# SPACES OF URBANITY:
## From the Village Square to the Boulevard

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The meaning of the city is not to be found in its buildings. Or, at least, it is not exhausted by them. It is not in the interstices, nor even exclusively in the passage-ways leading up to famous landmarks. It is elsewhere. And yet it is no doubt spatially grounded.

### The poetry and prose of the boulevard

In the seventies, when I went to Paris to start my studies in semiotics, there was a kind of fascination which rapidly grew stronger than my interest in semiotics itself: the city. And for a person coming from one of the small big cities of Sweden, the city meant: the *bigger* city. For in the world created by urbanism, there is always a city standing to each given city as the latter stands to the countryside. Except, to be sure, for those cities highest on the scale.

Paris, of course, it not just any city. If, in Walter Benjamin's words, it was the capital of the 19th century, some remnants of that aura remained in the following century, and may linger on still. My experience of Paris in the seventies depended on that system of boulevards and big department stores whose development inspired Benjamin's well-known description. The city was no longer to be found in the passages, chanted by Baudelaire, but it was still present on the boulevards, and of course in the pavement cafés.[1] Every casual stroll along the boulevards seemed a fantastic adventure, a passage through the entire world with its multifarious possibilities. The fascination of the boulevards came not only from that which could be found on them, but also from the possibilities which they opened up. These could be, quite concretely and spatially, the little café on the corner, or, in terms of activities, the trajectories into the body of the

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[1] The passages of the 19th century seem to share some characteristics with contemporary shopping centres. It remains to investigate their semiotic similarities and differences.

city afforded by the side streets, or, more interpersonally, the prospects for a chance meeting.

Part of the fascination emanated from the mixture of peoples and cultures that could be found there. In the streets, on the great boulevards, and at the courses and seminars that I frequented, you could meet people from all parts of the world (or so it seemed to me). But another part of the fascination lay in the secrets of Paris itself (which were not necessarily those recounted by Eugène Sue, Louis Sébastien Mercier and Restif de la Bretonne). The interest of the boulevards was also in their taking on the part of stage in relation to the back-stage making up the rest of the city.

I am not the only one to have been fascinated by the boulevard as an epitome of urbanity and, hence, of modernity. Before Baudelaire, Poe wrote about the view from the café table. Gogol pondered the infinite possibilities of Nevsky Prospect, and Dostoyevsky surveyed life in St. Petersburg during the white nights. Numerous films by Eric Rohmer, from *L'amour l'après-midi* (1972) to *Les nuits de la pleine lune* (1984) are basically about life on the boulevards, and this is also largely the case with Robert Bresson's *Quatre nuits d'un reveur* (1971).[2] Thus, literature and film confirm my intuitions about the central meaning of urbanity.

The boulevard is a public place, as is, of course, the town square. Spatially, however, the boulevard is a place of passage, while the square is a meeting place. This could be taken quite literally, as we shall see: on the boulevard, itineraries run in parallel (at least partly), but on the square they tend to cross. Another implication of the same observation, however, is that the square is basically static, whereas the boulevard stands for dynamism: the continuous thrust forward. These simple observations will no doubt have to be amplified and corrected later.

Less happily, of course, the boulevard is also the territory of the 'lonely crowd', as David Riesman said in a famous sociology classic: those who pass by remain for ever anonymous to each other, and most of the time their destinies never meet (Riesman 1950). It would have been tempting to say that they also make up the space of those crowds, obeying some kind of 'group soul', the idea which so scared the proto-sociologists of the 19th century such as Le Bon, Tarde, Blondel and Ortega y Gasset; but, of course, as we know, the Parisian

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[2] Based on *White Nights* by Dostoyevsky but moving the scene to Paris.

boulevard network was mostly constructed by Georges Eugène Haussmann in order to contain those very crowds. The square, at least if it is found in a small village, is something quite different: the eternal return of the already known, which means face time with your neighbour, or perhaps his cousin from the next village, offering the possibility of a friendly chat.

### Two other semio-spatial devices: the square and the coffee house

From a theoretical point of view, the square has acquired more fame than the boulevard, at least if it can be identified with the market place.[3] The latter is of course a pivotal image of Mikhail Bakhtin's work, although the modernity to which he ascribes it was already manifesting itself during the Middle Ages. Curiously, from our point of view, Bakhtin did not construe the market place as an encounter of bodies in space, but as a cacophony of voices, epitomised by the cries of the different street vendors, giving rise to such concepts as *dialogicity* and *polyphony* and, when being projected to different social groups, *heteroglossia*.[4] And yet, Bakhtin's work inspired the geographer Allan Pred (1990) to study modernisation in 19th century Stockholm as the coming together of different craftsmen and professionals originating in different parts of Sweden, each speaking his dialect as well as the jargon of his craft. Neither Bakhtin nor Pred, however, pause to consider the probability of this verbal heteroglossia having been accompanied by a comparable *bricolage* of behaviour patterns and meaningful chunks derived from other semiotic systems. The latter may be more obvious to the person coming to the small Mayan town of Chichicastenango in Guatemala – or even to someone visiting the Möllevången square at the centre of the immigrant quarter in Malmö.

Theoreticians of modernity, at least those who have connected it to the city, have insisted more on a third spatial configuration, the coffee house. Public man, the person taking part in a discussion about the means and ends of the

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[3] In fact, we would need to distinguish semiotically the market place from the more prestigious central square, as for instance the *zócalo* of Latin American capitals surrounded by the Presidential Palace and the Baroque cathedral. The latter is of course a kind of stage, part of a 'representative public sphere' in the sense of Habermas (see below).

[4] Actually, an even better image of such a polyphony may be the street vendors going up and down one parallel street after another, as they did in ancient Rome (see Archard 1991), and as they still do in the biggest city in the world, Mexico City. In that way, their cries really seem to weave a tissue of 'intertextuality'.

state and other aspects of public life, and beyond that about all essential intellectual preoccupations, first came to his own in the English coffee houses, and then flourished in the French cafés before and during the revolution (Habermas 1962; Sennett 1977). Jürgen Habermas is certainly not usually considered to be a semiotician. Nevertheless, his early theory of a 'public sphere', from being merely 'representative' (of court authority) during the Middle Ages, came from the Age of Reason onwards to involve the reasoned, critical, interchange of rational opinion, and is undoubtedly of the same general type as Yuri Lotman's semiotics of culture, according to which different historical epochs are dominated by different sign types (icons, symbols, etc.; cf. Sonesson 1987).

