



Imagine-a-City:

The informational city and the concept of cognitive mapping

*„Noch nie war mir die neue
Stadt wie verwehrt, und die unüberredete Landschaft
finsterte hin, als wäre ich nicht. Nicht gaben die nächsten
Dinge sich Mühe, mir verständlich zu sein. An der Laterne
drängte die Gasse herauf: ich sah, daß sie fremd war. ...
hungernde Fremdheit umzog das zufällige Flackern
meiner Gefühle.“¹*

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¹ "The new city hasn't been locked in such a way to me ever before and the landscape dawned as I would not exist. Nor took the other (next) things any effort to be legible to me. At the light post the street rose up the hill: How strange it was. ... Hungry alienation dominated the random flickering of my emotions." (R.M. Rilke, *Gedichte*, 1953) - Translation by author, please use with caution :-)

Introduction

[Context]

Our age is referred to as the age of the *third industrial revolution, of globalization, of hypercapitalism, of deregulation, virtualization and individualization*, or the age of the *post modern*. These labels for our times are associated with the development of advanced telecommunication and information technologies (*Telematics*). We are experiencing fundamental changes within every aspect of our lives: in individual and public domains, within political and economic arenas, as well as within both cultural and environmental spheres. Space, in all its aspects (landscapes, cities, places and bodies) is undergoing dramatic changes, too. This goes along with the increasing abstraction and virtualization of space as well with its' production and consumption on a hitherto unknown scale.² However, while we feel as if we are surrendering to the forces that cause these new conditions of space, the relevance of space as an area of comprehension, investigation and action, seems widely underestimated, undervalued and disregarded. Space becomes marginalized as the *other*³, which is conquered, commodified and utilized, but not conceptualized by the mainstream of contemporary investigation.

[Aims, Objectives and Strategy]

This elaboration seeks to contribute to a new understanding of space in the informational city. It strives to re-contextualize and re-conzeptionalize space and it's subsidiary elements: cities, places and in particular bodies in the informational context in order to raise a critical conscienceness about space and in order to develop a set of implications for spatial disciplines.

In order to set out a framework for my investigation I will first present the condition of contemporary space⁴. This condition is summarized as a spatial crisis, which evolves from the increasing polarization, fragmentation and homogenization of space in all its aspects. Because these developments transform space in dramatic proportions and at a far faster rate than our bodies and minds can handle, we develop a *crisis of orientation*. My investigation should clarify how this crisis evolves, as we have no alternative than to perceive the world through our five senses and as we re-act according to the cognitive images we develop. Consequently, within my inquiry of space, the space of bodies and minds, a space of imagination, evolves as the most important area of investigation. Therefore the discussion and evaluation of three fundamental, but alternative and non-modern theories of space, will form the central part of my argumentation. These theories of space are; Kevin Lynch's investigation of individual

² With the rise of abstract virtual space (*informational space*), *cities* seem to dissolve into '*global villages*', and with *hypermobility, telepresence* and *comfort*, the physical presence and experience of our *bodies* becomes peripheral. (cp. to Castells, Mc Luhan, Virillio, Senett)

³ Here I am relating to S.Sassens concept of the amalganated „other“, who coined the term to represent the marginal, informal, and forgotten side within globalization.

⁴ The informational city is the field of my investigation. Contemporary space is the space of this city. It is presented as a space where traditional and physical places as well as abstract and virtual spaces interact.

orientation, the 'cognitive space', Maurice Merleau-Ponty's inquiry into the - phenomenological⁵ space of the individual body 'espace corporel', and Henri Lefebvre's integrative 'social space'. The combination of these three theories will be crucial in finding a new concept for the space of the informational city. After this conception on a general level and a discussion of fundamental spatial concepts some specific implications and recommendations will be pointed out for a discussion. Therefore my efforts can be circumscribed as an elaboration on a re-imagination of space. The concept of *imagine-a-city* evolves as a prototype of the informational city as well as a guide to approach this city.

The situation: Informational city and loss of Orientation

In the following paragraph the condition of the informational city and its spaces will be laid out. The individual body will be contextualized within this situation and major problems and questions of relevance for this investigation will be formulated (Crisis of orientation).

