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Spaces of Risk, Spaces of Citizenship and Limits of the 'Urban' in European cities

Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona 2003.
Conference lectured at the symposium "(In)visible Cities. Spaces of Hope, Spaces of Citizenship". CCCB, 25-27 July 2003.

Introduction

The easiest way for me to introduce this lecture is by paraphrasing the title of the Conference, if I am allowed, with an antithesis in intersubjective representations of the Invisible Cities in two major European regions: Mediterranean representations of cities as Spaces of Citizenship vs British representations as Spaces of Risk. In this lecture we will explore the impact of these antithetical representations on the core and on the limits of the city. We will consider their effect on urbanisation and on urban sprawl around European urban landscapes.

In order to render the antithesis vivid, we propose to omit a lot of the European space and concentrate on a North / South comparison first, which will be then deconstructed: between British and Mediterranean cities. American cities often spring up close to the former, continental European ones close to the latter; but they do not constitute our focus. In order to introduce British / Mediterranean antitheses, let us propose a geographical version of Schorske's (1998) perceptive historical model, which traces the process whereby Europe switches from a view of the 'city as virtue' in the Enlightenment, to the 'city as vice' after the industrial revolution. In this paper, we will explore this antithesis in space rather than time, contrasting representations of British cities as spaces of risk (vice) vs representations of South European cities as spaces of attraction (virtue) and citizenship-founded-on-the-city. We will try to interpret this antithesis (intercepted, of course, by several other types) with reference to contrasts in the material reality of the urbanisation process, exploring in what ways, alternative representations of cities, cultural identities and ideas of urbanism, are rooted in different urbanisation dynamics.

Current urban geography keeps taking it for granted that industrialisation must lead to urbanisation and extends this by linking counterurbanisation with deindustrialisation. In this framework, South European urban development is explained away as 'retarded' in Anglo-centred convergence theories. As Mediterranean cities do not grow because of industry, they are considered to be at a stage prior to 'proper' development, and have often been labelled 'precapitalist' cities (WHITE 1984). According to the analysis presented in this paper, the Anglo-centric definitional linkage between urbanisation and industrialisation, crystallised in modernity, is especially inadequate for understanding Mediterranean development dynamics which have been based on culture and memory of strong urban identities since antiquity, rather than industrial capitalism.

It has been often pointed out, that urbanisation based on industrialization characterises the North but not the South of Europe (for a synopsis, LEONTIDOU 1990). Instead of the usual Anglo-centric negative stereotype found in literature on Mediterranean and Third World urbanisation without industrialisation, let us propose a positive one in this paper, at least for Mediterranean Europe: urbanisation triggered by memories of citizenship-founded-on-the-city in spaces of hope, based on urban-centred spatialities, rather than regional or national ones. And let me remind you here of Firey's path-breaking essay, 'Sentiment and Symbolism as Ecological Variables'. This is exactly what is re-claimed here: if not Firey's affective and moral sentiments ascribed to neighbourhoods, we will discuss cultural identities and their urban anchorage.

We will construct the antithesis of risk vs citizenship in the first part of this paper, in order to deconstruct it in the third. In fact, the first half of our analysis holds for the past millennium. Postmodern cities are different, they have deconstructed antitheses and couplets of the past. The limits of the 'urban' often converge. Spatialities have changed in the new millennium around gentrification, re-urbanisation and urban sprawl...

The interplay of Risk and Citizenship in European Urbanism

Representations of the city as the locus of citizenship are the most powerful in Italy. Consider, e.g. Italo Calvino's (1974 trsl) *Le città invisibili*; and Antonio Gramsci, who made the 'civil society' a central concept in his analysis and cherished cities as innovative spaces, despite his allegiance to peasants as social agents. Gramsci has left us with polemic texts with dynamic urban-oriented narratives:

> How would Italy of today, the Italian nation, have come into existence without the formation and development of cities and without the unifying influence of cities? 'Supercountrymanism' in the past would have meant municipalism, as it meant popular disarray and foreign rule. And would Catholicism itself have developed if the Pope, instead of residing in Rome, had taken up residence in Scaricalasino? (GRAMSCI 1971: 288).

