CITY OF FEARS, CITY OF HOPES

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Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky warned his contemporaries against the not just vain and silly, but also potentially dangerous habit of jumping to conclusions about the state of the world and about the direction the world takes: 'Don't paint epic canvasses during revolutions; they will tear the canvass in shreds'. Mayakovsky knew well what he was talking about. Like so many other talented Soviet writers, he tasted to the last drop the fragility of fortune's favours and the slyness of its pranks. Painting epic canvasses may be a safer occupation for the *painters* of our part of the world and our time than it was in Mayakovsky's time and place, but this does not make any safer the future of their *canvasses*. Epic canvasses keep being torn in shreds and dumped at rubbish tips.

The novelty of our times is that the periods of condensed and accelerated change called 'revolutions' are no more 'breaks in the routine', like they might have seemed to Mayakovsky and his contemporaries. They are no more brief intervals separating eras of 'retrenchment', of relatively stable, repetitive patterns of life that enable, and favour, long-term predictions, planning and the composition of Sartrean 'life projects'. We live today under condition of *permanent revolution*. Revolution is the way society nowadays lives. Revolution has become the human society's *normal state*. And so in our time, more than at any other time, epic canvasses risk to be torn in pieces. Perhaps they'll be in shreds before the paints dry up or even before the painters manage to complete their *oeuvres*. No wonder that the artists today prefer installations, patched together only for the duration of the gallery exposition, to solid works meant to be preserved in the museums of the future in order to illuminate, and to be judged by, the generations yet to be born...

What has been said so far should be reason enough to pause and ponder, and having pondered to hesitate before taking the next step, whenever we attempt to anticipate the future – that is, as the great philosopher Emmanuel Levinas cautioned, 'the absolute Other'[1] – as impenetrable and unknowable as the 'absolute Other' tends to be. Even these, by no means minor, considerations pale however in comparison when it comes to predicting the direction that the future transformation of cityspace and city life will take.

Admittedly, cities have been sites of incessant and most rapid change throughout their history; and since it was in cities that the change destined to spill over the rest of society originated, the city-born change caught the living as a rule unawares and unprepared. But as Edward W. Soja, one of the most perceptive and original analysts of the urban scene, observes[2], the cities' knack for taking the contemporaries by surprise has reached recently heights rarely, if ever, witnessed before. In the last three-four decades 'nearly all the world's major (and minor) metropolitan regions have been experiencing dramatic changes, in some cases so intense that what existed thirty years ago is almost unrecognizable today'. The change is so profound and the pace of change so mind-bogglingly quick, that we can hardly believe our eyes and find our way amidst once familiar places. But even less do we dare to trust our judgment about the destination to which all that change may eventually lead the cities we inhabit or visit: 'It is almost surely too soon to conclude with any confidence that what happened to cities in the late twentieth century was the onset of a revolutionary change or just another minor twist on an old tale of urban life'.

Not all writers heed the warning. Some (too many) did engage in the risky business of forecasting, focusing (expectedly) on the latest, least tested, most bizarre and, for all those reasons, most spectacular departures in the imponderables of urban lives. Prophecies were all the easier to pen down, and once penned looked all the more

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[1] Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, Paris, PUF 1979, p.71.
[2] Edward W.Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, Blackwell 2000, p.XII.

credible, when being argued with reference to one selected 'city-shaping' factor while neglecting all the other aspects of the notoriously complex human coexistence. The most popular topic for the 'single-factor' forecasts was the accelerating pace of change aided and abetted by the exponential growth of information transfer. The sheer novelty and the fast pace of 'informatics revolution' prompted many an analyst to expect the disappearance of the 'city as we know it' and, either its replacement by a totally new spatial form of human cohabitation, or its vanishing altogether. It has been suggested by some writers that the orthodox 'space specialisation' of city space has lost its purpose and is on the way out, as homes become extensions of offices, shops and schools and take over most of their functions, thereby casting a question mark over their future. The most radical prophets announced the cities' descent into the last phase of their history. In 1995, George Gilder proclaimed the imminent 'death of the city' (the city being seen as an increasingly irrelevant 'leftover baggage from the industrial era'), while two years later Peter Gordon and Harry W. Richardson announced proximity itself 'becoming redundant' and the imminent disappearance of concert halls and school buildings: 'the city of the future will be anything but compact'.[3] More cautious observers, prudently, fought shy of intoxication with novelties, facile extrapolations of ostensibly unstoppable trends, and both the panglossian and the cassandrian extremities in judgments. In such cases, however, the prophecies took on a distinctly pythian flavour, like in the dilemma posited by Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin: 'Will our cities face some electronic requiem, some nightmarish *Blade-Runner*-style future of decay and polarization? Or can they be powerhouses of economic, social and cultural innovation in the new electronic media?'[4] Whether cautious or reckless, radical or ambivalent, partisan or uncommittal, there was hardly a single prognosis that has not

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[3] Quoted after Mitchell L,Moss and Anthony M.Townsend, 'How Telecommunications Systems Are Transforming Urban Spaces', in: James O.Wheeler, Yukp Aoyama and Barney Wharf (eds.), *Cities in the Telecommunications Age: The Fracturing of Geographies*, Routledge 2000, p.30-32.
[4] Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, 'Urban Planning and the Technological Future of Cities', in *ibid.,* p.72.

been dismissed by some other writers as still-born – and rejected as soon as electronically recorded on a computer diskette.

I guess that enough has been said thus far to justify caution and to explain my reluctance to engage in another game of prediction. Taking a glimpse at the future that is-not-yet has always been and still remains a temptation difficult to resist, but it has also always been, and now it is more than ever before, a treacherous trap – for the thoughtful as much as for the gullible and naïve. When I wished my students to relax during a tense examination session, I recommended to them, for recreation and entertainment, to read a twenty or thirty-years-old 'futurological studies'. That method to make them laugh and keep them laughing proved to be foolproof. The story of past prophecies, forecasts and prognoses looking uncannily like a *Kunstkamer* filled with two-headed calves, bearded women and other similarly bewildering freaks and amusing curiosities, one can be excused for being reluctant to add another miscreant to the house already full.

CITIES AS COHABITATION OF STRANGERS

City and social change are almost synonymous. Change is the quality of city life and the mode of urban existence. Change and city may, and indeed should, be defined by reference to each other. Why is it so, though? Why must this be so?

It is common to define cities as places where strangers meet, remain in each other's proximity, and interact for a long time without stopping being strangers to each other. Focusing on the role cities play in economic development, Jane Jacobs[5] points to the sheer density of human communication as the prime cause of the characteristic urban restlessness. City dwellers are not necessarily smarter than the rest of humans – but the density of space-occupation results in the concentration of needs. And so questions are asked in the city that were not asked elsewhere, problems arise with

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[5] See Steve Proffitt's interview in *Los Angeles Times*, 12 October 1997.

which people had no occasion to cope under different conditions. Facing problems and asking questions present a challenge, and stretch the inventiveness of humans to unprecedented lengths. This in turn offers a tempting chance to other people who live in more relaxed, but also less promising places: city life constantly attracts newcomers, and the trade-mark of newcomers is bringing 'new ways of looking at things, and maybe new ways of solving old problems'. Newcomers are strangers to the city, and things that the old, well settled residents stopped noticing because of their familiarity, seem bizarre and call for explanation when seen through the eye of a stranger. For strangers, and particularly for the newcomers among them, nothing in the city is 'natural'; nothing is taken for granted by them. Newcomers are born and sworn enemies of tranquillity and self-congratulation. This is not perhaps a situation to be enjoyed by the city natives – but this is also their good luck. City is at its best, most exuberant and most lavish in offered opportunities, when its ways and means are challenged, questioned, and put on the defendants' bench. Michael Storper, economist, geographer and planner[6], ascribes the intrinsic buoyancy and creativity typical of dense urban living to the uncertainty that arises from the poorly coordinated and forever a-changing relationship 'between the parts of complex organizations, between individuals, and between individuals and organizations' – unavoidable under the conditions of high density and close proximity.

