GRAMSCI AND THE MEDITERRANEAN CITY: MODERNITY, URBANISM, SPONTANEITY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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The proletarian dictatorship will preserve this magnificent apparatus of industrial and intellectual production, this driving force of civil life, from the ruin which is looming so threateningly over it. Bourgeois power […] is now revealing the progress of its decay in the cities, which are steadily declining in comparison with the countryside […] The proletarian dictatorship will save the cities from ruin […] In this way, it will prevent those miraculous engines of life and civil progress which are the cities of today from being destroyed piecemeal by the landholders and usurers of the countryside who, in their uncouth way, hate and despise modern industrial civilisation.

(Gramsci, 1994, p. 136)

Abstract

The Mediterranean city is understood here through Gramsci's insights, but also the lenses of other interwar intellectuals, the Chicago ecologists and Walter Benjamin, who developed innovative theoretical languages around the city at the dawn of capitalism and modernity, stamping the social sciences until today. Gramsci was fascinated by cities as liberating, progressive, hegemonic, in a discourse contrasting to Marx and Engels' ambivalence and critical urbanism. He unveiled contrasts between Northern and Southern urban modernities. These are presented here with reference first to the regional role of cities and urbanisation, then to urban landscapes – first the urban core, then the periphery. Finally, Gramsci's interpretation of civil society and several of his concepts are explored and taken further: urbanism, hegemony vs dominance, divided cities, 'cities of silence', spontaneity vs conscious leadership, alternative cultures arising from popular 'common sense' in everyday life to reach class awareness and consciousness. Gramsci's 'spatial turn' and 'cultural turn', his distance from abstract, dogmatic models and sensitivity for local narratives have been resumed recently in postmodern discourses. He offers theoretical insights for Southern European urban modernities, which can be extended to the Mediterranean more generally, to non-European societies, and also to the next century, to our times.

Introduction: Gramsci and his contemporaries

Why Gramsci? He has become famous for his concept of hegemony and for his analysis of the Southern Question, but what about the city? Indeed, Gramsci has much to contribute to urban history and urban theory. Starting from the conviction that there are no "objective" urban histories, since the reconstruction of the past is always bound with the researcher's positionality, here we attempt to understand the Mediterranean city through Gramsci's eyes, but also those of his contemporaries. Gramsci was fascinated by cities as liberating and progressive. He was not lured by the rural idyll, nor did he stress urban squalor and anomie. He delivered a forceful discourse about the progressive potential unleashed by the city, such as the one quoted above. His frequent positive references to the city came in contrast to the ambivalent urbanism of Marx and Engels, who were magnetized by but also critical of Northern European cities, where the industrial revolution took place.

This essay approaches modernism in the South European city based on research into interwar urbanism and cityscapes as conceived by Gramsci (as in Leontidou, 1990; 1996). We also compare and contrast the views of the Chicago ecologists with those of Gramsci, as interpreted by Benjamin, in order to highlight a series of differences among interwar intellectuals in their discourses on Northern and Southern industrial cities and their modernities. Interwar intellectuals have left their mark on the social sciences. A strong motivation for this project is the innovative theoretical language describing the city and urban life as they emerged during the dawn of capitalism and modernity, at a time when growing cities startled the world with their rapid transformations.

> If Chicago was the "shock city" of the 1890s, one of the British nineteenth-century cities — Manchester — was the shock city of the 1840s, attracting visitors from all countries, forcing to the surface what seemed to be intractable problems of society and government, and generating as great a variety of opinions as Chicago did later or Los Angeles did in the 1930s and 1940s. Every age has its shock city. (Briggs, 1968, p. 56).

Every intellectual, too; because if Briggs refers to Los Angeles, the Chicago School of human ecology would be fascinated by Chicago, but in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s there was Paris (Benjamin) and Turin and Napoli (Gramsci). The debate about the city and urban life intensified in the interwar period. Modernity had the urban experience at its epicenter (Berman, 1983). The avant-garde in material culture and "the transitional, the fleeting, the conjectural" (Baudelaire, 1981, pp. 402–8) in art were reflected in cities, rapid urbanization, and migration.

Gramsci can be placed in a Marxist stream of European intellectual tradition influenced by the young Marx and magnetized by cultural questions. His contribution to urban theory has yet to be recognized in the fields of Geography and Urban Studies, as it stands in the shadow of the work of the Chicago ecologists. But in Europe two highly inspiring figures came to prominence in cultural Marxism, Antonio Gramsci and Walter Benjamin. Both offered theories on urban modernity that were based on historical reality rather than abstract schemas.