Habermas's modernity antedates that of Baudelaire, but it is considerably more recent than that of Bakhtin, and its locus is the coffee house, originating in England and France during the 17th and 18th centuries. In this 'bourgeois' public sphere, rational discussion becomes possible, because persons coming from different social groups and classes, as well as from all parts of the country, can meet on an equal footing, without their individual history or personality having any importance. To the extent that emotions are not taken to be expressions of something else, a personality, for instance, they do not have to be disciplined and rendered passive: this was, in Sennett's (1977) view, what rendered possible the rich public life of the 18th century. In opposition to Riesman, Sennett therefore claims that instead of the masses having become more and more alone in a society which is itself more abstract, social conditions have become increasingly sentimentalised, rending public life impossible, as it took place in the coffee houses of the Age of Reason.[5]

One of the pioneers of social psychology, Gabriel Tarde (1910), noted the importance for public life of the kind of conversation that has no fixed purpose, which took place at the Parisian cafés. Later on, the cafés played a similar part all through Europe in the emergence of the different Modernist movements; and in France, at least they have continued to this very day to play a very important role in intellectual life, giving rise to Structuralism (and thus to semiotics) as well as to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism. If, in recent times, there has

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[5] As I have argued elsewhere (Sonesson 1995), there is really no contradiction between Riesman's and Sennett's theses: sentimentality may very well be the form projected onto the abstract social relations simulating an intimacy which is no longer there. In any case, the process of compensation is not found on the boulevard, nor in the coffee house, but it is well known from television, but so far, I believe, absent from the Internet.

been a decline of public life, that is, in the view of the sociologist Johan Asplund (1983: 236ff), due to the diminishing *time* resources available in industrial society; and to the consequent lack of *spaces,* after the cafés were closed down. This is to forget that, in Paris, the cafés have still not closed. And, of course, there is also still more left of public life in France, as evidenced, among other things, by the importance of cafés for the development of French semiotics (as for instance the Greimas school). In Sweden, however, as no doubt in many other places, coffee drinking never acquired this public character: it essentially takes place in the private homes of friends and acquaintances; it is associated with gossip rather than with serious discussion; and, traditionally, it is mainly considered to be a practice characteristic of women.[6] Even traditional cafés in Sweden fail to manifest the public character they have in many other countries: they do not open up onto the streets, but are found behind the counter where pastries may be bought for home consumption. Curiously, it is in the age of the Internet that public cafés, turning their fronts to the street, have finally emerged in Sweden.

Whatever the differences between the coffee houses of the Age of Reason, the cafés of the artistic bohemia, the *Café de Cluny* of the Greimasian seminars in the seventies, and the Expresso houses of our contemporary youth, they are all specimens of a different spatial, or thus semiotic, device to the typical Swedish *conditori*. The former is similar to the boulevard, and perhaps to the market place, in bringing together individuals from different social and professional spheres, permitting an interchange in which earlier trajectories and details of life history are irrelevant. In relation to the coffee house, the boulevard permits a less sustained exchange of signs, it involves many more individuals coming together for a much shorter duration, and the exchange is rarely verbal, but more often visual and perhaps tactile: gazes and touch rather than words.

Some caution is necessary if we are going to identify urbanity with such spatial and semiotic devices as the boulevard, the market square, and the sidewalk café: urbanity in this sense does not appear to be contemporaneous with what archaeology has sometimes called the first cities of humankind. In Çatalhöyük, for instance, where houses were not separated by streets and other intermediate spaces, but were entered from the roof-top, there does not appear to have existed

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[6] This observation was first made (in Sonesson 1993a) as a generalisation from the present state of Swedish society, but I later discovered that Swedish ethnologists (notably Valeri 1991) have demonstrated the historical correctness of this surmise.

any real public space, if it was not roofs themselves (see Mellaart 1967; Mellaart *et al.* 1989; Hodder 1996). On the other hand, if the fabled Maya 'cities' were ceremonial centres, as has long been believed, they consisted only of public space; and if they really are 'the gigantic household facilities of Mayan kings', as has been more recently suggested (Webster 2002: 150ff), they were entirely made up of semi-private space. If so, this only means that urbanity, in a semiotical interesting sense, does not emerge as soon as a large number of houses are brought together. It has to await the 'publication' of space.

## From spatial objects to spatial semiosis

There are numerous books and articles, some of them already dated, a few even having acquired the status of classics, which bear titles such as 'meaning in architecture', or 'the language of architecture'. It is a basic misunderstanding to think that semiotics is out to implement those metaphors. On the contrary, it is concerned to pose the fundamental question: *if* it is a fact that buildings, and, more generally, space, convey meaning, then in what way do they accomplish this? A subsidiary question, of course, then becomes (by the force of circumstances) how similar or different is spatial meaning from the linguistic variety which has the advantage of having been much more studied?

The basic issue, however, in the domain with which we are involved here, is really another one: what exactly is the domain which concerns us? Is it architecture, that is, buildings – or is it some more vast field, such as landscape, townscape, or perhaps space generally? The history of semiotics shows there to have been basically two options as far as the object of study is concerned: the building – or space in general.

At least in a very general sense, a building is an artefact. Thus it can be compared to another artefact we already know a lot about, the (verbal) sign. Perhaps the most characteristic version of this approach is an early formulation by Renato de Fusco (1967), according to which the front of the building corresponds to the expression, while the interior corresponds to the content – a model which is difficult to justify beyond some simple examples such as the temple, the palace, and the main branch office of the bank. Early contributors to architectural semiotics such as Giovanni Koenig, Claus Dreyer, and Umberto Eco, tend to suggest, somewhat more generally, that the function of the building is equivalent to its meaning. The advantage of this model is that it may be transferred to smaller

parts of the building, and to other objects, such as the staircase, which, according to Eco, means 'go upstairs!', the desk, which is a favourite example of Eco's (1968: 281ff; 1972), or the Greek column, used by Saussure as a metaphor for the sentence, which Eco puts to the converse use.[7]

Just as a verbal statement is made up of many words, and the words divide into sounds or letters, the building may be analysed into smaller parts on different levels. This is the kind of approach Eco had to the column, but also to the desk: the legs mean 'holding up the desktop', but only the desk as a whole means whatever a desk means. This kind of approach to the building is much more systematically developed later by Donald Preziosi (1979a; 1979b) to whom walls, like the phonemes of a language, do not mean anything in themselves, but only serve to create rooms, which have individual meaning, more or less like words. It can always be argued that the wall *does* have a meaning (that is, a function) in itself, and that it is only the bricks and mortar making it up which are deprived of meaning. And so on. There certainly is no such absolute division between two 'articulations' as in verbal language.

