WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME

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INTRODUCTION

There are several cities and countries that do not use names to mark their streets, as is the case in Ghana, several Japanese cities, or even Brazil's favelas. In each instance, there exist different relationships with this nomenclature system that can be understood in terms of targeted interference in the way locals navigate inside the city or even from a political perspective that explains a division of classes present in society. What is common between them is that the names that appear at street corners have a much greater meaning than being just a simple name: they can (and are) used as a mechanism of control by the government or private companies to guide us in how to relate to the urban space. The nomenclature then goes beyond being a mere word, becoming what I call an *urban commodity*. In other words, it is an intrinsic system of the urban environment that has value in and of itself and is used by the macrostructure to plan, monitor, and control society.

In the case of Ghana, for example, the government received financial support from the World Bank and USAID fund to map, mark, number, and name the streets of the country. Using the argument that more than 50% of the population now lives in urban areas, the aim was to enable telephone companies and financial institutions to more easily track those who do not pay their bills. Until then, companies were at the mercy of knowing the place and asking locals for a few references (such as a specific tree or some most notorious resident) to locate the debtor – which could take weeks to happen. Now,

with the new system, financial institutions can quickly collect what is owed. In addition,

international funds use the argument that it will bring greater revenues for the country, so

it should encourage investment in mapping, and they could lend money to the

government – thus increasing its external debt. As USAID's webpage itself says:

> Many challenges remain to meet the vice president's goal of implementing the
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> guidelines throughout the 212 districts of the country. Conservative estimates based
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> on USAID's experience with five districts suggest that Ghana would need at least
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> $30 million to implement the program nationwide. This estimate does not include the
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> major cities, as cost may vary depending on size. The Ghanaian Government may
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> have to solicit these funds from external sources.[1]

What can be seen in this case is that the naming of streets is more than just the

name, but something that has value in itself and is used to order and structure the urban

environment. Japanese cities, however, instead of using nomenclatures, prefer to use a

number system for blocks, leaving the streets in these areas without specific names. To

find one's way in the urban space, then one must develop a familiarity with the area by

asking locals or using a GPS system. The navigation is not intuitive, which makes the

passerby interact more actively with the space to try to find what they need.[2]

On the other hand, the favelas of Brazil also don't have names for the streets, but

for different reasons. While in the Japanese cities the government decided to adopt a

number system for demarcation, due to the unregulated occupation of the slums, the

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1   Peter Fricker. "Directionally Challenged: Effort to Name Ghana's Streets Points the Way to Economic Progress," *Frontlines Online Edition* (July/August 2012). Available at <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/frontlines/economic-growth/directionally-challenged-effort-name-ghana%E2%80%99s-streets>. (Accessed on November 18, 2013).

2   Davien Hiskey. "Most Streets in Japan Don't Have Names." *Today I Foundout* (April 9, 2012). Available at <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2012/04/most-japanese-streets-dont-have-names/>. (Accessed on November 18, 2013).

region expands depending of the arrival of new families and not according to the number of available homes. They are heavily populated areas that do not respond directly to the offers of the real estate market as, generally, the lots are illegal. In these regions, the (lack of) names of streets are related to the economic status of its residents and the lack of government interest in regulating this situation. Therefore, the nomenclature becomes something of pride to the communities living in the slums, since when they have their space demarcated they feel included in a city that sees them as an outcast. Even Google Maps, when mapping the city of Rio de Janeiro, decided not to go to the slums, using violence and narrow streets as an argument.[3]

The use of the term *urban commodity* is a provocation to demonstrate that the mere naming is also something that can be used for purposes beyond spatially locating a resident. This term for this end seeks to clarify how the naming system is used to leverage up the real estate market in specific areas of the city in order to convince residents to accept increasingly exorbitant prices per square meter in some neighborhoods. This is the case with Bushwick, Brooklyn, for example. Because of increasing gentrification process, the real estate market changes the name of the region of some parts of the neighborhood so that tenants or buyers will identify a region as being more highly valued than it really is.[4] In this sense, a buyer does not only buy an apartment, but an entire nexus of signifying interrelations related to the idea of a locality.

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3 "Rio de Janeiro's favelas charted on city maps after decades of 'invisibility'," *DailyMail Online* *(*January 24, 2013). Accessible at <www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-2267553/Rio-Janeiros-favelas-charted-decades-invisibility.html>. (Accessed on November 18, 2013).

4 Lauren Evans. "FYI: Ridgewood Is Now East Williamsburg, Also Bushwick," *gothamist* (May 10, 2013). Available at <http://gothamist.com/2013/05/10/east_williamsburg_borders_now_exten.php>. (Accessed on March 25, 2014).

Thus, when buying an apartment on the Upper West Side in New York, or in Jardins in São Paulo, the consumer is not only buying a place to live, but also a symbolic status and a whole network that is behind that name, that created brand. The researcher Raquel Rennó has theorized a connection between the language used in marketing and how the real estate market has appropriated it to try to sell a brand, a concept behind a product.

> To say that someone is the resident of Morumbi or Jardins [rich neighborhoods], at the same way to say that another one is resident of Itaquera or Cidade Ademar [poor neighborhoods], by itself, it already allows one to create an idea of the social class to which an individual belongs. These are images which reflect the crystallization of values invested in spaces.[5]

One of the reasons for discussing this system in this thesis is that this very mechanism can be found either in the gentrification process or in attempts to control communities living in urban spaces. In some cases, when a community is gentrified, the new residents – or even the real estate market – strives to change the names of streets or even of entire neighborhoods in order to erase its history and build a new one, as was the case in Bushwick mentioned above. Moreover, politicians also use this same trick in return for favors, to try other political positions or even for reelection. It is a form of political bargaining between politicians and the communities that elected them (as is explained in further detail in Italo Calvino's section).

Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, for example, among the various cities described in the book, contains a story about one that has no names to identify the streets and passages.

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5   Raquel Rennó. "A Cidade das Marcas – Marcas na Cidade," *XXVI Congresso Anual em Ciência da Comunicação* (Belo Horizonte/MG, September 2 – 6, 2003). Available at <https://www.academia.edu/5780062/Cidade_das_marcas_marcas_na_cidade>. (Accessed on January 20, 2014).

The residents of Zaira must rely only on their memory and the marks left on the *urban infrastructure* as a way to navigate. *Urban infrastructure* refers here to the physical buildings that exist in space, whether they be houses, overpasses, bridges, sidewalks, and so on. Thus, the history of Zaira's residents is embedded in space itself and a reference is needed in order to navigate in its space.

Just as the history of the inhabitants leaves marks on the infrastructure, the infrastructure itself also influences the way one operates in a city. This question is addressed in the work of VALIE EXPORT. For her, the cities' architecture is responsible for shaping how our bodies behave, altering even psychologically how we understand ourselves and the urban space.

Milton Machado, in turn, extracts the social relations present in urban space to create an abstraction over the anxiety of progress and development represented by the cities. For Machado, there is a never-attainable idealization by urban planners of what would be a perfect urban space (based on developmental values), which leads them to implement these projects without even understanding the real social demands at work in those spaces. The characters present in *History of the Future* are fractions of a single personality which represent how the social aspect is forgotten in the eagerness for progress. Although they keep cities living (such as the *Nomad*), they are also expelled, killed, and forced to maintain a synchronous relation with the imposed change (represented by the *Module of Destruction*).

Machado's initial idea was to try to connect all of the continents in order to create the single continent of Pangea. No borders, no boundaries of nations, no barriers. The sovereignty of nations, which is associated with a nomenclature used to define territorial

areas, would then be called into question, and another mode of relationship between different cultures could arise. This subject is explored by Teresa Margolles when interviewing residents of the cities of El Paso, USA, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, about their impressions of those cities. El Paso and Ciudad Juárez are cities divided by the border between the two countries. Even though they share the same urban space, this boundary creates a dissociation of the two sides and how its residents see each other.

It is interesting to see how the question of territoriality is viewed from different perspectives. While Machado creates an abstraction to end it and Margolles points to the current political problems in national divisions, Claudio Bueno presents another variation: how the virtual can *hack* the physicality required for monuments that represent the history of a particular place. The *Invisible Monuments* series use the virtual to establish new monuments in places that would be impossible if they were actually built. In the case of the *Chant des Sirènes*, Bueno has created a mobile app that contains a sound monument celebrating the history of women killed in the First and Second World Wars. The work can only be accessed when the coordinates of a mobile phone's GPS enters the Old Port of Québec, in Canada. While the other monuments in the region exalt the male figure and tell a history chosen without necessarily involving the population, Bueno's invisible monuments demonstrate a more democratic approach to selecting which history should be told.

