Retracing Propinquity and the Ethno[flow]

Transnational migration flows are the conundrum of mobility and globalization: While transforming entire urban sections of the city into 'ethnic enclaves' - allowing for hosting nodes of reception to new arrivals - they translate into extrapolated patches of these flows' geographies of origin, conforming a new urban polynational metropolis. The results of this extra-national presence in the city generates trans-national connections in terms of financial, media and political links, which simultaneously reverse the original flow back to the point of departure. Thus, both flows consolidate themselves into a continuum: *Biopower* (Negri, 2001)[1] aggregates to form the incoming flow, while *Immaterial Labour* (Lazzaratto, 1996)[2] configures the reversed flow. Both of them conform the *Ethno*[*flow*][3] The *Ethno*[*flow*] both generates and hinders multinational integration and propinquity, allowing for simultaneous tension and harmony. It enhances local urban economies, while financially supporting far away points in the globe. Both the 'Transnational Suburb' (Davis)[4] and the 'Transnational Communities' (Portes)[5] are products of the *Ethno*[*flow*].

ARMANDO MONTILLA

Clemson University

Figure 1: '*Corrala*' typical Madrid dwelling: (16th Century) 18 x 32 dwellings around a central patio.

URBAN GEOGRAPHIES OF MULTICULTURALISM

The definition of Multiculturalism – or what it has been called: 'the multicultural society' - has been the object of heated debate over the last few years. Sociologists, Anthropologists and Cultural Geographers all insist in the multicultural society as a given product of our times, a defacto occurrence, as multinational migration and mobility is now the number one reason for the growth of major cities in the industrialized world.[6] Yet, the unbeatable forces of globalization amalgamate and homogenize the urban landscape, creating one 'global culture', engulfing everything into a unified, non-descriptive pattern. How is that urban societies can be 'multicultural', and 'globalized' all at the same time? The very essence of the definition of multiculturalism might provide the answers to this conundrum.

According to Wieviorka (2012) Multiculturalism [is] "*A Concept to be redefined and certainly not replaced by the extremely vague term of Interculturalism.*"[7] Following the logic expressed by Colin Rowe in *Collage City* – in which a process of fragmentation - the collision/superimposition/contamination of many diverse ideas imposed on it by successive generations, each with its own idea – conforms the city, it seems the very essence of 'multiculturalism' today, is a hybrid.

Cultural values are superimposed to each other, leading to new concepts with a cultural twist, such as the *Korean Taco* in Los Angeles, or Japanese-Brazilian Post funk music from São Paulo.[8] While the *Kebab* stand in Berlin's Kreuzberg or the Spanish signs in Miami's Little Havana have become mainstream manifestations of the urban spectacle, they are in essence nothing more than over-imposed, collaged/pasted-in spatial manifestations of culture, all forming part of the landscape of the contemporary city today. .

Yet, a definition of multiculturalism catering to the pure visual spectacle, serves only to the gaze of the city, and bypasses the very rooted fact giving birth to the multicultural society: The hardship of the migratory process itself, and the need of establishing spatial empathy and a sense of community in the new urban settings, on the part of the new migrants. A "*multiculturalism* [that] *is characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music, and cuisine that exist in a multiethnic society*"[9] is now considered a misleading model that communicates a flat-lined concept of what 'multicultural' means, an idea now rejected by a number of scholars.[10]

Spatially speaking, there are specific programs and uses of urban private and public space, which respond directly to the concept of multiculturalism, from a different (non-gaze oriented) perspective: The illegal sweatshops basement in New York's Canal Street or in the outskirts of Barcelona, or the multiple occupants' time-shared dwelling of minuscule apartments at *Corralas* in Madrid's Lavapiés district,[11] are spatial manifestations of what I call *ethnospace*: A space of transnational dynamic and fluid occupancy; with the capacity of changing the urban landscape in short spans of time. The occupation and appropriation of urban residual subspaces, and the over-density created by time-shared spaces of dwelling and overcrowed housing, represent all concealed characteristics of the *ethnospace.*

Furthermore, not only geographical, but also virtual connections made of financial, social and human capital, are part of this ethnic configuration of the city, constantly toggling between physicality and abstraction. While multinational urban migration transforms entire sections of the city into 'ethnic enclaves' - allowing for hosting nodes of reception to new arrivals – such enclaves also translate into extrapolated patches of the geographies of origin of theses flows, conforming a new urban *polynational* metropolis. The results of this