Preziosi's linguistic analogy seems to occupy a neutral position between the identification suggested by Eco (1968: 281ff), according to which use is really meaning, and the converse interpretation, suggested by Martin Krampen (1979a; 1979b), who follows the general semiotician Luis Prieto in suggesting that meaning is really use, or, more exactly, that signs are tools. There is some merit to this metaphor, no matter which item we take to be the tenor or the vehicle. Tools and signs are similar in being determined by some other category than themselves: no matter how much its external shape is varied, something is a hammer if it is particularly well adapted for the task of hammering; and no matter how much we change an expression, it is part of the same sign as long as it conveys the same content. But signs and tools are also different: in Marxian terms, the first serve to interpret the world, the second to change it. In fact, something may mean 'staircase' without being one (at the theatre, for instance; or in one of the villas constructed by Peter Eisenmann, where a staircase has been positioned up-side down and close to the ceiling); and the doctrine of functionalism could be interpreted to mean that it is not enough for an object to accomplish its function, but it must also carry the equivalent meaning (see Sonesson 1989).

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[7] On the early history of spatial semiotics, see Krampen 1979b; Nöth 1990, 2000.

The advantage of this approach is clearly that buildings may be seen as artefacts, thus becoming comparable to other objects. To analyse a building is not very different from analysing any other object of the perceptual world. There is thus continuity between the semiotics of architecture and design semiotics. In actual fact, however, this approach has never brought the analysis very far.

The other approach, then, does not take buildings as its object of study, but rather space in general. From this point of view, buildings are simply special portions of the general spatial surroundings through which we move. It is not only neighbourhoods or whole towns that may be analysed within the framework of this conception, but any portion of space which tends to elicit some particular set of behaviour. This point of view, represented mainly by Manar Hammad (1979a; 1979b; 1989; 2002) and Pierre Boudon (1981), is out to analyse space in general, in terms of what is accomplished in it. In contrast, with the exception of an early article by Roland Barthes on 'urbanism', the earlier approach never went beyond the analysis of buildings.

Instead of focusing on use, this second approach is concerned more generally with the possibilities of action offered by different portions of space. It does not ask what the *function* of space is, but which *potentialities for action* it opens up to us. As Hammad (1989; 2002) points out, the origin of this approach is really to be found in the discipline of *proxemics* initiated by Edward T. Hall. Hall (1959; 1966; 1976) was not concerned with space in general, but only with the small portion surrounding the human body. He did not care about space outside of time, but only about the moment in which a meeting takes place between subjects from different cultures.

From a proxemic point of view, the subject is a topological construction: a series of concentric circles demarcating the public, social, personal and intimate, spaces (in relation to another subject), within which is found the bodily envelope, all of which are defined by the fact that they may be penetrated and then produce an effect of meaning. This is to say that these 'protective shells', as Hall calls them, are more or less *permeable*. In topological terms, they possess the property of being open or closed. More exactly, in *merotopological* terms, some parts of them have the property of being open and others that of being closed. They produce a meaning when the borders are overstepped (see Fig. 1). The case of the bodily envelope is most easily illustrated: it possesses a series of openings (mouth, nostrils, etc.), but it may also be penetrated elsewhere, with more

serious consequences. To some extent this can be generalised to the proxemic spheres: the intimate sphere, for instance, may be more open in the forward direction. Actually, as I have suggested elsewhere (Sonesson 1993b), between the bodily envelope and the proxemic distances other layers may be introduced those of clothing, which are themselves of multiple structures, from hairdo and tattoo, at one extreme, to outdoor clothing, at the other.
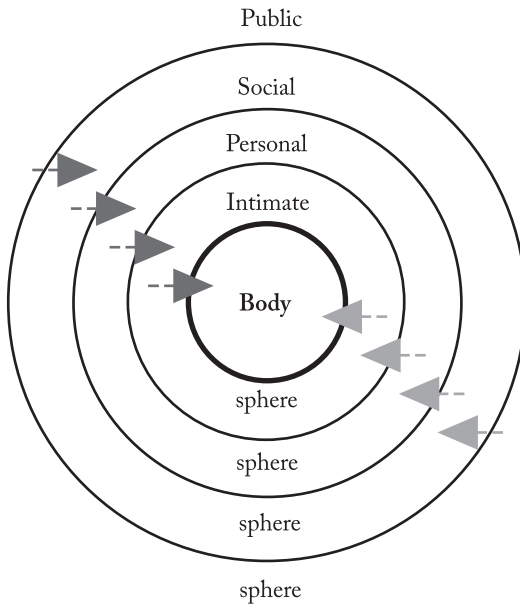
Public

Social

Personal

Intimate

**Body**

sphere

sphere

sphere

sphere

Figure 1] The body envelop and its surrounding proxemix spheres (inspired in Hall, and Spiegel, Machotka). The arrows illustrate entries through designated openings and through the closed borders, respectevly.

   All cultures define their public, social, personal and intimate spheres, but the distances which characterise each one of these spaces are different in different cultures. According to one of Hall's classical examples (which I have myself had numerous occasions to corroborate), a person from an Arab culture, who posits himself within what is from his point of view the personal sphere, the distance from which it is comfortable to have a chat, inadvertently enters the intimate sphere of a Westerner, the sphere in which it is proper to 'fight or make love'.

   Thus it may be seen that, in proxemics, space is defined in relation to the acting subject. And meaning is produced by transgressing the limits, as in rhetoric. But such an approach may be generalised. This is, notably, what Manar Hammad has done. His book (Hammad 1989; 2002) is certainly not about behaviour close to the human body. But it is not really about Le Corbusier's monastery of Sainte-Marie de La Tourette either. It is about some sets of behaviours which

may take place in La Tourette, but which could be transplanted more or less identically to many other places.

Although some followers of Hall have used an experimental approach, in the standard sense this term has within psychology, Hall himself really bases his model on a series of anecdotes. One, for instance, is about the American executive working in a Latin American country who was so disturbed by having people from that country sitting on his knees that he ordered a particularly wide desk to use as an obstacle, the result being that his visitors came crawling over the desktop in the hope of attaining a comfortable distance for having a conversation.

Hammad's book also reads, at the beginning, like a series of anecdotes; but the difference is that Hammad first creates the incidents which he describes and later analyses. Nor is he concerned to show the things taken for granted as they are revealed by the confrontation between cultures. Rather, he is out to describe what is universally taken for granted in spatial behaviour. In this respect, his work is rather more reminiscent of that accomplished by Harold Garfinkel (1967) and his disciples, the enthnomethodologists, who, for instance, would upset the arrangement on the checker board, or would keep silent the whole day at home, and then take notes on the others' reactions. The practice of both Garfinkel and Hammad may lead our thoughts to the kind of surprising acts accomplished by the Situationists, and even by the Decembrists (as described by Lotman), but then the goal of the actions was quite different. The same must also be said about more unambiguous acts of revolt and/or terrorism, from the classical anarchists to Al Queda, as well as of more benign everyday transgressions accomplished in the spirit of 1968 (as discussed by Michel de Certeau 1980).

An obvious advantage of this approach is that it avoids the pitfall of proposing too simple analogies between verbal signs and space. And although it does not treat space as a 'thing', comparable to the sign, it does offer some useful models for the analysis of design objects, notably as an extension of what is said about the wall. One may deplore, perhaps, that the solidity of the object is dissolved into mere potentials for behaviour.

