

LANDSCAPE TRANSITION OF GLOBAL METROPOLISES: FROM SPECTACLE CITIES TO SPECTACULAR CITIES

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Abstract Under the globalization background, the article doubts the popular mode of the large city group, explains the negative influence resulted from the large-scale urban land overflows, emphasizes the restriction to the unbounded urban expansion and uncontrolled regional inflation, and puts forward the strategies to rebuild new metropolitan landscapes, such as the landscape diversification, region recombination and puzzle city, in order to realize the transition from spectacular cities and urban spectacle to spectacular and wonderful new cities.

Keywords Globalization, Metropolis, Expansion, Landscape, Region, Recombination

Globalization is changing our perception of the urban world. While new cities emerge within new global contexts, the old world cities suffer from the various aging cycles of their buildings and the obsolescence of their infrastructures and urban services.

This is a world of new urban landscapes characterized by urban explosion, in both the exponential growth of urban populations and this concentration in large cities, along with dilated occupation and sprawl over the territory.

At the same time, however, we must note the power of these so-called intermediate cities and the resilient permanence of the rural communities and microcities within these rural environments.

The urban world is multi-faceted and possesses a great diversity in its forms of urbanity. Facing a representation that tends to place the conurbanized megalopolis as a more decisive paradigm, I pose a more open vision that understands reality as a grand panorama of spatial geographies and of simultaneous multiplicity in time and space for territorial situations.

This overview of the state of the art of global urban phenomena aims to raise questions about the hegemony of large agglomerations as a prevailing model and of great spectacularity, in order to reinforce the thesis that places a limit on the large urban overflow and waste of territory. Why do we continue to generate cities that consume valuable territories instead of regenerating city territory with so much committed land while supporting new demands that arise from social needs?

1. Quo Vadis, City? Quo Vadis, Territory? Quo Vadis, Landscape?

Land use has always pursued an expansionary trend. The city, however, presented controlled forms until the last century. Now, the city and territory have inexorably changed and, therefore, their interpretation has also changed. What we perceive as "urban landscape" or "territorial landscape" has to arise from positions that are not nostalgic and even less apocalyptic. We must review the state of the city and territory in order to improve them and (following the aphorism "the landscape is the soul of the territory") aim to build quality landscapes. It is always a good time to start over. Nothing has been definitively lost with respect to the quality of the city, territory and landscape.

Indeed, there are many seminars, exhibitions and articles dealing with the exploration of new urban landscapes and specifically metropolitan ones. I would like to especially highlight those that have developed in highly-occupied territorial contexts, in which phenomena such as sprawl are the determinant characteristics of a social concern that I wish to address with a renewed approach for environmental management. But now is the time, on a global level, to reflect and comment on what is happening and the effects on a planetary scale: urban development where urban expansion seems to be limitless.

American cities have already experienced the same territorial dilation, much earlier than the old European continent where city developments were historically produced. Now Asian and African cities are experiencing a new urban expansion under never-before-seen circumstances. Indeed, large Asian "tiger" economies show boundless urban explosions for traditional compact cities.

Multiple and ample works interested in the metropolitanization phenomenon have generated a consistent bibliography of explanation and interpretation. One of these, "Cities without Cities", the introductory conference title for The Future Metropolitan Landscape: Conference Reflections seminar tries to understand the contemporary regional metropolitan landscapes, affirming the relevance of the lost form of the traditional city (more or less compact, but measurable and definable) and the progressive establishment of an infinite city (scattered and dilated over territory, less definable, heterogeneous and multiform); a city that some authors have already qualified as a mixed colloidal, a city of lumps, or a variety of forms built on a territory fractured by infrastructure, punctuated by buildings and fragmented in its geographic continuity.

The unlimited spread of some cities sets up metropolitan territories that are not only supporting a physical banalization, but also a loss of quality that completely influences a weakening of the integrity and cohesion of the social fabric and economic power. Moreover, a degraded landscape is created, one that is negatively perceived by the citizens who inhabit it, seeing the effects of the new metropolitan peripheries where they are extensions of "urbanized" residence, currently abandoned or degraded agricultural areas, industrial areas in a precarious situation or that have already been abandoned, large spaghetti bools at the intersections of major metropolitan streets.