Figure 2: Ethno[space] by Dwelling '*Pisos Patera*' (time-shared) shift dwelling for migrants) '*Corrala*' in today's Madrid.

extra-national presence in the city further generates transnational links in terms of the financial, the media and the political, which simultaneously reverse the original flow back to the point of departure. Thus, both flows consolidate themselves into a continuum: *Biopower* (Negri, 2011) aggregates to form the incoming flow, while *Immaterial Labor* (Lazzaratto, 1996) configures the reversed flow. Both of them conform the *Ethnoflow*.[12]

Consequently, an ethnic occupation of urban spaces is dictated not only by ethnographic values, but also by cultural practices having a direct impact in urban space (Irazábal 2010).[13] Aesthetic pollution and retail programming (i.e. satellite dishes allowing access to international media - as a medium to connect back to the cultural origins - or the proliferation of money transfer shops and long-distance calling/phone outlets at the street level) emphasize *ethnoflow*, while mixed programming, such as the micro-Mosque in the back of the *Halal* butchery, or the day-showroom turned sweatshop at night, emphasize *ethnospace*.

3

Notwithstanding, the definition of multiculturalism remains still unclear and undefined, in spatial terms. Perhaps the clue to untangle this definition can be provided by the concept of *propinquity* - or spatial empathy[14] – as a vehicle to define the colliding of kaleidoscopic cultural values in the midst of urban space. The more in common inhabitants have with their urban surroundings, the more propinquity there is between built space and those who inhabit them. This spatial propinquity comes as a derivative from the idea of *erthäunis* – the relationship between objects and people – occurring within a system in which globalization acts solely as the conducting medium for the urban phenomena of ethnic/multinational occupation of urban space. Following the Roland Barthes' sequence from the myth – as described in *Mythologie*s - we could say that Globalization becomes the *signifier*, while urban ethnicity becomes the *signified*.[15]

Figure 3: Back-of-the-store 'mini' Mosque in Barcelona and *Strip Mall* multicultural signage in Indianapolis, IN.[16]

AMALGAMATED FLOWS

Globalization plays a very important role in conforming the *ethnoflow*, as explained above. Beyond the visual manifestations depicting the ethnic

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occupation of the city, the financial electronic realm plays an important role in the continuity of the *ethnoflow*: The money remittance industry has multiplied its growth over the last two decades: More than 215 million people (ca 3% of the world's population), now live outside their own countries of birth. Remittances - the money sent back to their home country by migrants – count for as much as three times the size of official development assistance by international organizations, and provide an important lifeline for millions of poor households around the world. Remittances to developing countries were estimated to have reached $372 billion by 2011. The overall economic gain from international migration for sending countries, receiving countries, and the migrants themselves is substantial.[17] "Remittance sender and receivers live in what Manuel Castells calls the 'space of flows'; a timeless place of transnational networks operating beyond traditional institutions and communities."[18] The mainstream proliferation of electronic media that facilitates money transactions at all levels, has only helped the fluidity of capital, in ways that surpass mainstreams banking controls, subjected to scrutiny on the part of National governments. Pre-paid re-loadable Debit Cards, fully participant of Credit Card mainframe networks, now allow migrants whose legal status prevents them from accessing bank accounts, to receive payroll deposits directly into virtual cash repositories; which in return allows them to electronically access remittances applications, in order to send cash to any point in the world. Some receiving countries have technologically adopted new ways to facilitate the flow of cash from their own migrant diaspora. As an example of this, the Smart Padala network in the Philippines allows users of pre-paid mobile phones, to receive money remittances from the US and many other countries - directly into their mobile phones by way of text messaging - allowing them to code obtaining cash via a debit card linked to Bank ATMs nationwide.[19]

Hitherto and not surprisingly, the financial *ethnoflow* carries a degree of resilience, making it supersede mainstream regulations enforced by local banking systems and other financial regulations in host/sending countries, much in the same way Saskia Sassen explained how financial global cities/centers such as London, New York, Tokyo, superseding national sovereign governments and functioning independently from National States.[20]