In the end, however, another, almost inverse, regret comes to the fore: although Hammad's domain is spatiality as such, rather than isolated spatial objects, he has thus far been content to apply his theory to such limited objects.

Taking another clue from Hall, we might suggest that spatiality not only goes beyond buildings, but is also independent of them. And, as such, it is not only wound up with the body, but also extends all over the city. It is in this sense that we have been talking about the boulevard, the market place, and the café as semio-spatial objects.

It might therefore seem that a better guide to take on our journey would be Michel de Certeau (1980), who has been more amply concerned with the meaning of urban space, and the different 'tactics' and 'strategies' which may be realised there on an everyday basis. However suggestive his approach, de Certeau has, in my view, two essential defects: first, he never goes beyond the semi-anecdotical discussion of the facts of urban life to something even approaching a semiotic model for the production of meaning; and second, because of his preoccupation with deviant and alternative usage of urban space, he never really gets around to discussing the prose of life in the city, the common sense structures that is taken for granted by most inhabitants of the city, and overruled by the nonconformists. We should of course not expect any semiotic model from de Certeau: in spite of his personal ties to the Greimas school, semiotics is relegated to the notes. The other problem is more curious: rhetoric cannot exist otherwise than as an outgrowth of grammar, but transgression may yet be used to discover the rules, as testified not only by the linguistic grammaticality test, but by the practice of Hall, Garfinkel and Hammad. In spite of his closeness to the situationist tradition, however, de Certeau never uses transgression as a discovery procedure.

**How to succeed as a stranger**

Let us now start by establishing spatial semiotics firmly on the ground. This can be done by having recourse to 'time geography', a very abstract discipline, invented by the Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand. Although Hägerstrand himself would seem to be unaware of the existence of semiotics, some of his disciples have not hesitated to make the connection, notably to French Structuralism. Also, Tommy Carlstein (1980: 57) tells us that time geography should be considered a 'structuralist approach', without, however, giving any further specifications. An English follower of Hägerstrand, Allan Pred (1981), has managed to conjugate his influence with that of Foucault, which is natural, in so far as the control of time resources must be related to the detention of power.

On the other hand, time geography appears to be particularly concerned

with *contiguity,* which has always been important, at least to Peircean semiotics. Asplund (1983: 199ff) observes that time geography as a discipline should be situated on the metonymic axis, in Roman Jakobson's sense, and Christian van Paassen (1981: 17) has similarly remarked on Hägerstrand's 'brilliant, profound, and exquisitely ambiguous postulate', according to which 'the criterion for survival is to succeed as a neighbour'. Since paths and projects may interlock in time as well as in space, Carlstein (1980: 47) has noted the need for distinguishing the demands for *synchronization* and *synchorization.*

Moreover, the way in which Hägerstrand himself (1972) formulates the task of his science (which could more properly be termed time-*and-space* geography, if space was not taken to be implicit in the notion of geography) is reminiscent of the program characterising spatial semiotics, at least part of the purpose of which it may have accomplished much better. Time geography is concerned with general, rather than special facts, that is, with invariants, which tend to be trivial, rather than exceptional in kind. The invariants are conceived as limits of, or restrictions on, the liberty of action open to individuals or groups, stating what is possible and impossible in given situations. These restrictions are defined in terms of space and time, but do not take their origin in natural or economical laws; rather, they result from the fact that phenomena tend to crowd, or affect each other, without having any other kind of relation explicable through general rules.

From the point of view of time geography, everything that happens does so in space-time. 'To exist is to be carried forward with time. Human consciousness feeds on what has happened and works on what is going to happen.' (Hägerstrand 1983: 239.) Both space and time are finite; therefore, they are considered to be scarce resources. Space-time is inhabited by individuals, each one of which is characterised by his own trajectory, starting at a point of birth and ending at a point of death (see Hägerstrand 1970: 15). Indeed, each point in the geographic now is best understood as a bundle of processes, that is, 'in terms of its double face of graveyard and cradle of creation' (Hägerstrand 1983: 23). Trajectories may be visualised as continuous paths inscribed in co-ordinate systems. If such a trajectory parallels the *x*-axis, it will describe an individual moving in space, but not in time, which is of course impossible; but a trajectory which follows the *y*-axis is quite feasible, and in fact indicates a stationary individual. A population, in this framework, appears as a web of paths which flow through a set of space-time points, and which are indivisible, if they concern organisms,

equipment, or tools, but may branch out in several paths, if they refer to matter, energy, or information.

In Johan Asplund's social psychology, the concept of trajectory is put to a number of interesting, largely metaphorical, usages: thus, it is argued that, if there are any forms of individuality in peasant society, these will become perceptible only when applying a very fine-meshed magnification to bundles of trajectories; on the other hand, the gross individuality of contemporary trajectories could well turn out to hide a small-meshed anonymity (Asplund 1979: 205). It is also suggested that it is the very parallelism of trajectories in the small village, which accounts for their permeability and coherence, and which thus explains the tendency for gossip to arise under these circumstances (Asplund 1979: 208). A listing of the places which Petrarch visited through his life, that is, his trajectory in terms of time geography, is sufficient to pinpoint one respect in which the Italian poet was a modern man: in being a traveller (Asplund 1979: 25). And if Philippe Ariès's history of childhood is read 'cybernetically', then it is actually about the creation of a special social space reserved for children, and which may only be occupied at determined moments by fixed bundles of activities and agents (Asplund 1979: 137ff).

It should be possible to describe semio-spatial objects such as the boulevard, the market place, and the café in terms of time geography. To some extent, such descriptions have already been suggested above: the parallelism of trajectories on the boulevard, their crossing on the market place, and their bundling together at the coffee house. In reality, however, the time geographical properties of these objects are much more complex. For the moment, I will attend only to the boulevard, and I will only be concerned with two or three of its constellations of time geographical properties.[8]

First of all, the boulevard is a place on *which individuals whose life lines start out and finish at very different places permit them to run in parallel for a shorter or longer duration.* This is really the central topic of Nikolay Gogol's short story 'Nevsky Prospect': the soldier and the painter, who come from different social classes, and who live in different parts of the city, walk together for a moment on the boulevard. So much for the different points of departure. However, they part again, when each one of them discovers a woman on the boulevard whom he decides to follow, which brings them both away from the boulevard, to new

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[8] I try here to extend a proposal already made in Sonesson 1995.

parts of the city where they have never been before. In Edgar Allan Poe's short story, 'The man in the crowd', such a life line starts out abruptly from the café window, and ends in the void 24 hours later.

