WHAT IS URBANITY ABOUT?

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Abstract

This essay consists of a theoretical exploration about the concept of urbanity, as referred to the way the spaces of a city are receptive to people. Spaces with urbanity are friendly spaces. The opposite are unpleasant spaces, situations low in urbanity. We live in cities, exceptions apart, where the public space tends to be increasingly inhospitable, often featured by long blind walls that surround introverted condos and large shopping centres, or featured by bars protecting buildings or, the worst, transmuted in the arid urban freeways. This seems to be, more and more, in different cultures, the urbanity of the motorcar, essentially funded upon spatial segregation. What might then justify a research upon the elements of urbanity, considering such irresistible tendency towards disurbanity? The excuse for such research comes, I suggest, from an understanding, shared by many, of public space as the locus of a shared urban culture, funded in collective values, in the coexistence with the other, diversity, exchange and the enjoyment of a city where urban space performs as an active background. Everything much the opposite compared with the tendency towards segregation described above. Urbanity, so conceptualized, emerges as a major and comprehensive parameter in the assessment of the quality of places. In its purpose of approaching what urbanity is about the article takes as benchmark the work of a set of authors proposed here as major contributors in the emergence of the concept of urbanity as a theoretical issue. The work of these authors suggest that the concept of urbanity performs as a synthesis for a set of urban characteristics and, as such, it goes in an opposite direction from that followed by quantitative methods which tend to disaggregate the urban in its constituent elements. The theoretical construction so elaborated suggests, in conclusion, that urbanity is a ubiquitous condition, as it may occur simply by the construction of the second house, though not, in any case, having only the first house alone at the plateau by itself. And the essential condition for the emergence of such embryo of urbanity is that the space left between the two houses must be a public space - a space naturally shared by the inhabitants of the two houses and visitors, or strangers that will pass by or stay - simply by virtue of its position in the spatial arrangement of that, still incipient, spatial situation.

Keywords: *urbanity, spatiality, public space, spatial integration, spatial segregation*

Theme: *Urban Space and Social, Economic and Cultural Pheomena*

SOS Urbanity: Working hypotheses

My interest in the theme of *urbanity* started when I first realized it as a concept that, yet being comprehensive, was capable of describing in a rather synthetic way the ingredient that was missing in so many contemporary architectural and urban situations designed by experts, architects and engineers. What can be seen in the places I am referring here is the absolute *lack of urbanity*. What would be the meaning of *urbanity* in such context? This is the mandatory question of this paper. As a working hypothesis, the meaning I will assign to the term urbanity is its traditional and most trivial sense, the one that refers to courtesy between people, yet now applied to non humans i.e. to buildings, streets and cities. Urbanity would be so constituted by *something* that comes from the city, from the street, from the building, and is appropriated to some extent by people. Urbanity, so understood, would be precisely in the *mode of appropriation* of a situation by its users both at the building and at the city scales. Nevertheless urbanity would not be synonym to urban vitality, as given by the presence of people in space, yet it can rather often take such feature on board. In such context the body would be naturally the parameter of urbanity, the spatial behaviour of people. The measurement of such politeness, such civility that would come from urban space, would be noticed in the spatial behaviour of the body, individual and collective; in its presence, in its absence, in its corporal attitude. That is to say, urbanity would be precisely in the way such relationship between body and space is materialized. How can one describe such accommodation of the body *to* space, or the lack of it? Which would be the determinant elements of such conjectured politeness, or hostility, that might emerge from spatial situations? In search of some clarification for these questions, my proposition in what follows is to draw an outline for the concept of urbanity that might lead, somehow, for its utilization as an operational parameter in the assessment of spatial quality in architecture and in urban design.

So urbanity, broadly speaking, might be seen as something inherent to the architecture of the public space, to its different scales, from the handrail of a public staircase to the more or less generous width of a sidewalk, and going larger to definitions upon the design of streets and of whole urban quarters. Each of these elements, coming from different scales, seems to have its own contribution in the constitution of urbanity, each of them with an intrinsic architectural quality that emerges naturally from the way its *form* accommodates, either well or badly, the body, individual and collective. Therefore urbanity would be by definition a quality of the form, of the architectural form, of the urban form, something essentially material, yet naturally affecting, reverberating upon the behaviour and well being of people, when immersed in the public space.

