DIOGENES

The image of the megalopolis – understanding the complex visual construction of Mexico City

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The image of the city has always been an important source and tool for defining urban cultural communities. Distinctive street patterns as well as streetscapes in different cultures and periods document the technological, economic, and cultural capacities of the cities' inhabitants. From Aristotle's practical philosophy (in the Nichomachean Ethics) up to the current tourist view of the city, where the relics of the past – cathedrals, castles, or town halls – serve as symbolic attractors, the heterogeneous image of the city has offered insights into the history of civilization. Supplementing the statistical data used in economic or social sciences research, the image of the city with its cultural complexity offers unexpected and refreshing material for a transdisciplinary account of the city as the most essential form of human culture.

The art history (and also philosophy) of world cities offers striking interpretations that help us to understand how the material substance and its transformation into an 'image of the city' become permanent tools which constantly generate ideas about spatial and cultural identification. For example, the fourteenth-century Senese displayed the political iconography of their habitat in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's wall paintings in the city council's Sala dei Nove; later, art historians pointed out the high symbolic value of this portrait as it depicts a city oscillating between the consequences of good and bad government. The urban culture of mid- and late nineteenth-century Paris not only inspired contemporary writers and painters, but also stimulated aesthetic research; Walter Benjamin, among others, formed perspectives that predicted future interdisciplinary research on cities. Friedrich Engels introduced social and political issues into the debates on unstable early capitalist societies; his observations drew on empirical descriptions of the cities' scenographies – which in mid-nineteenth-century industrial England were worst case examples. Even the 'roaring twenties' of twentieth-century Berlin, a breeding ground for extreme and creative urban art, literature, and philosophy, appear in art historical research as a unique coincidence of time and space in modern European city culture.

All these highlights in a dense field of art historical research were based on the idea of the city as a work of art (Stadtbaukunst in German: Brinkmann 1911), an idea related to more or less

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condensed and well-planned urban spatial configurations. Since the start of the twenty-first century, however, city form and image have changed considerably, both quantitatively and qualitatively.[1] The increasing number and size of the world's megalopolises (cities with more than 10 million inhabitants, Burdett and Sudjic 2007), mark a new epoch of city culture with different structural and aesthetic parameters from those of traditional European cities.

Huge, seemingly endless urban agglomerations as we find them mainly in Latin America (Sao Paulo, Mexico City), Africa (Lagos, Johannesburg), and Asia (Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur), to name a few, contrast dramatically with the mental visual expectations that define traditional city culture. These megacities are no longer considered works of art; they are mainly cited to reveal social and spatial decay in contemporary conditions.

Beyond the idea of seeing a megalopolis as a work of art, these new urban forms challenge us to develop new types and strategies of aesthetic interpretation. Focusing on Mexico City, one of the largest urban agglomerations in the world, this article reviews some aspects of the new visual constructions of the megalopolis, of its transformation into artistic and documentary images, and of methods of analysis. Some conceptual remarks may explain why this new field of art historical research opens up refreshing perspectives on the understanding of the current human habitat.

Visual constructions of the Mexican megalopolis

Mexico City, in the early twenty-first century, is a megalopolis of about twenty million inhabitants where cultural fragments of its pre-Hispanic past, the colonial period, and the modern epoch have left their visual traces. The city thus constitutes a vital, albeit sometimes clashing cross-cultural collage. Yet, the perception and evaluation of this megacity are bound up with ideological filters which produce a facile picture of a catastrophic city. From an aerial perspective, the immense urban agglomeration in the Mexican Basin looks like an infinite magma in a state of entropy, showing the permanent loss of structure, or the inexorable decomposition of urban substance. Although urban scientists have detected order within the chaos, and have shown the Metropolitan Zone of the Valley of Mexico to be more compact than many of the First World megacities, such as London and Chicago (Humpert, Brenner, and Becker 2002), a stereotype remains in the mind of everyone who contemplates these aerial views: that of the infinite megalopolis which questions the structural and physiognomic traditions of the city (Krieger 2006).

The seemingly paradoxical, but indeed typical mixture of agglomeration and fragmentation makes Mexico City an enigmatic contemporary city, a paradigmatic city with self-referential growth and structure. Its visual presentation reveals, both at micro and macro levels, a confusing overdose of contrasting but not obvious images. While the relics of the past – the Spanish baroque cathedral or the excavated pre-Hispanic Great Temple in the city center – still offer visual identification within a scheme of cultural history, many other visual elements such as cables, billboards, improvised housing aesthetics, and the impact of urban mobility in all forms, leave the spectator in a permanent state of uncertainty. Ephemeral urban elements and changing visual constructions produce scenographies of a 'no place,' which statistical data, economic analysis and even traditional urban planning methods cannot grasp.

