

Global Cities in Informational Societies

Introduction:

If the assumption is correct that cities are the real stage (“Schauplatz”) of contemporary society, as stated by Simmel, they must reflect the changes from industrial to informational societies which took place in the passage of the 20th. to the 21st. century. This implies a new look upon our cities and a fundamental change in the theoretical approach concerning their origin functioning and destiny. In other words, the theories on cities, and the traditional forms of urban studies must be revisited and new analytical categories must be devised for a better understanding of the changes that really occurred.

This proposition implies that former theoretical approaches are insufficient or even inadequate to analyze the outcome of urbanization processes in the last decades. They can even lead us to wrong conclusions if mechanically applied to new realities. Theories that were valid for the industrial era cannot simply be “recycled” to analyze the informational society and what Saskia Sassen describes as global cities.

I would like to illustrate this thesis by examining four “classical” approaches. I shall start with (I) Max Weber’s typology of cities and his analysis of the specificity of western towns. This critical review will be followed by (II) the analysis of Walter Benjamin’s studies of Paris, “the capital of the 19th century” in his “Passagenwerk” (1977). On a third step, (III) I would like to recall the contribution made by utopian Socialism to city planning as an integral part of the modernization process, and finally, (IV) make some remarks on the so called School of Chicago (of R.Park, G. Burgess and Louis Wirth).

Revisiting four theories on urban development

(I) **Max Weber (1864-1920)** developed the most comprehensive explanation of the origin of western cities in the context of his sociology of domination (1961). In fact, the chapter devoted to the “typology of the cities” deals with a type of illegitimate domination, which emerged in Central Europe before industrialization. The small medieval cities

represented the outcome of an almost “revolutionary” movement of citizens who opposed feudal power and aristocratic society.

Max Weber’s typology is based on economic criteria and includes (1) the “Fürstenstädte”, the Princes’ residences, (2) consumption cities, (3) production cities, (4) commercial cities, and (5) mixed cities. He was not satisfied with this typology, because in his eyes these economic criteria were insufficient. For a fuller definition of the urban phenomenon political factors should be taken into account as well. Thus, in a full *economic and political* sense, cities are conglomerates of handicrafts, manufactures, commercial establishments, located in a place which fulfills multiple functions, such as a fortresses, marketplaces, and law courts, and which enjoys a large measure of legal autonomy. Such urban communities must be based on the association of self-ruling citizens who aspire to autonomy. (Weber W&G, 2, p.934). In this sense western cities presupposed the existence of a “bourgeoisie”, the true pillar of their political and economic strength. The urban bourgeois society was the outcome of the decline of the rural-based aristocratic system. The new political power emerged from the capacity of citizens to organize production and commerce, to develop military force, to enforce territorial jurisdiction, and to find new forms of self administration and political autonomy. Private property and high income within the cities were considered central criteria of citizenship. To be a citizen was a crucial condition to take over political functions within the urban community.

One question remains open: why did Weber give his famous chapter on cities the main title of “Non-legitimate power”, reserving for a parenthetical clause the subtitle “The typology of the cities”? The reason may well be that as the feudal order refused money as the main basis for power, Weber considered that from an aristocratic point of view wealth-based power was illegitimate.

Summing up: Weber’s city theory describes the transformation from feudal to bourgeois society, or as he might have preferred to say, from traditional to rational forms of organizing economic and political life in the European society. His city typology was never found in its “purity” in real life. This is especially true in contemporary conditions, where new tools are required to study and analyze contemporary mega-cities like New York, Tokyo, Mexico City or São Paulo.

(II) Let’s take a look on **Walter Benjamin’s** (1892-1940) “flânerie” through his “*Passagenwerk*” (1935, 1982). The extraordinary influence of this work on postmodern thinking on cities competes with the enchantment exercised

by Italo Calvino's "*Le città invisibili*" (1972). The two texts have in common the fascination of their authors for one paradigmatic town: Venice for Calvino, and Paris for Benjamin. If Venice is the "scene" for the first western contact with extra-European civilizations (the Muslim world, China), Paris is the scene for all manifestations of "modernity", including literature, architecture, urbanism, capitalism, political organization. Paris is the "capital of the 19th century", which Benjamin looks upon with melancholy and nostalgia, because it is a world threatened by the German nazi regime.

