The new social morphology of cities *

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1. Changing equilibria between population and territory

In several countries, the discussion about the new urban form we live in, started in the early eighties from the concept of deurbanisation, with loose talks on the "death of cities" and even on what has been called "neo-ruralisation". The idea that the city is dying is not new and it surfaces periodically ever since the urban form made its appearance. However, returns of the census rounds of the eighties, coupled with speculations on the social effects of the explosive diffusion of information technology, gave empirical body to the most recent version of this recurrent imagination. Actually the city, and even the large city, is far from disappearing. Trends observed so far in urban systems in most of the advanced economies, indicate that cities are not declining but are undergoing a profound transformation, the full consequences of which are still to be completely fathomed.

One of the aspects of our conceptual apparatus that needs fairly radical reconsideration has to do with the implicit or explicit intellectual heritage of social ecology. Both in its classical and contemporary versions, social ecology (which remains despite all possible criticisms the originator of the most substantial body of empirical knowledge on human settlements) is based on some version of the analysis of competition of different human groups for living space. It is true that in social ecological analyses many other functions are equally considered, but the residential one is largely prominent. Simple evidence of this lies in the fact that the great majority of statistics about cities are based on residential patterns and residential units of observation. On the other hand it seems quite evident that the new form of urban morphology is largely the product of the progressive differentiation of several populations gravitating around metropolitan centres. With increased mobility of the population in numbers, direction, span, and frequency the very relations between population and territory become highly dynamic, and the set of social ecological concepts aimed at reconstructing structures of spatial arrangement are strained to a critical point. There is little doubt that the one of the major issues confronting our society, and the European continent in particular, is the profound readjustment of established equilibria between populations and territory. These can be examined at three levels of analysis.

At the highest level we have the disappearance of large geopolitical units, as the former USSR or Yugoslavia, and their substitution with a host of new and often undefined political units, sometimes as new states and sometimes as quasi-states. European integration, albeit in less dramatic ways, has set in motion processes of the same nature. The creation of a new geopolitical entity is not a simple summation process, as witnessed by the post-Maastricht controversies, and by the generalised growth of regional political movements. Strong and even violent resistances to the NAFTA plan are
signs of the same family of problems. The inventory could continue, but these examples should suffice to make the point.

At a lower level, so to say, we have the growth and diffusion of large urban entities competing with each other across national borders, and increasingly playing independent roles in the globalization processes. This is level at which we find most of the dynamics due to the globalization of economies which amplifies considerably the indifference of localization choices by organizations and individuals and forces cities to compete directly across national borders.

And at the microsociological level we find the complex interplay of ethnical, class and age traits defining populations with the social ecology of the city. A situation particularly difficult when administrative areas in the city interact with culturally sensitive population-identifying morphologies, and social actors try to position themselves strategically vis-a-vis the invisible network of administrative cages. This process is well known in American cities under the heading of "redistricting", and it is likely to become increasingly less latent even in the European continent.

Admittedly the relation between population and land has never been totally stable, as it is witnessed by large scale movements like the shift of the agricultural frontier, the waves of the historical migrations that shaped culturally and ethnically much of the planet, and the more recent urbanization dynamics that gave rise to the world we live in. To be sure not even the territory has remained stable overtime, as creation, destruction and transformation of the inhabitable land goes on perennially. Today, however, a new dramatic dimension has been added to this relation by the speed in which, physically or experientially, different points in the matrix of places can be connected with different points in the matrix of persons, social units, and events. This new dimension has undoubtedly far reaching social consequences that only in very recent years we have begun to explore systematically and on which our knowledge is still greatly limited. Not in the least because of these developments.

Class-based analyses meet equally serious difficulties in a period in which, on one hand, actors such as social movements, become increasingly visible on the urban scene, and, on the other, changes in the structure of the economy deeply affect established class patterns in all the advanced economies. In other countries as well, but here I have to stress that this analysis is particularly applicable to urban systems in advanced economies, although interaction between the various parts of world economy renders this distinctions less and less legitimate.

But reconceptualization is also badly needed because many of the established intellectual tools used to depict the urban phenomenon were built on a radically different urban morphology, and are strained by the new patterns of social relations emerging in time and space. In the end the deep changes in the structure of contemporary urbanization raise the problem of social, economic and political governance of the emerging large metropolitan complexes. Traditional municipal policies and institutions seem inadequate to achieve the aim of governing these new entities. In large regions of the world, such as Europe, even national governments appear not anymore adequate in governing systems evermore dependent on an integrated world economy, and capable to move autonomously on transnational markets. The weakening of traditional social formations, such as class-based ecological units, tends to affect long-standing practices of local government, as economic and social
actors constituting localities are increasingly outward looking. At the same time the search for social identity appears to translate itself in oftentimes paranoid localistic claims.

If we want to understand the current urban dynamics and related social problems we must adopt a new visual angle based on the idea that the study of cities is systemic in character and that at present the system we have to consider tends to have planetary extension. This is, however more easily said than put into practice. As it happens in all periods of deep structural mutation, the old and the new are highly mixed, in reality as well as in the minds of men, and it is difficult to separate one from the other. Thus it is possible to talk about deurbanization and live in cities choked by automobile traffic, to hear about cabled cities, and see flourishing businesses of express mail transportation manned by black kids on bikes, to observe large chunks of urban land vacated by manufacturing, and experience increasing urban settlement costs and so on.