Strangers are not a modern invention – but strangers who remain strangers for a long time to come, even in perpetuity, are. In a typical pre-modern town or village strangers were not allowed to stay strange for long. Some of them were chased away or not let in through the city gates in the first place. Those who wished and were permitted to enter and stay longer tended to be 'familiarised' – closely questioned and quickly 'domesticated' – so that they could join the network of relationships the way the established city dwellers do: in *personal* mode. This had its consequences – strikingly

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[6] Michael Storper, *The Regional World: Territorial Development in a Global Economy*, Guilford Press 1997, p.235.

different from the processes familiar to us from the experience of contemporary, modern, crowded and densely populated cities.

As that most insightful critic of urban life, Lewis Mumford, pointed out[7], in the concrete market place around which a medieval town was organised 'concrete goods changed hands between visible buyers and sellers, who accepted the same moral norms and met more or less on the same level: here security, equity, stability, were more important than profit, and the personal relations so established might continue through a lifetime, or even for generations'. Exchange inside the 'concrete market place' was a powerful means to solidify and reinforce human bonds. We may say indeed that it was simultaneously a cure against strangeness and a preventive medicine against estrangement. But from what we know of the peculiarity of city life, it is precisely the profusion of strangers, permanent strangers, 'forever strangers', that makes of the city a greenhouse of invention and innovation, of reflexivity and self-criticism, of disaffection, dissent and urge of improvement. What follows is that the homeostatic routine of self-reproduction built into the pre-modern city according to Lewis Mumford's description served as an effective brake arresting change. It eliminated a good deal of the uncertainty rooted in human interactions, and so also the most powerful stimulus to seek new ways of solving old problems, to construe new problems, to experiment, to improvise and to challenge the patterns that claimed authority on the ground of their antiquity or supposed timelessness. This quality of pre-modern cities goes a long away towards explaining their inertia and stagnation, apparent whenever comparisons are made with contemporary experience of urban life.

Growing numbers and greater density is the first answer that comes to mind when the question why the homeostatic mechanism of monotonous self-reproduction and self-equilibration eventually stopped operating. Dealing with the potential threat of routine-breaking, uncertainty and things going out of joint by the 'de-stranging' of

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[7] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*: *Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch 1961, p.413.

strangers, personalising the impersonal and domesticating the alien, cannot do and would not do if the numbers of strangers to be familiarised and personalised exceed human perceptive and retentive powers.

MODERN CITY AS MASS INDUSTRY OF STRANGERS

The swelling of the cities, caused in part, though in part only, by the sudden overpopulation of the countryside (caused in turn by the new farming and land-leasing regimes) made the old stratagems inoperable. But equally fateful, perhaps more seminal yet, was the advent of the capitalist enterprise, eager to displace and eliminate altogether the pre-modern corporative order of artisan guilds, municipalities and parishes. The old, corporatist pattern could no more 'de-strange', absorb and assimilate the multitude of newcomers. The new, capitalist pattern, far from being bent on absorbing, assimilating and domesticating the strangers, set about breaking the bonds of customary obligations and thus de-familiarising the familiar. Capitalism was a mass production of strangers. It promoted mutual estrangement to the rank of normal and all but universal pattern of human relations. As Thomas Carlyle famously complained, it made of 'cash nexus' the sole permissible, and called for, form of human bond.

When capitalist entrepreneurs rebelled against the 'irrational constraints' and the grip in which human initiative was held by the 'dead hand of tradition' – what they militated against was the thick layer of time-honoured mutual obligations and commitment in which human relations were securely wrapped. They militated against keeping human interactions under supervision of jointly accepted ethical principles and putting the considerations of security, equity and stability above cost-and-gain calculations and other precepts of economic reason. They also militated against the corporations that served, more or less efficiently, as the guardians of ethical rules and the priorities that those rules assumed and promoted. 'Freeing of enterprise' meant no more, but no less either, than crushing the steely casing of ethical duties and

commitments that stopped the entrepreneurial acumen and resolve short of the limits they would otherwise reach and inevitably transgress.

Mumford notes the telling change in the meaning of 'freedom' that occurred once the capitalist entrepreneurs took over the role of the principal freedom fighters of the new modern era[8]: 'in the Middle Ages "freedom" had meant freedom from feudal restrictions, freedom *for* the corporate activities of the municipality, the guild, the religious order. In the new trading cities, or Handelstädte, freedom meant freedom from municipal restrictions; freedom for private investment, for private profit and private accumulation, without any reference to the welfare of the community as a whole...' In its thrust toward enfeebling and undermining the local authority, much too ethically motivated for the entrepreneurial needs and ambitions, they had to undermine local autonomy and so self-sufficiency. For this purpose, 'the whole structure of urban life' had to be dismantled. And it was. In Mumford's summary of the survey of consequences, as the pre-modern town turned into a capitalist city, 'every man was for himself, and the Devil, if he did not take the hind-most, at least reserved for himself the privilege of building the cities.'[9]

Max Weber took the separation of business from household for the birth-act of modern capitalism. The household – simultaneously the workshop and the family home – tied together the numerous threads of interpersonal rights and duties that held together the pre-modern (and pre-capitalist) urban community while being in turn sustained, monitored and policed by communally observed custom. For the new breed of venture capitalists, separation and self-distancing 'from the household' was tantamount to the liberation from pernickety rules and written or habitual regulation; it meant untying of hands – cutting out for rule-free ventures a new, virgin space in which hands were untied, initiative unlimited, traditional duties non-existent and routines yet

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[8] *The City in History*, p.415.
[9] *The City in History,* p.440.

to be created from scratch in a form better fitting the 'business logic' destined to replace the logic of ethical obligations.

There were but two practical ways in which such a separation could be implemented and a space for the frontier-land type of freedom set aside. One way was to settle, literally, on a 'no man's land' – to go beyond the boundaries of the established municipalities in which the communally supported customs ruled; find a plot devoid of memory, tradition, a legible-for-all meaning. The other way was to raze to the ground the old quarters of the city; to dig up a black hole in which old meanings sink and disappear, first from view and soon after from memory, and to fill the void with brand new logic, unbound by the worries of continuity and relieved from its burdens.

Both ways were tried in such cities as happened to lie along the meandering itinerary of the 'puffing, clanking, screeching, smoking'[10] industrial juggernaut. Such cities spilled over their time-honoured boundaries and went on sprawling unstoppably, as city boundaries tried to catch up with industrial plants trying to escape obtrusive attention of municipalities and dig in outside. Their population swelled, as the country and small-town people, robbed of their livelihood, flooded in in search of buyers of labour. Industrializing cities found themselves in a whirlwind of perpetual change, as the old and familiar quarters disappeared and were replaced by new ones, too strange-looking and too short-lived to melt into the familiar cityscape.

Mumford gave such hapless places the name of 'paleotechnic towns'. Their look, sound and odour, the fashion in which the paleotechnic towns were managed (or mismanaged) and in which their daily life was organised (or disorganised) offended human sensitivity and most elementary notions of fairness and decency. Rubbish and waste clogged the streets until a smart entrepreneur decided to collect them in order to market as manure (in the middle of the 19th century there was in Manchester one toilet for 218 working-class inhabitants of the city...). And yet, at least from the point of view of the capitalist entrepreneurs and the sages who theorised their practices into the laws

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[10] *The City in History*, p.446.

of economics, 'there was no housing problem in the paleotechnic town. Even the meanest paid worker could be housed at a profit, in strict accordance with his income, provided no outside standards based on health and safety were introduced to mar the free play of economic forces. If the result was a slum, that fact was a justification of the slum, not a condemnation of the profit system'.[11]

However, 'outside standards' were to be introduced, though gradually, piecemeal, and not without overcoming the ferocious resistance of the pioneers of enterprise, their economist spokesmen and other heralds of efficiency, rational calculation and business reason. Cities, the paleotechnic towns included, did not stay forever in the frontier-land. The 'no man's land' was eventually re-conquered for law and at least rough-and-ready, rule-of-the-thumb ethics, though the war was long and many a battle lost on the way to final settlement.[12] It took the nation-states, themselves modern inventions, the whole of the nineteenth century and a good part of the twentieth to invade, annex and colonise the territory wrenched out of the local community wardenship by an industry and a commerce set on establishing their own rules of the game and staunchly resentful of all interference – whether in their past and left-behind forms, or in their new, emergent version.