Gramsci came from the middle of the Mediterranean, in the specific region of "the South" represented by Ales, Cagliari, Sardinia, where he was born on January 22, 1891. He was an urbanite in his mature life, moving between Torino and Rome, where he died in 1937, shortly after his release from prison. Benjamin was born one year after Gramsci, in 1892, in Berlin, and became a student of Simmel (1969), like Park. He escaped to Paris and other cities but committed suicide in Port Bou in 1940, pursued and haunted by the Gestapo. Gramsci and Benjamin never met. Despite their parallel experiences and Marxist influences, they interpreted Mediterranean modernity in very different ways. They did not influence each other in their writings directly and overtly. But their discourse is stunningly similar, fragmented in the style of "notes" that they left behind and in notebooks about European cities. Gramsci's Prison notebooks (1971) and Benjamin's Arcades project (1999) adopt the postmodern fragmented discourse, far removed from grand narratives (Leontidou, 1996). These seminal works, when deciphered, offer both multi-layered urban geographies and reflections on material cultures of modernity and even post-modernity.

Gramsci's ingenuity in the interpretation of cities outside the overexposed Anglo-American core of urban studies rests on his several Italian urban histories, which are refreshingly relevant for a geographical theory for the South European city (Leontidou, 1990; 1996). Adopting the standard sequence of urban geography, we will first consider the **regional** role of cities and urbanization, and then focus on urban histories of uneven development and diversity within urban landscapes, first for the urban **core** and the inner city, and then for the urban **periphery**. Finally, we will discuss the interrelation between **civil society** and the spatial particularities of Southern cities.

Urbanism, civilization, and urban hegemony

Interwar modernity in the Northern and Western city was reflected and materialized in **industrialism** and **anti-urban** dominant cultures. During the 19th and 20th centuries, within modernity, Anglo-American cultures cherished rural eutopias (Williams, 1973a) and developed a conception of the city as "vice". By contrast, Southern European urbanization accelerated without industrialization. The underlying economic force was not industrialism, but urban/rural uneven development, and the underlying cultural force of urbanization was Mediterranean **urbanism**. Populations are attracted by the city, partly because of memories of glorious city states (Leontidou, 2001), in which the city is a source of virtue, culture, civilization, productivity, and creativity (Leontidou, 1990; 2001). There is even a word for Mediterranean urbanism, *astyfilia* (in Greek, an affinity for the city").

To this dimension of cultural heritage, Gramsci added that of territorial **hegemony,** in contrast to domination. He tended to stress urban diversity and refer to certain cities as hegemonic and to others as dominant, and to yet others even exploitative. Bipolarities divide urban fromrural places, but also divide cities themselves, such as industrial vs. non-industrial cities. But what are non-industrial cities? Are they centers of commerce or merely consumption? Gramsci does not provide a clear reply. His concern is rather their political role, their hegemony or subordination, and their cultural role in the course of history.

Gramsci was the first to reflect on urban diversity, but also on rivalries, between cities. Both are in fact much more pronounced around the Mediterranean than in the North, as in the Northern Italian slogan: "Turin produces, Milan sells, and Rome consumes". This statement mirrors antagonisms between industrial and consumption centers, with centers of exchange positioned in-between. The rest of Southern Europe echoes such rivalries within its bipolar urban networks, e.g., Barcelona and Madrid, Thessaloniki and Athens (Leontidou, 1990; 2001, p. 94). In Gramsci's notebooks, divisions and interactions between

Milan and Turin, cities of the "Northern urban force", were thought to exercise an "indirect" directive function over other territorial entities, both urban and rural (Gramsci, 1971, p. 98). However, since there are diverse rivalries, urban hegemony cannot be easily typified. Only progressive cities, which hold an organic relationship to the countryside, may rise to hegemony, according to Gramsci (1971, p. 91; Leontidou, 1990, pp. 124–5).

Hegemony, whether class or territorial, is not mere domination. It is not the exercise of power and force, but is based on the construction of consent, which subordinates civil society to bourgeois and state ideology and crystallizes a dominant culture. Hegemony is also not a mere manipulation of opinion. The dominant culture is organized and lived, it becomes laws, constitutions, theories (Anderson, 1976; Leontidou, 1990, p. 41, 271; Mouffe, 1979, pp. 168–204). Hegemony is not static, but continually active and adjusting. "Such hegemony can be sustained by the rulers only by the constant exercise of skill, of theatre and of concession" (Thompson, 1978, p. 163–4; see also Williams, 1973b). It is the antithesis of consensus history, but also of coercion (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12).