The concept of the city is undergoing a fundamental restructuring on a global scale⁶. An increasingly discussed narrative is talking of the demise of the traditional city: „If we confirm the present trend – and there seems almost no reason not to do so, than it can be concluded that we lose the societal ground for the Phenomenon which was called European city.”⁷ Within a space which is quite young⁸, cities dissolve into the landscape, fragment into different specialized parts, polarize into rich and poor, and homogenize into an indifferent shape. If there is a general tendency that can be captured in one sentence, it is one of spatial homogenization, fragmentation and polarization⁹. The city becomes a pure economic space which is vitalized by technological forces¹⁰.

[Form and Appearance]

The informational city is a camouflaged traditional city. Its appearance can be explained with an increasing blur of spatial boundaries. As a new logic of networks imposes itself on the traditional

⁵ By this I understand an Investigation into the deep “character” (nature) of phenomena of things. - The Question is What is it? Rather than How is something working?

⁶ „Today our concern must be with a space on a world's scale, as well as with all spaces subsidiary to it. (Cosmological and Quantum space) The forces that shape this space-- basically forces of production: market of commodities, labor, capital, technology, science and demographic trends-- are of a power, scope, and effectiveness hitherto unknown and unimaginable.” (Lefebvre, (1974), p. 307)

⁷ cp. Pawley 2000, also Häußermann 1999, or Rötzer in Telepolis

⁸ cp K. Ganser (Paper for Agenda 21, 1999)

⁹ The forces, which are shaping this space (technological, economical.) are of great interest as well, however they not be analyzed within this paper. (see my chapters into this in „In-Formation of Space: Spatiality of Technology and Power“: Thesis presented at Columbia University, 1995)

¹⁰“The ether is humming- no, roaring- and not the signals of dying stars, but the radio and television stations and cellular telephones; the air is alive with plumbers, policeman, pilots, and spies; with data streams from fax machines, with uplinks and downlinks from stock-markets, news-services, and vehicle navigation devices. The electromagnetic spectrum is quivering at every scale, like an infinitely fine, space- filling spider's web shimmering with a billion messages in transit from somewhere to someone, but always and permanently there, and invisible like the light that passes by your nose.” M.Benedikt,(1993); “*Unreal Estates*”; ANY#3; NYC; p.57

logic of form and function, the traditional model of a city consisting of houses (private space), market places (economic space), squares and parks (public space) and temples (sacred space) gets confused. Today these models of space blur and intermesh¹¹. Public spaces are penetrated with 'private' cars, with *cellular phones in parks*¹² and lately with wireless networks on campuses and cafés.

W.Flusser talks of a destruction of traditional dwellings by the *winds of communication*:

"THE
GLOBAL SHAKE-UP
REFERRED AS THE
COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION
HAS REDUCED THE ACTUAL HOUSE
TO RUINS. MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL CABLES
HAVE PENETRATED IT"
-- SWISS CHEESE

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[Bodies]

These tendencies do not halt in front of our bodies. Nowadays our body becomes a rationalized system and a machine for production and reproduction.¹⁴ It is pulverized as it is controlled as a coded and decodable system, confined by the abstraction of space and broken down into specialized locations. On a greater scale this tendency to functionalization creates a fragmented society of specialists who are hardly able to communicate to each other - experts¹⁵. We experience our environment with increased mobility (*hyper-mobility*), as we are able to go everywhere, as we are able to stay at home and comfort ourselves¹⁶, and bring the world to the living room (*telepresence*). Both developments bring with them the possibility to see

¹¹ cp. to W.Flusser, "The City as a Wave-through in the Flood of Images" , in Arch+, #111, 1991, p. 58, p.84

¹²Erik W. Ellison; "Portable Phones in the Park: A New Approach to Understanding Planning Urban Space.", At the Ph.D.. Conference: Cyberspace, Public Space and the hyperghetto, New Conceptions of Urban Space; Avery Hall; Columbia University, N.Y.C., Oct. 1994

¹³ W.Flusser, (1991), Emphasis by the Author

¹⁴ H. Lefébvre describes the fragmentation and objectification of the body by abstract space:

