
DEEP LANDSCAPES: constructing urban landscapes for inhabitation

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Abstract

The Flat City space syntax model (Read, 2005), proposes that a structure of the environment is generated in the processes of definition and use of places by people in movement. These processes presuppose a dynamic embedding of subjects in environment, the production of a 'structure of inhabitation' of the urban landscape in movement, and a morphogenesis of form as an emergence out of this dynamic embedding. The idea rejects the assumption that a 'containing' Cartesian space underpins everyday social existences, the experience of inhabitation, and the emergence of settlement form, and tries to articulate a 'landscape urbanism of events' which addresses the issue of urban morphologies and the emergence of settlement patterns over time. The model is partly based on a research into a phenomenological perspective on perception in movement, and a revision of the notion of 'organism' as applied to the city (Bateson, 1991; 2000 :Read, 2007). This paper will begin the task of outlining a practical 'landscape urbanism of events' by speculatively proposing a notion of the local and of neighborhood design founded in this idea of dynamic inhabitation and its structure in the urban landscape. Instead of understanding the city as an aggregation of bounded neighborhood zones, we use a Heideggerian notion of landscape to see places as being constituted in their relations with other places. These performed relations involve physical movement – and physical movement infrastructures, and their relations with other physical movement infrastructures working at different scales, become the first elements of a construction capable of clearly defining neighborhood space as an apparatus of capture of the global to the local. It restores a notion of center to neighborhood space, and thereby eliminates two problematic spatial characteristics of modern neighborhood space: the border or dead edge, and the flatness in our experience of this space. Areas organized along these lines would offer more opportunities a locally specific and enabling local, for small-scale commerce, and spatial hierarchies and organization reminiscent of traditional urban places. These principles may prove capable of showing a way of designing urban surfaces of fine-grained co-inhabitation incorporating synergetic relationships of sociality and commerce. They may restore the possibility of incorporating the traditional benefits of the urban in our neighborhood building.

Bringing the Far to the Near

I will propose here that the urban landscapes we inhabit are constructed as local 'worlds of incorporation' that make available to us

'fragmentary' things that are themselves first constructed in non-local 'trans-urban circuits'. The dilemma we face today as regards the local is, as Saskia Sassen puts it, that "the city becomes an amalgamation of multiple fragments located on diverse trans-urban circuits." (Sassen, 2006, p. 50) And at the same time, as she says; in a global world, a traditionally understood local fails to capture the fact that cities continue to be "key sites for the spatialization of [global] power projects" (Sassen, 2005). My point here will be a little more mundane: that while the 'non-local' in the local may be more forcefully global and even more critical and indeed political today than before, that the local has *always* in fact been constructed in a relation between the near and the far, and that the very enabling power of the local – and its ability to facilitate more-than-local lives – depends on this construction and this tension and on a process of making what is far available and 'to-hand' in the near. This more mundane point is nonetheless crucial because it will change the way we understand the way we inhabit local places: it will change the meaning for us of 'city', 'center' and 'neighborhood'. We need to consider again the ways more-than-local places participate in the spatialization of the very ordinary and everyday 'power projects' of very ordinary people.

We need to inform the way we understand our task of designing local areas to the empowerment of local people. Places that facilitate more-than-local lives are horizontal 'worlds of incorporation' of the non-local to the local – and these become the business of the urban designer, who needs to begin to understand how he or she may afford the everyday actions and aspirations of ordinary contemporary people.

Urban models

We *think* the city in models – even when we do it without realizing it and in something as apparently unproblematic as the center-periphery model. No model is simply 'natural' and none can be assumed as being unproblematically 'true'. All models are tied to the purpose for which they are being used, and each model incorporates within itself a whole bundle of presuppositions about what the city is in its 'essence' and how it works. I want to first make one very important distinction between different urban models. One type – of which the center-periphery model is perhaps the most obvious – sees the city as an accumulation of mass, and we begin to think of it then as a problematic of 'architecture'. Another type of model – here we may start thinking about 'networks' – sees the city as relations and communications or circulations and flows, and then (usually) as a problematic of 'economy'. One important logical consequence of this divergence of models needs to be noted immediately: the 'city of architecture' can be understood as a single thing, standing up on its own and surrounded by 'space'; the network 'city of economy' cannot ever be alone – it needs something else, usually other cities, to relate to and communicate with. In the more interesting versions of these 'city of economy' models we understand the city itself as being made or constituted *in* relations; the city is 'suspended' and held together in relations and would collapse and disappear without the relationships that sustain it. The constitution of the city is something that happens in relations and that happens somewhat automatically (and continuously in time): to some extent the logic of constitution is 'of the world' and out of our hands. Lefebvre points to the way, in a world becoming rapidly more forcefully dynamic, this relational urban has "become 'objective', that is creation and creator, meaning and goal (Lefebvre, 2003; p. 28)" The city has, to some extent at least, become, in its dynamics, a complex self-constituting, 'self-organizing' thing.

According to this logic therefore, 'cities of architecture' come as units, while 'cities of economy' "always come in packs, never alone" to quote

Peter Taylor. We can spot 'packs of cities' in mutually constituting relations in many takes on the city, including those of Fernand Braudel, of Jane Jacobs, and in the World City of John Friedmann as well as the Global City of Saskia Sassen.

