

Guido BORELLI

[guido.borelli@iuav.it](mailto:guido.borelli@iuav.it)

*University of Venice*

*Dipartimento di Progettazione e Pianificazione in  
Ambienti Complessi (DPPAC)*



## **«There is time to kill today\*». Everyday life, boredom and domestic uncanny in the Italian Northeast**

The Italian Northeast, because the massive development of its industrial districts, the dashing growth of the diffused industrialization model and the early processes of manufacturing delocalization towards the Eastern European countries and then to the Orient, is one of the most interesting areas in the world in dealing with the effects of mature globalization. In just a little more than fifty years (roughly two generations), the population of the Northeast has passed – on average – by a widespread situation of indigence and poverty to a prosperity that brought it on top of the ranking of the European regions with the highest pro capite income. In the Nineties of the last century, the export revenues of the province of Vicenza was higher than the whole of Greece. Since the advent of the severe recent worldwide recession, the development model of the Italian Northeast has been considered by the international economic literature as a best practice of horizontal integration in production: a token of 'flexible mode of production', typical of the radical modernity. Nevertheless, there is dark sides of this issue: following the theoretical perspective by which every historical discontinuity creates new opportunities, social consequences and unexpected effects needs to be taken into account.

For the Northeast, one of the most tangible perverse aspects of the achieved economic wellbeing is represented by a widespread social malaise – a sort of inverse correlation between income and happiness – detectable in the daily lives of the residents, where boredom and acedia looks like the 'degree zero' of this malaise. Boredom comes as the distinctive sign of a posthumously era in which everything has already happened and anything that people had to propose has been reduced to pure negativity. From a sociological point of view, two aspects related to each other are of particular interest and will be

analyzed in this paper. First: the increase of attempts to 'kill time' through private pursuits that often lead to deviant behavior: sexual incontinence, pornography, xenophobia and senseless violence. Second: the proliferation of a vast suburban sprawl, with its absence of public spaces and ubiquitous surveillance devices, promotes family isolation and produces dwellings that becomes the refuge of a recently established social class that, constrained within the limits of its recent material wellbeing, does not feel completely at home in its own home.

As an empirical evidence of this kind of malaise, this paper will refer to the heterogeneous stream of novels and movies, that has flourished over the past decade, digging inside the Northeast. All these stories have in common the representation of a social reality falls into the abyss: an uncanny enclave continuously expanding in the throes of a deep unease. In this paper I shall use novels and films outside of their entertainment boundaries, as resources able to transmit information, lifestyles, cultures, beliefs and values. This sort of representations, less bounded by assumptions of theoretical and methodological nature, can be more consistent and appropriate with respect to reality. The novel and the movie does not represent an alternative vision of reality, competing with the sociological representation, but a field of empirical application – a supplement ethnographic analysis – which allows us to analyze complex social processes.