As has become clear by now, the object of study of this thesis is not gentrification *per se*, but how the naming mechanism can be understood through different biases. This work therefore does not present arguments about only one system used to change the urban center, but rather about the social consequences that these instances of interference

have. By avoiding the description just to situate the object, it is possible to focus on the

inter- and intra-relationships that occur in the urban space. It is a work of an ethologist,

so to speak, as Andrew Goffey explains in the introduction of the book "Capitalist

Sorcery." To Goffey, the ethologist studies the relationships of animals with their

environment instead of trying to describe in concrete ways what the animal is in and of

itself. Only in this way it is possible to understand what a particular animal may cause in

its inhabitat and its interference in the ecosystem.

> Ethology requires us to focus a little more closely on the relationship that is established
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> between the animal and the ethologist, a focus that, transposed to the field of politics
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> should lead to a more nuanced understanding of the way in which capitalism constantly
>
> reorganizes itself to prevent people getting a hold. The vampire squids of capitalism
>
> engage in the creation of 'infernal alternatives'.[6]

Studying the control mechanisms of a city only by the description and not by its

social relations is to fall into what the authors Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers

refer to as "infernal alternatives," which is to say "a scientist whose professional

certainties about what are the right questions to ask can lead him or her to adopt a

frighteningly dismissive stance with regard to anything that falls outside this position."[7]

The problem of falling into an "infernal alternative" is getting stuck on issues where the

answer appears hollow in relation to the question, or the results do not associate the

object with the explanation ("getting hold"). For the authors, when an anti-capitalist

struggle appears, one has the idea that only a divine intervention could interfere in the

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6   Andrew Goffey. "Introduction: On the Witch's Broomstick," *Capitalist Sorcery*. Palgrave MacMillan
     (2011): XVII.

7   Ibid: XIII.

economic productive mechanisms, as if there weren't a right answer to the question about how to change it.[8] It is to avoid this feeling of powerlessness in relation to capitalism that they advocate for a pragmatic analysis, which is "an art of consequences, an art of 'paying attention' that is opposed to the philosophy of the omelette justifying the cracked eggs."[9] In other words, this method does not want to justify an anti-capitalist struggle based on the problems of capitalism itself, but to understand what consequences the conflict has on the environment in which it operates. It is for this reason that this thesis seeks to understand the effects of nomenclature inside the urban environment. It is an attempt to question not only how urban planning is currently conducted in large cities, but also to stress the social relationships with the city's infrastructure using interventions and works of art as a platform for the argument

To avoid possible descriptions of the systems, this thesis focuses on using utopian thinking to understand the consequences of how the nomenclature affects the urban environment. Instead of doing a critique which sets up a dichotomous structure between two objects – one being considered good and the other bad – and having a descriptive syntax, this thesis takes a more imaginative approach. Rather than working in terms of mimesis (what the subject *really is*), it is preferable to make way for a project of possibility (what the object *can be*). The "radical critique" thus no longer lies in the descriptive aspect and the comparison of objects of analysis, but in creating an imaginable future – a utopian creation to real issues surrounding our life in society[10]. This

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8   Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers. *Capitalist Sorcery*, Palgrave MacMillan (2011): 25.

9   Ibid: 17.

10 Stephen Ducombe. "Utopia Is No Place: The Art and Politics of Impossible Futures," *Walker Art Center, Symposium* (July 29, 2010). Accessible at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?

is the utopian exercise being proposed here: working with this *"it could be"* to find out what really happens.

Each chapter focuses on the work of one artist and explains different views on this nomenclature system for urban areas. The intent is to demonstrate the different ways of understanding the cities and to problematize the social issues about how we relate in this environment.

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v=H8BhXKGOeeY>. (Accessed on November 18, 2013).

ITALO CALVINO

the organic interfering in the infrastructure

> In vain, great-hearted Kublai, shall I attempt to describe Zaira, city of high bastions. I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcades' curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past: the height of a lamppost and the distance from the ground of a hanged usurper's swaying feet; the line strung from the lamppost to the railing opposite and the festoons that decorate the course of the queen's nuptial procession; the height of that railing and the leap of the adulterer who climbed over it at dawn; the tilt of a guttering and a cat's progress along it as he slips into the same window; the firing range of a gunboat which has suddenly appeared beyond the cape and the bomb that destroys the guttering; the rips in the fish net and the three old men seated on the dock mending nets and telling each other for the hundredth time the story of the gunboat of the usurper, who some say was the queen's illegitimate son, abandoned in his swaddling clothes there on the dock.
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> As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands. A description of Zaira as it is today should contain all Zaira's past. The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.[11]

In 1972, the Italian author Italo Calvino published a book in which, in one chapter, he describes a city with an absence of street names. In *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo narrates different cities in the kingdom of the emperor Kublai Khan in a conversation that never took place, since the two did not speak the same language. Interweaving descriptions with imaginary conversations between the two characters, Calvino points to several ways of looking at and interpreting a single city, Venice, without necessarily specifying that it was only a single object of study. In his work, the

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11   Italo Calvino. "City & Memory 3," *Invisible Cities*. Harvest Books. (1974): 10-11.

object is broken into several facets, which helps reveal how complex the urban

environment and the social interactions are that occur within its structure. This happens

in a town that is discovered because several men had the same dream of chasing an

unattainable muse (Zobeide, which was also used by critics to explain one of VALIE

EXPORT works[12]), to one in which the streets were devoid of names, which forced its

residents to use their memories for each part of the city as guidance (Zaira). Calvino, in

this story, speculates about what happens when the streets are only associated with the

history of its residents: Citizens relate to the structure in a much more intimate way and

based in their own use of it. The *urban infrastructure*, rather than being only a lifeless

structure without any emotional attachment, becomes part of the experience. Each mark

left by the residents of Zaira helps in its description and the navigability for its alleys.

Each social interaction – as the drinking fishermen at the pier – is not an ephemeral

feature but clings to the space as a present and ever-changing story. Instead of relating

based on references that are often times imposed (such as street names generally are), it

is on memory and experience with the city that one navigates through the urban

environment.[13]

    This intimate feature is worth mentioning, not least because it was well

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12 In Roswitha Mueller's book about VALIE EXPORT's works, "*Valie Export – Fragments of Imagination*," she cites Zobeide to describe how EXPORT believes that a city is doubly gendered in a way to explain EXPORT's work *Syntagma*: "For Export, the city is both feminine and masculine (traditionally speaking): feminine in its housing, sheltering, and protecting life, masculine in its traffic, commerce, and communication. There is, however, a more powerful reason for considering the city as doubly gendered. One of the stories in Italo Calvino's book *Le città invisibili* relates how the city of Zobeide was founded exactly on that site where several men, pursuing the same dream, encountered each other. The site corresponded to the place where they lost the object of their desire, a woman, out of sight. This story suggests that 'the city constitutes itself through the attempt to lend duration to the desire expressed in their dream... as the site of absence of the woman in whose place a league of men gather together, bound to each other through the lack of the feminine.'" (p. 186-187).

13 Italo Calvino. "City & Memory 3," *Invisible Cities*. Harvest Books. (1974): 10-11.

understood by urban planners, who often looked into the past names and events that could represent a certain street in a specific neighborhood, as exemplified by the 9/11 attacks in New York[14] or by roads with the names of generals who were part of the Brazilian Dictatorship[15]. What might be regarded as being something that is healthy to urban life, however, can be also considered as an aspect of a control mechanism that is imposed on its residents. Although this provides a closer connection to the reality of the citizens (names and historical facts with which the community identifies itself), there is no critical questioning about its own use or real function. When a community is seen as being historically represented only by a name, there is the illusion of belonging to that site, which is often not considered in future public policies as is seen in cases of gentrification managed and organized by city administrations (Bushwick, again, is a good example[16]). The relationship between citizens and the nomenclature is sometimes so closely linked that most of the efforts of politicians elected to represent a district are restricted to changing these names. In São Paulo, Brazil, for instance, a 2012 survey found out that, only in the first half of that year, eight of ten projects approved by the City Council were to change street names, add celebratory dates, or give titles or do

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14 A list can be viewed at the website <http://www.oldstreets.com/honor.asp?title=Mauro>. (Accessed on March 26, 2014).

15 To learn more about the Elevado Costa e Silva, one worthy read is the article by Christina Gossman, "Finding Relief In The World's Most Congested City: A Sunday Afternoon On São Paulo's Minhocão," published by *The Atlantic*, on May 18, 2012. Accessible at <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/arts-and-lifestyle/2012/05/finding-relief-worlds-most-congested-city-sunday-afternoon-minhocao/2040/>. (Accessed on March 26, 2014).

16 Lauren Evans. "Who's Trying To Erase East Williamsburg's 'Avenue Of Puerto Rico?'," *gothamist* (February 26, 2013). Accessible at <http://gothamist.com/2013/02/26/whos_trying_to_kill_avenue_of_puert.php>. (Accessed on March 26, 2014).

homage to personalities.[17] In other words, it is no longer the residents who define this or that name, this or that memory, but rather politicians and urban planners belonging to the macrostructure and who have little or almost no direct contact with those who live and have a daily life on that particular street. History in relation to urban space is not told or written by the communities living in it, but by politicians far removed from the reality of day-to-day life.

