When globalization began – the latest as opposed to the many others that have occurred over several millennia – it was thought to have produced as its most immediate and long-term outcome a ‘planetary homogenization’. A kind of unification of the world – the mondialisation of which the French speak – it was considered to have dissolved the ancient barriers, cultural differences that distinguished them, the evolutionary projects that every geopolitical field would develop with a view to a ‘universal conception’ of the future. More than thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the extreme symbol of ‘division’, it is clear that the result of the global condition is very different. This is demonstrated by the continuing proliferation of new borders associated with previous ones that have not been removed. The metal curtain between the United States and Mexico, the red-hot border between Russia and Ukraine, the spatial marginalization of the Kurdish nation in relation to the context of which it is part, Chinese Hong Kong besieged by China itself, the ‘immaterial barrier’ in the European Union between the states in the center and the west and those to the east, such as Poland and Hungary, the ‘besieged border’ and continuously violated between Europe and Africa, the English Channel as a new boundary between Europe and Great Britain, within which the identity of Scotland and Wales has currently resurrected with energy, the initial dramatic revival of the ancient borders in the Balkans dissects those that remain, the Siberian mountains, the Himalayas, the desert oases, divided by insurmountable social and urban obstacles, such as the urban obstacles between central and peripheral neighbourhoods, divided by insurmountable social and conceptual walls that fragment the community into islands based essentially on income.

As previously stated, globalisation has not produced homogenization, but the opposite. Megacities, metropolises, medium and small cities have tried in every way to emphasize their identity even if they have based their evolution on the expressive model of North American cities, especially on the New York profile. Despite this common root, the propensity to assert one’s identity has materialized in such spaces as to give urban centers of any size an accentuated distinctiveness that undermines the character that Rem Koolhaas thought he had identified in contemporary cities, or rather their being a ‘generic city’. On the contrary, never before has urban petition created unique scenarios. We only have to see a single frame of a film set in a city to know where we are, even if no words appear in the local language.

The consequence of these brief considerations is the global diffusion of the image, never before seen in such density and frequency, or rather, of so many ‘iconic typologies’. A diffusion never seen before in which the different visual cultures confront each other in the desire to be recognizable in the most advanced and decisive way. Just think, for example, of the magnificent photographs of Joel Meyerowitz and those of Sebastião Salgado. If the realism of those taken by the American photographer lies in the area of a sophisticated but powerful narrative inspiration, in which color takes on a primary role, the works of the Brazilian master push the ‘realistic seeing’ towards a drama that ‘reinvents’ the world, the person, the light. In the same way, the art of portrait lies in the area of a sophisticated but powerful narrative inspiration, in which color takes on a primary role, the works of the Brazilian master push the ‘realistic seeing’ towards a drama that ‘reinvents’ the world, the person, the light. In the same way, the art of portraiture lies in the area of a sophisticated but powerful narrative inspiration, in which color takes on a primary role.

Quando ebbe inizio la globalizzazione – l’ultima rispetto alle molte altre che si sono succedute nel corso di più millenni – si pensò che essa avrebbe prodotto il suo esito più immediato e persistente una “omonologizzazione planetaria”. Una sorta di unificazione del mondo – la mondialisation – di cui parlano i francesi – si sarebbe realizzata globalmente, as to give urban centers of any size an accentuated distinctiveness that undermines the character that Rem Koolhaas thought he had identified in contemporary cities, or rather their being a ‘generic city’. On the contrary, never before has urban petition created unique scenarios. We only have to see a single frame of a film set in a city to know where we are, even if no words appear in the local language.