The analysis of supposedly hard facts, like the (almost impossible) census of about 20 million inhabitants in the greater metropolitan area, the urban cartography of zoning and distribution of building types, the spatial concentration of pollution, and even the sociological data which indicate that Mexico City is an essential component of the 'planet of slums' (Davis 2006) mainly sketch the urban character in an abstract way. Soft facts, however, such as the urban image and imaginaries probably help us to understand the phenomenon in deeper way. As recent neurological studies have

Figure 1. From *Spiral City* (2002) by Melanie Smith. Reproduced with permission.

shown, human epistemological capacities depend to a high degree on the processing of images. Thus, it makes sense to explore this source of understanding, with both established and new methods of art history and visual studies. Drawing on my earlier research (Krieger 2009, 2004, 2007), this article will focus on two levels of analysis: the micro and macro level, represented by the aerial view and the detail. The suggested reading of the image of the megalopolis shows continuity in the art historiography of the city. It is a contribution of the humanities to a complex interdisciplinary debate.

On the macro level, the importance of the image has become stronger through the widespread uses of satellite and aerial urban views on the internet. Without doubt, frequently-consulted programs such as Google Earth have stimulated the cartographic imagination of cities' structures and growth. However, in the case of Mexico City, these aerial views of the vastly extended megalopolis do not coincide with rational urban analysis.

A collective study by urban theorists, planners, and mathematicians, coordinated by the German urban researcher Klaus Humpert (2002), about 'fundamental principles of urban growth' compared satellite views (transformed graphically into 'black maps') of fifty-seven cities at the same scale of

Figure 2. From *Spiral City* (2002) by Melanie Smith. Reproduced with permission.

1:300,000. It proved that there exists a certain implicit order in the apparent chaos. The analytical instrument of fractal geometry (Mandelbrot 1987) revealed that the world's megacities with their irregular, accidental peripheral extensions, follow some rules, and also that the comparison of the fragmentation ratio shows a distinction between the so-called First- and Third-World cities. Specifically, megacities in developing countries have a certain tendency towards compact urban forms, while the traditional metropolises in Europe and the USA, such as London or Chicago (Humpert et al. 2002: 44 and 70), expand and fragment.

The results of this interpretative model for art historical research on the city are challenging, because the diversity and singularity of the cities' cultures apparently disappears behind a unifying analytical scheme. Yet, the revelation of fragmentation and fractal autopoeitic growth patterns is an essential paradigm of the cities in the early twenty-first century, one that future urban histories will have to take into account. Moreover, the Humpert team's research shows that the self-referential configuration of urban structures seriously questions the idea of authors of city design, such as planners and architects. When urban planning as a discipline – with its fictional instrument of the master plan – is said to be bankrupt in the face of uncontrolled megacity development, these urban researchers recognize a systemic mechanism of growth and mutation which indicates new forms of urban aesthetics.

These posturban forms[2] characterize the Metropolitan Zone of the Valley of Mexico (Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México, ZMVM, in Spanish), where the extended urban landscape dissolves into disconnected islands of gated communities for the rich and slums for the poor, with

only a few middle class neighborhoods as buffers. The abstract black maps, however, do not reveal these socio-spatial features; they have to be combined with photographical documentation. Only in combination with aerial and terrestrial photographic views does the aesthetic profile of the megalopolis emerge. In that profile, fragmentation and decomposition of traditional urban forms generate new forms of 'beauty by error' (Mönninger 1993: 131), or, using a figure of thought from philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, the decay of traditional (urban) beauty liberates a particular stimulating aesthetic potential. Seen from this art historical and philosophical perspective, the fragmented and decomposed megalopolis reveals characteristics similar to those of the early twentieth-century artistic avant-garde, which constructed new forms from the store of fragmented elements of the past (Bredekamp 1998: 416–417). The mega-'collage city' (Rowe and Koetter 1978) of the twenty-first century also illustrates Niklas Luhmann's theory of systems: the autopoeitic development of the (urban) system generates discontinuities which decompose established forms of sense (1997: 1140). The continuity of a traditional, homogeneous, mainly old European urban 'sense' as we find it in the historical center of Mexico City with its Spanish colonial urban and building structures – which still determines the collective mental urban imagination – is questioned by systemic interruptions, by urban growth with autonomous patterns and heterogeneous cross-cultural references.

