field of application of Anticipation/Future Studies discipline.

Why is the term "event" so widespread today? What semantic area does it cover? How should we use it? From roughly the sixties, it has developed in a frenetic way as the theory of specific philosophical field, interested in understanding what happens. Whenever an event can be described in a way that makes it intentional, that is, which presupposes an intention, that event is an action; if it doesn't assume any intention, that event is an event. Actions are what I do, events are what happens to me. Whenever there is action, there are reasons, in that the reasons are all that acts within us and leads us to act. This relentless syntagma normally is in relationship with all forms of cultural representation. (Calabrese, 2007)

The idea of event is a means of shared production of researches. In this way, a cultural event becomes a temporary service, a first example of virtual experience, suspended memory in a given space and time. This idea was born in the sixties, when the Florentines radical groups introduced a profile of ironic project, in conformity with the logic of doing research and not product. (Branzi, 2014)

Events are design initiatives, performed through a sequence of actions, characterized by a clear design approach and by the use of specific design devices (such as prototypes, mock-ups, design games, models and sketches).

9. Conclusions

In this text we talk about Re-cycle as Destiny.

According to Georg Simmel, destiny is the syntax of meaningful coincidences (Calabrese, 2007), that is the way by which an individual meets the historical-social background through his intentional acting. Future is backwards not only to recall certain past events but as a conjecture, that is "a statement or an opinion based on intuition, considered probably true, but not demonstrated" (Cinquegrani, 2012, p. 135) The vision of Re-cycle Italy - presenting an idea of alternative futures - challenges the way in which people, stakeholders, think and act in the present.

Returning precisely to the initial question, while everything is whirling changing ... clothes, houses and cities are apparently always the same. Is it possible to start reasoning about a new statute for the architecture and design of the eternal present?

Nothing is surprising. In the history of architecture and cities, the great technological changes have produced major changes in the lifestyles, in the forms of living and consequently in the way in which we design them. The major paradigm of modernity was about the best possible spatial synthesis between function and architecture. Today, with the information technologies revolution, we have the opposite problem, namely to give meaning, narrative and uses - even temporary uses - to spaces that have already given forms and turn them into attractive and ecologically efficient places to live.

Note: The research behind this text is the collective result of the authors. As regards the writing of paragraphs they are so allocated:
paragraphs 1.Presence of the past; 2.An Eternal Present; 3.The second machine age; 4.Detroit: Mosè RICCI;
paragraphs 5.Destiny of the design disciplines; 6.Operating by practices, designing activities, 7.Methods. Footprints, actions, reactions, interactions, 8.Social significance of practices and events: Raffaella Fagnoni.
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86

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87