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE 'SOLID MODERN' ERA

The nineteenth century cities were battlefields of sharply contradictory tendencies and starkly contradictory value hierarchies. One hierarchy put at the top sober calculations of costs and effects, gains and losses, profits and expenditures. The

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[11] Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, New York 1938, pp. 265, 176.

[12] 'Settlement', as Lars-Henrik Schmidt explains in his *Settling of Values* (Aarhus, Center for Kulturforskning 1993, pp.1-8) is not a decision. It differs from a rational calculation and proceeds 'without fixed criteria'. It is not 'looking for help in understanding or in reasoning' and is not 'deciding according to concepts or principles'. Neither has it a 'fixed procedure'. In other words, 'it differs from the "might-know"ing of understanding, the "dare-hope"ing of judging and the "ought-do"ing of reason'. It is, so to speak, de-regulated, reflecting a hotly contested area of conflicting and incompatible values beyond an agreed, consensual regulation.

other assigned topmost priority to the standards of humanity and the incipient human rights to dignified life and decent living conditions that such life required. The promoters of the first hierarchy refused to count the social costs of business venture; the advocates of the second hierarchy of values rejected the supreme authority of economic calculations in resolving human and social problems.

The two hierarchies stood in opposition to each other and were genuinely incompatible. The promoters of neither of the two hierarchies could easily abandon or compromise their postulates – given the dependence of political rulers on the support of their electors and the businessmen dependence on the regular inflow of profit. Nor could the promoters of any of the two hierarchies seriously contemplate, let alone wish, an unconditional surrender of the adversary. Business needed the political state to secure a social order in which to operate; most businessmen understood that the social devastation that the unconstrained profit–making went on causing would, unless wholly or partly repaired, become a threat to that order. The state rulers on the other hand were aware that there were only so many and no more demands they could impose on entrepreneurial budgets without putting the welfare of their electoral constituency under serious threat. No side could emerge from the confrontation fully and unconditionally victorious. No unqualified agreement, let alone a consensus, was likely to emerge. None of the sides counted seriously on the voluntary acceptance by the other side of the rules and principles dear to its own heart. The road to settlement led through confrontation and a perpetual contest between economic coercion and law enforcement. The long–term strategic aim of the bearers of 'outside standards' boiled down, in the nutshell, to the supremacy of politics over economy, and of political decision–making over the moves dictated by business interests.

Bit by bit and battle after battle, settlement was reached. The road to settlement led through a long series of factory acts and trade union and municipal empowerment bills. It ended in the more or less elaborate network of collective insurances against individual mishaps and misfortune (unemployment, ill health,

invalidity, poverty) that went down in history under the name of the Welfare State. That the settlement would be in the end reached and, once reached, upheld, seems in retrospect 'over-determined', indeed a foregone conclusion – in view of the impossibility of unilateral victory of any one of the two adversaries. It was, indeed, 'over-determined' – since both sides occupied the same ground and shared in the stakes of hostilities. Both adversaries were territorially fixed, tied to the ground, un-free to move. They were bound to meet over and over again, inhabiting the same land and having been defined by the land they occupied.

This was, after all, the era of 'solid' modernity, when power to do things and to force or cajole others to obey, or at least to refrain from resisting, was measured by the size, weight, bulk and toughness of the possessions. The might of the economy as a whole was measured by the volume of mined coal and smelted iron, the might of the individual 'captains of industry' by the size of their factories, heaviness of machinery and the numbers of labourers amassed inside the walls of industrial plants. Because of that territorial fixity, this was also the time of face-to-face, continuous, on-the-spot surveillance; the era of the from-the-top-to -the-bottom management through the time routine and repetitiveness of motions – in short, the era of *engagement*. The engagement was *mutual* – binding both partners, assumed and expecting to be locked together till death do them apart… Divorce was as difficult as in the nineteenth century marriage – and a unilateral divorce virtually unthinkable, since none of the partners had much chance of surviving it.

Being bound to stay together for a long time to come portends a protracted conflict and a lot of conflict. The disagreements are sure to crop up repeatedly; they may need an open fight to be resolved and so require from everyone involved to obey the rule *si vis pacem, para bellum*. But the prospect of a shared destiny means also the need for mutual accommodation and compromise, with an all-out war as the only – unpalatable – alternative. Mere 'cash nexus' won't do, if the whole population of the city, those currently drawn into the industrial mill and those still left behind, are the

'army of labour' – the first in active service, the second in reserve, waiting to be, if need arises, called back to the ranks. All need to be bodily fit for the hardships of industrial work, neither famished nor diseased.

Besides, living together in close proximity means that any penury, whomever it afflicts directly, may rebound on all the others. If the supervisors and the supervisees, the bosses and the bossed, the managers and the managed, are all tied down to the same city, decay of any part of the urban territory would adversely affect them all. Epidemics oozing from the slums may contaminate also the city's wealthiest quarters, and the crime bred by despair and nestling in rough districts and mean streets will jeopardise the well-being of all residents. The money spent on urban improvement, slum clearance, clean water supply, sewage and sanitation network, rubbish collection, cheap yet decent family accommodation for the poor, etc., may therefore make little, if any, *business* sense, but no businessman in his right mind would deny that it does make much sense for him and his family as the residents of the cityspace that all such measures are intended to improve. We may say, using the currently fashionable expression, that the need to make cities fit for decent living, and for the decent living of *all* its inhabitants, has turned gradually but inescapably from a worry of a few solitary dreamers, philanthropists and good-hearted reformers, into an issue fully and truly 'beyond left and right'.

Through their modern history, cities have been the sites in which the settlement between contradictory interests, ambitions and forces was intermittently fought, negotiated, undermined, broken, revoked, re-fought, re-negotiated, challenged, found and lost, buried and resurrected. Nothing has changed in this respect. Explaining the dynamics of a city by a single factor (city as a trade centre, an administrative capital, a military base, a religious cult centre etc.) – a habit still persisting since initiated by Max Weber's typology of 'city-generating factors,[13] stops far short from accounting for

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[13] Max Weber 'The Nature of the City', first published in 1921 in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik,* here quoted after Max Weber, *The City*, edited and translated by Don Martindale and Gertrude Neuwirth, Free Press 1958.

the astonishing dynamics, twists and turns, and stubborn unpredictability of city history. Now, as before, the cityspace is a meeting – and a battle-ground – of countervailing forces, and of incompatible yet mutually accommodating tendencies. What is new today, when compared with the sketched above conditions of the 'solid' phase of modernity, is the catalogue of the fighting/negotiating forces seeking or groping towards settlement.

IN SEARCH OF A SETTLEMENT FOR THE 'LIQUID MODERN' ERA

The nature of such forces remains as yet in contention, though there is a broad agreement between researchers and analysts of the contemporary urban scene that the emergent globality of economics is the principal factor of change. The effect of globalization most frequently emphasized, to the detriment of other factors, is the fast growing distance between *power* (increasingly global and circulating in the 'virtual' or 'cyber' space, and so ever more autonomous in relation to geographical, physical space) and *politics*, which remains, like in the past centuries, local, territory-bound, immobile. As Manuel Castells famously put it,[14] 'the flows of power generate the power of flows, whose material reality imposes itself as a natural phenomenon that cannot be controlled or predicted… People live in places, power rules through flows'. Let me sharpen the point: power rules *because* it flows, because it is *able* (beware ever forgetting it!) to flow – to *flow away*. Power superiority, domination, consist these days in the capacity of *disengaging* – the capacity that territorially defined places and people, whose lives are circumscribed by those places, are conspicuously lacking.

This much seems to be beyond doubt. It is becoming increasingly obvious, and agreed, that the growing extraterritoriality of power, and the tightening correlation between extraterritoriality and powerfulness (indeed, the degree of extraterritoriality becoming the principal measure of might) are the names of the new world-wide games

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[14] Manuel Castells, *The Informational City: Information, Technology, Economic Restructuringand the Urban-Regional Process*, Blackwell 1989, p.349.

and the most crucial among the factors setting the stage of human action and drawing its limits. The moot question, though, prompting considerable controversy but little agreement, is the impact that the new separation of (global) power from (local) politics has, may have or will have on city life and its prospects.