Implicit in this description is a second property of the boulevard, at which we hinted in the beginning: its capacity for giving access to the whole of the city, being the stage for which all the rest forms the backstage. The soldier and the painter both leave the boulevard to go to other parts of the city, but the itineraries which they choose are only two out of many potential ones. In this sense, the boulevard is *the starting point for numerous virtual trajectories*. This explains the sentiment, always expressed in the fiction of the boulevard, of there being infinite possibilities.[9]

Another particularity of the boulevard it that it puts emphasis on one of the fundamental laws of time geography: that *two persons cannot occupy the same space at the same time*. When you find yourself on the sidewalk, in particular on one as crowded as that of the modern boulevard, it is essential to steer free of other people. As Ervin Goffman (1971) observes, it takes a lot of largely unconscious manœuvering to avoid bumping into other persons. Each encounter on the sidewalk involves a negotiation about who is to step out of the way, or, more ordinarily, the degree to which each of the participants is to modify his/her trajectory. However unconscious, such a transaction supposes a basic act of categorisation: we may negotiate with somebody whom we have recognised as a fellow human being, but not with a lamp-post, a statue, or even a dog. Indeed, when this process of interpretation becomes conscious, and the other is not simply seen as a stranger, but as an individual person, or even as a person of a particular class or other social group, negotiations may break down.

From a time-geographical standpoint, both Asplund's description of the village, and my characterisation of the boulevard, are largely metaphorical. As long as we maintain our present point of view (which is of course not that of geography), this means there is something wrong with time geography. Considered as a semiotic theory, time geography is too limited. It does give us a temporal and spatial substratum on which to build, but we also have to account for the relative permeability of trajectories, and for the qualitative differences of the territories which they traverse. This is why we now have to turn to spatial semiotics.

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[9] Perhaps a more pregnant image for this virtuality of trajectories is the tree describing the logic of action (e.g. von Wright 1968) or the narratological model of Bremond (1973).

## Pre-urban spatiality: the road, the bridge, the window

In order to understand the urbanity of space, we have been attending to certain semio-spatial devices, among which we have singled out the boulevard, together with the market place and the café. This is similar to the way in which Pierre Janet (1935; 1936), mostly known today for having been the teacher of both Freud and Piaget, describes elementary cognitive operations. The structures of intelligence, which are given their formulae by Piaget, are designated by Janet (1935: 7ff) as *la route, la place publique, la porte, l'outil, le portrait, le panier, la part du gâteau, les tiroirs de l'armoire*, and so on. Here however, it is not clear what Janet means to say: for instance, is the piece of cake the figurative manifestation by means of which the child would normally come to understand the notion of separating an object into many parts having mostly the same properties as the original object? In any case, we do not need to peel off as many figurative layers as Janet does to get to the core: we are not concerned with the abstract schemes of cognition, but with their concrete spatial manifestation, as realised by practice rather than by thinking.[10]

Janet makes significant observations on the road. He sees in it the sign of the emergence of human intelligence out of the social world. *Les animaux ne connaissent pas la route, car celle-ci est caractérisée par l'aller-retour qu'ils n'ont pas, ils ne réunissent pas les deux trajets inverses dans une même action d'ensemble et, par conséquent, ils ne font pas de route.* One should not confuse the road with the track, for example with the odorous traces which worms follow. *Pour construire une route qui demeure après notre passage, il faut penser que nous reviendrons, que d'autres iront et reviendront, il faut l'aller-retour.* (Janet 1935: 152.) In fact, it is by positing a homology between what is to the left of the entry and what is to the right of the exit, that we can find our way on a trajectory of which we do not know the term.

The road is not the roadway. The Lacondon who crosses the tropical forest without hesitation does not have less of a road than we have. To Janet, the road is almost a piece of logic: an operation and its inversion. But there is something else to the road. It is made up of stations: crossroads, junctions, bridges, rounda-

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[10] For the first discussion of Janet and Simmel in this vein, see Sonesson 1981. For some recent qualifications, see Sonesson 2001. For the distinction between cognitivity and figurativity in the work of Piaget, and its relationship to figurativity in Greimas' work, see Sonesson 1989, Ch. I.4.

bouts, villages. Thus, the road is limited on two sides: it is by crossing them that we transgress the idea of the road, not by turning back. Similarly, the round way (to pick an example suggested by Boudon 1981) is closed on two sides compared to that which is not the road; moreover, one of its borders coincides with the limit of a closed place, the town within the walls; but considered as a road, it is completely open. Thus, curiously, the road has an extension in the direction of its width, whereas in that of length, only the intention poses the limit.

The German sociologist Georg Simmel (1957), who has also reflected on the nature of certain spatial objects, points out that the bridge and the hut, each one in a different way, manifest the capacity which human beings have to recreate space by marking their distance in relation to natural space: the hut delimits a space where nature poses a continuity, and the bridge establishes a continuity at the place where nature separates spaces. In my view, however, the opposition is not completely symmetrical: in the case of the hut a space is certainly delimited by a series of operations which do not leave any trace in concrete matter. In the case of the bridge, on the other hand, real continuity is not restored to nature: there is transgression of a limit which, by this very fact, is also emphasised.

The hut and the bridge are thus devices that are used to revalorise space semiotically. But Simmel also makes a comparison between the bridge, the door and the window. One can cross the bridge, indifferently in the two directions, he says; in the case of the door, it is on the contrary very different to enter and to leave. The window is used to connect an interior space and an external space, exactly as the door; but, whereas the door opens in two directions, the window has, according to Simmel's expression, a 'teleological effect', which goes from the interior to the outside, and not the reverse. In the prolongation of this reasoning, it might be suggested that the door and the window, like the bridge, are devices apt to restore continuity, which are applied to another device, the wall, the function of which is to transform the continuity into a discontinuity. The result, however, is not zero, but a qualification of the initial statement.

All that has been said so far remains describable by means of a topology, that is, a purely static theory. However, Simmel distinguishes, in addition, three things which do not concern the mutual relationships of spaces but the provisions that these spaces permit us to carry out: movement in only one direction, in the case of the window; movement in two directions, but with different significations, in the case of the door, and movement of an identical type in

the two directions, for the bridge. The privileged direction of the course and the qualification of space as being interior and outside are thus added. The two station-points between which the bridge extends are undifferentiated, like the two stops of a bus. In the case of the door and the window, it is obvious that the stations qualify the course.

Obviously, between qualitatively different spaces, the direction can never be indifferent. But it may fail to be manifested or be manifested in only one direction. The reverse of the ordinary window must be the shop window: the latter has a privileged access from the outside inwards. Permeability is relative to the different senses, as well as to movement. There is some confusion when Simmel opposes the window, which may be penetrated from the inside out, to the door and the bridge, which may be penetrated in both directions. The problem is not so much that there are windows, such as shop windows, which are more customarily permeable from the outside in, and that even apartment windows may be permeable from the outside. The basic issue is rather that, while windows are permeable to sight, doors and windows are permeable to movement. There is a difference in the practice of the users: one leaves by one and one looks through the other.

