

# The Temporal Cadavre Exquis The Dark Side Of Diversity

STEFANO ROMANO

*Polis University*

## Abstract

*We will address key questions concerning the development of our cities, in the specific case, Tirana, the capital of Albania, after the new worldwide scenario that come as a consequence of the pandemic. The questions that we will focuses connecting with the idea of diversity, addressing it from the symbolic point of view of the relation between art and architecture, and how this relation can affect resilience and vision of the future. This because we have to treat the space the same way we are doing with time, as a flow. Space and time also belong to this class of quantities. Past, present, and future, forms a continuous whole. Space, likewise, is a continuous quantity. With the fall of the communist regime in 1991, Albania has started to favor market logics and the recognition of property rights. Indeed, what followed such revolutionary political transition was a rapid privatization process and, according to many, an apparently chaotic urban development. The 2020 pandemic highlight the need for a change in the vision of our cities and the way they must develop. In the last months, many to underline new possible visions for our cities have used the idea of utopian concepts of the ideal city, or that of resilience cities. “Utopia” comes from Greek: οὐ (“not”) and τόπος (“place”) which translates as “no-place” and literally means any non-existent society. Sir Thomas Moore coined the term in 1516 when he uses to describe an island where the structure of the society and the equilibrium between men and nature was perfectly balanced. In standard usage, the word’s meaning has shifted and now usually describes a non-existent society considerably better than contemporary society. Humans needs these kind of places because mythical space is an intellectual construct and helps us define our real space. We will analyze how the idea of utopia relates to art and how art can be seen as a way to faces contemporary problematics through its close relation to the space of architecture.*

## Keywords

art, architecture, city, utopia, time

## Introduction

In 2019, before Sars-CoV-2 spread in the pandemic form of COVID-19, the world was confronted with the first permanent effects of climate change caused by human activity. This activity is so pervasive and represents such a pressing issue for the planet that, in 2000, atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen coined the term *Anthropocene*<sup>1</sup> to define the new geological era in which we live.

“The *Anthropocene* defines Earth's most recent geologic time period (Anthropocene) as being human-influenced, or anthropogenic, based on overwhelming global evidence that atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other earth system processes are now altered by humans. The word combines the root *anthropo*, meaning "human" with the root "-cene", the standard suffix for "epoch" in geologic time.” (Ellis, 2013). At the beginning of this geological era, Crutzen placed the Industrial Revolution, when, following an analysis of the polar caps, traces of carbon dioxide were detected in the air trapped in the ice. From the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, human activity has become increasingly present in every corner of the planet, changing its shape and habitat. The continuously accelerated development of the means of communication and transport, as well as the ability to reach every corner of the globe in a matter of hours, has sparked economic globalization and an increasingly dense exchange of goods and products between the world's various countries. This expansion has undoubtedly altered our way of life, of feeding ourselves, our position towards the planet. Forests have disappeared to make way for intensive cattle breeding, which, in turn, satisfies the global demand for meat; the seas are crossed daily by a flurry of cargo ships transporting goods, materials, and products from one part of the world to another. The same happens in the skies, where we can travel from one continent to another in less than 24 hours - an entire human biological cycle - through increasingly faster airplanes. The circulation of machines has saturated the roads of the world's major cities, creating a micro-urban climate that is immediately perceptible upon entering urban areas. Already in the 1980s, media pressure on the potentially catastrophic effects of human activity on the planet compelled world governments to decide on effectuating urgent changes in the way of production and living. In 1992, an international treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, was established, which was signed in 1997 and entered into force in 2005. Under it, the various countries that had signed the agreement would take concrete steps to reduce greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The specific aim of the Protocol was as follows:

*“The ultimate objective of this Convention and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to al-*

*low ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”* (UN, 1992)

From the beginning, it was clear that imposing a change of pace in the reconciliation of the needs of the global economy with those of the planet would not present an easy task. This challenging aim has rendered the Kyoto Protocol nearly ineffective until now, with signatory states continually threatening to leave the protocol, depending on their internal policies. Not even the various environmental movements, which, over the years, have been present almost everywhere in the world, and their constant effort to stir public opinion and awaken individual awareness on what is becoming a pressing exigence, seem to be able to have a real impact on human action on the planet.