Benjamin gave the "flâneur" the same status as Calvino did to his "navigator", Marco Polo. The "flâneur" is a pedestrian who circulates through the streets, arcades, bridges and parks. He is an observer who has no money and no interest in buying anything. But he is fully aware of all "manifestations" of the modern city as an expression of capitalist society. As an observer, the "flâneur" classifies the different "types" who populate the city: the gambler, the dandy, the whore, the tramp, the garbage collector ("Lumpensammler"). Benjamin's focus is not sociological but allegorical. He is not interested in social categories, such as the worker or the factory owner, but on abstract human types living in the streets, the public places, the arcades of Paris.

In describing Paris as the capital of the 19th century, he focuses on the stock-exchange, the galleries, the shops, the magazines, the cafés and restaurants, the official buildings, the churches, hospitals, railway terminals, underground stations, factories. The "flâneur" has time to look at these buildings, to admire their beauty, to evaluate their market and even their ruin value, to study the materials used to build them, like glass and iron. Benjamin is surprised with the fact that arches and columns still copy the design of other architectural periods, such as greco-roman columns, gothic arcades, etc. In his eyes the streets speak for themselves with their "tableaux urbains", the advertisements, the notice boards. Commodities announce their prices in the shop windows, all kinds of signs explain the logic of the city. Walter Benjamin, the flâneur "par excellence", is not a sociologist, a politician, an economist, but a participating observer, a committed city-dweller, whose fate is indissolubly linked to the fate of Paris, a passionate lover of this unique city, where he found a place as a refugee, after Hitler made it impossible for him and thousands of other Jews to come back to Berlin, his native town.

Benjamin's Paris can be seen as a kind of "ideal type", in Max Weber's sense, that is, a theoretical construct that is not identical with any given empirical city.

His concepts of the “flâneur”, the “flânerie”, the typology of characters and the use of “tableaux urbains”, borrowed from Baudelaire, can be applied to other cities. Willy Bolle, for instance, has used Benjamin’s categories to study the emergence of modernity in the city of São Paulo. Nevertheless, these concepts have become of little use to understand the structural changes which took place in society and the urban environment at the beginning of the 21st century. The masses, the flanerries, the “window shopping”, the arcades, are “facts” which a century later can be included in the archeology of modernity. Masses stay at home, watch TV and substitute street and public places for the intimacy of suburban bars and homes. Sometimes the masses reappear during football or baseball games, and occasionally in riots and violent demonstrations. But as fast as they appear, they disappear again. Today, streets and avenues in our large cities are empty of persons, but full of cars, busses, motor cycles, etc. Shopping can be done by catalogues, Internet, TV offers and telephone calls. People lost the habit of walking. They move from one side to another in trains, metros, busses, private cars. Rhythm and speed have been intensified. Malls and shopping centers took the place of shops in the “Passagen”, that enchanted Benjamin so much. Department stores, such as Zola’s “Le bonheur des dames”, destroyed little shops. Mc Donalds and Pizza Huts have killed traditional bistros and family-restaurants. Montparnasse sky scrapers spoiled the intimacy of the former painter neighborhood where Picasso worked after leaving Montmartre. “Le vieux Paris n’est plus, hélas!”, said Baudelaire.

(III) Let’s come to the **utopian socialists**. Most of them are at the same time designers of new urban spaces and inventors of new projects for society. Plato, for instance, exposed his views on social reform through the description of an ideal city. He evoked the legend of Atlantis in two of his dialogues (Critias, Timeus). If Atlantis was the model for Athens, and Athens the model for the Greek “polis”, this model permeated most other dreams of the perfect society. Let’s only remember Thomas Morus’ “Utopia”, Campanella’s “Città del Sole”, Francis Bacon’s “New Atlantis”, and Robert Owen’s “New Harmony”. (Freitag, 2001)

Charles Fourier’s (1772-1830) “Phalanstère” should be mentioned among other reasons because one of his followers, Jean Baptiste André Godin (1817-1888) succeeded in transforming the project into reality. Godin built in Guise, northern France, the so called “Familistère”, a “social palais” which survived till 1985, when it became a museum supported by the European Union.