This gap becomes more evident when a given region undergoes renovations and reconstructions that have almost nothing to do with the social aspect of the neighborhood. Instead of intensifying what happens in certain communities, urban planners and authorities seek to construct viaducts to improve traffic (Robert Moses comes to mind[18]); design *piazzas* in regions with no benches to sit on (Jan Gehl[19]); stimulate large hypermarkets to establish their businesses in places where the commerce is more local (again Moses); and many other examples of structural changes forcefully pushed upon the citizens who live there and have a direct relationship with the pulsating life of that space. The activist Jane Jacobs has stated:

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17 The research was made by the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* and published in the article in Portuguese "80% das leis são homenagens ou nomes de rua," accessible at <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/impresso,80-das-leis-sao-homenagens-ou-nomes-de-rua--,898522,0.htm>. (Accessed on November 18, 2013).

18 Robert Moses was a key figure for New York city urban planning during the 1960s. The literature about him and Jane Jacobs' fight against his plans is extensive. To know more about the character and his plans see his Wikipedia article <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Moses>. (Accessed on March 26, 2014).

19 Jan Gehl is a Danish architect well known for his projects of large plazas and reflecting pools. His architecture company is involved in a controversial project in São Paulo, Brazil, to re-signify a historical and degraded neighborhood in the city. His solution was to build a reflecting pool as a way to avoid the homeless people living there. To know more, it is worth reading the statement wrote by a social movement present in the meetings to discuss the project (in Portuguese). Movimento BaixoCentro. "Workshop SP Urbanismo," *baixocentro.org* (November 12, 2013). Accessible at <http://baixocentro.org/2013/11/12/workshop-sp-urbanismo/>. (Accessed on March 26, 2014).

Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building

and city design. This is the laboratory in which city planning should have been

learning and forming and testing its theories. Instead the practitioners and teachers of

the discipline (if such it can be called) have ignored the study of success and failure in

real life, have been incurious about the reasons for unexpected success, and are guided

instead by principles derived from the behavior and appearance of towns, suburbs,

tuberculosis sanatoria, fairs, and imaginary dream cities – from anything but cities

themselves.[20]

There is a visible gap between what is done with the urban structure and what the

population of that region really needs or wants. Cities are created as the result of the

imagination of a specific group of people and violently applied to communities who live

in these neighborhoods. Generally, the planning process does not pass through society's

inquiry to provide feedback and define what should be done with the urban space[21]. The

communities are rarely consulted to approve the renovation plans; they are simply forced

to live with the planned changes. Richard Sennett in his book "The Uses of Disorder"

discusses the relationship between urban planning and the communities affected by the

restructuring. According to him,

professional planners of highways, of redevelopment housing, of inner-city renewal

projects have treated challenges from displaced communities or community groups as

a threat to the value of their plans rather than as natural part of the effort at social

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20 Jane Jacobs. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage Books Edition (1992): 6.

21 Again, the case of Gehl and the historical neighborhood in São Paulo comes to mind. The participation of communities and social movements in the meetings was only virtual. The feedback and input provided by them was not incorporated into the final project. In this sense, the participation of the grassroots movements was strictly formal, and not a real conversation. It was only to guarantee what is required by law.

reconstruction.[22]

From this imposed perspective, the nomenclature of streets becomes a commodity. It is a way of applying the city plan to its citizens in order to control their behaviors and thus segment society into different identities and groups. The term *urban commodity*, however, is understood in different ways. Sennett, for instance, considers the concept of community as a commodity belonging to cities, as if the principle of a group identity was intrinsic to the urban space.[23] According to his theories, it is through the identification and separation of groups that a city's population can be controlled. It is a control imposed not only by the macrostructure, but also through an attachment to an identity that happens within the urban environment which, therefore, makes easier to identify who is the Other. Urban planners just use this identification to create their plans and increasingly segregate society. For Sennett, it is through this contraposition that communities attempt to preserve the "purity" of a group, avoiding contact with anyone who is different. This is more apparent in the distinction of rich and poor neighborhoods, or linked to religion or race. Each community or group identity tries to sustain invisible barriers against the other in order to maintain the purity and the moral values present in that community. No wonder that, at the end of his book "The Uses of Disorder," Sennett argues for an urban area without divisions or classifications, in which the exchange between groups may occur through antagonisms between conflicting identities. Only in this way can an organic and open environment for urban constructions be created that is focused on what people want and is not imposed by urban planners. According to

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22 Richard Sennett. *The Uses of Disorder – Personal Identity and City Life*. W. W. Norton (1970): 7.

23 Ibid.

Sennett,

> For when predetermined use through zoning is eliminated, the character of a
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> neighborhood will depend on the specific bonds and alliances of the people within it;
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> its nature will be determined by social acts and the burden of those acts over time as a
>
> community's history. The pre-planned "image" of city neighborhoods would not be
>
> definable on a planner's map; it would depend on how the individuals of the
>
> neighborhood dealt with each other.[24]

That's why a city without a defined nomenclature, as already shown by Calvino

with his description of Zaira, transforms the urban space into something more organic,

less imposed, and more open to social interference. There is then no imposition of limits

to a particular community, thus opening the city map to less controlled interventions.

Furthermore, although the understanding of *urban commodity* in this thesis is not directly

limited to, it references what Friedrich Engels and Georg Simmel argue about the urban

environment in a capitalist system. For the former, the urban structure developed by

macrostructure is a way to control the working class and prevent an idea of collectivity. It

is a force in the service of capital in order to maintain the *status quo* in society, thus

restraining the emergence of a real urban culture. On the other hand, for Simmel, there is

a dissociation between the individual and the urban space thanks to the impersonal

rationalism imposed by capital, making the cities into control centers to keep the use-

value and production of the working class[25]. These ideas, however, were reread by Henry

Lefebvre, who argues for a revolution that no longer emerges from the industrial

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24 Ibid: 142.

25 Joseph D. Lewandowski. "Street Culture – The Dialetic of Urbanism in Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-werk*," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*. Vol. 31, no. 3 (2005): 293-308.

environment, but from inside the cities. As David Harvey explains:

> In invoking the "working class" as the agent of revolutionary change throughout his
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> text, Lefebvre was tacitly suggesting that the revolutionary working class was
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> constituted out of urban rather than exclusively factory workers. This, he later
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> observed, is a very different kind of class formation – fragmented and divided,
>
> multiple in its aims and needs, more often itinerant, disorganized and fluid rather than
>
> solidly implanted.[26]

The fluidity inside the urban space and the plurality of groups and communities who work within the urban environment are addressed by several other authors who advocate for an antagonism in order to maintain the public space as a stage for democratic discourse. Chantal Mouffe, for example, argues for a "radical democracy" considering the struggle between different groups as a way to reach a real democracy against what is hegemonic.[27] Rosalyn Deutsche's arguments, on the other hand, explore how art in public spaces may – or may not – involve and engage citizens on issues about their space, stimulating debates about what is private or really public.[28] It is quite significant that Deutsche uses the figure of the homeless as a starting point for her argument about the truly public character of areas administered by neighborhood associations. According to her, the idea of an Other who, for the dominant group, can cause disturbance is the necessary conflict to highlight the use of public spaces for private purposes, or for activities that are only permitted or controlled by a small group. It is through this antagonism that appears the different understandings of what a public

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26 David Harvey. *Rebel Cities – From the Right to the City to Urban Revolution*. Verso (2012): XIII.

27 Chantal Mouffe. *The Return of the Political*. Verso (2006).

28 Rosalyn Deutsche. "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy," *Social Text,* no. 33 (1992): 34-53.

space is and how the privatization of parks and public areas happens.

The privatization of public space is one of the starting points for Lefebvre's argument about the right to the city. The commodification of urban space transformed the cities into an impersonal infrastructure in which "the urban remains in a state of dispersed and alienated actuality, the kernel and virtuality."[29] The commodification discussed in his work is more focused on the influence of capital in physical urban space, which generates new structural buildings, new stores and markets, and types of consumerism. It is the stimulus to consumption and not to social activities that transforms the city into something alienated from organic life. Thus, the city is regarded as a utopian object of interpretation, since it is not studied considering its entire historical trajectory:

> Yet, the *urban* remains in a state of dispersed and alienated actuality, as kernel and virtuality. What the eyes and analysis perceive on the ground can at best pass for the shadow of a future object in the light of a rising sun. It is impossible to envisage the reconstitution of the old city, only the construction of a new one on new foundations, on another scale and in other conditions, in another society. The prescription is: there cannot be a going back (towards the traditional city), nor a headlong flight, towards a colossal and shapeless agglomeration. In other words, for what concerns the city the object of science is not given. The past, the present, the possible can not be separated. What is being studied is a *virtual object*, which thought studies, which calls for new approaches.[30]

In other words, rather than cities directly responding to what happens inside them, they are artificially designed for a purpose that often contradicts the regular and organic

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29 Henri Lefebvre. "The Right to the City," *Writings on Cities*. Blackwell Publishers (1996): 148.