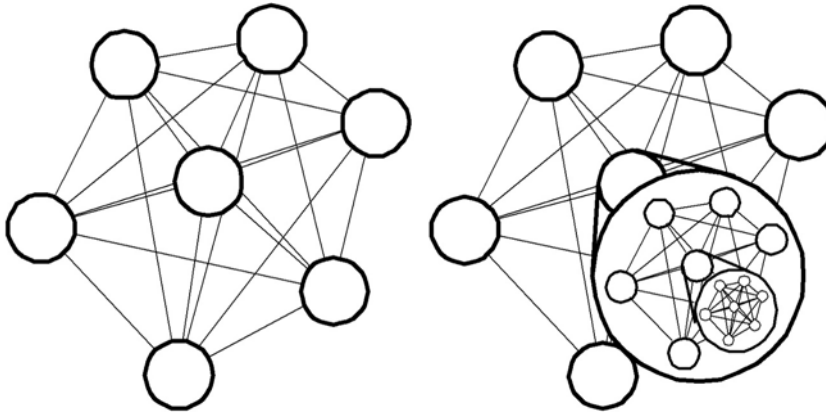


Figure 1:

A 'pack' of cities. 'Packs' of cities, neighborhoods, buildings

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It is from the perspective of things being constituted and continuously *produced* in 'packs' of things that I will start, in a construction which one can perhaps most easily understand as an extension of the basic World City or Global City idea which sees London constituted and produced in the first place in its relations of complementarity and exchange with New York, Tokyo, and then a whole host of lesser Global Cities. I will then take the hierarchies in this set-up and extend them all the way down to the local so that in the end we are talking about 'packs' of neighborhoods and eventually even 'packs' of buildings. These 'packs' of things are absorbed into other 'packs' of things as shown in figure 1 and a hierarchy of levels is established. As in the World and Global City ideas, there are relations between hierarchical levels as well as between cities, and one thing I will propose is that places are *produced* in these 'vertical' relations (Read, 2006a; Read 2006b; Bruyns and Read, 2007).

An immediate question arises which I have to deal with immediately: World and Global cities are founded in a logic of complementarity – which usually means we think about them in terms of the mutually sustaining *exchanges* between them. The powerful image of streams of money, information and people being transported across the globe is what holds the idea together for us and we can even imagine complicated accounts being kept of these flows. But we can't imagine so easily such a system of exchange between buildings, or neighborhoods for that matter. In fact the kinds of transactions we think about when we think of economy seem to go in the other direction – up and down the hierarchy of scales rather than across them. The logic of the contemporary economy at the lower scale levels seems to involve much more movements *between* and *through* scale levels than across the same scale level. We see for example the chance find on the flea-market moving up through the levels and eventually to a global network of collectors – and we see global brands moving down to the local highstreet and even backstreet. What is it that is being exchanged between neighborhoods? Well, quite a lot actually if the volume of traffic on inner city streets and boulevards is anything to go by, although this movement doesn't represent any cut-and-dried category in our theories of how economic exchange works. What it does represent is a whole hotchpotch of happenings – from people going to work and back, to parents taking their children to school, to backpackers searching for a campsite, to the courier taking a package from the lawyer's office to the company headquarters.

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The multitudinous small horizontal exchanges of complementarity between people don't seem to impact much on this big picture – at least not within the dominant theories of our world and its workings. What I will be proposing we are seeing here in a logic of 'packs' of things and their layering in hierarchies is a little different to a logic of the economy: what we are looking at when we look at complementarity in this way is a logic of 'horizons'; and it's a logic of intelligibility and the making of sense, and the making of things and the carrying out of projects which eventually make sense. We are looking at a domain of everyday things and affairs, and of the work we put into them to put things in order – perhaps in order that another kind of transaction goes up or down the 'hierarchy'. I will be trying to outline a logic of horizontal 'networks' of *situation* which sorts and makes intelligible a messy (il)logic of the daily facilitation of complex processes like economic exchange and the globalization of our world, rather than any economic exchange itself.

What is exchanged first between neighborhoods – eventually what is exchanged first between cities – may be not money, or information, or things, or even people, but a projective ordering we impose on our worlds. This projective ordering is itself based, I will propose, in an attention to matters of our immediate concern that *situates* us and the things we are engaged with in a relation with each other and our places. We act only from situation, and have to situate ourselves to act purposefully and effectively. This situation amounts to a gathering of what Heidegger calls 'equipment' within 'horizons', and it has (necessarily) both public and private dimensions. In a world in which multitudes of people are individually and simultaneously engaged in multitudes of bigger and smaller projects, and the putting of multitudes of bigger and smaller things in order, it would make little sense if all these activities simply happened in a great tumble over each other, each within entirely private 'horizons' and in a way that didn't coalesce in some way onto a more public order. We don't have to look far in fact to see this more public order; we see much of it in the routines and rhythms of daily living, in the institutions which regulate our activities and behavior, and in the objects, technologies and environments which we implicate in our everyday activities. It is in fact in large part thanks to these objects, technologies and environments that we are able to make sense of the orders of our worlds and of what we are capable of and may do. And these also, because they are shared with others – and because we share the use of them we also share their meanings – allow us to do things with other people. A large part of our 'equipment' is and must be public (Dreyfus, 132), part of a world (and the language which articulates it) held in common. It is as a part of this public world – public in a sense then a little prior to the simple sharing of presence and co-visibility with others – that we understand the places we situate ourselves. In a sense places become synonymous through the logic of situation with the 'equipment' we engage in our tasks and activities, but these places also become public in a massive convergence of the spaces and times of our movements and actions – in the need we have to communicate and share these places in a sharing and a making public of 'horizons', as well as in the impossibility of the tangle that would result from a world of entirely private and individual 'horizons'. Private 'worlds' within private 'horizons' begin to engage with public 'worlds' within public 'horizons' as individual realities take on a *fractional* relation with a collective reality (Law).