Charles Fourier was convinced that after the industrialization and urbanization processes which followed the French Revolution, a social and urban renewal became urgent. His fantasy of a “Phalanstère” for peasants, artisans and manufacturers, integrating workers and entrepreneurs, should function like a “phalange”, a collective working unit, based on the principle of cooperation and not competition. The “Phalanstère” or “Famelistère” looked like a royal palais similar to Vincennes or Versailles, but the organization of every-day-life is rather in the style of Bentham’s Panopticum, Goffmann’s total institution or Foucault’s “Surveiller et Punir”(1972). Lewis Mumford was the first urban sociologist to denounce the authoritarian character of utopist models. Utopians understood society like a clock mechanism, where everything should work precisely, without conflict, in a predictable and controlled micro-society, in perfect harmony. These conditions transform human society into communities of ants or bees.

Utopian projects such as the Famelistère of Godin introduced a certain measure of autonomy. This might be the reason why the Famelistère of Guise survived and proved its sustainability for almost one century. However, the debacle and fall of socialist societies in the last decade of 20th century was due in part to the mechanical and authoritarian bias inherent in all utopian projects. No society in which everything can be planned and controlled can be considered ideal.

Another modern utopian project has shown its capacity of survival: Brasília, the Brazilian capital. In contrast to Shandighar, the Indian town in Punjab, designed and realized by Le Corbusier, Brasília became a symbol for modern society and urban living. Lúcio Costa’s original urban project, strongly influenced by Le Corbusier, was more successful than Shandighar. Even if critics like James Holston (1984) say that Brasília does not keep the promises it made to Brazilian society and the world, it is a living city where people like to live.

In general, we have to admit that the strategy of planning new cities in the hope that they will create a new society, has proved to be a failure. Cities are social institutions immersed in a broader social context. New towns are no substitutes for new societies. Brasília did not prevent the reproduction of poverty, injustice, and exclusion. This criticism of utopian schemes was already made by Marx and Engels and has lost none of its validity today.

(IV) The **Chicago School** of urban studies introduced two new dimensions of analysis : the ecological perspective, and the journalistic approach.

R.Park, E.W.Burgess, L.Wirth, Mc Kenzie were the first urban sociologists who drew attention to the importance of the ecological basis of our cities, stressing the need for a healthy equilibrium between residential areas and the natural environment. Park was additionally the first author to work with the concept of “segregated areas” and “isolated neighborhoods”, based on his journalistic approach, describing the urban life of the different groups and minorities which form the urban population. Burgess introduced the diagram of an ideal large town, taking Chicago as a model. He discriminated at least five different inner concentric loops, starting with the central zone (I), zone (II), as a second loop, which contained the underworld, the “ghetto”, Chinatown, little Sicily, slums, rooming houses, among others. A third loop (zone III) embraced “Deutschland”, the second immigrant settlement, homes for the working class, “two flat areas”, a “Black belt”, among others. The fourth loop or zone, included the residential zone, hotels, the so called “bright light area”, apartment houses, single family dwellings. Finally, the outer circle (V commuters zone) was designed as a bungalow section. The segregation as studied in Chicago was interpreted as the consequence of strong migration waves of people coming from all countries of the world, especially from Europe in the period among the two World Wars. Occupying urban areas around Chicago’s center, the immigrants did not mix with other social, cultural and religious groups, and thus segregated themselves in a kind of ghetto. (cf. Saint-Arnaud, 1997).

New forms of analysis, recently introduced in urbanism and architecture such as the so called “syntactical analysis”, emphasize the negative effects of those isolated communities.

