The Eulogy of Urbanity

A critical perspective intersecting urban planning and philosophy

Paula Cristina Moreira da Silva Pereira and Fernando Manuel Brandão Alves

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/cultura/277>

DOI: 10.4000/cultura.277

ISSN: 2183-2021

Publisher

Centro de História da Cultura

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 June 2011

Number of pages: 217-236

ISSN: 0870-4546

Electronic reference

Paula Cristina Moreira da Silva Pereira and Fernando Manuel Brandão Alves, « The Eulogy of Urbanity », *Cultura* [Online], Vol. 28 | 2011, Online since 09 May 2013, connection on 21 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/cultura/277> ; DOI : 10.4000/cultura.277

The Eulogy of Urbanity. A critical perspective intersecting urban planning and philosophy

*Paula Cristina Moreira da Silva Pereira**

*Fernando Manuel Brandão Alves***

Introduction

"In our civilizational matrix, the city occupies a central place. *Civitas*, in its broadest sense, alludes to the same etymon of civilization and citizenship, that is to say, it originates an invitation to democratic participation (...). The world as a whole is becoming more and more urban. Unfortunately, the agglomeration of populations is often chaotic; particularly in developing countries, the city today is an arena of suffering and a symbol of human degradation" (Carneiro, 2003, p. 255).

The rapid growth of cities and the transformations they have suffered has led to an ambivalent discourse on the city: eulogy and criticism (cf. Innerarity, 2006, p. 104), a discourse that has none too often drawn its *boundaries* from the very delimitation of urban physical space. Although we cannot ignore that the revitalization of community life – the humanization of the city – largely depends on the requalification of urban space, the city also encompasses a political heritage intersected with social, architectural and urban heritages that must be considered, but above all, it cannot be obliterated as cultural and spiritual heritage.

Thus, for many centuries the city was the privileged space of urbanity; a space for the encounter of cultures, of strangers and of differences. The city inspired the renovation and re-creation of culture. Nevertheless, it has increasingly become a stage for violence, a place that exacerbates the pathologies of contemporary societies; the role of the city as a space where the collective, where diversity and identity interact, has thus been compromised.

Until recently, urbanity was associated with the city, but this association was mostly derived from a physical structure that has progressively disappeared. Thus, the urban world is rapidly changing under the impact of globalization, closely accompanied by a pattern of diffuse urbanization. And if urbanization is concerned with the expansion of the urban and its representations, urbanity "(...) es más que la forma de la ciudad; es un modo de vida, una actitud, una cultura cívica, que tal vez podría realizarse en otro escenario y que probable-

* Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Porto University (psilva@letras.up.pt).

** Faculty of Engineering of Porto University (alves@fe.up.pt).

mente ya no pueda realizarse más que en otro escenario" (Innerarity, 2006, p. 120). Critiques of the city in the 20th century have developed primarily around the loss of urbanity in light of the progressively functionalist construction of the city (cf. *idem, ibidem*, p. 104).

Essentially, urbanity emerged and developed in the city, but the contemporary city seems to be ever more distant from urbanity as a way of thinking. Indeed, reflections on citizenship and civility repeatedly denounce a city which has been fatally struck to the heart.

We are therefore suggesting that the city should be construed based on *urbanity* as a cultural project of what it is to be human.

Such a project demands a critical reflection that cannot forego contributions from the different disciplines that seek to gain an understanding of and insights into the phenomena of public space, since the city is before all else "the expression of the diversity of social relationships which have become fused into a single organism" (Giedion, 1967, p. 41).

We thus propose an approach that will attempt to go beyond a strictly utilitarian and/or physical understanding of the city, by intersecting insights from the domains of architecture, urbanism and philosophy, such that its political essence, as a higher form of collective life and expression of the spirit (cf. Carneiro, 2003, p. 259), may provoke and inform new urban policies and their management models, with a view to achieving true civility.

For the purposes of this article, civility, associated with affability, *benignity*, kindness and even delicateness, implies both a "combination of formalities, of words and of acts that the citizens adopt among themselves to demonstrate mutual respect and consideration" and a way of "observing these formalities". The term civility appears etymologically associated with life in the city, much as *civilitas* concerns political science or the government of the city, but as we witness the breakdown of the contemporary city, and its new confusing configurations, we find that affability and delicateness are in many cases giving way to hostility, to crudeness, indeed, to incivility, leading to growing difficulty in the construction of a collective identity.

Civility is progressively confronted with a public space that is becoming meaningless and trivial. In a time governed by privatization, exaltation and appropriation of privacy by the media, public space ceases to be a significant place where individuals can identify and recognize themselves.

In this context, we contend that *civility* is intimately connected to *urbanity*. Indeed, it is not merely a combination of formalities but a *mode*, an *attitude* intent on establishing ties between individual life and collective life, comprising as such an essential instrument in the construction of a collective identity, through the strengthening of social bonds. The city remains a privileged place for the encounter of differences; an exceptional space for shared feeling, thinking and acting.

The city as an urban phenomenon is concerned with the “result of the interaction between infrastructure and social forces” (Castells, 1984, p. 84), so it must be analyzed not only in light of Mankind’s needs as a physical being, but also in terms of how Mankind feels and constructs its meanings. Since the city is a heterogeneous organism where the diversity of measurable and immeasurable factors, inherited or acquired, find unity under the sway of a particular dominant social configuration, we have to consider the degree of importance attributed to economic efficiency (and the logic of the market and profit) in its development. If it is too high, it will lead to “the fusion of cultural types into a generalized type of capitalistic industrial civilization” (Castells, 1984, p. 96), homogenizing and sterilizing the identity of cities. Indeed, according to Claude Jacquier (1993, p. 165), the exclusive rationale of immediate profit in a society tends to “sacrifier (...) la formation d’individus capables de prendre des responsabilités dans le quotidien, à tous les niveaux de la société”.