The emergence of urbanity in the urban studies

The concern with *urbanity* is relatively recent in our field. Nevertheless the perception of the problematic pathway followed by the discipline of urbanism was already noticed in the work of Camillo Sitte early in 1899. For Sitte, '*the modern disease of isolated construction is to be condemned*'.[1] Half a century later the work of Jane Jacobs (1960) has become an emblem in this line of criticism. Jacobs is an enthusiast of street life, whose characteristics she synthesizes in the condition of *diversity*. She is focused predominantly in the loss of diversity noticedaa in the new urban developments then produced, in a large scale, when compared with the diversity she

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1 SITTE, C. (1899) City Planning According to Artistic Principles, New York, Random House, p. 52. Orig. Der Stadtebau nach sei nen kunstlerishen Grundsatzend, Vienna, 1899.

sees in cities produced out of incremental growth. Diversity, for Jacobs, is something endowed with an architectural dimension, in the diversity of architectural types, types of public spaces and types of activities, and a social dimension, in the diversity of human types, both in the economic and in the ethnic sense. Jacobs is especially critical of the urbanizations produced 'all at once', large housing developments, situations generally deprived from the architectural diversity that seems to be natural in the city produced by different agents during time. She also criticizes the 'supposedly cosy, inward-turned neighbourhoods' so capturing the problem of *spatial articulation* of these places in relation to their surroundings (Jacobs, 1961:115).[2]

Kevin Lynch (1960), contemporary to Jacobs, is another main contributor in our tentative description of the elements of urbanity. Lynch proposes, and also puts in practice, a *pleasant way* of looking at the city. The urban is for him *a set of spatial sequences* where '*the mobile elements and especially people, and their activities, are so important as the physical stationary parts*' (Lynch, 1960:1-2).[3] This Lynchian way of appreciating the city, by the way buildings and people perform altogether an urban scene, seems to carry in itself the essence of the concept of urbanity. Such appreciation puts side by side the physical elements that constitute the city - its stationary elements, public spaces and buildings - and the animated elements - people and vehicles - which endow spaces with life. This sort of appreciation is in principle essentially aesthetic, although a rather compromised one.[4] We are actually in the presence of a formulation, a spatial formulation, where the *convenience* of the body is a key protagonist in its capacity of *producing urbanity*. Central in the Lynchian formulation of the image of the city – essentially built from questionnaires applied to residents – is what he calls the *structural dimension*, laid down from the described mental images of the respondents, that have shown '*the visual predominance of the street system and its fundamental importance as a network, through which the majority of the people experience the space of the city*' (Lynch, 1960:49).[5] The perception of such structural character will depend, after Lynch, of a perception of *spatial continuity*. In this line Lynch suggests a diagrammatic description of the urban space by means of the representation of its network of spaces as interconnected lines of movement: '*paths may also be imagined not as a specific pattern of certain individual elements, but rather as a network which explains the typical relationships between all paths in the set without identifying any particular path. Such requirement implies in the existence of a plan with some consistency in its topological interrelationship or spacing*' (Lynch, 1960:48). Such diagrammatic understanding and representation of the urban space, as suggested by Lynch, is coincident, and anticipates, conceptually, in two decades the descriptive method proposed by Hillier and Hanson that has become widely known as *space syntax*.

In a similar line, Alexander (1965) presents, in a celebrated paper, a strong criticism on the lack of urbanity in planned environments.[6] His argument derives from the acknowledgement that '*when compared with ancient cities that have acquired the patina of life, our modern attempts to create cities artificially are, from a human point of view, entirely unsuccessful*'.[7] So he starts from a distinction between what he calls *natural cities* and *artificial cities*, a typology that stands for, as expected, the unplanned or incrementally evolved urbanizations and the newly planned

2 JACOBS, J. (1961), The death and life of great American cities, Jonathan Cape, London, p. 115.

3 LYNCH, K. (1960), The Image of the City, MIT Press, Cambrigde. pp. 1-2.

4 In the sense suggested by Kant: ' the beauty of a church, of a palace, of a summer house implies in a notion of finality that establishes what the object must be and, in consequence, provides the measurement of its ideal; so its beauty, this kind of beauty, is necessarily a compromised beauty', Kant, I. (1790), Critique of Judgment, trans. by JH Bernard, Collier Macmillan Publishers, London and Jafner, New York, 1951, p. 60-61.

