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## A Review of Leonardo Caffo and Azzurra Muzzonigro's "Costruire Futuri: Migrazioni, città, immaginazioni"

Steven Umbrello  
Institute for Ethics and  
Emerging Technologies

### Abstract

*Modernism has provided a strong case for technoproggressivism, innovation and speculation on future possibilities. However, drastic and often devastating consequences have followed modernism such as global warming and mass biodiversity loss. In Leonardo Caffo and Azzurra Muzzonigro's new book<sup>1</sup>, a case for posthumanism as a means for envisioning and rethinking futures studies is argued and practical means by which those futures can be realized are outlined.*

A critique of modernity and grand narratives of unification, Caffo and Muzzonigro aim to reevaluate contemporaneity to imagine more authentic futures and the means by which peoples can realize them. At its core, *Costruire Futuri* (literally, Constructing Futures) is a prototypical work in posthumanist ethics, but anything but aprototypical in its execution.

The authors contend that the hybridization between the disciplines of philosophy, art and architecture are essential engines for change. Similarly, the book itself is constructed as a hybrid project rather than one of simple interdisciplinarity, one that hybridizes the three disciplines as co-constituting one another. The central thesis here is that constructing futures means correcting past errors as if they are causes rather than mere consequences. The past is alive, embodied and continually transforming current and future practices. Similarly, envisioned futures shape the present and affect the hermeneutics of the past.

Caffo and Muzzonigro argue that the ecological crisis of the twenty-first century necessitates a re-envisioning of how distant groups and cultures can come into a 'third space,' one that is created to motivate a dialogue that is explicit, public and accessible (58).

The book is constructed in an unorthodox approach. Composed of only 107 pages of actual text (excluding the table of contents which is located at the back of the book, and the bibliography), the book is divided into three distinct parts. The core of the book (85 pages long) is the authors' explication and argument for their posthumanist hybridization of the three disciplines. It is here that they draw on the work of three scholars: 1) Stefano Boeri (architect), 2) Amos Gitai (actor and architect) and 3) Adrian Paci (sculptor and artist). The theories and work from the three are employed as the philosophical axis from which the authors' make their argument for the necessity of the hybridization of the three disciplines as a means by which desirable futures can be imagined and constructed.

The second part of the book titled "Constructing Futures: A Manifesto in 10 Points" (my translation) runs only five pages and acts as a sort of pointed summary of the first part of the book. The third and final part is a transcribed and translated (from English into Italian) dialogue between the three scholars and is covered in eleven pages.

The book, although remarkably short, is well-researched and philosophically rigorous, something that is not always seen within the scholarship and literature that constitute the posthumanities. Similarly, the book draws on much of the recent and relevant literature such as Haraway (2016), Morton (2007, 2016) and Singer (2016) to name a few. There is much to endorse this book, but above all is its lack of obtuseness and purposeful obscurantism that has and is characteristic of much of the posthumanist corpus.

The only fault with this text, if it can be characterized as such, is the inability for it to be widely disseminated given that it is currently printed only in its original language of Italian. However, given the strength of its thesis, the implications that it enrolls and the novelty of its composition makes an obvious case for its translation. To this end, it seems prudent that a review such as this, given the book's exclusivity, give at least a rudimentary outline of the ten points given that it succinctly and explicitly captures the thesis:

1. Constructing futures requires a body-based ethics for anticipation, and as a site for understanding identity and relations with others is necessary for envisioning futures.<sup>2</sup>
2. Constructing futures means that there is no privileged central position. The margins, the peripheries of disciplines, peoples and forms of life are shared and common spaces where hybridization can take shape.
3. Constructing futures entails both the distinction and connection of various forms of life. Realizing differences and heterogeneity is necessary for potent hybridization. Rather than totalize, oppress, or erase differences, we should envision the hybridization space as a porous membrane that allows for differing connections while affirming distinctness between entities.
4. Constructing futures means that groups must always remain open to the most substantial amount of future possibilities to permit transformations to develop. This entails a type of control of possibilities, but without dominance. This means that control should be limited as per point (1), respecting the boundaries of the bodies of other forms of life.

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5. Constructing futures means the development of shared time, space and tools for the distribution of agency, knowledge, practices and means of production. A collective intelligence is advocated that is less vertical and hierarchical, but horizontal and shared.
6. Constructing future means making room for models of relationships, management and production based on activation/kinetic engagement. Multiplicity becomes wealth when everyone has the possibility to trigger processes of transformation. This entails the expungement of superiority, unification and egocentrism.
7. Constructing futures means the shift from metaphysics to ecology. The ecological thought (see also Morton 2012) means the abandonment of the metaphysical ideal of the individual towards the concept of relations between entities as fundamentally constructive of their identities.
8. Constructing futures means the abandonment of anthropocentrism, shifting away from the privileged place that humanistic and modernist philosophy has placed humans and towards an understanding of a plurality of phenomenologies that exist regardless of the categories that we impose on them. This abandonment is the starting place for alliances to be formed between different forms of life.
9. Constructing futures means to look at the limits of the projects and actions undertaken in the past. This means looking at the changes to the structure of our actions rather than just the details of the actions themselves.
10. Constructing futures means aiming at peace. This is the conditions of the animal that is fully seated, still and fully present to themselves. This requires an understanding of phenomenological differences and the lack of pure isolation, but instead of interconnected enmeshments with all things.

In sum, *Costruire Futuri* is a markedly unique text. Composed of various stylistic parts, salted with beautiful art pieces to refer to during the narrative arguments and the clarity of its execution makes this text a pivotal reference to humanities scholars generally. Although in its current language it remains hard to access and disseminate, the value of the book itself makes its translation imperative and assured in the near future.

## Correspondence

Steven Umbrello  
 Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies  
 Postal Address: 241 Mapes Avenue, Woodbridge, Ontario, Canada, L4L 8R8  
 Telephone: +1-416-509-9596  
 Email Address: [steve@ieet.org](mailto:steve@ieet.org)  
 ORCID: 0000-0003-2594-6313

## Endnotes

1. **Costruire Futuri: Migrazioni, città, immaginazioni - Con un dialogo tra Stefano Boeri, Amos Gitai e Adrian Paci** by Leonardo Caffo and Azzurra Muzzonigro, Bompani/Giunti Editore, Firenze, 2018, 128 pp., € 11.00 (Paperback), ISBN 9788845295782. (*Constructing Futures: Migrations, Cities, Imaginations – with a dialogue between Stefano Boeri, Amos Gitai e Adrian Paci.*)

2. The body-based ethics that constitutes the crux of the thesis, and point 1 specifically, are extrapolations and re-tooling's from the work of Judith Butler (1993)
3. All page references are to Caffo, L., & Muzzonigro, A. (2018). *Costruire futuri: Migrazioni, città, immaginazioni - Con un dialogo tra Stefano Boeri, Amos Gitai e Adrian Paci*. Firenze: Bompiani/Giunti Editore. Retrieved from <http://www.giunti.it/libri/saggistica/costruire-futuri/>

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