CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN ECONOMICS, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Not just limits: the geographical boundaries as places of meeting and diffusion of cultural traits

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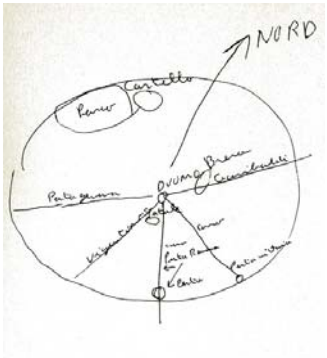
Abstract

Boundaries are a consolidating subject in the contemporary study of human geography. Newman's observations justify an analysis of the persistent geopolitical and cultural action played by these objects in all their forms, even if consider contemporary spaces as de-territorialized and borderless and regions only as elements of a global network. In fact material and non-material limits are meaningful sources of information for reading the structure of territories and for understanding their social, cultural political, ecosystemic and historical relationships: boundaries leave landmarks (material and non-material) on landscapes, immediately related to their own geopolitical function, these landmarks become objects of human perception (primarily visual) and are also the subject of political representation (landscapes); boundaries are the primitives of spatial knowledge on which peoples build their own geographical images of places; boundaries are a mighty basis of the mimetic function played by the cartographic language. Therefore, considering both their physical and narrative dimensions, we can state that geographical boundaries rather than being limits or barriers, are places directly involved in the diffusion of cultural traits. This issue will be discussed focusing on the role played by limits and boundaries on landscapes, cartography and mental representations of space.

'In a variety of formats and intensities, boundaries continue to demarcate the territories within which we are compartmentalized, determine with whom we interact and affiliate, and the extent to which we are free to move from one space to another' (Newman, 2003: 123)



Fonte dell'immagine:
Bianchi E., Perussia F.,
Il centro di Milano: percezione e realtà, 1978

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The seminar is part of the CISEPS project "**The diffusion of cultural traits**", whose goal is to trigger interdisciplinary debates, emphasizing common problems and peculiarities among economics, philosophy, anthropology, geography, history, biology and many more fields. Thinking in terms of cultural traits – i.e., characters depending in some way on social learning – doesn't imply exhaustion of cultural processes; rather, it means thinking critically to scientific models and metaphors for studying culture.

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