In Gramsci's work there is frequent reference to both class and territorial hegemony. Class hegemony, as discussed in unending streams of bibliography, touches the city. Distinctions between hegemony and dominance in territorial terms are diversified in Gramsci's urban types. They are also complicated by scale, in the form of hegemony on the local, regional, or national level. Gramsci considers the subordination of the country to the city (the essence of "Jacobinism") as an "organic" relationship in some cases, wherein the city rises to hegemony and organizes peasant consent (Hoare & Smith in Gramsci, 1971, p. 45; Leontidou, 1990, p. 258). In other cases, however, the city creates an "urban ideological unity" within it, distancing itself from the countryside. According to Gramsci, hegemony in territorial terms is relevant only for cities organically linked with the countryside, like Turin, which in his opinion was capable of playing the leading role in the socio-political transformation of Italy. In this case, Gramsci follows the optimistic side of Engels' analysis (1969), in which the industrial city of Manchester stood in contrast to the capital, London. Gramsci does not refer to Manchester and may have never read Engels (1969). But there are echoes of Marxist urbanism in his depiction of Turin as a laboratory of Marxian class struggle. He considers Turin a conflictual but robust city, in contrast with Milan or Rome.

> Turin is a modern city. Capitalist activity throbs in it with the crashing din of massive workshops which concentrate tens of thousands of proletarians into a few thousand cubic meters. Turin has over half a million inhabitants. The human race is divided here into two classes with distinguishing characteristics not found elsewhere in Italy. We don't have democrats and petty reformists in our way. We have a bold and unscrupulous capitalist bourgeoisie, we have strong organizations, we have a complex and varied socialist movement, rich in impulses and intellectual needs. (Gramsci, 1985, p. 33)

Gramsci describes a historically produced core typology of urban dichotomies, which he considers to be the basis of urban diversity. He distinguishes between industrial and "mediaeval-type" cities and the consequent dichotomy between progressive and regressive urban centers or modern and traditional classes. He thus analyzes divided cities, "cities of silence".

> Urbanism in Italy is not purely, nor "especially", a phenomenon of capitalistic development or that of big industry. Naples, which for a long time was the biggest Italian city and which continues to be one of the biggest, is not an industrial city: Neither is Rome — at present the largest Italian city. Yet in these mediaeval-type cities too, there exist strong nuclei of populations of a modern urban type; but what is their relative position? They are submerged, oppressed, crushed by the other part, which is not of a modern type, and constitutes the great majority. Paradox of the "cities of silence". (Gramsci, 1971, p. 91)

Gramsci borrows the title of D'Annunzio's poetry collection to weave a subtle local narrative about the divisions in European cities and working-class quarters, which remained hidden and surrounded by silence for the best part of the 20th century—another echo of Engels (Leontidou, 1989). We can also discern insights into weak Southern European civil societies, where the modernism of productive work is submerged to a majority and thus to the hegemony of the income-receivers and the *comprador* bourgeoisie[1].

The urban core and the "right to the city"

In the USA, the city-building process during modernity was based on **competition**. The overexposed Chicago School exalted "market" forces as "ecological processes" and was not conscious of any city-country or inter-city rivalries. It stressed ecological competition among social groups in space. Although this is now considered self-evident, it is not: it contrasts with ear-

1. The productive/parasitic dichotomy also concerns the bourgeoisie and has come quite late to the attention of researchers on Southern Europe (Moskov, Tsoukalas, Poulantzas). Their own interest in the *comprador* bourgeoisie did not emanate from Gramsci, but from Latin American studies of neocolonial social formations (Leontidou 1989, pp. 51–5, 1990, p. 40)

lier theories of **mutual aid** in nature and society, which we find in Kropotkin (1974), the anarchist, prince, and geographer. Gramsci's urban theory is in complete contrast with Anglo-American urban studies, despite its distance from the ideas of Kropotkin.

There is a nuanced historicity in Gramsci's writings, which is admirable given his lack of books and references during his time in prison. He was utterly isolated, in stark contrast with the Chicago ecologists, supported by the libraries and infrastructures of an excellent university and on their way to a place in posterity. In addition, Gramsci was far from formalist or positivist. There can be no "central place theory" in Gramsci and no land-rent competition models like those of the Chicagoans. If anything, he offered a class model, but one that is so nuanced that it is not a model; it is a historical portrayal and an alternative theoretical discourse, considering diverse Mediterranean urban histories, relationships between cities and countryside, urban antagonisms and bipolarities, cosmopolitanism, class interactions, urban landscapes and divisions. From his spatially and historically nuanced treatment of particular cities, however, a typology emerges.