In December 2019, unexpectedly for most people – but widely predicted by scientists – a new virus appeared in China, in the city of Wuhan, which gradually pervaded the news all over the world, not least because of the speed with which it spread, infecting the inhabitants of the Chinese city. In January 2020, the virus reached the European continent, catching everyone unprepared and spreading with impressive speed throughout the various European countries. In February, the virus had infiltrated the entire planet, and on March 11, 2020, the WHO officially declared it a pandemic. At this point, security measures were being implemented nearly everywhere to try to decelerate the pandemic, even if rarely in a coordinated fashion. The lockdown appeared to be one of the most effective measures for containing the virus' spread. Depending on the specific impact force of COVID-19, different countries implemented more or less rigid lockdowns, which meant that, for the first time on such a massive scale, millions of people found themselves "forced" to remain locked up at home, obligated to change their lifestyle habits overnight. The virus altered the very concept of everyday routine and approach to life. Initially, it seemed a passing thing, at least in people's perception, because, in reality, doctors and scientists were beginning to discuss the probability of years passing before the pandemic could be eradicated or even considered under control. What happened in tandem, almost unexpectedly, as an unanticipated side effect, was nature immediately reclaiming the spaces left "empty" by humans. Precisely the spaces of cities, those same spaces that until a few months earlier swarmed with human activities, cars, vehicles, and lights that never went off, became, once again, "inhabited" by animals and nature, which, immediately recovered what human beings had declared "theirs". Satellite images show a significant reduction in carbon dioxide in the air in all countries that implemented lockdown measures. And this in just one month after the restrictive measures were put in place. Meanwhile, as the world became embroiled in the sudden and difficult struggle against

---

<sup>1</sup> As of May 2021, neither the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS), nor the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has officially approved the term as a recognized subdivision of geologic time.

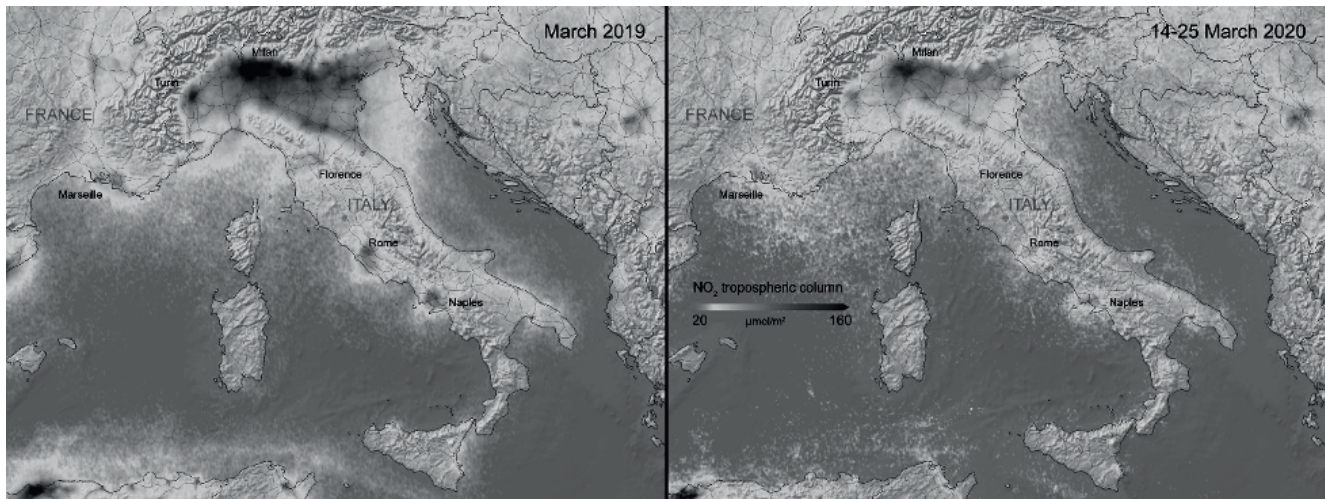


Figure 1. Nitrogen dioxide levels over Italy. ESA, modified Copernicus Sentinel data (2019-20), processed by KNMI/ESA

COVID-19, we all realized that nature was healing itself, that the drastic and sudden decrease in human activities resulted in a directly proportional improvement in the planet's conditions of habitability. These observations brought to the fore discussions on the need to change our way of life in order to strike a balance between the existence of human beings and that of other inhabitants of the planet. During the pandemic, a Climate Clock was activated on the facade of a building in New York's Union Square. The clock symbolically compared two lines, one green and one red: «*The Lifeline and Deadline on the Climate Clock tell us what we need to do, by when. There is still time to avert climate disaster, but only if we take bold, immediate action at the speed and scale necessary – beyond what politicians have deemed politically possible.*» (Anon., 2020)

A sort of public Doom clock<sup>2</sup> that tries to shock and raise awareness through numbers that appear to be a real condemnation, given the challenges and slowness with which the world's various governments move toward solving the climate urgency.