It was January 1920 when Gramsci was writing this, a time when, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Chicago human ecologists Park, Burgess and McKenzie (1967 edn.) were busy constructing a model for their own cities which would soon change the direction of urban geography. Both sides exalted the innovative potential generated in the city, but were antithetically coloured by the attitudes of their own societies: Gramsci saw the city as a workshop for citizenship, culture, progress and innovation; the human ecologists introduced the distinction between Nature and Culture, and saw the city as an ecosystem balancing out risk and the disruptive tendencies for crime, marginality and erosion of the moral order, embedded in early industrial settlements. For them, urbanisation was linked with, even 'determined by', industrialisation and modernity, which dissolves traditional communities (WIRTH 1938).

Industrial anti-urbanism in British and more generally Anglo-American culture, is strong in literary sources. It followed the urbanism of the Enlightenment intellectuals of Europe, Voltaire, Adam Smith and J. G. Fichte. Eighteenth-century secular intellectuals, the French Physiocrats, the familiar romantic poets, and then a large current of nineteenth-century artists, writers and reformers, archaistic and futuristic, pushed the view of the city as vice, as risk: squalour, crime, and disappointment of hopes raised by the Enlightenment project (SCHORSKE 1998: 43-9). The Victorian industrial elite adopted a rural nostalgia particularly reflected in literature, with Thomas Hardy's 'country' books as leading examples (WILLIAMS 1973). 'Our England is a garden', observes Wiener (1985: 46), and the 'pretense that the Englishman is a thatched-cottager or country squire at heart' is noted by Hobsbawm (1968: 142). Explicit anti-urbanism was of two types in Victorian times. The distaste for city growth and the protection of landed interests, which in any case lost their appeal as farming lost its importance in the national economy, form only part of the story. There was in parallel 'the criticism of city life by those whose way of life was essentially urban' (WIENER 1985: 48). Anti-urbanism was also evident in the USA. The flight from the city, the role of the highway as a refuge, man in nature and rural spatialities, have constituted a constant theme from Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright (WHITE and WHITE 1977). We encounter this in novels, film and music, from Ernest Hemingway to Bruce Springsteen (LEONTIDOU 1990: 257-8). The city in these cultures became a scapegoat for the squalour of modern life, while at the same time the countryside was 'remade' as a rural idyll (WILLIAMS 1973).

By contrast, since a very early period, the Mediterranean city represented progress and civilised cultural life for the people, while the countryside was considered the domain of ignorant peasants. In early urban Europe, when the city States were dominant and vibrant, urbanism was founded on the city by definition. The words *Polis / Politis* (i.e. City / Citizenship) had a common root. The clearest form of their relationship can be found in ancient Greece during the classical period (around the 5th century BC), and in Renaissance Italy (around the 14th century AD). The linkage drifted away with the decline of city states, and citizenship has been attached to nation state territoriality. However, we can trace urban-based citizenship flickering in Southern Europe. The city State remained a very important focus of life around the Mediterranean Sea, and the collective memories of its specific and glorious spatialities have never faded (LEONTIDOU 1997, 2000).

We can find this culture of urbanism in several socio-anthropological and geographical accounts, where cultural identities do include the 'urban'. In Greece, 'one can not conceive of civilisation at all outside urbanity' (KAYSER *et al*. 1971: 195), and the experience of urbanisation has been named with a word which means 'friendliness to the city': *astyfilia*. In fact, the postwar process of migration has been always considered as a common fact of life, and there was hardly any rural-urban conflict in popular culture since the nineteenth century (MOUZELIS 1978: Chapter 5). Social scientists have agreed that urbanisation

disentangled villagers from traditional authority. Many kept their bonds with their place of birth by keeping their property in villages and by attracting chain migrants to the cities (LEONTIDOU 1990: 258-61). This, however, along with the strong regional consciousness found in Greek urban migrant settlements, did not imply any hostility for the city. It meant a permanent affiliation with family and place of birth, which permeated many spheres of life, including spatial patterns.

