

TIPP – Understanding Territoriality: Identity Place Possession

Antagonism and demopraxia,
notes for a course of reflection to be developed within the project TIPP

I want to focus on some key words and concepts and questions.

Basically, I want to look at how a place becomes own and/or owned by its inhabitants; it is the idea of appropriation, which carries the negative aspect of expropriating the other and the positive one of feeling something as own out of a deep or total identification with it, such a political or humanitarian cause.

This act of appropriation is an aspect of the connection to places that may come under the umbrella of what is meant by the word *territoriality*. A place, a space, becomes territory under a military point of view (Allen Ginsberg, in Wichita Vortex Sutra, said *almost all our language has been taxed by war*), when is controlled, which is a notion not so far from the one mentioned in the background documents to this conference *territoriality is an anthropological concept derived from the observation of animal behavior and is concerned with how animals and humans demonstrate ownership*.

So the question is: does possessing a place or appropriating it, make it a territory?

The main issue seems to be power.

I would like to refer to the notion of hegemonic practice developed by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2001. As many in this room will remember, it is based on the acknowledging of the hegemonic nature of every kind of social order acquired in a context of contingency practices through which a certain order is created; hegemony tends to associate with possessing places, therefore territoriality.

Before looking into Mouffe's theory, I would like to call upon an artist for a contribution to framing (or rather expanding the frame, or even breaking it)

LARA

Lara Almarcegui's project *Wasteland* preserves a plot of land from any appropriation: it is not a territory as long as we cannot exert power on it, cannot control it. But interestingly enough: does this plot of land generate territoriality? It seems it can, as long as we can appropriate its nature and meaning therefore connect our identity with it.

Let me reference another art project questioning the notion of ownership and therefore shedding some light onto the idea of territoriality:

TIRA

Initiated in 1998, the land was the merging of ideas by different artists to cultivate a place of and for social engagement. The project's website says: Though initially the action to acquire the rice fields were initiated by two artists from Thailand, the land was initiated with anonymity and without the concept of ownership. The land was to be cultivated as

an open space, though with certain intentions towards community, towards discussions and towards experimentation in other fields of thoughts.

So, there is a latent reference to the idea of ownership as a form of negative appropriation.

Recently the notion of common has become a buzzword, and it challenges the idea of appropriation associated with expropriation. As we are aware, common is not the same as public, it does not mean state owned, neither private. Would a common territory exert territoriality? What kind of appropriation does it allow or imply?

Further from the notion, or perhaps *before of the notion*, of appropriation of the land, there is the one of landscape.

I'm interested here also to briefly remind the categorization developed by the Indian sociologist Appadurai on the five global dimensions of the notion of landscape:

- 1) etnolandscape, the immersive and ever-changing landscape consisting of the people around us;
- 2) tecnolandscape, the global configuration of technologies moving at high speed through the boundaries previously impervious;
- 3) financial landscape, the global network of currency speculation and capital transfer;
- 4) the media landscape, the distribution of the ability to produce and disseminate information and the vast, complex, repertoire of images and narratives generated by these capabilities;
- 5) idea landscape, made up of state ideologies and counter-ideologies of movements, around which the nation states have organized their political cultures.

Going back to Mouffe's analysis and connecting it with Appadurai's, we find ourselves – as contemporary citizens – in a scenario in which the hegemonic narratives tend to constitute a landscape, a representation often aesthetically characterized and full of symbols, which is assumed to be immutable, natural, as a geography of mountains and rivers and meteorology.

IMAGE????

This crystallization is the result of a process of hegemonic narrative; it establishes a specific political order, articulated in the forms taken by the institutions and into the organizational forms of the private, the intimate, the domestic. In reference to this constitutive process Gramsci stressed the centrality of the artistic and cultural practices in the creation and spread of what he called **common sense**, a specific world-view consolidated and shared by those in power and the widespread collective consciousness.