A most commonly believed answer to this question, again suggested first by Manuel Castells,[15] is the growing polarisation, and the break of communication between the life-worlds of the two categories of city residents: 'The space of the upper tier is usually connected to global communication and to a vast network of exchange, open to messages and experiences that embrace the entire world. At the other end of the spectrum, segmented local networks, often ethnically based, rely on their identity as the most valuable resource to defend their interests, and ultimately their being'. The picture emerging from this description is that of two segregated and separate life-worlds. Only the second of the two is territorially circumscribed and can be grasped in the net of the orthodox geographical, mundane and 'down to earth' notions. Those who live in the first of the two distinct life-worlds may be, like the others, 'in the place', but they are not 'of that place' – certainly not spiritually, but also quite often, whenever they wish, bodily.

The people of the 'upper tier' do not apparently belong to the place they inhabit. Their concerns lie (or rather float) elsewhere. One may guess that apart from being left alone, free to engross in their own pastimes, and to be assured of the services needed for (however defined) life comfort, they have no other vested interests in the city in which their residences are located. The city population is not, like it used to be for the factory owners and the merchants of consumables and ideas of yore, their grazing ground, source of their wealth or a ward in their custody, care and responsibility. They are therefore, by and large, *unconcerned* with the affairs of 'their' city – just one locality among many, all of them small and insignificant from the vantage point of the cyberspace, their genuine, even if virtual, home.

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[15] *The Informational City*, p.228.

The life-world of the other, 'lower' tier of city residents is the very opposite of the first. It is defined mostly by being cut off from that world-wide network of communication with which the 'upper tier' is connected and to which their life is tuned. They are 'doomed to stay local' – and so one could and should expect their attention, complete with discontents, dreams and hopes, to focus on 'local affairs'. For them, it is inside the city they inhabit that the battle for survival and a decent place in the world is launched, waged, won or lost.

There is much to be said in favour of that picture. It grasps an important tendency in contemporary city life (and in human life as such – since, as Mumford predicted, we have moved in our joint history from a city that was the world to the world that is a city). The secession of the new global elite from its past engagements with 'the people', and the widening gap between the *habitats* of those who seceded and those left behind, are arguably the most seminal of social, cultural and political departures associated with the passage from the 'solid' to the 'liquid' stage of modernity.[16] There is a lot of truth, and nothing but the truth, in the picture. But not the whole truth. Most significantly for our theme, the part of the truth that is missing or played down is one that more than any other parts accounts for the most vital (and probably, in the long run, most consequential) characteristic of contemporary urban life.

The characteristic in question is the intimate interplay between globalizing pressures and the fashion in which the identities of place are negotiated, formed and re-formed. It is a grave mistake to locate the 'global' and the 'local' aspects of contemporary living conditions and life politics in two different spaces that only marginally communicate, as the 'opting out' of the 'upper tier' would ultimately suggest. In his recently published study Michael Peter Smith[17] objects against the opinion (as suggested in his view by, for instance, David Harvey or John Friedman[18]) that

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[16] On liquid (or 'software') modernity and its distinction from its solid (or 'hardware') form, see my book *Liquid Modernity* (Polity Press 2000).

[17] Michael Peter Smith, *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization*, Blackwell 2001, pp.54-5.

[18] See John Friedman 'Where We Stand: a decade of world city research', in: *World Cities in a World System*, ed. By P.L.Knox & P.J.Taylor, Canbridge UP 1995; David Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Bach

opposes 'a dynamic but placeless logic of global economic flows' 'to a static image of place and local culture', 'now valorised' as the 'life place' 'of being-in-the-world'. In Smith's own opinion, 'far from reflecting a static ontology of "being" or "community", localities are dynamic constructions "in the making"'.

Indeed, the line separating the abstract, 'somewhere in the nowhere' space of global operators from the fleshy, tangible, supremely 'here and now' space-within-reach of the 'locals' can be drawn easily in the ethereal world of theory, in which the tangled and intertwined contents of human life-worlds are 'straightened up' to be then filed and boxed, for the sake of clarity, each in it own compartment. Realities of city life play havoc with neat divisions. Elegant models of urban life and sharp oppositions deployed in their construction may give a lot of intellectual satisfaction to the theory-builders, but little practical guidance to the urban planners and even less support to the urban dwellers struggling with the challenges of city living.

As already noted, the real powers that shape up the conditions under which we all act these days flow in the global space, while our institutions of political action remain by and large tied to the ground; they are, as before, local. What follows is that the latter are afflicted with the vexing dearth of power to act, and particularly to act effectively and in a sovereign manner, on the stage where the drama of politics is played. But it follows as well that there is little politics in the extraterritorial cyberspace, the playground of powers. In our globalizing world, politics tends to be increasingly, passionately, self-consciously local. Evicted from, or barred access to the cyberspace, it falls back and rebounds on affairs 'within reach', local matters, neighbourhood relations. For most of us and for most of the time, these seem to be *the only* issues we can 'do something about', influence, repair, improve, re-direct. Only in 'local matters' our action or inaction may 'make a difference'; as for the other, admittedly 'supra-local' affairs – there is (or so we are repeatedly told by our political leaders and all other

Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity', in: *Mapping the Futures*, ed. by Bird, Curtis, Putnam, Robertson and Tickner, Routledge 1993.

'people in the know') 'no alternative'. We come to suspect that they would take their course whatever we do or whatever we can do, given the pitifully inadequate means and resources at our disposal. And so, even the matters with undoubtedly global, far-away and recondite roots and causes enter the realm of political concerns only through their local offshoots and repercussions. The admittedly global pollution of air or water supplies turns into a political matter when a dumping ground for toxic waste or housing for asylum seekers are allocated next door, in 'our own backyard', in the vicinity of our residence. Progressive commercialisation of health concerns, obviously an effect of the throat-cutting competition between supra-national pharmaceutical giants, comes into political view when the neighbourhood-serving hospital is run down or the old-people homes and mental-care institutions phased out. It was the residents of one city, New York, who had to cope with the havoc caused by globally gestated terrorism – and the councils and mayors of other cities who had to undertake responsibility for the protection of individual safety, seen now as vulnerable to forces entrenched far beyond the reach of any municipality. The global devastation of livelihoods and the uprooting of long settled populations enter the horizon of political action through the colourful 'economic migrants' crowding once uniformly looking streets… To cut the long story short: cities have become dumping grounds for globally begotten problems. The residents of cities and their elected representatives have been confronted with a task they can by no stretch of imagination fulfil: the task of finding local solutions to global contradictions.

Hence the paradox noted by Castells[19] – of 'increasingly local politics in a world structured by increasingly global processes'. 'There was production of meaning and identity: my neighbourhood, my community, my city, my school, my tree, my river, my beach, my chapel, my peace, my environment'. 'Defenceless against the global whirlwind, people stuck to themselves'. Let us note that the more 'stuck to themselves' they are, the more 'defenceless against the global whirlwind', but also more helpless in

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[19] Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, Blackwell 1997, p.61.

deciding local, and so ostensibly their own, meanings and identities, they tend to become – to the great joy of global operators, who have no reason to fear the defenceless. As Castells implies elsewhere[20], the creation of the 'space of flows' sets a new (global) hierarchy of domination–through–the–threat–of–disengagement. The 'space of flows' can 'escape the control of any locale' – while (and because!) 'the space of places is fragmented, localised, and thus increasingly powerless vis–à–vis the versatility of the space of flows, with the only chance of resistance for localities being to refuse landing rights for overwhelming flows – only to see that they land in the locale nearby, inducing therefore the bypassing and marginalization of rebellious communities'. Local politics – and particularly urban politics – has become overloaded; it is expected to mitigate the consequences of the out–of–control globalisation with means and resources that the selfsame globalisation rendered pitifully inadequate.

