

V!RUS

Revista do Nomads.usp
Nomads.usp Journal
ISSN 2175- 974X

desenhando coexistencia | designing coexistence | sem 2-10

How to quote this document: Tapia, C., 2010. *CoexistenZ. Endpoint cohabitation*. Translated from Spanish by Gilfranco Alves Trujillo and Marcelo Tramontano. *V!RUS*, 04, [online] Available at: <<http://www.nomads.usp.br/virus/virus04/?sec=5>> [Accessed day month year].

CoexistenZ. Endpoint cohabitation

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In 1990, George Steiner wrote in his "Grammars of Creation":

We have not yet started to calibrate the damage caused to man – as a species, as the one which calls itself sapiens – by these events since 1914. We did not even start to understand the coexistence in space and time, accentuated by the immediacy of the graphic or verbal presentation in the global mass media, of the western super-abundance, with hunger, poverty, infant mortality, which attains three-fifths of mankind. There is an obviously lunatic dynamic in our waste of natural resources... Forty years after Auschwitz, the red khmers buried alive a hundred thousand of innocent people. The rest of the world, previously aware of such an event, does nothing. Due to the magnitude of the massacre, this century has the absurd contrast between available wealth and effective poverty, ... , coupled with the likelihood that either thermonuclear or bacteriological weapons can totally destroy the world, giving hopelessness a new dimension. We reached the clear possibility of a backing down in the evolution process, of a systematic return to brutalization. It is precisely this possibility which makes Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" the central modernity fable or, despite the Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, it makes plausible the famous quote from Camus: "The only serious philosophical question is suicide" (Steiner, 2001).¹

To consider an alternative to the no-return view provided by Steiner, and so avoiding responsibility for undertaking revisions to this reading or actions to address it, would reach unacceptable levels of laziness or cynicism. However, in a few lines, I'll try to sketch my position and at the same time an interpretation in this regard. More precisely speaking, it will

¹ Translation form Spanish version of Steiner, G., 2001. *Gramática de la creación*. Madrid: Editorial Siruela.

be a localization, since today there are no fixed points, and moreover two interpretations of a same question: an endogenous one and an exogenous one, respectively originated and formed within an interior and born and developed in the outside.

If Steiner is a valid starting point for us, this is because he expresses unambiguously his intentions, with all its cruelty. On a planetary scale, coexistence is a blind spot of the condition of being in the world. If we are aware of such a spot it is due to the mental image we created of it, suitable, and virtual. In this devaluation of the world, Steiner criticizes space-time disengagement that is given by the immediacy of the graphic representation. If we want to localize (this term that insists to find us) ourselves in the world, the system of constructs that we have created to ourselves promoted a way for time and another way, subsumed into the prior one, to space. Through the time we read the space. But every community process takes place within the space, even if virtual.

To give more meaning to these earlier statements, we would say that the whole system of values and knowledge is produced in transit between paradigms; these issues that everyone thinks are obvious, but looking back, not long ago, we realize they were not. We shifted from the confrontation between the natural and the artificial to the transit from the artificial to the virtual. If the first decade of this century was characterized by the so-called Digital Orgy as a doubling of the world in absolute terms, where we did not know what was original and what was a copy (only the communication media have the label to say what is real), then we can conclude that the action by excellence of our time is to retrieve the return of speech, language, representation that were expropriated by the culture of spectacle. The "Third Environment" is responsible for managing what the first environment (the nature) and second one (artificiality, manufacturing) generate. Once we place ourselves in the virtual sphere, anything can be modeled following our interests and the virtual will be the only plausible definition of reality, as Baudrillard would say: virtuality will be the only exclusive field for action and to hope the world effects to spread in it. Paradoxically, we see an exaggerated attachment to hyperreal reality, where the ridiculous, the disengaged, the impossible becomes a political justification, order and challenge. Up to this point: a part of the localization within the un-located (with no direction, with no place), and an endogenous interpretation within Steiner's text itself.

With a difficult distinction – a text is not real but can be updated, which means to become real – we will discuss an interpretation shaped from the outside of Steiner's text. Architecture grapples to it in order to get the opportunity to become more than a mere simulation and legitimization by communication media. It remains alert in case to need to move backwards, since what matters is not to grow into reality, but to be real because it grew into it: either in the media, by all means, or by imagination, or by the simulations which are consumed everyday.

Physicist Jorge Wagensber says that reality (the Kantian one, but seemingly also today) consists of two things: objects and phenomena. If the objects (spatial distribution of matter,

energy and information) occupy the space, the phenomena occupy the time (temporality transformations on objects). Therefore, Wagensberg concludes that the creation of reality coincides with the creation of time.

Few physicists are convinced of the existence of a single reality to administer and to which to feel under. Most believe in different manifestations of reality, as many as we can provide through our perception. Von Glasersfeld tells us that there is no external world, exogenous, but what exists is derived from an experience with it. A high degree of subjectivity crosses us and there is no way to discern a true world. No wonder that Humberto Maturana has located himself in this sentence:

I argue that the most important issue that mankind has before him now is the question of reality. And I argue that this is so, we realize it or not, because everything we do like modern humans, as individuals, as social entities or as members of any no social human community, implies an explicit or implicit answer to this question as a basis for rational arguments we use to justify our actions [...]. In fact, I argue that the explicit or implicit response that each of us gives the question of the reality determines how a person lives his life, as well as its acceptance or rejection of other human beings in the network of social and not social systems that the person integrates [...] (Maturana, 2009).

Well, getting to this point, combining both interpretations, we can say that if there is any possibility of thinking, this is by opening each one of us to the definition of what is real; regardless of the conclusion that the real only exists in the virtual world in some condition of the negative or reverse of the real one. If it is not possible to escape Steiner's diagnosis, and suicide is the most reasonable solution, as well as many philosophers have thought in the end of last century, then why keep going round about all this?

How would say the Wachowski brothers, the most obvious is to choose the blue pill and to continue the dream of full satisfaction, even reassuringly at the expenses of others who only dream of. Thus, Cronenberg creates a complete alternative to reality, which is but a symptom of the present time, in his movie "Existenz".

Even agreeing with Steiner, some opportunities would remain. Not in a redressing way, never global or structuring, the coexistence in the spaces for the denial would assure us an own time.

The research group OUT_Arquíás (Research to the limits in architecture), to which I belong, is part of a network of international studies (RESE). The group inquires about the notion of counterspace as a resource of present time to generate a way of developing to our existence in common. From the group's point of view, the question of counterspace arises from the knowledge of what happens in this temporality, from the handling of these assumptions, trying to clarify the opportunities this concept offers to insert the category space within culture, with a not-reconstructive intention, and from the opening provided by thinking of it in public.

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