The city should remain a *theatrum mundi*, encompassing the vast and varied influences that find their main argument in the legacies of the past on several levels, and in Mankind their motto for development. The legacies of the past, materialized and melded in the dominant culture and, therefore, in society, influence the spatial formation of the city, following a rationale that only the changing of time and space can call into question.

Why, then, are we proposing in this reflection an approach combining philosophy with architecture and urbanism in the construction of civility? Philosophy is born in the city and with the city. Philosophy as an intellectual and spiritual activity is a specific activity of the city that is rooted in the social division of labour between city and countryside, i.e., intellectual labour and manual labour, respectively. In the city, Philosophy leaves its interaction with nature, with the *original*, behind, even though the Cosmos as a Whole remains an object of philosophical reflection. In the city, it is human reality in its social specificity of living together that comes to interest Philosophy more clearly. Philosophy does not seek to specialize, but rather to build on the recognition of rationalizing all the dimensions of what is human, which find in the city the epitome of human sociability.

Philosophy and the city tell a parallel tale about conquering the uninhabited and the unthought-of. It is a story where conquest is materialized in the desire for humanization, forever interwoven with new ways of thinking and inhabiting (cf. Lopez Soria, 2003).

To consider the anthropological condition today is also to consider the city, that is to say, to reflect on the human condition is to reflect on our urban condition, in all its diversity and multiplicity. And, consequently, space in its anthropological dimension, since Mankind, regardless of the manner in which he does so, inhabits politically, assigning meaning to the place: “le politique est un constitutif de l’anthropologie” (Segalen, 1993, p. 205).

However, urban space, as a privileged place of human sociability and development of democratizing processes, is increasingly disregarded as an experience of civility. The city is becoming more fragmented, forgetting its core, where urban space considered as a unit is giving way to economic spaces, consumer spaces, administrative spaces and even architectural spaces; the latter often transforming the historical centre into a museum. This fragmentation results from the abandonment of the urbanity of thought. Knowledge has become specialized; the subject, the hero of knowledge, the heir to modernity, *universal and abstract, without belonging and axiologically neutral* (cf. Lopez Soria, *op. cit.*), has contemporaneously exalted scientific and technical expressions and approaches, thereby endangering the civilizational function of the urbanity of thought.

But the contemporary city, despite being a stage for globalization phenomena and a media-influenced world, is still a place of new experiences, as the mono-cultural city has given way to the multicultural city; a city that now requires, in every sense, an ever more renewed urbanity of thought; that requires, in light of its civilizational matrix and, therefore, as a means to strengthen social bonds, an exercise in reflection that emphasizes what unites the spheres of knowledge rather than what separates them.

The man-place interaction

A sense of place, before being associated with group identification, is intimately and primarily related to individual ties, since it is fundamentally at this level that symbolic connections take place, even though they may be “generalized” in a global framework of values.

Thus, it is important to consider, for example, that the connections between a place and important events in our life, such as childhood, constitute centuries-old foundations in the construction of a sense of continuity through the different stages of life. Such spatial supports gain a new identity, which some refer to as “*spatial identity*” or “*place identity*” when they describe the important role particular places have had in the development of people’s senses and personalities, or, we could say, of an un-reflected state of being. The result is the product of cognitive states embracing the physical surroundings in which the individual lives. These states represent the ideas and memories, the attitudes, feelings, senses, preferences and the construction of behaviours and experiences – the backstage to the enormous complexity of tying man to a place – in the day-to-day scenario of being human.

Individual connections are not just centred on the activities and people within public space; some spaces may acquire a strong significance for the individual by evoking special spatial events, that involve the story of human life or accomplishments – weddings, funer-

als, ethnic celebrations, and so on – harbouring particular memories, evocative forms that come to incorporate the identity structure of each individual with the place. This identification comprehends certain modes of the man-place liaison and, according to *Stephen Carr* (1992), occurs in keeping with five different yet juxtaposed versions:

- Individual connections (main memories from the past like childhood);
- Group connections (common history and influence among group members);
- Connections to Society (participation of members of a culture in its physical representation);
- Biological and psychological connections ('man – spatial archetype' association as a space characteristic);
- Connections to other worlds (the individual desire of imagination and realization of fantasies).

Many feel that roots to a place are a rare "substance" today; however, studies and surveys in the field of urban sociology have demonstrated that people are still bound to these types of spatial characterizers, with which they identify, and that originate from individual and/or group symbols. The truth is that they are always and evermore important, considering that, when symbols lose their shared meaning, people look for new symbols, even though they may not have the same meaning in the present as they did in the past (Rapoport, 1977, p. 325).

There are, in fact, spaces which, because of their potential for location and use, for design and scale, kindle strong feelings of protection, of entertainment and of well-being in individuals, almost elevated to the status of sought-after "pilgrimage sanctuaries", in an exterior world that constructs a "home" away from home. These include shopping centres and hypermarkets – simultaneously "Cathedral and Big Public Granary" of days gone by – as we can see in the imaginative text by Jorge Gaspar (1987, pp. 258-259).

On a smaller scale, other places of reception and diffusion in the social environment may be considered equally important. We are specifically referring to the traditional and almost extinct neighbourhood grocery store, which have for generations supplied local households, and to the "shops" or taverns of provincial Portugal, places with multiple functions and intense social interactions.