No one in our fast globalising world is a 'global operator' pure and simple. The most that the members of the global and globetrotting elite can manage is a wider scope of their mobility. If things get too hot for comfort, and the space around their city residences proves too hazardous and too difficult to manage, they may move elsewhere – an option not available to the rest of their close or not so close neighbours. Their commitment to the city affairs may be therefore somewhat less complete and less unconditional than in the case of those who have less freedom to break the bond unilaterally. This does not mean, however, that in their search for 'meaning and identity', which they need and crave no less intensely than the next person, they may leave out of account the place they live in and work. Like all the rest of men and women, they are part of the cityscape, and their life pursuits are inscribed in it. As global operators, they may roam the cyberspace. But as human agents, they move through and stay in the physical space, the environment pre–set and continually re–processed in the course of human meaning–and–identity struggles. Human experience is gleaned and its

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[20] Manuel Castells, 'Grassrooting the Space of Flows', in *Cities in the Telecommunication Age: The Fracturing of Geographies*, pp.20-1.

sharing organised, meanings are conceived, absorbed and negotiated, around *places*. And it is in places and of places that human urges and desires are born, live in hope to be satisfied, risk frustration and are being – more often than not – frustrated.

Contemporary cities are the battlegrounds on which global powers and stubbornly local meanings and identities meet, clash, struggle and seek a satisfactory, or just bearable, settlement – a mode of cohabitation that is hoped to be a lasting peace but as a rule proves to be but an armistice, an interval to repair the broken defences and re-deploy the fighting units. It is that confrontation, and not any single factor, that sets in motion and guides the dynamics of the 'liquid modern' city. And let there be no mistake: *any* city, even if not all to the same degree. Michael Peter Smith on his recent trip to Copenhagen[21] has recorded walking in a single hour 'past small groups of Turkish, African, and Middle Eastern immigrants', observing 'several veiled and unveiled Arab women', reading 'signs in various non-European languages', and having 'an interesting conversation with an Irish bartender, in an English pub, across from Tivoli Garden'. These field experiences proved to be helpful, says Smith, in the talk on transnational connections he gave in Copenhagen later in the week, 'when a questioner insisted that transnationalism was a phenomenon that might apply to "global cities" like New York or London, but had little relevance to more insular places like Copenhagen'.

LIQUID-MODERN CITY,
OR WHERE SPACES OF FLOW AND SPACES OF PLACES MEET

Cities of the world, all and any one of them, are affected by the new global interdependence of all, however remote, isolated and peripheral parts of humanity. The effects of interdependence may show more or less conspicuously, may arrive with a lightning speed or be delayed, but no place is really immune to their invasion. It is fashionable today to speak of 'multiple modernities' – but in one crucial respect all

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[21] *Transnational Urbanism*, p.108.

modernities are stunningly alike: in their vulnerability to the global interdependence. Of the arts in Latin America, the land often represented as 'a continent apart' setting its own version of modern life against the intentionally uniform global pressures, Margarita Sanchez Prieto recently observed[22] that they 'translate the new cultural atmosphere or milieu that mould everyday life: daily experiences which are characterised by an increase in privatisation…and the consolidation of a lifestyle structured by seduction and apathy. All these are the characteristic products of an age of market economy and consumerism, as well as a reinvigoration of the present as a result of a weakening of the teleological notion of progress and faith in the future…' The same could be said of the arts on show in the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, in the Tate Gallery, in Luisiana or Charlotenburg…

In the confrontation between the 'space of flows' and the 'space of places', none of the adversaries can claim priority and primordiality and none can be dismissed as alien or contrived. Contrary to the widespread opinion, locally anchored meanings and identities are not the 'real reality' of the city assaulted, deformed or eroded by the cancerous spread of 'transnational' rootlessness. Their combat is not an interim condition from which one of them will eventually emerge victorious. Other wars may end with the victor becoming the sole master of the battlefield from which the adversary has been chased away and banished – but this is an utterly unlikely prospect for the urban confrontation of the two closely intertwined dimensions of liquid-modern life. None of the two spaces can survive on its own. Both can live only in mutual embrace. 'Space of flows' *needs* its ostensible adversary – the 'space of places' – to cater for human needs it is incapable of meeting on its own. After all, it owes its power to the flat refusal to care about such needs. 'Space of places' *needs* its admitted adversary – the 'space of flows' – to pull, absorb and retain the continuous influx of human passions, its life juices. After all, it owes its constant attraction, and so the replenishment of its vigour, to

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[22] Margarita Sanchez Prieto, 'Escape from Social Utopia: New Art in Argentina and Chile', *Third Text*, Summer 2001, pp.75-84.

the perpetual bereavements of needs desperately seeking a shelter. The two declared enemies can live only in a state of combat; none would survive a victory. None would survive either the termination of hostilities, were such termination at all thinkable. Whatever else their confrontation may be, it is not a war of attrition.

Most of the change currently on the way and yet to come cannot be explained by reference to but one of the two intertwined/combative/supplementary /cooperative spaces. The changes arise from the interaction between the two, and solely in the context of that interaction can they be comprehended and (if at all) managed. It is for that reason that the changes notoriously escape the anticipation, not to mention control, of any single partisan (local-interests or global-trends promoting) agency. Each agency would need to reckon with the moves initiated by the other, and much of each agency's own initiatives would be responses to the other side's gambit. Comprehensive planning (and particularly the long-term comprehensive planning) of the city's future, at all times a mostly abortive and some times counter-productive endeavour, looks today more than ever misbegotten and prospectless.

We may deploy Franz Rosenzweig's apt terminology (even if introduced and elaborated in a different context[23]) and say that to be a viable proposition, city planning, that vocation of municipal authorities, needs to adopt the strategy of 'grammatical' rather than 'logical' thinking – the kind of strategy that is, willy-nilly, employed by speech that proceeds as a dialogue. 'Speech is bound by time and nourished by time'. Speech 'does not know in advance just where it will end. It takes its cues from others. In fact, it lives by virtue of another's life, whether that other is the one who listens to a story, answers in the course of a dialogue, or joins in a chorus'. The opposite (and utterly false, since blatantly self-destructive) strategy would be to act as a 'thinker who knows his thoughts in advance'. That opposite strategy disarms and dis-empowers its user in the face of the vicissitudes of the on-going conversation: it makes the agent un-

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[23] Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy: A View of World, Man, and God*, Harvard UP 1999, p.14.

ready for the twists and turns of *conversation* – notoriously, a process in which

'something happens'. We need *readiness*, not *plans.* We need such readiness as permits

to spot the rising challenge when it is still within the agent's power to respond, and own

errors when it is still possible to repair them. Such readiness would be the major

concern of what we may call, taking Rosenzweig's clue, the 'grammatical planning' or

'dialogical planning': a planning that is aware of being not alone on the ground nor

enjoying undivided charge of the ground, and that it cannot afford to choose loneliness,

or allowing itself to be left alone – lest the price should be the loss of grip over its aims

and objects and self-inflicted impotence.

SECURITY VS. FREEDOM,

OR THE VALUE-ANTINOMY OF CITY LIFE

The combination of the globalising pressures and the territorially oriented

identity-search that sets in motion and guides the structural development of the city is

reflected in the apparently contradictory desires and expectations of the residents. On

one hand, there is the insistent and consistent 'MacDonaldization' of urban environment

(the term coined and first used a decade ago by George Ritzer[24]), with its overwhelming

tendency to standardization and the resulting dreary uniformity of the urban habitat.

Whatever the *drive*-wheels of that process, it is the enthusiastic reception of the results

by their customers that serves as its *fly*wheel. The residents of a city in which all

routines are routinely broken and no familiar landmark is truly immune to the tide of

perpetual change crave for the rare comfort of predictability and orderliness, and the

MacDonald restaurants, as well as the fast expanding family of their imitators, promise –

and supply – the island on both. Here, at long last, one can feel secure in a familiar

environment: one can be certain to get what one expects and wants. The less

predictable the wider city stage, the higher the value of micro-regions, like MacDonald

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[24] See George Ritzer, *The MacDonaldization of Society*, Pine Forge Press 1993)

restaurants, or Starbuck cafés, or Steak House and Pizza Hut eateries, that purvey a welcome relief from confusing and disconcerting novelty.

