THE NEW FRONTIERS OF URBAN SPACE
IN A GLOCAL WORLD:
BETWEEN PANDEMIC
AND IMMIGRATION

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Abstract: Global cities have historically been the symbolic meeting place of the long-standing relationship between immigration and globalization. But the pandemic has challenged this historic relationship. The virus has had an unprecedented impact on global economic immigration, it has altered the dynamics of international population movements. Global cities, never so dark and silent, are the iconoclastic representations of the crises produced by the health emergency. The concept of space and time changes in the international geopolitical landscape, but also in everyday life, from homes to offices, from city streets to the suburbs. Faced with the "network of bits" that connect everything, passing beyond physical borders, the architecture of the cities, the places of life and work is destined to adapt to new urban planning and new ideas of living space. The aim of this paper is to analyse from a geopolitical perspective the evolution of urban space in the new post-pandemic normality in a glocal world.

Keywords: city, globalization, glocalism, immigration, pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Global cities have historically been the symbolic meeting point of the long-standing relationship between immigration and globalisation. But the pandemic has challenged this historic relationship. The virus has had an unprecedented impact on global economic immigration, it has altered the dynamics of international population movements. In developed countries there has been a decline in new arrivals and many resident immigrants have decided to return to their country of origin. Global cities, never so dark, deserted, and silent, are the iconoclastic representations of the crises produced by the health emergency.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, in fact, confirmed that ours is a glocal world, that is, a world based on a close relationship between the global and local spheres. The virus has created a tension between its spread that knows no borders and the principle of national territorial sovereignty as the locus of political responsibility (Milani 2020): it is a disordered world (Pagnini, Terranova 2020). We are witnessing a technological breakthrough that changes the space-time relationship: eliminating time and thus bringing the relationship with space to infinity. The new methods of communication have undermined, as has the virus, the traditional schematic frontiers of physical and political geography (Vento, Zasio 2020). The rapid spread of the virus shows that the international order, hitherto based on borders and territorial political spheres as defined by itself, is today facing an unstable world with complex problems caused by factors such as innovation and the mobility of people, goods and especially information. The international health emergency has consecrated the beginning of a new glocal era: the infinitely small has a direct relationship with the infinitely large; it can challenge the world (Bassetti 2020).

A glocalist perspective may suggest continuing to look to countries. But also, to local political entities, such as cities, to macro-regions (Cusimano, Mercatanti 2019) and super-national cultural identities, such as civilizations (Cadeddu 2020), for example the British Commonwealth but especially the Italica Global Community[1] (Bassetti 2015). That which complicates the analysis is the fact that neither cities nor civilizations have a fixed definition, since they are both the result of a constantly changing network of people, which modifies the meanings and values of human actions. Furthermore, local political behaviors clearly contribute to changing civilizations, just as each civilization (defined by a coherent vision of values) influences behaviors in local political realities. The rapid development of technology, together with the global pursuit of economic interests, has made interaction with each other a structural feature of society and one of the greatest challenges of our time will be the possibility for civilizations to agree on a set of meta-values based on reciprocity (Köchler 2020). In the current global context, the interaction between different and often

incompatible value systems has the potential to create conflicts, especially in this pandemic phase. The agreement on a set of meta-values can open the possibility for a new dialogue between civilizations. Geography is still the destiny it has been for centuries. And today, in the era of fast, even instantaneous connections, in the season of new multi-identities (Sen 2008) and hybridizations, together with geography connectivity is also destiny (Khanna 2016).

Political geography is flanked by the functional geography of exchange processes in the most diverse fields. We are in a world-society, inhabited by a multitude of civilizations and global communities that exist, thanks also to advances in technology, regardless of the political borders of nation-states, and are sustained by continuous flows of ideas, people, goods, and money, and they constantly expand and mix to better solve the problems that associated living raises every day.

In this disordered world, our society is also liquid; it no longer has those boundaries or "partages" that made it stable and immobile (Fukuyama 2020). The concept of space and time changes in the international geopolitical landscape, but also in everyday life, from homes to offices, from city streets to the suburbs. Faced with the "network of bits" that connect everything, passing beyond physical borders, the architecture of the cities, the places of life and work is destined to adapt to new urban planning and new ideas of living space.