The strongest emotions we feel today in our everyday lives are no longer projected as powerfully as before on the historical monuments which, in the manner of *Violet-le-Duc*, were called "chronicles in stone". They have thus today lost symbolism and wealth as a civilizational chronicle of our time. Hence, living according to a logic that stems from the "day

to day, from hour to hour, with no feeling for relationships, does not merely lack dignity; it is neither natural nor human", and "leads to a perception of events as isolated points rather than parts of a process with dimensions reaching out into history" (Giedion, 1967, p. 7). In this regard, and as a means of controlling this process and handling its harmful effects, Klaus Kunzmann (2004, p. 399) mentions that "the conservation of the cultural heritage as well as the protection of the cultural townscape have to be regulated" and that "aesthetic standards have to be formulated and enforced", although the media may play a fundamental role "for support and to help provide a means of communication to the local citizens".

In this context, planning can fulfill a fundamental role when equipped with operational instruments that incorporate the immaterial side of the meaning of place, so as to avoid impoverishing the city as a physical space and, especially, as a social space, which in turn leads to a loss of good citizenship and civility. Therefore, and recalling the main argument of this text, even though it should have a "tangible" dimension, planning cannot be restricted to the physical issues of infrastructure, salubrity, economic profitability and political affirmation, as noted by Amos Rapoport (1977, p. 360); it should expand into the domain of the ontological *background* of the space of the city.

The process of man-place identification involves a dynamic and indivisible interaction between two vectors, so it "Does not (...) make sense to think of Man without his architectural environment: what is human has become architectural and what is architectural has become human" (Muga, 2005, p. 24). This means that while the environment influences mankind, mankind too affects the environment, in a relationship of interdependence that should be taken into account when assessing and understanding the meaning of a place, and which involves certain fundamental requirements.

The requirements that thus guarantee the interaction defined by man's connections to a place, in order to develop its meaning or sense, are:

a) "Legibility" – seen as a property or ability of a place to communicate in light of its openness to the user and to its potential use, a concept already developed by Kevin Lynch in his work *The Image of the City*.

Any public space should provide a set of data that, when understood clearly by its user-inhabitants, express the nature and the possibilities of interacting there. When these come close to people's lifestyles and the patterns of use with which they have become familiar, a space where shared objectives and connections to the place arises, acquiring a positive meaning. If the level at which this phenomenon occurs is high, we are then within an evocative place or space, a space 'with meaning', where memories, feelings

and experiences of the individual, the collective or of a culture are exalted, and, in some way, they connect each individual to a higher dimension¹.

b) Relevance – seen as a quality that complements the previous one and that operates on several levels, since the legacies of time and history do not occur in a simple manner; the level of evocativeness and symbolism of a place varies in perception and understanding from individual to individual, according to their cultural background and sensibility. A place may thus become relevant or not, according to its degree of congruity with the life and culture in which it exists. The aesthetic experience therefore lacks an ontological density, because building the meaning of a place depends on our ability to experience it, on our ability to feel it in order to give it meaning, to create its spatial boundaries and its identity, i.e., our territoriality.

c) The “skin” of the space as a consequence of new “decorative attitudes” on how the elements and objects in public space are covered. Even though we highlighted previously the social connections and meanings, these can be influenced by the public space’s “skin”, particularly with regard to its physical connections². Even though the design may evoke varied rhythms and stimuli that favour communication and connections, the projectual options embraced by the design are often complicated, between contextualism and the dense or disconcerting decorative expressions that characterize the “skin” of a space. This is easily memorized by the image it may transmit, and is also responsible for the emotions it triggers in individuals who end up defining part of the meaning the place may have, as well as its relationship with the wider surroundings.

Thus, the reading of a space’s “skin” is always the result of a feeling which, whether positive or negative, carries a measure of affectivity. This in turn will lead to a particular spatial meaning, which will necessarily form the basis, or not, of a sense of civility with regard to that space. All spaces assume an idiosyncrasy which induces feeling and meaning that only by experiencing it, by apprehending its “spirit”, is it duly justified.

¹ Evoking these feelings of proximity and familiarity means the place acquires an important meaning for their lives, and the space is revealed as a mediator of meaningful learning, to the extent that it is perceived, experienced and felt as our own event; this means the existence and, above all, the essence of the space and its places also depend on the meanings that man bestows on them.

² In the Modern Movement, for example, the main role of the surface was to clothe the physical forms or to complement their structures, reducing or practically cancelling out their decorative roles, contrary to what happened, for example, in the 18th century. Nowadays there is a multiplicity of trends, directions and artistic attitudes that exceed the limits of the modernist paradigms, in a time that represents a fourth dimension in Design in general. If the physical connections are based on how the location, reserves, design and composition of a place are reflected in the surrounding area, this problem may induce harmful effects in the symbolic meaning that any place enjoys.

d) The individual and/or group (in)formation – which will influence how people connect with a space. These connections exist on several levels and in the extent to which people share them through, for example, cultural ties between individuals with similar backgrounds, ties among families, friends or other groups with common interests, and shared experiences among those witnessing this or that event. The role of each individual in the use of the space is a result of their interaction on these various levels of connection to the environment. On the other hand, the ability to enjoy and transform a place may stimulate the development of various levels of communication. We are thus assuming that culture plays a crucial role in individual/group formation, derived from its ability to inform collective and individual practice and imagery, which is to say the ability to intervene in the formation of civility.

In addition to these requirements, other qualities are needed for a place to have meaning, such as comfort and connections between inhabitants/residents. Spaces should have sufficient comfort for the intended experiences to occur within them. Regarding connections between inhabitants, it is under these more direct means of communication that feelings of belonging and security in a place are created, thus contributing positively to increasing the meaning of any space.