For Gramsci, as well as Calvino and a long line of authors between and after them, there were other forces creating urbanisation besides industrial development, among which memory played a leading role. The 'aversion to nature in traditional Italian upper class culture, in contrast to the culture of Northern Europe' (FRIED 1973: 106) is echoed in writings reflecting the concerns of broader social strata also during modernism and postmodernism. Southern urbanism had an important discontinuity, during Fascist regimes, where leaders were terrified by the concentration of urban populations. Mussolini combined anti-urbanism with spectacular city-building operations in Rome. He idealised 'peasant Italy' and relocated urban residents from the inner city in order to resurrect the glory of ancient Rome. Planning, *urbanistica,* received official recognition and grand access routes through the centre of Rome have indicated the concern of planners with monumentality rather than amenity (FRIED 1973: 166). Mussolini also attempted to check migration through anti-urbanisation laws and legislation on forced domicile (ALLUM 1973: 27; FRIED 1973: 80). The Fascist laws of 1931 and 1939 aimed at controlling rural-urban migration with the introduction of work permits in cities. However, in order to obtain a work permit, it was necessary to hold a residence permit! It would be worth discussing this in the context of citizenship, which relates with the right to work, and also in relation to its repetition in Greece, decades later, but only in rhetoric of the dictators of the late 1960s. Occasional threats to control domestic migration to Athens were often voiced by the Greek military junta, in the context of a rhetoric about 'parasitic' Athens, but were never realised (CARTER 1968). In any case, the set of policies against popular house-building and the facilitation of deindustrialisation underlines the dictators' apprehension about the social threat presented by urban concentrations. However, these policies were combined, in the most contradictory manner, with an active boost to inner-city multi-storey construction addressed to the middle classes, by loosening relevant legislation, thereby creating high-rise development and the current urban congestion (LEONTIDOU 1990: 212-5). Inviting the middle classes and excluding popular strata by curbing spontaneous urbanisation, was the main task of the Greek dictators.

In Spain, the same contradictory combination of anti-urbanism with urban planning was dominant after the civil war. Franco strengthened Madrid (SALCEDO 1977), while state-controlled institutions portrayed the city as a space of risk, as the centre of vice and evil (communism, crime, divorce). Fascism aside, however, Iberian countries also developed urban-oriented cultures which merged with Latin American urbanism to acquire a global impact. These cultures reach from West to East in the Mediterranean. In Turkish tradition 'urban life, because of cultural values rooted in history, is considered a higher form of organization' (KARPAT 1976: 232). In Istanbul, environmental deterioration is blamed on the migrants. An aristocratic family descendant is quoted in remarking indignantly about *geçecondu* residents:

> 'it is a disgrace that learned men devote their time to studying these wretches, instead of fighting to preserve what is left of the civilization of our great peers' (quoted by KARPAT 1976: 63).

But urbanism and anti-urbanism must be seen as two faces of the same coin, as two representations embedded in each other, each surfacing in different periods and spaces. Consider the Enlightenment for the North, Fascism for the South, as outlined above; or urban competition, as outlined in the next section. Even in the 19th century, at the peak of the 'city as risk', this negative stereotype was intercepted by positive conceptions, such as the famous Northern intellectual concession: 'city air makes man free'. Marx and Engels played with this ambivalence, passing from ethical rejection of the modern city as the scene of labour's exploitation and alienation, to an historical affirmation of its liberating potential: this is a switch from spaces of risk to spaces of citizenship. However, simultaneously, the city was painted in black in Northern European and American city-ideas as analysed above (by BRIGGS 1968, WILLIAMS 1973, WHITE and WHITE 1977, WIENER 1985, and others). Before we deconstruct this any further, let us turn to its implications in urban spatial patterns and quality of everyday life.

Inner city, urban sprawl, and the limits of the informal city

Everyday life is affected profoundly by the above antitheses. If in the Anglo-American city public space is physical space (*urbs*), in the Mediterranean it is the place where democracy and citizenship were concretized (*civitas*) – from antiquity until our days. Urban life revolves around the city and the home, and there is another North/South divide here since Roman times. The Mediterranean tradition sees the whole city as the context for civil life and the housing units as small private enclaves. Anglo-American cultural stereotypes, by contrast, see houses as the essential setting for everyday life, and the city as a context for movement toward houses and leisure spots. The English public life has not particularly needed the city: the elements of civilisation already existed in everyone's home (BRIGGS 1968: 72): "my home is my castle". By contrast, Mediterranean castles enclosed a whole city, and were consecrated as boundaries or limits of the city, with ditches opened by a pair of bulls around every newly established city back in Roman times. The Romans, like the Greeks before them, subordinated homes to an enclosed settlement and believed that citizenship and participation in a real, natural city constituted the precondition of civilisation.