An age of change is underway. We are going through the worst crisis that the generations born after 1945 have experienced. The term crisis, from the Greek krysis, evokes a separation and a choice. The crisis is cyclically inevitable and can make individuals become aware of their limits and push them to better adapt to their environment (Thom 1989; Ross 2021). The paradigm shift occurs when we become aware that the old is no longer essential to interpret what is happening at present. Here, then, is the creative component, the new one that frees itself from its own cocoon. From this point of view, the pandemic has accelerated the processes that were already underway and of which we were not fully aware. We are witnessing a sort of natural selection that affects old age in the broadest sense of the term: elderly people with poor health, but also companies

or that part of the now obsolete socio-economic model (Cingolani 2020).

The pandemic has forced us to change our habits and the way we work. Smart working and smart studying put the digital literacy of the population and the country's IT infrastructures to the test. Businesses must rethink their organization, the governance model, the very principle of productivity. Wages, prices, and profits are inevitably transformed. We will see how many and which of these changes become permanent and be able to respond to the needs of humanity (Cingolani 2020).

GLOBAL CITIES BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW WORLD

Cities have played important roles in connecting the world through the ages and through the processes of modernization (Sassen 1991). When we look at history, we see that cities preceded our contemporary ways of identifying power. Important cities existed long before the concept of state and sovereign state existed. Over time, the rise of the nation-state has been such that in various periods the state has become more powerful. In that period, it is interesting to observe how in some cases the cities became impoverished, and many lost some of their functions as in fact these functions were assigned to the State which defined borders, regulatory systems, and population growth.

Since the 1990s, the processes of globalization have once again changed the power relations between cities and nation-states, this time strengthening the former at the expense of the latter. This is how so-called global cities began to take hold. Global cities are profoundly different from those of the nineteenth century because they often do not actually belong to the state but are in effect global. They are important at the regional level but also serve as operational centers of the global economy (Sassen 1991). They have become increasingly glocal.

With the coming of the new millennium, the importance of global cities has continued to increase. In 2002, Richard Florida foresaw in his essay *The Rise of the New Creative Class* an urban neo-Renaissance fueled by the concentration in a selection of

international metropolises of highly qualified talents: architects, artists, engineers, doctors, biologists, scientists, writers, etc. (Florida 2002). In the first two decades of the 2000s, global cities located in economically and technologically advanced geographic areas, which Richard Florida defines as peaks of excellence, demonstrated an exceptional ability to attract talent and investment from abroad. To the point of becoming real avant-garde poles, detached from the states that host them territorially, and connected to each other by digital infrastructures that establish a new potential international order. It is a phenomenon that Parag Khanna defined in his work Connectography (Khanna 2017).

The scientific community is today wondering whether the Covid-19 pandemic will reduce the power acquired by global cities or represent a stimulus to innovate them by trying to balance competitiveness, social inclusion, and sustainability. Covid-19 transformed cities and their public and private spaces into ghost towns. This reaction to the virus was accentuated in the main megacities and cities of art in a matter of weeks by the unprecedented return of workers to their places of origin and by the lack of tourists who had stopped traveling.

There is no shortage of reasons for being pessimistic. During the pandemic, cities are frightened by the density of population that in normal times makes them hives of creativity, but which at this point shows vulnerability towards a still little-known virus. Restaurants, theaters, museums, concerts, night clubs that have made living in the city attractive, suffer from the obligations arising from the need to comply with the anti-Covid-19 regulations: from social distancing to the use of masks. There is a risk that even after the pandemic many may continue to be wary of going out to dinner in crowded restaurants or going to see their favorite musician in a concert venue surrounded by thousands of people.

In the last half century, large global cities have grown and displaced smaller ones, as well as rural suburbs and even nation-states, thanks to their modern and innovative social, economic, and cultural fabric; ideal for encouraging professional relations at an elevated level of knowledge and communication, which

generates added value, that is, wealth, to the economy of the most advanced metropolises.