Space and Time in the variability of a place

As mentioned previously, the construction of citizens' collective imagery is an important instrument in strengthening the connections of man to places and society, by amplifying their collective memory, and therefore satisfying their aspirations and expectations. It is essentially the spaces which are inhabited and experienced and the activities occurring therein that should provide the connections of man to a place, a basic need for any individual. The interaction of man with place, whether individually or in a group, is conditioned by his connections to the historical, sociocultural, economic, political and philosophical dimensions, and by the symbolic spectrum of his connection to the Universe, or other worlds involving his biological and psychological nature, intellectual development, background and sexuality, in a complexity where time and space are expressed equitably and simultaneously. Thus, that which is a paradigm of a particular society, i.e., a collection of values with specific validity for a "collective agreement" that justifies the practical activities of society (Solá-Morales, 1995, p. 129), may lose meaning for another society, which is spatially and temporally separate from the first. The paradigm therefore constitutes a vector in time and space which conveys validity and variability to the spatiality of the city: validity because it determines what social issues will define the space, and vari-

ability because time and space, being common denominators to all societies, enable an integrated comparison between their spatial meanings.

Faced with different paradigms, it is thus inevitable that what is valid for one society may not be for another, and that spatial meanings and the degrees of civility of one, lose their meaning in another³.

To illustrate this point, let us analyze the relationship between two examples of models of cities separated in time, in space and in society: the ideal city of Albrecht Dürer and the *Ville Radieuse* of Le Corbusier.

According to Jürgen Zimmer (2003, p. 472), the first emerged as a consequence of the “evolution of military techniques of the 15th century”, which implied modernizing the fortresses of cities and citadels in order to “withstand the artillery of the besiegers”. In response to this, Dürer adopted a model of the compact city, using as his main references on a formal level *Utopia* by Thomas More and the Roman *castrum*. But it was not to be an exact copy, since in relation to the first, for example, the dimension of social idealism is detached from its military purpose. Even so, we can establish an almost direct relationship between Thomas More’s depiction and Dürer’s design for the ideal city, namely: its fortified quadrangular base-shape, considering that, in *Utopia*, “whoever knows one city knows them all, because they are all (...) exactly similar” and that the city of *Amaurota* “has an almost quadrangular shape” (More, 2005, p. 72); its compactness, which avoids spatial urban voids – particularly the mostly symbolical and functional void, because the whole city is walkable and all its spaces are devised for citizen participation, and, as a result, multi-functionality in contrast to mono-functional zones. These premises are related to the social paradigm of 15th century Europe, the development of military defense and attack techniques, thus defining a specific purpose for the city, which in this case is defensive.

The purpose of the *Ville Radieuse*, on the other hand, is to solve the “manifest deficit in the creation of living, working and most of all housing conditions”, consequently taking as its paradigm responses to the problems of a *progressionist industrial society* (Sigel, 2003, p. 706). That said, the *Ville Radieuse* represents a city model which is based on improving living conditions, especially infrastructures and architectural and urban salubrity, starting with a clean slate. It is therefore *opposed to the historical centre* (Sigel, 2003, p. 706), admitting its demolition, with the exception of monuments, in order to define an urbanism that frees the ground surface, established on *pilotis*.

³ It also explains the failure of some recent proposals for American squares that were inspired by the image of Medieval and Renaissance Europe, and which lose their meaning, becoming irrelevant, because one cannot add a sense of public and political change to contemporary American reality which essentially characterized the European square some centuries ago.

Thus, between the ideal city of Dürer and the *Ville Radieuse*, a relationship of approximation and opposition is created, based on paradigm changes in time and space. Although the two models of cities have the same underlying purpose, which brings them closer (that of progress and the well-being of the population), it is what defines this progress and this well-being that divides the approaches. This is where the change in paradigm plays a crucial role: to one, “progress” means the development of military techniques; to the other, “progress” means answering the problems of living conditions in progressionist industrial cities.

While the ideal city of Dürer celebrates a model of centralized city, the *Ville Radieuse* abandons it (Kenneth Frampton, 2000, p. 217) and divides it into several parallel strips, in a *zoning* system. To use Rogers’ definition of a compact city, while the first constitutes a city that is “dense and socially diversified where economic and social activities” overlap, “where communities” are “concentrated around neighbourhood units” and which contemplates complexity, the second, the sprawling/diffuse city, rejects it, reducing it to “simplistic divisions and easily manageable economic and administrative packages”, for *economic convenience* (Richard Rogers, 2001, p. 33), which may lead to the fragmentation of urban space, and greater difficulty in satisfying levels of urban sustainability.

Compaction and dispersion are models that significantly interfere in the way citizens appropriate the space and develop relationships of meaning and place with it. Both of these examples correspond to paradigms separated in time and in space, which, as a result, offer different degrees of civility by validating certain spatial meanings: the materialization of the 15th century paradigm in the ideal city of Dürer, by assuming a compact form that is juxtaposed to the pre-existing urban form, allows for the spatial meanings of previous societies to be maintained. It also provides new meanings ensuing from (new) needs and specificities of the 15th century Man – it is the social representativeness of space which persists and is extended into space and time as a reflection of paradigms from the past, while always maintaining regardless the basis for Man’s identification with the place, his ability to establish a certain degree of civility with that same place. This is not the case with the *Ville Radieuse* which, by assuming a more disperse configuration in the territory, and, above all, by conceiving the demolition of historic centres, severs the whole relationship between Man and the historical legacy of his past, eliminating essential spaces of social representativeness and identification. It is however undeniable that the main premises of 20th century urbanism stemmed from this model of city, particularly in countries like Portugal, where the modernist influence was felt for longer than in other countries, and which clearly led to a loss of the city’s spatial quality. During the 20th century cities grew on the outskirts where more serious social problems associated with a lack of civility,

of identification and love for the space also thrived, as has been proved in many studies conducted in this field, from urbanism to sociology.

