MATRIZes

Mobility as a contradiction of urban space

Lucrécia D´Alessio Ferrara[1]

Abstract
If we wish to study the impact of new technologies on Communication Society and its relations with urban space, it seems essential that we confront the implications of that technology in terms of the city's functional and social equipment. In this comparison, confluences and differences are found between the modern city and that other, understood as being liquid and the result of potential mobility and real sociability within a network, making it contradictory to what is traditionally understood as a city. Recognizing those confluences in order to define their social differences and, consequently, understanding whether it is possible to talk about urban space or a city network, will be the focus of this paper: we will look at how mobility, urban space and networks are names that are used to characterize the city of yesterday and that of today. However, although these urban dimensions cannot be confused from a cognitive and social point of view, they are essential to understanding the characteristics of the network city.
Keywords: mobility, network, cyberspace, urban, city.

The society of communication and its scientific models

When it comes to a definition, scientific models tend to characterize the peak moments of science and culture as if they contain concentrated forces which herald a moment that is new and, above all, without precedent. In other words, what characterizes the appearance of a model/paradigm is its total lack of connection with its precedents: it constitutes a very real separation which points towards a new era – one which leads us toward forgetting that culture and science constitute an uninterrupted line and only in this way can their characteristics be understood or isolated.

The moment within which we live does not escape this fact and within it there exist a group of concepts including globalization, acceleration, mobility and a network which cease to be simple words and become paradigms of a knowledge which considers itself systematic and with the ability to involve science, culture politics, economics and communication. These are names which come about as magic metaphors, to be involved in the emergence of a new era and add in new items to History. In other words, paradigms tend to be translated by an explanatory systematization and they tend to be understood as a whole capable of reaching the scientific activities and the cultural manifestations.

These days, simplification of the movements of culture and science through periodization or the building of rigid concepts means making their movements discontinuous and hierarchical and seeing them as artificially stagnant and divided

---

between the past and the future. It means freezing what is dynamic and unforeseeable. It means ordering science and culture, constraining them in their continuity which, up until a certain point, is unforeseen. To put it differently, periodization and conceptual rigidity are paradigms which contribute to the nationalization of that which is dynamic and unforeseeable.

Labels such as mobility and network, while they are self-explanatory paradigms, of a Communication Society, lead us to a situation where we lose the possibility of learning new rhythms which are being added to History, so preventing us from studying the dimensions and differences of those paradigms in more depth. In other words, with this introduction, we wish to propose, for the development of this paper, the hypothesis that mobility and the network are not defining elements of that Society and, therefore, the necessity rises for a more complex analysis which goes much further than a simple formation of technological communication networks. Expressing it differently, if we want to study those paradigms in their current possibilities of the formation of the urban, it is necessary to understand the relationship which is established between networks and mobility, since they are much more than simple pieces of technological equipment and their interfaces.

Due to the complexity of an irreversible time, as Prigogine teaches, it is a matter of urgency that the irregular does not become regular and that a unique event is not simplified when something may be an occurrence which signals fluctuations of the scientific paradigms and, above all, leads us to become capable of recognizing the present as an indicative bifurcation, indicative of changes which do not occur by accident, but which are signs of a cultural vitality demanding a closer look at what has been termed a network society. This society would be capable of asking us to presume the harmony and homogeneity of a global age, bringing all spaces together, the urban ones above all. We know however, that spaces do not get globalized because they are not worldwide; what is possible to globalize, without giving them a single voice, are societies - people in their appropriated urban spaces.

Becoming mobilized by means of technology allows the urban space and one's local space to become the location of economic production and reproduction activities which, within our incessant global competition, ends up identifying the unification of consumer tendencies, for example, with union, as if they were synonymous words,

useless in their ability to signify. Domination and coercion are identified as liberty and spontaneity so as to arrive at a single result: mixing and fragmenting them in order to simplify what is actually quite complex. The element that creates life and stimulation is eliminated from the urban space: the everyday construction of differences between spaces is abolished. Within this relationship, it is necessary to understand that mobility and networks in the urban space is much more than the simple technological availability brought about by mobile equipment; it needs to be understood that, related to the urban space, these complimentary devices assume other dimensions which place them in other scientific paradigms and, above all, ask us to consider whether the contemporary scientific paradigms may only be understood if they are considered in relation to the duties which they have paid to culture in terms of their historical and scientific dynamics and the difference which is established between them.