This type of highly skilled worker that fuels the creativity of a city was, however, forced by the emergence of the pandemic to move, in a short space of time, from working in their offices in the large buildings of the most important global urban centers to working online. This phenomenon has weakened the position of metropolises and, as we will see in the next section, of low-skilled immigrant workers who historically have found employment in the service sector in global cities. It remains to be seen whether this decline in global cities caused by the pandemic will eventually represent an opportunity to rethink urban space. In other words, whether global cities will take advantage of the current situation to innovate once again and adapt to the new glocalized world. It could be a revolutionary process of modernization through which global cities would begin to respond to needs hitherto neglected (inclusion and redistribution of the advantages of globalization, for example) in favor of exclusively economic factors such as productivity and competitiveness. It is easier to imagine that the city will not disappear with the pandemic, but it will certainly emerge differently from the one we knew up until early 2020. This is not the first time this has happened; since time immemorial, cities have been epicenters of communicable diseases. However, to date at least, no pandemic, plague or natural disaster has killed the city or humanity's need to live and work in urban districts. This is because the concentration of people and economic activities in the city, which acts as a driving force for innovation and economic growth, is simply too strong.

THE URBAN SPACE BETWEEN MIGRATION AND PANDEMIC

The pandemic has upset the balance in the historic union between immigration and globalization that has always had global cities as a symbol of its coexistence. It is an imbalance that risks altering, as we will see in this paragraph, the relations between the North and the South of the world.

In 2020, for the first time in several decades, the requests for visas and residency permits by economic migrants fell in OECD countries, with a fall of -72 per cent in the second quarter. The repercussions of the health emergency have also affected immigrants already residing in the main developed nations. Some have returned to their homeland; others are consuming their savings waiting for a recovery in the labor market. In the United States, the unemployment rate of foreign nationals in the pre-pandemic phase was almost one percentage point lower than that recorded among natural born citizens, now it is two percentage points higher. In Sweden, 60 per cent of the increase in the number of unemployed in the so-called first wave affected immigrants. These are examples of a trend recorded in all countries for which data are available (OECD 2021).

Irregular migration flows have also been affected by the restrictions on movement due to the pandemic. For example, the European Commission declared a total of approximately 114,000 arrivals in 2020, a 10 per cent decrease compared to 2019, the lowest figure in the last six years.

The World Bank found that in 2020 remittances from immigrants to low-medium income countries fell by 7.2 per cent compared to the previous year: in absolute terms about 508 billion dollars against 554 billion recorded in 2019. The frequency of money transfers by immigrants to their countries of origin, risks returning to the levels of 1999[2] (World Bank 2020).

Social consequences can also be added to the economic repercussions because when material remittances fall, intangible ones also decrease. This latter aspect was introduced in the international scientific literature in the 1990s when, at the end of a long study of the Dominican immigrant community of Chicago, the American Peggy Levitt spoke for the first time about social remittances (Levitt 1998). Levitt explained that immigrants not only send money home but also news and information on the rules, customs, and traditions, both public and private, that are observed in the countries in which they moved to live and work. This type of remittance is of equal, if not greater, importance to the countries of destination than the material ones. In fact, they are part of a transnational network

(Sassen 2007) based on an articulated network of exchanges that allows immigrants and their families to live simultaneously in two different and often distant societies. With the result of shortening the gap that for a long time had prevented those who were further behind from updating and improving their human capital which in the modern world represents the greatest factor of wealth.

The recipients of this type of remittance are not only the families of immigrants but also their communities because they can influence and modify the management models of the *res pubblica* and the traditional ideas that citizens have about the functioning of politics and democracy in their countries. Without forgetting, moreover, the power that social remittances can have as a link for entrepreneurs in developing countries to the markets of industrialized ones and access to new lines of financing for their activities. The decline in material and social remittances could alter relations between the North and South of the world.