The journalistic approach was introduced by Park. He sat at the beer tables with the immigrants of the most different origins and learned about their urban life style and their living and working problems. Those were the raw materials for his empirical urban analysis. Park went for further study to Berlin and Strassburg, where he attended lectures by Georg Simmel. His PH.D. dissertation was submitted to the neo-kantian philosopher Wilhelm Windelband, at Heidelberg. He was one of the first journalists to join the Department of Sociology of the Chicago University. Park defended the necessity to work empirically on city issues, utilizing techniques such as interviews and questionnaires. If at the beginning newspapers and magazines were the main sources of information, radio and film reports about the life styles in modern American cities became privileged forms of empirical data collecting. This new school of urban sociology denounced the violence and the injustice present in all large cities, while recognizing the positive aspects of the new urban centers, including comfort, water,

electricity, entertainment and access to information. It is worth remembering that literature, in particular the so called “urban novel”, had been narrating urban life since the nineteenth century. Classic books from Hugo, Balzac, Zola, Dickens, Döblin and many others inform us about life in industrial cities even better than systematic studies done by Marx or Engels. But it was really Park and his group who introduced the analysis of urban life through the media.

This “mediatic” approach has two major problems. First, only those aspects of urban life which are captured by the media are included in the analysis. Everything that is omitted or forgotten by the media will be treated as a non-event. Second, Park’s approach may be distorted by an “anthropological” bias, thereby attaching intrinsic value to cultures and subcultures, gangs and tribes. If those “sub-cultures” are composed of clandestine or terrorist groups, not integrated in the broader value-system of the “official” city, they may act against the interests of broader society, forming a “state within a state”. Examples: the “drug mafias”, “skin-heads”, and “fascist” or “neo-nazi youth groups”.

In conclusion, we may say that the Chicago School of urban studies, in spite of having a broader perspective and a better methodology than many of its predecessors, is not a reliable procedure to explain recent urban and societal changes.

Two new approaches to overcome the limits of former theories:

(I) Recently, **Ronald Daus** (1943-) from the Free University Berlin, introduced at least two innovations in the area of urban sociology. First, he focuses on extra-European cities, predominantly in the Southern hemisphere, thus emphasizing problems which are generally neglected by the ethnocentric perspective of first world analysts. Dealing with cities which in the majority of cases were built under the colonial rule, his approach is geared to the life of the streets and not to the interests of the old elites and oligarchies which succeeded the former colonial power. Secondly, in order to write a kind of ethnography of neglected cities, he had to diversify his sources and utilize non-conventional documents. His materials include photographs, films, TV programs, statistics and official reports (World Bank, UN-Human Development, International Monetary Fund). Daus’ materials include also science fiction, literature, poetry, private journals, murals, paintings, plastics, newspapers, interviews, political programs, comic strips, porno (photos, literature and films), academic lectures and discussions. Information gathered through trips to different

countries and cities, participating observation, conversations with friends and colleagues, reading of scientific books and studies complete his sources. Nothing is left out, everything proves to be useful in portraying city life. Out of this haphazard material he made a sort of collage, a patchwork embodying urban aspects which did not fit into the different theoretical frameworks we discussed in this paper.

Without denying a strong European influence, his trilogy deals in the first volume with “The European Foundation”(1995), and tries to understand the functioning of colonial towns, conceived as efficient instruments of domination and exploitation on behalf of the European metropolises. In the second volume, “Nation Building” (1997), the cities become the center of a national consciousness and feeling, giving birth to the idea of freedom and autonomy. The former colonial town is upgraded and becomes the new capital of an independent Nation. In the third volume, “Life, Pleasure and Suffering” (1999) Daus points out the richness of new life styles that emerged from this colonial past, full of contradictions, and characterized by a blend of cultures, races and ideologies. Daus devotes his attention mainly to cities located in Latin America, Asia and Africa, such as Mexico City, Havana, Lima, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Manila, Bangladesh, Shanghai, Dakar, Lagos, and Luanda.