TERZO PARADISO

The generative and transformative dynamic that Mouffe describes with the terms

hegemony and antagonism, is also considered by Pistoletto (who detects a teleological nature and composition of balance which are on the contrary denied by Mouffe) in terms of a neohegelian dialectic represented by the principle of Trinamics, the dynamics of the number three, originated from the opposition (but also from a not totally oppositional difference) which is a duality organized by the force of the creation process. This would find in the trinamic principle its own articulation.

The trinamics is represented by a symbol, the new infinity sign, also called the symbol of the Third Paradise, with which Pistoletto and Cittadellarte represent figuratively the process of opposition generative of new balance.

Hegemony and balance do not seem at all synonymous, nor in all honesty reconcilable, but if they are taken in a dynamic and impermanent sense, the boundaries between the two distinct concepts round off and I think I see that in some cases they can even meet. It seems to me useful to reference to an experience of creative workshops that I have developed over the years in my practice of direction of Cittadellarte as an alive art project, in the making, experience developed in reference to the categories of landscape described by Appadurai. I created a platform of research and testing of the concept of counterlandscape: in line with the notion of Appadurai Media Landscape, we know that hegemonies tend to use the media as a primary tool in the construction of representations and narratives that form the landscape in which we live: opinion leaders, as well as artists such as pop singers, advisers and mainstream thinkers, journalists and of course political leaders. It is for us a given landscape, and it is such as a result of the narratives built MAINLY by big powers who hold or can make use of mass communication.

Despite the fact that access to the systems of expression and representation made available by the web does not lack, it seems, however, that it is impossible for us citizens and individuals to change the landscape in which we live, so much the one of the ideas as the physical one. Yet, there are anywhere micronarratives. They derive from the incessant imaginative work (doing images) that humans, in every cultural and contextual determination, inevitably produce. Even in the oppressive conditions of totalitarian regimes or in the most alienating and destructive ones. These images, resulting from the unstoppable creative power of the human spirit, contribute to the ineffable formation of a magmatic substratum of thought, ideas and representations that may also constitute a form of landscape.

We are talking of discourses that tend to go along and often to counterbalance the narratives that determine the media landscape. Speeches articulated by individual micronarratives, and curdled around them, thus giving rise and body to a different landscape, complex and potentially fragmented, full of contradictions and often opposite to the hegemonic one. A landscape that essentially consists of stories and images produced "from below." In the analysis of Mouffe, it is spoken of critical artistic practices defined as "those who in various ways help to upset the dominant hegemony ...".

Today, thanks to the network and mobile technology, this landscape is more and more accessible, be it that one positions herself as creator or as beneficiaries; the presence and impact of this landscape is therefore increasingly crucial in our lives. This landscape is therefore a counterlandscape which opposes the representation of the world as set, and

articulates a departure from the traditional view of landscape as a given; It is another landscape, made by us and our experiences.

The counterlandscape stands in dialectical position (antagonist) to the prevailing scenery and dynamics by Pistoletto would be sought in the clash / meeting between landscape and hegemonic counterlandscape and in the establishment of a balance hegemonic and unprecedented transition, for which new counterexamples will give form a new counterlandscape and therefore more dynamic imbalances.

The question is if a counterlandscape generate territory and even more territoriality? If it does, does this apply only to the one who produce the counter-representation or also to others? To the ones who appropriate its spirit or vision, for example?

PARK FICTION

Making landscapes is a metaphor for making places, which recalls to another buzz word of today, when people refer to art social practice calling the artists, *place makers*.

Making place is indeed a recurring issue for many art practitioners and it is one of the ways that connects art and politics, in the past and today; if we look at the protest movements like Occupy and Indignados, which seem enacted often with languages specific to the world of art (or rather of activism, those practices that feed on activism and the arts often quite difficult to distinguish).

Here we do see the opening of spaces of critique and antagonistic imaginative quests. But, is it enough?

