LOCAL AND GLOBAL: CITIES IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY[1]

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Over the past year or so, I have expanded my work in both areas of my current research. I have explored deeper the interaction between information technology and society, some outcomes of which have recently been published on the internet (Castells 2001). I have also continued my analysis of spatial transformation through an interdisciplinary approach to the problems of cities and regions. This paper summarises my current ideas for research on urban transformation.

INTRODUCTION: THE NETWORK SOCIETY

To begin I explore two sets of relationships – that between the local and the global, and that between certain dimensions of identity and functionality as they impinge on spatial forms – and will try to show how they interact in the spatial transformation of the information society. Some people call this the network society – and I do the same myself, for conceptual and analytical reasons that are explained below.

We are indeed living in a period of historical transformation. In my analysis, this process involves the interaction of three features that, though distinct, are related to each other. The first is the revolution in information technology that started in the 1970s and then expanded all over the world. The second is the process of globalisation, which incidentally is not only economic. There has also been globalisation of the media, as well as cultural and political globalisation, etc. The third feature is the emergence of a new form of organisation that I call networking. This is not just any kind of networking, but the specific kind of power networking that works through information technology. This power networking is changing the way we perceive, organise, manage, produce, consume, fight and counter-fight – embracing practically all dimensions of social life. The interaction between the revolution in information technology, the process of globalisation, and the emergence of networking as the predominant social form of organisation constitutes a new social structure: the network society. As we know, industrial society has had many different social, cultural and institutional manifestations. Likewise, the network society has many different manifestations, depending on country, culture, history and institutions.

However, some basic commonalities emerge when we consider specific features of this network society. This paper focuses on one of the dimensions of this transformation. To some extent, it may be conceptualised under the notion of the network society. The dimension is the spatial transformation. It is a fundamental dimension – and always has been, all through the world – of the growth process that we know as structural change. In that regard, I believe we need a theory of spatial forms and processes, which can be adapted to the new social, technological and spatial context in which we live.

Here, I formulate some elements of this theory. In the main, I build my theories from the bottom up. I try to practice grounded theory, thus, I try to build analytical frameworks that could be used as tools for empirical research. First, I give a brief overview of what

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I see as the emerging spatial trends at this hesitant beginning of the twenty-first century. Then I offer a tentative theoretical interpretation of these spatial trends. Subsequently, I will highlight the main issues arising in cities and in the theory of cities in the information age. Particular emphasis is placed on the key theme of this paper, namely the crisis of cities and of the city as a socio-spatial system of cultural communication. I conclude by pointing out some implications of my analysis for planning and urban policy.

As usual in my work, this will be very sketchy. I hope that further discussion will provide further enlightenment both for you and me.

KEY SPATIAL PROCESSES

Let me first identify the key spatial processes of the early twenty-first century. First, I think we are rapidly moving in the direction of an urbanised world. We are about to cross a critical threshold: half of the population of this planet will soon be living in cities. Reliable projections state that by mid century, between two-thirds and three-quarters of the total population will be living in 'some kind' of urban agglomeration. And the critical question is, which kind? Certainly we will not be living in the countryside as we now know it. We may be living in urbanised villages, though. This is one of the most important forms of rapid urbanisation, particularly in developing countries. This process of urbanisation is concentrated disproportionately – and increasingly so – in metropolitan areas of a new kind. These urban constellations are scattered throughout huge territorial expanses. Gottmann's megalopolis was somewhat reconstructed (Gottman 1961). Today, we have not only metropolitan areas but also big 'metropolitan regions', and these are very special indeed. They are a mix of cities, countryside, centre, and periphery – they are not necessarily part of one urban continuity. Some people call them edge cities, others call them conurbations. I think all these terms belie the novelty of the process. And that novelty lies in the ability to connect functionally a huge number of people and activities throughout a large expanse of space. That space is constantly being remodelled and reconstructed by the transformation of the communication, transportation and telecommunications systems.