It is an unprecedented scenario in the contemporary history of immigration, especially in the Western world. The causes are manifold. The health emergency has created a global economic crisis that has hit most severely the service sector, households, and businesses which inherently require a large, low-skilled foreign workforce. Hotels, bars, and restaurants, for example, are among the businesses that have many immigrants among their employees but are also those that more than other economic sectors have suffered the consequences of lockdowns and the measures used to combat the spread of the pandemic.

This picture has been further complicated by the consequences of the destructive innovation of teleworking (Autor, Reynolds 2020). In just a few months, it has altered the habits of millions of skilled and qualified workers, immigrants and non-immigrants, especially in large global urban areas. The threat of the virus has forced freelancers and managers of industry, finance, media, and public administrations all over the world to experiment with remote working. And for those, living and working from home rather than, as in the past, outside the home, had as the first immediate consequence that of giving up, at least in part, the jobs previously delegated to others because of lack of time or for economic necessity.

In short, teleworking is a form of automation of the labor market. It is an innovation that seems destined to transform the demand in global cities for real estate, cleaning services, home care assistance, taxis and, more generally, those types of jobs that were in great demand in the past by skilled workers. It is an analysis that seems to find practical confirmation, for example, in Europe, as recently reported by the English weekly newspaper "The Economist" which in the historic Charlemagne column, dedicated to European affairs, published an in-depth study entitled *How the pandemic reversed old migration patterns in Europe* (The Economist 2021). The analysis shows that in 2020 the number of immigrants from Eastern European countries who left Western ones to return to their homeland increased as never happened before. It is estimated, for example, that 1.3 million Romanians and 500,000 Bulgarians returned home. While countries such as Lithuania registered, for the first time in recent history, more arrivals than departures. This reversal of intra-European migration flows also affected highly skilled immigrant workers.

As a result of teleworking thousands of managers and professionals have returned to their countries of origin. However, they have lost neither their jobs nor their related salaries that guarantee them, (given the average lower prices of goods and services at home), a much higher purchasing power. Not to mention that their know-how acquired abroad can represent a formidable national asset: in short, from brain drain to brain gain (Weinar 2021).

The pandemic has also changed the migration flows of international students. In the universities of the United States of America, for example, in the academic year 2019/2020, the number of foreign freshmen fell by twenty thousand units compared to the previous year (Israel, Batalova 2021). It is a trend that had started before the virus emerged, but has been accelerated by the pandemic, especially due to the growth of distance learning. It is a not drastic decline, but relevant at a symbolic level because it is the first negative sign that the US has registered since 1965, when the American government with the Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the entry bans that had up until that time restricted access to certain nationalities, thus

allowing all international students to believe and invest in the
American dream.

   If the market and employment are in crisis in developed
nations, for the inhabitants of the relatively less advanced coun-
tries, apart from refugees, the incentives that until recently en-
couraged them to leave are now likely to fail.

   A condition complicated by the nature of the productivity
crisis created by the pandemic that hit the service sector which,
especially in the last twenty years, had driven the informal im-
migration market, both regular and irregular. Many commercial
and entrepreneurial activities will be forced to change their
work organization models. Many may not survive the crisis.
Others will survive, but will be forced to scale down and, where
possible, automate production in order to make profits while
producing less. The demand for home care assistants could also
drop; in some contagion clusters a generation of elderly has dis-
appeared. The families of the survivors, afraid of the risk of con-
tagion, could refuse to hire, at least for the time being, foreign
workers to assist their vulnerable relatives. Small ethnic enter-
prises could face competition from the natural born population
who, having lost their jobs, could return to occupations they
had previously abandoned. In other words, in this scenario, the
long-standing informal agreement between the North and
South of the world, based generally, on the export of lower
value-added products from industrialized countries to those
with lower wage systems, could change. And, on the contrary,
the arrival of immigrant workers from the latter to the former,
especially in the business sector, and public and private ser-
vices.

THE NEW POST-PANDEMIC NORMALITY

   The pandemic has changed the relationship and dynamics
between cities, immigration, and globalization. However, it is
difficult to assess whether these changes are the temporary and
conditioned reflection of the exceptional measures imple-
mented to combat the virus globally. Or the sign of a new world

with rules and dynamics still to be defined. However, there are at least two observations that can help us find an answer.