30 Ibid.

use of their infrastructure. According to Sennett, when urban planners are hired for large projects, there is no concern for the lives of its inhabitants, but rather their primary goal relates to the economic interrelationships that happen with other cities and regions.[31] The changes are designed to ensure that the flow of goods and trade between municipalities happens fluidly and without obstructions. This perspective is essential to the city life; after all, the urban environment inside a capitalist system necessarily needs to generate funding sources for the survival of its residents. The problem arises when the residents who would benefit from this tangle that assists in economic relations are forgotten and even have certain constraints of life imposed on them that have nothing to do with what they want. The projects end up seeming artificial and inconsistent with reality[32].

The city created by Italo Calvino, finally, is a demonstration of how social relations within cities might happen without an imposed urban commodity acting in citizens lives. Moreover, it also shows that the organic construction of a city, where the experience of use becomes an important factor for orientation, is a characteristic that should be considered and even encouraged. In this way, different identities are able to relate to each other, not being avoided through invisible barriers but considered and included in daily life. Consideration of the other's experience in the urban space is needed in order to understand the particular locality and thus navigate through its streets.

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31 Richard Sennett. *The Uses of Disorder – Personal Identity and City Life*. W. W. Norton (1970): 91-95.

32 Again, Jane Jacobs' fight to avoid the urban renewal of West Village is a good example. See: Jennifer Hock. "Jane Jacobs and the West Village: The Neighborhood Against Urban Renewal," *Journal of the Society Architectural Historians*, Vol 66, no. 1 (March 2007): 16-19.

VALIE EXPORT

the infrastructure interfering in the organic

VALIE EXPORT. "Abrundung II (Round Off II)" (1976)

In this discussion about urban space, the body's relationship with the structure of the city is also affected. How architecture and urban structures are created is a way of mediating how the body interacts with the space itself. VALIE EXPORT, as she stated, considers the body to be expansive. Unlike the discussions in groups of Viennese Actionists, which dealt the women's body as a three-dimensional object in space, EXPORT "releases the body into the mobility of interrelations signifying."[33] In other

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33 Roswitha Mueller. *Valie Export – Fragments of the Imagination*. Indiana University Press (1994): XX.

words, she adds the body in an analysis of relationships between the communication system in which it is inserted and how the body reacts to this through expressions caused by mental and emotional concerns. In this way, the architecture simultaneously influences the body and the mind, shaping and framing our behavior in this urban environment. This understanding is present in almost all of her work. EXPORT explores how her body is a support that interferes in the production of a film and its environment (*Adjungierte Dislokationen*) to the forms that the city imposes to its inhabitants, as in the work *Abrundung II (Round Off II)*.

Based in her works, the artist seems to state that architecture and urban space could be used to shape internal states of the body, in which lines and geometric shapes accentuate the imposition of architecture or even landscapes in relation to the body. From this influence not only our physical structure is affected, but also our minds and behavior to the environment in which we operate. EXPORT's performances, and photographic and video records illustrate that the control within an environment is not necessarily only because of communication systems (although, for her, it is extremely important), but also the physical structure in which we operate. The *urban infrastructure* thus has no way to be neutral or totally oblivious to the presence and interaction of its citizens. It dictates how our body reacts and interacts with the imposed system in order to shape our behaviors and relationships we have within this environment.

An interesting group for drawing a parallel with the discussions raised by EXPORT are the Situationists. For example, their conceptualization of *psychogeography* calls into question the idea of the urban space as being something that is imposed, since participants simply walk around town without a defined direction ("dérive"). Or, when

they had one, they were encouraged to respond affectively to the encounters they had and change the trajectory ("détournment").[34] Each map, each locality, was shaped according to the personality and experience of each one, which only would be possible if one considers the city to be an open stage for different opportunities and perceptions. While still working with an imposed structure, the Situationists – which included Lefebvre and Guy Debord – questioned in a playful way the perception we have of it, and also challenged the participants to think about cities as something different: as an open and constructive process built from the experiences of each one. It is a search for ways to bypass the control forced by urban planners and the imposition of consumption created by a capitalist system. For them, both ideas of "détournement" and "dérive" are essential to circumventing the system created by the spectacle of consumption. The former can be translated "most simply as 'diversion,' though at the loss of the nuances encoded in the original French – 'rerouting,' 'hijacking,' 'embezzlement,' 'misappropriation,' 'corruption,' all acts implicit in the Situationist's use of society's 'preexisting aesthetic elements.'"[35] And for the latter, "one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there."[36]

It is also important to note that, according to some members of the group, these

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34 Simon Sadler. "The Naked City – Realities of Design and Space Laid Bare," *The Situationist City*. The MIT Press (1998): 15-66.

35 Ibid: 17.

36 Guy Debord. "Theory of the Dérive," *Internationale Situationiste #2* (December 1958). Accessible at <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>. (Accessed on March 26, 2014).

discussions about the opening of the cities were not only applied to capitalist cities, but also to those with other economic systems. Although it is not an ideal shared by all members, it is interesting to understand that the city can be understood not only by an imposing economic system, but also in a predominantly social one. But what connects the different sections and discussions of the Situationists is the imposition of something oblivious to the body, the organic, the life that is in city streets.

> [Raoul] Vaneigem refused to distinguish the urbanism of communist and capitalist states: "Urbanism and information are complementary in both capitalist and 'anti-capitalist' societies: they organize silence." In both the East and the West, he claimed, "the ideal urbanism is the projection in space of a social hierarchy without conflict. Roads, lawns, natural flowers, and artificial forests lubricate the workings of subjection and render them amicable." It had to be understood that urbanism regulated the body and the mind as well as architecture. "In a novel by Yves Touraine," Vaneigem recalled, "the State even offers retired workers an electronic masturbator; economy and happiness find themselves complete."[37]

Another group member, Asger Jorn, for example, had a more open understanding of urban areas. Trying to go against the imposition of the modernist Le Corbusier, Jorn believed that the architectural construction in the work of Corbusier was functionalist and it divided cities and districts based on categories and groupings, separating where a family with children should live and a neighborhood with housing for the elderly.[38] There was a clear division between groups as to which spaces each profile should inhabit. Thus, segregation formed the basis for a more functional city and was less concerned about the

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37 Ibid: 16.

38 Peter Wollen. "Situationists and Architecture," *New Left Review 8* (Mar/Apr 2001): 129.

social and organic aspects of relationships.

> Jorn's underlying claim was that 'the framework for living' was not one that could be
>
> imposed from outside, externally, by city planners and architects. It had to be built in
>
> co-operation with the inhabitants of the city themselves, whose free input was
>
> needed, just as the skeleton needed the muscles and the stalk the sap.[39]

As much as EXPORT has not necessarily discussed urban planning, she understood the imposition created by the macrostructure and how it affected the way we relate to the *urban infrastructure*. Her perception of the city was fully connected to the body, and she applied this organic understanding to the urban environment. For EXPORT, for example, the city did not have a specific gender, but embodied both the masculine and the feminine in its forms: "feminine in its housing, sheltering, and protecting life, masculine in its traffic, commerce, and communication."[40] And EXPORT sees this structure as liberating to women while imprisoning them at the same time:

> If the city can exclude women, as a cultural community in which men alone transact
>
> business, govern the nation, and enforce the laws, it can also free women for the first
>
> time from their isolation in the private home.

The act of folding herself in a corner and intensifying the rays of a curve point to a violent architectural imposition. It is not the architecture that molds the organic, but rather the rigid structure that shapes the way we act and move around the space. This imposition is intimately connected to the distance urban planners have from the object of analysis ("the virtual object," as stated by Lefebvre in Italo Calvino's section). Social life, again, is forgotten for the sake of something considered superior by the planners, such as

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39 Ibid.

40 Roswitha Mueller. *Valie Export – Fragments of the Imagination*. Indiana University Press (1994): 186.

the ideal city or economic progress.

In this case, for this study, it is important to emphasize how a city that does not think in a specific *urban commodity* – such as the nomenclature of the streets – can resignify EXPORT's exploration of architecture interfering in the internal states of the body. Without these mechanisms of control, the body would have another meaning: an agent that could modulate the spaces. The absence of impositions by the macrostructure would make the citizens agents of the changes in the living environment. It would define the space which, inevitably, shapes us.