A different conception of space and time has helped us to see how "every interpretation of reality is based upon a quite unique position. Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed." (Durrell; p. 12). We see how in a public 'structure of places' the urban surface

may become a *differential* situating action (Lefebvre). Every action involves a situating – an emplacement – not only of the actor, but also of the acted upon, and actions will be unsuccessful by virtue of ‘error’ in situation. What may be even more important is that every unseen action or impossibility of action is unseen or impossible by virtue of ‘error’ or incoherence or unintelligibility of situation (Heidegger, 1977).

The Produced Local

Saskia Sassen's point about the local and its fragmentation is a straightforward one in a relational view of things. She is pointing to the fact that the things we see around us (and the places we see around us) are not adequately explained in their simply being there. They all are what they are by virtue of the fact that they are the products of the processes and communications and circulations that produce them and *make* them what they are. They are all produced, in her terminology, in ‘circuits’ which draw diverse materials and intentions and purposes together in places and things. We can understand this today in almost all the material things we see around us; almost none of which remain in any ‘original’ form, untouched and unchanged and uninvested with meaning by the processes of their production. Nothing is simply *there* in any kind of originary state – everything we see around us comes already invested with purpose and function and meaning. At the same time we remain strongly tied by presuppositions of simple autonomous and ‘empty’ things, and imagine for example, that the things and places we see around us simply *are* there as dumb material in the first instance, waiting as if ‘empty’, to be invested with meaning at a more personal, ‘symbolic’ level. We forget that they (and we) are *already* produced, and already invested in those processes of production with purposes and meanings.

We find therefore two quite diametrically opposed ways of seeing the local; one which acknowledges this actively and already-made and mutually-constituted aspect of things, and one which imagines things to be somehow just sitting there as if dead and dumb and ‘empty’ ‘atoms of existence’, waiting for us to invest them with meaning. In the second view, place and the local becomes something self-evident and objective, an inactive and ‘natural’ material ‘resource’ to be invested with significance and meaning by way of active and locally situated people, social processes, and architecture. In particular, ‘meaning’ or ‘significance’ becomes when the meaning-giving, subject develops an “affective affinity between material fabric and himself.” The “sense of emotional familiarization” (Tzonis; p. 55)ⁱⁱ that arises becomes a glue that binds identities of self, collective and place into something significant (and something that is very often proprietary and territorial). From this view we come very quickly to a politics of ‘our place’ and a place that demands territorial marking and definition, and defensive bounding and eventually even gating (De Caeter).

A dominant interpretation today, has it therefore that ‘place’ is something neutral and pre-existing, ‘empty’ and a ‘resource’. Place is something like that ‘empty’ Aristotelian substance, waiting to be ‘filled’ with significance and meaning by some active agent. We get led very quickly into a ‘crisis of place’ because, at the same time, it becomes more and more evident today that locally situated lives are, in some way that escapes definition in this view, less and less simply local. We find ourselves thinking the global as a process that in some way extra to and in addition to the local pervades the world around us. We think of connectivity as being over and above the local, actively tugging us in one direction while the dull and inactive ‘dead-weight’ of the local holds us back (often in some nicer and more ‘traditional’ and ‘harmonious’ place). Today's new technologies of connection and digitalization come to entail “an absolute disembedding from the

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material world. Key concepts in the dominant account about the global economy – globalization, information economy, and telematics – all suggest that place no longer matters. And they suggest that the type of place represented by ... cities may have become obsolete ...” (Sassen, 2005). Place is ‘empty’, material *substance*, and entirely different to the dominant processes of relation and communication today which themselves take on an entirely *insubstantial* character. We find a fundamental disengagement of place from processes of communication, and a growing ‘crisis’ and ‘obsolescence’ of place in direct proportion to the rise of technologies of connection and communication. We derive a view of dislocating connective technologies at odds with a human process and sense of inhabitation of place.

The difference between this dominant interpretation and what I will propose has something to do with origins again: what I will suggest is that rather than us starting off as non-technological creatures who have gradually become changed or corrupted or dis-placed by technology, and by the corrosive and fragmenting invasion of the non-local into the local; that we are in a very original sense technological and non-local, and that what we see in the historical development of our inhabitation of our world is not so much a ‘loss of place’ along with the rise of the technological, as a ‘technogenetic’ *evolution* (Healy). That there are political (not to mention environmental and existential) spin-offs of this evolution cannot be denied, but that is not what I want to talk about here in the first instance. I want in the first instance simply to address the mechanics of another view of the production of the local in non-local networks; a view which sees the local as a *production* of the non-local – the local becomes in fact *nexus* in multiple network systems. I suggest later that the politics of a gradual creeping of the global, and of an influence of corporate capitalism, into all places, can be best resisted by increasing a quotient of ‘distance’ or ‘depth’ from the ‘world’ of the global to the nexus of the local – by inserting intermediate scales as integrating ‘worlds’ in their own right. Local life can be enriched and an increase in the scope of what it affords can be effected by way of multi-‘worlded’ ‘deep’ urban landscapes.