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Editorial. The Geography of the Image
Franco Purini

When globalization began – the latest as opposed to the many others that have occurred over several millennia – it was thought to have produced as its most immediate and long-term outcome a ‘planetary homogenization’. A kind of unification of the world – the mondialisation of which the French speak – it was considered to have dissolved the ancient barriers, cultural differences that distinguished them, the evolutionary projects that every geopolitical field would develop with a view to a ‘universal conception’ of the future. More than thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the extreme symbol of ‘division’, it is clear that the result of the global condition is very different. This is demonstrated by the continuing proliferation of new borders associated with previous ones that have not been removed. The metal curtain between the United States and Mexico, the red-hot border between Russia and Ukraine, the spatial marginalization of the Kurdish nation in relation to the context of which it is part, Chinese Hong Kong besieged by China itself, the ‘immaterial barrier’ in the European Union between the states in the center and the west and those to the east, such as Poland and Hungary, the ‘besieged border’ and continuously violated between Europe and Africa, the English Channel as a new boundary between Europe and Great Britain, within which the identity of Scotland and Wales has currently resurrected with energy, the initial dramatic revival of the ancient borders in the Balkans dissects those that remain, the Siberian mountains, the Himalayas, the desert oases, divided by insurmountable social and urban obstacles, such as the urban obstacles between central and peripheral neighbourhoods, divided by insurmountable social and conceptual walls that fragment the community into islands based essentially on income.

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With regard to the image in globalisation, for now we can identify some of its aspects, limiting them to three for reasons of space. The first is the "present". The present day does not endure as it did or will, in the "contemporary period". The present is considered the simple addition of fast moments, also very different, in which the influence of Futurism is felt, moments that give rise to a succession of visions, insights, impressions.

The same look is limited to the 'surface of things'. Hence the instantaneous and changing nature of the present, which leads the past and the future back to it, ultimately emptying them of meaning. It is no coincidence that Zig-munt Baumann coined the famous concept of 'liquid society', always on the move, in which the influence of events, people, works hybridize and mix, refusing to become something stable.

The second aspect of the image today is that it is produced within a subjective, atomized, particularistic trend. All for the benefit of productive spaces for research, it is possible to identify some aspects, limiting them to three for reasons of space. The third aspect is the prevalence of 'virtuality'. An ideal map of the world as a characteristic of every place on earth, that is, as the uniqueness of each nation, of its cultural dimension and the future projects for the earth.

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Current cinema is an image of the image, even as figurative art and the art of building, theatre, music itself becomes the image of musicians – think of Riccardo Muti – sport is 'neutralized' and expropriated of its competitive truth by the image. An ideal map of the world in the age of consumption, that every day is consumed in representing itself is very useful, as shown by the attempt made by XY. With this issue, in which each published essay proposes adequate and precise critical perspectives and outlines new and productive spaces for research, it is possible to open a cognitive path that can reveal something implicit but already active regarding the near future.

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The third aspect is the prevalence of ‘virtuality’ over true reality. For more than three decades we have persisted in thinking, from those who identify with the ‘global engine’, that is with the digital age, that what is completely concrete is not what exists, but its alchemical transformation into a kind of revealing formula that acts in the domain of the imaginary. It is no coincidence that the ‘smart city’, a definition that the writer does not love, has demonstrated in the time of Covid-19 its total and painful failure. Only if any utopia remains in its field can it really be operational. It is well known that once it is achieved, it always turns into a ‘dystopia’. Current imagi-nations, being related to the earth, produced by a satellite that explores the planet – a journey that has allowed extraordinary discoveries – both at ground level, in a connection with the horizon, and concerning the dark realm of caves, are all the more powerful the more they are the result of an exploratory vision, a ‘project of seeing’, a passionate question, and in its obsessive way, about the being of things, in the sense of their continuing or disappearing.

Reality has always been an ideal place for a rethinking by human beings, who often wanted to change it, but have never thought of building a combination in which the virtual replaces the concrete.

What these short notes propose is the need to identify a ‘geography of the image’ that is equivalent to understanding the multiplicity and localization of so many landscapes in the world. A geography that makes viable the primacy of the present. The present is the ‘contemporary period’. The present is the “motore globale”, ovvero nel digitale, che e delinea nuovi e produttivi spazi per la ricerca, si può aprire un percorso conoscitivo che può rivelare qualcosa di implicito ma di giusto riguardante il prossimo futuro.