Many years ago, the Dutch invented the *Randstad*. By now, almost everybody believes in the Randstad, everybody except people in the Netherlands. Maybe they are starting to experience a real Randstad now. It may not necessarily be what it was defined as by spatial planners. Instead, the Randstad is the articulation of this country in a vast agglomeration that is linked to Germany and all the neighbouring countries. It is linked to an entire European network of fast transportation. The area contained within two hours transportation time from Amsterdam, Rotterdam, or Utrecht accommodates a huge population. I would not say that everybody in that area is functionally linked. But large segments of the population are. Many others are linked partly to this region and partly to an adjacent one. Interestingly, what the automobile could not entirely accomplish in Europe, the fast train is doing. Europe is emerging as a set of major metropolitan regions, which are at the same time strongly interlinked. The same phenomenon may be observed all over the world.

The work by Scott and other geographers at the University of California, Los Angeles, shows that there is a new Southern Californian 'metropolis', as it is called (Scott 1996). It extends at least 150 miles from north to south, and goes into Mexico. Tijuana is part of it, and so it is a transnational city, although the largest Mexican city in this conurbation is Los Angeles – LA has four million people who are originally from Mexico. The San Francisco Bay Area is a different kind of animal with other characteristics. In terms of the actual labour market, there are 7.5 million people living and working in that area. San Francisco is no longer the largest city in the Bay Area. This is San Jose, with a population of one million, versus 750,000 in San Francisco.

An empirical definition of what a real conurbation is has changed for the USA, at least. It used to be the telephone network, but now, with the internet, it has become global so you do not have any specificity. Now, it is the television market. What the television station considers as their market, *that* is the city. But

it is not a city, of course; it is a market link to a connection between residential and working places. In really big cities – not little European conurbations – in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Macau, Zhuhai, and the other cities of the Pearl River delta, all the way to Canton, about 65 million people work and live in a highly interrelated functional area. Certainly not everybody does everything in that area, of course. Take Japan – the conurbation of Tokyo, Yokohama and Nagoya (now functionally extended to include Kobe and Osaka, and Kyoto to a large extent) is another huge urban constellation.

This is the kind of phenomenon I do not call a city; my current term is metropolitan region (which cannot be more than a provisional one until we find a serious empirical interpretation of what is going on). It is a new kind of urbanised agglomeration that we are generating. These magnets of economic, cultural, political and urban growth are absorbing more and more of their population and activities in their hinterland. In fact, they become nodes in global networks of cities. Indeed, advanced telecommunications, the internet, and fast computerised transportation systems (I remind you that planes, trains, and ships are all computerised transportation systems) allow for a simultaneous spatial concentration in huge areas and thus for decentralisation. Therefore these systems are introducing a new geography of networks and urban nodes throughout the world, throughout countries, between metropolitan areas and within metropolitan areas. This is the new urban geography.

CURRENT SOCIAL PROCESSES

On the social side, there is a trend for social relationships to be characterised simultaneously by two processes: individuation (not individualisation but the building of meaning *vis-à-vis* the individual project) and communalism. Both processes use spatial patterning and online communication. Individuation is both spatial and virtual: physical proximity and online connectivity. The same applies to communalism: virtual communities and physical communities develop in close interaction. We now have enough empirical research to go beyond these fantasies about virtual communities being different from physical communities in a world in which the internet has become a key communication mode. We have both online and off-line social interaction, creating a hybrid pattern of sociability. Something else that should be emphasised – though not a spatial phenomenon, it does have extraordinary consequences for spatial structure and dynamics – is the crisis in the patriarchal family. This has different manifestations depending on the culture and the level of economic development. This crisis gradually shifts sociability from family units, in the traditional sense, to networks of individualised units. Most often, these are made up of women and their children in relationship to other women with their children, but these units may also consist of all kinds of individualised cohabitation partnerships. This has extraordinary consequences for the uses and forms of housing, neighbourhoods, public space and transportation systems.