Another issue with which EXPORT is concerned is considering the communication system responsible for psychosomatic changes of the body. In other words, from a Situationist perspective, the media system imposed by new technologies affects the state of mind of cities' residents in order to change even how their bodies function. Guy Debord was one of the authors which posited and strongly criticized it this interference, arguing that it is exclusively for the purpose of increasing consumerism.[41] For him, there is a bigger concern with the stimulus of consumption than with the people's real lives. According to Debord,

> But on the whole this introduction of technology into everyday life – ultimately
> taking place within the framework of modern bureaucratized capitalism – certainly
> tends rather to reduce people's independence and creativity. The new prefabricated
> cities clearly exemplify the totalitarian tendency of modern capitalism's organization
> of life: the isolated inhabitants... see their lives reduced to the pure triviality of the

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41   Simon Sadler. "The Naked City – Realities of Design and Space Laid Bare," *The Situationist City*. The
     MIT Press (1998): 15-16.

repetitive combined with the obligatory absorption of an equally repetitive

spectacle.[42]

In other words, the mind alters the functioning of the body when receiving and being influenced by these information networks. By throwing the body into a corner and illustrating the issue of urban structure shaping the erect state, EXPORT makes a poetic critique of this interference, creating a state of awareness about the extent to which the city influences its residents. It may be for this reason that EXPORT no longer wants to think of the body only as a physical entity in space, but in its expansion through the context in which it is inserted. "While this dialectic exchange between body and culture is most evident in EXPORT's performance, it is one of the major concerns of all of her art."[43]

Thinking about the possibility of something happening beyond the expected helps not only to understand the mechanisms that generate the expectation, but also to think in new ways and means to understand the establishment. VALIE EXPORT's performances visually demonstrate the influence of architecture in the body and raise questions about how to understand this *urban infrastructure*. We are so used to its rigidity that it is difficult to understand how this interference happens. How can the framing of the body in this way be avoided? What structure can be influenced by the body? What is the probability of this happening? And how is it possible to understand and change the way urban planning is done today?

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42 Ibid.

43 Roswitha Mueller. *Valie Export – Fragments of the Imagination*. Indiana University Press (1994): XX.

MILTON MACHADO[44]

the organic and the infrastructure simultaneously interfering each other
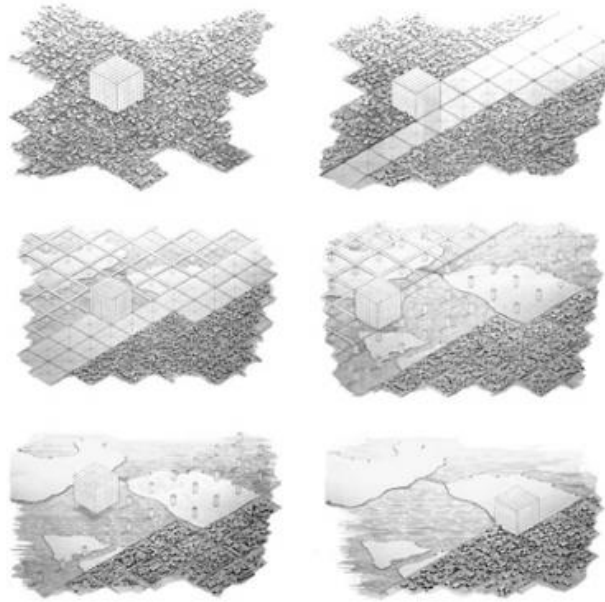
Milton Machado "History of the Future - Series I" (1978)

Milton Machado, with some of these issues in mind, uses an assumption as the point of entry for his exploration of cities and urbanism that sounds somewhat absurd. What is the probability of a ping pong ball going through a wall when thrown by an arm? Scientists use this imaginary exercise to explore the understanding of atoms and question the very likelihood of an empirically impossible event being realized. In theory, however, the ball could go over the wall in one chance in 10 to the power of *-n*, where *n* tends to be equal to ∞[45]. For Milton, the issue is not just the ball, the wall, or the end result of the

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44 This section draws on an interview held with the artist in January 2014.

45 Milton Machado. *History of the Future*. Cosac Naify (2013): 110.

mathematical formula, but also the understanding of probability as a viable factor in the operation to create knowledge. As Machado states,

> Students and teachers knew from their experience of the real natural world that balls would definitely not cross through walls. But they invented this fiction in order to create a new theoretical problem, and to find out more about atomic structures, intermolecular spaces, mass, densities, attritions and interactions. And about *problems*: it was in the name of physics that a fictional world was created. What the finite $n \neq \infty$ in the index guarantees is this singular reality: the creation of a world.[46]

History of the Future, then, is the exploration in urban planning of this probability of something that will never occur. Machado created the work as an analysis about projections and social relations within the city space without the need to be put in practice. It is not a utopia or dystopia, but rather an *atopia* about urban planning. To this end, Machado extracted essences of the main ideas and relationships that happen in the urban environment, building an abstraction that challenges the idea of a city planner. For this thesis, Machado's piece connects to the subject of imagining a city without *urban commodities* to show the root of all urban issues. In *History of the Future*, one can understand the desire for progress always present in contemporary cities, the social relations that cut across different conceptions of the urban environment, and even the creation of an ideal city, which could never be out of abstraction and actually put into practice.
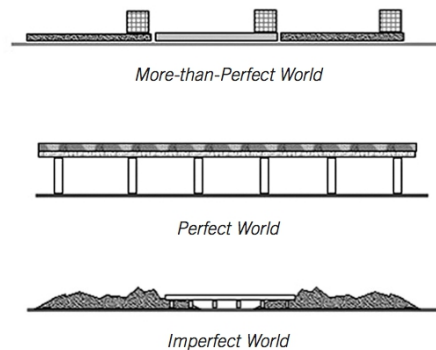
For this task, Machado used as a starting point the idea of connecting the continents again, bringing back the first continent, Pangea, when there were no oceans or

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46   Ibid: 111.

borders between terrestrial spaces. In the author's theories, giant bridges interconnect the continents as a way of breaking barriers and boundaries. As the artist explains himself:

The idea for a *project restoring physical unity* between continents initially inspired and justified the graphic representations of the three superimposed worlds of HF and its fictitious characters. The concept was then significantly developed from the mere description of the mechanism, or rather the dynamic of the movements described, to critical reflections on the *idea of unity* as a general principle – thus ideal in character and large in scope – implicit in the project of affirming the human condition itself (an ideal already contained in the treatment of this same condition which is necessarily fragmentary and recurrently "as a whole"), and on the *idea of progress* – in which the pursuit of ideas of perfection provides a paradigm and method – which lends to the cognitive process ("as a whole," so to speak) a similarly ideal character. [47]

Machado then idealized spatial layers between different worlds: Machado calls the lower level, which shows the continents and cities we know, the *Imperfect World;* in the middle plane there is the *Perfect World*, a space where the structures linking continents support the plane above; and, finally, on the

More-than-Perfect World

Perfect World

Imperfect World

Subdivisions between the three worlds theorized in History of The Future

top plane, the *More-than-Perfect World*, an abstraction about the constant destruction and construction of cities, mainly idealized by urban planners.

In this scheme, Machado also posited three characters that relate to the urban structure: the *Sedentary*, the *Subject to a Vulgar Death*, and the *Nomad*. The three

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47   Milton Machado. *History of the Future*. Cosac Naify (2013): 7.

represent the social relationships that take place in an urban environment, demonstrating principles current in ideas of progress and development. These figures cannot be considered human or living characters – although the *Sedentary* has an anthropomorphic feature. They are representations of social relationships, each having specific functions within the *History of the Future*.

The *Imperfect World* contains *Imperfect Cities*, oceans, continents, and *Symbolic Bridges*. These are bridges that connect the continents and create a single continent, passing over borders and physical obstacles to get to other regions. It is in this world that rural life exists, besides the cities as we know today.

Above the *Imperfect World*, there is the *Perfect World*, consisting of the *Pillars of the New World*, the *Ephemeral Bridges* and the *Ideal Plan*. The pillars are vertical structures that have caves in their midst and sustain the *Ephemeral Bridges* and the *Ideal Plan*. The bridges are connections between the pillars for sustaining the *Ideal Plan*, which is a structure that serves as the foundation for the *More-than-Perfect Cities*.

The *More-than-Perfect World* then consists of the *More-than-Perfect Cities* and the *Modules of Destruction*. These modules are responsible for the constant destruction and construction of idealized cities. For this to happen, there are three cycles that ensure constant change: *Destruction*, *Construction*, and *Life Cycles*. They are cycles that happen at the same time, one in each city and forming a system of triads. While one *More-than-Perfect City* is in the destruction cycle, the second is in the construction cycle, and the third in the life cycle. In this plan, each city has its own *Module of Destruction*. The module, in turn, has four movements:

1) MD leaves the *Alpha Position* and turns to the *Omega Position*, destroying the

More-than-Perfect City and making the *Ideal Plan* and the *Pillars of the New World* visible;

2) MD leaves the *Omega Position* and turns to the *Alpha Position*, destroying the *Ideal Plan* and making the *Ephemeral Bridges*, the *Pillars of the New World*, and the *Imperfect World* visible;

3) MD leaves the *Alpha Position* and heads again to the *Omega Position*, destroying the *Ephemeral Bridges;* and

4) the MD goes back to *Alpha*, destroying the *Pillars of the New World*.