"In abstract space, and whenever its influence is felt, the demise of the body has a dual character, for it is at once symbolic and concrete: concrete, as a result of the aggression to which the body is subject and symbolic on an account of the fragmentation of the body's unity. This is especially true of the female body, a transformed into exchange value, into a sign of the commodity and indeed into a commodity per se." Lefebvre , (1974), p.310

¹⁵ For a theory of experts as tools for abstraction and alienation see M. Weber(1930)

¹⁶ R.Sennett (1995); R. Sennett theorizes the notion of comfort in relationship to a loss of touch and a dislocation of the modern body.

everything without being seen (*omnivoyance*). In this post modern scenario time and temporality are increasingly replaced to synchronicity and a loss of historical relationships. ¹⁷

[Commodification]

An increasing commodification (valorization) of every aspect of space and the spatial changes resulting from this commodification are central aspects for the understanding of the informational city. Traditional spaces, bodies and places become modified by *com-modification and valorization* ¹⁸. What is new about this condition is that commodification of space and commodification of information reinforce each other. Public space, as it is conceptualized in humanist and democratic thought¹⁹ is losing its place. It is public not just disappearing into the space of media, but it becomes commodified by the media. Whereas the Greek ideal of public space, the Agora, was characterized by the use value of argument and counter-argument, in the time of informational production²⁰, the value of a message has the tendency to be reduced to its profitability. In Alexander Kluge's²¹ estimation, the media markets "industrialize consciousness on a large scale" and expropriate borrowed feelings and experiences. Spatial representation is increasingly related to mass-communication, the media and image representations.

[Crisis of Orientation]

In a space as described above a crisis of orientation evolves because our *image* of the present is confused, chaotic and turbulent- in a word: 'obscured', obscured by the symbol, the image, mass media. This crisis of orientation causes a spatial and a social confusion, which paralyzes our ability to act and plan as we find ourselves in struggle to find a meaning, and as we are unable to represent ourselves in this environment. In *F. Jameson's* words:

"The postmodern subject has lost his capacity actively to extend its pretensions and retentions across the temporal manifold and to organize its past and future into coherent experience. It becomes difficult to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but "heaps of fragments" and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary" ²²

In presenting dramatic changes which occur in space at every scale the former paragraph intended to lay out the problems and demonstrate the relevance of space as a central area of investigation. If we abolish the (postmodern) idea that our crisis will prevail to the point when we

¹⁷ Postmodernism, Jameson argues (1984), involves a transformation of time and the self. In the postmodern world, historical duration where past and future are meaningfully integrated with the present yields to an immersion in a present, that represses the past and excludes the future. Immediacy displaces duration to create a flux that is endless. As a result of the collapse of historical time, the self is fragmented.cp.. Jameson (1984)

¹⁸ Interestingly the virtual environment often follows the metaphor of a city (cp. digital cities in the internet) to facilitate navigational orientation.

¹⁹ A concept of the public, which comes close the one of Habermas (1962): for him the public evolves from a democratic culture of public speech and print media.

²⁰ cp Mitchell, William J.: (1989)

²¹ A. Kluge,(1985), p.53

²²F.Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", 1984

will have reconstructed the traditional city and everything has been made visible, it is the task now to develop new images of the city, to imagine the invisible, and to develop new representations of it.²³ However in order to do so, we need to reconceptualize the nature of space and our image (perception) of it.

The concept: cognitive mapping, espace corporel, social space

"Dwelling is the basic character of being in keeping with which, mortals exist." ²⁴

A spatial crisis as presented in the last paragraph effects our traditional understanding of space. The idea of modern, mathematical space as an abstract container as conceived by Descartes or Leibnitz, as well as the model of Kantian space as a pure transcendental concept, both fall to a fundamental crisis, if confronted with the consequences of the conceptualization of space within the informational city. Space is more than a container for life and history and more than an abstract concept.