This crisis coincides with changes in the business world. Here, we see the emergence of the network enterprise as a new form of economic activity, which is a highly decentralised yet co-ordinated form of network. At the same time, we see the emergence of decentralised and co-ordinated management patterns. This network enterprise is not a network of enterprises. Rather, it consists of enterprises that are internally organised as networks and then connected with other networks of other enterprises. The network enterprise has very substantial spatial consequences. The most important is a return to the work-living arrangements of the pre-industrial age or of the period of industrial craft work. Interestingly, these arrangements for working and living in the same place often take over the old industrial spaces, transforming them into informational production sites. For instance, in San Francisco's multi-media gulch, the city's last remaining industrial buildings were transformed into spaces for multi-media production sites. What is multi-media? Manufacturing or services? It is both! It is the production of dreams, which is the most powerful form of manufacturing in our world. It is a very material production in many ways, but it is software, so it is informational production. It is a different kind of manufacturing. It is a production organised in terms of the people

living there, working there and socialising there. And whether we refer to experiences in London, Tokyo, Beijing, Taipei, Barcelona or Helsinki, we find exactly the same kind of work-living arrangements in the advanced software-based industries.

Urban areas around the world, another key trend, are becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural. This is an old theme of the Chicago School, but I would say it is now amplified in terms of its extremely diverse racial composition. (I will come back to the analytical implications of this matter later.) Another trend is that the global criminal economy is local at the same time. It is solidly rooted in the local urban fabric. The cities are being taken over in many ways by this global criminal economy. In other words, the global criminal economy does not start from localities and depressed areas. It is a global business that penetrates the urban areas in different ways. It reaches into the poor ghettos but at the same time also links up to money-laundering and other activities. The breakdown of communication patterns between individuals and between cultures is another major trend. This leads to the emergence of defensive spaces, which are in fact at the root of the formation of sharply segregated areas: gated communities for the rich, territorial turfs for the poor.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF PUBLIC SPACE

At the same time, in reaction to the trends of suburban sprawl, major metropolisation and individualisation of residential patterns, urban centres and public space become critical expressions of local life. As I will show later, this is in fact a reaction and an interaction. But for the moment, I am still going down the list of what we can observe on the surface in terms of spatial transformation. In other words, public space is really critical. In most planning projects everywhere in the world, the revitalisation of urban life and of the city as a communicative space has become paramount. In fact, it is becoming the most salient selling device for private residential development. In principle, support for the vitality of public space is still a major trend. I say only in principle, because the commercial pressures and the globalisation of tourism and business travel are mimicking urban life in many cities rather than actually rebuilding urban space. Many public spaces around the world – and thus in your cities too – are also being transformed into theme parks, where symbols rather than experience create a life-size urban virtual reality. Ultimately it is the next best thing to being projected in the media and then selling the city. In that sense, the Las Vegas phenomenon – building all the greatest cities in the world in Las Vegas – can also be reproduced, whereby the greatest cities of the world become Las Vegas themselves. It is a consequence of the commercialisation of public space, of the massive diffusion, and of the suburban and exurban sprawl.

On the other hand, it is a consequence of the increasing individualisation, whereby, as Galliano has proposed, consumption items become individually appropriated. Thus, you have individualisation of the residential and work experience, on the one hand, and individualisation of the consumption of the city, on the other. All in all, the new urban world seems to be dominated by a double movement: inclusion in trans-territorial networks and exclusion by the spatial separation of places. The higher the value of people and places, the more they are connected in interactive networks; the lower their value, the lower their connectivity. In extreme cases, some of the places are by-passed by the new geography of networks. This is indeed what happens in depressed rural areas around the world, in declining regions, or in urban shantytowns. Then the infrastructure of these networks – not only of communication networks, but also of water, electricity, roads, or advanced communication systems – reinforces this segregation. The work recently published by Graham and McMahon on splintering urbanism clearly shows how these spatial and social trends towards splintering spaces are in fact materially articulated and reproduced in the design of telecommunication infrastructures. In this way, the world is not socially segregated simply by the market or by people moving or not moving. It is also segregated by the spatial layering of major communication infrastructures – for example, where you have

fast internet access or not, where you have fibre-optic cable or not, where you have advanced transportation systems or not. In Europe, the localities by-passed by the high-speed trains are being segregated.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NETWORK STATE