The three characters are also part of the *More-than-Perfect City*. The *Subject to a Vulgar Death* is the character that waits for its death, allowing the MD to end its existence during the destruction of the *More-than-Perfect City*. The *Sedentary*, in turn, seeks to preserve its life entering the caves of the *Ephemeral Bridges*, passing by the *Perfect World*, and arriving to the *Imperfect World*. On the other hand, the *Nomad* has an intrinsic relationship with the MD. Its shape is a minute sphere, which allows it to go inside and divert from the MD and preserve its existence in the *More-than-Perfect Cities*.

In the movements of *History of the Future*, the presence of the Nomad is essential to understanding the flow and preservation of *More-than-Perfect Cities*. As Machado describes it:

> The Nomad moves.
>
> Motility is the Nomad's motivation.
>
> The Nomad is an invention.
>
> The Nomad is a founder of cities.
>
> The Nomad is an initiator.

The Nomad's future is to initiate a city's present.

The Nomad is a translator.

The movements of the Nomad are vectorial, not directional.

The Nomad acts through permanent deterritorialisation.

The Nomad acts through permanent reterritorialisation.

The Nomad acts through permanent transgressions.

The Nomad acts through permanent incorporations.

The Nomad acts through negation and excess.

The Nomad acts through variation, expansion, conquest, capture and offshoots.

The Nomad collects but does not constitute albums.

The Nomad is not particularly fond of generals.

The Nomad is a producer of maps from which it is constantly detached.

The Nomad acts through the repetition and the reaffirmation of difference (more than one thousand times).

The Nomad is always in the middle ("*dans le milieu*"), even when at the beginning or at the end.

The Nomad is always in the in-between.

The Nomad sees things as though for the first time.[48]

The *Nomad* is the one responsible for keeping the cities alive and challenging the movements of the *Module of Destruction*. It is this idealized character that contests the imposition made by progress and development. When extracting the essences of social relations that occur inside the cities, Machado leverages the discussion to metaphysics and epistemology.

The study developed by Machado since 1978 is influenced mainly by

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48   Milton Machado. *History of the Future*. Cosac Naify (2013): 50.

philosophers, such as Arthur Danto, Jean-François Lyotard, and Karl Marx. Padre

Antonio Vieira, however, who published in 1718 a book titled with the same name as

Machado's piece is the most interesting of them all.[49] What is interesting in the context of

this thesis is understanding the influence the work of Padre Antonio Vieira has in

Machado's own studies. Vieira's *History of the Future* questions how predictions about

the future can be considered in Catholic precepts. Vieira, with his famous rhetoric,

explains that the prediction of the future by a mortal being is a desecration condemned by

Catholicism. For Catholics, this ability should be restricted to those who are considered

holy. But, at the same time, he believes that mortals can do the same thing, as it was

prophets who wrote the Bible – although the forecast has been made by God, and the

prophets only used their pens to write. There is a conflict about who can actually write

about the events to come. Vieira's book, for example, is an allegory of a future in which

Portugal establishes the Fifth World Empire, conquering and dominating all territories

already known by the reign. It is important to note that Vieira does not use the name of

the country to compose the Fifth Empire, but instead uses the word "world." According

to him, many older societies viewed their reigns as the only existing world, as was the

case with the Egyptians and the Assyrians. Vieira predicts the turn of Portugal and the

Catholic Church to be the new hegemony of this world.

> This was the World of the past, and this is the World of the present, and this will be

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49 The Jesuit, although participating in the conquer and catechesis during the colonial Brazil, was known for his struggle in defense of indigenous peoples, arguing that them could not be enslaved as the church and Portugal planned. For Vieira, it was necessary to create an independent institution to manage and understand the vastness of cultures that were already in the territory. This fight earned him processes and almost condemnation by heresy by the Church. However, his eloquence and rhetoric were very well recognized in Brazil and Portugal, and Vieira continued his work, focusing mainly in studies about the Inquisition. To read more about Vieira, see the Wikipedia article: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ant%C3%B3nio_Vieira>. (Accessed on January 25, 2014).

the World of the future; and together these three worlds will form (as God formed

them) an entire World. This is the subject of our History, and this the World's empire

that we promise. All that meets the sea, all that the Sun shines on, all that covers and

surrounds the Sun, will be placed under the Fifth Empire; not by name or fanciful

title, like all those who until now were called empires of the World, but by domain

and real bondage. All reigns will unite in a center, all heads will obey the supreme

head, all the crowns will perish in a single diadem, and this will be the pedestal of the

cross of Christ.[50]

This domination of the entire planet, as if the world were only one, lacking

divisions of nations or continents, speaks directly to the work of Machado, where the

continents were reconnected through the *Symbolic Bridges*. The world theorized by

Vieira is shown by Machado's piece as the territory in which unity finally happens. There

are no borders, frontiers, or governmental divisions – which is why Machado considered

his studies to be atopian as opposed to utopian. None of the cities in the *Imperfect World*

(the bottom level of his abstraction) have distinctions between themselves. It should be

emphasized that the abstractions and theories created by Machado embody a pessimistic

and ironic approach to urban planning, even though they are not a dystopia. Machado

speculates on how cities are built using the same concepts that architects and planners

use to argue for their projects. In the *Imperfect World*, the cities always need to be

changed, altered, reconstructed through processes of constant renewal, mirroring the

designs and structures theoretically considered perfect.

The reflection of *History of the Future* thus breaks any messianic logic, revealing that

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50 This passage and the other ones that follow were translated by the author from Portuguese: Padre
Antonio Vieira. "História do Futuro – Vol I," *Obras Escolhidas*. Livraria Sá da Costa. Lisboa (1953):
13. Online edition accessible at <http://www.fcsh.unl.pt/docentes/rmonteiro/pdf/Futuro_I.pdf>.
(Accessed on January 24, 2014).

there is no more salvation on the horizon of time. The former catastrophe will

continue to reproduce itself in the future, indefinitely, creating a new world each

time. History is a game, almost a videogame, in which we risk our lives and have to

make choices – few, within a pre-fixed range. We might succumb naively, simply

await death, such as those *Subject to a Vulgar Death*. Or flee in despair, such as the

Sedentary, producing the opposite movement to that of the symbolic machine:

delving into the depths, believing in steady ground, in a reality separate from the

game and able to resist its effects. Or we can take the roguish strategy of

accompanying our own game, following the rhythm of its movements. Rolling like a

little sphere is the figure of the *Nomad*, the emblem of the artist.[51]

The hierarchy that Machado created (with the *Imperfect World* below, the *Perfect*

World in the middle, and the *More-Than-Perfect World* on top) demonstrates the will to

achieve something that can never be reached. It is for this reason that the world at the

top, where the *Modules of Destruction*, the *Nomad*, and the other characters are, is in

constant change and renewal. It argues against the greed for revitalization and the

constant need to plan the urban space. Because of this constant change, the characters are

forced to move and find a way to avoid being destroyed in the route – although the

Subject to a Vulgar Death is eventually destroyed during this process. The *Sedentary*,

through the caves found in the *Pillars of the New World*, finds refuge in the *Imperfect*

World, where they can settle and build their *Imperfect Cities*. These movements can

represent the constant escape caused by the imposed projects in the urban space; plans

that mostly have an unattainable idealism and disregard the organic existence living

within there.

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51 Tania Rivera. "The Architecture of Thought," *History of the Future*. Cosac Naify (2013): 99.

For this thesis, Machado's work is an essential element for understanding the relationships that take place in cities through projects created by urban planners. Through the abstractions presented in *History of the Future*, Machado criticizes the imposition created by the idealism of planners and the process how cities are designed. In the end, the foundation world, which serves as support for the construction of the *Pillars for the New World*, will always be considered imperfect and in need of improvements. However, it will never be turned into something perfect, or even more-than-perfect.

It is for this reason that Machado chose his work's title. The conception of history is obviously focused on the past, to report events in a given period of time. The future, in turn, is something that will come. Phrasing the two terms together, however, brings the idea of narrating the past of something that is about to happen, as if you were already considering a future that, in fact, has already been defined in the past. Vieira's *History of the Future* brings light to this conception:

> To satisfy, therefore, the greatest eagerness of this appetite [for predicting the future] and to run the curtain to the biggest and most hidden secrets of this mystery, today we place in the World theatre our History, therefore deemed as being of the Future. We do not write with Berossus the antiquities of the Assyrians; or even with Xenophon the history of the Persians; or even with Herodotus of the Egyptians; nor with Joseph of the Hebrews; nor with Curcio of the Macedonians; nor with Thucydides of the Greeks; nor with Livio of the Romans; nor with our Portuguese writers; but we will write without the author what none of them wrote or could write. They wrote stories of the past to the future; we will write stories of the future to those who are present. Impossible painting to portray copies before the original, but

this is what the brush of our History will do.[52]

Thus, it is a way to intertwine all historical times in a given proposition and ensure a better understanding of the changes already planned. It is no wonder that Machado believes his exploration is more an *atopia* than anything else. In his *History of the Future*, no boundaries or borders are established, as they are physical or temporal. His concern lies in how cities are restructured, describing a constant change in which the *Nomad* is forced to act in order to ensure the continuity of the entire cycle.