TRANSNATIONAL SUBURBS

The ubiquitous continuity of the financial *ethnoflow* between large urban centers in the industrialized world and remote points in developing countries, reveals another spatial urban complexity. Large urbanized areas within metropolitan perimeters, become virtually more connected to distant points in the globe (becoming extrapolated geographies of connectivity back to the migrants points of origin); more so than to the immediately local geography. Thus, Mike Davis calls 'Transnational Suburbs' to these neighborhoods maintaining solid links to specific areas in countries such as Mexico or China.[21] Newly applied disciplines to urban design and planning such as GIS (Geographical Information Systems) are tapping into the nature of these flows, not only to map but to understand the complexity and fluctuation of these trans-national links, between remote areas and dense populated areas of main US urban centers: "*Obviously, the design and the reasons for its collection have an effect on the biases of the map. Now that many specialists other than cartographers can make maps, it is specially important to understand the source of data they rely on, the products of which are maps and images that are having an effect on policy, cities, landscape, privacy, and beyond*" (Kurgan, 2013:53).[22] Similarly, not only are the flows of capital

ENDNOTES

1. Negri, Toni and Hardt Michael: *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. Part 4: 'The Decline and Fall of Empire,' 4.1 'Virtualities,' 'General Intellect and Biopower' p. 164.

2. Lazzarato, Maurizio: 'Immaterial Labour,' trans. Paul Colilli & Ed Emory, in Virno Paolo and Hardt Michael, Eds: *Radical Thought in Italy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996 pp. 132-146.

3. All *Ethnoflow, Ethnospace,* and the *Ethno[city]*, have been concepts announced as part of an in-progress PhD dissertation: "'Fractal City' or New Babylon? Urban geographies of multiculturalism and the 'Ethnocity,'" at the Department of Urban Geography, *Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (UAB).

4. Davis, Mike: *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big City*. New York: Verso, 2001 'Transnational Suburbs' p. 93.

5. Portes, Alejandro: 'Global Villagers: The Rise of Transnational Communities' URL: http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/BLPR102_PIMENTEL/Portes.html.

6. Wilson, Franklin D (1988) "A*spects of Migration in an Advanced Industrialized Society*," in: *American Sociological Review* 53: 983-996.

7. Wieviorka M. (2012) "*Multiculturalism: A Concept to be Redefined and Certainly Not Replaced by the Extremely Vague Term of Interculturalism*," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 33: 225-232.

8. Korean tacos are a fusion dish popular in the U.S. State of California, often as street food, consisting of Korean-style fillings, such as bulgogi and kimchi, placed on top of small traditional Mexican corn tortillas (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_taco) Akira S E As Garotas Que Erraram ('Akira S & The Girls Who Fucked Up') were a conceptual outfit made up of Brazilian/Japanese maverick Akira S on bass and programming, writer and activist Pedreira Antunes (formerly Número 2) on vocals and lyrics, Ana Ruth on bass, Corina on keyboards and Edson X on drums. Their music had a punk funk disco feel with great half spoken, half sung vocals (http://www.last.fm/music/Akira+S+&+As+Garotas+Que+Erraram).

9. Kymlicka, W: "*Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future*," *Transatlantic Council on Migration, Migration Policy Institute of Europe*, 2012.

10. Esrkine, N: (2010) "*What is Multiculturalism? Why is so controversial? Can it solve Ethnic Conflicts?,*" in: Theories of Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict.

11. "*Corrala is a typical representation of Madrid's architecture from XVI and XIX century. The necessity to accommodate a great number of newcomers gave a birth to this kind of buildings, especially popular in the districts of Lavapiés, Latina and Palacio. The entrances to all the apartments in Corralas are communicated through a central patio, where the social life of the community of neighbours take place. Formerly, the apartments were no bigger then 30 square meters and the neighbours shared toilets. Nowadays there are about 500 corralas left in Madrid, some of them are in a pretty bad condition although there are some citizen movements taking an initiative of restoring this beautiful sign of Madrilian architecture,*" (http://www.360cities.net/image/la-corrala-a-madrid-typical-building#0.00,0.00,70.0).

12. Negri, Anthony and Hardt Michael: *Empire,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. According to Hardt and Negri's book Empire, "*Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it—every individual embraces and reactivates this power of his or her own accord. Its primary task is to administer life. Biopower thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself,*" (http://www.cyberfeminism.net/biopower/bp_aboutbp.html).