The constitution of these mega-metropolitan regions without a name, without a culture, and without institutions weakens the mechanism of political accountability, of citizen participation, and of effective management. In other words, there is increasing contradiction between the actual spatial unit and the institutions of political representation and metropolitan management. On the other hand, however, local governments in the age of globalisation emerge as flexible institutional factors that are able to react, to adapt more quickly to global trends. In fact, the dynamics of globalisation do not eliminate local governments. Rather, globalisation enhances their role and the ability of local authorities to get closer to the needs of their community. In other words, if you cannot control the world, you shrink it to the size of your community so you can manage it a little bit better. Actually, you cannot control it at the national level either. The rebuilding of networks of co-operation between institutions can proceed faster and go deeper on the basis of legitimacy. As all surveys show around the world, whatever is left of political legitimacy, which is not much, is left mainly at the local level. So, a new form of state emerges.

More and more, I see this to some extent as a confirmation of the very tentative hypothesis posed in my trilogy. That is what I call the network-state. It does not make the nation-state disappear. Rather, it integrates the supranational institutions that are made up of national governments, nation-states, international institutions, regional governments, local governments, and NGOs (which are citizen representative organisations). In this particular network configuration, the network-state becomes the actual institution that is managing cities and regions in our context. In that sense, local governments become a node in the chain of institutional representation and management. The local authorities are able to input the overall process, but with added value because of their capacity to represent citizens at a closer range.

However, in any case, this is work in progress. For the moment, what we observe is an increasing gap between the actual unit of working and living in the metropolitan region on the one hand, and the mechanism of political representation and public administration on the other. In this context, urban social movements have not disappeared by any means; they have merely mutated, essentially around two main lines. The first is the defence of the local community affirming the right to live in a particular place and to benefit from adequate housing and urban services in that place. The second, and I would say probably the most proactive, is the environmental movement. It acts on the quality of cities within the broader goal of achieving a better quality of life. The environmental movement is not simply a movement for a better life but for a different life. In that sense, it is as much a cultural movement as it is a traditional urban economy-oriented movement.

In my view, these are the main spatial trends. They are based on pure observation and certainly can be challenged by different observations. But this is what I would distil from my observation of current changes worldwide in terms of the spatial transformation. Let me try to make sense of what is going on with the help of some concepts that bring the discussion to a more analytical level.

AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

I think that the transformation of cities in the network society can be organised – in terms of the building blocks of a new theory – around three bipolar axes. The first relates to function, the second to meaning, and the third to form. Functionally speaking, the network society is organised around the opposition between the global and the local. Dominant processes in the economy, in technology, the media and authority are organised largely in global networks. But day-to-day work, private life, cultural identity, and political participation are essentially local and territorial. Now, cities as communication systems that work throughout history are supposed to link up

the global and the local. But that is exactly where the problem starts. Cities are in fact being torn by these two conflicting logics that destroy the city as a sociospatial communication system when they try to simultaneously respond to logic. What does this mean? Well, it means that if you organise your spatial planning to create a competitive city in global networks, maybe you are going to put your resources – economic, technical, institutional – where they will trickle down to the population, the neighbourhood. They may sponsor the expression of cultural identity later on; for the moment, they can organise a street party once a year. Now, if you simply cater to the local identity, to the needs of the inhabitants, you will have to ask where the money comes from. You have to be competitive and you have to be productive. So, while we have to be in the networks, we have to be at the same time rooted in locality and identity. But in our observations around the world, we see that first things come first. And the first thing is how to exist in the global networks. There is a tremendous and increasing distance between the locality as an expression of society, on the one hand, and the functionality and the globality as expressions of competition and productivity, on the other, whereby they function in the creation and appropriation of wealth. The second thing is how to exist in terms of meaning. As mentioned earlier, our society is characterised by the opposing development of individuation and communalism. Now that we have come to the theoretical part, we can define some things. By individuation I mean the enclosure of meaning in the projects, interests and representations of the individual. That is why the concept of individualisation is not the same as individuation; in the latter, all that matters is enclosed in the individual. By individual I mean a biologically embodied personality system, or – if translated from the French – an individual is a person. Communalism refers to the enclosure of meaning in a sheer identity. That enclosure is based on a system of values and beliefs to which all other sources of identity are subordinated. Society, of course, only exists at the interface of individuals and identities mediated by institutions. This interface and this mediation are at the source of the network-state.

