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## Filming coexistence: movies, city and sociability

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There is an old German dictation that has been repeated since Middle Ages, *staduluft macht frei*, the air from city releases. It registers the popular perception of amazing things that can happen in the city, differently from other places, and that are resulting from the contact with "the other". This other one can be a close one, an equivalent person, or someone different, distant. There is an ambiguity here that will permeate the German sociological discussion at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth century: community versus society opposition and the different ways of sociability that are engendered in each one of these human groups. Thus the coexistence is inquired by stiffness or fluidity of bounds that individuals and groups establish among them, delineating bridges and walls – physical and/or symbolic ones – that join and separate them in the urban space. Far from resume this discussion, I propose here a tour to some films that somehow deals with these questions.

One of the community determinant features is the "spiritual unity", which make that unifying values be valued. Many times, this leads to control of everyday life aspects from individuals, implying until its segregation in contact with others non-belonging to the community. A perfect illustration of this situation is "The Village" (EUA, 2004, directed by M. Night Shyamalan). The village from title seems to be the perfect place to live in it, quiet and isolated from the world, where everyone is friends and lives in harmony. But this idyllic community undergoes changes when the inhabitants find out that the grove which surrounds them hides mysterious and dangerous creatures. The fear of being the next victim and the pact between the people from village and the creatures which live in the forest surrounding, lead any inhabitant does not

venture to enter in the grove. Lookout posts are created, which serve both to drive off the creatures as to make sure that nobody tries to run away from the village.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYKUkrqAjI0>

The fear as source of unity and solidarity is a fragile alliance, and the bounds which establish are always about to break up. The situation of ideal isolation professes in "The Village" soon reveals its artificiality and unsustainability. However, in the passage from small community to the big city, the fear of other remains. Here, the bounds reappear in another way. Bounds are artificial and built, and need full and constant effort for their maintenance. The presence of foreigners tends to point this artificiality and their limits, contributing to stimulate, many times, the conflict among groups. Segregation and moving in the city: in case of our urban societies, the borders are more volatile, we live together in high proportional density and in the course of our everyday lives, we cross or face with the most different groups. This is what happens in "La Haine" (France, 1995, directed by Mathieu Kossowitz), where three young boys from French suburb – a Jewish, a black, and an Algerian – surpass the bounds of their ghetto and walk through Paris creating a series of conflicts.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_NwS0wKB2GE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NwS0wKB2GE)

This conflicting coexistence does not an European or American prerogative: "Contra Todos" (Brazil, 2004, directed by Roberto Moreira) presents the lack of perspective installed in everyday life of a family in Sao Paulo suburb, and the desperate search of its protagonists to try to overcome those limits. In both films, the big city, in its ambivalent seduction and oppression, hovers indirectly on the acts and speeches of centers depicted in the narratives, creating conflicts which end up dissolving them tragically.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=forGir66-Eg>

Identity and otherness take turn in the game of establish bounds, position us on now one side, now another, from symbolic lines which delineate. This can be the experience of three women that are presented in the road-movie by Amos Gitai director, "Free Zone" (Israel, 2007). An American, daughter of a Jewish father, an Israeli e a Palestinian that go to a free trade zone located in Jordan. Twinned in the female condition, separated by the ethnical, cultural and age experience, they see these bounds building and deconstructing around them throughout the entire journey.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdBxel9KZcg>

This boundaries porosity which denounces its arbitrariness can also be noticed in the beginning of "My Beautiful Laundrette" (United Kingdom, 1986, directed by Stephen Frears). One of the characters says to the protagonist, Omar, son of Pakistani, which are full of "in-betweens", expression for someone who is always in the range between one thing and another, but that never decide the side which stay. This speech reveals the tension of a generation of immigrants sons, lost between a culture from which they don't keep any interior feature (but

whose presence manifests by the skin color and the facial features), and an England in which they born, but paradoxically called them foreign. By other side, the "in-between" also applies to the inner experience of Omar, divided between his heterosexual obligations impregnated in the family tradition and his homosexuality. There are many options ahead to the protagonist, involving his attitude towards cultural, social and sexual bounds.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzSdRNxWJbs>

Breaking down barriers that separate and segregate individuals - firstly the class barriers, but after that one of gender, ethnical and religious - was always the dream from the revolutionary utopias. Fighting by a society fairer mobilized a lot of people, like the parents of little Anna from "La Faute à Fidel"(France, 2006, directed by Julie Gravas), who after come back from a travel to Chile of Allende, they engaged in political activism. Little Anna, however, sees scared this new reality modifying her world until now divided between the family environment and Catholic School. Adverted by the Cuban baby-sitter about the dangerous represented by Fidel Castro, she sees her house taken by strangers and bearded friends of her father, and the constant changes of baby-sitters coming from distant countries. Scared, Anna resists by her own way, but slowly builds a new apprehension of the world. The political education is aligned with sentimental education, anchored in coexistence with others.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFq46Y5GVtM>

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1990, however, seemed to have carried transforming utopias. The capitalism had won, and the free trade, now global, would be the egalitarian arena where everybody could make its dreams comes true, dependent only on the individual effort of each one. But this is not what the young protagonists from "The Edukators" (Germany, 2005, directed by Hans Weingartner) think. The friends Jan and Peter protest against income concentration, invading houses of high society members, messing their furniture and objects, but never stealing anything or hurting anyone. The objective is to destabilize the sense of safety from rich people. While Peter is traveling, Jan and Jule, Peter's girlfriend, perform an action that ends up going wrong, and are forced to kidnap Hardenberg, a businessman which had been student activist in '68. Thereafter, the radical youngsters approach the rich bourgeois and it is developed a history which shows the generation conflicts and world points of view where all of them starts to ask about their values. The political action and the possibility to change the world, even as politics from everyday life, from interpersonal relationships, are reviewed and rethought in face of contemporary dilemmas.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB1UMfC8koc>

In terms of this micro-politics of daily living, it is worth to watch "The Visitor" (EUA, 2009, directed by Tom McCarthy). Walter Vale, a lonely teacher recently widowed, is forced to return to New York to attend a conference and finds his apartment occupied by a young couple of illegal immigrants. After the intrusion was explained, Walter invites the couple - the Syrian Tarek and his Senegalese girlfriend, Zainab - to become his guest. Thereafter, an unlikely

friendship develops between the quiet teacher and the young musician. But this pleasant interlude is broken by unjust imprisonment of Tarek and his possible deportation which mobilizes Walter waging to crusade for the musician liberation. Although the film approaches the issue of immigration policies with a certain naivety, this is the context and not the central theme of the work, and does not compromise it.

*<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGjjx3WmSE>*

What does "The Visitor" talk about? It Talks about bounds, cultural and legal ones, talks about globalization, talks about social distances. But it talks mainly about the true concern to the other. Zygmunt Bauman remembers of an Anthropology professor who told him that the dawn of human society could be marked by the discovery of a fossil. It was a human skeleton that showed a broken leg in childhood – although the individual had survived until the 30 years old. Accordingly to Bauman's professor point of view, human society had born from compassion e the care with each other. Taking this compassion and concern for the other, from our everyday life to a local level, then to the global one, is the challenge that awaits us. It sounds utopian, but what are the city, and the cinema, otherwise spaces of creation and construction of utopias?