Terms like "resilience," "zero impact" and "clean energy" have become part of our daily vocabulary, and many have pointed to utopia as a possible way of changing our way of life during these difficult months (we have entered the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic). In fact, what all these arguments about the human impact on the planet have in common is the need for change; change in the approach to our way of life, change in our way of consuming, and change in how we manage our consumption waste. Changing entails rethinking the very foundations of our being in the world, and, to do so, we must have a sufficiently large "space for thought" to allow this rethinking. Here, the concept of utopia provides the necessary space for our thinking to move freely, allowing us to see beyond what we are presently accustomed to seeing; to allow us to make that mental leap that creates an unexpected situation in respect to our daily lives. "Utopia" comes from Greek: *οὐ* ("not") and *τόπος* ("place"), which translates as "no-place" and denotes any non-existent society. Sir Thomas Moore coined

the term in 1516 when he used it to describe an island where the structure of the society and the equilibrium between humans and nature existed in perfect balance. In standard usage, the word's meaning has shifted, and, presently, it commonly evokes a non-existent society that is considerably better than contemporary society, even if in Moore's book, there is a precise distinction between *eu-topia*, happy living, and *ou-topia*, the concept of non-place. Humans need these types of places because mythical space is an intellectual construct and helps us define our real space.

*"Two principal kinds of mythical space may be distinguished. In one, mythical space is a fuzzy area of defective knowledge surrounding the empirically known; it frames pragmatic space. In the other, it is the spatial component of a worldview, a conception of localized values within which people carry on their practical activities. (Tuan, 1977)*

Since Plato's time, people have tried to build societies that stand on a solid rational structure, which has meant that the utopian model was discarded as a possible vision for the construction of society. Yet, as we have begun to see, man needs a utopian space, a mythical space, in order to preserve an essential dimension of the human experience. The loss of utopia in social visions has harmed the quality of social planning and the ability to challenge the established order. Various alternative models for urban design, based on utopian thinking, were conceived and proposed, primarily during the nineteenth century. Some of these models have also been tested, mainly in the United States, which, at the time, was still in its full exploration phase. We must look back at the Industrial Revolution to understand how the dramatic changes in the production of goods led to an unprecedented shift from rural to urban areas, necessitating a completely new way of thinking about life and work. These changes prompted the development of urban planning, as it became necessary to rethink urban living and working spaces.

*"The origin of modern town planning must thus be sought at that moment in time when circumstances had crystallized sufficiently to cause not only discomfort but also to provoke the pro-*

<sup>2</sup>For more info: <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/>

test of the people involved. At this point, historical discussion must broaden beyond issues like pattern settlement to include the social problems of the time, demonstrating how modern town planning should be regarded as an integral part of the general attempt to extend the potential benefits of the Industrial Revolution to members of all classes, and emphasizing the inevitable political implications inherent in what may appear to be a purely technical field." (Benevolo, 1975)

Industrial progress went hand in hand with social poverty, but the utopias proposed as attempts to curb this ever-increasing disparity stood at too great a distance from reality and, thus, remained unattainable, at least in the lifetimes of those who hypothesized them. One hundred and fifty years later, the world crisis we are experiencing has once again placed us at a crossroads, faced with the choice of continuing to live our lives according to the habits we have established, exploiting the planet's resources to the point of no return, or seeking to imagine new ways of existing in harmony with it. In other words, to advance what proved to be utopian ideals during the Industrial Revolution, i.e., ideas too far removed from the reality of the historical moment to be successfully introduced into daily life. To shift these ideals from a level above reality to the level of reality, our everyday world, in order to prevent them from dissolving along with reality itself: «If the task we have is to build genuine utopias instead of modeling our behavior in terms of false utopias such as Coketown, Country House or National State, and all the other partial and inadequate myths we have listened to, we need to review the ideals that can help us rebuild our environment». (Mumford, 2008)

