



# (*ibidem*)

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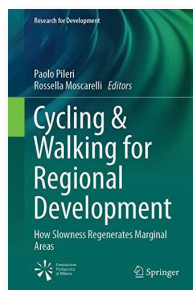
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Bruno Latour sostiene che la società non esiste come una sostanza, cioè come qualcosa che sia là, stabilmente presente seppur nel variare dei suoi aspetti momentanei. La società esiste per lui come un evento se e quando le persone e le cose socializzano. Da questa linea di pensiero segue, anche se Latour ne tace, che tantomeno lo spazio esiste come una sostanza. Non perché sia impalpabile, ma perché esiste come un evento se e quando le persone e le cose spazializzano, cioè stanno in relazioni spaziali. Da quando il distanziamento sociale è diventato un obbligo, a causa della pandemia, noi assistiamo a forme di socialità rinnovate che coinvolgono persone, cose e reti digitali. Nel senso di Latour, il distanziamento non è meno sociale per la rarefazione dei contatti fisici. Ciò che conta è la socialità, comunque il suo evento si realizzi. Il mutamento sociale determinato dal distanziamento sembra avvenire nella cornice di uno spazio immutato. Le strade, gli alberi, gli edifici, le pareti domestiche, le corsie degli ospedali, i vagoni dei treni sono quelli di prima: conservano le loro posizioni, misure e dimensioni. Tuttavia, c'è motivo di credere che al distanziamento sociale segua un altro modo di spazializzare. I mutati rapporti spaziali tra persone, cose e reti digitali danno luogo a riconfigurazioni di quello che chiamiamo spazio. Queste iniziano – con la riapertura delle attività – dalla disposizione degli arredi e dalla postura dei corpi intimoriti dalla prossimità. Proseguono con modifiche progettuali di arredi e mezzi di trasporto per adeguarli al nostro diverso modo di spazializzare. E se il distanziamento si dovesse protrarre a lungo, noi assisteremmo alla riconfigurazione degli ambienti nelle forme, nelle dimensioni e nelle possibilità di utilizzo. Già le stanze domestiche sono aule per studenti e docenti, uffici per lavoratori smart, luoghi di cura per chi è in quarantena. Gli ambienti esterni andrebbero a loro volta incontro a distanziamenti, diradamenti e ricomposizioni in base alle relazioni spaziali del mondo pandemico. Se anche fosse un esperimento mentale, reso tale dal completo ritorno alla normalità precedente la pandemia, sarebbe utile a rammentare che lo spazio accade come un evento della nostra presenza.

L.G.

## Filippo Barbera

# Slowness matters



Paolo Pileri and Rossella Moscarelli (eds.)

### **Cycling & Walking for Regional Development: How Slowness Regenerates Marginal Areas**

Springer, Cham 2020

pp. 249, € 135,19

Urban life is built on quickness. High-tech local development is based on the capability to anticipate the pace of change and figure out new market opportunities. The creative class lives swiftly; it is loyal to the *credo* of flexibility to catch the new chances that emerge everywhere in the world. Places are fungible, providing that they are endowed with connectivity, cultural capital, and fancy jobs. Places are dots, and the lines connecting them do not count. Linkages are understood as fluxes of capital and information that need to be accelerated as much as possible for they are just means free from intrinsic value. Modernity is rooted in quickness. Slowness is a residue from the past, best associated with ‘free time’ and with no economic value and/or public worth. Paolo Pileri and Rossella Moscarelli’s edited collection turns this ubiquitous narrative on its head. Seeing things the other way around is a key heuristic shift to foster a new way of thinking, change the hegemonic frame, and activate new action patterns accordingly. From this ‘reversal’ perspective, slowness becomes a strategic

resource from which it is possible to build a future for fragile and marginal areas and so-called ‘strong’ places. In this respect, slowness can be turned into a chance for local development: a form of public value usable to designing, planning and organizing territorial policies and territorial planning. From this background premises, the book unfolds in four sections. Part one lays the theoretical basis on which the book’s main themes are developed: territorial marginality, new development policies, and slowness. Concepts and ideas related to ‘slow tourism and slow travel’, the experience of slowness as a way to better observe things, such as pedalling on a bicycle, the strategic role of ‘margins’ and their consequences for territorial planning at both national and international level, are discussed at length. The second section focuses on the Italian case, going from the role of slowness in relation with the Italian landscape – showing how moving slowly allows us to discover the ‘ordinary’ beauty of places – to the history of food in its connection to slowness. It further analyses the role played by pathways, historical roads and public ownership buildings that need to be framed as hidden little gems of the cultural heritage. Section three discusses VENTO bicycle route project: a 700-km-long bicycle tour ridgeline created by a research group of the Politecnico di Milano. VENTO is the very epitome of slowness as a resource for the local development of marginal areas. The VENTO project has been built on a research methodology that allowed to put the idea into practice throughout a mixed research approach, consisting of a collection of case studies, publications and communication at various levels, technical planning, local involvement, and institutional cooperation. The VENTO project – it is underlined – has a key narrative and educational value, stemming from the intimate connection with the territories it crosses. Finally, section four looks at European cases where bicycle routes and pathways have allowed for economic development, and not only, of the crossed