How do we reintegrate a fragmented local?

What I will propose here is that we inhabit a ‘structure of places’ that brings things, fragmented by their production in non-local circuits, ‘to-hand’ in place, and that brings place and relation or communication together in a single frame. This is a normativity that is human and historical and evolutionary, and one that is systematized and extended, rather than overturned, by technology in an evolution of our humanly and technologically constructed world.

The connective becomes today associated with a ‘loss of place’ in a disorienting and dislocating dynamic of global flows. It is associated with urban fragmentation and the loss of a comfortably familiar locus of inhabitation – though a few writers intuit that this may not be the end of the story. Sassen begins to give an account of this contemporary local when she proposes that in the midst of global flows, “the city becomes an amalgamation of multiple fragments located on diverse trans-urban circuits. As cities and urban regions are increasingly traversed by non-local, including global circuits, much of what we experience as the local because locally-sited is not necessarily local in the traditional sense of the term.” (Sassen, 2006; p.50). We can sense here the way Sassen’s ‘fragmentary local’ is what it is precisely by way of the ‘trans-urban circuits’ that traverse it: it and its fragmentary character are *produced* by those circuits – even somewhat mechanically produced in networks of material flows –

rather than simply being neutrally and passively available as a resource to be invested with a meaning. So Sassen, in posing the problem of the local, immediately opens up for us the possibility that the local is *produced* (however problematic and even dystopian this production may be), and that the nature of this production has nothing to do with the local as it is more normally understood – *it is a production out of higher-scaled communicative circuits*.

What Sassen misses still in her local is a means to understand how a *non-fragmentary* local (or better perhaps a local which combines aspects of the fragmentary and the continuous and draws fragments back together in a local which is recognizable and real. This urban, produced out of higher-scaled circuits, may not always be either as fragmented, as disorienting, as dis-placing – or as hard-edged and bounded, or as accommodating and comfortable – as the theorists on either side would like it to be.

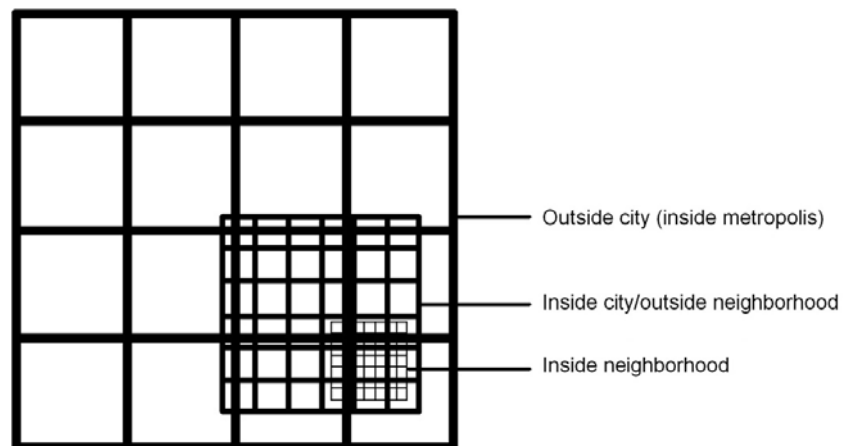
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What I will speculatively propose and begin to demonstrate here is how this may happen by way of a diagram I will outline – of a cascading process of the investment of higher-scaled potentials in lower-scaled integrative matrices of places till they 'hit the ground' to use one of Sassen's catch-phrases. They cascade through successive connective matrices till they hit the lowest scale of a connective matrix of the neighborhood or 'local'. This will amount to saying that a 'groundless ground' of the local is constructed in the way the potentials in higher-scaled 'regions' of 'isotopic' (equal-place) places are invested in, and made concretely and practically available in lower-scaled place-regions (basically figure 1 again). It amounts to saying that the non-local is available in the local only to the extent it is made concretely available or *realized*. The non-local is also not arbitrarily distributed in the local – it distributes itself according to a logic I will outline below that says what is realized first must be imagined.