This is extended today towards a contrast between street life in the South (which spreads to continental cities such as Paris), and 'hurried leisure' in America (KARAPOSTOLIS 1983: 262), where at least in the period of modernism the private car has superseded the pedestrian (JACOBS 1961). The antithesis extends to leisure patterns such as eating out, where 'hurried leisure' is evident in restaurant queues in Northern Europe, in the practice of waiters of keeping glasses full, and in their pressure to clear the table for the next round of customers as soon as a meal appears to be finished. This is not experienced in Mediterranean cities, nor is anybody expected to leave the table or the cinema as soon as the meal or the film ends. People are allowed to enjoy their meals and performances in unhurried leisure.

Leisurely enjoyment of public spaces and the tendency toward street life cannot be attributed to the mild Southern climate alone. They reflect urban-oriented cultures in compact and enclosed cities, where home entertainment has been traditionally difficult in restricted housing spaces. Certain aspects can also be found in French urban 'café societies', in Vienna, and in tourist squares elsewhere. The popularity of the city centre and the inner city more generally is evident in the tendency of the more affluent social groups to live in the centre. This contrasts with inner-city poverty in British and several Northern European cities, where the more affluent classes have suburbanised from a very early period. It is not spacious living (as in the Burgess and Alonso models), but accessibility to the city centre which is highly valued and preferred in Mediterranean cities. Theirs is an inverse-Burgess model.

The popularity of the city centre combined with street life is evident in the urban landscape and land use. Unfortunately, it does not mean a strong environmental consciousness for public spaces. It means, however, that inner cities undergo *continuous gentrification* in Southern Europe. The Central Business District is not dominated solely by economic activity, but also by residence and cultural and leisure spaces. Zoning is not strict: mixed land use throughout the urban fabric creates a combination of residence with economic and leisure activities at walking distance – a postmodern collage (LEONTIDOU 1993). Zoning is actively undermined by spontaneous urban development. Social spaces are also mixed, and segregation is milder than in the Anglo-American city. In the densely-built Southern urban neighbourhoods, vertical differentiation in multi-storey apartment buildings overlaps with mild neighbourhood segregation (LEONTIDOU 1996).The urban landscape is interspersed with small squares in both central and peripheral areas rather than large parks. It is difficult to imagine a Hyde Park or a Central Park in any city of the South, or a Green Belt for that matter. Piazzas are for seating and eating out, leisure spots are dispersed in neighbourhoods within walking distance, and lined with the outdoor tables of cafés and taverns. Harbours and inner-city archaeological parks are enjoyed for strolling. This creates a striking contrast with the London Thames waterfront, which is rather unfriendly for strolling, though recently outdoor city life has been adopted in the North too, as detailed in the last part of this paper.

Values for central living in Mediterranean urban Europe are combined with a rural second home for days of leisure. This is exactly where sprawl – or rather leapfrog development – often appears. The big difference from Anglo-American patterns is that the latter involve ribbon development of first, main, homes, in the remote suburbs, which create sprawl. Throughout the Mediterranean and a lot of continental Europe, by contrast, second-home access has been important in the creation of compact cities: between 8 and 20 per cent of urban residents had access to a rural second home in the early 1980s (WHITE 1984: 163-4), and the rate has gone up considerably since then, with the spread of residential North-South tourism lining the Mediterranean shores (APOSTOLOPOULOS *et al.* eds. 2001). In Southern Europe, holiday homes may be located at the place of origin of migrants to cities, which a lot of the Mediterranean urban populations are. Increasingly, however, they are built outward from the urban agglomerations, creating sprawl.

