

The Shifting Place. Aesthetic, Spatial and Temporal Fractures of Transitional Territories

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The concept of “locality” that the project *Understanding Territorialities* addresses is that of a “territory we feel most emotionally connected to”, which is “often exploited by Eurosceptic and nationalist arguments but often neglected as a subject for discussion by Europhiles”.¹ At the same time, the feeling of getting “lost” or equally of feeling “at home everywhere” by living without borders is forcibly or voluntarily a shared transterritorial condition, in which the renewed and widespread attention to the “local”, both as a place that gives life and as identitarian originarian place, makes of the locality and localness a battleground.

In physics the principle of locality belongs to the “Quantum Field Theory”, which indicates the influence that an object is subjected to in its immediate vicinity, for which “the various parts of the system (or various regions of the space) can't interact instantly, but only through the propagation of 'signals' from a region to another, that is that the fundamental mechanism of the interaction can only be local and can only take place between a point and others infinitely closed.”² In computer science an implication of locality, composed by the “temporal locality” and the “spatial locality”, “is that we can predict with reasonable accuracy what instructions and data a program will use in the near future based on its accesses in the recent past.”³ In Italian common using, the locality (*località*) indicates both a quality (that of “being from a place” that has inside the “idea” of the place, like being indigenous⁴); a geographical place (which refers to specific local characteristics or to specific relations with other geographical places, like “touristic localities”); and a biogeographical place (a place that results by detailed coordinates where a specific specie of animals or vegetals live or where there have been finded samples died or fossilized).⁵

The *località* (localness), as a quality of “being from a place” that has inside the “idea” of the place, nowadays is “activated” by forms of delocalisation and relocalisation of imaginary meanings; by the copresence, the cohabitation and/or the coexistence of different forms of territorialities; and recently it can result from a “phenomena of the return” to pre-modern relation with what we call “Nature”, that leads to the reconfiguration, redefinition or the *remake* of forms of ruralities, often configured in opposition, relation or interaction with those of urbanities, in a kind of universal-ancestral-identitarian process of recomposition.

In pre-modern times, the word *spatium* (space) was not used, the latin world used for indicating a place was that of *Locus*, that is the “location where a specific object is”, that the Germanic translated in *rum*, that gives place to *raum* in German, to *ruimte* in Dutch and *rooms* in English⁶, which, in the current common language and imaginary spatial meanings, indicates the private space for excellence. Thus potentially, locality could be an undefined place understood both as public, private and common, with its potentialities of indetermination which recalls the “originarian” paradox of the Plato's *chôra*, that indicates the countryside, the mother and the wet nurse that the urbanity and the city needed in order to exist, as both a matrix and an imprint⁷.

In this frame, the “return to the origins”, paradoxically connects us to the “pluri-urban” theorized by researcher and essayist Tiziana Villani, which “proposed itself as a new metaphorical figure of the present”, that is that of the “superficial time”, caused by the sudden globalization of real-time telecommunications.⁸ In this real-time, “the new fears meet the language born

1 Understanding Territorialities project webpage: <https://understandingterritoriality.wordpress.com/about/>.

2 Definition and history of the word *Località*, Enciclopedia Treccani: <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/localita/> (Translated by the author).

3 Definition taken from a tutorial of the Iowa State Univeristy, available at the link: http://web.cs.iastate.edu/~prabhu/Tutorial/CACHE/pr_locality.html.

4 Definition taken from the Treccani Vocabulary: <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/locale1/>.

5 Definition taken from the Treccani Enciclopedia, available at the link: <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/localita/>.

6 Thierry Paquot, Chris Younès, *Espace et lieu dans la pensée occidentale. De Platon à Nietzsche*, Paris, Éditions La Découverte, 2012.