HIRSHORN

I would like to refer to the abysmal gap that separates the subversive, antagonistic, counter-hegemonic practices operating on the levels of deconstruction of identities and subjectivity, as well as the juxtaposition of imagery and narratives, from the hegemonic landscape which is not simply narrated, but rather is it administered by the power; this hiatus, between the questioning and the actual organization of the coexistence with setting institutions and states; what I would call the *anatomy of the organizations and the physiology of the institutions*; I mean operating a city, the organization of health system, the management of the army and the public apparatus, the administration of production and distribution and so on.

ARAB SPRING

In 2002 we realized an exhibition, curated by Dagmar Reichert, entitled *critique is not enough* and we presented in artistic practices that work directly in the organization of pragmatic elements of everyday life and ordinary citizens, who were in distress or less.

CRITIC 1 AND 2

The size of the critical (to use the theme of critical artistic practices Mouffe uses) seems to be implicit in the fact of the *proposal* and even more in that of the creation of an alternative reality to existing models. But the focus on the practice shifts or rather disarms the instinctive reaction of the mechanisms of repression. But I would point out that you work a shift here from the dynamics of class struggle consolidated into a much more insidious challenge to the established order, creating antagonistic strategies potentially very effective;

RICK LOWE

we think of the work done by artists like Rick Lowe Project Row Houses in Houston with the housing problem, that can not be swallowed by the work of neutralization that capital plays normally in this kind of projects through gentrification.

This shift has led me to think a new variation, a perversion of the word democracy, in DEMOPRAXY, thus shifting the focus of discourse and antagonistic dynamics, from the semantics of Cratos (power) to the one of praxis, that of course means practice.

JONAS STAAL

OVERVIEW OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE 4TH NEW WORLD SUMMIT IN THE ROYAL FLEMISH THEATER (KVS)

I feel demopraxy has something to do with the political projects that in the 90's and 2000 we witnessed flourishing powerfully across Europe and that were too easily dismissed as populist, neo-nationalist, xenophobic and localist, what generally often were, but also we should acknowledge that they fed on the same matrix that has fueled the projects that were set up within the formalized political representation, basically parliamentary: from 5 stars Party in Italy to Podemos in Spain and Siryza in Greece, but also in reference to involution that the Arab Springs have known and the powerful advance of jihadist organization like ISIS.

Is demopraxy connected to place-making?

Investigating such a perverting and diverting vision (in reference to the origin of the French word *divertissement* that invokes the concept of detournement and enjoyment), we set up an archive of demopractic projects ongoing, active at different levels and in many areas, from environment to health, from town planning to alternative forms of economic models etc ... the project is a website in progress and it is called geographiesofchange.org; there are seven hundred practices (today) representing a fractal of a much larger and complex reality, but whose atomic structure is probably very similar.

GEOCHANGE

Geographies of transformation define an archipelagus territory surrounded by other

territories, definitely overwhelming at the time, represented by the hegemonic systems geared more onto the post-Fordist capitalism. These different territories coexist, indeed they insist on the same portion of physical terrain, but the territories of the transformation creep into the hegemonized territory defining practices of space, of relationships, exchange, production, participation, sovereignty and appropriation.

how is identity, belonging, power relations between these transformative territories and the others played? What are the ways to recognize and exercise territoriality in these antagonistic dynamics? How to protect and strengthen those zones where already the active hegemonies are different from those dominant in most of the space? How to extend them or contaminate? How can the art system help? And even more: how can another artist residency not undermine these practices but rather strengthen them?

These are some of the issues that we face in the research we conduct within a TIPP, especially with the residential seminar we intend to carry out in autumn to Cittadellarte.

As I have mentioned a third paradise, let me just show you as a conclusion some of the artworks and installations realized by Cittadellarte and hundreds of artists and practitioners from different walks of life and background pretty much all over the continents

The third paradise is a utopy, a no place, but it is also real places and a possible territory whose appropriation is welcome. It is not a theoretical idea only, not just a symbol, as the geographies of transformation practices deliver us with hundreds of actual change making activities.

But it is also an aesthetically meaningful artwork. Still.

Biella, May 24, 2015

Paolo Naldini, Cittadellarte, Director