The shift intended by Mumford is toward science and art, as the author considers it essential that both become central expressions of the social structure, to serve as guides for people from a rational and emotional perspective. Science has advanced significantly in the last century, owing primarily to the technological revolution. Very important scientific discoveries have occurred and continue to occur at ever faster rates than just a century ago, and what were utopian prospects only a few years earlier have become certainties from which to begin shifting the scope of our research (and utopias) ever a little further. Art, too, was naturally revolutionized by science, not only in its methodologies but, more significantly, in its certainties and points of departure in terms of thought. The way of thinking of artists has changed, growing more complex following the complexity of the contemporary world, with artists increasingly relying on scientific discoveries for their artistic conjectures and artworks questioning our approach to life and everyday routine, often urging reflection on grand, universal themes. In this historical moment of world crisis, a pandemic-related health crisis that underlines the need for a profound change in our habits; an economic crisis as a direct consequence of preventive measures against the pandemic; an environmental crisis that confronts us with the urgency of a radical change in our way of life on this planet. All crises lead – again – to a single possible solution, the change at various levels in our way of living and understanding

reality. Art has always helped the human being think of change as an inherent aspect of daily life, not fear it, and neither take reality for granted. Artists have used utopias, always and at all levels, as real springboards for visualizing possible and alternative worlds to the one in which we live. The city is frequently the "theater" in which artistic operations are imagined, sometimes through apparently simple operations, but with profound conceptual content. The artificial space of cities, a space conceived and built by man, in which we now move with ease, as if it were our natural environment, is a space fraught with



Figure 2. Joseph Beuys, 7000 Oaks, Kassel, 1982. Image source: Internet

contradictions. Sometimes obvious, sometimes more hidden, in the folds of these contradictions, we can find the necessary push to imagine our alternative future, the escape route from the reality in which we live. Consider the artwork *7000 oaks*, started by the German artist Joseph Beuys in 1982, during that year's edition of Documenta (a contemporary art exhibition that takes place every five years in the city of Kassel, Germany). Beuys's project involved planting 7000 oak trees, each next to a basalt stone about 122cm high, in the city of Kassel; however, the work that required five years to complete has expanded to other cities all over the world. Beuys' work, his legacy to future generations, emphasizes the relationship between man and nature. A relationship that evolves, as evidenced by the German artist's work. Beuys' choice to combine basalt stone with oak reflects the ever-changing relationship between people and nature; when the oak is young, the human being seems to dominate nature. However, over time, this relationship shifts, and the oak - nature - first reaches the height of the stone, establishing an equal relationship and creating a precarious balance between the human being and nature. A precarious balance because, as everything in the universe, it is completely subject to the passage of time; then, it changes again, the balance is broken,



**Figure 3.** Joseph Beuys, 7000 Oaks, New York, 1988. Image source: [www.diaart.org](http://www.diaart.org)

and nature becomes dominant. We can also read this relationship in terms of the different biological cycles of human beings and nature. Human life is shorter than that of an oak (there are specimens of oak that live up to 500 years). This new balance, also precarious but with a longer span, urges us to consider the role of human beings regarding nature and how, in our vision, we think of dominating it, of being able to bend nature to our needs. It is precisely this viewpoint that has led to the environmental crisis in which we currently find ourselves, and which demands urgent and definitive solutions.

*"I think the tree is an element of regeneration, which in itself is a concept of time. The oak is especially so because it is a slow-growing tree with a solid heartwood. Since the Druids, who were named after the oak, it has been a form of sculpture, a symbol for this planet. Druid means oak. They used their Druids to define their holy places. I can see such a use for the future. When we start with the seven thousand oaks, the tree planting enterprise provides a simple but radical option for achieving this goal." (publicdelivery.org, 2021)*

Considering our relationship with nature and our distorted perspective of it, let us examine the work of Finnish artists Pekka Niittyvirta and Timo Aho: Lines 57° 59' N, 7° 16' W 8, completed in 2018 on the island of Lochmaddy, the archipelago of Uist, in the Outer Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland. Along the walls of the village's buildings, the artists installed neon lights connected to sensors that became activated with the rising tide. The lights were placed at the height of what the experts predict will be the sea level in a few years due to the melting of the glaciers and the rise in sea level if we do not immediately change our way of producing, living, and impacting the ecosystem of the planet. The work is a poignant and direct reflection of the catastrophic consequences of our indiscriminate behavior toward the environment, a critique of the contemporary consumption model, which, nevertheless, originates in the Industrial Revolution. At the beginning of this paper, we