2. Four urban populations.

The above is only an exemplificatory catalogue of the many facets of the inadequacy of our conceptual apparatus. The urban structures which we walk in - or ride in - in our daily existence are already radically different from the urban images we carry in our mind, and in our hearts. Thus I believe that there is an urgency for a very profound reconceptualization of the intellectual and empirical tools we need for the study of urban social facts and processes. It would be very naive to pretend to lay down a new theory of urban development. I do not propose to offer one, and I do not believe anybody has one. But I would like to contribute to the many efforts currently under way in this direction with an attempt to analyse urban changes evading the straight jacket of strict social ecological thinking and class analysis. An analysis based on the simple concept of population: namely an aggregate of individuals defined by one or more simple common traits. Contrary to the kind of theoretical assumptions we need in order to analyse classes, movements, groups or organizations it is possible to talk about populations without any strong assumption about their rational collective behaviour.

To give an example of both the simplicity of definition and empirical power of the concept of population it is sufficient to look at current patterns of urban migration from the third worlds to the developed ones. Migration flows are mostly composed of individuals moving according to random personal motivations. The effects of these aggregate decisions are far-reaching precisely because they are a loose sum of individual actions. Looking at the Mexican border of the US, at the Mediterranean or at any other of the many "gates of the world" between rich and poor regions, it is possible to see large populations in movement, and to foresee the effects on faraway urban structures. The pressure is unrelenting and very difficult to control. Physical barriers such as the many historical walls as the ones raised by Roman or Chinese emperors, French or German generals or soviet bureaucrats, can only delay these movements, and render them even more explosive when me barriers give way. It is very difficult to cope with population movements. Much more difficult than coping with class conflicts: these can be mediated through institutions and organizations representing class interests and goals. When we observe dynamics of the kind that Durkheim, talking about the movement from the country to the city, called "un courant d'opinion, une poussée collective" one can be fairly sure that such currents reflect or anticipate the reactions of the ame collective to some great mutation of deep structural nature. Many signs tell us that a phenomenon of this kind is affecting contemporary cities in these very years when on one hand we can observe the interruption and even the inversion of century old urbanization processes. And, on the other, there is
a growing renewed interest in urban life where the enticing images of the new technologies mix with the disquieting promises of a new urban middle age *a la Gotham city*.

Based on these very cursory considerations I propose to represent schematically various types of urban morphologies by using a simple combination of *four populations* differentiating out in successive phases. The scheme is only a simple heuristic device that leaves many problems aside, but I hope that it will be suggestive enough to raise new issues in looking at urban development (see scheme A).

**3. From the traditional city to the first generation metropolis.**

In the traditional town, on which all the current thinking about urban life is still largely moulded, the *inhabitants*, or the population *living* in the city, largely coincided with the population *working* in the city. City limits encompassed both these population in one territory or spatial unit; for millenia, and until very recently, encircled by walls, and neatly separated by the rest of the land. The additional population of market-goers, visitors, pilgrims or suppliers, while not irrelevant numerically or functionally, did not deeply affect the social and ecological structure of the city. Until few decades ago city walls, even when they had lost military relevance, retained administrative significance: tolls were paid at the entrance, and doors were closed at night.

The industrial revolution did not greatly affect this situation, because production of goods in the secondary sector requires mostly the shifting of raw materials, manufactured goods, and financial assets, while workers and entrepreneurs remain largely concentrated in urban areas, once the great transformation that has brought them there is completed. One important aspect of this traditional urban structure has to do with the structure of local government. This is based on the autonomy and franchise of inhabitants all over the world, and especially so in several European city systems, where the basic political patterns of local government (as well as the finely meshed network of settlements on the land) can be derived directly from original medieval (or earlier) characters.

The early metropolitan development that took place in the USA from the twenties, and after War World II in Europe, can be essentially seen as a growing differentiation of two *populations*: the *inhabitants* and the *workers*. One can think of this early metropolitan development as two circles progressively separating one from the other while they both grow in diameter, as in a Wen diagram. While a sizeable portion of the diagram remains overlapping, the two circles come increasingly apart. *Commuting* is the consequence of this process. Namely the development of the most characteristic and widespread circadian experience of the urban dweller of the mid-XX century. From the sociological point of view the class structure of me commuting population is quite different, and actually almost symmetrical in the USA and in Europe, but the urban morphology produced by this differentiation is similar. The result is what I call first generation (or early) *metropolis*, largely based on FURs or DUSs, or *commuting basins*, and embodied in the concept of *metropolitan area*.