Regions of places that are isotopic with respect to each other (cities are isotopic with other cities; neighborhoods are isotopic with neighborhoods; cities are not isotopic with neighborhoods) are integrated by distinct movement infrastructures. These movement infrastructures are a first and obvious condition of relation and complementarity. We see in figure 1 how a 'natural' hierarchy may form – of an isotopy of cities (metropolis) over an isotopy of neighborhoods (city) over an isotopy of buildings (neighborhood). Each of these isotopies or place-regions generates its own distinct movement infrastructure. These movement infrastructures are also a manifestation and realization *in* the world of an order of 'inside-outside' we use to make the world intelligible – they are constructed such that they order the fact that the city of Amsterdam, for example, has, from the point of view of the mobile experiencing subject, an inside and an outside, at the same time that any neighborhood in Amsterdam has an inside and an outside (and such that the outside of the neighborhood corresponds with the inside of Amsterdam) – and it does this without the need to define edges and boundaries. The logic is one of movement that sees us moving from place to place *in* our neighborhood – or being *outside* our neighborhood and moving from place to place in a matrix of neighborhoods *in* our city – or being *outside* our city and moving from place to place in a matrix of cities. And all without necessarily crossing any physical boundary. We see in fact when we begin to understand the logic of the inside-outside of moving experience, that 'boundary' in the traditional urban is first an artifact of a zenithal perspective on the world (as has already been argued by Tim Ingold amongst others) and it is then an artifact we build into our built environment as we plan it from the zenith view.

Figure 2:

The inside-outside orders of urban place-regions and their movement grids



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The *reintegration* of local 'fragments' located on 'trans-urban' (we will just expand the scope of the urban) circuits is therefore a straightforward matter of drawing them together meaningfully (not always completely or efficiently, and not always without a residue of incompleteness or 'edginess') into connective matrices set up in a logic of isotopies or place-regions that orders the world of insides and outsides for us and makes places available to us for our collective and public use. What I am talking about here deals less with the global as large and remote and abstract, and more with the way it becomes local and available in a practical way. This is about a 'capture' of the global and the metropolitan to another world where everyday events and transactions may take place in the light of higher enabling scales. And what I will be talking about has to do with a deepening and thickening of the differential urban surface to the end of the facilitation of events which are important in the lives of ordinary people – and which enable non-local lives.

The Realization of the Local

There is a reluctance to understand the 'physical city' as part of a process of a systematic construction or production of local social and economic realities. Social formations are understood as a matter of enacted relations which are not bound by constraints of 'physical space'. There is clearly a reaction here against the simplistic spatial determinism of much planning thinking. The relation of global to local is thought of as one of structures of relations that are more localized and differentiated within larger social or economic networks of pure (and abstract and despatialized) exchange or interaction, and these relations are reckoned to be too fluid to be tied into bounded spatial domains. The view I will outline here starts from the position that a key point about concrete local realities is that they are *realized* – and they are realized in situations where the possibility of such realization must first be entertained. The process of everyday thing and place and situation making, passes, at some level, even if it is not always available to everyone to achieve that making and formation, through a *constructive* phase: things and places (or the elements of those places that are not consciously made 'by design') have to be *made*. And before they are made they have to be imagined.

And in certain places it is possible (or coherent) to imagine certain things, where those things may not be imaginable (or coherent as imaginations) somewhere else. We can begin to see how there must exist a *differential* in the urban surface, whose logic is one of a 'distribution of *coherent* potentiality'. Not everything is imaginable everywhere – and there exists a structure of the urban surface which conditions the human activities of imagination and *realization*. A location where such a coherent imagination may lead to realization is

precisely and practically an 'enabling place'. We begin to see that there may exist a 'structure of places' which differentiates the way potentials are made 'present' and real to us (Healy; Heidegger, 1962). We can imagine that such a differential may be related to the connective possibilities and affordances in places.

Things are not everywhere and equally and transparently available to us, as is supposed in a frame which sees the 'real' and the 'imagined' as occupying different ontological domains: things are revealed to us in a world which is in the first place structured by our being in it – and significantly for Heidegger, by our technologies (Healy; Heidegger, 1977). The link to technologies today, and the way they make certain knowledge and possibilities available to us in some places more than others, is clear enough, though I think it is also clear that the movement fabric of the city – its system of pathways – may also become 'technology' in this sense. The particular things that seem possible or imaginable may become so by way they are already situated in particular 'circuits' of possibility or imaginable coherence spread out as an organization on the surface of the earth.

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I have already begun to intimate how 'networks' of places and the 'equipment' they situate may distribute not just material and money and bits and bytes around the globe, but also our actions and intentions *into* it. Our networks may become 'technological' in the way André Leroi-Gourhan has already theorized, as part of the means by which we 'exteriorize' our bodies and actions. We may live *through* networks as networks create the conditions *and distribute the potentials* for such living. And we may not just connect over distance through networks, we may also *situate* ourselves and the things we connect to through networks: here 'coherency' and the networks which enable the work we put into making things work and making fragmented things coherent, suddenly come to the fore. The question about the local we started out with – about how the local becomes fragmented – is suddenly turned around, and what is interesting and the thing to be explained is precisely how it manages to become *coherent*. We find ourselves imagining not a landscape of fragmented things, but rather a 'suspension' of imaginers (people who may therefore become realizers – or actors and agents) in higher-scaled connective webs that enable their non-local actions, but who exist at the same time in particular local contexts which concretely and practically facilitate their actions and give them intelligibility and *sense*. We need the newspaper kiosk or the internet café in the local in order to access the global. We could imagine, as a start, an urban environment where circuits of the global (locally materialized in the shape of global brands, travel agencies, and global entertainment and communications possibilities) are brought together and made available in place to circuits of people, themselves moving at metropolitan scales, city scales and local scales; their movements bringing the riches of the global to presence in structured and intelligible and practically affording ways.