7 Augustin Berque, *Milieu et identité humaine. Notes pour un dépassement de la modernité*, Paris, Donner lieu, 2010.

8 Tiziana Paris, *Psychogéographies urbaines. Corps, territoires et technologies*. Eterotopia, France, 2015, p. 16.

by this new feeling: the fear of transgressing, that of not to manage to do something, the fear of not to being convinced that what has been proposed us as line of sharing the duty and the way of thinking the difference, was really right. This alarming and disturbing 'difference' is the factor of the crisis. And from the crisis emerge the phantoms, fantasies, especially in territories submitted to constantly changing and at the same time and to the pretension of being faithful to what they are: the last root of fragmented identities.”⁹

This process is improved by the “truth” of mythical forms of representation of the localness as a tool of imaginary institution of meanings and thus of constitution of the sense of the place. That seems to be actually predominant against the sensitive experience, as a kind of “systemic” attempt at redefining spaces and places on local and planetarian scales. “Enlightened men and those who are not should join their hands, thus mythology must become philosophical to make the people reasonable and philosophy must become mythological to make philosophers sensitive”¹⁰, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling wrote, for which it should be “a mythology” which serves the ideas, as a mythology of the reason rather than a theogony (Paquot and Younès, 2012).¹¹

Particularly in rural contexts, the projects of recreation, redefinition and regeneration of places can reiterate “frozen” figures of “the local” and of the places itself (*iconema*) connected with the antiquity, which are often more exploited by the massive touristic marketing strategies than by local politics for improving of a better economic, social and environmental life conditions of inhabitants, which, according to philosopher, social critic, economist, psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis, it's only possible by achieving the awareness of self-limitation and self-determination of society.¹²

The philosophy behind some of the new activitst movements that in the biellese territory are activating processes of local and communal self-determined changing is developed on permaculture, which originally referred to “permanent agriculture” and later has been expanded to stand also for “permanent culture”. According to its fathers Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, “permaculture is a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless labor; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area as a single product system.”¹³ The shifting that permaculture intends to achieve is that from micro to macro scales, thus from local to global, since it “doesn't have as main objective to put pressure on government and institutions to change the policy, but to allow individuals, families and local communities to emphasize their self-sufficiency and self-regulation”.¹⁴

In these terms, the permaculture institutes itself as a dimension of certainty against the uncertainty of urban life, through the dynamics of opposition between figures of rurality and those of urbanity, that rebirth as a little scale revolution towards the large scale, thus from local level to planetarian level.

How to identify the tensions that are occurring between the material resistances and virtual loads? How these tensions reveal themselves and act in the biellese territory and in those of participants' origins?

9 Tiziana Villani, *Op.cit.*, p. 22 (Translation by the author).

10 Thierry Paquot, Chris Younès, Paris, Éditions La Découverte, 2012, p. 256. Translation by the author.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 255.

12 Cornelius Castoriadis, *L'institution imaginaire de la société*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1975.

13 Definition of permaculture, available on wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permaculture>.

14 David Holmgren, *Permacultura, dallo sfruttamento all'integrazione. Progettare modelli di vita etici, stabili e sostenibili*, available on wikipedia: <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permacultura>

Residency programme within the frame of UNIDEE - University of Ideas at Cittadellarte - Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy

The module is articulated in three parts: three days spent around the Biellese mountains, hosted by the “agents of changing”, members of the Biellese in Transition net; the individual and collective working week at Cittadellarte; and the public presentation of the module's outcomes.

The editorial staff of web newspaper “Italia che cambia” and the movement “Biellese in Transition” will be the guests of the programme, with who participants will explore, live, investigate and formulate ideas about how the Cittadellarte's *artivators* could reveal and improve shifting processes, unprecedented long-term visions and unexplored possibilities across disciplines, scales, dimensions and “worlds”.

Through a sharing living experience among the “agents of changing” and at the same time through the establishment of global connections, the module will focus on issues, concepts and images at the base of the transition process of places experienced, such as “resilience”, “permaculture”, “bioregionalism”, “degrowth” and “deep ecology” between current forms of border thinking and the necessary process of self-determination and self-alterity of local communities, societies and their own territorialities.

Beside the given bibliographic reference for going into the deep of above mentioned topics (that will be sent by the mentor before the beginning of the module), participants are required to bring bibliographic, audio-visual and iconographic references (such as books, copies or abstracts) about the above mentioned topics from their own places of origins.

The programme will be developed on the following three axes of research: locality between space and place; common and *proprium*; and from reality to real.