Added benefits of 'MacDonaldization' are the satisfaction of the travelling global-business people's need to (at least occasionally) relax and disarm, and of the adventurous tourists, who despite their appetite for a change of place do not want the place to be too much of a change, and crave for an oasis of familiarity in an alien and therefore vigilance-taxing environment. The Holiday Inn hotel chain, catering mostly for global business people, promises its customers 'no surprise', while tourist resorts aimed at mass travel 'offer a large selection of routinized activities in interchangeable exotic settings where a guest can stay without having to venture into the unknown and unpredictable environs of local life on a tropical island'.[25]

With the hopes of an orderly, transparent and predictable 'ideal city' all but abandoned and left with little purchase (or for that matter credibility), the bereaved utopian longings for the exquisitely human-friendly habitat that combines intriguing variety with safety, without endangering any of these two necessary ingredients of happiness, have been focused on smaller, and so more feasible and realistic targets. Rather than struggling to reform the street, let's cut ourselves free from its hazards, run for shelter and lock the door behind. Chains of thinly, but widely spread mini-utopias consolidated into realities are the second best, 'poor man's' replacements for that one big utopia, known for being perpetually defiant of reality that would not bend to its shape.

The magic blend of security and adventure – of supervision and freedom, of routine and surprise, of sameness and variety – is sought, with mixed success, in such archipelago of pre-fabricated islands of pre-designed order, all the most zealously for the hopes to find such wondrous amalgam off their shores fading and dissipating. Craving for the shelters has the uncanny propensity to feed on itself: just because the search has been focused on the oases, the world between them looks and feels more

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[25] John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis*, Routledge 1998, p.82.

and more desert-like. The deserts, though, are ambiguous places: they are the stuff of which both romantic musings, but also fully prosaic fears, are kneaded. Unlike the oases themselves, inside which everything is pre-designed, pre-scripted, insured against misadventure and protected by a money-back guarantee, the world in-between the islands of secure adventure – the wide and narrow streets of the everyday life city, its spacious and cluttered squares, bright and dark passages, near and distant quarters of the city – tempt with the promise of a gamble: there are exciting adventures and unspeakable dangers mixed in proportions that the hapless stroller cannot calculate, and coming in a succession that s/he cannot anticipate. Untested and unknown adventure is the pull of the city; untested and unknown risk, its repellent.

John Hannigan has traced back the convoluted itinerary of American cities' recent history. What we learn from his study is that sudden horror of crime lurking in the inner-city dark corners struck the inhabitants of American metropolitan areas in the second half of the last century and led to the 'white flight' from the city centres – though only a few years before those 'inner cities' were powerful magnets for the crowds eager to revel in the kind of mass entertainment as only the centres of big cities, and not the other, less densely populated urban areas, could offer. No matter whether that dread of crime was well grounded or whether the sudden upsurge of criminality was a figment of feverish imagination; deserted and abandoned inner cities, 'dwindling number of pleasure seekers and an ever greater perception of cities as dangerous places to be' were the result. Of one of such cities, Detroit, another author noted in 1989[26] that its 'streets are so deserted after dusk that the city appears to be a ghost town – like Washington, DC; the nation's capital'. Hannigan found out that a reverse trend had started towards the end of the century. After many lean years of 'don't go out tonight' panic and its 'desertification' effects on cities, American town elders in league with promoters struggled to make town centres once again fun and magnets for the would-be revellers, as 'entertainment returns to the city centre' and the 'out-of-

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[26] B.J.Widick, *Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence*, Wayne State UP 1989, p.210.

town day-trippers' are drawn back to the inner city in hope to find there something 'exciting, safe and not available in the suburbs'[27].

Admittedly, such sharp, neurotic U-turns in the cities' plight are in the United States, with its long festering, most of the time seething and occasionally erupting race antagonisms and enmities, more salient and abrupt than elsewhere, where race conflict and prejudice do not add fuel to the smouldering sentiments of uncertainty and confusion. In a somewhat lighter, more attenuated form, the ambivalence of attraction and repulsion and the alternation of passion for, and aversion to, big city life mark, however, as well the recent history of many, perhaps most, European cities.

MIXOPHILIA VS. MIXOPHOBIA,

OR THE ATTITUDINAL ANTINOMY OF CITY LIFE

Whatever happens to cities in their history and however drastically their spatial structure, look, and style may transform over years and centuries, one feature remains constant: cities are spaces where strangers stay and move in close proximity to each other. Being a permanent component of city life, the ubiquitous presence of strangers within sight and reach adds measure of perpetual uncertainty to all city dwellers' life pursuits; that presence, impossible to avoid for more than a brief moment, is a never drying source of anxiety and of the usually dormant, yet time and again erupting, aggressiveness. The perpetual, even if subliminal, fear of the unknown desperately seeks credible outlets. Accumulated anxieties tend to unload against the selected category of 'aliens', picked up to epitomise 'strangeness as such'. In chasing them away from one's homes and shops, the frightening ghost of uncertainty is, for a time, exorcised. The horrifying monster of insecurity is burnt in effigy. Border barriers painstakingly erected against 'false asylum seekers' and economic migrants are hoped to fortify a shaky, erratic and unpredictable existence. But liquid-modern life is bound

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[27] *Fantasy City*, pp.43, 51.

to stay erratic and capricious, and so the relief is short-lived, and hopes attached to the 'tough and decisive measures' are dashed as soon as they are raised.

The stranger is, by definition, an agent moved by intentions that one can at best guess but would never know for sure. The stranger is the unknown variable in all equations calculated when decisions about what to do and how to behave are made; and so, even when not behaving aggressively or actively resented, the presence of strangers inside the field of action is discomforting, as it makes a tall order of the task to predict the effects of action and its chances of success or failure. Sharing space with strangers, living in the uninvited yet obtrusive proximity of strangers, is the condition that the city residents find difficult, perhaps impossible to escape. The proximity of strangers is their fate, and a *modus vivendi* must be experimented with, tried and tested, and (hopefully) found to make cohabitation palatable and life liveable. This need is 'given', non-negotiable; but the way in which city residents go about satisfying this need is a matter of choice. And choice is daily made – whether by commission or by omission, by design or default; by conscious decision or just by following, blindly and mechanically, the customary patterns; by joint discussion and deliberation or just through following, individually, the trusted, because currently fashionable and allegedly patented, means.

Of São Paulo, the largest, bustling and fast expanding Brazilian city, Teresa Caldeira writes[28]: 'São Paulo is today a city of walls. Physical barriers have been constructed everywhere – around houses, apartment buildings, parks, squares, office complexes and schools… A new aesthetics of security shapes all types of constructions and imposes new logic of surveillance and distance…' Whoever can afford it, buys himself/herself residence in a 'condominium', in its intention a hermitage physically inside, but socially and spiritually outside, the city. 'Closed communities are supposed to be separate worlds. Their advertisements propose a total "way of life" which would represent an alternative to the quality of life offered by the city and its deteriorated public space'. A most prominent feature of the condominium is its 'isolation and

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[28] Teresa Caldeira, 'Fortified Enclaves: The new Urban Segregation', in *Public Culture* 1996, pp.303-28.

distance from the city… Isolation means separation from those considered to be socially inferior' and, as the developers and the real-estate agents insist, 'the key factor to assure this is security. This means fences and walls surrounding the condominium, guards on duty twenty-four hours a day controlling the entrances, and an array of facilities and services' 'for keeping the others out'.

As we all know, fences cannot but have two sides… Fences divide the otherwise uniform space into an 'inside' and an 'outside', but what is the 'inside' for those on one side of the fence is the 'outside' for those on the other. The residents of condominia fence themselves 'out' of the unprepossessing, hurly-burly and rough life of the city and 'in' the oasis of calm and safety. By the same token, though, they fence all the others out of decent and secure places whose standards they are prepared and willing to keep up, and in the selfsame shabby and squalid streets they try, no expense spared, to fence off. The fence separates the 'voluntary ghetto' from the many enforced ones. For the insiders of the voluntary ghetto, the other ghettoes are 'we won't go in' spaces. For the insiders of the involuntary ones, the area to which they are confined (by being excluded from elsewhere) is the 'we can't get out' space.

In São Paulo (with Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's second biggest conurbation, not far behind) the segregationist and exclusionist tendency show itself at its most brutal, unscrupulous and unashamed, but its impact can be found, albeit in a somewhat attenuated form, in most metropolitan cities. Paradoxically, the cities originally constructed to provide safety for all its inhabitants, are these days associated more often with danger than security. As Nan Elin puts it,[29] 'the fear factor [in construction and reconstruction of cities – Z.B.] has certainly grown, as indicated by the growth in locked car and house doors and security systems, the popularity of "gated" and "secure" communities for all age and income groups, and the increasing surveillance of public spaces, not to mention the unending reports of danger emitted by the mass media'.