Leaving aside Gramsci for now, let us concentrate on urbanism and anti-urbanism, as discussed in the previous section. These basic forces in urbanization dynamics also impact spatial structures within cities, urban landscapes, and land and housing allocation. Differences between Mediterranean and Anglo-American cityscapes abound, but the main antithesis emanates from the center/ periphery relation (Leontidou, 1989; 1990). In the USA, and in the UK, elites have chosen to live in the suburbs, often creating "garden cities", and have left the inner city to the poor and the migrants. The Chicago School has invoked the Burgess model of competition and the ecological processes emanating from the market. But the Mediterranean urban landscape had the opposite overall structure in the interwar period: an inverse-Burgess model.

Beginning in Gramsci's time, the suburbs of Mediterranean cities formed popular shantytowns, extensive peripheral popular settlements, or spontaneous settlements, as we will call them here. By contrast, the Mediterranean bourgeoisie has usually chosen to live close to the center, thus putting *astyfilia* firmly on the map and on the urban landscape. This core of the city magnetized intellectuals as well. The glass arcades, built at the turn of the 19th century in central Paris, enchanted and at the same time alienated Walter Benjamin. They were urban art but also places where the idle upper class, with their craving for expensive merchandise, could stroll (Benjamin, 1999). With reference to the "technological subconscious of the 19th century", Benjamin exalted urban phantasmagoria in interaction with social classes (Merrifield, 2002). Like Gramsci, Benjamin abhorred inequalities, exploitation, and suppression, but he expressed his abhorrence as melancholy and a kind of escapism, becoming a wanderer. The irresistible appeal of the arcades inspired Benjamin to imagine the *flâneur*, Baudelaire's figure of a wanderer in the urban landscape, who took pleasure in "bathing in the crowd" as an art (Baudelaire, 1947; Benjamin 1999, see also Harvey, 2003, pp. 23–24; Leontidou, 2010).

> The city is the realization of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality to which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself. Without knowing it; yet nothing is more foolish than the conventional thesis which rationalizes his behavior, and which forms the uncontested basis of that voluminous literature that traces the figure and demeanor of the flâneur — the thesis, namely, that the flâneur has made a study of the physiognomic appearance of people in order to discover their nationality and social station [...] (Benjamin, 1999, pp. 429–30)

Benjamin was a critic of 20th century vulgar modernism and its planners, especially Haussmann. But in this regard, the parallels to Gramsci are not straightforward. Gramsci's comments on Americanism and Fordism are quite optimistic about the possible role of modernism and maybe, indirectly, new urban planning (as well as other aspects of Fordism) in modernizing Italy's uneven social and spatial structure. He approved of "the grandiose projects" and the "exaltation of the big cities" of the time, insofar as they reorganized the "terrain" of communist hegemonic projects. While such optimistic comments are difficult to read as affirmations of Mediterranean informality, this may be attributed to the lack of grandiose planning in interwar Mediterranean cities. Of course, Mussolini did remodel Rome (Fried, 1973), but relevant conflicts erupted after Gramsci's time.

In parallel, the "**right to the city**" emerges right from the start in Gramsci's polemic text. The bourgeoisie is placed on the same level with usurers of the countryside, while the city is, for Gramsci, a "magnificent" place of production and civilization, with the proletariat as its best hope. Gramsci here presents a strong statement about the "right to the city" as defined by Lefebvre (1996. p. 158): as "a cry and a demand" to save the city from decay. This quote also reveals Gramsci's dialectical approach to urbanism: a proletarian hegemonic bloc centered on the industrial city is necessary to liberate its potentials, primarily against certain forces in the countryside, but also against certain aspects of urban life and certain classes in cities. This proletariat, a population "of a modern urban type" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 91), created by rapid urbanization in all cities of the world, has been frequently submerged. However, in Mediterranean ur-

ban history it has often established its right to the city, as we will now argue.