This new pattern introduced great changes in the organization of cities, but it was not totally disruptive of their original structures. For one thing the *commuter population* spent most of the time in the central city secluded in working organizations and largely separated from the rest of the city.
population. Changes were indirect, affecting the socioeconomic traits of urban regions, and creating problems in the superimposition of new functional entities on existing administrative subdivisions. Difficulties were more acute in areas where the contrast was sharper. For instance in the US the largely middle-class character of suburbs contributed to the fiscal crisis of central cities, through the well known phenomena of spillovers and free riding, but on the other hand the flexibility of territorial administrative units like the county allowed fair degrees of adaptation. In Italy, where the fiscal system is largely centralised, and where middle classes until very recently remained in central cities, the fiscal crisis did not take the same proportions registered in the USA. On the other hand the more rigid network of communal or municipal institutions delayed, and actually so far prevented, proper administrative adaptation to the new urban morphology. All in all, however, early metropolization on did coexist with the traditional urban structure to a fair degree.

4. City users and the second generation metropolis.

Some of the same factors that contributed to the first generation metropolis, however, contributed to a further differentiation. In particular the diffusion of private cars, and in general of fast transportation systems, giving rise to the jet era. The increased mobility of people, combined with the availability of greater income and leisure, allowed the differentiation of a third population in our diagram, the city users. Namely a population composed of persons moving to a city in order to use its private and public services: from shopping, to movies, to museums, to restaurants. This is a swelling population that has increasing effects on the structure of cities and actually uses them in a rather uncontrolled way. There are cities that have a very small population of inhabitants, a slightly larger population of commuters, but a vast population of city users. Venice is the extreme case, but many other cities of the world experience phenomena of this kind. Contrary to commuters city users make in fact use of the public areas of the city, more often than not in a rather barbaric way. It is not surprising that at the beginning of 1990 the Mayor of west Berlin declared that he was not worried about disposing of Der Mauer "because tourists will take it away". In practical terms city users have given body to the famous prophecy of Marx and Engels that the Chinese wall would be destroyed by "the heavy artillery of the soft prices of merchandise".

The size of this population is growing, but it is difficult to assess. Precisely because all our collective cognitive apparatus is geared to a traditional city that is undergoing a profound mutation, and statistics still deal mainly with inhabitants, to a smaller degree with commuters, but practically in no way with users. If we want to perceive systematically these new trends we have to look to entirely new sources of information. Every year the London airport system handles a transient population numerically equivalent not to the inhabitants of London or any of the world metropolises, but to entire nations like Italy or the UK, and is expected to double this population in the next few years. A large chunk of this mass is composed of city users, coming and going and increasingly contributing to the economy of London, or of any other major metropolitan city. From buying a postcard and chewing one hamburger to leaving a sizeable amount of currency in shopping, hotel fees and restaurant bills. Not to mention the usage of collective goods, such as streets, parks, parking lots, and public transportation, still largely paid by the inhabitants.

Sociologically the population of users is difficult to define, for the very lack of statistics just lamented. An educated guess would assess it as being fairly differentiated from hinterlands kids roaming and cruising on evenings and week-ends, to middle class tourists and shoppers of all ages, to special groups like soccer fans or concert and exhibition-goers. A theatre like La Scala,
traditionally the artistic and social temple of the Milanese population, is increasingly taken up, years in advance, by city users coming from faraway countries, with a large proportion of co-citizens of Madame Butterfly.

Although direct competition or conflict of the users with the inhabitants is not evident, indirect competition (in the sense in which the classical social ecology uses this term) is in fact taking place. The users population is not attracted by residential areas, except when the latter fall into the category of picturesque, but it heavily affects the spatial composition of central cities, and of some specialised suburbs. In particular commercial and leisure areas of the city are affected with increasingly profound impacts on the global social structure of the city. Areas like the Parisian Quartier latin or parts of Rome, London, New York or scores of other cities, teeming with discount stores, jeans shops, fast food and the omnipresent signs of the rags multinational, tend to selectively filter out the original population of the neighbourhood, even when it constituted the local attraction in the first place. The same is happening in top commercial strips such as Rodeo Drive, Faubourg Saint Honore' or via Montenapoleone - a street where, recently, real estate topped 15.000 dollars per square meter.

The type of metropolis that is growing out of the increasing gravitation of city users is the one we are living in nowadays. It is very different from the city we are accustomed to deal with in popular and scientific terms and could be defined as second generation (or mature) metropolis.

5. Metropolitan businessmen and global cities.

But yet a fourth metropolitan population is differentiating out. This is a small but very specialised population of metropolitan businessmen. People who get into central cities to do business and establish professional contacts: businessmen and professional visiting their customers, convention goers, consultants and international managers. This fourth population, relatively small but growing, is characterised by having a considerable availability of both private and corporate money. It typically stays for a few days, but sometimes for more extended periods, but it is not a permanent population. It spends part of the time doing business, but part 7 using the city, although at a relatively high levels of consumption. This is a population of expert urbanites, individuals composing it tend to know their way around, be very selective in term of shopping and hotel and restaurant use, as well as in the use of top cultural amenities, such as concerts, exhibitions, museums, but also saunas and gyms. Increasingly business and top level tourism go together.

Both the city users and the metropolitan businessmen are a product of the service industry. One little explored aspect of the service industry is the fact that while secondary type industries shift goods, services in large part require the shifting of population. Actually shifting population around has become one major part of the service industry. Despite a growing portion of services that can be delivered telematically, most of the services need face-to-face contacts, even when the partners are not terminal consumers, as in the important area of services to firms. Consulting, public relations, marketing, and the like: all these activities require intense and repeated face-to-face interaction.