These are some conceptual frameworks for using a visual approach to understand the aesthetics of the megacity. In the eye of the beholder, multiple images of expanded megacities can be seen and understood as instructive material for cultural self-descriptions and patterns of identity in a hyperurbanized world. Yet the capacity to read and understand these images depends first on the epistemological quality of the image itself, and second on the visual training of the beholder. The black maps of mathematical research on the cities do not necessarily reveal insights for everyone, but require certain knowledge of cybernetics and chaos theory. Perhaps other visual formulas, such as those of the fine arts or urban documentary photography succeed more directly in transforming the distinctive power of urban images into visual proofs of spatial and cultural identities.

While the effect of images is a question for experimental neurological research, art history at least can reconstruct the intentions and potential image production – in our case this is done in a concrete way, by explaining how the abstraction of art or the visual constructions of documentary photography unfold sensorial and thus mental effects. Aesthetic research about the phenomenon of the megacities recovers the notion of a city as a place where the societies' capacities are displayed directly. Their contrasting historical and current images may reveal how the city mutated from the representation of a high standard of civilization into a symbol of cultural and ethical decay.

Artistic and documentary images and imaginaries

This mutation is a central issue in the work 'Spiral City' by the British artist Melanie Smith, who has been based in Mexico City since the 1990s. Her photographic and video installation, presented in 2002 in London and Berlin art galleries,[3] shows aerial images of the Mexican megacity taken from a rented helicopter. In contrast to Humpert's visual documentation of a compact city with a less fragmented borderline (in comparison to First-World cities), Smith's approach displays an impression of an endless megalopolitan carpet, extended all over the central Mexican landscape. It was meant as visual proof of the city's entropic development. Her work is comparable to Robert Smithson's artistic research about the entropy of suburban New Jersey (USA), in the late 1960s, called 'The Crystal Land,' where the 'site' as the material urban reality was mapped artistically as a 'non-site' (Smithson 1979: 19; Angélil and Klingmann 1999).

Figure 3. From *Spiral City* (2002) by Melanie Smith. Reproduced with permission.

Both, Smith's and Smithson's artistic conceptions were based on the second law of thermodynamics, which describes the loss of energetic differences in the flow from hot to cold (within a closed system). This model seems to grasp the suburban development, where the loss of (central urban) order, limits, and landmarks leads to an irreversible state of decay. Those elements which constituted the traditional city were leveled and thus dissolved in the suburban flow of amorphous infrastructures and nameless buildings. The 'architecture of entropy,' which Smithson detected in the outskirts of the greater New York area, and which Smith three decades later documented in Mexico City, configures an 'urban requiem,' based on anti-social tendencies and one-dimensional technological progress in the hyperurban development of the surrounding natural landscapes (Linsley 2002; see also Life, December 1965, 92 and 96).

The almost hypnotic visual construction of Melanie Smith's photographs and videos makes obvious what Smithson has described as the urban 'dead level.' Following mathematician John von Neumann's re-interpretation of entropy as the uncertainty of the results of an experiment (Hagen 2002), one may deduce that the critical experiment of autopoietic hyperurban development of seemingly endless patterns profoundly questions and even erases traditional urban order. Exactly this is shown in 'Spiral City': the strict rectangular system of blocks suffers anarchic structural interventions. A clash of structures and meaning between the organized and the informal city characterizes the entropic geopolitics of megalopolitan development. Heterotopy mutates to entropy. For centuries in the history of the city, the urban grid has been a tool of rational and efficient planning, and even more, a symbol for the triumph of civilization over nature (from the ancient Greek Hippodamos of Miletus according to the New York Commissioners' Plan of 1811).

Now it becomes increasingly overwhelmed by anarchic expansion. This anarchic expansion is, in quantitative terms surely the signature of the early twenty-first century habitat.

