This past decade the architectural community has witnessed a strange phenomenon. Struck by the financial crisis of 2008 and with scarce commissions, members of this community have started wandering far away from the core purpose of architecture into not so unfamiliar territories such as anthropology, social activism and 'politics'.

Let me clarify why I consider these territories to be familiar: our generational predecessors, struggling with the impossibility of pursuing the Modern project, had already unsuccessfully experimented with this exploration; they were the Postmoderns. Despite their good will, any attempt they made was instantly swallowed up by capitalism. Alongside the disorientation that the postmoderns were affected by, they also made a taboo out of anything that could have a remotely universalist ambition, (which obviously was not the most efficient strategy for addressing an increasingly global condition).

Architecture is the discipline of partitioning space : that is its core purpose. If there is a single point I would like to get across it has to be this one.

That is not to say that one should not be concerned with politics – quite on the contrary – but the only way for us to be credible is to tackle this matter from the locus of partitioning space.

Nevertheless, this cannot be done without acknowledging the technological shift we are traversing.

Two fundamental changes related to technological progress await us: on the one side, these changes concern production and on the other the evolution of our bodies. We will see that both relate to what we might think of as ownership and boundaries.

Let us look at what will most probably happen with production: the capitalist rulebook tells us that if you work hard, you will be financially successful.

There is a supposed clear relationship between labour and the revenue it generates for the individual participating in this contractual exchange. Having gathered sufficient revenue, the individual is then able to invest, letting capital generate its own revenue.

Let us now consider a world where labour is uncompetitive in comparison to machine work. We are left with two classes: one possessing the means of production (machine owners) and one absolutely incapable of generating revenue (surplus populations). We must also acknowledge the potential existence of a third class: the operators. The operators maintain and program the machines. But it is quite clear that this class' existence is only financially justified if its demographics stay small and dwindle in a predictable manner.

The result is the emergence of a breed of super-financial-humans and the dying out of useless non-workers. Two inactive classes devoid of social mobility.

Concerning our bodies, they are already changing. Over the last couple of decades, we have unanimously embraced prosthetic appendixes in the form of our phones. This might sound like an exaggeration (or worse a banality) but simply imagine going a few hours without your prosthesis or having someone grab it and accessing the data it contains, texting or posting from your identity. The soft violence this would constitute confirms the fact that you have grafted, or included in your cognitive scaffolding, a foreign object. This object is obviously foreign for several reasons, but the one we are interested in is the fact that it is owned by an external entity. Of course, you bought your phone: you own it. But it is virtually dead if it doesn't have access to its own infrastructure (a data-network). This infrastructure must be considered a coherent body, with its own physicality: a physicality that extends inside of you.

While this relationship could be seen as symbiotic, we must understand that this is a relatively new thing and its consequences are not yet well understood. A wooden leg or a glass eye belong to you; their physicality is entirely contained within the boundaries of what you consider your active body proper.

These new prosthetic devices cannot be diagramatised according to a schema of mere inclusion (like older prosthetic forms) but must be represented as intersections: they materialise the shared space between our individual bodies and the great data-network body.

More than ever, architecture is necessary as the discipline capable of addressing the shift affecting these boundaries.

Indeed, regarding my first point, it seems unviable for humanity to fully embrace technological progress without equally redistributing the fruits of machine work. It is essential that we construct a new partition of space to claim the territories that machines operate in (factories, data centers and communication infrastructures, roads, fields...) as public domains.

Secondly and without any nostalgia or reactionary position (there is no way back, nor a desire of a world without global interconnectivity), we must understand the spatial reconfiguration of our bodies proper as intersecting with a body of data. This other body is furthermore to be claimed as a political body, and it cannot remain an economic asset to a privileged fraction of humanity.

The inevitable technological progress we are witnessing the beginning of must converge with an emancipatory project, the core of which is, more than ever, the collectivisation of technological equipments. A central practice in order to make this happen consists in a repartitioning of space, in a reconfiguration of spatial qualifications. Architecture will divide. ♥

DUE