**Figure 4.** Pekka Niittyvirta and Timo Aho, Lines 57° 59' N, 7° 16', 2018. Image source: <https://niittyvirta.com/lines-57-59-n-7-16w/>

saw how the proposal for dating the geological period in which we find ourselves - Anthropocene - coincided with the Industrial Revolution as, following analysis in the polar caps, traces of carbon dioxide were detected in the air trapped in the ice. In this case, the work transports us into a dystopia dangerously close to reality, a warning reminiscent of the Macabre Dance iconography from the Middle Ages. That "remember you must die," which must have been therapeutic for people somehow, serves to make us realize that we must take another path from the current one. This realization does not mean that science has not already warned us of the gravity of consequences stemming from our contemporary lifestyle, but, unlike science, the artistic message has the advantage of immediacy. Visual language manages to penetrate in a more precise and synthetic way than scientific language, composed of written theories and verified through mathematical formulas. The rapidity with which the image is able to convey the complete scientific message can guarantee that speed of propagation, necessary today more than ever, to strike the common imagination so that even drastic decisions can be made as soon as possible. The image of the level that the sea will reach in the coming years is more powerful than a thousand words in demonstrating the need for a new vision. The word "vision" stems from the Latin *visio -onis*, derived from *videre* "vedere"; we must be able "to see," "vedere" a new reality, to think abstractly about possibilities that do not yet exist, that is, that we do not yet see. The same idea of conveying a warning can be found in the artwork *Ice Watch*, created by Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson in 2014. The installation consists of 12 blocks of ice arranged in the shape of a clock and installed in public spaces in various European cities. The ice blocks come directly from glaciers near Iceland. The work aims to provide the viewer with a direct experience of our planet's polar caps melting. The blocks weigh approximately 100 tons at the time of the installation. The artist has been chastised for the considerable financial investment and means required to create a work that literally dissolves within hours. The criticisms may appear reasonable if we believe that the responsibility for the



**Figure 5.** Olafur Eliasson, Ice Watch, Paris, 2015. Image source: the artist's website

dramatic situation we are experiencing lies precisely in our way of consuming the planet's resources, but, as previously stated, scientists have already warned us about the current situation, and, without this, many changes in resource management and our way of life would not have occurred. The sight of the ice melting before our eyes, in the incompatible space of our cities, thousands of kilometers away from the physicality of the problem, may strike the conscience more than the words of experts from around the world. Speaking of the exploitation of our planet's resources, let us now analyze an artwork that focuses precisely on this theme, on the possibility of circumventing the laws on the exploitation of public land in the city of New York. The artwork in question is Swale, an ongoing project started in 2016 by the American artist Mary Mattingly which consists of a barge of about 1500 square meters which houses a vegetable garden and which sails around Manhattan offering food to the inhabitants of the city. The project was born out of a reflection on a law that forbids New Yorkers from planting fruit trees or growing food in public areas of the city. This is to prevent an excess of this practice from becoming harmful to the local ecosystem. The artist has used maritime laws, different from those of the exploitation of public land, to circumvent this situation. In this way Mattingly underlines how the basic goods of our survival (food and water) are subjected to a socio-economic system that cuts them off from our daily landscape. Here we mean the real urban landscape, underlining how every visual element that society decides to include or exclude from the city space, changes its shape and consequently the perception we have of it. Swale is in the artist's words "an intentionally provocative public artwork and a floating edible landscape". In fact, moving in the bay of Manhattan the barge changes the urban landscape making it fluid, like the water on which it navigates, developing a new methodological approach to the production of food in the metropolitan space. In fact, people are free to attend the artwork when it docks, collecting food from the trees, bringing it home or eating it directly on the boat, during the lunches organized by the artist herself. Various fruit, vegetable and vegetable plants