As spatial devices, the road, the bridge, the door and the window do not require urbanity. But just like the boulevard, these devices depend on permeability in different directions and in different modes. Permeability in this sense, however, can only be understood in relation to the border.

**On some semiotic properties of borders**

Language has long served as a rather unfortunate metaphor in the study of other kinds of semiosis. In the discussion of limits, however, it remains useful. As Francis Edeline once put it, 'To semiotize is (first) to segmentize'.[11] When arguing, in another context (see Sonesson 1993b), for a semiotics of the body and of clothing, I suggested that the idea of a 'form' being projected onto a 'substance', voiced by Saussure and Hjelmslev, is really a much more generic concept of meaning than the sign: it concerns the establishment of limits in reality, implying the selection of some features out of the continuum of reality to the detriment of others, which are then taken into account and organised together.

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[11] In his lecture at the Congress of the Nordic Association for Semiotics Studies, Lund, Sweden, July 1992. I have been unable to find this expression in the published work.

The same phenomenon is familiar from Gestalt psychology and, of course, from catastrophe theory. In everyday perception, including that of language, quantity is all the time transformed into quality.

The notion of segmentation thus extends to the world of our experience, the Lifeworld. In fact, semantics mediates the domain of language and experience, as seen in classification and categorisation. From a geographical point of view, Barry Smith (1995a, b; 1999) has distinguished *bona fide* and *fiat* borders (and the corresponding spatial objects), where the former are inscribed on the ground as material facts, whereas the latter are the result of human-made demarcations. Islands, lakes, and planets, for instance, have *bona fide* borders, because their limits have been produced by nature. States, countries, and land-parcels, on the other hand, have *fiat* borders, since they are the result of human cognitive acts. According to Smith (1995a), even Ireland, considered as a country, has *fiat* borders, because it is made up of many islands apart from the big green island we tend to think about. It is a *super-unitary* object. On the other hand, some countries are made up of parts which can be distinguished within larger unitary wholes, such as the non-coastal states of South-America and Europe. These are *sub-unitary* objects.

Smith's opposition between two kinds of borders easily translates to the linguistic domain. *Fiat* objects correspond to the structuralist conception, according to which linguistic content is separated out of an 'amorphous mass'. *Bona fide* objects, on the other hand, correspond to the hierarchical organisation of the world of our experience into basis levels and prototypes.[12] One may get the impression, however, that the geography of Barry Smith conspicuously lacks a historical dimension. Expanses filled with water may seem in our day to be the most obvious kind of *bona fide* objects, whereas a forest appear to be a mere accident on the ground, but in earlier times, when it was much easier, or more common, to cross a lake or a strait than a forest, or even to cover any terrestrial distance, the opposite would seem to be the case. Indeed, if what is now southern Sweden was for a long time a part of Denmark, that was probably not because the latter country was construed as a super-unitary object (which is probably true today, in spite of the recent bridges), but because the Öresund strait served better to bind the territory together than did the deep forests of Småland to the north.

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[12] Smith (1995b) himself claims the use of words such as 'this' and 'that' serve to establish a transient *fiat* border.

The general lesson of this observation is that even *bona fide* borders are such *in relation to a particular social practice,* which, in this case, is the relative availability of transport by sea or by land.[13] This observation, though made independently, is germane to the insights of Hammad's spatial semiotics, in which space is defined in relation to behaviour.

Another interesting point made by Smith (1995b) is that borders have fronts and backs, somewhat like line drawings (see Sonesson 1989, Ch. III.3). Although there is a portion on the map where the borders of France and Germany coincide, these borders are not the same: each one points inwards to its own respective territory. As an extreme example, Smith recalls the border of the former German Democratic Republic, which was not a border at all to the Federal Republic. Still, this may not be the best example of a border having only one side, since in the domain of politics, it is hardly possible for one state to completely ignore a border instituted by another. If we refer back to Hall's proxemic model, however, it is clear that, on the level of the ambient space of the human body, borders may very well exist in only one direction.

In fact, relationships to borders, and the objects they define, may be described on a number of dimension: as mere position in front of the border, movement from the outside in or from the inside out, with or without resistance from the other side of the border (Fig. 2). This model was first developed as a way of expressing in topological terms, with an added dynamical element, the so-called modal-vectorial properties suggested by Howard Gardner (1970) when elaborating on an idea from the psychoanalyst Erik Eriksson (cf. Sonesson 1989, Ch. I.4.5.; 1993b). The psychoanalytical derivation of these categories is irrelevant here; what is important, however, is that these categories form a spatial model which is intimately wedded to bodily experience. Interestingly, many of the categories turn out to correspond to the so-called 'local cases' found in Finnish grammar (and less completely in other grammars, often expressed as prepositions rather than cases; cf. Hjelmslev 1937). It also accounts for the twin aspects of indexicality, as found in visual rhetoric, contiguity and factorality (or mereology). Where it goes beyond grammar, however, is in the active stance taken by

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13 As Smith (1995b) points out, political boundaries were originally created in places where there was little human activity (even though they later on come to be marked by border-posts, watch-towers, and the like). But in certain historical circumstances, water is precisely where there is the greatest amount of human activity.

the ego and/or the alter ego. Resistance as reality proof is of course an old ingredient of philosophical theories, from Maine de Biran to Sartre. Here, however, it serves to account for the bodily-centredness of the spatial model.

When first developing this model of borders and their transgressions as an extension of the proxemic model, I was unaware of the similar extrapolations made by Hammad, as applied to architectural elements such as the cells, the corridors,

| *position* | *permeability/* *direction* | *ego inside* | *alter inside* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *adjacent to* adessive | *adjacent to >* somewhere else abaltive | | |
| | *somewhere else > adjacent to* elative | | |
| *inside* inessive | *inside > outwards* elative | *ego opposed* inhibition | |
| | | *ego in favour* expulsion | |
| | *outside > inwards* illative | *ego opposed* alterresistance | *alter opposed* egoresistance |
| | | *ego in favour* incorporation | *alter in favour* intrusion |

Figure 2] A fragment of the sublogic of space (inspired in Hjelmslev's case grammar and the notion of modes and vectors in the work of Gardner 1970; cf. Sonesson 1989, I.4.5).

and the refractory of La Tourette. In order to demonstrate the semiotic nature of borders, Hammad (1989: 39ff; 2002: 59ff) picks the wall as an example. It is possible to jump over a wall, he observes, but this may be perceived as an aggression. A wall may appear to be insurmountable, but it is so only to someone having no resources as his disposal, such as a ladder for passing over it, or a crowbar with which to crack an opening in it. So the wall is merely as 'dissuasive device', that is, an invitation not to pass over it. In addition, it can be seen as an invitation to search for the door, that is, the place where the wall may be traversed. Indeed, the door as well as the wall are devices which serve to filter certain things out,

while letting others through. This is illustrated by the exterior wall panels of the cells in Le Corbusier's monastery of La Tourette. They are divided into four sub-panels: a door, which lets through people, light, air, mosquitoes, warmth and cold; a metal lattice serving as a mosquito net, which lets through air and cold, but neither people nor mosquitoes; a window pan which lets light pass but neither air nor other objects, and the concrete basement which lets through neither heat, nor light, nor air, nor people. Hammad concludes that all barriers are selected: they let through certain categories of agents and not others. They are thus defined, not by intrinsic properties, but by the part they play in some particular social practice (a 'program' in Greimasian terminology). Yet the material properties of these spatial objects are not indifferent: a piece of winter clothing must be woven tightly in order to prevent the passage through the fabric of cold winds, and a door must be sufficiently wide to permit the passage of a man carrying burdens.