Therefore the following passage will consider holistic, phenomenological narratives of space, and establish a framework of space as a relational and dialectical structure. The investigation will focus on three concepts of space which define the personal, social and political dimensions of space. This approach will provide us with a basic set of instruments to conceptualize our problems in developing a concept of the informational city. Space can be seen as product and as something that is produced, as outcome and as context, as form and relationship, as object and media, as something ephemeral, fluid, changing and material, and as an outcome and framework for social and cultural relations. The relationship of our perception of space and space as it is produced by this perception evolves as a dialectical relation. Space is perceived, imagined, and produced simultaneously. Consequently imagination evolves into a central concept within this investigation.

[The concept of Cognitive Mapping]

As a spatial planner Lynch identifies the relevance of the image for the body. Orientation is a fundamental function for the body and an image of ones environment. The cognitive image', becomes the prerequisite for the development of any higher emotions.

During the peak of modernity, characterized by rapid industrialization, mobilization and rapid suburbanization, in the 1960's, Kevin Lynch, a Boston based urbanist and planner, conceptualized the city using the perspective of the living space of its inhabitants. It was his intent to analyze and restore the visual quality of American cities (New Jersey, Boston, Los Angeles) by studying the mental image of the inhabitants within these cities.

In his investigation whose goal was the reconciliation of the fragmented urban environment,

²³ Cp. the actual discussion about the „diagramme“ in contemporary american architectural theory (Arch+ 156)

²⁴Heidegger, M., "*Building, Dwelling, Thinking*", in Poetry, Language, Thought, p.160

Lynch develops a relational or 'soft' concept of space seen in unity with its users and establishes the individual body, its orientation, perspective and cognition as key players within this space. Inspired by environmental psychology, ethology²⁵ and phenomenological thought, his starting point is the view of a body as a navigational apparatus. This body is dependent on an environment in which s/he can find meaning in order to survive. The foundation of his work is neither abstract space, nor an idea or concept. It is the necessity of a mobile organism to orient itself in space. Imagination becomes indispensable in order to find *meaning* within this world. An image develops in the mind of the individual, partly as a result of what is presently visible (perception) and partly as a result of the memory of past experiences.

*"The automobile, with its speed and personal control, may be a way of establishing such a sense (unity of self and large environment) at a new level. At the very least, it begins to neutralize the disparity in size between a man and a city."*²⁶

In his efforts to structure the automobile city into a coherent spatial framework, returning to traditional historicist forms does not seem to be an option for Lynch. In his objective and pragmatic approach, he identifies the same technology, which engendered the condition of crisis within the modern city as the key element to overcome this crisis. Therefore he praises the enlargement of perspectives gained from the moving automobile in order to understand the new city. Consequently for him in conceiving modern spaces, moving elements are of the same relevance as the stationary ones.

His discussion of the driving experience by night anticipates to some extent a description of virtual space:

*At night a new order reigns in the city. The chaotic skylines, jagged spaces, erratic signs, forms, and shapes disappear into the darkness, to be replaced by luminous dots, strips, and diffused light.*²⁷

In investigating the relevance of space, it becomes necessary to turn to the disciplines that form Lynch's background, but that he never discussed first hand: environmental psychology, phenomenology, anthropology and philosophy.

[Marleau-Ponty's phenomenological 'espace corporel']

While the space for Lynch is seen as an environment, a stage for orientation, phenomenological²⁸ space is directly related to and produced by the individual²⁹.

²⁵ science of animal behaviour

²⁶ Lynch, 1963, p.15

²⁷ Lynch 1963 p.54

²⁸ Definitions (Websters Dictionary):

[Phe-nom-e-non](#) \... \ [LL phaenomenon, fr. Gk phainomenon, fr. neut. of phainomenos, prp. of phainesthai to appear, middle voice of phainein to show\... \ 1 pl phenomena : an observable fact or event 2 pl phenomena a : an object or aspect known through the senses rather than by thought or intuition b : a temporal or spatiotemporal object of sensory experience as distinguished from a noumenon c : a fact or event of scientific interest susceptible of scientific description and explanation 3 a : a rare or significant fact or event\... \ [phe-nom-e-no-l-o-gy](#) \ ... \ [phenomenon + -logy] (ca.1797) 1 : the study of development of human consciousness and self-awareness as a preface to philosophy or part of philosophy\... \