Daus comes to a surprising result: these extra-European cities can give lessons to their former mother-towns. Their inhabitants are more creative, have more initiative, show more cultural and religious tolerance, have greater flexibility to deal with unforeseen problems, develop better forms of sustainability, overcome economic and political crisis more easily, and with few exceptions are more peaceful than their counterparts in the First World. It is true that these new cities have to deal with more poverty, less democracy, bigger pollution, greater demographic pressures, more corruption and more violence. So he uses the Brazilian experience of “favelization”, to show that this phenomenon will soon extend to First World cities, where the tendency to exclusion and poverty are also present. Daus adds that the inhabitants of non-European cities show more vitality, are more pleasure-oriented (football, carnival, sex, etc.) and are generally happier than the inhabitants of European cities. Life expectancy and security may be lower but they have a more balanced demographic pyramid than their European counterparts. In this respect, as is so often the case with European observers, Daus idealizes living conditions in Third World cities. But he has a deep and sophisticated knowledge of the cities he discusses.

In his own original way, Daus follows the path open by Robert Park. He also finds inspiration in Benjamin's procedure, creating a typology of urban inhabitants such as the tramp, the beggar, the prostitute, the dandy, the snob, the film star, the politician, the expert, the international civil servant, the tourists, the drug-dealer, the smuggler, the hotel owner and the street boy. As his studies cover at least half of the globe, we may say that Daus offers a globalized view of all cities excluded from the global economy.

(II) - The notion of "global city" was first brought into play by **Saskia Sassen**. In her first book on this subject, "The Global City" (1991), she analyses New York, London and Tokyo as examples of cities which in the two last decades advanced to the status of global cities. Later, she includes other cities in this category like Miami, Toronto, Sidney, as pointed out in her subsequent book, "Cities in a World Economy" (1994). Under certain circumstances, Sassen also admits that Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Zurich, Frankfurt, Mexico City and São Paulo may be included in the category of global cities, because they fulfill the prerequisites for certain transnational economic transactions. For a better understanding of Sassen's ideas, it will be useful to discuss the concept "global city" further.

According to her, "global cities are key sites for the advanced services and telecommunications facilities necessary for the implementation and management of global economic operations. They also tend to concentrate the headquarters of firms, especially firms that operate in more than one country."(1994, p.19)

After the Second World War and more precisely in the two or three last decades of the 20th century, important transformations in the world economy took place. Africa and Latin America lost their once strong ties with world markets in commodities and raw materials. There was a dramatic increase in the importance of Foreign Direct Investment in services. The role played by international financial markets was enhanced. The institutional framework established by the Bretton Woods arrangements (1947/48) started to break down (cf., 1994, p.27/8).

These realignments brought about a profound restructuring in the hierarchy of all cities in the world and also within the existing city web in one and the same country. New inequalities among cities arose. Nations and their importance within traditional commercial and economic webs lost their privileged positions. The importance of national States started to shrink and certain "global cities" became more important in the globalized landscape than whole Nations. A new combination of spatial dispersal and

global integration created new strategic roles for major cities like New York, London and Tokyo.

“Beyond their long history as centers of international trade and banking, these cities now function in four new ways: first, as highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy, second, as key locations for finance and for specialized service firms, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading economic sectors; third, as sites of production, including the production of innovations, in these leading industries; and fourth, as markets for the products and innovations produced.” (1991, pp.3/4)

In her two most recent books Saskia Sassen seeks satisfactory answers to several questions, such as: (a) what role do major cities in fact play in the organization and management of the world economy? (b) Has the consolidation of world economy affected the economic, political and social order in major cities so that we must worry about their sustainability? (c) How does the historical, political, economic, and social specificity of a particular city (for instance Paris) resist its incorporation into the world economy ? (d) Does the relationship between State and the city change, under the conditions of a strong articulation between city and world economy and if so, how?

