Foreword

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This new text edited by Agatino Rizzo first has the great merit of reminding us that we are on the front line in a war against inertial and conservative forces of global societies. The clash is consumed today through the means of mass communication that feeds on definitions used as a call to order.

The speed of mass communication inexorably swallowed up, digested and regurgitated everything in a very short time, compared to research. Some terms used to briefly describe 20 years, or more, of research, within two years enter into communication and dissemination, first as an example of exaggerated and distant evocation of elitist scientific research, and then conclude, in a flash, the parable between the opposite accusations of fashionable attitudes (or mainstream as they say today), of abuse and improper use to clear something else (the so-called something-washing), such as one's personal interests or the desire to be protagonist/proselytising.

We must wait a little longer and let it settle in order to point out that the originality of a term has value or not, not as such, but if the 'underpinning research' is relevant (here I refer to the impact and benefits for the society outside the academic and industry interests) and rigorous in method.

However, the speed of communication does not play in favour of decanting the contents because the predatory and subtle role of contemporary capitalism also applies to communication. Here, this text by Agatino Rizzo and Anindita Mandal offers an unmissable opportunity to understand how definitions can be emptied of meaning and used as a fetish by a post-Fordist society that is more alive than ever. Within this context, we must always be attentive to the cynicism and strategic intelligence of neo-liberal supporters capable of unpredictable and paradoxical transformations.

Thus, the studies on predatory urbanism presented by the authors go beyond the issue of climate change denials and put us in front of the subliminal risks of the phenomenology of facade environmentalism, of greenwashing and of the uselessness of technocratic interpretations of sustainability.

In fact, the definition of Anthropocene, and the word sustainability – intended simply as a reduction of the negative impact on nature – hide today the danger of corroborating a narcissistic position of humanity, as defined by Sigmund Freud in his paper 'A difficulty in the path of psychoanalysis'

([1917] 1955), which although aware of the self-destructive consequences, would therefore not be willing to question its Promethean role in overcoming its Oedipal complex.

Equally, today, Rizzo and Mandal stress that overcoming global crises can only go through a holistic review of our positions and values of our society. According to Rizzo (2013), sustainability has been used to fuel its original enemy, modern capitalism, as massive modernization of their urban infrastructure mostly through government-led, large-scale (or mega) projects.

At this point the authors' criticism becomes systematic and necessarily leads to a political position: megaprojects are indeed emblematic case studies in which the intentions regarding sustainability and green resilience not only do not affect system strategies, but also rather reduce the opportunities to contribute to a diverse, equitable and inclusive society. In this sense, the selected case studies (Doha, Johor Bahru and Mumbai) are emblematic not only for their size and paradigmatic functions, but also for their geopolitical locations, which evidently recall the need for a new taxonomy of planning so that precisely the most fragile regions of the world do not become easy prey to a paradoxical form of green capitalism.

The terms of sustainability, if managed within a neo-liberal political and economic logic, risk becoming a further problem, rather than a solution. In this historical phase, an ecological approach, promoted in the absence of conditions of social inclusiveness and diversity, becomes, at best, pure technicality, to the point of being inevitably and structurally transfigured into greenwashing as, if seen systematically, the environmental crisis is in fact a crisis of accessibility to primary resources and of social justice rather than an abstract reference to environmental ethics.

We all know that the sum of the positive feedbacks of the crisis will lead to the collapse of the human society well before we can cause irreversible damage to the biosphere (irreversible for who but for ourselves?). The recent pandemic is clear evidence of this. The crisis we face is therefore fundamentally based on the social cannibalism of a single species and even the word Anthropocene is the result of an arrogant reification, to paraphrase the words of Stephen Jay Gould in *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (1996), simply to describe the way in which a third of humanity transfers the consequences of their greed to the remaining two-thirds of the population.

If we observe the phenomenon of megaprojects from this point of view, we can only detect the contradictions of their hypothetical environmental demands. To quote Johannes Kepler, in fact, 'nature uses as little as possible of anything' (Auden and Kronenberger, 1920, p. 98). According to Gould and Pievani (2003), nature always operates in economy and in a systemic way and warns us about reading ecology in an exclusively determinist, adaptive and specialized key, which involves the creation of structures for responding

to a predefined function for a scenario that will not necessarily take place in the future. The role of the social sciences is therefore pivotal for a holistic understanding of the phenomena of ecology, precisely because our survival is threatened by global crises, as much as by the risk of interpreting technology and specializations as solutions, without affecting the cultural (and economic) paradigms of society.

In conclusion, the status quo is not an option. Architects and planners can no longer reject their responsibilities, as buildings, urban and productive agglomerations are the major cause of CO₂ emissions; they must decide finally whether they are part of the resistance or whether to be a spy on behalf of the enemy. When not able to produce a radical idea, a vision for ecological cities, architects become simply the armed wing of climate change masterminds.

A visionary approach is therefore the lens we need today to understand the reality. The only recipe is to instil in young people, who are not conditioned by a rigid and inertial mental map that is determined by the last 100 years of history, the ability to be creative, and even revolutionary.

Today we do not have to decide how a building is made ecologically, but we must think about whether the concept of building itself as we have conceived it up to now makes sense or is a reflection of our society. An effective holistic ecological revolution must therefore pass through the risks of the popularization of resilience and 'green' thinking in urban planning, which are a precise and effective and reactionary communication strategy.

Megaprojects are the antithesis of the aforementioned revolution as they are the paroxysmal representation of an obsolete paradigm that does not disappear only if the 'party dress', that of sustainability, is sewn on to it. This happens because we intend technology today to be an adaptive tool for the impromptu needs of conservation. We need instead to rethink the urban fabric and its relationship with both our sense of sociality and the troposphere in order to transform the cities in virtuous, just and inclusive open systems reacting to climate change, without compromising their ethical integrity. No longer will architecture define an object, a unique and recognizable item, but will entail hybrid landscapes generated by specific variations of the urban continuum, also involving processes aimed at the adaptation to both extreme environmental conditions and growing social pressures.

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