²⁹ The discipline of **phenomenology of perception** evolves out of an interaction of environmental psychology and phenomenological thought. In the early 20th Century Husserl, Bergson, Freud, and Proust detach their thought from a linear, abstract and mechanical understanding of Time and Space

Body and space become part of an integrated model, interdependent parts of a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1963) develops a theory of phenomenological perception (*Phénoménologie de la Perception*). This is the most detailed theory of space, body and imagination for our purposes. Whereas 'Cartesian' space was composed of objects and things, phenomenological space is composed of dialects and relationships. Merleau-Ponty's space is defined as a corporal space or '*espace corporal*'. This theory is founded on a phenomenology of the body and its senses. A being is set up on the sensory experience of things and his feelings towards them.

Ponty's concept of the body is anchored in space and can only be understood in investigating space. The experience of space and of being does not occur through abstraction from a bird's eye perspective, rather it is experienced by the *imagination of space*.

"As far as I have a body, and act though this body in the world, time and space are not sums of added points, nor the infinity of relations, ..., I am not in space and in time, I am not thinking space and time, rather I am to space and time, my body attaches itself to them and is part of them." ... "Our being is oriented, our existence is a spatial one, our experience is polarized".³⁰

Ponty's space acts as a medium, which enables the positioning of things and the development of relations. *"Space can be imagined as the universal possibility of all things to connect"* This has important an important impact on the spatial discussion of the information age and opens up new perspectives, for a new conceptualization of contemporary spaces.

Modern communication technologies have the potential to enhance and support a space as conceptualized by Ponty's, however, the fact that sensory and bodily experience are irreplaceable has to be taken into consideration. Using Ponty's definition we have to open up our definition of a city to a network of human nodes³¹, a redundant *"field of inter subjective relations"*.

[Lefebvre's social space]

There is still a piece missing in the puzzle, when the idea of contemporary space is discussed. Having established the relevance of space, as it is experienced, perceived, imagined and produced by an individual body, a political and social dimension of space will be introduced in the discussion Henri Lefebvre's 'social space'. The value of his theory of space as a social product, lies in its capacity to integrate all major traditional and alternative models into one concept.

He writes:

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents, and thus seems to be 'purely' formal, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has

and develop a new human conscience, of perception and of action. See a detailed description of spatial investigations within different disciplines in Bollnow (1963).

³⁰ M.-Ponty, 1973, p.286 and 243

³¹ A concept, which has been developed by Robert Park (Chicago School) in the twenties, and is also used in W. Flusser's thought.

already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies³².

Lefebvre's space is a space created by human groups in specific places, using specific modes of production and engaging in collective, economic, social, and political exertions, to achieve human purposes.

His model consists of three sub spaces, the space of spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation (Fig.1). The lived *space of spatial practices* is the space of daily life and can be associated with Heidegger's 'being in space' or the situationist's 'practice of daily life'. In the second subspace he identifies, *conceived space* or 'representations of space', abstract powers are deployed. It is a space, which is consciously produced, codified and conceived, a space of politics, ideologies and economies. This model can be compared to the Kantian space of abstraction. With the third space, the '*space of representation*, Lefebvre delineates a space where the physical reproduces itself, a space of symbols and images (perceived space). This is the space of images and signs and to a great extent it is basically Ponty's space of phenomenological perception.

Unlike the various models produced by the thought of science and mathematics, social space is 'real' space, and it is actively produced by human thought, imagination, and labour.

Social space is also related to the experience and representation to its smallest units, individual bodies.