To make clear what it is we are speaking of, we could imagine an environment where circuits of the global (locally materialized in the shape of global brands, travel agencies, and global entertainment and communications possibilities) are brought together and made available to circuits of people themselves moving in connective patterns at metropolitan scales, at city scales and at local scales. Some of these people may imagine and then realize the imagination of buying a ticket to travel to China (or opening a travel agency) – and they will do so where these actions are coherent in relation to the circuits of their own movements and the places these movements bring to presence.

The 'Virtual' and the Flat City Model

There is another aspect of networks that has been forgotten with all the attention to the *actual* of the connective, to the *real* hard-wiring of the world. This other aspect is the pre-realized (and the virtually realized or imagined) – what it is that the wiring hardens and systematizes. Before we create a global circuit, it must be possible to imagine such a thing or its necessity. There exists in other words a network of the imagined that precedes and prefigures the hard-wiring of the world. Before the actuality of travel to or trade with China, it took Marco Polo to see that the possibility of such a travel or trade existed – and this was before he or those around him had ever *seen* China. Certain things are a great deal more difficult to imagine than others – it was very difficult for a Venetian to imagine what Marco Polo did when he did it – but they become much easier to imagine after the first trail of footsteps or provisioning posts or navigation bearings have been laid. They become so easy to imagine in fact, they become absorbed into routines of existence that conceal their own workings. Today, a Venetian will walk into travel agent any day of the week and book tickets to China. Travel to China is not just realizable, it is available in a way that is so systematized and coherent that the work put into making it so has been erased. Today the possibility of travel to China sits in a seemingly obvious ordered relation with our Venetian's own movements of making places present in the local. This is what I mean by 'evolution'.

The Flat-city model is proposed to address this issue of a structure of the imaginable – what we can think of as a 'structure of everyday presence' in the surface of the city. Built on the principle of what prefigures the realized, hard-wired connections of the world, and then structures our interface with those connections coherently, it is in the first place a structure of the human in the world. It is a factor of the difference made to the world by the fact of us being here, and of an evolution and progressive systematization of this difference over a long history. It is therefore also part of a 'structure of causes', a 'teleological' we have progressively incorporated into the world by way of our being here. It is part of the 'second nature' we have in a sense unleashed on ourselves, by constructing the dynamics of the world and its conduits and efficiencies. It is part of a 'second-natural' 'organic' and 'ecological' we can begin to think of as 'urban'.

The Flat City model of the urban surface has been derived from exploratory work on urban movement systems in Dutch cities (Read, 2005). The basis of the model is the empirical discovery that urban movement in Dutch cities is 'naturally' structured into differently scaled movement grids, layered over each other, and that these grids, and the movements they convey, each draw functional elements of the urban landscape into relations of orientation with themselves – drawing the shape of this functional breakdown into a co-related structure of movement and functional patterns organized by scale (Bruyns & Read, 2007). Neighborhood-scaled functions (baker, supermarket, corner-shop, for example) are drawn into co-relation with movement particular to the neighborhood-scaled movement grid; city-center-scaled functions (clusters of computer shops, carpet and flooring shops, employment agencies, for example) are drawn into co-relation with movement particular to the city-center-scaled movement grid; metropolitan-scaled functions (head-office clusters and the services associated with them, industrial parks and agri-industry, residential dormitory neighborhoods, villages and suburbs, for example) are drawn into co-relation with movement particular to the metropolitan-scaled grid or grids. We note a high degree of regularity and order in this layering of grids: in the Amsterdam metropolitan region, one can, with little difficulty, break the entire land-bound

movement grid (including rail networks) into three coherent scales of working.

Space is here reduced in the first place to a congruent simultaneity in co-orientation of a network conveying movement of a particular scale, and the functions that depend on that network for their 'customer base', in order to establish a 'spatial datum', or a 'centering device', which integrates and '*centers*' particular 'worlds' of movement and function. These 'spatial data' are understood as space-time (and perceptual) 'worlds' which function, on the face of it, with a certain 'internal' coherence. I postulate space-time coherences and consistencies attached to these layered 'devices', and set up horizontal layers of movement grids and their related functions on this basis (see the figures) and find the genesis of urban form in these layers and in the relations of these layers with each other. We are talking here of a systematization of movement and of its enabling technological and infrastructural components, and of the most recent phases of such an evolution that absorbs entire landscapes of centers and peripheries into functional metropolitan regions in a positively and unequivocally urban way.

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The Productivity of Movement

The contemporary urban surface is one constituted as a fabric of movement that we see here may itself be productive of its own form. These form-producing movements have for the most part been theorized in terms of 'exchange' and of 'flow'. What I suggest here is that they may organize and produce form on the basis of the 'structure of presence' and imagination-realization process ('form follows a process of making-real in fields of coherent potential' rather than 'form follows actual connection') already discussed. This is a process which also involves a process of 'knowing through movement' (Read, 2006a; 2006b). The connective fabric of the city is organized (and has been systematized) into an apparatus of capture – of movement grids operating at different scales which organize the way higher urban scales including the global become available coherently in the local. Along with the dynamatizing of global and metropolitan connectivity networks and an increasing integration at global and at metropolitan scales – suggesting a stretching of the connective possibilities of the global (complemented by a concomitant metropolitan integration) over *all* urban surfacesⁱⁱⁱ – we also have a certain *thinning* of the total surface, as the scales represented in our model by middle-scaled and local grids fail in general to be extended further over the urban surface.

