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Transition / Deviance

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Abstract. Social structures are living a significant phase shift from complicatedness to complexity, and they must exercise their plasticity in the continuous movement from one place to another and the rapid changes of context that require them to adopt always different models of knowledge, interaction and behavior. This attribute of "permanent change" has a deep influence on the meaning of "society" and its founding pillars including that of "citizenship", whatever permanent or temporary it is. The following essay wants to investigate temporary citizenships as a "transition", meaning a series of interconnected changes that take place in different environments but can influence each other and generate continuous innovation. How can the temporary citizen contribute to produce innovation and modify knowledge processes, rituals and approaches, accordingly within a given territory, a context, a community made of diversity, divergence and difference as potentials traits of deviance?

Keywords: Complexity; Transition design; Open system; Practice; Transition cities; Material citizenship; Diversity; Interdisciplinarity; Democracy of knowledge

1. Transition

In the Treccani dictionary, the noun 'transizione' has at least nine definitions [1]. Music, physics, chemistry, lithology, metallurgy, histology and molecular biology are the different disciplines where the word "transition" has a specific meaning. In a broader sense, transition means a "change from a way of being or living to another, from one condition or situation to a new and different one" [1].

The word therefore has an intrinsic reference to the history of human and social evolution where "different forms of life and language meet with reciprocal influences". The theme of reciprocal influences is a constant feature of transitions: one example is, in a strictly physical sense, the "phase transition" where the transition from one state to another creates an exchange of energy with other systems, to disturb the reference system. From order to disorder to create a new order: this is essentially the effect of all transitions that have become relevant in the studies of our contemporary world's phenomena. A "long" or "prolonged" present is the time frame of "transition design" trying to translate the sense of the "long now" [2] whose goal is "to draw on the knowledge and wisdom of the past to conceive solutions in the present with future generations in mind" [3].

If the "prolonged present" is the time span where transition design reflects and acts, we could consider "cosmopolitan localism" [4-5] as its spatial frame where the focus on *hic et nunc* never loses the global dimension thanks to a continuous exchange of information and technology. Already in 2015, on the Pisa Internet Festival, Manzini subtitled his speech on cosmopolitan localism as a "co-production of places and communities in a fluid world" [6]. His theory was grounded on the role of connectivity that has dissolved traditional social forms by giving impetus to new ways of co-living and collaborating in new communities to co-design new places. In its evolutionary and adaptive

pathway, the city continually becomes a "new place": thanks to the continuous interaction of its actors, we witness the realisation of practices and processes of continuous social learning that demonstrate a deep link between the social and cultural innovation of a territory. This link is also underlined in the general theory of systems whose definition is "a complex of parts which, with certain connotations, establish relationships among themselves, so that the behaviour of each of them is influenced by the relations they establish and are involved in and vice versa" [7]. According to von Bertalanffy, systems are open to, and interact with their environment, and can even acquire qualitatively new properties through emergence, thus they are continuously evolving.

Cities, too, can be considered “open systems” where transitions are constantly informed by new and regenerated knowledge of the natural and social context. An example of concrete application of the concept of transition to cities is the European Union’s "Transition Cities" project, of which the city of Bologna is a partner, helping cities move towards a vision of a participatory, sustainable and inclusive future. Participation and inclusiveness within cities also provide for the involvement of "temporary" actors who interact in a network of spaces and relationships and therefore escape the traditional category of "formal citizenship" to converge in a broader concept of "material citizenship". *Practicing* citizenship, therefore, even temporarily, seems to be the way to increase the productive thinking and ability of the city, driven by participation and collaboration. These can be described as "dimensions of change" and are common patterns to the various forms of innovation that we can observe today in the economy and society. The entry "Future of Innovation" in the "Encyclopaedia of Creativity, Invention, Innovation and Entrepreneurship" [8] indicates participation and collaboration as essential dimensions of innovation because they enable the involvement of a wider spectrum of actors and instances. The trend towards a further opening of the innovation process will continue and become even stronger in the coming years: flexible working models and outsourcing, and an ever-increasing number of freelancers who will inhabit changing digital and physical spaces as temporary citizens, are already enabling the emergence of new strategies for innovation. Coordination mechanisms of self-organised user communities, web-based co-design platforms or city-level innovation initiatives involving public and private actors are on the rise and are progressively becoming complementary to (or replacing) traditional market mechanisms in a scenario of increasingly distributed innovation where the city and its citizens, however stable or temporary they are, will play a key role as a hub of innovation and continuous knowledge production and regeneration.