areas. From the Netherlands to France, Denmark, and Switzerland, to the United Kingdom's national cycle network, to the historical reasons for the success of the very famous Camino de Santiago, to the Cycle tourist backbone along the Danube in Germany and Austria, these case studies show how these 'lines' generate jobs, wealth, and prosperity. The goal is to bring out good practices of public policies whose aim is to 'build slowness' as a purposeful project. This is a key message of the book: we have been used to think that slowness is the 'baseline' condition, while quickness is the 'intervention' scenario. Do nothing, and things will be slow; act and things will get quicker. The book, quite rightly, emphasizes that both quickness and slowness are a socio-political construction. We need quick and effective planning to build slowness! All in all, the volume intends slowness as key to open the doors to places that are in each case considered, regardless of them being central or peripheral. Slowness is a tool that has much to teach about urban practice and planning. But, as just said, slowness needs to be intentionally constructed: designing slowness as a multi-goal practice, capable of regenerating marginal areas connected to the central ones, requires both a political vision and a dedicated administrative action. Focusing on slowness might deeply affect the mainstream paradigm of territorial planning. Slow, continuous, and linear movement connecting dots can feed a continuous experience of 'vicinity' that is a source of social cohesion and wealth for connected localities. In the perspective of quickness, the journey is a waste of time, and slowness is a source of anxiety and a problem to avoid. On the contrary, a bicycle route or a pathway, with their linear development across territories, overcoming administrative boundaries' formalism and fragmented public management that only obeys bureaucratic criteria, can truly challenge the relationship between places and planning. This point is both straight and key: administrative boundaries are a serious challenge to developing a linear path that crosses them. The coordination among different administrative units is, apart from a few lucky cases, a challenging task. Administrative boundaries shape public actions over and above the collective interest: they define what should, could and ought to be done. The

book is chiefly of interest for urban planners and geographers, but its core ideas have wider social sciences applications more broadly. I will highlight three perspectives in this line. As the editors aptly underline in their introductory chapter, the word 'slowness' – 'lentezza' in Italian – includes within it the word 'lente', lens: the tool that magnifies everything we see, that makes what would otherwise elude us visible, and that allows us to focus on what would otherwise be out of focus. Slowness allows us to fully understand the complexity of the vision made up of feeling, selection, and perception. What slowness allows us to see better, then? First, the neglected role of marginal areas for the local development of places: marginal areas are, in fact, marginalized ones. They are remote from regional poles; often they are rural or mountain areas including small towns, functionally autonomous rather than embedded in larger urban systems. Such areas generally present low or negative job creation rates, both in the primary sector and in manufacturing and tertiary sectors, which concentrate in major urban areas. The progressive loss of their role as employment providers has been followed by a decline in the provision of services, for which their population must commute to larger urban poles. Marginal areas are a deep well of resentment and anger, which often translates into political support for populist forces. As electoral geography tells us, the 'populist' vote (cf. Brexit, or recent electoral turnouts in France, Italy, and the United States) heavily concentrates in areas scarred by a history of economic decline or where the gap between urban and rural, between 'strong' and 'weak', is particularly wide. These are places where different types of inequality combine, concentrate, and interact, resulting in multidimensional deprivation: economic inequalities (in income, assets and wealth), social inequality and unequal access to the foundational infrastructures of citizenship (transportation, education, services), as well as inequalities of recognition. Secondly, as moral psychology underscores, two separate processes seem to be activated in making moral decisions: one is automatic, unconscious, and emotion-based while the other is slower, more conscious, and based on consideration of alternate outcomes. Although the fast, emotional process is overwhelmingly domi-

nant, slowness is key to the distinction between what moral philosophers call 'deontological' (i.e., absolute, unconditional) as opposed to 'consequentialist' behaviour (i.e., moral decisions based on expected outcomes). Thirdly, finding a place for slowness in a world grounded in quickness is a resource for building effective organizations based on 'heterarchy', meaning to articulate and keep alternative conceptions of what is valuable, worthy, and counts at work at the same time. The creative friction between quickness and slowness may generate a resourceful dissonance that, especially when the organizational environment is turbulent and uncertain, makes it possible to break out from the lock-in of path-dependent solutions ritualistically built on ideas and frames that reward vested interests and choke radical innovation.