Space and the city: function and use

Metropolis, megalopolis, post-metropolis, cyburbia, exopolis, global city, open city and endless city are all new names that have been attributed to the city or the place which designates that type of associated life where spaces, services, behavior and values are shared. However the urban space and the city are brought together in day-to-day use, don't confuse them - on the contrary, they can be considered as distinct scientific categories and, as such, are indispensible for the understanding of social relations to be possible – relations which, under the impact of new technologies, are concentrated in that which has been understood to be a specific phenomenon; the city.

Urban space and the city are not confused, but made flexible, relate with each other and live together in the environment of the network society, although if what characterizes the urban space is its definition of territory, then the city, on the other hand, is defined as a social relationship, an exchange and a mediation. There are however, a series of disciplines such as urban geography, urban economics, urban anthropology and urban culture that encourage us to believe that the urban space is an all-encompassing category which is confused with the city and, therefore, capable of creating investigations and inferences susceptible to explaining that space and the city itself. However, it should be considered that to understand mobility and its networks it

is necessary to separate the space and the city, and, at least for part of this paper, this will be the concern of most importance.

The territory which distinguishes the urban space does not only refer to the physical or geopolitical characterization; on the contrary, and maybe in a more wide reaching form, it refers to territory as constructed space which, fixed in terms of function and predetermined usage, structures what is understood by space. Although function and use are distinct, common sense tends to simplify distinctions and identify the two attributes: within this simplification are found the roots of ambiguity which lead us to confuse urban space and the city and, above all, and within a crisis of the traditional poetics of the urban space, lead us to a difficulty in discriminating between what we understand to be a modern and a post-modern city.

Since Vitruvio, the definition of the constructed space and, consequently, architecture, has been recognized by the triad of its classic concepts: *utilitas*, *firmitas*, *venustas,* which we can translate literally as functionality, security and beauty (Solà-Morales, 2002: 125). Within these concepts, that which most evidences the material characteristic of constructed space is security, closely followed by functionality.

Security is responsible for the stability and permanence which challenge time, alongside formal solutions which ensure conditions of functionality. Western culture has maintained the centrality of the two principles as defining material elements in constructed space, where security and functionality are brought together in material solidity. Fixed and permanent, these characteristics are marked by time, since it is this quality which guarantees that indispensible functionality and, above all, the urban intention of the territory.

The celebrated functions (habitation, work, circulation, recreation) of the urban space understood as a constructed city, and condensed by the famous Athens Charter in 1933 (Le Corbusier, 1993), were directly linked to a mono-articulated space by those functions understood as being so excluding and contingent that they came to divide the conception of constructed space which, although concentrated, became socially hierarchical and ordered in its specific functions. Marked by time, the objective of the constructed urban space was, at a future time, to reach a linear ideal of functionality and security which could be expanded globally, generating a fixed and homogenous model of constructed space. It was all about the ideal for the universal space.

Avenues, roads, corners, crossings, u-turns, roundabouts, blocks and zones are elements specific to that constructed space and they divide and organize, they create a social and economic hierarchy and, above all, they fashion the primordial character of its functionality: the urban space presupposes networks which determine the physical and political composition of the territory, and are socio-political axles in a structural and functional relationship. In other words, it is absolutely necessary to recognize that networks are not exclusive characteristics of the digital universe, but this configuration is inherent in the urban space. It should be stated, however, that the concept employed to characterize, maybe exclusively, the peculiarity of the connected city can touch upon other dimensions which, certainly going beyond the simple functionality of a physical network, assume social and cultural peculiarities which characterize the city and distinguish it from the urban space. This relationship may be essential for understanding the dimensions of a digital network and, above all, its difference in relation to functional networks.