The urban periphery and popular spontaneity

The distinction between dominant and subordinate classes is reflected in dominant and subordinate modes of land and housing allocation in Southern Europe. These imply the notion of class cultures, as follows: the "market," with the concomitants of possessiveness, competition, and economic exploitation, is the domain of dominant classes (Leontidou, 1990). This dominant mode of land and housing allocation, the regulated market, has been contravened in the Mediterranean city by spontaneous settlers, implicitly and silently carrying anti-capitalist values and alternative cultures, affecting modes of housing allocation by the creation of self-built settlements, often illegal. This popular action has challenged two basic axes of dominant cultures in Mediterranean civil society: the dominant "market" and the intervention by state planners and urban policymakers to regulate it. Popular self-help housing and squatter settlements are manifestly informal, since they undermine formal procedures and many aspects of dominant cultures: the "market", the rules of the state and the bourgeoisie, as well as premises of modernity and planning. They have escaped commercialization and have been reproducing housing as use value rather than exchange value, for habitation rather than speculation; they have put the family as a regulating institution in cases where the welfare state is absent or weak (Leontidou, 1990; 2010).

Between Mediterranean and Anglo-American urban histories, there are obvious contrasting trajectories in the case of suburbanization. In the cities of Southern Europe (and Latin America, for that matter) the accommodation of thousands of internal migrants was achieved by squatting and semi-squatting in peripheral popular settlements (Leontidou, 1989; 1990). This was unthinkable in UK or USA cities throughout the 20th century. And it was barely beginning in Rome, and also Athens, Barcelona, Lisbon and elsewhere, in Gramsci's time. We must therefore not seek direct references, but ways to understand it through Gramsci's eyes. Self-built settlements can be understood through his notion of popular "common sense". With this, Gramsci superseded "folklore" or medieval/pre-capitalist relics and referred to cultures of everyday life (Leontidou, 1990, p. 240):

> "Spontaneous" in the sense that they are not the result of any systematic educational activity on the part of an already conscious leading group, but have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by "common sense", i.e. by the traditional popular conception of the world — what is unimaginatively called "instinct", although it too is in fact a primitive and elementary historical acquisition. (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 198–9, between parentheses)

Thus, semi-squatters contravene planning by-laws and regulations, which are incomprehensible to them, absurd, outside popular "common sense". They consider it a natural right to build a shack and live in the urban periphery. And the state turns a blind eye to illegal building — until dictatorships decide to control it (Leontidou, 1990). This process of **spontaneous urbanization** (Leontidou, 1989; 1990) can be linked to and inspired by Gramsci's couplet of spontaneity vs. conscious leadership, as defined in his work:

> The term "spontaneity" can be variously defined, for the phenomenon to which it refers is many-sided. Meanwhile it must be stressed that "pure" spontaneity does not exist in history […] In the "most spontaneous" movement it is simply the case that the elements of "conscious leadership" cannot be checked, have left no reliable document. It may be said that spontaneity is therefore characteristic of the "history of the subaltern classes", and indeed of their most marginal and peripheral elements; these have not achieved any consciousness of the class "for itself", and consequently it never occurs to them that their history might have some possible importance, that there might be some value in leaving documentary evidence of it. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 196)

We have here appropriated Gramsci's concept of spontaneity heuristically, in a different context from that in which it was originally conceived, profiting from the power of his work to inspire the conceptualizations of phenomena beyond those he was interested in, or the ones he witnessed (Leontidou, 1990; 2012) [2]. Popular urbanization in Mediterranean cities was only beginning during Gramsci's time, especially in interwar Greece with the inflow of refugees, and in Mediterranean cities with their massive internal migrations. Popular suburbanization was starting. But it escalated during the first postwar decades in South European cities. Illegal residences were built massively by the settlers themselves, often overnight. This was semi-squatting, since the land was usually not squatted upon but bought as small agricultural plots, where it was illegal to build. Popular invasions overwhelmed planners, and civil society overwhelmed the state with massive illegality in land allocation. Mediterranean cities expanded illegally, by popular initiative.

In the interwar period, Greece was the focus of popular suburbanization, because of the refugee inflow from Asia Minor, after the 1922 population exchange between Greece and Turkey. But Rome, Barcelona, Lisbon, and other cities also grew spontaneously. Self-built popular suburbs were living testimony of the

success of "subaltern" groups in stating effectively their "right to the (Mediterranean) city" (Leontidou, 2010). They produced "slums of hope". Subordinate popular cultures would survive within civil societies by sustained struggles and, in the process, they articulated a new form of hegemony, functional for the system, with the tacit acceptance of squatting (Leontidou, 1990, pp. 41–2).