5 LYNCH, K. op.cit., p. 49.

6 ALEXANDER, C. , 1965. A city is not a tree, in Architectural Forum nº 122, pp. 45-63.

7 Ibid. p.47

urbanizations respectively. Such distinction is initially functional yet it soon evolves into a spatial proposition. Unplanned urbanizations would be characterized by the *overlap of catchment areas* of the different urban facilities and the areas routinely covered by inhabitants in their everyday life. He defines these patterns of overlap by comparing them with the zoning based distributions of planned situations where, he suggests, '*a tree-like hierarchy makes the different parts of the settlement disconnected or fully encompassed by units of higher order*'.[8] Alexander makes the functional comparison his strong point as he suggests that the so called semi-lattice pattern of unplanned cities produces a complex pattern of use where local facilities belonging to one area tend to be also used by inhabitants of other areas. Complementarily unplanned urban areas might rely upon other parts of the city to satisfy the requirements of their own inhabitants. Following an opposite direction, he suggests, town planners tend to propose self-contained tree-like urban patterns with their own facilities from which they are also separated.

By 1983 Hillier ET al, in the seminal article '*Space Syntax: a different urban perspective*' have presented a more precise outline of the constituent elements of urbanity, as an architectural category.[9] This happen in the middle of a wave of public inquiries, involving harsh criticism on the quality of social housing in England, at the beginning of the eighties. It is in such context that Hillier and his colleagues acknowledge that '*the search for urbanity has become a central theme in architecture*' (Hillier et al, 1983:48).[10] The condition of urbanity, for this group of researchers, seats on three pillars. The first of them is the *network condition* that is so depicted: '*the global organization of space acts as the means by which towns and urban areas may become powerful mechanisms to generate, sustain and control patterns of movement of people*'. And further on: '*how buildings are arranged around particular spaces is important, but this form of spatial arrangement can never reproduce urbanity. How a space fits into an area is a more important determinant. Urbanity and the virtual community are the products of the larger scale organization of space, that is, global design*' (Hillier et al, 1983:49).[11] Hillier suggests that such global scale, or global arrangement of space, *performs* affecting the way space is appropriated by people. He sees space as an active background for human action, and as such responsible for the presence, or absence, of people; the so-called *vitality* of the public space. Hillier sees such condition of *being public* – how much public a situation is – expressed in the intensity of the interface between residents and visitors or, in his words, the 'strangers' Another element of Hillier's urbanity is architecture, the local scale, the way public space is *constituted*. This is for Hillier the key word of urbanity locally, constitution, spatial constitution, the way spaces are constituted. As he says: ' *The convex organization of the public space and its interface with the buildings – the presence of blind walls or barriers that keep buildings away from the public space – may also affect strongly the relationship between residents and their neighbors and between those and strangers*' (Hillier et al, 1983:52).[12] Therefore, even regarding the local dimension as subsidiary – to a larger scale as the protagonist of urbanity – Hillier does not underestimate the importance of such local factor.

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8 Ibid. p.47.
9 HILLIER et al, 1983. Space Syntax: A different urban perspective, in Architecture Journal 4/London, pp. 48-63.
10 Ibid. p.48.
11 ibid. p.49.
12 Ibid. p.52.