Traditionally, sprawl or rather suburbanisation, was created by unauthorised, spontaneous popular settlements, springing up around all Mediterranean cities. The limits of the city were defined by popular land colonisation until at least the mid-1970s, in stark contrast with both controlled suburbanisation in British cities and urban sprawl beyond them by affluent classes. In Britain and the USA, peripheral urban land was always strictly safeguarded against popular invasions and control of illegal building was effective (LEONTIDOU 1990: 247-8). At the same time, however, urban sprawl outward from the large agglomerations followed the highways in the USA, while in England controlled expansion beyond the green belts brought the limits of the city outward with 'New Towns' and satellite settlements. This differs profoundly from overspill due to spontaneous urbanisation. In England, land has been tightly controlled and every kind of illegal building was suppressed at birth (GEORGE 1966 edn.: 79; BRIGGS 1968: 19). As for the USA, shanty towns encircling many cities during the industrialisation phase, such as Chicago in the 1850s (KARPAT 1976: 11), were displaced 'after the civil war when streetcar systems opened new areas to middle-income development' (WARD 1973: 297).

This contrasts with loose control of peripheral urban land in the Mediterranean. Even today some Southern countries have no land registration systems. There are several types of landlordism in Southern Europe (private, large and small, state, church; FRIED 1973: 115), but such diversity has not created diverse urban fringes with respect to spontaneous popular settlement. *Borgate* were mushrooming in the Roman urban fringe already in the early 1900s. Apparently, large properties were subdivided and sold in anticipation of popular pressure for infrastructure expansion. There are even references to illegal dwellings built with subsidies from the state (FRIED 1973: 29, 120). The contrast with British and North European Green Belt policy can hardly be over-emphasised.

The Southern European urban model is more compact than the British one. Squatters need the city for their livelihood and hang around, close to it. Cities do not sprawl to the externt of Anglo-American ones. They expand less, and become dense by high-rise building and also illegal additions within approved city plans, giving the middle classes extra space. Rooftop additions create a couple of supplementary dwellings for exploitation, as in Roman apartment buildings (FRIED 1973: 59); the adjunction of *áticos* and *sobre-áticos* retreating from the facade gains Barcelona residents some height; balconies become rooms and glass houses in Athens apartment buildings. Illegality within the city plan is most obvious in the case of Naples, where the building boom during the 1950s was invaded by people related with the *Camorra* and was partly controlled by city bosses, the virtual economic empires of Lauro and Gava (ALLUM 1973: 36-9, 296-7). Neapolitan speculators were immortalised by Rossi in his film *I mani sulla città*, reminiscent of American rather than Mediterranean corruption and the role of the mafia in the city-building process. Elsewhere in the South, illegality is 'democratically' spread, and a whole population is well trained in contravening regulations and devising informal strategies of living and working.

The 'Mediterraneanisation' of European cityscapes

In the above sections, antitheses were stressed: astyfilia vs risk, compact vs sprawling cities, the attraction of the inner city vs the suburbs for affluent residents, South and North. Now we will deconstruct antitheses in order to discern and the convergence of urban patterns. In fact, population movements nowadays indicate a revival of urban living, not only in the South, but also on the North. Gentrification swings Northern European 'urban life-cycles' towards a re-urbanisation trend (VAN DEN BERG *et al.* 1982), currently enhanced by urban competition, a rising tendency evident throughout Europe. Urban competition intensifies the invention of neoliberal strategies for visibility in place of the welfare state, reform and redistributive planning (JENSEN-BUTLER *et al.* eds. 1996; KEARNS and PHILO 1993). These local development strategies are based on strong cultural identities and sense of citizenship, as well as the capitalisation of heritage. Cities compete as city states once did, though with new methods and peaceful means. In this race the Mediterranean has a peculiar ambivalent advantage (LEONTIDOU 2000).