**Figure 6.** Olafur Eliasson, Ice Watch, Paris, 2015. Image source: the artist's website

are grown on the barge. The work brings the idea of a mobile landscape and of access to primary goods for the inhabitants of New York, but broadening the discourse, the artwork is an open reflection on these issues that touches all the cities of the globe. Moreover, it could have a real impact on the landscape of New York, because in parallel with the production of food on the barge, the artist is engaged in a dialogue with the Municipality to change the law on growing food in the city's public spaces. Considering that New York has approximately 30,000 acres of parks, the project could have a powerful impact in changing the "fixed" landscape of the city. Continuing to help build a mobile one in the meantime. The works examined show us exactly the use of utopia in the construction of the image of the city. An image both physical and symbolic, which speaks to us of different temporalities and different endings, dystopian or utopian, thus embracing the two faces of the vision of the future, the pessimistic and the optimistic one. That way of seeing reality by considering it from all possible angles in order to be able to read it as an organic whole that opens up to welcome everything in an anti-hierarchical way. According to the organizational model of the rhizome, elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, namely a descriptive model in where the organization of the various elements that compose it does not follow a line of subordination, but where each element can influence or be influenced by another. In our view, this is the only possibility to conceive a different organization of urban space and consequently, the only way to build the image of a multi-faceted city, importing the sociological feeling indicated by Laclau and Mouffe into urban planning according to which: «*The presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself*». (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985)

The presence of the other is understood here as the possibility of influencing and letting oneself be influenced in turn, to create elements and subjects that have in common a point of view contaminated by contingency and therefore not absolute. On the other hand, even in the origins of urban planning, according to Benevolo's theories, the solution to solve the problems of



**Figure 7.** Mary Mattingly, Swale, 2016 – ongoing. Image source: the artist's website

city organization was found in shared thought, in a democratic society: «*Modern town-planning is not merely an attempt to represent this process in visual terms, by transposing its application to the problem of the use of space, but must also be regarded as a vital factor in the creation of a democratic society*». (Benevolo, 1967)

What Benevolo meant was precisely the possibility of transposing the concept of a shared vision into the construction of the image of the city, a practice that has perhaps been lost over time. Welcoming the "other", not necessarily understood as the practice of welcoming people's opinions, but rather as the ability to welcome the images produced by the active participation of people in the symbolic construction of the city. The last artwork we examine perhaps clarifies this aspect even better. It is *Wheatfield* by the American artist Agnes Denes, created in Milan in 2015 within the Porta Nuova area. The artist had previously created the work in 1982 in Manhattan. In the case of Milan, *Wheatfield* covers an area of 50,000 square meters in which 1.250 kilos of wheat seeds have been sown. The work of ecological land art opens up fundamental themes that the pandemic has forcefully brought to the center of the global debate, such as for example the microclimate of the metropolis, the sharing of food (also underlined by the work by Mattingly which we analyzed previously), the energy production and land conservation. The work is also a strong reminder of the responsibility that each of us has, towards the production of the image of our cities, and to underline this aspect, the work has an interactive structure that foster the active participation of the inhabitants in the moment of harvest. 5.000 people voluntarily joined in the wheat harvest and each participant received a packet of seeds that they could plant themselves. This methodology establishes a generating chain that brings with it the possibility of changing the image and the shape of an entire city, a utopian revolution realized through a small seed of wheat.

An image, the one that derives from *Wheatfield*, which shows how a delicate and bucolic image like that of a wheat field, can have a disruptive force in the middle of the city skyline, forcefully shifting the perceptive and visual balance of full and empty



**Figure 8.** Mary Mattingly, Swale, 2016 – ongoing. Image source: the artist's website

space that shapes the urban space. Another of the main concepts in all the artworks we have examined is time. The passage of time, the possibility of moving back and forth in time, the idea of eternity: these notions constitute some of the most complicated and central ideas, crucial concepts of philosophy and science throughout human history. One of the main problems with classical utopias was the underestimation of the temporal problem in their proposals. The institutions that people have created to give order to the reality in which we live function according to different times, and it is impossible for all to receive a particular vision at the same time. Furthermore, time is divided according to a structure composed of three moments, past, present, and future, which influence - and not insignificantly- our actions and visions. Aristotle, one of the most influential philosophers of all time, saw time as a single body; past, present, and future were, according to the philosopher, a single flow, and so, he claimed, should space be considered as well: «*Space and time also belong to this class of quantities. Time, past, present, and future, forms a continuous whole. Space, likewise, is a continuous quantity: for the parts of a solid occupy a certain space, and these have a common boundary; it follows that the parts of a space also, which are occupied by the parts of the solid, have the same common boundary as the part of the solid. Thus, not only time, but space also, is a continuous quantity, for its parts have a common boundary*». (Aristotle, 1970)