The network-state relates to the grassroots, to the people themselves. Remember, since Gramsci onwards, civil society was always seen in relationship to the state. That's what makes civil society interesting. That's what organises an autonomous transition from the organisation of people in society to the institutions of the state. So, civil society is not the contrary of a state. It is the complement of a state. It is the bridge towards the state, in the original Gramscian theory and as it has been developed by others from there. But again, in general, people tend to think the contrary. So, in a more modern formulation: the civil society in fact is developed in a sheer public sphere *à la* Habermas. Now, what we observe in the formative stage of the network society indicates the increasing tension and distance between personality and culture, between individuals and communes. In other words, there are two logics. And in between the institutions of civil society, the political institutions and the public sphere – as legitimate institutions of communication and representation – seem to fade away. And then we are confronted with the logic of individuals, on the one hand, and of communes, on the other. Therefore, this split between personality and commonality puts extraordinary stress upon the social system of cities as communicative institutionalising devices. In this sense, the problematic of social integration again becomes paramount, as it was in the origins of urban sociology and urban studies, but now in completely new circumstances and in terms radically different from those of early industrial cities. Why? Well, social integration is now problematic because of the urban transformation represented by a third and major axis of opposing trends, this one concerning spatial forms.

FLOWS AND PLACES

We have dealt with function, and we have dealt with meaning. Let us now look at the issue as a question of form. In terms of form, the major bipolar opposition is between what I call the space of flows and the space of places. In the space of flows, separate locations are linked up electronically in an interactive network that connects people and activities

in different geographical contexts. Now, the spatial flows – let us say, the financial networks, the international production networks, and the media networks – are not a-territorial. They consist of territories which are distant, which are linked to different geographic hinterlands. But they are electronically connected; their function and their meaning come from their connections. Thus, they do not exist separately. In that sense, they are not purely electronic networks. The electronic networks link up the specific places, and it is this hybrid space that is the space of flows. The space of places organises experience and activity around the confines of locality. What is critical in our society is that cities are structured and restructured simultaneously by the competing logics of the space of flows and the space of places. Cities do not disappear into the virtual networks. Rather, they are transformed in the interface between electronic communication and physical interaction. They are transformed by the combination in practice of cities, networks, and places but without fully integrating them.