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52 Some names may be still in Portuguese. Padre Antonio Vieira. "História do Futuro – Vol I," *Obras Escolhidas*. Livraria Sá da Costa. Lisboa (1953): 4.

TERESA MARGOLLES

the infrastructure blocking the organic
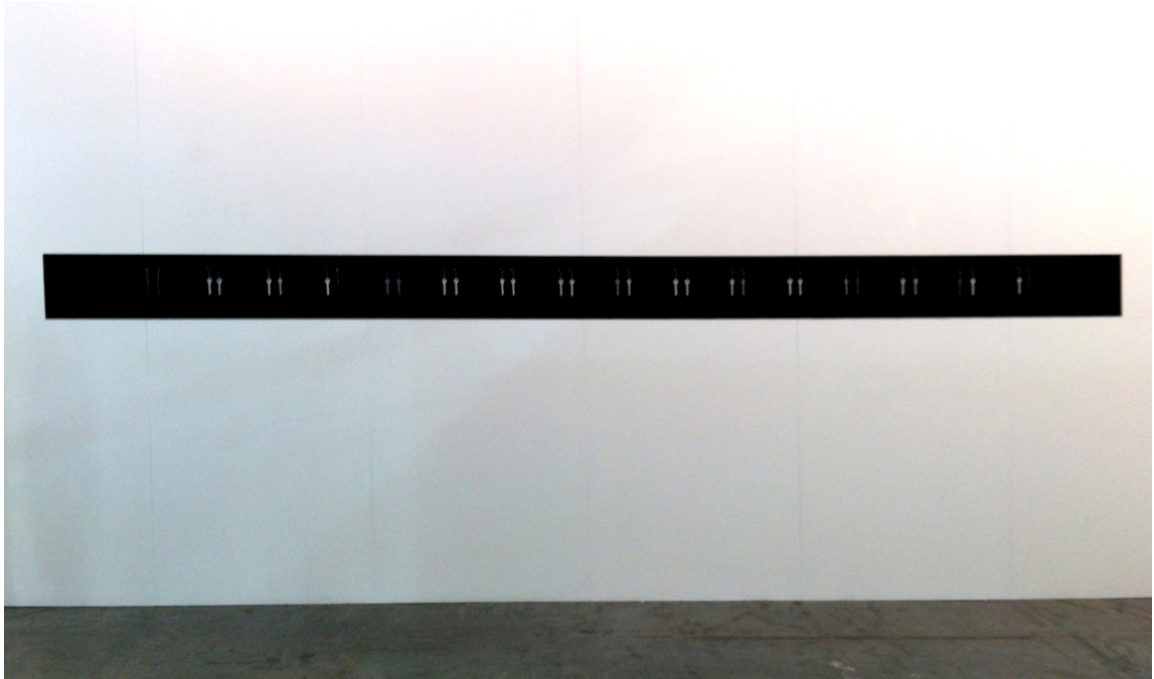
Teresa Margolles. "Llaves (Keys)," (2012)

The discussion about borders also is related to what the urban commodities used for control are. It is not only the naming of the streets that creates a gap between social life and *urban infrastructures*, but also the socio-political differences between nations. The work *Keys (Llaves),* by Teresa Margolles offers a poetic way of bringing up issues about the forced separation caused by the concepts of nation and sovereignty. Margolles interviewed residents of the cities of El Paso, USA, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and asked them to give their impressions of each side of the border. To Margolles, the two cities should be considered as one, even though its urban field extends across the two

countries. What prevents them from being together, however, are the national divisions and their economic realities.

With a background as a forensic Mexican policewoman, Margolles studied and analyzed several cases of violence that took place in Ciudad Juárez, considered one of the most violent cities in the world because of the wars waged against drugs.[53] Her works are her way of exploring and demonstrating the urban violence in this city in order to draw attention to cases that are often overlooked because happened on the Latin side.

The boundaries, in this case, ultimately separate the way this problem of violence is dealt with and often instigates the perception of how it is in the other side. The keys made by a Mexican artisan demonstrate how this separation functions in the subjectivity of residents of both cities, for whom one can be considered to be a "state of crime" and the other "freedom."

The boundaries challenged here by Machado are seen as a major impediment to understanding the real extent of the problem of the city. Although Margolles still tries to disclose the facts through her works, the border that cuts the city is far from being removed. In cases like this, where the urban space of a city transpose a national sovereignty, who is responsible for the local problems? The question of nomenclature goes here from everyday life to questioning the macrostructure itself. An unnamed territory does not belong to anyone. The spatial politics then are not connected to daily life in the *urban infrastructure,* but fall on how different governments see each other.

Spatial politics are debated nowadays in different ways. One of them is to

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53 Lise Olsen. "Ciudad Juarez passes 2,000 homicides in '09, setting record," *Chron Online* (October 21, 2009). Accessible at <http://www.chron.com/news/nation-world/article/Ciudad-Juarez-passes-2-000-homicides-in-09-1593554.php>. (Accessed on January 26, 2014)

understand the national sovereignty through a global economic system. Understanding

how money flows in a globalized world serves to make questions about the real owner of

a territory more explicit. Saskia Sassen, for example, questions the global financial

market to understand how a country's sovereignty can be understood in a globalized

world. To do so, she argues for a "new geography of power," which she believes to have

three components:

> One of these components concerns the actual territories where much of globalization
>
> materializes in specific institutions and processes. And the question here is, then,
>
> what kind of territoriality is this? The second component of the new geography of
>
> power concerns the ascendance of a new legal regime to govern cross-border
>
> economic transactions. One can see here at work a rather peculiar passion for various
>
> kinds of 'legality' driving the globalization of the corporate economy. There has been
>
> a massive amount of legal innovation around the growth of globalization. The third
>
> component of the new geography of power is the fact that a growing number of
>
> economic activities are taking place in electronic space.[54]

The "new geography of power" helps explain the influence of other nations in

local affairs. In view of the accumulation of capital through financial market, it is easy to

understand how borders are not a real problem and how sovereignty is more linked to

accumulation of capital than to social relationships. For Sassen, the old concept of

sovereignty rooted in identity no longer can be applied in contemporary dynamics of

capital. One example that she gives is the case of the purchase of 3 million hectares in

Congo and Zambia by China for the production of biodiesel. Although the plantation

does not correspond with the national biome of the two African countries, the focus on

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54 Saskia Sassen. "Territory and Territoriality in the Global Economy," *International Sociology*, Vol. 15
    No. 2 (June 2000): 372-393.

accumulation of capital allows such a purchase without considering the environmental impact that this may produce.[55] Even though there is a defined space and an established nation (and even a name for a country), there is no assurance over who has the real sovereignty of those regions.

It is through the perspective of financial institutions that Doreen Massey also questions the space of cities and territories. Following Mouffe's and Deutsche's understanding of conflicts, Massey uses London as an example of a globalized city driven by the flow of capital in the financial market. But for her, the imagery of London is stuck in a perception of what the city should be: a global center linked to the financial market. Any imagination beyond that is pruned by the internal flow of the city itself. As Massey says, "sometimes you have to blow apart the imagination of a space or place to find within it its potential, to reveal the 'disparition' 'in what presents itself as a perceptual totality'."[56]

If the financial market can live in a world where borders no longer exist, why do immigrants still have problems entering certain countries? This discussion, for Massey, creates what appears to be a paradox between the right and left. While the right defends the free flow of capital between countries, it is against equal rights for immigrants. The left, meanwhile, is against the freedom of capital but vehemently defends the flexibilization of immigration laws. According to Massey,

> When those on the right of the political spectrum argue, say, *for* the free movement of

55 Saskia Sassen. "The Global Street: Making the Political," *Subversive Forum – The Future of Europe*, (May 14, 2012). Video. Accessible at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wECY6eUkOkY>. (Accessed on January 24, 2014).

56 Doreen Massey. *For Space*. SAGE Publications (2005): 158.

capital and *against* the free movement of labour it does not necessarily entail a

contradiction. It only lays itself open to that charge (and thus open to that kind of

political challenge) when each argument is legitimated by an appeal to a geographical

imagination hailed as a universal, and when (as in this case) the two legitimating

imaginations contradict each other. The 'inevitability' of a modern world without

borders *versus* the 'naturalness' of a world in which (some) local people have a right

to defend, with borders, their own local place. It is perfectly coherent to argue both

for a significant relaxation of European rules on immigration (greater openness) and

for the right of developing countries to put up protective barriers around, say, a vital

sector of production or a nascent industry (greater closure).[57]

Although the discussion about the global financial market seems far removed

from Margolles' keys, it raises big questions about sovereignty and when a boundary can

be ignored or not. While there is a consensus that, in a globalized world, the borders are

disappearing, it is important to stress the question: for whom? And it is the impression of

the residents of Ciudad Juárez and El Paso that the choice is very explicit.

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57 Ibid: 165.