The abandonment of urbanity degrades the territory and reveals a belligerent and disappointing landscape, one in which we feel a renewed need for the development of a mixed city, characterized by the quality of space, use density, mixture of functions, and, ultimately, the strength of its individuals. Rethinking and remaking the peripheral metropolitan landscape is truly the only way to rediscover lost urban quality.

2. The Landscape as the Perception of Territory but also as a Project

Multiple meanings can be attributed to the word landscape. So many so, that there is confusion at times. What happens when we use this word so indiscriminately? A healthy reaction is to try to establish a consensus on the meaning and the precise use

that we've given to this word in order to identify or signify shared questions about the perception of territories. I have intentionally utilized two key words to understand what the landscape provides us: territory and perception.

Territory is essential to define the discussed space and perception is the word that enriches the interpretation of what happens in this territory. Territory carries a tangible reality while perception provides the opinion that we have, hermeneutically and critically, of the landscape when we observe it, when we analyze it and when we establish a specific valuation. Perception, cognition and affectivity are categories developed with our landscape gaze. The landscape is the fusion of what is seen and what is not seen of the territory, texture as an expression of a profound structure and of the preceding and conditioning history, "a semantic latency", as proposed by Eugenio Turri, consisting of communities that have lived in the territory and have geographically and socially configured it. We have made the content of the "landscape" too sacred and have lost the strength and forcefulness of what it is and what it means in order to improve territory conditions.

Territory is explained by the characteristics of the medium, transformed by ways of living. The landscape, if it is the expression of territory must rediscover its "country" status! Neither nostalgia for old unrecoverable landscapes nor an apology or pseudo-modern fascination for non-places or landscapes of homogenizing globalization makes any sense. If the territory does not have a soul, the skin hardens and dries. Intervening in the territory, we can use the landscape as a figuration of new forms of habitability -- new neighborhoods and cities -- that do not lose their quality of pre-existing space, that is, building something new on territory already committed to urbanization.

3. Contemporary Territories in a World of Urban Explosion: Multiple Landscapes

Once could say that explosions have marked contemporaneity: demographic, urban, migratory, mobility, economic and, most definitely, a social explosion that breaks classic paradigms. It is interesting to observe how we oppose territories within the limits of certain thresholds for maximum urban occupancy, the metropolis, and the total absence of anthropization, the desert. This extreme duality, however, is misleading, given the progressive loss of definitive isolation in the desert territories, which occurs in parallel to the growing isolation that man suffers in atopy in some metropolitan areas. Nature becomes increasingly urbanized and the city recovers new forms of wild abandon.

Urban explosions cause an uncontrolled fragmentation of physical space, which becomes a broken mirror, a cracked area, a brittle mosaic, in that the fragments still retain the meaning of all that decomposed. This fragmentation provides desolation and a broken landscape that seeks to understand territorial integrity, because there is neither sequence nor connection between the parts. It is the landscape of the ordinary periphery that has now been transformed into a multitude of incongruent and banal peripheries, those that are polluted and noisy, shredded by roadways and poor communication, with both a great deal of infrastructure and, paradoxically, little infrastructure...The city grows following very different processes, materializing in plural forms and with new urbanities, but we could be more demanding with

resulting landscapes. We have to distinguish between the "city" and "metropolis", as proposed by Henri Lefebvre,¹ but we are unable to understand and even less able to identify the reality of the real contemporary city. Therefore, it makes no sense to eulogize a city that has been abandoned to the chaotic order of non-standard flexibility or normative deregulation, nor praise the periphery as a new type of modern space. We now understand the contemporary city as a setting for multiple landscapes where our new projects are developed.

It is necessary to be aware of some of the relevant phenomena that characterize the contemporary metropolis in order to understand the challenges of a possible transformation:

- Uncontrolled extension of the city over the territory with dissipation of entailed functions.
- Residential dispersion over territorial environments increasingly removed from centers.
- Polarization of central functions in the nodes of metropolitan accessibility.
- Large internal transformations of the consolidated city.
- Loss of new growth relationships based on the centrality of transportation.
- Increase in the peri-urban perimeters because of extensive growth dilation.
- Congestion of existing infrastructures due to the absence of new infrastructure.
- Problems with the reuse of certain wastelands because of their levels of contamination.

