

Editorial

*Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
-But who is that on the other side of you?*

T.S. Elliot, *The Waste Land*, 1922

In 1997 the BBC broadcasted a series of six episodes based on Steward Brand's book "How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built"; these episodes have very suggestive titles that not only stands out as a 'must watch' show but also takes the spectator into a deep reflection in each one of the cases. Titles like "Built for Change", or "The Romance of Maintenance" or "Flow", show how Brand is a firm defender of proposals that now return to the present time and relate to the life of a diverse amount of buildings that at the same time are trying to adapt to new uses and needs.

In 1968, Brand published World Earth Catalog, an archetype of very complex situations in which he was treated as an idealist, but the reality is that in the world during the last decades, 1,300,000 people have been mobilized each week. "I had an idealized idea of the countryside life, but evidently I never lived in a village", a sentence by Brand himself that allows us to reflect on a current reality in the depopulation of many small towns and villages where life was generous, friendly and close, also in the relationship with nature and what it offers. It is true that this depopulation of the countryside allows for a natural regeneration of its products, entering into the circular dynamic that is so on trend nowadays.

These people who arrive to the city, like those who arrive into a new world, are presented with the problem of habitat, something they must solve immediately because they are not only responsible for their own selves, but this migration in all directions, drags with them children of all ages, basic necessities with an unsure gaze into an uncertain future.

The circumstance of resolving this "provisional" relocation, frequently in the countries of the so-called southern zone, curiously leads to a return to the primitive, vernacular habitat, (another circular relationship with the architecture of yesterday), where living together was done in a single outbuilding. That is, the use of a single space shared by the whole family and where all the domestic activities and functions of the time were carried out. This idea was contrary to the approach to modern life acquired in the dwellings of the early 20th century, where a formal idea of compartmentalization of spaces in the house appeared.

The kitchen becomes an independent room, the children's room and the guest room are programmed, a dissociation from the previous idea of shared living. Therefore, we find ourselves with a very classist differentiation of habitat according to the part of the world in which we find ourselves.

Although this is not today's case, because the latest events following Russia's invasion of Ukraine with more than five million citizens displaced in a country like Poland once again made the situation a cause for permanent reflection in the

search for long-term solutions. At the same time, we (especially young people) live in a social situation where everyday life is programmed in a short term view, resulting in what Bauman calls the *Liquid Society*, a call to adapt to the vital moment.

This contemporary sociologist and philosopher affirms that the difference between solids and liquids is a reflection of the society of the new millennium, a society dominated by constant change, by the need to adapt to new stimuli that arrive almost suddenly in a multitude of different scenarios, mainly in the technological field, and which have nothing to do with those of the last century

Bauman identifies society as a fluid entity that moves, passes through, filters, leaks, floods the new reality, thus adapting itself more and more to current needs in an ever-changing way. In an excerpt from his famous book *Liquid Modernity*, (2000), says: “These reasons justify our view of “fluidity” or “liquidity” as appropriate metaphors for apprehending the nature of the current - in many ways new - phase in the history of modernity”.

Expectations are transforming, management itself in many sectors and at all levels, but the main ingredient for this multifaceted change is the new “short-term” social mentality, which is replacing the “long-term” mentality.

As Bauman comments: “Till death do us part” marriages are out of fashion, there is no longer an expectation of forever. Society no longer thinks that a person can develop a job for life, and of course, they are certain that they will probably never work in what they studied and graduated in, therefore, their way of thinking is mutating towards this capacity to adapt, to accommodate themselves to a new situation in constant movement. And this leads to question, is flexibility in the same matter as adaptability?

It could be said that the idea is basically identical in the terms where there is a visible spatial transformation, for example, we can say that certain elements can mutate in a fixed space, such as the design itself and the elements that form it, where these can be changed according to the passage of time or the needs of the people who live there, as defended by Schneider and “Till in Flexible Housing” (2007), when it is stated that flexible housing is one which is capable of adapting to the diverse and changing needs of its inhabitants.

This definition, intentionally broad, includes both the possibility of choosing between different compartmentalization options prior to the occupation of the dwelling, as well as the capacity for transformation and incorporation of technological advances over time or the potential for it to be adapted to non-residential uses.

It is true that social demand will mean that from now on we will have to rationalize and define the way of designing, so that flexibility can be achieved; the possibility of growth and addition, the spaces under the occupants’ low usage demand, the technology referred to alternative systems, (mobile, transformable partitioning, ...), to the more rigid traditional construction, to the more rigid traditional construction, as well as the idea of prefabrication and the capacity to be able to design with final dismantling are going to be very important premises that help to avoid the obsolescence of housing and public spaces of habitual use.

Steward Brand, with whom we begin this editorial, proposes the separation by layers and construction systems, John Habraken’s concept of Frame or Support, Walter Segal’s approaches in favour of self-construction and interchangeability or the principles of modular coordination and prefabrication will from now on not be theories of future trends, but will be the necessity of the present.