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Elections of the Council Coming soon





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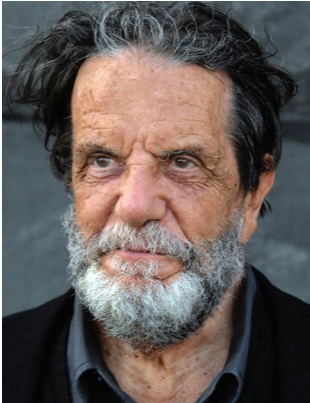
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Phase Transitions: During the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

Massimo Pica Ciamarra

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Massimo Pica Ciamarra

1. Solid / liquid / gaseous / plasma: transitions or "phase changes" of matter passing through "critical points" in both directions.

Even in architecture, there are "phase changes" and "critical moments" in which, what has been in the air for some time, coagulates, solidifying into facts or date symbols of the spread of

tensions, towards a different concept of living environments. In architecture, the "phase changes" have little to do with shapes, styles or languages because, according to Aulis Blomstedt's dated aphorism, the architectural form is like an iceberg whose visible part is only a sign of a wider and deeper reality. There is no hierarchy between the states of matter. The "phase changes" of living environments - leaving aside the nostalgic ones - usually have a progressive character. Human adventure is punctuated by revolutions and new ways of thinking. "Sapiens. From animals to gods" is the acute title of a recent history of humanity in which the evolution of the ability to understand, of mentalities and of organisations, is traced.

Communications, accumulation of experiences, collaborations, connections, culture: Homo sapiens is a particular social being even if afflicted by individual pathologies. After the generalised lock-down and a few months of substantial absence, the greenery began to emerge from the pavement of the squares, the sea became transparent and crystalline, and the intrigued animals found themselves crossing spaces forbidden to them. Above all the air you breathed was different, as were the images of the Earth from space.

2. In the second half of the 1900s there was no shortage of three "phase changes", significant, even if not epoch making:

- the first occurred at the end of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) and the abandonment of the schematics that animated the "Athens Charter",

- the second occurred with the awakening produced by "The limits of development": research promoted by the Club of Rome and which precedes the 1973 crisis,
- the third occurred at the fall of the Berlin Wall and the "Deconstructivist Architecture" exhibition, towards the end of the 1980s.

Between the end of the CIAM and the great energy crisis, there is an interval of time similar to the one which separates the "Sunday walking season" from the fall of the Berlin Wall. So, years after the great energy crisis, a new and substantial change in ways of thinking occurred in the late 1980s. At the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the "Deconstructivist Architecture" exhibition seemed to sense the fall of the Berlin Wall and the need for a new International Style capable of demonstrating the inevitable triumph of capitalism over "overseas" models. Thus, a long season began of objects catapulted into various realities, apparently magnificent and upsetting, in reality, far from the needs of individual contexts; various mannerist sculptures, abstract with respect to the issues that building must solve.

The third phase was exhausted thanks to the 2007-08 recession which, among other things, brought frugality and de-growth back into vogue. A dense cloud of events does not help to identify key dates in recent decades, while the IT revolution now interconnects everything and everyone by making infinite amounts of data and information available. The "Team X: A Utopia of the Present" exhibition was underway in Paris, in December 2008, at the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, where the "Déclaration des Devoirs de l'Homme" project was born. Accelerations and surges of the twentieth century supported "*Collapse - how societies choose to live or die*" (1) In the midst of the crisis, "*Spillover*" (2) showed how man's domination of the environment is the most dangerous contemporary pandemic and that the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of the planet are increasingly conditioned by human presence. Not long after it, "*Laudato si*" (3)

1. Diamond J. *Collapse - how societies choose to live or die*. London: Viking Penguin; 2005.

2. Quammen D. *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*. New York: W. W. Norton Company; 2012.

3. Pope Francis. "*Laudato si*" ". (English: "Praise Be to You!"). Segrate: Piemme edizioni; 2015.

denounced the logic that destroys nature and exploits the weakest; intertwined environmental and ecological crisis with the social crisis; it had comforting results on a global scale which, however, later decreased and contradicted each other. In 2016 "Reporting from the front" was the theme of the Venice Architecture Biennale; "Taking Care - Designing for the common good" was the theme of the Italian Pavilion. However, reality did not change. Frugality and resilience remained slogans.