However, variability may arise within the paradigm itself. This means that, for the same paradigm, different ways of interpreting and approaching the same problem lead to different spatial, symbolic and projectually different approaches. Kenneth Frampton (2000, p. 139) believes this is true of the divide within the *Deutsche Werkbund*, during the 1941 Cologne Exhibition, with two factions, although both were based on the same idea of a “utopian future that was equally hostile to the bourgeois reform and the culture of the industrial state”. One is *collective acceptance of the normative form* – *Typisierung*, which includes, for example, the work of Walter Gropius and Peter Behrens; the other is individual, expressive affirmation based on the “desire of the form” – *Kunstwollen* –, which includes the work of Bruno Taut or Henry Van de Velde.

The relevance of a place does not depend on external factors alone, but is sustained on human dimensions and faculties that are not always duly rated in political plans and management models. In our opinion, other contributions are required, notably from philosophy and art, in order to better equate the meanings of places as conferred by the people who inhabit them. On this level, hermeneutic and epistemological work should be coordinated with aesthetics and ontology. The relevance of a place suggests an intimate engagement between aesthetic, ontological, gnosiological and anthropological experiences, which implies a renewed reflection on sensibility. Indeed, the aesthetic experience can reveal and communicate an understanding and, above all, a recognition of the anthropological dimension of space, if we transcend the strictly aesthetic relationship with the work of art and perceive it as a deeply affective relationship, since what we know of a thing or place is not separate from what how we feel about it. In other words, the ontological density provides aesthetic experience with a maturity that can overcome the homogenizing and media-driven tendencies of the much debated post-modern aestheticization.

As is widely known, sensibility was long cast into passivity and with Kant, became characterized as receptivity, establishing a sensibility/understanding dichotomy; for psychology, sensibility generally respects the universe of feelings and emotions which, to some extent, does not remove it from the sphere of passivity as opposed to intellectual activity. However, for philosophy, despite the Kant of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and of the *Critique of Practical Reason* and based on the Kant of the *Critique of Judgment*, the aesthetic experience begins to configure a sensibility that is closer to the scope of the feeling of taste and of the sublime, in a supra-sensitive experience which will enable, we suggest, an intimate involvement with poetry or with ontology. The aesthetic experience is then revealed in an ontology of the relationship and not only as a product in its material dimension. This

means that sensibility, as a faculty, also implies activity, because it leads us from registering impressions, from feeling as a mental act, to the ability to be affected and the ability to experience as a reflected moment of what is felt.

Thus, with regard to the relevance of places, we should not only consider sensibility in its common meaning or as receptivity, but rather take into consideration another aspect: ontological sensibility, the kind that relates to empathy, identification with a place, topophilia, in the sense that it requires our activity, our experience in the world.

What we therefore should and can overcome are two types of sensibility: a tactile sensibility, as Walter Benjamin called it, or sensology as socialization and trivialization of the senses, as Mario Perniola puts it, when he refers to the aestheticization of contemporary culture.

For Walter Benjamin (1992), life in the big cities, invaded by information, by mechanization and by automation, subjects experience to the technical-social domain, and reveals and promotes a shock to the sensibilities that leads individuals to seek protection from these shocks. A new sensibility is thus instilled which, in isolation, in indifference and in the loss of memory, is intersected with the emergence of “men with amputated roots”, in the emergence of a tactile sensibility; an absence of experience is hence revealed, since the (referred to) living conditions emerge as anti-experiences. According to Mario Perniola (1993), in the past, feeling used to relate to particular subjectivity, but now, by moving to the exterior, it becomes anonymous and impersonal, establishing a “kind of sensology that is based on a model of ideology and that shares with it this attribution of psychic processes to collective life (...) targeted at each individual in the name (...) of an imposition in order to repress what they have already proved and approved and that does not have any other legitimacy outside this general and anonymous consensus” (Perniola, 1993, p. 14). This reveals not only the feeling but also the *already felt* of a socialized world in constant *communication* and de-realizes sensibility, in the sense that, by being given the already done, the already said and the already occurred, it obliterates our ability to look for and give meaning, to take responsibility and to act.

Society should be seen as the result of the relationship between individuals, as António Firmino da Costa (2001, p. 62) suggests, where the “personal life trajectories continuously redefine individual sociocultural identifications” and where the “social processes continuously create, destroy or modify collective identities”. According to the same author, this construction of identity occurs on the level of relationships, because it is a result of the interaction between human beings; and on the cultural level, because it involves “images and categorizations of the social universe, feelings and values regarding its components, modes of expression and communicational codes, identification symbols and practices

loaded with identity related symbolism". In truth, feelings and affections play an important role in the evaluation of reality, according to Scheler (1971), since they reveal the way in which the subject is affected by things, by reality. Max Scheler (1951; 1971) intended to overcome the traditional idealism that only recognized the human being in his speculative-rational dimension. In fact, for Scheler, the human being has a value in himself and for himself. And this is due both to his personal qualities, and to his interpersonal and social skills. This means society, the community, is a reference, based on which the nature of man can be appraised. When Scheler (1951) claims that the human being is the only being who has a place in the world, he is questioning the being of man and his role in relation to others as well; how does man construct this place and how does he construct and achieve himself in this place, which is a place of affections. Feelings are, for Scheler, states of the I provoked by the relationship with the world. It is a matter of considering from here, if we wish to, a significant learning experience of life and the world, in the sense that the affective experience in relation to objects implies a strong motivation to know them, to want them. It implies the movement of a qualitative continuity of wanting that is objectified, because when I feel, I feel in relation to something or someone; this automatically shapes social life.