We may, nevertheless, ask in reference to Melanie Smith's 'Spiral City,' whether this work of art includes a social critique of urban development, or whether it is just an artistic product adapted to the small mental (and commercial) market for contemporary art in intellectual centers in Europe and the USA, following the prefabricated patterns of art critique (Krieger 2000) and curatorial intentions. This evaluation remains the task of the beholder. The catalogue essay of the 'Spiral City' exhibitions praises these images of Mexico City as 'one of the most sublime expressions of the catastrophe of the modern' (Medina 2002: 4), but perhaps the displayed and published photographs of the entropic city only correspond to a taste for chic abstract art among the – relatively few – gallery-goers in London, Berlin, or New York. Moreover, the installation of 'Spiral City' in galleries (or museums) depends on traditional equipment such as the video projector and the conventional wooden or metal frame for the photographs. Thus, the epistemological impact of the entropic urban images probably is diminished by the conservative media of display. A presentation of the work on the Discovery Channel or any other commercial television program may unleash other effects in wider circles of beholders.

The problem of communicating syndromes of urban crisis in art shows also questions a more abstract and radical artistic representation of urban decay: the work of the Mexican conceptual artist Teresa Margolles, who at the 53rd Venice Biennale of summer 2009, presented her vision of urban violence and ethical erosion in urban societies. Her installation 'What else could we talk about?' consisted in the interior walls of a Venetian palazzo painted with blood extracted from the multiple cadavers of drug gangs fighting for control of the markets in Mexico and the USA. Although this installation focused on the violent cities in the northwestern states of Mexico next to the US border, it recalled, in some respect, her earlier works located in Mexico City. In the morgue of the violent megalopolis, called 'Semefo,' she extracted the fluids from dead bodies and blood for installations and performances. In the Venice pavilion, abstraction of the violent urban topic is present via concrete furniture 'manufactured with a mixture of fluids collected from the place where a person was murdered' (Medina 2009: 34) or via the Palazzo's floors cleaned 'with a mixture of water and blood from murdered people in Mexico' (ibid.: 43), or via blood-impregnated 'fabrics' framed by rococo stucco ornaments.

In short, Teresa Margolles' and Semefo's art production at least in part refers to urban conflicts and catastrophes. It is an art of crisis which presents an abstract sublimation of 'necro-urbanism' (ibid.: 16, 17, 22). Yet, in my opinion, this shocking abstraction of blood-splattered megalopolitan violence is the discursive counterpart of the popular (and vulgar) reports of the drug war as presented in the leading Mexican television stations 'Televisa' and 'TV Azteca.' Also, Margolles art, exported with official support from the Mexican government to the prestigious international Venice art show, fits well into the neocolonial clichés of the European public, which expects visual urban thrills from Mexico, similar to the catastrophic newspaper articles on Mexico City.

'Citamblers' – potentials of the visual education in the megacity

There exists an alternative to the entropic documentary and the catastrophic abstract image production of the Mexican megalopolis: the neo-surrealist and neo-situationist group of urban researchers called 'Citambulos' ('Citambler' in English), which collects the unknown visual and

material fragments of the city as an alternative to the controlled hegemonic view of tourist guides and popular clichéd photobooks about Mexico City.

The Citamblers were inspired by Walter Benjamin's notion that the spirit of an urban era and culture is crystallized in seemingly unimportant details, not only in its monumental panorama (Benjamin (1983: 575): 'in der Analyse des kleinen Einzelmoments den Kristall des Totalgeschehens zu entdecken' ('To discover in the analysis of the small particular moment, the crystal of the total fact.')). The consequent visual reading of the city's fragments reveals fractals of the whole megalopolitan culture. Aware of the limited epistemological possibility of understanding an agglomeration of twenty million inhabitants with almost unlimited growth and overwhelming heterogeneity, the authors selected paradigmatic sites in order to grasp striking symbolic images for the present century from this conflicted urban laboratory. In some respects, these fragmented urban views correspond with its fragmented image. Here, the Citamblers found and liberated the barely-recognized aesthetic potential of urban image production. Of course, exploring this potential of the megalopolis does not mean warming over the anachronistic concept of aesthetics as a – relative – norm of beauty. Instead, it recollects the original meaning of the word aisthesis in ancient Greek, which includes all the facets of sensory perception and the intellectual understanding thereof. In this way, the visual construction of the city does not only comprise the great works of architecture, but also embraces the visual complexity of the environment, including that produced by popular, even anarchic cultures.

These objects complement, enrich, and contrast with the official historiography of Mexico City. For example, the electric cables decorated with pairs of sneakers (Álvarez, Rojas Loa, and von Wissel 2006) are anarchic refurbishments of the city. They make an ironic statement and, given their absurdity, they effectively become micro-forms of resistance against the homogenizing globalized macro-forms of the urban environment. The citambler may discover alternative spatial identifiers placed by the inhabitants, whose diverse cultural expressions create an unmistakable profile for the megacity. It is a semantic reprogramming, in many cases unconscious, of the 'city without qualities,' with its grey, monotonous, and hostile urban form expanding over vast areas.