In the twentieth century, Henri Bergson expanded Aristotle's idea that time was a single flow and that past, present, and future constituted a single entity, merging into our being present here and now. This notion leads us to consider how space is central in the discourse of time because it physically places us in a point (or more points) in reality. In our case, the space of works of art within our cities establishes a relationship with the space of the city that is not only physical but also temporal, transforming it and moving it elsewhere in time and space. It is exactly Bergson's thinking that our vision of the city is based on, shifting the perception of the temporal flow from our internal perception, to the urban space, to how the objects that composes our daily landscape are linked together according to a flow which



**Figure 9.** Agnes Denes, Wheatfield, Porta Nuova Milan sprouts March – July 2015. Photo Agostino Osio

moves us back and forth, building the thickness of our perception. On the other hand, Lynch already underlined how cities are a temporal experience: «*Looking at the cities can give a special pleasure; however commonplace the sight may be. Like a piece of architecture, the city is a construction in space, but one of a vast scale, a thing perceived only in the course of long spans of time.*» (Lynch, 1960)

In the same way, art also has a physical, spatial, but also temporal value, helping to build visions that settle in our heads in its relationship with the spaces of the city where it is installed, helping to build our idea of reality. In its synthesis, art, especially art conceived in urban spaces, has the ability to create that vision necessary to move our thoughts beyond the reality of the moment, back and forth in time (and space) and this is its driving and premonitory strength; art does not anticipate the future, but helps creating it. In the title of this paper, we have used the metaphor of the *cadavre exquis* to better clarify the isolated vision and the overall vision. The *cadavre exquis* is a methodology invented by the artists of the surrealist movement, to create drawings in which one could not be fully aware of the overall result. Technically, it was made through a drawing started by an artist, who left it "open" incomplete by folding the portion of sheet used for drawing, leaving only a few signs of his drawing visible for the next artist. The second artist would continue the drawing starting from the signs left in sight, leaving some signs of his drawing visible following the same methodology. Once the available space had run out the sheet was opened and the entire drawing visible, with the result of a completely unexpected image. If we shift this methodology to urban space, the result is very close to what happens in contemporary cities, where there seem to be many different cities that make up the metropolis, united to each other only by small signs left incomplete, without a common vision. This overall vision has become an urgent need after the pandemic and above all a vision that takes into account the active participation of people in the construction of the new symbolic image of the city, so that this determines a change in its physical image. It is no longer possible, nor sustainable that the city is a fragmented organism as in the vision of the *cadavre*



**Figure 10.** Wheatfield, Porta Nuova, Milan, Public sowing. Photo Agostino Osio © Agnes Denes. Courtesy Fondazione Trussardi Milano e Fondazione Riccardo Catella Milano

*exquis*. The city must include the notion of the *other* as an active participant. This post-phenomenological approach would make it possible to design urban space by moving over time, collecting visions that come from every corner of the urban fabric, thinking of the city as a single organism for which each part sends and receives information from the whole, influencing and being influenced. A space-time continuum that would neutralize the historical problems of implementing the utopian vision, making it feasible.

## Reference List

- Anon. (2020). Climate Clock. [Online] Available at: <https://climateclock.world/science> [Accessed 30 June 2021];
- Aristotle (1970). *Categories*. Bari: Laterza;
- Benevolo, L. (1975). *The Origins of Modern Town Planning*. (2nd ed.). London: MIT Press;
- Ellis, E. (2013). Anthropocene - The Encyclopedia of Earth. [Online] Available at: [https://editors.eol.org/eoearth/wiki/Anthropocene#cite\\_note-endnote\\_4-4](https://editors.eol.org/eoearth/wiki/Anthropocene#cite_note-endnote_4-4) [Accessed 30 June 2021];
- Mumford, L. (2008). *Storia dell'Utopia*. (5th ed.). Roma: Donzelli Editore;
- Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and Place - The perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis(Minnesota): The University of Minnesota Press;
- UN (1992). *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, New York: United Nations.