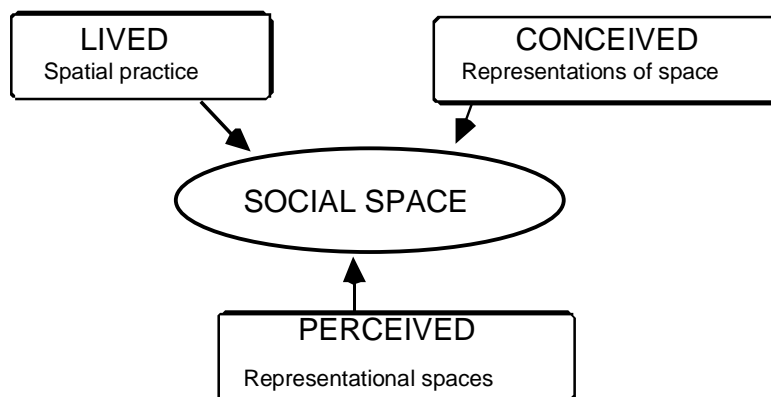


Fig.1: Lefebvres Concept of social space

Social space exists as an equilibrium of spaces, which is sensitive to shifts (see Fig 1). Thus from Lefebvre's point of view, a spatial crisis arises if this balance is lost. The point of departure for Lefebvre was a spatial crisis, as it was engendered by the domination of abstract space by the forces of modern organisations (i.e. the state powers of the 60's). Our problem today is the

³² Lefebvre, 1976, 31

domination of a different abstract space, the global 'space of flows', which dominates over a social 'space of places'.³³

[Summary]

Using the positions of Lynch, Ponty and Lefebvre, we have operationalized a holistic concept of space, which includes the role of bodies and the perception of space (images). Their combined concepts come to an understanding of places and bodies as the focal points in a web of relations. Space and body exist in a dialectical relationship, defined by mutual determination. They come to be seen as the nodes and intersections between culture and nature, abstraction and reality, past and future, form and 'inform', the abstract and the real. They are open and relational systems and it is this relational characteristic, which characterises their spatiality and temporality. The major factors of what defines the human are, --being in time and space. However the in-betweenness, the state of balance, equilibrium of bodies and spaces is sensitive to shifts.

Outlook and Conclusion

*"...powerful spirit-geysers shooting skyward with the force of an unlashd flood, conceding small, playful, submissions to the giant stream of the planetary Electra, yes they could be the skin of the worlds spirit as it seeks transformation."*³⁴

In order to sum up the major ideas covered in this presentation, I will draw a set of conclusions, which have evolved out of my discussion of spatial concepts in relation to the informational city. I will close with a set of implications for spatial planning to which these findings point.

[Space in the informational city]

Contemporary space has been described as being in a state of crisis because it has been polarized, fragmented and homogenized by a combination of economic and technological forces on a global (total) scale. Because these developments cause serious interventions in traditional spaces including the personal spaces of our bodies and minds, we develop a crisis of orientation. We fall into this state, because we have no choice than to perceive the world through our five senses and we act and produce our reality according to the cognitive images we develop.

The space within the informational city can be characterized as a space in between a traditional 'space of places' and a virtual 'space of flows'. Virtual space evolves as an overlay on this world, not an alternative to it. It evolves out of our real space and culture. However, it transforms us and the totality of relationships (political, social, cultural, physical). It is a new space of production and consumption and it revolutionizes the production of real space. Its production

³³ cp. Castells, 1989.

³⁴

and reproduction happen along old lines of power and control. It is a political and ideological space and we have to apply the concepts and implications of corporal space and social space to this space too. Traditional Space ('Space of places') and virtual space ('Space of flows') can be integrated into a larger reality of social space. This calls for a new concept of space which is more and more a multilayered, topological, and 'soft' space. This space is not mappable and cannot be reduced to a conventional image and representation.

[Implications for Planning]

"To make it mean something for oneself, to care for something" - Applied to the universe this can only mean that one seeks to transfigure all that is perceived as "real", that is, to interpret it and to give it a form. The form is initially the anchoring element and then becomes the all-embracing crystal, the "world structure".³⁵

Finally the question arises of how we as a profession occupied with the planning of space can constructively react to this state of crisis and the new character of space that was described in the course of this work? Specific recommendations can not be given without recommendations on a general level.

In the process of *imagination*, planning has to create meaning in the contemporary condition of our urban environment by transforming it creatively into new projects. The projects that are involved include a redefinition of meaning and identity and have to find a new balance between a space of information and physical space, media reality and experience, collective consciousness and personal thinking, as well as trained perception and haptic perception. Planners are the first to handle, approach and comprehend a dimension which is in progress, and conceptualize things that are emerging and not yet generally understood, in order to share their images and construct representations of a new reality. They have to prepare the path to understanding this continuously adapting reality for the general public.³⁶

A critical understanding of space as an ideological and biased product must be developed at all levels.³⁷ In fact the inability to imagine or create an image of reality (non-imageability) has to be confirmed and it must be asserted that we cannot know the world and its totality by abstraction³⁸.