Locality between space and place

According to Ngram Viewer system¹⁵, the historical using of the word “locality” between the 1800, the century in which industrialization and global market changed the concept, the function and the meanings of the space and the place, and the 2008, increased very fastly between the 1800 and the 1860 by touching the climax in 1916, in the full WWI, that was a “war of positions” (Paquot and Younès, 2012).¹⁶ The using of the term “local”, at the opposite, increased gradually until touching the highest point in the 1990s, when the “placemaking” (litterally, “to make the place”, or “to create the place”, or “to build the place”), became a category of public art, in order to describe “the design and development of common spaces, shared environments and civic places created for communities.”¹⁷

What social impact have today the meanings of “local”, “locality” and “localness” on local and transterritorial level ? What are their aesthetic, spatial and temporal expressions in the common language and daily life practices?

Community and *proprium*

According to Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, “The political philosophy tends to think about also the community in the way of 'a broader subjectivity' – as is doing a large part of the new-communitarian philosophy, in spite of the alleged opposition to the individualist paradigm, when it 'inflates' the degree of the self in hypertrophic figure of the 'unity of unities’”. (...) Therefore, Esposito says, “the thing that we should appropriating of our common (for communism and

15 Ngram Viewer calculation system is the system set by Google for first level of inquire to raw data based on the Google books ones:

<http://storage.googleapis.com/books/ngrams/books/datasetsv2.html>.

16 Paquot e Younès, *Op.cit.*, p. 301.

17 Placemaking as category of public art described by Public Art Review: <http://forecastpublicart.james.mn/art/placemaking/>.

communitarianisms) or communicating our own (for communicative ethics) the product does not change: the community is tied hand in glove to the semantics of *proprium*.”¹⁸ The neocomunitarian conceptions, he continues, “are united by the unreflective assumption that the community is a 'property' of the subjects that it combines: an attribute, a determination, a predicate that qualifies them as belonging to the same set. Or even a 'substance' produced by their union”, in which the possession is mainly related to the territory, that is defined by “the category of 'ownership' as the original matrix of all subsequent property.” This process gives place to what Esposito identifies as “the most paradoxical aspect of the matter”, that is that “the 'common' is exactly identified with its most obvious opposite: it is common what unites into one identity the ethnic, territorial, spiritual property of each of its members. They have in common their own; they are the owners of their common.”¹⁹

What are the (re)new paradigms of the common and of the commonality as a good, a value, an essence referring to our proprium (own)? In order to imagine and activate “institutive” or “constitutive” (ri)territorializing processes, how do we find a balance between the need for recovering the “roots” and at the same time that of being interrelated with transnational-planetarian forms of the common commitments?

From the real to reality

According to the reflection on “intergenerational effects” by geographer, orientalist and philosopher Augustin Berque, “our body, via a series of 'primary metaphors', would be the final interpret of the sense of our concepts, by being in a predicate position (...).” Therefore, according to him “the world built by the previous generation appears as natural to the next generation. For that reason, in Japan, it can be called *Kawa* (River) which is actually an ancient canal.” He states that the intergenerational effect arises when the subject “preach” the predicate in a position of “nature” and thus not in the position of the “reality” but in that of the “real”. Thus, as Berque continues, “in order to study the landscape, or the *ecumene* in general (that is the relationship of humanity to the Earth's stretch), we have to go over the modern reduction from the reality to the real”, since, as the physics demonstrated, “the pure real is unknowable, since it is not predicable.”²⁰

What is the relationship between resilience and resistance, persistence, preservation and emplacement, by considering both the intuitive and sensitive relation with the territory and at the same time by considering both the philosophical and scientific meaning of resilience as a rebound to the originarian state in deformed/changed shape?

The outcome expected

At the end of the module, the participants will develop an artistic-pluridisciplinary geomatics of the Shifting Places, which will be distributed locally and globally in forms of publication, as a semantic, iconographic and methodological transterritorial tool in which the imaginary and functional meanings of “locality” and “localness” are declined and developed according with the local experience and participants' originarian localities. Each of them will be responsible for a section, in response to the UNIDEE intent of forming “*artivators* as people who intend to use art as a methodology, practice and language, having new tools for becoming agents for the activation of responsible actions and processes in urban transformation and social emancipation in the territories in which they live.” (From the Statement 2016 for UNIDEE-University of Ideas by Cecilia Guida <http://www.cittadellarte.it/unidee/statement.html>)

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¹⁸ Roberto Esposito, *Communitas*, Turin, Einaudi, 2006.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Augustin Berque, *Milieu et identité humaine. Notes pour un dépassement de la modernité*, Paris, Donner lieu, 2010, p. 71.