13. Irazábal, Clara: *'Ethnoscapes', in Banerjee, Tridib and Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia* (Eds.) *Urban Design: Roots, Influences, and Trends. The Routledge Companion to Urban Design*, London/New York: Routhledge, 2010.

14. "*In social psychology, propinquity (from Latin propinquitas, "nearness") is one of the main factors leading to interpersonal attraction. It refers to the physical or psychological proximity between people. Propinquity can mean physical proximity, a kinship between people, or a similarity in nature between things ("like-attracts-like") Two people living on the same floor of a building, for example, have a higher propinquity than those living on different floors, just as two people with similar political beliefs possess a higher propinquity than those whose beliefs strongly differ. Propinquity is also one of the factors, set out by Jeremy Bentham, used to measure the amount of (utilitarian) pleasure in a method known as felicific calculus,*" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propinquity).

15. Barthes, Roland: *Mythologies* (translated by Annette Lavers) New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

16. http://www.urbanophile.com/2010/04/18/the-new-look-of-the-american-suburb/.

17. Figures by the World Bank (http://bit.ly/1eUcZgs).

18. Terry, Donald F. and Wilson, Steven R: *Small Change: Making Migrant Remittances Count*, Washington DC: Interamerican Development Bank, 2005 (http://issuu.com/idb_publications/docs/book_en_16598).

19. "*Smart Padala is the world's first international cash remittance service linked to the mobile phone. Through Smart Padala, sending cash from abroad to the Philippines has never been more convenient and affordable – and all at the speed of text,*" (http://www.sendpera.com/category/smart-padala/).

20. Sassen, Saskia: *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

21. "*Social scientist Mike Davis has coined the phrase 'transnational suburbs' to describe an emerging phenomenon. Natives of*

between individuals, but also community interests contribute to these virtual connection between remotely connected places to be a stronghold of the ethnoflow, all while by-passing geographical boundaries (Portes, 1996).[23]

SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE ETHNOFLOW

Furthermore, another notion from Castells applies to these transnational dynamics: That of the *"Dual City."*[24] The overlapping of spatial occupation by different workers' classes and genders, within the same architectural envelope, permits a potential duplicity of flows, which taps into the nature of the previously stated processes within electronic media. While the Stock Broker monitors financial activity at a different time zone - late at night at his multinational financial corporate office spaces - an office cleaning staff member - who works herself during the same night shift - uses her mobile phone to verify that her money remittance transaction has gone through its point of destination (presumably also at a different time zone). Physical and architectural manifestations of the *ethnoflow* transform the frontage of strip malls and storefronts at street level at *ethnic enclaves* (Portes and Bach (1985: 239),[25] in an array of establishments born out of the need to service migrant urban communities: Money remittances agencies and calling centers, for migrants to make cheap phone calls to their home countries or to obtain pre-paid calling cards, together with ethnic restaurants and other ethnic-managed business, such as dry cleaning outlets and barbershops. In cities such as Los Angeles, where muti-ethnic enclaves are not unusual, the presence at the same strip mall of a Korean dry clean, a Latino grocery shop, an Indian/Bangladeshi or Pakistani Calling Center and a Chinese restaurant, conforms – together with the multilingual signage that accompanies its architecture – simultaneous manifestations of *ethnopaces* and *ethnoflow*, all within propinquity distance. In such cases, another notion comes into mind, that of '*ethnoscapes*' (Irazábal, 2010).[26] According to this concept, and departing from the notion that "[t]*he landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refuges, exiles, guestworkers, and other moving groups and persons who constitute an essential feature of the world*..[...]...*appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree*" (Appadurai, 1991:192);[27] the architecture of the ethnic enclave is conforming a new landscape of ethnicity, which caters not only to complex relationships of provision of goods and services, but also to a cultural dimension that include an urbanity of tension and harmony, fluctuating and changing according to the diversification of urban transnational migratory process itself.