The first observation concerns the fact that any change in behavior and habits, even if voluntary and temporary, can have unexpected developments. It is a phenomenon that Wilhelm Wundt formalized with the expression *heterogonie der zwecke*, or the unintended consequences of intentional actions. In its analysis on the reversal of intra-European migration flows, the Economist reports, for example, that among Eastern European immigrants who have returned home in recent months with the intention of emigrating again once the pandemic was over, the number of those who have already changed their minds is increasing. Many have decided to invest on a personal and professional level in their homeland. There are those who have already started small businesses with the savings earned abroad. Or those who, confident of soon finding a job, take advantage of the time and quality of life among friends and family in homes and communities that are often more comfortable than those in which they were forced to live in the peripheries of large cities far from home. Especially since their entry into the EU, Eastern European countries have registered a reduction in the economic and wage gap with those of the West. Doing the same job, a Romanian worker in Italy can now count on a salary equal to three times what they would earn at home, but in 2010 it was equal to five times.

These are behaviors that in the psychological field can be explained with the so-called terror management theory (Becker 1973): every time one feels close to death or is in an extreme situation, one tends to take stock of one's existence. With the pandemic for the first time, the world stopped, it had time to look at itself in the mirror and take stock of its past.

This forced pause for reflection has prompted at least a part of the world's population to re-evaluate the time and quality of their lives. There are those currently working from home who do not intend to give up this greater freedom and time which they can dedicate to themselves and their families. The number of people who refuse to return to commuting, go to the office or accept inconvenient hours has increased globally to levels never seen before. It is a phenomenon that in the United

States is called The Big Quit or The Great Resignation. It is estimated that in 2021 the number of employees in the US who decided to resign because they were tired of their work increased between 15 per cent and 20 per cent compared to 2019 (D'Alessandro 2021). According to the Work Trend Index 2021, 41 per cent of global respondents are considering leaving their jobs this year and 46 per cent are likely to move elsewhere because they can now work remotely.

Added to this are phenomena such as what in Italy has been defined as South Working. This is an inversion of internal migration flows which historically in Italy has always been in a South-North direction. With the pandemic and the acceleration of digital innovations, such as tele working, in 2020 and 2021 there was an increase of southern workers in Northern Italy who chose to return home, working remotely and taking advantage of socio-economic advantages to live away from large urban agglomerations.

These are behaviors and trends that fall within the definition of another neologism produced by the pandemic: the so-called Yolo economy (Roose 2021), from the acronym You only live once, that is, the economy of those who have begun to put quality of life first. It is the result of the many questions people have asked themselves during the lockdowns about the lives they had been living pre-pandemic.

The second observation concerns the discriminatory nature of what has been defined as the Yolo economy. During the pause for reflection that the pandemic imposed on all of humanity, many have understood that they want to change their lives, devote more time to themselves and their family. But this is a privilege that not everyone can afford. The pandemic has accelerated the digital revolution with an unprecedented impact on the organization of work. The problem is that the great processes of modernization, and therefore of change, are never win-win: there are winners and losers. Think of the Luddites who protested against the steam engine or the scribes who fought against Gutenberg's movable type printing machine which in one day could produce what up to that point would have required a thousand days of writing by hand (Terranova 2021).

In other words, there is a risk that the era of change accelerated by the international health emergency could accentuate, especially in the West, the conflicts between two opposing social blocks: Anywhere vs Somewhere (Goodhart 2017). The first category includes a minority of global professionals, super specialized and educated who during the pandemic, thanks to teleworking and more generally to new technologies, benefited from the tragic advent of the virus. Not only that. They could also afford to work remotely from exotic destinations that often offered them easier access to vaccinations to attract them.

The less qualified belong to the second category, those employed in tasks that concern the activities most affected by the anti-Covid-19 regulations, those related to the traditional definition of territory: from catering to construction or home care assistance. Among these is the very high percentage of immigrants who, having often lost their work, also lost the possibility to send those economic remittances, which for decades have been the driving force of the economic development of their countries of origin.