Recent efforts

In a rather distinct line the work of Rheingantz (2012) acknowledges the impossibility of describing urbanity by rational means. Reason, and especially language, would not be able to capture the complexity of the concept in the myriad of ingredients it carries and, as such, it could not be described in terms of a scientific discourse.[13] For Rheingantz urbanity would be above all *an experience* and as such it would be impossible to describe it as something exterior to us, something possible to be observed with critical distance. Such epistemological dead end leads to a notion of urbanity where all differences that constitute and animate urban life seems to be eliminated. Rheingantz so elaborates an understanding of urbanity as a *collective* that results *'from the heterogeneous articulations that involve human and non-human actors'*.[14] The so-called *non-humans* – a category that would include nature plus buildings and cities – would not be entirely objects and not social constructs as well. Would be instead hybrid elements endowed with the capacity of interacting with people and affecting people's behavior. The argument, inspired in the principles of the so called Actor-Network theory, as developed by French sociologist Bruno Latour, John Law and others, acknowledges the urban milieu as a *socio-technical network* in a permanent state of change, performed by a heterogeneous set of flows that puts together, as leveled, the materiality of the physical space, the so called *non-humans*, and people.

In his *Fingerprints of Urbanity*, Krafta (2012) explores the concept of urbanity as an attribute of the urban form itself, as he sees the buildings and spaces that constitute a city as agents of urbanity in themselves: '*the urban form would be a sort of manifestation of petrified urbanity*'.[15] Time is a crucial dimension in Krafta's urbanity; the urbanity historically produced, as the author suggests, *urbanities amalgamated in time* by means of the urban space. Considering the cumulative nature of the production of the urban milieu, a sort of collaborative work, developed during time, all urban places would be virtually an accumulation of different urbanities coming from the past. Urbanity, so conceived, would capture the dialogue that different authors - architects and developers - set up by means of the way their buildings either confirm or deny the architectural behavior noticed in pre-existing buildings, as introduced by different authors. In this line, the author suggests that the so-called *urbanity of form* may assume at least three distinct patterns. The first would be performed by generic homogeneity, as observed in its constituent elements, buildings and spaces; a pattern which he sees as a caricature. The second would be by diversity of fragments homogeneously positioned - Rowe's Collage City would be the paradigm for this type - which he sees as fallacious. The third pattern would be performed by heterogeneity, which he eventually regards as in tune with the general tendency observed in the evolution of cities. Urbanity would be keener to flourish in situations funded upon heterogeneity, situations constituted by buildings that have been produced by different authors, and preferably diachronically, than in situations more characterized by homogeneity of authorship and synchrony.

The work of Netto (2012) explores different dimensions of urbanity by means of an approximation between concepts of the urban studies and parallel ones brought from philosophy.[16] The author so justifies: '*if urbanity is about experience, we have to listen to those who talk about experience as anyone – philosophers – in order to understand the specificity of*

13 RHEINGANTZ, P. (2012) Narratives or Translations of Urbanity, in Aguiar, D. and Netto, V. Urbanidades, Ed. Letra e Imagem, Rio, pp. 135-161.

14 Ibid. p.139.

15 KRAFTA , R. (2012) Fingerprints of Urbanity, in Aguiar, D. and Netto, V. Urbanidades, Ed. Letra e Imagem, Rio, pp. 115-133.

16 NETTO, V. Urbanity as Becoming, in Aguiar, D. and Netto, V. Ed. Urbanidades, Ed. Letra e Imagem, Rio, pp. 33-60.

the urban experience in relation to experience as a whole, the experience of the world.[17] Acknowledging initially *the effects of social unbalance* upon urbanity, Netto explores the notion of the experience of the world and of *the other*, as mediated by the city, an experience that eventually results in the *co-presence* of different life styles. Considering this scenario - increasingly performed by what he describes as *tensions of social disintegration* – the author proposes an *integrating role* to the city, as expressed in three dimensions of urbanity; the *phenomenological*, our shared experience of the city, the *communicational*, where the city emerges as the place for our symbolic interaction, and the *ontological*, where the city is seen as the connector between the human and the material, between our practices and the shaping of the materiality of the world around us. The bridge between these different dimensions of urbanity happens having as a background the role of *the other*, the presence of the other as a key factor in the construction of urbanity. Netto's argument is permeated by a generous dose of idealism and the condition of urbanity is there heighten as *the* (would be) major objective of urbanism, in a period of history when the general tendency observed goes precisely in an opposite direction, in the direction of the so called *disurbanism*, especially that one that spreads powerful following the rational of the motor car and its facilities.