3. The Covid-19 pandemic

will result in a new "phase change". No doubt, although it is not clear how, it will manifest itself and its effects in various regions of the world. It is, however, evident that the major outbreaks of the pandemic have found space in particularly polluted territories and that, within these same areas, the pandemic has not spread homogeneously. Hence the positions taken by various archistars naively aimed at proposing the decisive principles of decentralisation and rediscovering the role and potential of the smaller centres: something which has been clear since the dawn of the "IT revolution" which, in areas with high population density characterised by intense networks of centres with modest distances between them, laid the foundations (but only foundations) for a relative territorial indifference and for the recovery of the smaller centres.

It is amazing that, only today, the positive role of villages and smaller towns is recognised. For decades it has been clear that the IT revolution has generated consequences opposite to those of the revolution due to the automobile. The latter favoured disruptions, dispersions, isolations and autonomies everywhere; while the IT revolution had different consequences in different contexts: elsewhere it has favoured isolation and dispersion. In the "city land" it supports the rediscovery of the smaller centres, where aggregations and social relationships are decidedly more

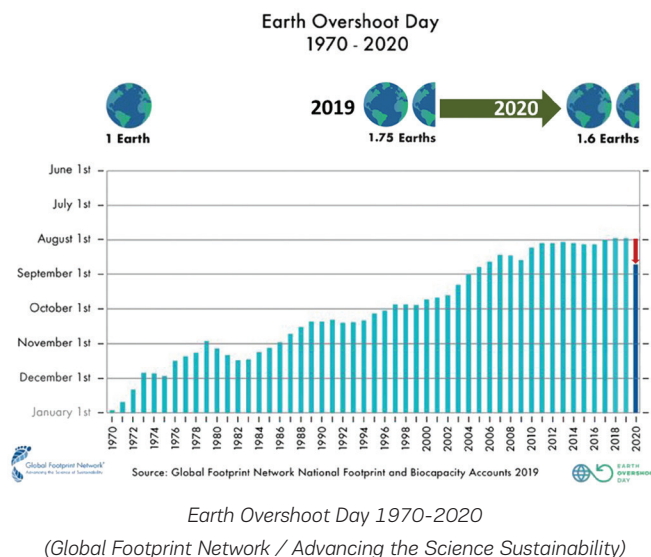
intense than in megalopolises or metropolises.

4. From an economist's point of view, man's main invention is the city, regardless of its spatial qualities (4). He looks at the city as a phenomenon. However, the Mediterranean and European culture expresses an idea of a city which is very different from those of other regions of the world and "The Hidden Dimension" warns that "the experience is perceived through sensory filters arranged according

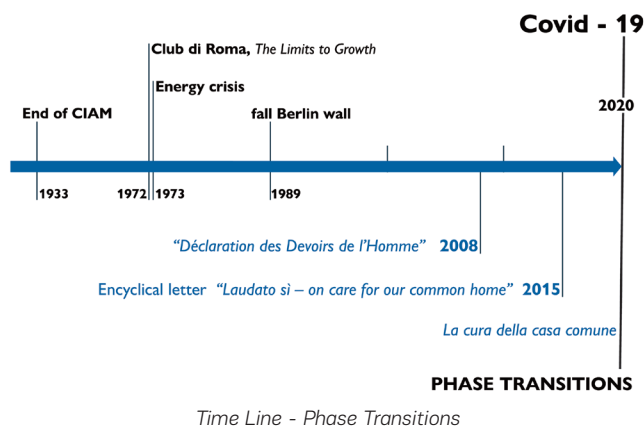
to cultural conditions: it is different from that of those who live in different cultural environments" (5) Two years after this introduction to proxemics, "Le droit à la ville" took hold in Europe (6). In the contemporary condition, the urban is not a "city", but a pathological set of monads that enhance functional separations, banality and absence of identity.