Our model suggests that the systematizing technology of movement grids *produces* – the question returns to exactly *what* it produces. At this level of high integration with the metropolitan, and between the global and the metropolitan, it is hard not to draw the conclusion that what is produced – we see this in suburban and exurban business and industrial and residential developments, and the malls, parks and 'centers' distributed along the freeways and strategically attached to railway stations – is what Heidegger calls 'standing reserve' or 'resource'. What is 'revealed' in these technological networks (therefore what can be imagined and then realized) is a cluster of functions whose reason for being is the service of the global capitalist machine itself. "Modern technology as a revealing that orders is, Heidegger insists, no mere human doing. ... Man does not control unconcealment, into which at any time the actual shows itself or withdraws." (Healy). We are no longer in control of these revealings, and what is produced in these circuits and organized and integrated by the metropolitan grid is geared to the 'regulation' and the 'securing' of the workings of the city for the global machine. What may or may not be produced in lower-scaled circuits and organized in lower-scaled

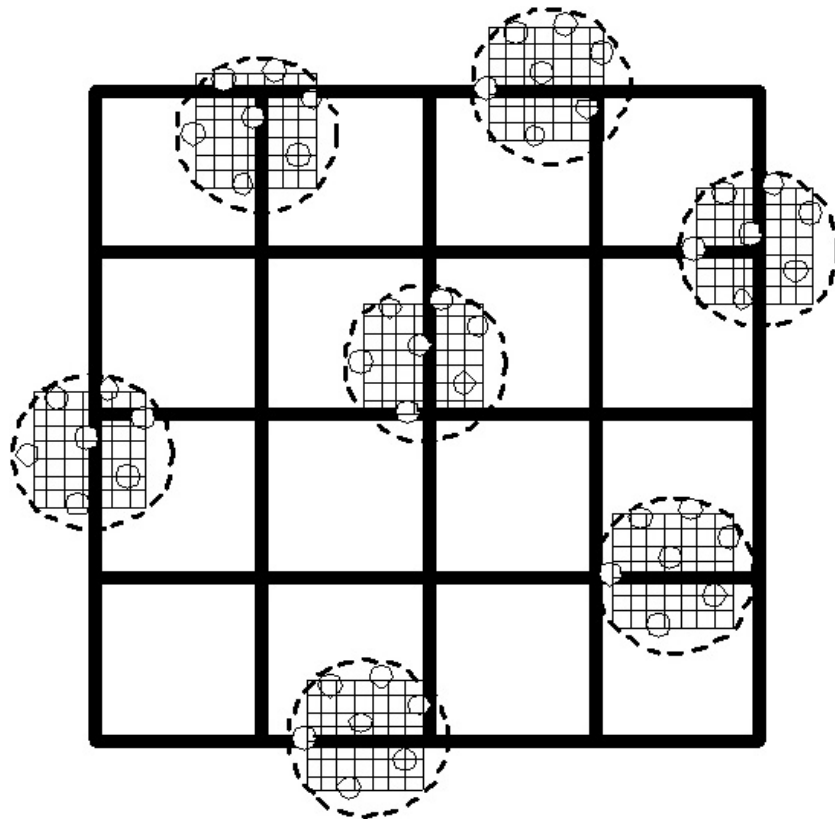
grids becomes (certainly at the level of what may be imagined in the frame of this global technological and technocratic – at the level therefore of the ‘ostensible’) quite irrelevant.

But we know also from our research that a lot *is* produced in these lower-scaled grids. We see a production of mass in layerings of circulations (Bruyns & Read, 2007). Even today, when a discourse and politics of globalization dismiss these productivities as marginal and irrelevant, we see them in actuality and in countless real situations positively facilitating the lives of millions of people. And often in ways which are creative and productive of locally specific and particular lives and forms which are resistant to and transformative of the global. What is especially relevant is the fact that the global, in very many modest but enabling ways, becomes available in the everyday lives of people in ways that are imbricated in local conditions and local concerns. The global is *localized* in multitudinous ways which are particular and situated and which affirm locality and local culture while still affording access to the global and metropolitan. What these local-scaled worlds appear to be doing, I propose, is integrating significant events and places into particular places – into which the larger, more universal, global ‘world’ becomes ‘grounded’. Some of these ‘worlds’ may be historically evolved and embedded in urban fabrics as local cultures and places; others may be younger or less embedded, harsher and less accommodating at the level of the local – but what they all do is offer niches and opportunities for the support of local existences.

050-12

Figure 3:

The city produced in movement – the production of mass in layerings of circulations



A ‘Deep Landscape’ Critique of ‘Thin Globalization’

In fact none of us these days need, like Marco Polo, to go all the way to the global in order to find it. As another of those at first sight paradoxical anomalies about the phenomenon of the global and the systematizing machine of our global world, we find that the effective factors today in the construction of global places have shifted back to the local. In our by now thoroughly and ubiquitously globalized world,

it is no longer the simple pathways to the global that give us the most effective and enabling global places but rather the quality of the local 'worlds' we make which realize global potentialities in locally distinctive ways. The dangers of a universalizing global are not overcome but one of the ways to an effective resistance is through the local. We need to exploit the diverse critical mass this overlap of 'worlds' is capable of gathering to place. In our globalized and metropolitanized world, effective places everywhere just *are* global, they *are* metropolitan, and insofar as 'medieval' places or 'small town' places exist anymore, they exist as forced and staged constructions built on dubious exclusionary presuppositions.