In order to answer these questions, we have to differentiate world cities into different categories or create new typologies in Max Weber’s sense. Without doing this in any explicit way, Saskia Sassen allows us to distinguish at least five different types of cities: (1) “global cities”; (2) “Mega-cities” or megalopolis; (3) “metropolises” ; (4) “peripheral cities” and (5) “sleeping cities”.

(1) “Global cities” are the new pillars of the “informational era”, in the sense of Manuel Castells (1995-1999). They provide fully the infra-structure needed by the world economy for the realization of international transactions. This includes good airports, hotels, telecommunications, media, Internet, banking, security, stock exchange, and so on. The global cities have a significant number of qualified and efficient persons able to supply and produce all necessary services. They are market places capable to absorb and recycle all financial flows and transactions. Examples: New York, London, Tokyo, Miami, Los Angeles, Toronto, Sidney, Zurich, Frankfurt. It is important to remember that this hierarchy may change very fast under constantly changing economic conditions. The position of New York may have changed since the terrorist attacks against the WTC.

(2) “Mega-cities” or “megalopolis” are essentially defined by the number of their inhabitants, i.e. usually more than 10 million people. The number of cities in this category has increased in the last two or three decades. This urban explosion has occasioned serious problems: lack of employment, of housing, of transportation, of schooling, of health care, and so on. Overpopulation in these cities has brought about an increase in violence and drug-consumption, as compared to smaller cities. Wealth and poverty, skyscrapers and slums, coexist. Examples: Bogotá, Lima, Rio de Janeiro, Bombay, and so on.

(3) “Metropolises” are old cities with a long history and an important economic, political and cultural tradition, which have shown their ability to adapt to modernization and to the new world economy, without losing their specificity and dignity as cultural sites. They are well known and preserve their aura as former capitals. They are large towns with a substantial number of inhabitants, have good airports, transportation systems, hotels, cultural facilities, and political autonomy. But they are not willing to be transformed into mere instruments of the global economy, even if they are able to perform all the functions which are expected from global cities. Tourism represents an important source of income for their inhabitants. This is the case of Paris, Rome, Berlin, Munich, Madrid, Vienna, Lisbon, Athens, Prague, Budapest, to only mention some of the best known western metropolises.

(4) “Peripheral cities” are all those cities which became secondary or even marginal from the point of view of economics, geography or culture. In former times those cities may have contributed to the progress of civilization, but today they lost their importance and prestige. Some of them may even be seen as decadent, unable to re-establish a link to the web of major world cities. Examples: Marseille, Glasgow, Porto, Sevilla, Bucarest.

(5) “Satellite” and/or sleeping towns are urban sites which by themselves have no autonomy. They need other cities in the neighborhood for working places, cultural entertainment, political participation. They too are “secondary” but they have a strategic contribution to make when they are able to supply part of the labor force required for manufacturing and services. This is the case of Potsdam, near Berlin; Campinas and Osasco, and the so called ABC (Santo André, São Bernardo, São Caetano) near São Paulo; Darmstadt and Bad Homburg for Frankfurt and so on.

As in all other typologies, it is easier to find a mixture of all five types or different combinations of two or three of them, than one “pure” case. This explains why São Paulo and Mexico Cities may be classified at the same time as megalopolises and global cities. But even if Paris or Berlin may

have some of the characteristics of global cities, the fact remains that they are predominantly metropolises. It is also important to bear in mind that the classification is flexible. One city which today fits within one category may tomorrow be more appropriately located in another one, as was the case of Marseilles, Porto or Bucharest.

We should keep in mind that not only the cities, but also the area, landscape, and region in which they are embedded, develop, change and decay. So it is not surprising that the ranking or classification can change even if within the city no changes have been registered. It is enough to think of the fate of Bonn after Berlin became again the capital of Germany.

Saskia Sassen's analysis gives the impression that cities are thrown together like balls in a lottery game. The combination which comes out is the outcome of statistical principles of probability beyond our control.

After this clarification, we are able to give some answers to Sassen's introductory questions.