The current pandemic will bring about profound changes in the processes of regeneration of living environments. Sometimes intangible changes will prevail over physical ones. In our context, "Civilising the urban" points to a different future, also by tracing networks of non-homogeneous centrality, of various scales and in easy relationship with each other. Each of these centralities can be part of the "city of 5 minutes" aimed at banning cars from the city, perhaps

using systems of "pedestrian acceleration". In early February 2020 - it was not even suspected that Covid-19 could invade Europe - news arrived at a short distance of each other that the Mayor had promised to transform Paris into a "city of 15 minutes" and that Copenhagen had realised the sustainable city of the future based (like the Caserta urban plan, 2007- not implemented) on the principle of the "city of 5 minutes" with "ecological shuttles"- electric or



TIME LINE



4. Hall E.T. The Hidden Dimension. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc; 1966.

5. Glaeser E. Triumph of the City. London: The Penguin Press; 2011.

6. Lefevre H. Le droit à la ville. Paris : Ed. Du Seuil ; 1968.

hydrogen fed. Hence networks of public spaces and “places of social condensation” whose identities are strengthened through continuous adjustments and stratifications.

Architecture is politics: regenerating the current environments of life requires vision, new mentalities, commitment to “moral rearmament”, immense resources. Only communities convinced that the quality of their environments will positively affect the various aspects of life will be able to do this: well-being, safety, economy, health, sociality, happiness. This can be true if - acting on a local scale - regenerating is a simultaneous premise of social equity and an even micro contribution to the immense environmental issue. In fact, one cannot ignore the intimate relationship between pandemics and something which has seemed progress and modernity so far.

5. The “phase change” due to Covid-19 cannot be solved by trivial slogans and formulas: it will start from changes in ways of thinking, from the abandonment of obsolete references, from a mental regeneration that spreads, creating new sensitivities. At the end of the 1950s, the break from the principles of the Athens Charter gave way to different actions united by a common feeling on the themes of the transformation of living environments.

Yona Friedman’s “Architecture Mobile”, the “Metabolism” movement in Japan, the origins of “Team X” - whose thrust does not yet seem to be exhausted - belong to that climate. Fifteen years later, the theses of the Club of Rome and the great energy crisis of ‘73 gave way to a strong reconsideration of environmental and ecological issues: it just happened when the era, in which the planet’s resources were still sufficient for its inhabitants, ended.

In 1970, the very idea of “overshoot day” (which is the calculated date on which humanity’s resource consumption for the year exceeds Earth’s capacity to regenerate those resources that year) did not exist. For fifty years, it approached: in 2019, it had reached July 29th. In 2020 for the first time, it moves back. Thanks to Covid-19, with a powerful, comforting leap back it even reverts to where it was fifteen years earlier. The overshoot day, however, would have fallen on May 16th if the entire world population had lifestyles similar to ours.



Our Unstable Present and Future: 2. Migration

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Tibor Szabó

Many scholars have dealt with the theory (and in part) practice of migration since the beginning of the century. The main issues are those of sovereignty, hospitality, and multi- or pluri-culturalism. In my view the current historical period could be called the *New Migration Age* because of the many new

phenomena that have appeared. Particularly, because migration touches most of the peoples of the world. It is a consequence of freedom of movement, for in the present phase of globalisation it is very easy to travel and also migrate (or settle), in some cases *en masse*. All such move-

ments are facilitated by the new open international borders that have characterised the world since 1989, including East Central Europe. True, some societies and states are closed to migrants – including some Arab states, Australia, and others-but the majority remain open. Thus there are few impediments to mass migration or resettlement. We should not forget that war and various conflicts in different parts of the world make these problems ever more grave.

Theories of international migration

Khalid Koser has undertaken important work on the migrant question (1). According to him there are two categories of migrants: voluntary and enforced. In the latter category are people forced to flee their countries by political, ethnic, religious or gender conflicts, discrimination, or ecological

1. Koser K. International Migration. A very short introduction, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.