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[29] Nan Elin, 'Shelter from the Storm, or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa', in: Nan Elin (ed.), *Architecture of Fear*, Princeton Architectural Press 1997, pp.13, 26.

Genuine and putative threats to the body and the property of the individual are turning fast into major considerations whenever merits or disadvantages of a place to live are contemplated. They have been also assigned the topmost position in the real estate marketing policy. Uncertainty of the future, the frailty of social position and existential insecurity, ubiquitous accompaniments of life in the 'liquid modern' world, rooted notoriously in remote places and so staying beyond individual control, tend to be focused on the nearest targets and channelled into concerns with personal safety; the kind of concerns that are condensed in turn into segregationist/exclusionist urges, inexorably leading to urban space wars.

As we can learn from the perceptive study of young American architectural/urbanist critic, Steven Flusty[30], servicing that war and, particularly, designing the ways to deny the adversaries – current and potential – access to the claimed space and to keep them at a safe distance from it, constitute the most visible and rapidly expanding concerns of architectural innovation and urban development in American cities. The novel, most proudly advertised, and widely imitated constructions are 'interdictory spaces' – 'designed to intercept, repel or filter the would-be users'. Explicitly, the purpose of 'interdictory spaces' is to divide, segregate and exclude – not to build bridges, easy passages and meeting places, facilitate communication and otherwise bring the city residents together. The architectural/urbanistic inventions distinguished, listed and named by Flusty are the technically updated equivalents of pre-modern moats, turrets and embrasures of the city walls; only rather that defending the city and all its dwellers against the enemy outside, they are built to set the city residents apart and, having stigmatised them as adversaries, to defend them against each other. Among the inventions named by Flusty, there is 'slippery space' – 'space that cannot be reached, due to contorted, protracted, or missing paths of approach'; 'prickly space' – 'space that cannot be comfortably occupied, defended by such details as wall-mounted sprinkler heads activated to clear loiterers or ledges sloped to inhibit

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[30] Steven Flusty, 'Building Paranoia', in: *Architecture of Fear,* pp.48-52.

sitting'; and 'jittery space' – 'space that cannot be utilised unobserved due to active monitoring by roving patrols and/or remote technologies feeding to security stations'. These and other kinds of 'interdictory spaces' have but one purpose: to cut extraterritorial enclaves out of the continuous city territory – to erect little fortresses inside which the members of the supra-territorial global elite may groom, cultivate and relish their bodily independence and spiritual isolation from locality. In the landscape of the city they become landmarks of *disintegration* of the locally grounded, shared communal living.

Developments described by Steven Flusty are high-tech manifestations of the ubiquitous *mixophobia*, a most widespread reaction to the mind-boggling, spine-chilling and nerve-breaking variety of human types and life-styles that rub their shoulders in the streets of contemporary cities and in the most 'ordinary' (read: unprotected by 'interdictory spaces') of their living districts. As the polyvocality and cultural variegation of urban environment of the globalisation era sets in, likely to intensify in the course of time rather than mitigate, the tensions arising from the irreparable unfamiliarity of the setting will probably go on prompting segregationist urges.

Unloading such urges may (temporarily, yet repeatedly) relieve the rising tension. Confusing and disconcerting differences could be unassailable and intractable, but perhaps the poison may be squeezed out of the sting by assigning to each form of life its separate, inclusive as well as exclusive, well marked and well guarded physical spaces… Short of that radical solution, perhaps one could at least secure for oneself, for one's kith and kin and other 'people like oneself' a territory free from that jumble and mess that irredeemably afflicts other city areas.

'Mixophobia' manifests itself in the drive towards islands of similarity and sameness amidst the sea of variety and difference. The roots of mixophobia are, we may say, banal – not at all difficult to locate, easy to understand if not necessarily easy to

forgive. As Richard Sennett suggests[31], 'the "we" feeling, which expresses a desire to be similar, is a way for men to avoid the necessity of looking deeper into each other'. It promises, we may say, some spiritual comfort: the prospect of making togetherness easier by cutting off the efforts to understand, to negotiate, to compromise that living amidst and with difference requires. 'Innate to the process of forming a coherent image of community is the desire to avoid actual participation. Feeling common bonds without common experience occurs in the first place because men are afraid of participation, afraid of the dangers and the challenges of it, afraid of its pain'. The drive towards a 'community of similarity' is a sign of withdrawal not just from the otherness outside, but also from the commitment to the lively yet turbulent, engaged yet cumbersome interaction inside. The attraction of the 'community of sameness' is that of an insurance policy against the risks with which the daily life in a poly-vocal world is fraught. It does not decrease, let alone stave off the risks. Like all palliatives, it only promises a shelter from some of their most immediate and most feared effects.

Choosing the escape option prompted by mixophobia has an insidious and deleterious consequence of its own: the more self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing the strategy is, the more it is ineffective. Sennett explains why this is – indeed, must be – the case[32]: 'cities in America during the past two decades have grown in such a way that ethnic areas become relatively homogeneous; it appears no accident that the fear of the outsider has also grown to the extent that these ethnic communities have been cut off'. The longer people are staying in a uniform environment – company of others 'like them' with whom one can 'socialise' perfunctorily and matter-of-factly without incurring the risk of miscomprehension, and with no vexing need to translate between distinct universes of meaning, the more one is likely to 'de-learn' the art of negotiating shared meanings and a *modus covivendi*.

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[31] Richard Sennett, *The Uses of* Disorder*: Personal Identity and City Life*, Faber & Faber 1996, p. 39, 42.
[32] *Ibid.,* p.194.

As they have forgotten the skills needed to live with difference or neglected to acquire them, there is little wonder that such people view the prospect of confronting the strangers face-to-face with rising horror. Strangers tend to appear ever more frightening as they become increasingly alien, un-familiar and incomprehensible, and as the mutual communication which could eventually assimilate their 'otherness' to one's own life-world fades, or never takes off in the first place. The drive to a homogeneous, territorially isolated environment may be triggered by mixophobia; but *practicing* territorial separation is that mixophobia's life-belt and food purveyor.

Mixophobia, though, is not the sole combatant on the urban battlefield. City living is a notoriously ambivalent experience. It attracts and repels, but to make the plight of the city dweller more complex yet, it is the same aspects of city life that, intermittently or simultaneously, attract and repel... The confusing variety of urban environment is a source of fear (particularly for such people among us who have already 'lost the familiar ways', having been cast in a state of acute uncertainty by the de-stabilising processes of globalisation). The same kaleidoscoping twinkle and glimmer of urban scenery, never short of novelty and surprise, has, however, its difficult-to-resist charm and seductive power.

Confronting the never-ending and constantly dazzling spectacle of the city is not therefore experienced, unambiguously, as a bane and a curse; nor does the sheltering from it feel as an un-mixed blessing. City prompts *mixophilia* as much as, and simultaneously with, *mixophobia*. City life is an intrinsically and irreparably *ambivalent* affair. The bigger and more heterogeneous a city, the more attractions it may support and offer. Massive condensation of strangers is, simultaneously, a repellent and a most powerful magnet, drawing to the city ever new cohorts of men and women weary of the monotony of rural or small town life, fed up with its repetitive routine – and despaired of the dearth of chances. Variety is a promise of opportunities, many and different, fitting all skills and any taste – and so the bigger the city is, the most likely it is to attract the growing number of people who reject, or are refused accommodation

and life chances in, places that are smaller and therefore less tolerant to idiosyncrasy, and more closefisted in the opportunities they offer. It seems that mixophilia, just like mixophobia, is a self-propelling, self-propagating and self-invigorating tendency. None of the two is likely to exhaust itself, nor lose any of its vigour.

Mixophobia and mixophilia coexist in every city, but they coexist as well inside every one of city residents. Admittedly, this is an uneasy coexistence, full of sound and fury – though signifying a lot to the people on the receiving end of the liquid-modern ambivalence.

OUT OF THE VICIOUS CIRCLE?