(a) Among all five city types introduced by Sassen's typology, the most important one for the globalized world economy is the global city. New York, London, Tokyo, Miami, Toronto, Sydney are indispensable for the international economic transactions. All of these global cities make a vital contribution to the circulation of finance capital around the world. They are central to the world capitalist system at the stage of globalization. If one of those cities is paralyzed, as almost happened in New York as a result of the attacks against the WTC, the whole system may be affected.

All other city types are not so strategic. Their importance for the international finance markets decrease gradually as we move down the scale from metropolises to satellite cities. With megalopolises like São Paulo or Mexico City the problems are different, on the one hand because their infrastructure qualifies them for the role of global cities, and on the other hand because their demographic, economic and political problems generate excessive risks for capital flows, as is happening just now with Buenos Aires, once considered the most European metropolis of Latin America.

(b) The macro-structural changes in global economy, the transformation of the industrial into the informational society and the changing emphasis on information rather than material production have produced profound structural changes affecting the organization of societies, their labor force strategies, the power structures of the State but above all the place and hierarchy of contemporary cities. Some of them qualify to occupy the highest ranking in power and finance, like New York, London and Tokyo. As we know, others lost their former importance. Completely secondary localities like Silicon Valley suddenly emerge as important financial,

technological and informational “zones”. As Sassen admits, European metropolis like Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Vienna, and Moscow remained undisturbed in the position of historical prestige they have acquired throughout the centuries. Inevitably there are winners and losers, and it seems not easy to predict who will win and who will lose in the next decades, who will “make it” and who will not. Some of the more traditional cities, like the capitals of the Arabic World seem to be happy not to be involved in a game in which every outcome seems to be possible.

(c) The economic, political and cultural traditions of cities which until now have remained untouched by the global economy may be studied particularly well for the case of Lisbon. (see Freitag, 1999). As is well known, Lisbon survived as a small and picturesque metropolis in Portugal, staying away from the two World Wars, and remaining as the somewhat decadent metropolis of a declining colonial empire. After the seventies, Lisbon was overwhelmed by people coming back to the motherland from the former colonies. Portugal’s redemocratization was made easier thanks to the generous help of the European Union. Technological reforms, modernization of transportation and telecommunication systems, and ambitious urban projects (a second bridge over the Tejo river was built, degraded harbor areas were renewed for the Expo-98) changed the charming capital, from which Vasco da Gama and Cabral departed to discover the way to India and to Brazil. Lisbon is no longer the quaint metropolis that Tanner and Wim Wenders loved to show in their films. It changed its face in response to the changing trends of the world economy and the informational era.

Economic and political changes in the world context inevitably affect the inner structure and dynamics of smaller cities. To finish,

(d) let’s come to the last question, concerning the relationship between global cities and the power structure of the State. On this issue Sassen adopts a similar position to that defended by Manuel Castells. Both admit that the shrinking of the national State is inevitable. In contrast, cities, especially global cities, grow in importance. But this does not mean the end of the State, its “waning away”, in the sense of Marx. Sassen argues that the State is responsible for organizing and supervising city planning and city renewal, so that individual cities may “graduate” to global cities, able to compete with their sisters in the world wide web of cities required by the global economy. Michael Peter Smith (2001) criticizes in his last book, *Transnational Urbanism. Locating Globalization*, the economic bias of Castells’ and Sassen’s argumentation. In his opinion, cultural, social and anthropological arguments must have priority in the construction of city-theories and city-typologies. (see also Douglas & Friedmann, 1998).

Conclusion:

This paper is not an elegy for lost Trojas and submerged Atlantis, but neither is it a hymn of welcome for the Brave New World of “global cities”. Cities are not only “Sitze des Geldes” (sites of money) in the terminology of Georg Simmel, but chapters in the long journey of civilization, echoes of memories that should not fade. Above all they have been and continue to be the homes for countless human beings. Under present conditions, most of them live in extreme poverty, in marginal and peripheral cities. Such people have no importance from an economic point of view. They are redundant, from the perspective of global rationality. But it is only for their sake that current suggestions to review our city images (“Stadtbilder”) and city concepts are worth being considered at all.

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