Urbanity and spatiality

The word of the authors reviewed above suggests that urbanity and spatial segregation may be seen as phenomena qualitatively opposed, although resulting from a same set of affecting spatial factors, that may be eventually resumed in the *spatial arrangement* of places, in the way the spaces of the city articulate themselves preforming the urban spatial form, that eventually shelters what we understand as public space. This follows the understanding of the city as a spatial network. Such mode of arrangement constitutes the *syntactic dimension* of the city, a dimension that refers, on the one hand, to the mode of articulation of the public spaces amongst themselves – the network of streets – and, on the other hand, to the way these same spaces relate to the buildings that constitute themselves. My working hypothesis – in the task of delineating yet tentatively the constituent elements of urbanity – suggests that such syntactic dimension plays a predominant role in the *degree of urbanity* inherent to the different places of a city and, in an opposite way, in the *degree of spatial segregation* – or low urbanity – verified in others.

Urbanity would be as such a phenomenon that results, by definition, from this combinatorial dimension that is inherent to the urban space. This spatial *syntax* may be seen, in this line, as a particular aspect of a more general phenomenon that is *spatial configuration*. Syntax, as such, is basically connectivity, spatial articulation, and urbanity would be, so understood, a function of this spatial arrangement of places. All human action on territory happens mediated by a spatial arrangement that has, in any case, a syntactic dimension, by means of which bodies – humans themselves and humans encapsulated in motor vehicles - move. Such movement happens naturally according to the condition of *axiality*. The acknowledgement of the immanent role of axiality in the human appropriation of the spatial condition is not new in our discipline. For the Swiss architect Le Corbusier '*the axis is perhaps the first human manifestation, it is the means for all action. The child in its first steps tries to move along an axis, the man that fights the storm draws for himself an axis. The arrangement is the gradation of axis, and as such the gradation of objectives and the classification of intentions*' (Le Corbusier, 1931:187)[18]. Such

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17 NETTO, V. ET AL (2012) Notes upon a tortuous dialogue, in Aguiar, D. and Netto, V. Urbanidades, Ed. Letra e Imagem, Rio, p.18.
18 LE CORBUSIER, 1931. 'Towards a New Architecture', London: J. Rodker, p.187.

understanding of the different spatial scales from the standpoint of the *gradation of axis* and the accommodation of the body and activities – Corbusier's *objectives* and *intentions* – was crucial in his demonstration of the reasons of architecture; lines of movement and sight, some longer, some shorter, that as set, and in an articulated way, constitute the spatiality of places; cities, buildings, and private interiors. The local and the global scales superimpose the each other in such spatial arrangement.

The appreciation and *embodiment* of the local scale by an observer happens simultaneously to an *optical* perception of the global scale, of the global spatial condition in which he/she is immersed. While peripheral vision *senses* the local scale, its convexities and enclosures, in a haptic way - as bodies actually *touch* the city, its sidewalks, road pavements and building walls - optical vision, the line of sight, the axial line, captures the global scale. This seems to be how the capture of urbanity happens in human beings.[19] Nevertheless the effectiveness of such global scale upon any urban situation seems to be predominant as far as it affects strongly *what happens* in the local scale. One can say, following Hillier, that one same local situation – in terms of building type, spatial arrangement, style and so on – when hypothetically embedded in a different global situation - different from its original or previous one - will result, or evolve, in a rather different condition of urbanity, simply because it will have another pattern of use of space compared with the pattern observed in the previous situation and, quite likely, a degree of vitality, animation, also different from that, either higher or lower. Urbanity would be therefore a synergic condition, a resultant, a mother-quality that includes many others.