We can recognise here the permeability of borders which we have earlier encountered in our discussion of Simmel's spatial objects and in the layers of body space. We now realise that permeability is relative, not only to the different senses and to movement, but also to different kinds of agents. Interestingly, however, Hammad does not attend to the possible unidirectionality of borders, which we observed in our analyses of Simmel's window and door (cf. Hammad 1989: 75; 2002:100). Indeed, the window certainly has the capacity to let light and vision through in both directions, but there is a sense, noted by Simmel, in which it is permeable to gazes from the outside in, and not the reverse. The first kind of 'being able' is somehow physically incorporated into the object; the other one is just a part of the social practice of which the window forms a part. By using dark glasses or one-way mirrors, it is possible to incorporate the second prescription into the object, but that is not usually done.

This only serves to show that, basically, a border is always a semiotic device, although in some cases the prohibitions and permissions which it involves may take material shape. The implication is not that the border is arbitrary, created by mere *fiat*: there is always some social practice in which it is grounded.

### The 'publication' of space

The title of Manar Hammad's book, *La privatisation de l'espace* (1989) cannot be adequately rendered in English. The nominalised term 'privatisation' may in French suggest the act of depriving, as well as of making private. These associa-

tions turn out to be important for the dynamic conception of private space suggested by the author in the later parts of his book. Already Hammad's quotation from *Le Petit Robert,* stating that *private* means 'where the public does not have access, is not allowed', suggests that public space is primary, and that private space is created by depriving public space of some of its parts.

More formally, privatisation involves, according to Hammad's definition, a person being able to conjoin himself with a place, while others are unable to do so, and a superior instance authorising such admittance to the place. One is reminded of Rousseau's characterisation of the primordial act of sociality, when a person delimits a portion of the commons declaring 'This is mine!' Or, as Hammad (1989: 45; 2002: 66) puts it, 'privatisation has something to do with the very general problem involving the control of processes and the mastery of space'.

This description is certainly enlightening. And yet it seems to me that public space is much more than an 'amorphous mass' from which private space is parcelled out. If we admit that there is a process of privatisation creating the private domain, then perhaps we should also postulate a process of 'publication', which is not simply the reversal of the former one. Something does not become public simply by returning to the innocence of undivided space before the fall occasioned by privacy. The transgression of the borders erected by privatisation is at least *also* a positive fact. Indeed, there may be a dialectical spiral taking us from privatisation to publication and back again.

Habermas's description of the public sphere starts at an all too advanced stage. We have seen that what renders the Habermasean public sphere possible is the coming together at the coffee house of people stemming from different parts of the country or the world, and representing different classes, who yet do not capitalise on their different life-stories. Even this may be described in terms of time geography, if, adding semiotic qualifications, we admit that, on their way, the individuals coming together have passed through different qualitative spaces, traversing unscathed various barriers which normally filter out those being of particular kinds of origin, class, and so on, and that in this case, contrary to Hägerstand's words (1983: 239), their consciousness does not 'feed on what has happened', nor 'work on what is going to happen'. The boulevard, as we have encountered it above, answers to some extent to the same formula, but, to begin with, it is not a point where all the trajectories meet, but an ongoing set of trajectories. As a result, the extension for which the trajectories come together

is less enduring, and the memory of earlier parts of the life-lines, as well as the anticipation of future parts, do not have to be emptied out.

But there is still another, more fundamental, difference. The boulevard, as it may still be experienced today in Paris, as well in many other (particularly Latin) big cities, is not a polyphony of voices, but a tangle of gazes. Indeed, the primary function of interpretation, telling us that another person is approaching for whom we must give way (as noted by Goffman), is overdetermined by a secondary function of interpretation, normally at a higher level of awareness, which is aesthetic, as least in the old sense of involving 'pure contemplation'. As such, it does not only pick up information but also gives it out: it conveys messages such as 'I observe you' and 'I find it worthwhile to observe you'. The hero of Eric Rohmer's film *L'amour l'après-midi*, who spends his life on the boulevard, expresses this double function of the gaze very clearly, when he says life on the boulevard is basically a question of 'trying oneself out on another'. The gaze, in this case, as in those of Baudelaire and Gogol, is exchanged between men and women. Frenchmen still unabashedly conceive this as a mutual interchange between the sexes. For Americans, on the other hand, this is something men do to women, and consequently, they talk about 'visual rape'. The metaphor is adequate, at least in the sense that it describes the crossing of the visual barrier. In fact, the trajectories of the boulevard are peculiar, in that they do not only allow for movement, but create virtual access to looking, and no doubt also to smelling, touching, and, more rarely, speaking.[14] At least this is what Rohmer's hero hopes for.

What is special about the boulevard, in relation to the coffee house, is the degree of freedom which it allows. But it is still not the first version of a public sphere based on exchange. Before it we have the square, not in the sense of the market place, but as the central place of the village, not the *zócalo*, but the *alameda* or *parque*, to use the Latin-American terms. There is a Mexican folk song, the refrain of which consists in telling the girl to go once again around *al parque* in a circle, in the hope that this time she will meet someone who will marry her. I have never seen anything like that in Mexico, but not long ago you could still experience something of the kind in the small villages on the Greek islands: every evening, all the inhabitants, including new-born children, assembled on the central square (which, on the islands, is often the harbour), walking

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[14] As women in Mexico City and other places know well, the best chance for not so virtual touching is nowadays the subway wagon.

up and down over and over again. The trajectories, which are here strictly parallel, although having opposite directions, are always the same: they do not open up to other potential trajectories away from the square; they certainly permit an exchange of gazes and also often of speech. Indeed, this is what generates the 'leakage' between trajectories known as gossip (though perhaps not so much on the square). But all this follows a well-known, repetitive, pattern.