The pandemic has, therefore, underlined the division that has been emerging since the 1990s between the winners and losers of globalization and immigration (Sassen 2014). The international health emergency, with its powerful destructive force, could accentuate the anxiety and frustration of the "Somewheres" with unpredictable consequences on the social population, especially in the West. In the recent past, the "Somewheres" fearful of globalization and immigration sought political refuge in the heterogeneous union of nationalistic and neo-populist movements (Camus 2015). They still now, at least in part, defend themselves from pandemic fears by supporting virus deniers and vaccine conspirators. A problem complicated by the fact that, to recall a theme addressed in 1983 by the Nobel Prize economist Wassily Leontief, those left behind, the people excluded from the processes of innovation and transnational mobility, are not like the horses that the advent of tractors pushed aside until they disappeared from modern agriculture in silence and without protest.

CONCLUSIVE REFLECTIONS: THE FUTURE CITY

Global urban spaces are the symbol of the creative destruction caused by the pandemic that has accelerated the transition from the old to the new normal in a glocal world. The pandemic has seriously damaged the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and their residents who do not have adequate health insurance, access to medical care and who are most vulnerable to job losses. This is also a fundamental issue of both security and fairness. The concentration of poverty, economic inequality and racial segregation provides fertile ground for amplifying the negative effects of the international health emergency.

Think, for example, of how the conflicts created by the "uberization" of cities can be exacerbated by the pandemic and become the symbol of the clash between Anywhere and Somewhere, that is, between the winners and losers of the current modernization processes. The term uberization defines the range of services offered by innovative economic players (Amazon, Uber, Airbnb, Deliveroo etc.) that in recent years has transformed the landscape of work in the urban space. The phenomenon of uberization is the basis of what has been called the gig economy, that is, the economy of temporary, short-term work. The economic actors of uberization distinguish themselves from the classic service platforms because their business is based on a subcontracting system. To meet the demands of their customers, they do not rely on full time employees, but on temporary workers who are on call and earn based on the number of deliveries and services they can offer.

It is a system based on a form of collective precariat that bypasses the traditional rights of workers. The gig economy produces enormous benefits for the owners of the platforms and for the customers who buy goods and services just in time with super convenient times and prices. But they are advantages that depend heavily on the deregulated work of a heterogeneous group of on-call workers who live on precarious work with hourly wages often well below the nationally agreed minimum wages. During lockdown the frustration of gig economy workers increased because they were in extremely high demand; they guaranteed the demands of customers confined to home but

continued to earn very low wages at the very real and serious risk of contracting the virus.

Uberization is just one example of the many conflicts and disputes that have been accentuated by the pandemic in the urban space. This is one of the considerations that has prompted various international experts and scholars to rethink the spaces and ways of living together in urban space in what will be the new post-pandemic normal. Inclusion, fairness, sustainability, and security should be the drivers of the future city. Richard Florida has, for example, proposed a 21st century city innovation plan based on the following ten key points.

Airports and train stations represent a strategic engine of economic development: they cannot be left inactive for a long period. A mobilization comparable to that which the international community put in place after the Twin Tower attacks in 2001 is required, adding to the already operational security systems, the systematic checking of passenger body temperature and a health screening network inside airports. It will be necessary to find new solutions to avoid overcrowding in terminals and on-board aircraft, and to ensure supplies of medical devices for personal protection.

Reevaluating structurally and urgently the services provided by stadiums, arenas, conference centers, cinemas, and theaters to avoid that once the pandemic is over, citizens stay away for fear of possible new infections. The sooner large-scale civic infrastructure can be safely reopened, the faster our urban economies will be able to recover in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Reviewing local public transport (buses, subways, trains) to avoid overcrowding. This means redesigning spaces and seats but also varying the opening hours of shops (to reduce the number of people leaving home at the same time) and encouraging the use of sustainable, alternative means of transport. Many cities worldwide have begun to invest in cycle and scooter paths and have improved car/scooter sharing and forms of urban mobility that before the pandemic had a marginal role.