CLAUDIO BUENO[58]

the organic hacking the infrastructure

Claudio Bueno. "Les Chant des Sirènes (from "Invisible Monuments" series)" (2011)

There is no doubt that technologies changed the way we interact in cities. The information system that runs in the virtual environment can even be considered to be the "killer" of how we understand the urban space.[59] Today, there are new ways to relate and understand how we can interfere in the urban environment without necessarily adding something physically to the space. During a residence in Québec, Canada, Claudio

58 This section draws on an interview held with the artist in January 2014.

59 William J. Mitchell. *e-topia*. The MIT Press (2000).

Bueno explored the monumentality using mobile devices as a way to add another layer of information to what is already regarded as established. In the Old Port of the city, Bueno realized that the story told through sculptures and monuments in the region about the two World Wars had a male and simplistic perspective. Besides that, in interviewing the local population he discovered that they had not even been asked to participate on how this history would be told. In other words, in this region, the monument reflects a history that does not represent how residents wants to portrait themselves or historical facts. History, therefore, is imposed by the macrostructure in a public space with great frequency of tourists in order to specify how visitors should look at and relate to that location.

The port area is a military zone which is restricted on certain days to pedestrian visitors and can only be accessed by ships and cruises that dock at the port. In order for cruise tourists to visit the area, they have to go through immigration and have their passports checked even for a quick stop of 20 or 30 minutes. Meanwhile, locals are forbidden from accessing the place. This process drew Bueno's attention, and he saw the highly controlled site as a target for *hacking* this imposition. His *Invisible Monuments* are applications for mobile devices that access a sound work when it comes to specific coordinates via GPS. Bueno is concerned with the triangulation between the body, space, and an information layer that may exist there. Only there, at the Saint-Laurent River, one can hear the mermaids singing and luring men to the seabed. *Le Chant des Sirènes* is a way of telling the story of the Wars through the perspective of the women who worked in the communication departments inside the ships and of questioning the monumentality that is imposed on communities.

The question of monumentality is essential here to understanding how the work

of Bueno falls into a perspective of a city without an *urban commodity* such is the nomenclature of the streets. Theoretically, the monuments represent the connection between space and its history. Rosalind Krauss, however, believes that monumentality no longer exists, since the monuments have now entered a "space of what could be called its negative condition – a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place."[60] Bueno's work, in contradiction to Krauss, works with all three at the same time: site, home, and place. Although using the virtual, Bueno brings up discussions of how brutal a monument is to the history of a place and how to hack this understanding. It is no wonder that Bueno uses mobile technologies to do so, as they can add new layers of information in a given space. While successfully erecting a statue requires the government permission and all of the associated bureaucratic processes, creating a work on the Internet only requires a developer and the work itself. Therefore, anyone visiting the site can hear the song of the Sirens without even feeling invaded by a historical imposition.

This participation enabled by the virtual also opens up another field of perception of what a city could be. The open source communities, for example, believe that institutions restrict creation and innovation by having a rigid hierarchy. For them, collaboration is much more useful than closing oneself off to the help of others.[61] What would this concept look like when applied to the city? The Spanish journalist and activist Bernardo Gutiérrez applied the four laws of freedom characteristics of open source software communities to understand how these open cities would be. To do so, he

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60 Rosalind Krauss. "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October*, Vol. 8 (Spring, 1979): 34.

61 To understand better the open source communities, see: Yochai Benkler and Helen Nissenbaum. "Commons-Based Peer Production and Virtue," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol 14, no. 4 (2006).

exchanged the word "software" for "city":

> **Freedom 0.** Freedom to run the city for whatever our purpose is
>
> **Freedom 1.** Freedom to study the functioning of a city and adapt it to our needs –
> access to code source is essential for this condition.
>
> **Freedom 2.** The freedom to redistribute copies and help your neighbor.
>
> **Freedom 3.** The freedom to improve the city and then publish it for the good of all
> community.[62]

Gutiérrez' goal in doing so was to advocate for a more reactive city. The urban structure, based on these laws, would respond to what its residents demand rather than being something given by the macrostructure. This exercise is only to demonstrate how the ideology and philosophy of open source communities could be applied to the urban space.

The idea of an open city, however, is not a novelty. Even Jane Jacobs has argued for this.[63] The difference is that, instead of creating a nostalgia of old cities, it considers the technologies to be allies in the process. In response to its collapse provoked by the financial market, the government of Iceland recently decided to create a new Constitution while considering the participation of its residents. Instead of selecting a small group of politicians to decide the future of the nation, they applied the same principles of the open source communities to this new approach of governance.[64]

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62 The original in Spanish was translated to English by the author. Bernardo Gutiérrez. "Soñé que era un DJ de calles (ciudades copyleft)," *#CódigoAbierto_CC* (April 14, 2012). Accessible at <http://codigo-abierto.cc/2012/04/14/sone-que-era-un-dj-de-calles-ciudades-copyleft/> (accessed on January 25, 2014).

63 Jane Jacobs. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage Books Edition. 1992.

64 Harvey Morris. "Crowdsourcing Iceland's Constitution," The New York Times Online (October 24, 2012). Accessible at <http://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/crowdsourcing-icelands-constitution/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0>. (Accessed on January 25, 2014).

The openness of a city helps the plurality and multiplicity argued by Mouffe and Deutsche necessary to the discussions of public space. And another important aspect of the virtuality of these monuments is the possibility for new pieces in the same locality. If, with the physical, is almost impossible to build two monuments in the same location, in the virtual environment is possible to create not only two, but infinite works. Anyone can create an accessible piece via GPS technology for the same locality without having them necessary conflicting with each other. "This sound monument does not stand as a historical imposition, but as a creation and a direct negotiation with the city," explains Bueno.[65] Virtuality, then, emerges as a means of circumventing the point of view of the macrostructure in a way that citizens' participation can emerge and organically happen. In the same way that Bueno created his work, anyone can do the same, paving the way for a real spatial interference by locals. It was only through geolocation that Bueno was able to tell the history through a bias that is different from the current one without plundering the ancient monument, confronting the police, or even imposing his historical perspective.

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65 Priscila Arantes. "Cláudio Bueno," *Binômios #3 (*August 2013): 5. Accessible at
   <http://3c.art.br/binomios-3/>. (Accessed on January 24, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The works and interventions cited here show different perspectives of what might happen if there were no control mechanism to mediate social relations in the *urban infrastructure*. The issue of naming the streets is just one among many other *urban commodities* that directly interfere in our daily lives. The main argument for this specific choice and not another is the interest in understanding specific mechanisms that promote gentrification. Its influence in the space is such that even something as trivial as the classification of a particular avenue or even the name of a neighborhood can influence and help with the eviction of whole communities from their original neighborhoods.

Today, the macrostructure needs the cities to be highly controlled so that it can predict profits and income without major disturbances. Because of that, there are no real concerns if there are people living under this flow of capital. Organic life, in most cases, is thought of secondarily, without being the bigger – when it should be the only? – concern of the macrostructure. It is because of this fierce imposition over many years that protestors have recently taken to the streets around the world, with the experience in Turkey to defend Gezi Park being perhaps the most emblematic for this thesis. The imposition of the real estate market allied with the government was such that even one of the remaining parks in the city was the target of large real estate enterprises.[66]

This thesis is concerned with pointing out the consequences of this problem of the impositions made by the macrostructure. Returning to the idea of being an "ethologist," it

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66 To understand more about the protests at Gezi Park, visit the Wikipedia article "2013 protests in Turkey." Accessible at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_protests_in_Turkey>. (Accessed on January 25, 2014).

was not the intent of this study to discuss gentrification or all mechanisms of control imposed by the macrostructure. Rather, it has sought to understand how the absence of an *urban commodity* could interfere in the social relationships we have with the *urban infrastructure*. Without having a linear demarcation inside the cities – which Sennett believed to be characteristic of a "new anarchism"[67] –, there would be a better understanding of the Other, which would make the urban space much more creative and plural. As Lewis Coser put it so well: "Conflict (...) prevents the ossification of the social system by exerting pressure for innovation and creativity."[68] The urban space would not necessarily be divided by class, race, ethnicity, or other identity groups, but it would be a constant conflict self-organizing and managing their own spaces. Sennett advocates for social conflicts as a way to generate neighborhoods open to changes. This idea is not far from the plurality and the antagonisms suggested by Mouffe for establishing a "radical democracy."[69] In the end, through "new anarchists" theories, a healthy environment for democracy can be created; a space in which a plurality of groups is respected in practice and there is no separation between those who are poor and those who are rich.

Finally, the artistic works discussed here represent some of the possibilities for the different perceptions of what constitutes an urban space. Although they do not discuss the lack of an *urban commodity per se*, they point to a different understanding of what this city would be. They are platforms for encouraging discussion and raising public

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67 Richard Sennett. *The Uses of Disorder – Personal Identity and City Life*. W. W. Norton (1970): 105-198.

68 Lewis A. Coser. "Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Sep., 1957): 197.

69 Chantal Mouffe. *The Return of the Political*. Verso (2006).

awareness of the issues presented here.

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