The playful, ironic perception of these signs opens new paths towards understanding, crucial for reformulating the current concept of the city – of the neo-liberal city which no longer works as an instrument for the education of society, but rather reduces itself to an accumulation of autonomous individuals linked together by very little besides consumerism.

The Citamblers' publications and exhibitions encourage the urban aesthesis, the act of seeing, which feeds back into the consciousness and thus generates a continuous learning process, where the genetic predetermination of the brain can enrich itself with empirical reality. The urban collective imaginary provides countless visual stimuli that modify the creation of neural networks, thereby educating the city-ambulating inhabitant. New neural combinations emerge, generating meanings beyond established associations. Thus, the accepted view of things is converted into a new and refreshing aesthetic experience.

In anthropological terms, perception and construction of images is a basic function of the human being. Contemplation through photography of the urban surroundings provides orientation. In fact, photographs are like windows which allow us to peer at a virtual city closely connected with tangible reality. Although photography is just one more means of reception,[4] it generates an aesthetic education capable of demanding an overhaul of the consciousness of the citizen-turned-citambler. The artificial presence of the urban imaginary in the photographs included in the Citamblers' guide book, invites readers to verify constructed urban realities with their own eyes.

The representation of Mexico City in mental or photographic images depends on specific parameters of time and space. While nineteenth-century draftsmen presented the city with a high

degree of realism (Decaen 1972; Fomento Cultural Banamex 1993) current producers of megalopolitan images share their visions through a broad range of avant-garde visual techniques accumulated over the twentieth century such as collage,[5] photomontage, diagrams, etc. These visual systems blow up petrified visions of reality. These contemporary gazes are constructions of urban reality, the elements of which agglomerate or atomize under the different perspectives drawn by the citambler. From time to time, images emerge which lay claim to their own value and meaning, beyond the explanatory word.

The incessant construction of subjective urban reality codifies the visual stimulus with the appropriate terminologies and concepts. Step by step, the brain makes new associations between image and word, and codifies the urban experience in the symbolic structures of language. Nonetheless, the apprehension of the urban visual world through words only allows for a partial, sometimes deceptive, understanding. According to Ludwig Wittgenstein (1999: 346), language shows similar principles to those of urban organization: it is a labyrinth of paths. 'You come from one side, and you find your bearings. You come from the other side, to the same place, and you are lost.'

'Citamblers' is a project of aesthetic education which enriches urban experiences, without excluding the negative sides of the current development of the megalopolis, such as the ecocide and the socio-spatial disintegration. Via aesthetic seduction, in a playful manner, this alternative to mathematical (Humpert) and artistic (Smith, Margolles) understanding of the Mexican megalopolis leads to ethical reflection about the current hyper-urban culture of a city that went from demographic explosion to social implosion and environmental exploitation, and which has been gradually transformed from a post-industrial city into a post-productive city.[6]

Conceptual dimensions of the megalopolitan aesthetic

Can the term 'city' be used in the same manner to describe both pre-Hispanic Tenochtitlan and the megalopolitan agglomeration in the Valley of Mexico of the twenty-first century? What new visual constructions of city have emerged? Is it even worth examining them as a source of collective creativity? At the end of this overview on a specific, albeit unusual topic of art historical research, we may consider some conceptual aspects.

Visual consciousness about the built environment is a necessary human capacity. Recent neurological research has recognized the importance of visual perception in the formation of human identity. The brain is constantly configuring cognitive maps of spatial consciousness. Of the hundred billion neurons in the human brain, the majority process visual stimuli, i.e. images, and only a minority deal with abstract processes such as mathematical calculation or the logical configuration of language. That is why the urban landscape and its complex collective imaginary is not a decorative element, interesting only to art historians, but rather a key nutrient of consciousness. Furthermore, as cybernetic and anthropological research has shown (Rieger 2003: 163, 186), the imaginative capacity of human beings programs the ethical standards and their related actions.