CONCLUSION: THE CITY OF PROPINQUITY

Multinational migration has always persisted in urban history, while the ethnic enclave dates back almost to the origins of the urbanity itself. Jewish Ghettos become a norm in 15th Century Europe, and *Mellahs* in Moroccan cities were pockets of disambiguation within Northern African Arab societies.[28] What is different today is that globalization provides a vehicle for mobility to transform urban environments at a much faster pace, providing instant spectacles and the adopting of cross-cultural programming and pop-up spatial territories of tension and harmony. Talking about urban geographies of multiculturalism opens an opportunity for a dialogue and a vehicle of exploration into the ethnic occupation of the city, based on cultural, economical, and political values. The formerly called multicultural city, the polynational metropolis, the city of spatial values culturally transformed by multinational migration, can now be called the city of

propinquity. Both flows conforming this migration – the incoming, and the outgoing – are key aspects of these urban processes and transformations. Therefore the *ethnoflow* contributes to a balance – whether negative or positive - of urban propinquity as a whole.

The *ethnoflow* will continue to exist as a virtual and spatial continuum, which will keep transforming urban areas and will remain adapting to the different circumstances the migratory process encounters, as long as transnational migration occurs. As cities continue evolving in diversity demographics and their incoming ethnic population grows, eventually abandoning the ethnic enclave and moving to the upward suburbs (Li, 2011);[29] new incoming population will replace the vacancies of the outwards movement of migrants. The ethnoflow infrastructural spaces will only continue to proliferate, defeating notions of center and periphery, and continuing to be an integral part of hyper-capitalism structures of economics and spatial power.

particular Mexican villages are moving en masse into the same U.S. neighborhoods, creating de facto satellites of their home-towns" (Jack Chang: "Unrecognized live, give life and die in our midst," 2002).

22. Kurgan, Laura: *Close-up at a distance: Mapping, Technology and Politics*, New York: Zone Books, 2013, p. 53.

23. "*Transnational communities create a variety of new economic relationships across national borders…[…]…a phenomenon of growing importance--communities that span national borders. A by-product of improved communications, better transportation, and free trade laws, transnational communities are in a sense labor's analog to the multinational corporation. Unlike their corporate siblings, however, their assets consist chiefly of shared information, trust, and contacts. As the members of these communities travel back and forth, they carry cultural and political currents in both directions. Their emergence complicates our understanding not only of global trade but also of immigration and national identity*" (Portes Alejandro: "Global Villagers: The Rise of Transnational Communities," in *The American Prospect* no. 25, March-April 1996, p. 74-77).

24. "[t]*he dual city is a classic theme of urban sociology: the contrast between opulence an poverty in a shared space has always struck scholars, as well as pubic opinion*" (Castells, Manuel: *The Informational City: Economic Restructuring and Urban Development*, New York/London: Wiley Blackwell, 1999).

25. "*In the [Ethnic] enclave…[…]…education contribute[s] to occupational gains very early in the resettlement experience, with the magnitude of that advantage increasing over time. Enclave workers also benefit initially from their work experience…[….]… and, subsequently, from additional un-acquired education*" (Portes, Alejandro; and Bach, Robert L., Ed: *Latin journey: Cuban and Mexican immigrants in the United States*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1985, p. 239).

26. "*Ethnoscape thus evokes an intricate and dynamic relation between people (ethnos) and place (scape). Cultural identity (ethnicity) has become a prominent way of building individual and collective subjectivities and constructing urban lifestyles. The ideal of public spaces—open, accessible, inclusive, and capable of supporting encounters of difference—makes them privileged sites in this quest …[…]…Public spaces are also sites for the negotiation of values, rights, duties, and rules of sociability in a community. Identity politics—issues of legal status, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity—are increasingly played out in public spaces, thus creating Ethnoscapes*" Irazábal, Clara: 'Ethnoscapes', in Banerjee, Tridib and Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia (Eds.) *Urban Design: Roots, Influences, and Trends. The Routledge Companion to Urban Design*, London/New York: Routhledge, 2010.

27. Appadurai, Arjun: *Modernity at Large: The Cultural dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 192.

28. "A mellah (Arabic, probably from the Arabic word for "salt" or from the Hebrew for "salt" (both pronounced "melach") is a walled Jewish quarter of a city in Morocco" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mellah).

29. "[An] ethnoburb is a suburban or residential business are with a notable cluster of a particular ethnic minority population. Although the ethnic minority group may not constitute the majority within the region, as there may be a variety of ethnicities present, it does compose a significant amount of the population" (Wel, Li: *Ethnoburb: The new Ethnic Community in Urban America*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011.