It is essential to understand that the digital networks are not self-explanatory or "self-absorbed" (Duarte & Frey, 2008: 161) and, above all, in speaking of networks of urban space, involve a wide concept which, maybe, is expanded within its own meta-language. In this way, it is only possible to assume this concept if we understand the differences between the functional and digital networks and, above all, the way in which the latter diversifies in terms of a critical dimension of the first and, also, of the urban space itself. In other words, to speak of digital networks presupposes the investigation of how the digital articulates itself as a means of communication where the functional and the relational, the physical and the mobile, and that which is fixed and that which is in flux, are all in mediation.

The use of space as multifunctional

Submitted to use and life, the functional urban space comes face to face with the instantaneousness of the unspecific multiple that it projects in view of the city concentrated on social activities as elements that are central to the urban experience and which allow it to exceed the limits of the space as materiality controlled to achieve the unforeseeable daily routine: the urban space is transformed into the city and the utilitarian function into a social relationship where nothing integrates functionally.

The multifunctional city hinders, erodes and deconstructs the constructed functionality, very often not leaving behind any traces because that unforeseen use is confused with the degeneration of the urban space itself, which, over the last few decades and in a symptomatic manner, has generated a rush of revitalizations which aim to return to the functionality of the urban space. In flux and change, the city shows itself as another facet of the urban space, evidencing a quality which the functional materiality, tied by planned time, could never covet or experience. The urban space and the city sit in opposition, just as the structural and relational networks oppose each other. The stable urban space is in opposition to the dynamic city which, in constant movement, recovers the flux which Heraclitus, since pre-Socratic Greek times, had identified as the universe's sole dominating force. The domination of time over space has been definitively eroded away so that, in terms of the movement of the city, the instant of a time without time, a present time, is revealed in the anonymous and collective circularity of the action that it asserts.

This city is being dematerialized more and more however, because it is no longer possible to be projected or constructed to last, presenting alarming paradoxes which confuse the analysis and the possibilities if its understanding, transforming the old materials, which construct its stability, into elements of an iconic image in which the city is reflected as functional and the value of the buildings as a form of appearance. In this way, we have a physical and constructive dematerialization to project it onto symbolic materiality, in which the values of an essentially expository way of life are communicated in order to be seen and/or exhibited.

Real estate speculation exploits the imaginary ideals of the user, creating standards of life, habitation or a city lived in from a distance and in the celebration of photographic images or simulations. The celebrated image of the city comes through as a contradiction to the functionality and inaugurates a set of un-coordinates which characterize the contemporary urban space. Curiously, this iconic image of a city which is reduced to transparency ends up insinuating and anticipating a city dematerialized in numbers and digital connections. Some curious approximations appear between the image of the city made vertical and the digital registration of the mobile city.

The 'bigness' proposed by Rem Koolhaus (2002) transforms the verticality into unruly construction without stability or function, despite being characterized as the

privileged icon of the contemporary city which is made of glass and is transparent, shiny, full of light and expands the urban space far beyond functionality, since it is experienced from the distance of a digital image from all over the world. The competition for the construction of the tallest building in the world characterizes the city which, being mimicked around the world, presents the same icon: being vertical in order to show - through its height - prestige and economic and political power. The verticality reproduces an emblematic value which defines the contemporary city, surpasses the old standards of constructed stability and announces another contradiction of space in the city.

However, alongside this intangible materialism, made of dreams and images, there appear characteristic individuals who, taking refuge in anonymity, are produced by an action that is active in the city like a strange force pushing the foreigner's mobility forward. Initially *flaneur*, this anonymous individual is transformed into an immigrant, a vagrant, a vandal, a tramp and street vendor who, without fixed roots, is in search of that stability in the space and this search constitutes the fundamental nostalgia of the city used in relation to the functional city. It shows the basic contradiction that is established between the urban space as a functional network and the social network of the used city.

Hybrids are made of the urban space and the city, the concrete and the intangible, the constructed urban space and the inhabited city. The contradiction inherent in the urban space becomes apparent: as functional material, the social connection can never accept the social connection and, much less, the network of subjectivities which characterize the city. In other words, to discover the base of a social network, we cannot look for it in the self-engrossed sufficiency of technology, but realize that its roots are not in the availability of support, but rather in the nature itself of the city as a social set, where everything is connected without visible materials.