The global and the metropolitan are everywhere today precisely because they are not 'over there' – in a horizontal relationship of distance to us. The 'branch-lines' to the local (Latour) have been constructed, and the global and the metropolitan penetrate and traverse every viable urban place. We exist in a *vertical* relationship to all these higher scales: they are stacked up over us. Today then, it is the points of meeting of the global, metropolitan and other higher scales, with the local, that is the point of interest. We could say better that the issue for today is *how the local is constructed* to capture the global to place in ways which enable local people. In place of abstractions and universals, we get everywhere a very concrete construction in the local of places offering the conditions for a contemporary life, depending on and connected to the higher scales, supported in a place which has depth and particular character due to its being captured within an even finer-grained parochial.

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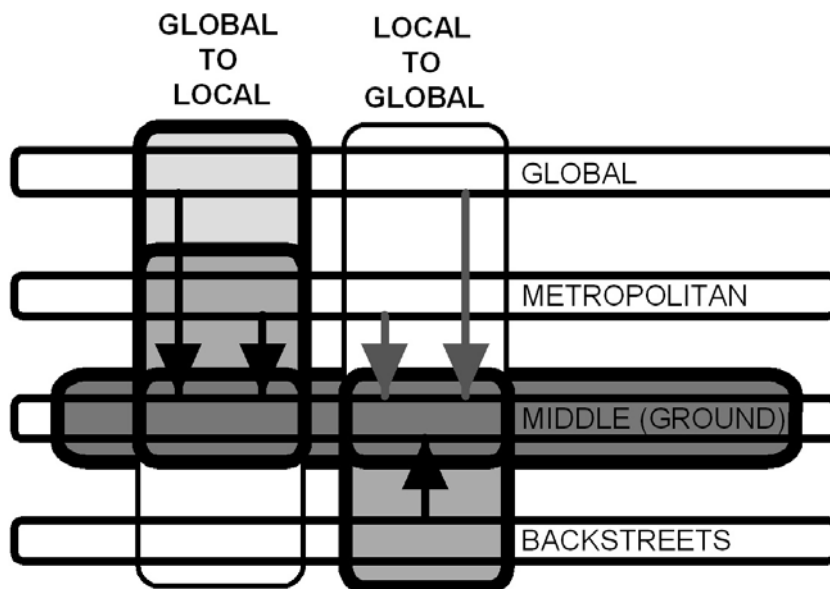


Figure 4:

Stacking up place; a vertical layering

One may legitimately object that many people do not live in such a construction any more, in an enabling and public bridge between the parochial and the higher scales. What is true at the same time though is that a considerable number of people travel to these kinds of places (the grey arrows figure 4) to exploit and enjoy the qualities of these places *as places*. What's more, in doing so, these metropolitan and global nomads (or just plain commuters), add themselves to the 'diverse and critical mass' layered into that place, and contribute to the metropolitanization and globalization of the place.

The contribution *of the place itself* to urban character and function, and the principles of its construction, are simply too little understood or too crudely misunderstood. I certainly don't wish this to be read as a plea for 'urban traditionalism': what I want to suggest is that there exists an ecology, working simultaneously in psychological and

physical space (Gregory Bateson's 'mind in the world') that structures and situates our being in the world. Where we feel that that existence and situation is illegible and insubstantial, we will probably find, I will propose, the reasons in the framework I have outlined here. This framework – and the considerable amount of detailed elaboration it still needs – sets, I speculatively propose, the parameters for our continued situated existence in this world, an existence which need not, thanks to the extraordinary construction and power of place, ever be without local particularity, surprise and potential.

Gregory Bateson had a great insight; one that can open a wide way through the dilemmas we face with respect to our technological urban cultures and the design of its territory. He proposed that we engage with and act in a world already formed, physically and psychologically, to ourselves. He proposed attempting to understand this world as being continuous, and as continuous with us. In a world whose reality we understand as consisting of bounded domains, we think of invasion, of violation, of rupture, and create a space of defense and partition and fragmentation. I have proposed here a continuous distributed form of the city capable of differentiating without borders; a form what's more that can begin to construct a meaningful everyday space which forms itself to our lived experience.

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- i. The layers of 'the rural' and 'the industrial' have turned out to lack the power, even as 'floating signifiers', over urbanisation processes that Lefebvre granted them at the time of writing and from his particular ideological position in the 1960s.
 - ii. Tzonis, a 'critical regionalist', describes the local as a 'resource'. The view we articulate understands the local as a 'production'
 - iii. We imagine a global network that distributes the global through 'metropolitan gateways' (global cities), from where it is further distributed by way of an increased metropolitan integration. We see today this model losing some of its power as more smaller centers also participate as 'gateways to the global'. Both global connectivity and metropolitan are thickening and complexifying

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