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The theory on the balcony.
Among the postpandemic landscapes of Lockdown Architecture

Editor: *Nina Bassoli*

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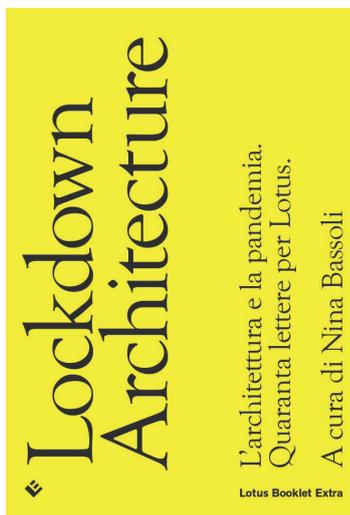
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If there is one thing that can be said about the Covid-19 pandemic, it is that it has triggered, starting from its global spread last winter, an explosion in the production of theoretical elaborations that is unprecedented in recent history. The phenomenon is unprecedented as for quantity of contributions (appeared online and on all kinds of newspapers), for their density (if we compare that quantity to the brevity of the period in which it originated) and for the variety of fields in which the pandemic seems to have generated such impacts to trigger the need for mass intellectual speculation.

One year after the beginning of this production, a polarization of the theoretical heritage gradually began to take shape. After all, the pandemic very directly questions how we inhabit, the vulnerability and normability of bodies – that is, space and biopolitics – and therefore those who were galvanized the most were, above all, the enthusiasts about both disciplines. Among which there are, of course, a myriad of architects.

Lockdown Architecture, curated by Nina Bassoli and recently published in the Lotus Booklet series, collects forty contributions on the subject commissioned, starting last June, to as many architectural firms (mostly) and academics, writers and intellectuals.

Placed in alphabetical order by first name of the authors, the contributions are arranged fluidly through the volume, without specific thematic or stylistic hierarchies, a desire expressly declared by the letter of engagement – also inserted at the beginning – in which the participants are called to free reflection.

The small but dense series deriving from it is a collection whose reading results in a satisfying experience both for those who are approaching these themes for the first time, and for experienced voyeurs of post-disaster planning.

For the former, the collection can be considered a useful overview of the main urban issues raised so far by the pandemic. Scanned by the voices of the relevant selection of exponents from the world of the project disciplines involved, cardinal issues clearly emerge, including the new role of the domestic dimension and the world-home in which everything takes place, the emergence of a sort of new environmentalist localism, the observability of new physical and immaterial boundaries in the space-

time of everyday life, the centrality of public space in urban dynamics, the relevance of open residential spaces (balconies, terraces, courtyards) and of the relationships they enable, the new Foucauldian spectra of total surveillance, the emergence of drives leading towards an anachronistic, regressive and socially disintegrating counter-urbanization, which is also one of the possible scenarios, should our society decide to rely entirely on the concept of distance. The use of legitimate doubt among the extreme alternatives “nothing will ever be the same again” and “everything will be back to what it was” is also very widespread among the authors, suspended between Gattopardesque perplexities and desires for revolution. At the same time, for the latter – that is, for the already savvy observers of the ongoing apocalypse – the book itself can perhaps be considered an almost architectural device. Like a sketch pad, each reflection similar to a theoretical drawing, all portraits of the same, very complex, thing, executed from forty points of view each separated by a minimum angle of observation. Some traits are therefore similar, subjects drawn and redesigned (a very architectural way of elaborating and transmitting thought indeed), while others completely overturn the contours of the investigation, reaching almost opposite conclusions. And it is in these subtle interpretative gaps that less beaten paths emerge. More unusual concepts whose direct discovery I suggest. They can be anticipated to the reader only through a selection of interesting images: happiness, lucid vigilance, last ones, critique of reality, redesign of supply chains, occupied landscapes, access to multiple focal lengths, loss of boundaries, struggle, ghosts, generic space, dreams, nocturnal biographies, car-free suburbs, Mediterranean city, multiscalar green infrastructure, intergenerational mix, theory-based practice, forests, empathy, us, civil servant, face disarming, guaranteed connectivity, climate medicine, atmospheric envelopes, radical adaptation, urban sponges, survival through design, metaphysical necessity, freedom, responsibility, a mobile school that reaches all places, accessibility, Potteries Thinkbelt, global community, re-spiritualization of life, public landscape, bicycles everywhere, coexistence. Like any valuable theoretical product, *Lockdown Architecture* contains old and new words, promising new spaces of thought, and therefore it also acts as a preparatory tool for the development of forthcoming theoretical discourses.