Thus, the problem of space arises precisely where the unique human ability for abstraction also arises – "(...) by relating impressions, straight or curved lines, planes, structures, masses, a variety of proportions and shapes, the purely physical observation is transposed to another sphere, the one of emotional experiences" (George, 1993) – a kind of *magical thought* where immaterial entities and the relationships of influence and determination among them take place, and this is inseparable from rational thought (the author explains the thoughts of S. Giedion on the subject of art and the conception of space in the work *The Eternal Present*, 1965). The term points to an "intimate immenseness" that "(...) is a philosophical category of reverie (...) of varied spectacles (...) the contemplation of grandeur (...) a state of the soul so particular that the reverie places the dreamer outside of the next world, before a world that bears the sign of the infinite" (Bachelard, 1993, p. 189). An explanation is thus found for how, for example, from the memory of the vastness of the sea and the plain, we can renew in ourselves the resonance of contemplating such greatness through meditation; or even attribute a figurative spatiality shared by architectural space and the figurative arts, as mentioned by Zevi (1979).

This makes it impossible to equate *a thought without images*, much as it is impossible to equate a thought without memory, a thought without *vestiges*. "La estética se encontrará ya siempre en la lógica, y la lógica en la estética" (Ferraris 1999, p. 20).

By way of conclusion: urban planning as a sensitive experience

The rational maturity of humanity and the individual has enabled and effectively still enables representation, also interpreted as an ability for abstraction, an ability to conceptualize and, therefore, to mentally represent the world and its objects. However, rational thought has been configured, particularly from the positivist paradigm, and exacerbated by industrial and technological models, within the scope of an instrumental reasoning which obliterates the perception of reason as a complex and distinct unit that always relates to all human dimensions, be they magical, poetical, artistic, philosophical or logical.

The capacity for abstraction has, thus, in the context of the problem of space presented here, a proximity with the particular thought of the arts and philosophy, *a sensitive vision* that overcomes instrumental rationality and recovers its origin in the concept of memory: the impossibility of thought without images. The difficulty, in fact, of establishing the difference between the sensitive and the intelligible, between what is only a vehicle, deposit or support of an intellectual argument, and that which is its substance (cf. Ferraris 1999, 20, p. 21). For Maurizio Ferraris, thought cannot ever forego images, or fantasy, because in fact an image is always more than an image. And this is so true that the ulterior distinction, in terms of clarity, is also the success of imagination and its fruits (cf. *ibidem*). This does not mean, however, that the sensitive should be identified with the intelligible, but it is essential that we acknowledge that, in the experience of thinking, there is an intimate interaction between memory, the ability to project, to anticipate and to imagine.

The separation between the sensitive and the intelligible undoubtedly enabled the sciences and technique to make progress, but resulted in dramatic divergence in the domain of rationality that compromised other ways of thinking which transcend the space-time reality and, consequently, impede the understanding of immaterial entities.

It is precisely the interaction between understanding and sensibility that should be at the basis of an understanding of the city and, as a result, of planning with a view to civility. Sigfried Giedion (1967, p. 816), in this context, further claims that “in the future the town planner will need to advance further and further beyond the limits of the purely technical. The reconquest of the unity of human life is nowhere more urgent than in this work”, because civility, as a human ability to attribute meaningful feeling to a space, is a consequence of a set of its material and immaterial characteristics that stimulate man or not and, therefore, his civility.

The conquest of the unity of spheres of knowledge and, particularly, the reconciliation between understanding and sensibility, may well constitute the “cornerstone” to conquering the fundamental level of civilization that is desired in any given space – that it may

accommodate the multitude of expressions and associations of the cultural universe – other times, other places, other longings...

Consequently, it is not the place of urban design, *per se*, to exclusively satisfy all the solicitations of an environment that is intended to be interactive and meaningful. This function encompasses a wide range of participants aside from the designer, *viz.*, the individuals and groups capable of effecting small changes. Indeed, their specificities should be at the basis of an urban environment that will, as a result, be a “means of non-verbal communication”, involving coding and decoding processes that users should be able to read/interpret (Rapoport, 1977, p. 333).

In the same way, civic training should satisfy the requirements of a given environment, becoming one of the premises of planning with a view to achieving civility: to inform people about the wanting and the knowing of how to experience urban spaces is fundamental, because to guarantee their success is to ensure, *a priori*, that people use them, know how to use them and can as such award them a certain degree of love. To contemplate the importance of social/ethical training is to understand planning as an activity with a nature that is “centrally concerned with making ethical judgments about better or worse, with and for others” (Campbell, 2002, p. 271), which it is.

Consequently, to intervene in the urban fabric without previously intervening in the social fabric is to risk disparity between form, function and use. Hence we frequently see interventions that quickly succumb to a lack of use or its distortion, to vandalism and insecurity, particularly when they are works that are imposed, often altering pre-existing uses in favour of an *upgrade* of the site, but disengaged from a necessary and parallel *upgrade* of the practical and sensitive training of its future users. A training that should enable a return to a sense of community and a broadening of the notion of affectivity restricted to ‘my house’ to a notion of ‘my street’, ‘my city’.

This is why, according to Klaus Kunzmann, “In recent years geographers and urban economists have been telling us that, after the sustainable city, the ‘learning city’, has to be seen as our urban development paradigm of the future” (2004, p. 390). Robert Upton goes a step further, when he suggests that planning “has to be perceived as spatial ethics”, so “a primary object of planning theory should be to develop ethical knowledge – knowing how to know how to act in relation to spatial issues” (Upton, 2002, p. 268). This means that the planning technicians should base their activity on ethical and aesthetic values, capable of influencing their “identity, choices, practices and obligations as civil servants” (Pløger, 2004, p. 49), since “each creation, whether it assumes a more or less collective sociological form (...), or a more or less individual artistic-literary form, is capable, in turn, of having repercussions both in individual imaginations and in the collective symbolism” (Augé, 1998, p. 66).

We do not want, with this, to neglect the importance of the practical and real issues of planning. On the contrary, and as Manuel Castells (1984, p. 215) argues, we believe that planning technicians should “extract and mark out the real grounds of the debate and guide it towards a commitment based on certain goals that are shared by everyone”, and “its power of negotiation” should correspond “to experts who have sure knowledge of what is possible”.