Let me give two examples of this rather abstract problematic. One concerns urban structure, the other urban experience. In urban structure, the example is the notion of global cities. The global city is not a medal of honour given to certain cities that have become important, which would imply that there are also semi-global cities, upcoming global cities, etc. We already had a concept for that – an old one that Friedmann reinvented, the 'world city', which is a hierarchical concept (Friedmann 1986). If the global city has any meaning other than that it is possible to substitute one by another, it is a different matter. It is the notion that there is a global city in certain dimensions. For instance, financial networks – which is an easy example to understand – are made up of bits and pieces of different cities across the globe. The financial districts of New York, London and Tokyo are all part of the same city. They work symbiotically. They connect with each other but also with Frankfurt and Amsterdam and so on. And to a large extent even La Paz, Bolivia, is part of it. A little bit of La Paz is in that global city because that is how lots of money (they do some good trading) circulates in these global networks. So London is not a global city, if you understand global city to mean that the whole or the majority of London is integrated in a global network. No, London is very local and very parochial. If you go around Hampstead, you seem to be in an upper-class village of the gentry. And the same thing applies to every city. Take New York – New York is very local. Queens is a very local area, these days usually local from the point of view of all kinds of immigrants from around the world. The global city, therefore, is a network of financial spaces when the global city is defined in terms of financial networks. It is a network of the advertising or media industry when it is defined in those terms. It is a network of high-tech spaces – along with Silicon Valley, Helsinki and Munich – when defined in those terms. So, there are many global cities. But the many global cities are not London, Zurich, New York and Frankfurt etc. There are many different dimensions of globalisation, of urban activities, which are connected functionally. All cities, to very different degrees, are to some extent under the stress of the connection of each key centre, of each key activity in this global network, while at the same time most of the city is engaged in a very local life. It is the tension between the two activities that is critical. From the point of view of the urban experience, we are entering a built environment that is increasingly incorporating electronic communication devices everywhere. In fact, our urban life, as Bill Mitchell from MIT has pointed out, is becoming what he calls an 'e-topia' (Mitchell 1995). That is, a new urban form in which we constantly interact, either deliberately or automatically, with online information systems, which increasingly will be in the wireless mode. So, materially speaking, the space of flows in terms of the experience is folded into the space of places. But at the same time, there is tension between what you do and moving, with your head-set, on the internet all the time. This tension leads to great difficulty in terms of the social integration of cities as communication devices.

Let me now turn to the issue of social integration, which is really at the forefront of the theory of cities in this network society. The notion here is that we have a fragmentation of meaning in areas that are functionally inte-

grated. While an urban agglomeration is a functional unit, at the same time it creates a disparity of cultures, systems of representation, and systems of meaning. Thus, an agglomeration is multicultural but at the same time multi-meaning. Concretely, if we live in a world of individuals and communes, each commune has its own set of values and each individual has his/her project. Therefore, it is extremely important to see how this multiplicity of meanings and of cultural sets can interact and communicate. The traditional problematic of social integration – of the origins of cities in the industrial area – was a different one. There was a dominant urban culture into which rural migrants or migrants from other parts of the world had to be integrated, assimilated. There is no way to assimilate anything now because there is no dominant culture. The dominant culture, if there is one throughout the world, is represented by the mass media and by the hypertexts that this media contains. But this dominant culture is, in fact, very malleable, because it is a market-oriented culture. It follows. It is not a culture with values that everybody has to believe – that was the old industrial culture. It is a culture that follows whatever happens in the market; it identifies niches. Well, so rap is the thing. I create MTV and we will rap. This is not the dominant culture; it is a market-oriented culture. Rather than unifying the diversity of cultural messages, it amplifies this diversity by transforming different cultures and sets of mind into market niches, thereby enhancing and deepening the fragmentation. So, we have a fragmentation of the spatial configuration of the metropolis, we have an individualisation of communication, and we have a constellation of cultural subsets. Under such conditions, the notion of public sphere disappears. The traditional notion could only be reconstructed by institutions – through fundamentally political institutions and in a general crisis of legitimacy. Take, for instance, California. These days 39% of people in California think (at least a year ago they did) that the governor as well as the political representatives in their state and in the USA are crooks – yes, the word used in the survey is crooks. And 70% believe they are not being represented. According to Kofi Annan's survey last year for the United Nations, two-thirds of the people on the planet think they are not represented by their governments. Without pinpointing specific countries, Kofi Annan added that this is also the case for the most established and advanced democracies in North America and Europe. Two-thirds of the people on the planet!