The urban space confronts its fundamental contradiction: the functionality is transformed into a city, its structural networks are now social, and the design of the territory has become a connection manipulated by means of a digit and producer of intangible relationships, to circulate in mobile connections. The social network evolved for the digital network which, more than a social one, is a network of ideas or modes of thought and action connected across great distances or virtually, but also capable of foreseeing complex collective social thought.

The city expands into the world city

Within a worldwide program of urbanization and retrieving Bauman's metaphor, the city that has expanded into networks of connection, has been called a liquid city. However I prefer to call it an errant city, because this characteristic more clearly defines the character of its mobility which, dislocating itself without moving from the physical location, discovers, in the digital images of the world, the places which, without context, are worldly and available to be used in an imaginary sense, allowing the harmonious architecture of the world to become possible, rather than just virtual. In the fluidity of the digital images and in the turmoil of the multiple and continuous, everything fits, because nothing stands in opposition or creates a functional hierarchy for itself. In continuous and flexible space, another city is constructed of possibilities, because nothing is planned or finalized. Digital technology appears to confirm that its most tangible consequence is to allow communication between cities and places that, at the same time as being distant geographically, are closer in the possibility of creating mobile relations and, with these relations, inaugurate a planetary public space which, without commands or power, can connect in line with the social interest which encourages it.

Considering the structural networks of functional urban space or the social networks of the city which are characterized by face to face mediations, we can recognize that the connected networks of space come about as metaphors of those which went before with the purpose of allowing a certain, more concrete perception of the new urban society. This metaphoric character has already allowed the rescue, in a meta-linguistic sense, of digital networks for analysis of the functional or social networks, speaking therefore, of networks within networks:

> Within this principle of urban pregnancy, it is important to rescue the idea that networks are less a geometric form and more of an intellectual instrument to understand a phenomenon... ...Urban life is a network of networks (Duarte/Frey, 2008: 160-161).

Contrary to what happened with the functional and social networks, the digital networks can have distinct configurations, but it is unquestionable that they map out another territory that has no physical or geographical location; on the contrary, being defined in the sphere of world-cities, they construct political networks that structure the power. Based upon the dispersion of ideas or actions, the networks of power are formed,

distorted and expanded with the fluid mobility that allows them the speed of that which is not definitive and much less made to last.
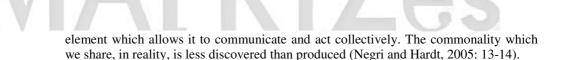
Despite only considering the technological dimension of the new global network, Castells offers us the clearest definition of the dimension of political power in that network, understood as flux to define the mobility of their decision centers of inconsistent importance:

> Thus, I propose the idea that there is a new spatial form, characteristic of the social practices which dominate and mould the networked society: the space of flux. The space of flux is the material organization of the social practices of shared time which works through flux... The first layer, the first material support of the space of flux, is really made up of a circuit of electronic impulses... The second layer of the space of flux is made up of ourselves (centers of important strategic functions and centers of communication),,, The third important layer of the space of flux refers to the spatial organization of the dominant managing elites (not the classes) which exercise the management functions around which this space is articulated (Castells, 1999: 503 to 505).

Within the character of strict informationalism (1999: 50) with which Castells intends to want to define and/or understand the complexity of the network society, it appears to be clear that the division of flux into layers ordered into their specific dimensions seeks to translate - in functional terms, just as occurred with the fixed elements of urban space - the curious need for order of that which, in its intangibility, appears to be opposite or disobedient to the organizing paradigms of its possible, but insecure, power of action as a social network. In other words, it seeks to structure or order the division and hierarchy of the world-cities, as the public management space ordered and divided urban territory.

Contrary to Castells and the extreme opposite to the rigidity of the application of a scientific paradigm, Negri and Hardt appear to want to understand the infiltration of ideas and actions which, as a consequence of digital mobility, lead the city toward the rediscovery of its references and possibilities when it discovers, as a *corpo comum*, how to draft-produce its political action in a continuous manner, unforeseen and distinct throughout the planet:

> The multitude (of people)... is an open and all-encompassing concept which tries to understand the importance of the recent changes in the global economy... The multitude... is potentially made up of all the different configurations of social production... Two characteristics of the multitude make their contribution to today's democracy particularly clear. ... As far as the multitude is not an identity (as a people), nor is it uniform (as the masses), its internal differences should discover the common

element which allows it to communicate and act collectively. The commonality which we share, in reality, is less discovered than produced (Negri and Hardt, 2005: 13-14).