Squatting acquired the consent of the dominant classes, who adopted an ambivalent attitude, alternating repression and concession in order to control illegal building (Leontidou, 1990, p. 255). Popular interventions in the city have thus diversified civil societies, reproduced social cohesion, and acknowledged hegemony. Gramsci considers Southern civil societies as structured by the interplay of force and consent, dominance and hegemony, but also counter-hegemony. He inspires us to expose and understand the margins of capitalist modernity, which have been crucial in Mediterranean civil societies. He refers to "marginal and peripheral elements" in conflict or interaction with other actors. He poses the matter of spontaneity on a class basis. He displaces modernity and capitalism towards their informal manifestations. Unintentionally and intuitively, Gramsci highlighted what was soon to follow in Southern urban histories: the rising importance of the division between informal and formal work and residence. This was indeed a success story of "subaltern" groups, but, while it lasted, it remained hidden and monographic, absent from academic literature, stigmatized but tacitly accepted by authority. Gramsci's notes are invaluable here, too, for yet another insight which can be applied in a different context:

> In reality, even when they appear triumphant, the subaltern groups are merely anxious to defend themselves (…). Every trace of independent initiative on the part of the subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for the integral historian. Consequently, this kind of history can only be dealt with monographically, and each monograph requires an immense quantity of material which is often hard to collect. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 55)

In contrast to Marxist economism and productivism, Gramsci's contribution lies on two levels. On the one hand, distance from abstract models and from grand narratives and, his passion for empirical material place Gramsci as a stark critic of conventional urban theory of his own time and of ours. On the other hand, his implicit dislocation of modernism and modernity towards the margins, whether social (subaltern groups) or geographical (the South) ones, leads to the construction of a theory of the Mediterranean city inexistent even until today (Leontidou, 1990). This theory engulfs and draws attention to the margins of capitalist modernity. Gramsci is fascinated by Southern alternative civil societies, "weak" on several levels but strong enough to defend the "right to the city" (Leontidou, 2010). Indirectly, he shares his enchantment with the unexpected and the alternative in urban space. He insists on the importance of spontaneity in politics and prompts others not to despise spontaneity:

> Neglecting, or worse still despising, so-called "spontaneous" movements, i.e. failing to give them a conscious leadership or to raise them to a higher plane by inserting them into politics, may often have extremely serious consequences. It is almost always the case that a "spontaneous" movement of the subaltern classes is accompanied by a reactionary movement of the right-wing of the dominant class, for concomitant reasons. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 199)

Gramsci here affirms spontaneity, but also unveils the important question of raising spontaneous urbanism to a higher plane politically, with the help of leadership, in order to prevent an absorption of this very spontaneity by right-wing forces. Mediterranean popular settlements were often neglected by the Left and co-opted by right-wing governments by force and consent, demolitions and legalization (Leontidou, 1990). In light of Gramsci's experience of the rise of fascism in Italy in his own time, this issue was painfully relevant. This was also the case for the rest of Southern Europe later in the 20th century, with dictatorships until the 1970s. Their specter still lingers in the 21st century, with bankers of Goldman Sachs appointed as prime ministers in Greece and Italy in 2011! Can this be justified with reference to the crisis, or even weak civil societies?

(Post)modern palimpsests and civil societies

Mediterranean urban spaces of informality, mixed urban landscapes, vertical differentiation, and palimpsests in the city have an interesting array of social impacts. Gramsci relates these with cohesive civil societies, as we will now see.

Most Mediterranean cities have no ghettoes and no "gated communities, no exclusivity in the residential landscape, except in a few conspicuous bourgeois quarters (Leontidou, 1989). Segregation has been rare, with very few exceptions. The cohabitation of middle and working classes, natives and migrants, in mixed urban quarters has been an outcome of **vertical differentiation** alongside neighborhood segregation in Mediterranean cities (Leontidou, 1990, p. 12). Piecemeal urban development, sustained by a multitude of small building enterprises, has resulted in apartment buildings with vertical differentiation and also large percentages of owner-occupation. In apartment buildings in Athens, class and ethnic difference escalates

between the ground floor and semi-basements for the lower classes and poor migrants, and the top floors and *rétirés* for the rich (Leontidou, 1990, p. 132, p. 236). The same can be found in some neighborhoods of Rome and Barcelona, with *aticos* and *sobre aticos* on top floors, retreating from the facade. Segregation would be an inappropriate concept in these cases: no doubt, there is neighborhood clustering, but it is diluted by vertical social differentiation, among different storeys, creating mixed rather than exclusive communities. In this, Gramsci offered his valuable insights, discussing the central high-rise tenements of Naples, as Allum observed:

> On the ground floor of these palaces and tenements are found the famous bassi in which the poorer families live; the upper classes inhabit the upper floors of the same buildings. This cohabitation accounts for the ideological unity of all social groups in these zones which many observers have commented on [3].