4. The Effects of Blurred Limits of Territory Use: Multiperipheries and Interior Microperipheries

The city has ignored its atavistic relationship with the territory, a fact that has generated a multitude of heterogeneous forms, often fragmentary and mixed. The current city is a large "urban nebula", which one has to decipher and understand in order to act accordingly. New lexicon that we seek to phenomenologically understand the urban reality are devices for the plan and management of new urban processes.

Mobility conditions and determines the new morphologies of the twentieth century territories. The dilation of people in the territory determines the metropolitan scale. This does not exist without the movement or flow of materials, goods, information and people. The "product" and "construct" of this mobility are the mega-urbanization of territory, while the most visible expression of the background and surface is the metropolis, its real landscape: we find it not in the urban geometry and topology, but in its kinetic perception and in the changes and transformations manifested in everyday landscapes. Extended use of territory, which has progressively marked forms of urban life, has expanded the city over a wide geography that we recognize from the spatial effects of the blurred limits of territory use. This has resulted in a

highly-anthropized territorial geography and a system of cities increasingly conurbanized and close. The dilation of the city, overcrowding and fragmented forms of territorial occupation have increased the perimeters of contact between the countryside and the city, between countryside and countryside and between city and city, in the many situations that produce contemporary urban realities: commercial strips, infrastructure landscapes, brownfields, waste lands, industrial landscapes, transport and mobility hubs, marginal landscapes (shrinking cities), marginalized landscapes, etc.

5. Generating New Urban Landscapes through the Recomposition of Territory

Territory is a permanent file. It makes the biophysical substrate evident, it expresses environmental dynamics and is a testimony to social actions. It is the history and geography of the production of space. From a holistic view of the territory as a contemporary expression, which includes the memory of the past and vindication of a better future, we believe that it is possible to intervene and modify territory pathologies. The most appropriate strategies are its recomposition and also its reinvention.

Recompositions are on the agenda in multiple fields of human activity. "Re:mix. Re:make. Re:configure. Re:consider" are applicable to social behaviors and, consequently, to the recomposition of our territories from a committed ecological perspective, for the environmental conciliation between the city which evolves and changes inexorably and the permanent territory. For this, and as a strategy for rebuilding, we have witnessed some of the efficient principles when ordering, planning and managing the contemporary city:

- Facing dispersion: concentration.
- Facing low density: new and reasonable higher densities.
- Facing territorial fragmentation: more reasonably compact models.
- Facing hyper-specialization: mixture and mixed uses.
- Facing social segregation: social space, cohesion and solidarity.
- Facing lack of centrality: construction of renovated urban spaces.
- Facing monocentrality: reticulated polarization.
- Facing the macrocephaly of mega cities: a network of intermediate metropolitan cities.
- Facing exclusive competitiveness and autonomy of parts: complementarity and synergy.

Reinventing landscapes involves generating new ways of relating to the territory, of using it and managing it, reflecting on the possibilities of changes towards a new spatiality that will be possible through the landscape project.

6. A New Paradigm for Rethinking the Efficiency of the Metropolis: the "Territorial Mosaic City"

The renewed territorial project involves the articulation of fragments and adjustment of different forms of the city to the demands of new programs in a new system of physical and functional organization. The "territorial mosaic city" is a proposal to understand the urban realities from the urban synapses, that is, from the spaces of articulation; at the same time, it is a proposal for the morphological and environmental structure, designed according to mutual ecological adaptation and co-evolution of interacting urban and natural ecosystems, i.e., urban pieces with the entire space of the territory's biophysical matrix, full of rivers and their elements, water runoff and the more capillary drainage network, crop fields, orchards and forest areas. Based on the articulated mosaic of urban pieces with the environmental matrix of the territory, this aims to increase environmental balance.

The territorial mosaic city entails a vision of interrelation and interfaces between the different components of the territory and the city without discontinuity:

- The environmental matrix as support.
- Consolidated urban structures.
- Urban tiles of the dilated peripheries.
- Peri-urban spaces in the metropolitan perimeters and interstices.
- New attraction nodes at the intersections of major infrastructures.
- Territorial open space.