The difference between these two epistemological positions summarizes the difficulty of understanding that which is imagined to be understood as mobile social networks as a new reality of the city. In the dimension of a world-system, the functional reduction should not be confused with the hegemony of a global system, capable of functionally organizing all the configurations of the world cities and guiding them towards a radical homogeneity.

Nevertheless, and despite being fluid, this network of connections model characters constructed in the likeness of actors confused by the social networks and contaminated by the territorial definition characteristic of the functional urban space. In the digital network, the crisis of identity reappears, and the characters of the connected networks get closer to those who populate the social space: between them, however, a clear difference is observed. Now they are possible people, even though they are virtual. In the fluid mobility of a manipulated digit in a mobile piece of equipment, it is possible to construct another space that they re-territorialize without physical space, even though it is sufficient to allow identification of them in terms of that which they seek to be or could be, or which allows them a form of survival or belonging which they are guaranteed, in accordance with the way they act. In fact, when facing the new mobile and fluid territory, in relation to the fixed territory of functional space, a clear difference can be observed which should not be confused with de-territorialization; on the contrary, the mobile of the connected networks re-territorialize as flow that which tradition has taught us to understand as being fixed and stable (Haesbaert, 2004).

With their instantaneous speed, these networks promote mobilization, movements, displacements and organizations which guide the construction of a new classification of territory and promote the complicity of people who have nothing in common except the possible solution to an emergent problem which, for a moment, allows them to identify with and belong to a group organized on the countless relationship sites or in organizations with common activities. The old anonymity of the city appears to have been definitively cast out. There are, on the one side, internauts navigating the web and, as nomads or tribes, they are looking for a possible place in planetary space, albeit virtual. On the other side, there are the countless avatars, with a

virtual ID, using the passages of cyberspace to look for another identity which will make them more sociable: behind a pseudonym or an image, fiction and reality are mixed. These connected networks allow a reconsideration of the real social and cultural impact of the supports which, despite being more and more mobile in terms of technology, act as agents of a stability made up of unexpected 'socialities', which act as promises of a world system where the planetary city can be redefined when compared.

Within this promise, the concentrated city in its planned self-sufficiency is substituted by the confrontation of the cities of the world. Nevertheless, and paradoxically, this comparison does not present comparable variables since, within digital confrontation, the heterogeneousness of the cities is evident, despite the supposed homogeneity of the standardized images which, arising from the metropolis constructed by industrial capital, remains and develops.

The mobile network as a promise of social conquest

The city constitutes a communicative means where an intense mediated exchange is established transforming it into an exemplary social laboratory. However, to be measured technologically, that communicative means is transformed into mediatization characterized "by a type of technological prosthesis of sensitive reality denominated 'medium'" (Sodré, 2002: 21). Within this space of definitive self-assumption, chronological time is subverted and it, the space, begins to dictate no longer hours or minutes adapted to life, work or relationships, but the connections which occur without a determined location, but always recognizing the place where they are made possible.

There arises the cybercity (Lemos, 2007) – essentially environmental and ecologically *biomediatic* (Sodré, 2002) to offer duties for the transcending of the functional/social stalemate created by industrialization and developed by the economic-financial globalization of the world. This challenge is set up as a new ideal and has been invested with a bio-political dimension, which echoes that biomediatic environment. Along these lines, Hardt/Negri maybe present a provocative recipe:

> Our starting point is the recognition that the production of subjectivity and the production of the common can form, together, a symbiotic relationship in a spiral form. In other words, subjectivity is produced through cooperation and communication, and in its turn this produced subjectivity comes to produce new forms of cooperation and communication, which, in turn, produce new subjectivity, and so on (Hardt/ Negri, 2005: 247-248).