Thus, integrated planning is fundamental, and it may therefore contemplate several factors that make up the city (such as historical heritage, individual and group symbols, the otherness, the practical objectives of development, design or management), in order to endow the city with material and immaterial characteristics (a response to social diversity, a sense of community, optimized appreciation of the environment, an identification of symbols, a greater flexibility between desires and facts or a balanced competitiveness, and so forth) capable of increasing civility.

The way to attribute meaning to a place, managing the aforementioned risks is, without a doubt, an encounter with urban design to establish integration at the various levels of the area of intervention.

Constructing the meaning of a public place, a process that involves users, designers and managers to a substantial degree, implies first endowing the space with the ability to harbour different, memorable and significant experiences, in an environment where comfort, security and pleasure intersect with the satisfaction of its users’ needs. The most gratifying conquest, but also the hardest to achieve, is being able to combine the development of qualities, memories and meanings associated to a specific time and place (of our own), with the timeless experience of emerging cultures. Projects that later seem to be the sublimation of the spirit of a time, are often not recognized as such when they are created on the fringes of current trends⁴. But fashion, or style, is somewhat ephemeral and is no more than a set of formal options of image that gravitate without vital ties to society. The true root of society and, hence, that which should be taken as a crucial basis for the development of the city, is culture, which thus “*remains the last bastion of local identity*” (Kunzmann, 2004, p. 387).

In the same way, globalization, virtual communication networks and the machine are in fact vectors of the development of civilization, but they cannot underpin the construction and meaning of cities: globalization, in terms of values, mobility and consumption patterns, because it leads to a cultural leveling; virtual communication networks, by significantly reducing the need for travel and physical contacts with the environment,

⁴ We find some examples that illustrate this disparity of the innovation of erudition in time and in place, especially in artistic movements that only much later saw their value acknowledged.

strengthen “a widespread belief that the concepts of place and territory’ are without meaning” (Matthiessen *et al.*, 2002, p. 903); and the machine which, in the case of the development of cities, does not permit an understanding of social and human forms in their spaces, organization and representativeness⁵. By managing these issues, a balance can be struck between all the urban factors, so that the city “may pass from a static condition to the free equilibrium of an organism” (Giedion, 1967, p. 819) and civic rights may be restored.

Management, when considering its role in building the meaning of a public place, should be introduced into a democratic structure that encourages cultural diversity and expression, instant appropriation by users, and change, fundamental dimensions of life and the construction of a singular and collective identity. The ability to reinforce the identification of individuals with a space is all the more effective, the greater the participation of a community or group in the upkeep or management of that space, while exercising their rights and obligations. It is fundamental for management to assimilate notable elements and occurrences in a space, in order to stimulate the interest and continuity of its experience by man – its being, its meaning and its revitalization. Understanding how the meaning of a space is constructed is a key guideline in the design of public space and its management policies, which ultimately implies equating its anthropological dimension, or rather, thinking of the space as a mediator of social development, a process that requires the development of the life of the spirit.

If sustainable development concerns mankind and living conditions, and not only well-being, often shaped by an underlying corporate engineering intersected with different economic interests, then sustainability demands a deeper reflection that cannot disregard the life of the spirit. We therefore agree that basic principles such as peace, tolerance, responsibility, solidarity, respect and justice compete for the public good and, above all, for the humanization of the management policies of public space. In the context of this project, this amounts to equating space as part of the development of a cultural project of what is human, so fundamentally necessary to the reconfiguration of the city as the aspiration and expression of civilization.

Civility is nothing more than the simple, albeit complex, feeling of loving and identifying ourselves with, or not, the spaces of our city, no matter how we do it, or what symbols, images and meanings we associate with it.

⁵ Even though technique has long been at the service of man, and we must not forget the criticism to which it has always been subjected, technology today has a political and even ideological dimension that is extended to architecture and anthropology. This may prevent the real development of civilization, since technology no longer concerns just the *machine*, but a new conception of politics which, when submitted to the laws of the global market, endangers the *civitas* as an expression of the *polis*.

Without disregarding the more practical issues of planning, it is fundamental that planning technicians adopt a “deep communitarian philosophy” (Watson, 2004, iv). This means, when faced with cultural diversity and with their own internal dynamics, it is necessary for technicians to examine their own beliefs (and where they stem from) so that they are receptive to the possibility of different points of view and, above all, to different rationalities.

Urban planning on a local level can no longer be guided by merely material assumptions, with a particular aim in view. It should certainly operate proceedings and instruments that allow it to combine infrastructure and feeling, as a formula to achieve this aim.

It is now the responsibility of planning, urbanism, architecture, philosophy, sociology and any individual who thinks and constructs the city to not forget that “mankind’s ultimate destination has become inseparable from the destiny of the city: to halt the decline of the great metropolis, to add value and human dimension to its spiritual architecture, to recreate trust in the strategic and daily government of the city, to ensure a leap of quality in its intimate texture, to promote the human condition within its boundaries, to rebuild cohesive communities around values of civilization, to reinvent urban democracy, to restore security and trust to city life are just some of the concerns” (Carneiro, 2003, p. 276) that we must share.