However predictable, the village square is still a public sphere of exchange, that is, what Habermas calls a 'bourgeois' public sphere. As such it is opposed to the official square, used for parades, which incarnates the representative public sphere, which is more or less equivalent to the theatre. A case in point is not only the official parade of the king and his nobles, the wedding of the crown-prince, but also, for instance, the dismemberment of Damien, the attempted assassin of Louis XV in the mid-18th century (as described by Michel Foucault, 1975). In a way, of course, all public life is theatre, as Goffman maintained, and as Guy Debord and other situationists have claimed about capitalist society. In fact many components of daily life exist in order to be perceived by others: this is true of all clothes and body decorations, not only different varieties of 'piercing' and tattoos, which recently have become popular again, but also the more customary earrings and other adornments that are familiar in Western culture. To a greater degree, this is true of the market place, the town square, the popular festival, the boulevard, the café, and similar spatial configurations. But these are not exhausted by representativity, as is the theatre and the representative public sphere.

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Sonesson 2000b), the *spectacular function* can be described as an operation resulting in a division applied to a group of people, and separating those which are subjects and objects, respectively, of the process of contemplation; but, in fact, the subjects and objects of contemplation are often the same, at least temporarily. In the market, on the square, the boulevard, etc., observation is (potentially) mutual, as well as intermittent, but this is not true of the official parade or the dismemberment of Damien, nor of the sport event or the theatre. In ritual, there is a difference between those who only observe, and those who, in addition to observing, are also observed.[15] As a contrast, on the boulevard, but also already on the town square,

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[15] However, there is probably nobody in the rite who is *not* a subject but only an object of observation, for the officiator also partakes in the experience of the rite; he performs it for himself, in the same sense in which he does so for the others (unlike the actor).

the spectacular function is *symmetric and continuously changing*. However, contrary to what happens in other parts of everyday life, it is certainly *dominant*, in the sense of the Prague school: it does not only retain the upper hand, but it uses everything else for its purpose.

Although the anecdotal evidence from literature and cinema certainly suggest so, the scenery presented by the boulevard does not only allow for the categorical perception of men and women. From the male point of view, which has certainly until recently been the point of view of written history, woman has no doubt long been the foremost *inner other* of 'Culture' (in the sense of cultural semiotics), accompanied, in certain societies, by slaves, domestics, Jews, gypsies, and others: someone being present in the territory of 'our culture' who does not share in the ownership of that territory (see Sonesson 2000a; 2002). Indeed, in many historical societies, and some contemporary ones, women are not allowed on the street, or only once completely covered up in a *burqua*, which means that they have been excluded or, if one prefers, preserved from the mutual exchange of the boulevard.[16]

But the categorical perception of the man in the crowd does no doubt take account of many other types and degrees of Otherness. I knew that in the seventies in Paris: gazes also stopped to interpret the foreigner coming out of another culture, whose lifeline started somewhere else, in a place which was not just far away, but qualitatively different, in some division of Non-culture or Extra-culture (as was my case). The message of this gaze was no doubt different: it did not ask for mutuality, least of all for mutual recognition. In Paris in the seventies the issue was not serious: the French knew we were going away, and that we would never be able to change their culture. Since then, immigrants are everywhere, and they tend to stay on, and yet their otherness never goes away: in Sweden, we already talk about immigrants of the 'first', 'second', and 'third generation'. So there is no more persevering inner other than the immigrant.

As a public sphere, the boulevard has been found lacking: the ghettoisation of immigrant cultures rarely permits us to share trajectories. Moreover, this is no doubt a moment when we would need to take a step up, Habermas style, into the verbal public sphere, going from gazes to conversation. For the time being, at least in Sweden, urbanity still does not seem to have reached that level of maturity.

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[16] Cf. Hammad (1989: 77; 2002: 102) about the female body having for a long time been a privatised space controlled by the male.

**New views from the café table**

In this essay, I have tried to approach what I would like to call a deeper sense of urbanity, by looking at a number of historically preponderant spatial objects from the point of view of their capacity for regulating meaning. Seen in this way, the present text is of course merely an experiment or, perhaps more precisely, an attempt at developing a preliminary theoretical framework. The empirical data of this work, to the extent that is exists, is merely anecdotal, derived from personal experience, literature, and film. Its only function is to be suggestive. And what it is meant to suggest is that urbanity is not found in any particular material facts, but in a qualitative overdetermination applied to bundles of trajectories. In this sense, my project owes a lot to the social psychologies of Janet, Simmel, and Asplund, as well as to the time geography of Hägerstand and the spatial semiotics of Hammad. But the intent of the project is to widen the scope of these approaches to a point were urbanity meets the theory of the public sphere and the models of cultural semiotics.

In a sense, of course, the present reflections are overdue. Today it may seem that the boulevard, as well as the café, is too small a nook in which to locate the public sphere, which we rather expect to find on the Internet. This may be true (cf. Sonesson 1995), but similar principles apply for its analysis. That is, however, another story. For whereever the Internet is to be located, it is certainly outside of urban space.

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## Linnaruumid. Külaväljakult bulvarile

### Kokkuvõte

Linlikkus tähendab palju enamat kui lihtsalt majade kogumit: see on elamise ruumi eriliik. Siinse käsitluse lähtepunktiks on ajalooliselt mõjukad linnakujundid: turuplats, bulvar ja kohvik. Ruumisemiootika võib nii nagu keel võtta aluseks piiratud hulga elementaarühikuid, "ehituskive", mida saab teatud viisil kombineerida; või huvituda sellest, kuidas koha loovad seal aset leidvad sündmused. Artikkel rakendab teist meetodit, püüdes sellele luua senisest kindlamat alust. Abiks on võetud üks geograafia haru – ajageograafia –, mis käsitleb liikumistrajektoore ruumis ja ajas. Sellele lisatakse piiri mõistest tuletatav semiootiline kvalitatiivne dimensioon. Piir on eristamise kui esmase semiootilise operatsiooni tulemus. Piiride semiootiliste omaduste käsitlusi leidub Pierre Janet' ja Georg Simmeli sotsiaalpsühholoogias, Edward T. Halli prokseemikas ning Manar Hammadi semiootikas. Eeltoodu põhjal on võimalik määratleda teatud ruumilis-semiootilisi objekte, nagu näiteks bulvar, mida võib vaadelda kui külaväljaku ja kohviku vahepealset, Jürgen Habermasi järgi avalikus sfääris paiknevat avaliku ruumi vaheastet. Lisaks Hammadi analüüsitud privatiseerimise protsessile vaadeldakse avalikustamise protsessi, mis pole pelgalt eelneva ümberpööratud variant. Seeläbi püütakse iseloomustada linnaruumi tunnusjooni ja potentsiaale. Urbaansus ilmneb kui lava, millel esmalt pilk ning alles seejärel sõna vahendab sugusid, klasse, kultuure ning muid teisesuse kehastusi.