Reexamining the utilization of internal spaces in hospitals, schools, and universities to avoid overcrowding by those who benefit from the activities and services offered within them.

Improving and reorganizing the operation of teleworking. This means, for example, alternating on a weekly basis work in presence and remote work; reviewing employment contracts, guaranteeing forms of welfare and insurance even when working remotely (e.g. remote-work accidents); investing in innovative forms and coworking spaces in city centers to encourage new kinds of socialization, taking advantage of the properties that large companies will sell due to the increase in teleworking and prevent remote working from being reduced to simply working from home. This would be an important element to relaunch the city centers today affected and impoverished by the decline in the so called "lunch break economy" that guaranteed large revenues to a variety of entrepreneurs.

In large urban centers, restaurants, bars, and shops are the ones most affected economically by the crisis. Public aid to the owners of these businesses must firstly be used to overcome the emergency in the short term, and secondly to invest in infrastructure that will allow them to remain open in the future even during a pandemic.

Reinventing the creative and artistic economy of the city; supporting and improving the provision of exhibitions and artistic performances.

Setting up on a metropolitan scale a task force of expert urban planners, geographers, engineers, architects, and psychologists to assess how to prevent a new pandemic from striking certain groups and districts in different territorial areas.

Raising the quality and safety standards of those who work on the frontline of emergencies that threaten the health and safety of the city: nurses, ambulance drivers, supermarket staff, police officers, warehouse workers, deliverymen and logistics staff.

Investing in urban regeneration. In particular, it will be crucial to invest in so-called green cities. According to Edward Glaeser, the term "green" has three meanings. The first concerns the need to lower carbon dioxide emissions in urban spaces: polluting transport will have to be reduced and urban pedestrian areas increased. The second meaning concerns the concept of integrating greenery, plants and trees, with the lives of citizens. In this regard, Glaeser emphasises, it will be better to invest in many small green parks spread throughout the city

rather than having just one big green lung like Central Park in New York. During the various lockdowns, all over the world, we realised how important it is to have green spaces close at hand where you can connect with nature. The third aspect is adaptation, the need to protect urban spaces from the effects of global warming. Cities are extremely vulnerable in this respect and can suffer flooding and damage from storms, snowfall, high temperatures or storm surges. It is important to consider green spaces with this specific protective function (Glaeser 2021).

It is possible to imagine that the pandemic will not downsize but will, however, change the city of the 21st century. Some aspects of our cities and metropolitan areas will be remodeled, depending on how long the current pandemic lasts. Fear of crowds, subways and trains in particular, as well as the desire for a safer and healthier environment, may draw some out of the cities and into rural areas. Families with children and vulnerable people can swap their city apartments for a house in the country, but new forces will push people to large urban centers. Ambitious young people will continue to flock to cities in search of personal and professional opportunities. Artists and musicians may stay in town attracted by plummeting real estate prices. The crisis could represent an opportunity to rethink the concept of space and time in our cities, making them more inclusive and accessible. From this perspective, the pandemic could be a tool to revive the creative force of our cities and their capacity to attract young people and immigrants in a glocal world (Florida 2020).

NOTES

[1] An Italic is someone who loves, appreciates, and recognizes the charm of Italy. The way of life and the commonality of values is the glue that unites the italics around the world, and this can become a soft power of Italy. Italics live in countries and societies that are culturally and geographically far from each other and do not necessarily have Italian kinship or ancestry. Recognizing oneself in the Italica Global Community does not mean a renunciation of one's own national identity but the entrance to an enriching dimension. To be italic is a characteristic in progress, open to hybridization. The Italics represent a global community, to be developed and recognized following the example of the most famous Anglo-Saxon, Hispanic, French-speaking civilizations, and in the future probably Chinese and African (Salvini 2015).

² The World Bank recently updated this forecast upwards, but only because it found that many immigrants stranded abroad, unable to return to their homeland, have been forced to resort to formal channels to send remittances home, often eroding their own savings.

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