The conceptualization of this model has a number of operational objectives:

- Favoring osmosis and dissolution of boundaries between the urban and the rural.
- Planning for the permeability and exchange between ecosystems.
- Regeneration of the urban margins (ecotones).
- Articulation of the mosaic pieces through referent urban spaces.
- Efficient management of mobility.
- An increasingly careful traffic mesh project.
- Regeneration and articulation of the empty spaces of the metropolis.

7. The contemporary city as a kaleidoscope landscape

The intense and inseparable relationship between the city and its environment has given us a great many mixed feelings and generated a set of imagined and multiple landscapes that are either praised or criticized in different territorial situations.

Often we feel as if we are model orphans managing the territory project. It seems that we now have to discuss the richness of discipline diversity, from a forum of visions and polyhedral opinions, even dialectically opposed, in uncertain times. The tension between the most pernicious liberalism and claim of a new territory culture or "for the territory", which is, ultimately, incorporating the people who inhabit it, constitutes the true ecosystem where we live.

We must speak from the perspective of the planner who, if I may, builds the city, intervening in the subtle balance of the blurred border between the natural and the constructed, taking into account the words of Joseph Rykwert: "The planner of today... must still learn an important lesson from his predecessor..., that any 'pattern' that the city offers has to be strong enough to survive the inevitable disorder ... and must structure the urban experience".² Without nostalgia for the past and with a profound enthusiasm for managing the city project, which has been our lot to live, and thinking about the construction of a "new" space on the road towards the infinite city, we will explore all landscape possibilities.

Thus, we must reinterpret the possibilities of the landscape as a tool. In the metropolis, landscape interventions have to create social consensus in order to improve the quality of life (environmental, cultural, aesthetic...) in useful places for the community, for efficient mobility, for the creation of habitability, for health within a suitable environment... A new beauty, a new aesthetic, a new sense of possibilities for the metropolitan man to generate comfort and equity...

Landscape use has to be a social mediation tool for managing change. When we plan territorial transformations, we find that new landscapes are opened. The landscape project is therefore a tool, a cultural mediation to generate a critical vision of the abuse of territory and to raise new paradigms of use.

Recycling abused territories in the metropolitan peripheries means generating a new factory of landscapes that, along with new forms and spaces, brings about new ethical attitudes for the inhabiting citizens. As Gaston Bachelard proposed, "if you dream before contemplating, before being a conscious spectacle, all landscapes are a dream experience. They are only contemplated with an aesthetic passion previously seen in dreams. We recognize that the human dream is the preamble of natural beauty."³ Looking at the metropolis this way, we will lose the limiting cliché and will distinguish the possibilities of the kaleidoscope landscape of a city containing many cities within itself, constructed in spurts but in need of new orders that articulate the multiplicity of its forms.

8. Spectare civitates!

In its etymological root, the world spectacle contains "spec" which means to see; and when we see a city, we perceive it as a spectacle, that is, as a representation or aspect and expression of the functions that are developed in the city, or the set of activities that relate to these representations. The city is a fabrication, but at the same is the face of those who live, visit, show and perceive it.

The city has been and is quintessentially a permanent stage of events, both ordinary and special; and, thus, is represented and constitutes a symbol or generates different

identifying symbols. Historically, the city is iconographically shown through its architectural symbols, with profiles, elevations and specific urban plants or testimonies of its history and memory from its spatial enclaves. However, the city was never a spectacle in itself, but for what was happening inside. It is the post-modern city that begins a new phase of spectacle city in its crazy competitiveness resulting in *primus inter pares* and the selling of an image to society of the generating consumption of an indescribable multiplicity of media shows (Disneyfication, McDonaldisation, etc.), of "second life" (iconic visual virtual interfaces), branding (distinguishing brand attributions), "imagineering" (media environment creations that encourage fiction to create new urban inconceivables), "marketing" (diversified and adapted consumption offerings on demand). In this whirlwind of spectacle, the city disguises itself and presents a stage for new utopian dreams that affect both the tourist and the immigrant, the inhabitant and the urban manager, and becomes great tragi-comedy theatre.