The growth of the fourth population, the metropolitan businessmen, signals another very important phenomenon, namely the internationalization or globalization of metropolitan centers. The fourth
population is increasingly constituting what I would call a transnational middle-class living not in a city, but in cities, or better between cities, and it affects the morphology and functions of all large urban centers. This social group is still fairly varied, but it is increasingly identifiable. Managers of multilocai enterprises, both private and public, such as the large number of international organizations - UN, ILO, UNESCO, OECD, FAO, WHO, and the growing family of European governmental bodies businessmen, international consultants, academics, performers, sportsmen, and the like. This population requires fairly similar services all over the world: hotels, office and meeting places, restaurants, shopping centers and so on. And the result is already visible in large sectors of several world cities. Among the postcards that the traveller can buy in any airport newsstand, there is one that can be bought the world over, reproducing the local skyline. Increasingly these skylines, as well as the urban areas they depict, tend to look alike. And this is not surprising because increasingly these areas are not the product of national economies, but a segmental unit of a larger entity. Hotels, offices and commercial centers built by the same companies in many cities, go together with the standardisation of local shops interested to cater to an increasingly homogeneous transnational population of urban travellers.

In Europe this trend has been to a degree braked by the strength of national urban cultures. For centuries the top ranking cities of European urban systems embodied the specificity of local culture and traditions. XIX century European national and regional capitals symbolised the climax of this dynamic: Vienna, Paris, London, Berlin, Milan and Florence offered themselves to the learned traveller each as a distinct world, with languages, architecture, cultural institutions and social mores proudly displaying the best of their respective national or regional character. The facade of this identity is still standing, despite World War II destruction and post-war oftentimes destructive reconstruction, but the homogenisation is at work. Prince Charles' battle against the "ugliness" of the new urban architecture in England is a telling example. The London skyline displays vividly the superimposition of the old and new architectural patterns. The fight against fast food shops in several European capitals, Rome and Paris in particular far from being a marginal episode, is a nodal indicator of the conflict between the traditional national identity, which included the culinary culture, and one of the most aggressive modern multinationals whose commercial success is precisely based on extremely fastidious imposition of product and labour force standardisation. And the recent crisis of Eurodisney is a not irrelevant sign of the resistances that are met by the diffusion of the new type of metropolis in a situation like the European one where traditional urbanisation is still tightly settled on the territory.

Reference to fast-food is also more than anecdotal. In fact as the city users population increases, fast-food and catering in general, become a growing strategic economic urban function in metropolitan centers, adding a new angle to the emerging class structure. Catering and related industries are actually the portion of the labour market that attracts overwhelmingly another growing segment of the new metropolitan population: namely low level foreign workers from third world countries. The services required by city users and metropolitan businessmen are largely manned by marginal workers. It would be preposterous to extend the argument to the point of seeing here a new class conflict reproducing the traditional one between the factory owner and the factory worker, but there is no doubt, to my mind, that the incipient class polarisation noted by several studies, is largely connected with the impact of the new populations of metropolitan users as opposed to dwellers or workers. Saskia Sassen has shown very convincingly that there is a relation between the economy of the global city, and the "vast supply of low-wage jobs required by high-income gentrification in both its residential and commercial sectors".
One last important remark. In the competition among these several populations, and related urban functions, it seems quite clear that the residential function and the urban inhabitants tend to be on the looser side. But the entire philosophy of local government is based on various degrees of self-governments by the city dwellers. If this population is going to become increasingly irrelevant from the numerical and economic points of view, one serious and far reaching consequence - which I believe is already behind many manifestations of the urban crisis - is what I would call de facto disenfranchising of the urban dweller. Local governments are elected by residents, but the economic interests of the metropolis are increasingly dependent on populations not politically accountable from the point of view of the city itself. The well known debate of the sixties on economic and service spillovers, captured in fact only one aspect of this process which will require much deeper investigation than has been conducted so far.

For the sake of classificatory completeness we can call this new metropolis, still emerging under the impact of metropolitan businessmen, the third generation (or late) metropolis. But I do not want to push the taxonomic argument too far. I am satisfied to state that the new emerging metropolis is at least a different breed from the commuters' one, as this was different from the traditional industrial town.

The above analysis receives additional insights in the frame of Giddens' concept of "disembedding" as a trait constituent of what he calls "radical modernity", a concept that I found more illuminating and analytically powerful than the current cult term of postmodernity. One of the leads suggested by the concept of "disembedding" points to the analysis of the social consequences of the new communication technologies. A theme that deserves more than a substantial chapter by itself, but to which I would like now to turn briefly solely to point out some possible conceptual consequences of the analysis of the impact of new technologies.