Gramsci (1949, pp. 95–6) was the first to comment on this ideological unity as an outcome of vertical differentiation to a large extent. In other words, he appreciated the impact of a spatial pattern on civil society. His observation is a major contribution in understanding the importance of geography through the dialectics of space with Mediterranean civil societies, and the creation of social cohesion by a spatial arrangement. This was intensified and made more complex only in the 21st century, with massive migrations from the global South and East.

Naples was a workshop of conceptualizations and theories at the time, like Manchester or Turin before it. Besides Gramsci, the city came under the scrutiny of his contemporary, Walter Benjamin[2] (1979), who was interested in the ambiguity of the modern and in the alternative forms of urbanism encountered away from his familiar Northern European cities (Buck-Morss, 1989, p. 27; Robinson, 2006, pp. 30–34). He was impressed by the porosity of city life in Naples, where private life was lived in public places: "Porosity is the inexhaustible law of the life in this city, reappearing everywhere" (Benjamin, 1979, p. 171). He even saw the interpenetration of day and night in the siesta (Benjamin, 1979, p. 175). Private life became collective in the narrow streets of Naples, where "the living room reappears on the street [... and] the street migrates into the living room" (Benjamin, 1979, p. 174), just like in the spontaneous popular "slums of hope" around Mediterranean cities (Leontidou, 1990). But the basic difference of Naples was the centrality of this everyday life on the street.

Unlike Gramsci, however, Benjamin put aside civil society and referred to primitive communities. "What distinguishes Naples from other large cities is something it has in common with the African kraal; each private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life" (Benjamin, 1979, p. 174). In other words, Benjamin saw porosity and the interpenetration of public and private in extra-European terms, outside modernity, as primitive or archaic, with Africa as a symbol for the dynamism and transformation of a decaying European culture (Robinson, 2006, p. 32). Many urbanists since then have considered Mediterranean cities as pre-industrial. By contrast, Gramsci stood by Southern cities as workshops of a different type of industrialism, Europeanism and modernity.

Southern cities have been constantly misunderstood as "particular cases" or "pre-capitalist relics", or they have been completely neglected in urban studies and social science in general. After Gramsci, however, we can counter these prejudices and claim that these "different" cities are solidly embedded in capitalism (Leontidou, 1990). This is their particular form of capitalism, where mixed uses due to informality and the employment linkage contrast with Northern ordered land use and zoning. The cityscape has been a kaleidoscope of piecemeal urban development instead of zoning, fragmentation instead of compactness, vertical differentiation in parallel with community segregation. The urban landscape thus dislocates modernism through the collage of mixed land use, self-built settlements, and spontaneity together with informality.

Is this really primitivism, or is it closer to postmodernism (Leontidou, 1993)? For the last half century, after Jane Jacobs (1961), planners have been exalting mixtures and kaleidoscopes. Popular suburbs and the mixture of classes in the city were **not** signs of primitivism, as even Benjamin—let alone so many others—thought. The interplay between modernism and postmodernism has been an exciting question regarding the landscape of the Mediterranean city since the early 20th century. We have to stress informality, not primitivism. The Mediterranean urban landscape is spontaneous, fragmented, porous, piecemeal, kaleidoscopic, and mosaic-like: a postmodern landscape, antithetical to the Anglo-American city of zoning, market control, and organized planning. Contrary to such landscapes of modernism, Mediterranean urban landscapes have many common traits with utopias of postmodern urbanism, a term derived much later but pre-announced by Jacobs (1961) and described in Jencks (1991), Ellin (1999), and others. Curiously, these authors did not

2. Like Gramsci, his contemporary Benjamin also opted for spontaneity in the cityscape, criticizing planners, but he did not refer to it thus. Also, he saw it as a cultural rather than a political process. He drew contrasts between the official art in museums and the charm of the urban landscape, as well as informal urban landscapes and their antithesis to "Haussmannization" (Boyer 1994, p. 141)

refer to Southern Europe, where in fact urban landscapes approached postmodern icons much earlier than the Anglo-American ones (Leontidou, 1993; 1996).