I want to call a culture of planning that incorporates that idea. It should result in a culture of a new spatial understanding and the empowerment of the body to re-present itself in a new way,

³⁵ Bruno Taut in „Letters of the glass chain“

³⁶ A role that is commonly associated with artists.

³⁷ The development of a radical political culture of postmodernism will accordingly require moving beyond rigorous empirical descriptions which imply scientific understanding but too often hide political meaning... A new 'cognitive mapping' must be developed, a new way of seeing through the gratuitous veils of both reactionary postmodernism and late modern historicism to encourage the creation of a political spatial consciousness and a radical spatial praxis. Soja, (1989), p.75

³⁸ Jameson (1984) takes K.Lynch's (1960) idea of cognitive mapping and proposes to extend it into a social mapping, taking into account Althusser's interpretation of ideology as the representation of the subjects imaginary relationship to his or her real conditions.

a culture of the *project*. Whereas sub-ject's and can be objectified, planned and disciplined, a culture of the *pro-ject*³⁹ proposes the creative transformation of reality by imagination.

The specific areas planning has to address within this context are the role of technological-, aesthetic-, social-, traditional-, and political practices.

a. technological practice

In order to achieve a new spatial understanding, the capacity of new technologies and spaces as tools for the imagination and projection has to be explored. (These are in general the same technologies that engender the crisis in contemporary space.)

b. aesthetic practice

Purely economic, scientific and rational practices have to be complemented by a new aesthetic culture of planning. In particular, this culture has to map the topological space of relationships that evolves in the age of information and address the human need for orientation and coherence. This is an approach that Kevin Lynch was pursuing in his proposals for the automobile city. This aesthetic sense must overcome a longing for the formal reconstructions of the past, which post modern practices are seeking, but it must first care about its the contents and the program needed to derive new forms and designs.

c. social practice

Planners have to recognize the new logic of space, which is a logic of polarization, fragmentation and homogenization and a new logic of access, bandwidth and invisible control. In interpreting the city as a social environment for enabling possibilities, as a framework to build up social potentials, they have to give spatial attention to the marginalized part of population, which is not associated with mainstream economic production.

d. traditional practice

As contemporary problems arise from the domination of an abstract space of flows over the traditional space of places, planners have to take a stake in traditional values, like a culture of place (*genius loci*), density and variety, slowness and the sensory, thought, critical policing, and sustainability.

e. political and public spaces

Finally planning has to cultivate an understanding and a consciencenessa of space, that is more than a neutral container, but the outcome of ideological and political relations, a space that is produced, colonized, appropriated and transformed by various powers.

If it becomes possible to imagine a city as a web of relational differences, we can succeed in freeing up the individual's potential within this environment and can create functioning nodes for social interaction.

³⁹pro-ject\... L, neut. of *projectus*, pp. of *projeter* to throw forward, 1 a: to devise in mind : DESIGN b: to plan, figure, or estimate for the future 2 : to throw or cast forward : THRUST 3 : to put or set forth : present for consideration 4 ; to cause or protrude 5 : to cause (light or shadow) to fall into space or (an image) to fall on a surface ... (Webster's College Dictionary, 1993)

[Imagine-a-city]

The culture of 'imagination' is evolving into a key element in my study of contemporary space. Imagination is suggested as the tool needed to decode the hidden realities in our postmodern landscapes, as a concept and strategy at once. 'Imaginacity' transfers this concept into a state of being, into an attitude for navigating the informational city.⁴⁰ In this sense 'Imagine-a-city' evolves into a prototype for the informational city and into a strategy to approach this new city.

⁴⁰ Not the nation- the city becomes more and more relevant spatial entity of societal - economic, political and cultural- relations life in a globalized world, - but this is another story. (For the National, Regional and Urban discussion cp. Sassen (1993, 1996), Castells (1996)etc., for statistics of the urbanization of our planet see UNCHS-Habitat (2001)

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