6. New communication technologies and urban life.

The discussion of new technologies and their effects on the urban system has been biased by sweeping generalisations and unsupported anticipations. Many will remember that in the early 80'S there has been a widespread circulation of popular imaging of the telemathic society and of cabled cities. These images included the electronic cottage, the computerised home or robohouse, and all that jazz. Many speculations proposed the vision of a new city blinking with the soft-lights of computer screens but deserted of people and soul. A further increase in alienation and isolation was easily prophesied. Typical of this trend was some part of the discussion on the telework or telecommuting, especially in visions like Toffler's electronic cottage that led so much of the media to imagine a future of citizens working from their cottages in the redwoods at the soft tune of chamber music. What all these images, for which we are largely indebted to the sophisticated marketing techniques of the electronic industry, have in common with the cities we live in, still choked by ground transportation and teeming with ghettos, can be assessed by touring any large city of the world.

And yet these technologies do exist and are rapidly developing, even if their outcome will not probably be very close to the one predicted by popular (and sometimes scientific as well) magazines during recent years. As scholars we have to take into account these changes without loosing our cool in assessing a technology that from many points of view has extremely fascinating aspects. The
main point is that today large cities the world over are compressed in the superimposition of two
great technological cycles: the one based on material transportation and the one on information
transmission. The succession of these two cycles can be conceptualized not in term of straight
substitution, as many erroneous evaluations hinted in the past, but in term of competing functions.
Up to now it can be said that the cost of any transported unit has tendentially decreased. From now
on this is probably not true anymore, if real costs with externalities are taken into account. While its
fairly certain that the cost of any information unit transmitted is rapidly decreasing, and it will
probably continue to do so for a foreseeable white. Hence we can expect a future re-adaptation of
many social and economic activities the depth of which cannot be underrated, but the quality of
which still has to be evaluated.

However, has it happened in many historical cases of long cycles overlapping, not rarely the waning
technology showed unexpected bursts of productivity while the competing new one was already
underway. The longbow was produced and technologically perfected for close to a century after the
powder gun was already in use. Some of the fastest and most perfect sail ships have been built when
steamboats already crossed the ocean and mnemonic techniques (palazzi della memoria) knew an
explosive diffusion in the baroque era, more than a century after the invention of the printed page
that was due to render them obsolete. It is likely that something of the kind is taking place today as
epitomised by the familiar view on Southern Californian Highways: executives stuck in traffic jams
use the cellular phone to conduct business.

Many good sociological reasons explain this apparent paradox, suggesting that the service economy
still requires a great (and maybe even increasing) deal of personal contacts, as it requires the
delivery of a large quantity of small parcels. Thus the trade-off between transportation and
communication is far less trivial and mechanical than many assumed in the early eighties. However
the debate on increased isolation and alienation in the telemathic society, albeit until now largely
fiction oriented in character, raises a serious theoretical issue for sociologists. Urban sociology - and
sociology in general - developed around the key concept of community (Gemeinschaft). Beginning
with the classical period, community has been interpreted as mainly based on primary (face-to-face)
group relations, and the many applications and reinterpretations of this concept in urban studies,
ever abandoned the late-romantic assumptions which assigned, sometimes in an uncritical way,
positive connotations to territorially based face-to-face relations.

Now it is possible to explore sperimentally and theoretically a different type of community with
potential theoretical revisions of this concept still largely unforeseeable. I refer to the French
experiments of telesociabilite' and to the first studies conducted on these experiments. In short these
experiments deal with the multiple telephone links attempted by the French PPTT, first in the rural
department of Lozere and later on in the urban areas of Montpellier and Marseille. Users can hook
in these networks or chat-lines anonymously and freely from any point of the telephone net. One of
the interesting outcomes of sociological research into these experiments is that the initiative has not
had a great success in the rural areas - for which it was originally thought in order to reduce
isolation due to physical distances. But above all they did not develop in any particularly different
form from a normal telephone chat, albeit with more than one partner. On the contrary the same
experiments in urban areas gave rise to surprising results.

First of all for the quantitative success, with peaks of 10.000 daily calls in a small city like
Montpellier. But, more importantly, because those engaging in the experiments where not the
isolated and marginal individuals expected. If any, these types of person became marginal even in the telephone network. Meaning that the opening of a technical channel of communication it is not sufficient, in itself, to remedy to personality or social traits of marginality. The users of telesociabilite' seem to be centrally located strong actors in society for whom this new tool adds to the regular exchange occasions. Thus the new technologies do not substitute but reinforce and complement "normal" or spatially bound social relations. To the point that in the larger Minitel experiment telesociability has become an important support structure not only for love message exchange, as the media have been fast to capture, but also to relay friendship groups, voluntary, and political associations. Far from increasing anonymity and isolation, the new communication tools seem to be able to foster at least certain types of social ties.

But the second, and even more relevant aspect is that this aspatial community, largely composed of anonymous actors - and therefore missing some of the constituent characters of Gemeinschaft - appeared to the researchers regulated by the same social norms and sociological structures that characterise all primary groups according to the traditional group theories. It fosters norms of behaviour on its members; creates leaders and deviants, reacts to perceivable social inequalities like the sexual one (obviously but not exclusively) and lastly it gives rise to identities belongings and exclusion mechanisms creating a specific normative culture in the aspatial or immaterial group composed of telephone users.

