

Extract 1 – ‘Researching a minor project’ from *Progetto Minore. Alla ricerca della minorità nel progetto architettonico ed urbanistico* (Siracusa: Letteraventidue, 2020).

These pages collect scattered thoughts not because they are disordered in space and time, but because – as Matteo Meschiari says – they want to visualise the dynamics of complex thought and mediate between vision and speculation, between landscape and thought, between space and expression, and between place and word. Thoughts that see a way of happening of ‘the project’ in a ‘variable viscosity.’ Thoughts with a question at the centre: does a minor project exist? And if it exists, how is it made? Questioning the possible existence of a minor project in urban and architectural knowledge and practice, this text focuses on the importance of minority as a possible statute of design.

Progetto Minore translates reflections made around design practices and thought, recalling references and traditions ranging from philosophy to cultural studies, from anthropology to the feminist tradition, offering a double key of interpretation. On the one hand, a reflection on the crisis status of the project and its disciplines in relation to theory. On the other, an affirmative ethics, recalling the need for criticism and situating it in the broader horizon of a necessary decolonisation of urbanism and architecture capable of reclaiming a *pensé autrement* of the territory in the folds of materiality, discourses and practices. The minor project is a renunciation, a retreat into other disciplines, models, practices, or in a painful nihilism of impotence, but on the contrary, as a tone of power, an ethic that recodes, reworks and subverts the key categories of the project (internal/external, public/private, function/use, ignorance/knowledge, present/future, real/possible), indeterminating them not by emptying and flattening them but by creating a schism, a caesura in the ecologies of the practices that constitute the urban, freeing their potentialities, alternating their valences, recentring their relations with diversity, with the indistinct, with the complex, with the mestizo, exploring divergences and opening up dissonances.

Progetto Minore somehow was born out of the continuation of *The Ethics of Potential Urbanism. Critical encounters between Giorgio Agamben and Architecture* (Routledge, 2017) and intends to open up a missing and necessary reflection on that previous book: to suggest a decolonial posture of the urban project, bringing into play its limits, epistemic violence and spatial thoughts; bringing out minority as solidarity and resistance to the modern, functionalist, determinist and neo-techno-ecological project; affirming new living, new spatial grammars, reflecting the project in the words of authors such as Escobar, Mignolo, Lugones and their multiverses of spatial otherness that have challenged the silence imposed by the modernity/coloniality matrix.

Progetto Minore is not a finished, concluded, complete or even precise reflection. It is located in what Caroline Walsh calls griefs, cracks, breaks, wounds, margins, thresholds, not intended as a simple eulogy of a position, but as a space of crisis and at the same time as a place where ‘light passes through.’ (2019) Uncertain, elusive because it is made up of crossings between different disciplines: philosophy and architecture. An uncertain space not only because it is crossed by conflicts, tensions, unresolved dialogues and misunderstandings, but also because it is critical, resistant to the globality of a safe, dominant universal thought, and therefore open to further elaboration. In short, it is located in an open field on which architecture and urban planning must

confront each other, hybridising, clashing and enriching themselves with different knowledge. A place stimulated 'by other knowledge through diffractions' (Amirante, 2020:12).

This diffraction, this standing on the margins, is certainly decentralisation, but it is not a surrender to knowledge, methods and tools of one's own. It is another language that renounces sterile arrogance to embrace a fertile minority.

Minor is an adjective that qualifies an action, a tone. But, as Ronchi reminds us, major and minor are comparatives, between them 'the difference is one of degree within the horizon of a common genus [...] The minor is less relative to that which the major is more of' (2017:11). The minor, when reflected by philosophy and critical theory, is highlighted not a reduction, but as a difference in status, recognition, measure, position: therefore an intensity. And it is precisely this intensity that the book aims to characterize and locate.

To make minority re-emerge as a statute has therefore the aim – digging into some specific literatures – to focus on immanence and to bring back the discussion not on a possible relevance built on the themes of domination, diffusion, commodification and communication typical of architecture and urbanism, but on a different practice of thought and action 'advancing a speculative claim that in the eyes of the majority could only appear naïve' (Ronchi, 2017:11)

A minor project, in its naïvety, is not an inferior project, incapable of acting or of staying in the crisis and becoming concrete; but neither is it marginal, external, depowered, it is simply a different intensity of project. It is a project that does not become an ontology of disciplinary, geographical or methodological power, but one that is destitute, that is, able to offer and bring out a 'power of not' (Agamben, 2016:283). Resistant and at the same time immanent. Resistant to the request to abandon thought, theoretical criticism in order to throw oneself into a concrete doing, but also immanent in giving back a propositional flexion, not only destructive; to become proposal, vision and 'non-projecting imagination' as Glissant (1997) would say.

This being a minority is not a resignation nor a pacifying gesture but requires a sensitive becoming 'whose task is not to restore the whole of a thought, healing wounds and giving the illusion of a completeness that does not exist, but rather to look in the direction of the presumed formal contradiction' (Ronchi, 2017: 13–14). The widening of the cultural front, the open field of global crises and the almost ineluctable certainty that the project and its production are not to be understood as independent parallels but as caught up in the meshes of the political, in the complexity of uncertainty and the violence of social reality, mean that *Progetto Minore* is not a refuge in theory but, on the contrary, encourages the project to hold dear – and thus put back at the centre – critical thought of the margin and from the margin; a disciplinary margin but also a positioning outside the known world of architecture and urbanism to try again to find a horizon of meaning in the project itself.

Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden have already said, introducing *Gender Space Architecture* (2000), that architecture and urban planning must be understood 'in context,' that is, in the context of their social, economic, political and cultural production, but also in the context of their consumption of representation and interpretation, and therefore in the light of the

environmental, health, racial and inequality crises that affect design. Recalling the centrality of the project is to reformulate its contemporaneity. It is not a trivial call to arms, a request for action and for getting one's hands dirty in a new functional operation.

On the contrary, it is a 'destituent' proposal for a new, minor way of thinking about design and its making in crises, which is substantiated as an inversion of its own meaning. A sort of critical architecture in Hays's version, 'resistant to the conciliatory and self-confirming operation of a dominant culture and yet irreducible to a purely formal structure detached from the contingencies of its own place and time' (1984:15) and Jane Rendell's version (2006), that allows the relationship between criticism and project to be continuously renegotiated.

A retreat into an affirmative and immanent critique is made not of great narratives and powerful imaginaries, but of fragments, hints, makeshifts, as Maliq Simone (2010) would say: sporadic clusters, sporadic hints, hints, makeshifts, sporadic thickening, luminous junctions, not images or precise practices, not solutions, let alone forms. Indeterminate but not generic because they renounce delivering meaning, but opaque, if we were to follow Glissant (1997).

There are three declinations that I have glimpsed in projects in search of minority: inoperative, instrumental and decolonial. These three intensities serve to think about the minor project and in fact constitute the articulation of this short text. Each of them is intended to be a 'shadow image.' a political illumination, to use Meschiari's (2018:25) words, insofar as it is an operator of criticism and resistance with respect to a totalitarian, major, dominant horizon. Faithful to the incompleteness and respectful of the space of these pages, to these three declinations – accompanied by the different trajectories of the philosophy of critical theory – I have put before them a founding reflection for the reasoning, which inevitably passes through Giles Deleuze (1975), the turn that Elizabeth Grosz (2001) gives to his work, and the specific take on a minor theory that Cindy Katz (2016) suggests starting from geography.

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