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2. Deviance

It was 1998 when Fincher and Jacobs defined the "city of difference" as the place where it is possible to perceive the "presence of otherness". In her "*Life and death of large cities. An essay on American metropolises*" published in 1961 [1], Jane Jacobs opened a substantial debate on twentieth-century urbanism and its role in the evolution - or involution - of contemporary society. Density and complexity are the pillars of the urban community which enable four essential rules: the presence of the greatest number of basic functions within the block (housing, commercial activities, businesses, services), the small size of the blocks, buildings of different ages and condition and a good population density (approximately at least 100 units per half hectare). The primary objective of this design is to encourage as much as possible encounters between people who are different in terms of culture, geography, ethnic group and age. These rules are different from the choices made by rationalism: buildings and blocks of maximum size, homogeneous areas for building types and sufficiently low density to prevent hygienic and social problems as issues compromising the established order. We could define these issues as “deviance”, the definition of which has been widely debated in both social and sociological terms.

The main difficulties in coming up with a univocal definition of "deviance" are largely because it "is not an objectively given quality of the act, but a subjective (or political) attribution: it is always the product of an interactive process" [2]. In the attempt to find some recurrences in the various definitions of the phenomenon, it is useful to proceed by juxtaposition [3] and by negation [4]. From a sociological point of view, Matza identifies three recurring juxtapositions: correction/compassion (studying the phenomenon to eradicate it *vs* empathically understanding the phenomenon); pathology/diversity (deviance as an intolerable and undesirable variation of normal *vs* deviance as a tolerable phenomenon which is considered negatively only for extrinsic reasons); simplicity/complexity (deviance as an obvious fact as a deviation from normal deviance *vs* a complex

phenomenon to be defined given its sometimes paradoxical relationships with normality). In terms of negation, on the other hand, Howard Becker rejects three conceptions of deviance: the one that reduces it to a pathological state, the one that describes it in statistical terms, and the one that identifies it as transgressive conduct. The quality of the deviance for the author therefore lies in the social reaction and is to be attributed to the eye of the observer. This analysis shows the evolutionary path of the studies on the concept of deviance which has progressively become more scientific and less moralistic starting from the School of Chicago, also known as the School of Urban Social Ecology, where the relationship between deviance and city has been investigated. In Cohen's reconstruction on the sociology of deviance, for the Chicago School the city was seen as a privileged laboratory for studying the phenomenon for ecological reasons (urban growth creates favourable environments for the birth of symbiotic relationships between various forms of deviance), cultural transmission (deviant norms are transmitted and learned from one generation to another), and social disorganisation (deviance is the effect of the weakness of traditional forms of social control).

The debate on the equivalence of meaning between "deviance" and "diversity" is still open but their close relationship has been explicitly investigated by Tamar Pitch [5] in her treatise on deviance. Pitch writes: "if until a few years ago the trend was to interpret this whole complex field by privileging the criminological and pathological aspect, now ... we tend to extend the perspective of ‘diversity’". For Pitch, it seems that “at the end of its historical journey, the concept therefore tends to approach the notion of 'diversity'. The possibility of accepting new norms leads to the production of new and “hybridised” knowledge, which is nurtured by the concept of "interdisciplinarity". With a pinch of provocation, we could compare the theme of interdisciplinarity to a sort of "deviant behaviour" towards the hyper specialisation of knowledge which has for a long time characterised social and organisational contexts. As Bunders [6] argues, when talking about "democracy of knowledge”, interdisciplinarity is not applicable to disciplines only but is a scalable concept that connects the interfaces between science, governance and society to the advantage of solving complex problems. Interdisciplinarity, then, must be considered to all intents and purposes as a mode of innovation, because it creates a “feasible interconnection between different levels of cooperation” aimed at improving not only the present but also future development scenarios.

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