It is an experiment still too limited to give more than suggestions, but these are powerful and stimulating. Both because many commonplaces about the new technologies are put to a severe and critical test, and because it opens up theoretical possibilities to be seriously explored by urban scholars. Moreover because these experiments and reflections upon them can give very interesting indications on possible developments even in areas that have been so far presented to the public opinion in the most trivial way, such as it happened with the popular discussion on the use of the new technology for local government or the political process in general. The so called issue of "teledemocracy". It goes without saying that these cursory remarks do not even marginally indent the vast issue of the relations between technology and urban processes. Here I have simply sampled a few aspects that seem of crucial importance for sociological theory.

7.Conclusions.

The main concluding point may be the renewed assertion that urban systems in advanced economies are undergoing a deep mutation, not dissimilar in scope and consequences from the one that led to the formation of the industrial town. If this is not simply a rhetorical statement, or one biased by an historical trompe l'oeil due to the desire of each generation to place itself at crucial hinges of social change, we, as scholars of urban phenomena, are faced with the challenging task of radically redefining the object of our field, and its conceptual representation. On a quieter note, at the very least we can say that there are at least three urban formations intermeshed in the territorial reality, particularly in regions with millenary urban history such as Europe. The traditional town (with all its historical variations) that can be defined as an entity in which the commune, or its institutional and physical morphology, coincides with a community a sociological entity defined by interactions among individuals, groups, classes and organizations. The mid-XX century metropolis embodied in the idea of metropolitan area. An entity less easily definable than the traditional city) but still fairly interpretable by a functional system, large, but limited in area (albeit with uncertain borders) and dominated by a center(core)periphery(fringes) morphology. In its exploded version, Jean Gottman's
Megalopolis. And finally a new entity that is still difficult to grasp and that as been variously defined as World city, Global city, Exopolis, an open network with no central places, or with a plurality of "nodes", not necessarily arranged in a clear hierarchical order. The abundance of definitions and terms, rather than their scarcity is another indication of the deep transformation under way in urban areas the world over. In periods of rapid change it is first of all the conceptual order to be shaken: old terms loose significance, while new ones, often proposed with evocative in lieu of analytical purposes, add rather than subtract to the terminological complexity. This latter entity is also more difficult to define on the territory, and its borders may vary by many orders of magnitude, depending on the particular "net" we decide to make reference to.

No matter what exact definitions we accept for the new urban form, many of the social problems of contemporary metropolitan societies depend on the coexistence and superimposition of these three "urban layers". The first generation metropolis has not totally substituted the traditional towns, and the network city, or second generation metropolis, still contains towns and metropolitan areas. The new urban form is characterised by the "specious continuity with pre-existing social orders" that Giddens attributes to cities, is affected by a major universal dynamics, namely the processes of change in which we are all deeply involved. Fundamentally these changes involve modifications in the economy largely based on innovations in the technosystems of communications and transportation. The greater mobility not only of capital and commodities, but also of individuals, messages and images, is at the same time a mover of this change, and part of the new economic system emerging from it. Moving people around has become an industry in itself, and a very important one with many facets: tourism, the combination of business and leisure typical of metropolitan businessmen (who live between cities as well as in cities) but also migrations of workers and would-be workers. And equally important has become the industry of moving images and messages around. Particularly because the relation between the shifting messages and local cultural identity is increasingly crucial.

Globalization, transnationalization and internationalization are the terms used in the literature, but further clarification will be needed because they are not totally synonymious. Globalization is more encompassing, while internationalization has more to do with processes involving nations and their relations. In any case this process, or processes, can be studied per se, from the point of view of their effects on society at large or for their effects on cities, or system of cities. The analysis of the processes of globalization can be conducted on a fairly autonomous plane, and in a sense in an a-spatial way, although there are latent contradictions in this statement that a finer analysis should point out. The general meaning is, however, simply that the globalization processes can be analyzed in their general aspects without necessarily referring to spatial effects or consequences. For instance changes in the labour force composition due to increased use of telemathic tools it is not in itself a spatial phenomenon, having to do with abstract systems of norms and behaviour which we call "roles" or "work contents". It is clear, however, that in the end a different organization of work generally based on telemathic will have far reaching spatial effects.

Nor do these changes consists exclusively of economic processes. Modifications at the geopolitical level are of crucial importance. In particular changes introduced by the process of European integration as well as those taking place in the post-socialist societies are to be taken into consideration. However, by and large the globalization process can be seen as a "spontaneous" dynamic. Not in the sense of being totally free from the intentional actions of important actors, but in the sense of dynamics produced as the aggregate effect of a plurality of actors. This process can be studied in itself, as well as in the effects it produces. Of course the distinction is analytic, because the effects are part of the process, but it is a legitimate one.
There is a fairly general consensus about the notion that the major, and more universally damaging, effect of the globalization process at the urban level is an increase of social polarisation, and in a growing crisis of the redistributive policies that have so far governed the social conflicts in urban areas. Classes formed in the industrial urbanism had to find some kind of institutional compromise, which was generally based on municipal welfare systems of some sort, in turn rooted on a fiscal political pact. Suburbanites of the first generation metropolis evaded this pact by commuting to outside residential areas, creating the fiscal crises of the sixties and seventies. City users of the second generation metropolis are further unbound from the traditional fiscal municipal policies, and from political accountability. Thus the metropolis of tomorrow will have to base itself on a radically diverse fiscal structure.

