

AESTHETICS PORTFOLIO:

“LIQUID SUBURBS”

Made by Massimo Briani.

Through this photographic portfolio entitled “LIQUID SUBURBS” we want to focus on the theme of suburbs understood as both physical spaces and metaphorical dimensions. When we speak of suburbs, moreover, we are not referring exclusively to physical “banlieues”, but we also allude to those places - real or metaphorical - which are in contradictory or conflictual relationship with places institutionally delegated to the conservation and development of life. The “inside-outside” relationship does not simply constitute a “topos” of the social sciences, but above all a key to understanding the structuring of the individual's educational development. From these first considerations it is quite evident that it is not possible to ignore the understanding of the dynamics that play the urban peripheries in the constitution of those “estimi” environments (adjective of Lacanian coining) for the definition of the relationship with the “anthropological space”. In the peripheries, in modern times, we have associated in negative terms what Bauman defines as “forced individualism”, as the liberation from any possible social bond and consequent solitary management of “risk”, uncertainty and the fears that derive from it. So that the way in which we live in “liquid contemporaneity” becomes a biographical solution to systemic contradictions present in society capable of generating only mistrust, bewilderment, anomie, existential insecurity. The process of individualization has shown its darker and “disorienting” side, the postmodern individual seeking greater freedom of action and an ever more ephemeral and fast gratification (closely linked to consumerism) has progressively lost confidence in his own abilities and confidence in society, which is no longer able to protect him and help him adequately as in the past. In the end, the “dynamic” risk of the first modernity was transformed in the second modernity into a “static” and unproductive risk, capable of crushing the individual in an infinite and swampy present that is increasingly difficult to face, depriving him of that thought utopian essential to prefigure and achieve a better future. In this climate of “individualized” uncertainty, impotence, failure, victimhood, disengagement have taken over so much that the new generations have to give up in planning the future. How are those “spaces” connoted which, for some reason, do not become “places”, that is, spaces characterized by a level of “humanization” (term used by Jacques Lacan to explain the Register of the Symbolic)? What is the weight of the effect of “Unheimlichkeit” - “disorientation” / “perturbation”, in the lesson of Freud (1919) and Heidegger (1927) - that these spaces determine on Winnicott's individual-environment set-up, with all the pedagogical repercussions that they carry with them?

Starting from the Foucault's lesson, before reflecting on physically connoted peripheral spaces, it would be necessary to understand the symbolic charge that makes a space more or less peripheral, first of all in a semiotic frame. For Foucault, before being urban

landscapes left to neglect and civic decentralization, suburbs are above all an ante litteram form of “other space”, a daily dimension that maintains a liminal and paradoxical relationship with institutionally relational places. The peripheries, that is, are above all a way of imagining the relationship with space: a way that is not central, not centered. This relationship, like the “facilitating” one postulated by Winnicott, constitutes an unavoidable node for understanding which alternative paths the vector of subjectivation can undertake. Already in 1967, the year of the conference “Des espaces autres”, Foucault underlined how the modification of spatial perception was the central characteristic of the transition from modernity to contemporaneity: «The great obsession that haunted the nineteenth century was, as is well known, history: the themes of development and arrest, the themes of crisis and the cycle, the themes of the accumulation of the past» (Foucault, 1967, p. 19); «The current epoch, on the other hand, is perhaps the epoch of space. We live in the age of the simultaneous, in the age of juxtaposition, in the age of near and far, of side by side, of the missing» (ibidem). The peripheries, whether physical or figurative, represent a real place of departure from “official” spaces, in the sense that they maintain a relationship of “difference” rather than “identity” with these spaces (La Cecla, 2000; Vidler, 1992 ; Zanini, 2000). The ethnological problem of the “banlieues”, for example, is played out precisely on this conflictual relationship: anthropological communities that officially belong to a cultural or state identity but which, for different reasons, do not feel that they are integrated into these identities. All forms of hyper-nationalisms or xenophobic fundamentalisms or antagonistic subcultures or cultures lie, in their anthropological genesis, precisely in the Freudian question of “feeling a stranger in one's own home” (Bonaparte, 1933; Kristeva, 1988), as Freud explains the profound meaning of the concept of “disorientation” in the formidable essay “Das Unheimliche” (1919). In a “liquid” society, life, particularly in the suburbs, seems to settle down and flatten itself in an eternal arid present of future prospects, similar to quicksand, amidst increasingly heavy and immobilizing doubts and perplexities, anchored to certainties linked to a past that is not it exists more and instead persists with nostalgia in the memories of flexible men, weakening them transformative capacity of reality. To adapt to continuous change and the structural risks of the second modernity, man has preferred to abandon the thought of introspection by adopting a mentality of “survival” that feeds on a “fast” thought typical of machines. A thought that does not allow for any deep reflection of one's own experiences, which does not provide the possibility of authentically taking care of one's self and which is shown through the construction, reflected by the architecture of the suburbs (as highlighted in the portfolio), of a “patchwork” Composed of many small and fragile fragments, often devoid of ties and connections, which are unable to give meaning and significance to the existential path of the individual as well as of the family nucleus and consequently of the non-community itself.