References

- Augé, M. (1998) *A Guerra dos Sonhos: Exercícios de etnoficção*. Oeiras: Celta Editora.
- Bachelard, G. (1993) *A Poética do Espaço*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Benjamin, W. (1992) “A obra de arte na era da sua reprodutibilidade técnica”, in: *Sobre Arte, Técnica, Linguagem e Política*. Lisboa: Relógio d’Água.
- Campbell, H. (2002) “Planning: an idea of value”. *TPR-Town Planning Review* 73(3).
- Carneiro, R. (2003) *Fundamentos da Educação e da Aprendizagem. 21 ensaios para o século 21*, 2.^a ed. Vila Nova de Gaia: Fundação Manuel Leão.
- Carr, S.; Francis, M.; Rivlin, L. G. & Stone A. (1992) *Public Space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Castells, M. (1984) *Problemas de Investigação em Sociologia Urbana*, 3.^a ed. Lisboa: Editorial Presença.
- Chapin Jr., F. S. (1974) *Human Activity Patterns in the City – Things People do in Time and Space*. USA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Costa, A. (2001) *O que é Sociologia*, 3.^a ed. Quimera.

- (2001) *Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa*. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Antônio Houaiss de Lexicografia, pref. Antônio Houaiss, pres. Mauro de Salles Villar; (2002), Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, introd. João Malaca Casteleiro.
- Dollé, J. (1993) "Habiter la citoyenneté", in: J. Roman (Ed.) *Ville, exclusion et citoyenneté – Entretiens de la ville II*. Paris: Editions Esprit.
- Ferraris, M. (1999) *La imaginación*. Trad. Francisco Campillo García. Madrid: Visor.
- Frampton, K. (2000) *História Crítica da Arquitectura Moderna*, 2.^a ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes Editora Lda.
- Gaspar, J. (1987) "Do pelourinho ao centro comercial", in: *A Cidade em Portugal: onde se vive, text: O retorno à promiscuidade*, Revista Povos e Culturas. Universidade Católica Portuguesa.
- George, P. (1993) *O Terciário e a Construção da Cidade*. PhD diss. Lisbon: Technical University.
- Giedion, S. (1967) *Space, Time and Architecture*, 5th ed. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Innerarity, D. (2006) *El Nuevo Espacio Público*. Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe.
- Jacquier, C. (1993) "La citoyenneté urbaine dans les quartiers européens – Urbanité et civilité", in: J. Roman (Ed.) *Ville, exclusion et citoyenneté – Entretiens de la ville II*. Paris: Editions Esprit.
- Kant, I. (1960) *Critique de la raison pratique*, 3^e éd. Trad. François Picavet. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- (1994) *Crítica da Razão Pura*, 3.^a ed. Trad. Manuela Pinto dos Santos e Alexandre Fradique Morujão, introd. e notas Alexandre Fradique Morujão. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- (1998) *Crítica da Faculdade do Juízo*. Trad. e notas António Marques e Valério Rohden. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda.
- Kunzmann, K. (2004) "Culture, creativity and spatial planning". *TPR-Town Planning Review* 75(4).
- López Soria, J. (2003) Para una filosofía de la ciudad. *Urbes. Revista de ciudad, urbanismo y paisaje* 1(1).
- Mathiessen, C. W., S.; Annette, W. & Find, S. (2002) "The Top-level Global Research System, 1997-99: Centres, Networks and Nodality. An analysis Based on Bibliometric Indicators". *Urban Studies*, 39(5-6).
- Morus, T. (2005) *A Utopia*, 14.^a ed. Lisboa: Guimarães Editores.
- Muga, H. (2005) *Psicologia da Arquitectura*. Coleção Ensaios, Gailviro.
- Pereira, P. (2006) *Do Sentir e do Pensar. Ensaio para uma antropologia (experiencial) de matriz poética*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.
- Perniola, M. (1993) *Do Sentir*. Trad. António Guerreiro. Lisboa: Presença.
- Pløger, J. (2004) "Ethics in Norwegian Planning: Legitimacy, Ambivalence, Rhetoric". *Planning, Practice & Research* 19(1).
- Rapoport, A. (1968) *The Personal Element in Housing: An Approach to Open-ended Design*. United Kingdom: RIBA Journal.

- Rapoport, A. (1977) *Human Aspects of the Urban Form – Towards a Man-environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*, 1st ed. Pergamon Press.
- Richardson, T. & Jensen O. B. (2003) "Linking Discourse and Space: Towards a Cultural Sociology of Space in Analyzing Spatial Policy Discourses". *Urban Studies* 40(1).
- Rogers, R. (2001) *Cidades para um Pequeno Planeta*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili SA.
- Segalen, M. (1993) "Identités culturelles et modèles d'appropriation de l'espace urbain – Le cas de la ville de Nanterre", in: J. Roman (Ed.) *Ville, exclusion et citoyenneté – Entretiens de la ville II*. Paris: Editions Esprit.
- Sigel, P. (2003) Le Corbusier (1887-1965) "Para uma Nova Arquitetura – Urbanismo - A Carta de Atenas". *Teoria da Arquitetura – Do Renascimento aos nossos dias*. Trad. Maria do Rosário Paiva Boléo. Colónia: Taschen GmbH.
- Scheler, M. (1951) *La Situation de l'homme dans le monde*. Trad. e pref. M. Dupuy. Paris: Editions Montaigne.
- (1971) *Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l'étude des lois de la vie affective*. Trad. do alemão, M. Lefebvre. Paris: Payot.
- Solà-Morales, I. (1995) *Diferencias: Topografía de la Arquitectura Contemporánea*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili.
- Upton, R. (2002) "Planning Praxis: Ethics, Values and Theory". *TPR-Town Planning Review* 73(3).
- Watson, V. (2004) "Of Universals and Specificities: How Different are We?". *TPR-Town Planning Review* 75(1).
- Zevi, B. (1979) *Architettura in Nuce – Uma Definição de Arquitetura*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- Zimmer, J. (2003) Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) "Instruções diversas para a fortificação das cidades, castelos e praças-fortes". *Teoria da Arquitetura – Do Renascimento aos nossos dias*. Trad. Maria do Rosário Paiva Boléo. Colónia: Taschen GmbH.