Under such conditions, we have an individualisation of work, an individualisation of the metropolis in terms of spaces, and an individualisation and communalism in terms of the cultural sets. Communalism is collective individualisation *vis-à-vis* the rest of the society. You can individualise as an individual; that is to say, 'Me and my group, and my culture, and I do not know anything about the rest.' Multiple fragmentation creates a crisis of the city as a communicative device, which is in fact the original and historical function of the city. This is not the same thing as the traditional crises – those of integration of migrants and the urban anomie of the early industrial age. It is a fragmentation that reproduces itself at the spatial level, the work level, the cultural level and the political level. In that sense, we could be living in the paradox of an urbanised world without cities. The key challenge is how to live together. It is as simple as that: how to live together if we do not share communication codes, not only if we do not agree – it is a matter of being able to speak some kind of language to each other. If the working class opposes capital and fights, that is class struggle, and that can be bloody. That is a language; they know what they are talking about. Communication can be conflictive communication, as it has been throughout history. This is different. This is fragmentation and alienation. You are an alien. I cannot talk to you, I do not understand what you are saying, and it is not a matter of language. It is a matter of the values, of the value set. Therefore, I get close to myself, my family, my group, my project, and we split. That is the notion of communication in cities in which the dominant culture has been irreversibly suppressed. Instead, there is coexistence and a multiplicity of sources of meaning and expression. The key challenge for the new urban civilisation is to restore communication. To restore communication means the building and development of communication protocols. This is not a metaphor; it is a concept from information tech-

nology theory. Which kind of communication protocols? Let me present three of them.

TYPES OF URBAN INTERACTION

The first kind is the physical protocol of communication. How do you restore communication in a fragmented sprawl? Well, you have to introduce new forms of symbolic nodality that will identify places in this endless sprawl. What kind of symbolic nodality? We do not have to think of fancy solutions. I am not postmodern, so I always want to give an example. I do not construct and deconstruct; I am trying to analyse. Let us consider the Barcelona model of planning and design, which has been highly commended around the world. How was the periphery of the working-class district (which was much worse than the Parisian periphery of the *grandes ensembles*) marked and redefined by the Barcelona planners? Well, they started to construct horrible monuments, statues and squares of very doubtful taste. But that does not matter, really. Some people like it – not many – but it does not matter. When you get completely lost, and you ask anyone living there: 'How can I get to that HLM number 134 in the second town?', the person will tell you, 'Well, continue here, then you will find an absolutely horrible statue in a shabby square, then you turn right and you are there.' In other words, symbolic nodality reconstructs spatial meaning in the city. That is why architecture again becomes very important. Architecture always had been about the marking of places. Urban design has always been about the marking of urban forms in relation to culture and meaning.

The second level of urban interaction refers to social communication patterns. That is, it concerns how people can start being together, sharing cities without being able to speak to each other and without going through the public institutions. How can people be public in the post-Habermas society, in which only Habermas thinks that there is public legitimacy in the institutions? How can people do that? Well, remember the old child psychology, explaining how children learn communication. They learn it by doing things – not by talking but by doing things and sharing things. If you share something with others in your spatial practice, if you say: 'That is my space and also the space of this other guy', and then if we share the space and we do not kill each other the first week, then maybe we can start populating this particular space together. So, rather than recreating the public sphere, we are moving toward public places as an alternative model, so away from Habermas and closer to Kevin Lynch. And in that sense, the spontaneous social interactions in public places are the communicative devices of our society. Meanwhile, formal political institutions have become a specialised domain that hardly affects the private lives of people who do not want to be professional politicians. So, in the practice of the city, the answer lies in public spaces, including what I call the social exchangers or communication nodes. These are the stations, airports, all those places where people have to bump into each other because they have to change trains or planes or buses. And these are the squares, which have some kind of social activity. These spaces are in fact the devices with which to reconstruct sharing communication and therefore city life. I call this level of urban interaction the sociability of public spaces in the individualised metropolis.