One of these central ethical paradigms consists of the commitment of the citizen to his city. Through visual orientation in a given urban environment, attitudes, opinions, and community organization are configured. While early political theory was closely related to the material substance and rational structure of the cities – the Greek polis as an instrument of politics – megacities challenge other means of spatial and political identification. Confronted with an accumulation of more than twenty million inhabitants, the mega-citizen may lose orientation and symbolic coherence in his habitat. At the start of the twenty-first century, the traditional Roman motto 'urbi et orbi' has changed to 'urbi est orbi.' Now the city becomes the world. And this hyperurbanized world where now fifty percent, and a predicted seventy-five percent of the

population lives, generates enormous agglomerations, which in popular evaluation are seen as urban monsters – like Mexico City.

One etymological origin of the term 'monster' can be found in the Latin word 'monstrare,' to show or indicate something (Kirk 2008). Monsters, even urban monsters as a cultural product, reveal the exaggeration and transgression of a standard. This transgression has already become the new norm when we think of the accelerating growth of megacities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Their images give us insights into the cultural and political condition of dense and conflicted human cohabitation. As yet, however, the collective ability to read the cities' image is not widely developed. Visual education offered by art history has a role to play.

Equipped with the analytical instruments of this discipline, methodologically extended towards a science of the image (Bildwissenschaft in German), readers of the cityscapes may recognize interpretative potentials and also critical issues of urban life. One of these critical points is what Rem Koolhaas, based on the novelist Robert Musil has called 'a city without attributes' – urban conglomerations showing advanced erosion of spatial identity. These losses of specific physiognomic characteristics – as embodied in downtown Atlanta or in the new business districts of Shanghai and Dubai with their interchangeable aesthetics of globalized architecture and urban structures – are already commonplaces of cultural critique, but as yet we do not understand how these new urban physiognomies respond to different patterns of political, economic, social, and cultural organization in a polycentric and hyperurbanized world.

In contrast to reproducing negative clichés about monstrous, violent, and aesthetically diminished megacities, the Citamblers' approach of walking and perceiving the complex image of the city (beyond the schematic analysis given by Kevin Lynch), offers an inspiring physiognomic reading. While the term 'physiognomy' in the eighteenth century was a pseudo-science (Lavater), abused in the nineteenth by racist criminology (Lombroso), it was revived in the 1920s as an instrument to decipher the city's character in all its facets, including the waste spaces, the unknown contexts, and the hidden secrets (Christians 2000). In this sense, art history and visual studies can develop a critical (not ideological) physiognomy of the cities, where the detail, the visual fractal virtually reveals essential paradigms of the whole city. Yet, this reading depends on the beholders' visual training, a task important not only for urban understanding, but also for establishing orientation in the present environments that are flooded with television and internet images.

It makes sense to stress the functional aspect of urban physiology: to foster identification, consciousness, and reconsideration of urban development. But understanding the complex visual construction of the megalopolis includes an epistemological problem: I do not see what I do not want to see (von Foerster 2001), and, the 'temporalized, unstable, complex image [of the city] brimming with the history of its production' (Resina and Ingenschay 2003: 2) often provokes mental rejection. If that happens, it leads to static and exclusive patterns of perception. The so-called after-image of the city is not fixed in stable signs and references. Instead, it reveals the permanent change of urban images and meaning. In turn, that challenges us to make permanent revisions to our established habits by using the 'science of walking'[7] and traveling in a hyperurbanized polycentered cross-cultural world, beyond the traditional academic and tourist fixation of old European city culture.

Notes

1. An interesting case is the popular mental definition of New York: while the greater New York area is an urban agglomeration of about nineteen million inhabitants, many people reduce 'New York' to the topographical sharply defined island of Manhattan, which shows spatial limits (marked by the Hudson and East Rivers) similar to a medieval town with walls.

2. Term coined in the context of Koolhaas et al. (2001: 650–720 'Lagos').
3. *Mexico City. An Exhibition about Exchange Rates of Body and Values*, Berlin, New York: Kunst-Werke u. P.S.1, 2002; Cuauhtémoc Medina. *20 Million Mexicans can't be wrong. Exhibition Guide*. London: South London Gallery, 2002.
4. This idea is based on the notion introduced by Leon Battista Alberti in his work De Pictura (1435), in which he asserts that the (painted) image is a window.
5. On the influence of the artistic form of the collage in urban thought, see Rowe and Koetter (1978).
6. On the characteristics of the post-industrial and post-productive city, in which the informal market culture dominates, selling cheap products from China or other Asian countries, see the case of Lagos, Nigeria, analyzed by Gandy (2004: 30).
7. The 'science of walking' was invented by the urban theorist Lucius Burckhardt, University of Kassel; for an overview on this topic, see Careri (2002).

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