Urban vitality and urbanity

The numerical, quantitative description of such global, structural dimension of the city – a central feature in Hillier's urbanity – tends to be statistically well correlated with urban *vitality*, this conceptualized as the presence – either bigger or smaller - of people in urban spaces. Situations more spatially integrated, or integrating, tend to be endowed with more vitality. The analogy with irrigation sheds some light on this point. The spatially more integrated parts of the city, the ones more irrigated spatially, are the ones endowed with more vitality, with more people using, experiencing the public spaces. Such *presence of people* is naturally followed by the presence, and densification, of the different urban activities, including residential density. The research I have produced as support for my PhD dissertation has shown strong correlations between *spatial integration* - as described by the measurement of Real Relative Asymmetry applied to axial maps - and the distribution of the different urban activities. The results then obtained have just confirmed what seems to be a rather common sense notion, actually an ancestral notion.[20] The correlations given for the spatial distribution of *shops* and work activities, as placed in *office buildings*, when matched with the corresponding *integration values* were - for different urban areas of Porto Alegre, a large Latin American city - consistently beyond seventy per cent. The residential distributions presented consistently correlations beyond sixty per cent showing the increase of residential density – especially by means of the substitution of houses by apartment buildings – following consistently the spatial hierarchy described by the rank of integration values. This research has not counted people, yet it has shown a rather accurate description of *urban vitality* in the way urban activities perform in their spatial distribution. In an opposite direction, it has also shown that when an urban situation is

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19 The insight on such description of the movement of the observer as a convergence of haptic and optical perceptions comes from PALLASMAA, J.(2005), The eyes of the skin, Architecture and the Senses, John Wiley, Chichester; following a theoretical pathway previously suggested in the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.
20 AGUIAR, D. (1991) Grid Configuration and Land Use, PhD Thesis, University College London, Bartlett School, London.

syntactically segregated, it will have, in view of its spatial genetics, its spatial nature, a lowering in activity density, a lowering in vitality and a low degree of urbanity, even if it is locally well constituted. Curiously, this same segregated situation could also have a high degree of vitality, in terms of the presence of people, and even commercial success, depending just on the degree of attractiveness of the activities there located. Even though such situation will have, by definition, a low degree of urbanity; it will have always to rely on attractors in order to make its vitality flourish.

Such vitality or, one may say, condition of animation of an urban situation may be assessed by means of the *co-presence* of people in the public spaces, something Hillier has described, as we have already seen, as *virtual community*. Although *urban vitality* and *urbanity* are conceptually distinct, the presence of people in the public spaces seems to be an evidence, perhaps the most basic, of urbanity, especially when such co-presence is made up of people with different economic status, race and religion. The concept may be so understood in a more complex way so allowing us to figure it out in terms of *types* of urbanity, simply funded upon the material characteristics or qualities of places, and *gradations* of urbanity, funded upon the *intensity of presence* and on the *attitude* of people and buildings. So the condition of urbanity is distinct from the condition of vitality although it certainly includes it. A space might be full of people, flourishing in vitality in week ends - when the situation is closed for car traffic, as it happens to some heavy traffic thoroughfares in the central areas of cities – and show itself as a situation of rather low vitality when left by itself in normal days.

Therefore if there is urbanity, there are people naturally involved, although urbanity, such somewhat evanescent phenomenon, belongs to the city, to the urban form, and not to the people. Urbanity seems to be, conceptually, a kind of *spatiality*, this understood as a relationship between space and people, a relationship that happens in the most peculiar situations, from the bottom of the ocean to the heights of the mountains, to the urban milieu. Urban spatiality is what we might call urbanity. The intensity of such interaction between people and space, seems to be an effective parameter of urbanity, in terms of its intensity. People, however unconsciously, relate naturally with the urban space and in this way *experience* urbanity. The condition of urbanity is found in the way the city welcomes people and, otherwise, in the mode of appropriation of space by people. Leon Battista Alberti, in Renaissance, sees the city as *the big house*. Any city of any type might be, by definition and functional pre-condition, a shelter, some of them mega-shelters, and are therefore, all of them, endowed with urbanity, of some type and in some degree, even Milton Keynes.