A great deal of the governance problems of the new metropolis can be approached more aptly by acknowledging this intertwining of morphologies, rather than by trying to reduce one to the other. In countries like Italy where there has not been, at the proper time, an institutional solution to the governance of the traditional metropolitan areas (the typical form of second generation metropolises) things are now more difficult. The issue of governance of these new entities becomes then crucial both for the comprehension of current dynamics and for the actions to be taken to influence the future social morphology, if this is at all possible. The issue can be stated as follows. Globalization trends tend to homogenise cities the world over. However, this general trend does not necessarily mean that localities have lost their relevance. On the contrary, as David Harvey points out, the process of "social (re)construction of places" is complementary to the globalization of capital. Precisely because global competition is becoming so generalised, localities need to offer some particular item, both in term of symbolic identity of places and products (Beaubourg, risotto alla milanese, bacalao, Moma, Disneyland, the WEM, LSE, or the juvenile hideout of Mark Twain, you name them) and in term of actual services and consistency of the local economy, as it is the case of areas such as those in the Third Italy, in Cataluna or in the Silicon Valley and Orange County, as well as in the Rundstadt (again you name them).

But since the administrative borders of the traditional centers (cities, communes, and sometimes even regions) have often become obsolete in the course of the current urban dynamics, the analytical and actual definition of the entity that serves as the basis for the territorial support of such competition becomes crucial. At the same time the definition of this entity is also crucial for the identification of actors and actions in the democratic process. So far local democracy was largely understood in terms of some variation of the original idea of political community or gemeinschaft, but now, as we have seen, the validity of this concept is increasingly submitted to erosion by the emerging social and physical morphology of the city.

This leads to the final concluding remark. The new social morphology of the contemporary metropolis can be better understood if one makes an effort to abstract from the limiting straight jacket of traditional social ecology and class analysis, better equipped to study the industrial city and the early metropolis, both largely based on the spatial distribution of inhabitants and commuters and of their stratification patterns. Today large metropolitan centers and their economic functions are increasingly affected by growing populations of city users. Rather than cities for the inhabitants these are increasingly cities for guests and visitors. The political consequences of these developments, that bring with them a de facto disenfranchising of the dweller population should be more carefully investigated. "The New American City And the End of Public Space", states the subtitle of one of the best books describing the emerging urban entity. Malls are in fact one type of "public space", not very different, in commercial terms, from the Agora, the Forum, the medieval market place or the souk, scenery included. But stripped of the political meaning and function of the
Agora’, because they are fora exclusively open to guests and visitors. The new city is an hospitable city, but we are afraid of this hospitality, because behind it we perceive the not so invisible hands of the "Science of Malling", rather than the pluralistic forces of the traditional urban marketplace.

These developments pose a larger problem to the scientific community, even in countries where metropolitan area (or FUR of some sort anyway) statistics are currently available. Useful as they might be - and they are indeed - they seem now inadequate to properly describe the urban phenomenon of today. I hope to have shown that the observation tools provided by official statistics, largely based on punctual plotting of individuals and organization on space, fail to account for a wide range of components of the new urban phenomenon. They show us the social composition of the dormant city, with glimpses on that of the working cities, but nothing or very little on the social aspects of the generally active city. Metaphorically, this situation is tantamount to the condition contemporary astronomers would find themselves in if their observations were still restricted to the use of visible light-band optics, thus missing a great deal of the events today known to populate the universe. Likewise the urban universe is crowded with populations that escape observation. From this point of view urban scholars have an important task ahead, in intellectually influencing the way in which official statistics are planned and collected, as a crucial step toward the achievement of that knowledge that we all believe is an important prerequisite for the solution of issues of governance.

* this paper is largely based on material published in Metropoli a nuova morfologia sociale della citta Il Mulino Bologna 1993

1) See INSOR, L'Italia rurale (A cura di Corrado BARBERIS), Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle foreste, Lasterza, Roma-Bari 198S, pp. 8-10 passim. In the Italian debate term counterurbanization, probably the most correct used in the international jargon, has found scarce diffusion.

2) For what concerns Italy I have critically analysed in detail the empirical foundations of the current trends, but similar analyses can be performed on another national data. See Enrico ERCOLE and Guido MARTINOTTI "Le aree metropolitane Amministrare xvii, 1, April, 1987 pp. 111-155 and "Le aree metropolitane: la regione metropolitana lombarda", Amministrare, xviii, 1, Aprile 1988, pp. 141-193. Later on partially republished in G. MARTINOTTI, Metropoli. La nuova morfologia sociale della citta* Il Mulmo, Bologna 1993.

3) I am talking here of social ecology a broad sense, which encompasses a family of explanations including the studies of the social ecological school in the proper sense and all urban analyses that in Durkheim's terminology would be classified as part of morphologie sociale.