This is not about demonizing spectacle cities, since we must be aware of their contribution to sustainment and the urban economy, but we should ask ourselves a few questions: What do we see when we look at the city? Or what do we want to see? Or better still: what do we believe we are seeing? From there: do we see or are they making us see? Countless pages would be filled, if all those who could answer these questions did -- because no city leaves us indifferent! In questioning, we ask what motivates us or anaesthetizes us through the vision and perception that the city offers.

I propose then that we focus our critical attention on what the spectacle city means (the spectacle city, spectacular cities) , in order to finish with a thesis: look under the spectacle cities! Welcome the expectant cities or cities with expectations renewed towards the creativity of their service, knowledge and sociocultural offerings; the cities that build civility from kindness to their citizens based on quality urban space, to keen adaptation of scale against gigantism, to ease, to legibility, access and to public space.

9. Spectacle cities and the spectacle of contemporary cities

Spectacle cities come to destroy the authenticity of the citizen and alienate; on many occasions they become a player in the urban scenery and within the reality of the lives of their citizens, a grotesque and epidemic decoration of spectacle cities; among the many possibilities that we could highlight: the postcard monument cities, the "façadism" mask cities with iconic architecture that conceals the ordinary, the mummified cities, under a patrimony sacralized in excess and uprooted from daily life.

Indeed, cities have become increasingly like the stages of urban civil theatre. Nothing is left out: the spectacle can be dramatic, tragic or comic.

In any case, and from my point of view, we must be critical of what "spectacle cities" mean for the benefit of "spectacular cities", since the spectacle of the contemporary city in its expressions of marginality, urban poverty, inequality, etc. are opposed to the city that com- modifies leisure and culture. Sure enough, to speak of the

spectacle of cities is to refer to cities that are not, or that are only a spectrum devalued from the true urban city – civitas-polis; the banal and banalized cities, who show their epidermal attributes and deliriously- coveted objects; although we must bear in mind the good and bad models derived from the effects on cities from major exhibition events (universal exhibitions and international fairs), from the Olympic games or different kinds of performances (cultural functions, literature, philosophy, gastronomy festivals, etc.).

10. Against spectacle and for new spectacular cities: the urban constellations vs. the iconic city

There are cities that seek new possibilities for their values, attributes and virtues. Cities that are spectators of their potential and make the strategic role of renewal important and, therefore, are permanently re-founded.

Cities that are strategically developing the full potential of their cultural industries through creative employment and cultural sector management, investing in new infrastructures and spaces for innovation and creativity; through the revitalization of historic centers and their cultural offerings, urban events and creative social networks. Speculating on the new modalities of the spectacular city, in my view, reschedules the social spaces of the city, regenerating the street as an abode, the house as a refuge, productive spaces as memorable places, and spaces of mobility as places of encounter and sharing. Against the coldness of the urban agglomerations of disjointed, unarticulated and culturally and socially dis cohesive companies, only a decent, warm and qualified space can foster an educated and free citizenship. The spectacular city will genuinely demonstrate what it should be: a fertile enclave in community exchange with a quality public sphere and a few qualified intimate spaces; a city that creates empathy and regroups citizens into concrete and real shared spaces, going beyond the corporate dissolution that would provoke an exclusivity of virtual networks; a source of information and of support in knowledge and of resources.

New cities, specifically, must escape the metropolitan or metapolitan gigantism and reprogram themselves in urban constellations that return to organizing and living around urban places as recognizable as the neighborhood; reconquering and configuring the spectacular spaces as good urban elements, like streets or plazas, replacing visits or the consumption of events with living spaces. It is in living in places where citizenship is created and generated, not just from the programmers of major cultural events or urban mercantilist paraphernalia. It will not be any easy task, since the commitment of the city may not be atomized in its neighborhoods if there is not a large federation of connected and freely interrelated neighborhoods; for that, conflict management shall be the weapon of the new citizenship. The territorial mosaic city allows for quality regulation of the different parts of the city, without any disregard. Articulating the city, the urban project, the intermediate scale that addresses the good urban forms, the architecture of the street, of the plazas, the building of a system of green spaces, and the architecture of each urban piece with a comprehensive vision of space, remain the key to a good city.

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