Since strangers are bound to carry their lives in each other company whatever the future twists and turns of urban history are, the art of living peacefully and happily with difference and to benefit, undisturbed, from the variety of stimuli and opportunity the variegated city scene offers, acquires paramount importance among the skills that the life of the city resident requires. Even if complete eradication of mixophobia is not on the cards, given the rising human mobility of the liquid-modern epoch and the accelerated change in the cast, plots and setting of the urban scene, perhaps something can be done to influence the proportions in which mixophilia and mixophobia are mixed and so reduce the confusing, anxiety-and-anguish generating impact of mixophobia.

There is a lot that the architects and urban planners could do to assist the growth of mixophilia and minimize the occasions for mixophobic responses to the challenges of city life. And there is a lot they may do and indeed are doing to facilitate the opposite effects. As we have seen before, segregation of residential areas and publicly attended spaces, commercially attractive to developers as a fast fix for mixophobia-generated anxieties, is in fact mixophobia's prime cause. The solutions create, so to speak, the problems they claim to resolve: builders of gated communities

and closely guarded condominiums, and architects of 'interdictory spaces', create, reproduce and intensify the need and the demand they claim to fulfil. Mixophobic paranoia feeds upon itself and serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy. If segregation is offered and taken up as a radical cure for the danger represented by strangers, cohabitation with strangers becomes more difficult by the day. Homogenising living quarters and then reducing to the unavoidable minimum all commerce and communication between them is the foolproof recipe for keeping the urge to exclude and segregate intense and deepening. Such a measure may help to reduce the pains suffered by people afflicted with mixophobia, but the cure is itself pathogenic and deepens the affliction, so that ever new and stronger doses of the medicine are needed to keep the pain at a tolerably low level. Social homogeneity of space, emphasized and fortified by spatial segregation, lowers in its residents the tolerance to difference and so multiplies the occasions for mixophobic reactions, making city life look more 'risk-prone' and so more agonising, rather than making it feel more secure and so easier-going and more enjoyable.

More favourable to the entrenchment and cultivation of mixophilic sentiments would be the opposite architectural and urban-planning strategy: propagation of open, inviting and hospitable public spaces which all categories of urban residents would be tempted to regularly attend and knowingly/willingly share. As Hans Gadamer famously pointed out in his *Truth and Method*, mutual understanding is prompted by the 'fusion of horizons' – the cognitive horizons, that is, the horizons that are drawn and expanded in the course of the accumulation of life experience. The 'fusion' that the mutual understanding requires may be only the outcome of *shared* experience; and sharing experience is inconceivable without shared space. As if to supply a massive empirical proof of Gadamer's hypothesis, It has been found that spaces reserved for face-to-face meetings (or just 'being around' together, dining in the same restaurants, drinking in the same bars) between travelling businessmen and other members of the emergent globetrotting elite or 'global ruling class' (like global chains

of supra-national hotels and conference centres) play crucial role in the integration of that elite on the top of, and despite the cultural, linguistic, denominational, ideological or any other differences that would otherwise split it and prevent the development of the 'we belong together' sentiments[33]. Indeed, developing mutual understanding and sharing life experience that such understanding needs are the reasons why travelling businessmen or academics travel and go on visiting each other and meeting at conferences. If communication could be reduced to the transfer of information and no 'fusion of horizons' was called for, then, in our age of world-wide-web and internet, physical contact and (even if temporary and intermittent) space-and-experience sharing would have become redundant. But it has not, and nothing suggests thus far that it will.

I may repeat now: there are things that architects and city planners may do to shift the balance between mixophobia and mixophilia in favour of the latter (just as they, by commission or omission, contribute to the opposite drift). But there are limits to what they can achieve while acting alone and relying solely on the effects of their own actions. The roots of mixophobia, the allergic, febrile sensitivity to strangers and the strange, lie beyond the reach of architectural competence or city-planners' remit. These roots sink deep in the existential condition of contemporary men and women born and bred in the deregulated, individualised, fluid world of accelerated and diffuse change – and the shape and look of city streets and the uses of city space, however important they may be for the quality of daily life, are but some and not necessarily the paramount among many factors contributing to that destabilising, uncertainty-and-anxiety breeding condition. More than by anything else, mixophobic sentiments are prompted and fed by the overwhelming feeling of insecurity. It is insecure men and women, uncertain of their place in the world, of their life prospects and the effects of their own actions, that are most vulnerable to mixophobic temptation and most likely to fall into its trap. The trap consists in channelling the anxiety away from its true sources and

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[33] See for instance William B.Beyer, 'Cyberspace or Human Space: Wither cities in the Age of Telecommunications?', in: *Cities in the Telecommunications Age*, pp.176-8.

unloading it on the targets unrelated to them. In the result, a lot of human beings are victimised (and in the long are inviting victimisation in their turn) while the sources of anguish stay protected from interference, unscathed and intact.

What follows is that the troubles that afflict contemporary cities cannot be resolved by reforming the city itself – however radical such a reform may be. There are, let me repeat again, no local solutions to globally generated problems. The kind of 'security' urban developers offer is impotent to relieve, let alone eradicate, the existential insecurity replenished daily by the fluidity of labour markets, the fragility of the value ascribed to the acquired, or currently pursued, skills and competences, or the frailty and assumed transience of human bonds and partnerships. Reform of existential condition precedes reform of the city and conditions its success. Without that reform, the city-confined efforts to overcome or detoxicate the mixophobic pressures are bound to remain but palliatives; more often than not, just placebos.

This needs to be remembered – not in order to devalue or play down the difference between good and bad architecture or proper and improper city planning, which may be and often are enormously important for the quality of life of city residents, but to set the task in *a perspective that entails all the factors decisive for making the right choice and making that right choice stick.*

Contemporary cities are dumping grounds for the mis-formed and de-formed products of fluid-modern society (while, to be sure, themselves contributing to the accumulation of waste). There are no city-centred, let alone city-confined solutions to systemic contradictions and malfunctions; and, however enormous and laudable the imagination of the architects, city mayors and municipal counsellors, they won't be found. Problems need to be met where they arise, and the expanses where the troubles suffered inside the city but born elsewhere incubate and gestate are too vast to be tackled with the tools made to the size of even the largest conurbation. Those expanses extend even beyond the reach of the sovereign action of nation-state, that widest setting for the democratic procedure invented and put in place in modern times. Those

expanses are global, and increasingly such; and so far we have not come anywhere near inventing, let alone deploying, the means of democratic control matching the size and the potency of forces to be controlled.

This is, without doubt, a long-term task and a task that would require more, much more thought, action and endurance than any reform of urban planning and architectural aesthetics. This does not mean, though, that the efforts of such reform need be suspended until we grapple with the roots of trouble and bring under control the dangerously loose globalizing trends. If anything, the contrary is true. The city is the dumping side for anxieties and apprehensions generated by globally induced uncertainty and insecurity; but the city is as well the training ground where the means to placate and disperse that uncertainty and insecurity can be experimented with, tried out and eventually learned and adopted. It is in the city that the strangers who in the global space confront each other as hostile states, inimical civilisations or military adversaries, meet as individual human beings, watch each other at close quarters, talk to each other, learn each other's ways, negotiate the rules of life in common, cooperate and, sooner or later, get used to each other's presence and, on an increasing number of occasions, find pleasure in sharing company. After such admittedly local training, the strangers may be much less tense and apprehensive when it comes to the handling of global affairs: incompatible civilisations may seem not that incompatible after all, mutual hostility not that intractable as it appeared and sabre-rattling not the sole way of resolving mutual conflicts. Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' is a much more realistic project if pursued (even if by trials and errors and with but mixed success) in city streets, than when it is sought by piling up the deterrence weapons and stockpiling the punishing arms hoped to bring the 'enemies' to their senses and to keep them at bay.

Confronting the new global situation, and particularly confronting it effectively, will take time – like all truly profound, watershed-like transformations of human condition did, do, and will. And like in the cases of all such transformations, it is impossible (and highly inadvisable to try) to pre-empt history and to predict, let alone

pre-design, the form it will take, and the settlement to which it would eventually lead. But such confrontation will have to take place. It will probably constitute a major preoccupation and fill most of the history of the just starting century.

The drama will be staged and plotted in both spaces – on both the global and the local scenes. The denouements of the two stage-productions are closely intertwined and depend intimately on how deeply the script writers and the actors of each production are aware of that link and with what skill and with how much determination they contribute to the other production's success.