This welcoming, from spaces to the body, happens in different ways, in the streets of that district, in that street of the city centre, at the shopping centre, in the walled residential condo, in the pathways of the township, at the large housing estate, as in all and every urban situation. These are the types of urbanity, hundreds of them. This typology of urbanity might be ranked from the *more formal* to the *more informal* situations. I take formal here as something essentially funded in geometry, and especially on regularity. Therefore urbanity happens, in different ways and in different degrees in all and every urban situation, from the more formal ones, such as the monumental axis in Brasilia, for instance, till those more informal, say, a small alley in the middle of Rocinha, the large favela in Rio.

Final notes: The essence of urbanity

The theoretical pathway followed in this essay has suggested that, in its most essential formulation, the condition of urbanity might happen simply with the construction of *the second*

house, although not, in any hypothesis, just with the first, the first house, the one that was left by itself at the plateau. When the second house is introduced in the landscape, it might happen, depending just on the way this second house will be positioned in the relation to the first, the emergence, the birth, in that very place, of urbanity. The space *in between* these two houses will be then, fulfilled just only one condition, an *urban* space, an *urban* situation. And from then on, such place – a space somehow delimited - will become somewhere endowed with urbanity. What would be this condition that should be necessarily fulfilled for the embryo of urbanity to germinate in such an incipient spatial situation? Such essential condition is that this space, between the two houses, ought to be a public space, a space for collective use, for shared use by the people that live in the two houses and simultaneously by people that pass by, *the other*, as suggested by Netto (2012) or, following Hillier, a space shared by *inhabitants and strangers*. For strangers to aim at using that place it must naturally have some attractiveness or it should be *on the way* to somewhere endowed with such attractiveness. Configuration and attractors seems to perform complementary in the making of urbanity.

The situation described above have shown the birth of a genuinely public urban space, in the way it happened in the west of America and in the most primeval urban situations and, with it, in whatever ways and with whichever ingredients – types of configuration and types of attractors – we have the birth, the embryo of urbanity. The elements and effects of the local scale and those coming from the global scale are there superimposed, already in such an embryonic situation. This is why the classic walled residential condo, or the large shopping centre by the freeway, independently of their local configurations, are bound to have a crippled urbanity where the global scale is replaced by elements of the regional scale, in the first case, and severely limited by the imposition of sequences of protocols in the second. In the model of the *essential urbanity*, outlined in this essay, if the two houses are put behind fences, as a walled residential condo, we do not have urbanity at all, by definition, simply because we do not have a public space and as such, we do not have the presence of *the other*.

We will have in this case a sort of residential spatiality that might be, and actually is in some cases, rather interesting *as landscape*. Many residential condos, in the wave of the so called new urbanism, attempt to imitate the spatial configuration and even the building typology of traditional settlements, yet without getting anything closer to the corresponding urbanity, simply because of the suppression of the *public space condition*, as explained above. The other way around, cloned situations, cloned places, literal copies of historical celebrated places, like the Homeric pastiches one can find in Las Vegas or Macau, might, provided the unique condition of *public accessibility*, become places endowed with urbanity, in some degree, and in some cases, once having the *diachronic condition* fulfilled, places endowed with plain urbanity, despite their formal condition of architectural pastiches.

The arguments presented above allow us to end up by seeing urbanity as something essentially material, palpable, visible, something that emanates from the city, its spaces, its architecture, something *manifest*. Something else is the way the different degrees and types of urbanity are perceived, read, felt, loved, desired, hated, demonized or ignored by people. Here comes culture, history, the origin, experience, sensibility, and other characteristics of each person, which eventually will define the way urbanity is perceived, read, felt, loved, desired, hated, demonized or ignored here and there. And we enter here in the complex theme of the relationships between the protocols of urbanity and the spatial behaviour and the perception of people. The inhabitant of a walled residential condo, in general a more conservative person, reads and feels the urbanity of the centre of the city as an inhospitable situation. He feels better in a less urban situation, in the realm of the *disurban*, if I may say so. On the other hand the inhabitant of the historic centre, with streets and urban blocks, read and feel the

pseudo-urbanity of the walled condo as something exotic, odd, weird. To conclude, such more ideological argument about the way urbanity is, or is not appreciated by people is entirely out of the scope of this paper.

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