The third level of urban interaction refers to the new combination of electronic communication and physical face-to-face communication as new forms of sociability. These days, we know through rigorous empirical research that it is completely false that the internet alienates and isolates, etc. That proposition is based on just two studies, and they can be easily criticised. All the other studies show the contrary. People who engage in sociability on the internet have more sociability, more friends, more activities, more everything, controlling for level of education. What we also know is that this sociability is not separate – not a virtual reality versus the real reality. No, it is a different domain of reality. The communities that exist on the internet are different kinds of communities than the ones that exist in different forms. In fact, they are not communities. They are individual networks of socialisation, but they work together to induce forms of face-to-face sociability. So, virtual communities as networks of individuals connect to face-to-face sociability, thereby recreating some form of sociability. The analysis of code-sharing in the

new urban world requires the study of the interface between physical layout, social organisation, and electronic networks of communication. In this sense, the analysis of the new network of spatial mobility in the mobile phone era is a critical frontier for the new theory of urbanism. The young people in our societies are building their sociability on the mobile phone. But they do not spend their time talking on the mobile phone to the person they will meet when they get to their appointment. While they are walking towards their appointment, they are anticipating their appointment. Some empirical research has been done on the use of the mobile phone to actually build a multi-spatial system, including a spatial back-up system at home, perhaps. While providing a connection with their friends, the mobile phone also transcends the boundaries of space. They use it to reach ultimately the closest discotheque or the closest bar or the closest excursion to the mountains. So, the places of the space of flows – that is, the corridors and the halls that connect places around the world – will have to be understood as exchangers and social refuges, as homes on the run as much as offices on the run.

Under these conditions, a dominant trend emerges towards the disintegration of cities as communicative devices. The beginning of general urbanisation could be at the same time the end of urban civilisation, which is based on communication and sharing, even sharing in a conflictive manner. This is the current situation, but at the same time there is a counter-offensive. Again, these are not my ideas; I always look at what is happening, and then I say, 'Aha, good, counter-offensive; here we go.'

CONCLUSION: THE INTEGRATION OF URBAN LIFE

Throughout the world, a number of people in cities – politicians and, particularly at the local level, planners and citizen groups – are trying to reconstruct urban life. Urban life is to be understood here not as the traditional historic central city, not like a world of Amsterdams. Rather, it should be seen as a world of social interaction and meaning operating on the basis of the appropriation of a space by sociability and by the society that goes beyond the functionality of integration in the global networks. In that sense, the process of reconstructing urban life is the process of reconstruction of the city as a communication system in its multi-dimensional sense. Restoring functional communication through metropolitan planning, providing spatial meaning through a new symbolic nodality created by innovative spatial projects, and reinstating the city in its urban form through the practice of urban design, focused on the preservation, restoration and construction of public space – these are the critical issues in the new type of urbanism. Conversely, there is what I would call the defensive battle of nostalgic reconstruction of the old city in the suburbs through new traditionalism and the new urbanism. Well, this is really giving up. It amounts to saying, I am going to build a suburb that looks like a city. But the important thing is how people interact. And people can interact in horrible places. If they interact in horrible places, then they can reconstruct this space and make it meaningful. So, that level of communication seems to be the critical one. There are a number of cities around the world where we see just that. You can observe it on all continents, from Portland to Curitiba to Barcelona. There are a number of very good examples that always combine an emphasis on public space, competitiveness in the global networks, a strong emphasis on local governments and citizen participation, and the ability to reintegrate symbolic nodality, symbolic representation in the reconstruction of space. But in the end, none of these efforts by people, by planners, and by urban designers can function without a transformation of the urban policy, and that depends in turn on the transformation of urban polities. Ultimately, the meaning of cities depends on the governance of cities. How can we introduce this notion of governance of cities in a situation of increasing bureaucratisation and alienation of institutions *vis-à-vis* their citizens? That is a fundamental question. In the absence of any empirical evidence we cannot accept the idea that some great urbanists or great architects or great policy-makers would be able to make any significant advances without transformation of urban policy on the basis of urban polities. So, ultimately it is a political problem in the traditional

sense, in the sense of the polis, the challenge is to reconstruct society through the practice of living together, in the process of communicating with each other in the urban civilisation.

Note

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