4) Despitethe failure to formulate a theory of the urban crisis on social movements, these have become persistent actors in most urban areas. See Mark GOTTDIENER, Cities in stress. A new look at the Urban Crisis, Sage, Newbury Park, 1986, pp. 8 £

5) Cities have always been thought, to a degree, as fairly self-contained units. In antiquity in the form of citymbtes, and in more recent times as urban or metropolitan communities within a national
structure. Chunks of societies, so to say, that could be experimentally isolated from the remaining parts of the social system for the sake of analysis. Even urban system analysis has dealt primarily although not exclusively, with national or regional urban systems. Such is the case, for instance, of the Zipf's Law or all other models based on rank order assessments. The so called Zipf's Law or "rank size distribution" states that in an urban [national] system there is a relation between the size of a city center and its position in the rank order of size). Today it has become increasingly difficult to maintain this analytical fiction. Especially, but by all means not only, in geopolitical areas such as the European one which the establishment of supranational institutions frees to considerable degree individual cities from national ties, and forces them to increased competition for global resources.

As it is witnessed by the growing number of city clubs and lobbies mushrooming in these very years and by the acute interest in city marketing. Namely the techniques being developed to promote the international arena locational advantages offered by individual cities and generally based an the supply of some kind of urban amenities (See among others, the international conference "Marketing of Metropolitan Regions", 8-10 November 1990, at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam).

6) I am aware that this statement needs many qualifications in terms of more precise categorisation of certain types of cities, like caravan or market centers, and holy cities. It is, however valid for the generality of cities in the past.

7) In Italy city walls were relinquished by military dominion in the late XIX century, but city tolls (dazio) were paid until the tax reform of 1972. See the interesting seminar organised by the Istituto Gramsci and the University of Parma, Le mura della citta November 1987.


10) While the term is similar, the meaning of this label is different from the one in Myriam JANSEN-VERBECKE, "Inner City Leisure Resources" in Leisure studies, 4,(1985) 141-157. Actually the Dutch scholar refers to the consumption patterns behaviour of city residents. See also Elisabeth LICHTENBERGER, "The Changing Nature of European Urbanization", in Brian J.L. BERRY (Ed), Urbanization and Counter-urbanization, Urban Affairs Annual Review, 11, Sage, Beverly Hills 1976, pp. 81-107. An essay whose importance and insight I had earlier missed.

11) John R. LOGAN suggested to me that in the early days of what I call the first generation metropolis, the number of city users was in fad greater, because general stores were concentrated in the business center, and in that period there were few shopping malls in the outskirts.

12) Birgitta Nedelmann suggested the nice caption of city users and abusers.
13) East Berliners seem more organised: they have apparently created a corporation to sell chunks of the Berliner Mauer but whether by sale or by theft the result is the same. A dramatically important piece of the built environment is being used.


15) According to the new ticketing rules you can more easily reserve a place at this theatre if you book by mail from another city. Milanese residents are penalised, and opera fans from Milan actually staged a protest in recent months.

16) Positing of these four populations does not imply that more traditional class relations and conflicts have disappeared, but there is little doubt that they undergo deep transformations which undermine some of the classical socioecological factors of urban class conflict. The strength of the industrial urban proletariat was to a large degree, as it has been noted repeatedly since Marx, a function of its territorial organization. Working class districts reinforced and projected on the urban plane, so to say, the class solidarity created in the factory, while the organization of traditional working class parties and movements relied heavily on the urban ecological niches in which subcultural factors created an extraordinary synergy of economic social and political interactions. Much of the lore about industrial cities and early metropolitan areas centered on this essential components of the urban landscape that tend to wane in the present-day metropolis. In purely numerical terms, the inhabitants is probably the most disfavoured of the four populations by the overall dynamic. But also commuters are probably shrinking or better changing to more peripheral trajectories - vs center-periphery ones - as even top level co-ordination functions tend to move to the fringes of large conurbations. All in all, then, traditional class cleavages and solidarities, while by all means still existing and perceivable, give way to new cleavages and group realignments.

17) On world city systems see among others, M.P. Conzen (a cura di), L'evoluzione dei sistemi urbani del mondo, (trad.it.) Angeli, Milano 1989.

18) Thanks to Roy Drewett for this formulation. Easy for him, an outstanding member of this new population.

19) There is very little research conducted on this population, at least to my knowledge, and even less so by urban sociologists. See however an interesting book: Jane Marcelau, A Family Business? The Making of An International Business Elite. Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'Homme, Cambridge 1989.


22) "A Eurodisney insieme alla crisi spuntano i veleni", La Repubblica, 4 Jan 1994, p.45. This event is strictly connected with the "Jurassic syndrome", another aspect of the localistic claims against the invading presence of the multinational media industry.

23) With this term I do not refer to the distinction between use value and exchange value of the city, such as adopted by John R. LOGAN and Harvey MOLOTCH, Urban Fortunes. The political Economy of Places, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1987, although a good deal of my reasoning seems to go in the same direction.


26) For a thorough survey of the literature on telework see Ursula HUWS, Werner B. KORTE and Simon ROBINSON (for Empirica), Telework: towards the elusive office, John Willey and Sons Chichester 1990, exp. p.p.-10.


30) See IDATE, Fragments des passions ordinaires, La Documentation Française, Paris 1987.


34) David Harvey, "From Space to Place And Back Again. Reflections on Post-Modernity", Lecture held on April 17th 1991 in Milan.

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