This point is not yet resolved. Rapid urbanization and migration created urban informality, spontaneity, porosity, fragmentation, urban diversity, and neighborhood differentiation. Gramsci illuminated these processes as aspects of a different, Mediterranean, version of modernity, industrialism, capitalism, and civil society. Interwar intellectuals[3] saw a kaleidoscopic urban modernity. But Gramsci's gaze allows us to travel through the in-between spaces of modernity and postmodernity. Not only his intellectual reflections, but his very discourse echoes local narratives rather than Marxist grand narratives. Gramsci's critique of modernity, as well as his fragmented discourse, are forward-looking and touch postmodernism, unintentionally, maybe unconsciously (Leontidou, 1996).

Conclusions

There is still a large gap in the construction of theories of the Mediterranean city, with medieval histories transformed by modernity, and thus in alternatives to the Chicago Anglo-American tradition that dominates the literature. When this deficit was first revealed, on the other side of the Atlantic, Gramsci's enigmatic geographical imaginations in his notes, writings, and reflections led to innovative theoretical constructions. His **innovations** included a spatial and a cultural turn, a distancing from abstract models, anti-dogmatism but not historicism, except for an overt inclination towards the Mediterranean.

Gramsci's work has opened up debates and explorations rather than fostered the construction of dogmas. There can be no "Gramscianism" anywhere, as there are "Marxisms", "Trotskyisms", "Leninisms". The Anglo-American error of considering his approach as historicist, or even particular to Italy, and leaving it aside has misinterpreted and marginalized Gramsci's elusive texts for a long time. Gramsci may have been inspired by local narratives, but he incisively interpreted them with concepts of wider relevance, rather than presenting grand narratives (Leontidou, 1996, p. 181). This is not historicism. His concepts are anchored in their close connection with historical events taking place in Mediterranean Europe, with mostly Italian examples, but they are also timeless. However, the concepts have a much wider relevance and his texts abound with theoretical innovations. Idiosyncratic concepts are not to be understood only as duly self-censored, in order to pass through prison bars. These enigmatic concepts are pregnant with suggestions for alternatives to dogmatic formulations (at the time, Marxist economism of the Third International). His discourse in the form of "notes" and fleeting thoughts gives rise to sophisticated cultural explorations of the world of European modernity. His interpretative essays criticize dogmas and counteract his contemporaries" abstract modeling, determinism, economism, functionalism, and anglocentrism. Urban theory has a lot to learn from Gramsci.

Gramsci's work was re-discovered in the late 20th century and placed at the forefront of a Marxist "cultural turn" by the seers of Cultural Studies. His "cultural" contribution was interwoven with his "spatial" focus, including the understanding of cities in depth. He formulated a consistent critique against the crude materialism and economism of the Third International and established the dialectics of political economy and culture (Leontidou, 1990, p. 40). During the interwar period, he counteracted the oblivion of young Marx by intellectuals of the Left. His critical Marxism and anti-economism involved urban comparisons which acquire a particular density and relevance for Mediterranean urbanism.

Now the (post)modern European city, with its remodeled landscapes, multiplicity of functions, and kaleidoscope of identities, echoes those non-industrial (but not primitive) Italian cities for which Gramsci sought a strategy (Leontidou, 1993; 1996). In our days, the strategy is neoliberal place marketing, and this is where the North and South converge. Their antithesis and exploitative relationship becomes blurred in postmodern urban competition: the entrepreneurial city, which emerges with globalization and neoliberalism, is rebuilt with postmodern principles around the globe, but also with Mediterranean principles of informality, fragmentation, mosaics, and the absence of zoning. Though submerged, the South has become recently a model for the "Mediterraneanization" of Northern cityscapes (Leontidou, 2001).

Gramsci was no doubt unaware that his intellectual insights would connect such diverse scales and inspire so many forms of struggle, including mobilizations for space, place, and squatting (Leontidou, 1996, p. 192; 2010; 2012); and he certainly did not expect to alter people's ideas far beyond his interwar struggles and continuing after his death, into the 21st century, as globalization and neoliberalism have ignited spontaneous urban movements in the Mediterranean: the "Arab spring" and the "movement of the piazzas" in Spain and Greece.

3. Allum (1973, p. 59) cites as "observers" Meyer (1948), Gramsci (1949, pp. 95–6), Luongo & Oliva (1959), and Vitiello in Guadagno & De Masi (1969). All except Gramsci are postwar authors. See also Leontidou 1990, p. 12.

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