From this quotation two essential elements stand out as confirmation of the character of social promise which the new connected networks will represent: the proposal of a recipe and the reiterative circularity of something already established by the bio-political nature itself which inspires the social character of the network. In this sense, is the old functionality of the urban space revitalized and would the contradictory character which appears to want to discipline the use of the networks be confirmed? Whilst it is a social promise, the reflection can be destined to a set of investigations which point to a connected network as a technologically enabled instrument, but subject to the unexpectedness of an action which may be ideologically promised, but unforeseeable in concrete terms.

The promise of a technologically connected city and a manufacturer of another social network have activated conjectures, analyses and theories. Whilst it is a promise for the future, that movement of ideas plans the weaving of a social network as an agent of the segregated network which characterized the modernist city and deed of a metanarrative which substitutes the progressive ideas and organizers of the modern city.

At the axis of this movement, Richard Sennet does not hesitate to draw inspiration from the ideas of Jane Jacobs who, at the beginning of the 1960s, and with a visionary capacity to provide a prognosis on the large cities, pointed out as variables of analysis the possibilities of understanding them as an evolving and growing manifestation of complexity, diversity and dissonance which would dissolve the modern city's plan of balance and integration. Such evolution appears to be decisive for the construction of a city that is porous to experience, appropriation and, above all, the capacity to permeate inside and out, the public and private, to create a vital and political body (Hardt/Negri), always in movement and always incomplete, but essential for the creation of an open city which places itself as a perspective without goals for an urbanization of the world within an endless city which, in turn, admits conflict and dissonance operating in an open system "incorporating the porosity of the territory, narrative indetermination and incomplete form – becoming democratic, not in a legal sense, but as a physical experience." (Sennett, 2007: 296).

Contrary to the social networks of the modernist city, the Network Society offers unforeseeable and always surmountable possibilities in which nothing should last,

because nothing is finished, but is always available to corrections/revisions along the way. Absolutely distinct from the previous experiences promoted by functional space or by the social city, the cybercity astonishes by its possibilities of technological mobility, but constitutes a challenge to be experimented with to try to construct a new reality which surpasses the simple production of the previous social relationship, with the aim of allowing the construction of a new sociality. Thrown into opposition are production and construction, lasting social relationships and unforeseen ones, the right city and the cybercity, where there is nothing to be apportioned, since this city is nowhere, but becomes virtual through the simple possibilities of its unforeseen and planetary spaces.

In its human consequences, the cybercity is the promise of something which should be other in order that it can bring about results which we take from unique thought to a universal consciousness (Santos, 2000) and to the possibility of construction of a meta-narrative which reveals the contradictions of that account inspired by and produced by industrial and social capitalism. Cybercity, Opencity, Endlesscity are names for the new Promised City, although these names do not designate or highlight; rather, they are simply metaphorical of the promises which they demonstrate. To understand the extension of these metaphors it is necessary to research the content and form of the promises.

References
CASTELLS, Manuel. *A Sociedade em Rede.* São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1999.
DUARTE, Fábio e FREY, Klaus. Redes Urbanas. In: DUARTE, Fábio, SQUANDT, Carlos, SOUZA, Queila (orgs.). *O Tempo das Redes.* São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2008.
HAESBAERT, Rogério. *O Mito da Desterritorialização* – Do "Fim dos Territórios" à Multiterritorialidade. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Russel, 2004.
HARDT-NEGRI, Michael e Antonio. *Multidão. Guerra e democracia na era do império.* Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: Record, 2005.
KOOLHAAS, Rem. *Conversa com Estudiantes.* Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2002.
LE CORBUSIER. *A Carta de Atenas.* São Paulo: Hucitec/Edusp, 1993.
LEMOS, André. Cidade e Mobilidade Telefones celulares, funções pós-massivas e territórios informacionais. In: *MATRIZes.* Rev. do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências da Comunicação da Universidade de São Paulo. Ano 1, vol. 1, 2007, pp.121-137.
SANTOS, Milton. *Por uma outra globalização.* Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: Record, 2000.
SENNETT, Richard. The Open City. In: *The Endless City.* London: Phaidon/The London School of Economics/ The Urban Project, 2007.
SODRÉ, Muniz. *Antropológica do Espelho.* Uma teoria da comunicação linear e em rede. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 2002
SOLA-MORALES, Ignasi de. *Territorios.* Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2002