The re-invention of tradition is sought for the sake of place marketing throughout Europe; but it is much easier for Mediterranean cities to valorise the past in urban design and to seek authenticity of ancient and renaissance cultures in the urban landscape. With memories of a past when citizenship was founded in the city, in a sense, many Mediterranean towns and cities never lost city state or capital city status in the popular imagination (GINER 1985). There is plenty of this sense of uniqueness in the pride of Mediterranean cities for their heritage and traditions. There is also the resilience due to the experience of constant urban competition within the respective national territories. Urban rivalries have been more pronounced in the

South than in other European regions. The bipolar urban networks, but also urban primacy, have long created a tension between the two largest cities: Milan and Rome, Barcelona and Madrid, Thessaloniki and Athens have been representing the antithesis between industry and administrative power. This has been politically charged, e.g. Mussolini's rhetoric on behalf of Rome reinforced anti-Roman sentiments among other cities, and created the Northern slogan 'Turin produces, Milan sells, and Rome consumes' (FRIED 1973: 71). Similarly, during the 1970s, other Mediterranean capital cities were fiercely stigmatised as 'parasitic' and moralised against, especially Madrid and Athens (SALCEDO 1977; LEONTIDOU 1990). In time, such fierce rivalries have empowered Mediterranean cities within urban competition.

As in ancient times, urban identity has been constantly reaffirmed, often aggressively, in all corners of Southern Europe. The building up of positive Mediterranean urban identities preceded the industrial revolution and the latter is not a relevant event in their own particular cultural development or urbanisation trajectories or urban landscapes, except as a global constraint. Cities of Southern Europe have much less rustbelts to clear, fewer industrial buildings to renovate. On the contrary, they can renew the urban core by the valorisation of ancient and renaissance cityscapes. This pride in tradition harmonizes with the popularity of the inner city and postmodern spatialities of continuous gentrification. Despite the current stabilisation of urban population and trickles of inner-city decline in Madrid or Rome, or more markedly in the Italian Northern 'Triangle', it is possible that Southern Europe will never face a counterurbanisation trend to the extent that this was experienced in the North. These cities are affected fundamentally by urban restructuring in different ways: production is rapidly outstaged by consumption in strategies to attract entrepreneurial interest in postmodern Europe.

Corporate mobilisation and the culture of urbanism led Spain to provide three star examples in urban competition in 1992, hosting international events: Barcelona for the Olympics, Madrid as the European city of culture, and Seville of EXPO 92. These cities have promoted their images with reference to their own spatiality. They developed urban territoriality rather than that of the Spanish nation state, and never forgot their past rivalries (GARCIA 1993, LEONTIDOU 1995). Since then, the international spotlight has often turned on the three cities.

Such developments and the rules of urban competition in Europe, are speedily reversing the poles of convergence models. If anything, post-modern Europe does not see the South lagging behind or following the development path of the North. It is rather Northern cities which seem to follow the culture of urbanism. Southern cities are *not* developing towards Northern models. By contrast, I venture to say, Northern anti-urbanism is moderated by urban competition and by 'selling places', mostly cities, and diluted by gentrification (JENSEN-BUTLER *et al.* 1996; KEARNS and PHILO 1993). The return to urban living inward from sprawling Northern suburbs, combined with the 'Mediterraneanisation' of inner-city landscapes such as that of central Baltimore, Liverpool, Glasgow, exemplifies ways in which, in postmodern times, Southern urban-oriented cultures have profoundly influenced and literally penetrated the North.

Conclusion

Neoliberal developments are swinging Mediterranean cities from pre- to post-modernism, without full-scale modernisation in-between (LEONTIDOU 1993). Convergence theories, 'urban life-cycle' models and evolutionist perspectives of the past are thus discredited in postmodern Europe. Mediterranean urban trajectories are not 'prior' to those of Anglo-American cities, nor do they constitute their exact reversal, for that matter. The opposite is rather the case in postmodern urban competition: Northern agglomerations follow the Mediterranean city, where the past (from antiquity to the enlightenment) is constantly revived and incorporated into the present. If the city has been cherished in Mediterranean Europe, it may be because the ills of industrial squalour and modern life never had to be attributed to any scapegoat, as in British cities of risk. The fact that modernism, industrialism and Fordism did not take root in Southern Europe does not mean that these cities are pre-industrial, pre-capitalist, pre-modern, pre-anything, as often portrayed in Northern urban theory. This grand narrative is shattered by another, according to which Mediterranean cities were rather long ago 'post'-modern (LEONTIDOU 1993). Current developments facilitate the rejection of evolutionist and convergence models, the grand narratives which have kept Mediterranean cities captive in anti-urbanist perspectives and locked in unsuitable theory for such a long time.

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