IMPORTED MODELS, HYBRID SPACES:
THE CASE OF REPRESENTATIVE PROJECTS IN SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA, AND IN OBERHAUSEN, NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA

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Abstract *There is concern generated in the context of globalisation, whether convergence of urban patterns occurs despite differences in the institutional cultures of distinct planning environments. We observe, however, that global exchanges of meanings, lifestyle and spatial models stimulate organizational as well as morphological transformations of our urban environment. Confronted with today's changes of urban territories, which conceptual framework can help us to evaluate the quality of newly developed spaces?*

In order to build an understanding of contemporary production of meaningful urban spaces, this paper interprets the relationship between spatial and institutional components of places. Its theoretical framework is inspired by Marc Augé's non-places, Helmuth Plessner's logic of diplomacy, and Douglass North's institutional change. The paper contributes to current literature that incorporates into the interpretation of places specific historical context, particular mental models, agents and social interaction. For that I present two successful retail and entertainment developments in comparison: the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, California, and CentrO shopping mall in Oberhausen, North Rhine-Westphalia. Both projects employ imported spatial models, as the Promenade replicates European pedestrian streets and CentrO is modelled like the American shopping mall. Although they factually copy other spaces, they have been implemented through institutional change by means of manipulation of the current structure in place. Institutional change, as structural transformation in the economic and governance systems, seems to be a precondition in the global world for the production of hybrid spaces.

The project in Santa Monica shows that achieving a social goal and at the same time complying with individual choice for economic prosperity required a coordinated political effort. We envisage that successful place-making is based on an ongoing process of public debate, and on the space management by multiple agencies interested in both economic success in the global market, and civic sense of the place.

Keywords Place-making, public realm, institutionalism, diplomacy, negotiations

Introduction: On Globalisation, Quality of Spaces, and Public-Private Realms

This paper is part of a comprehensive inquiry into the politics of place-making[1] -- particularly in the way political discourse and processes are reflected in developments that include public spaces. The objective of this study is to advance an understanding of contemporary meanings of the quality of urban space. Therefore, it draws a line of continuity from traditional writings on the creation of urban places (e.g. Lynch 1960, Sitte 1965, Rapoport 1977, Alexander 1987, Whyte 1980) to present days literature that incorporates into the interpretation

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[1] In the words of Kevin Lynch, urban design "is the imaginative creation of possible form, together with a way of achieving it, that will carry out some human purpose" (1976: 78). Placemaking is the way in which all human beings transform the places they find themselves into the places where they live, […and] consists of those daily acts of renovating, maintaining, and representing the places that sustain us." Schneekloth, Lynda H. and Shibley Robert G., 1995

of places specific historical context, particular mental models, agents, social interaction and negotiations of conflictual interests (i.e. Buck-Morss 1989, Boyer 1996, Loukaitou-Sideris & Banerjee 1998, Crawford 1999, Healey et al. 2001, Beauregard 2003). Along with Lynch's concept of imageability,[2] in this exploration the meaning of quality of space is approached from a standpoint similar to Paul Klee's, as depicted in his studies of visual art. I briefly illustrate it here in Giulio Carlo Argan's formulation, and propose the distinction to be made in reading it that, while Klee's quality of form refers to relationships and attitudes towards images, in the case of urban space the individuals interact with urban scenes.

> The world of qualities which opens out the more one descends into the unconscious depths, is not the world of forms already dead and established, but the world of nascent form of formation, of Gestaltung: it is the world of unending organic relations which are born of real encounters and are measured by the effective strength which each image develops in its particular condition of space and time (Argan in Klee 1973:16).

My interest is in public spaces that are configured in urban areas designed for public access and use, and that intend to allow common temporary ownership. Ideally, in order to ensure the evolutionary capability of the urban structure, public spaces do not restrict diversity. This study recognizes that the prerequisite of public spaces to permit flexible interactions or "unending organic relations" is a significant feature in creating a world commonly perceived and absorbed, by stimulating various ways to shape spaces of quality.[3]

During the last decade in the field of urban studies there has been concern regarding the loss of public space in Western cities with the consequence of privatisation of public life (i.e. Sorkin 1992, Crawford 1992, Boyer 1992 & 1996, Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998, Lofland 1998, Banerjee 2001). Such endeavours recall positions within the larger context of social thought that oppose the negative effects of modernity (Berman 1982, Scott 1998), or assemble the context of a narrative of loss (Sennett 1977, Habermas 1995 & 1998). It is largely agreed that one of the consequences of modern life is the decrease of public interaction and civic life, while individual

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[2] Lynch's semiotics identified the elements of built environment important for the popular perception, and he defined "imageability" as the quality of a physical object to convey a vivid image to the observer. Organizing the sensorial experiences into a "coherent pattern" facilitates new experiences as well: "Indeed, the function of a good visual environment may not be simply to facilitate routine trips, nor to support meanings and feelings already possessed. Quite as important may be its role as a guide and a stimulus for new exploration" (1960: 109-110).
[3] During the process of urban design "[t]he question is how to obtain the highest degree of congruence possible (or the least degree of incongruence) between physical setting and human requirements as best understood at a given time, the model being traditional environments where congruence was at maximum" (Rapoport 1977: 384).

isolation becomes the expression of social independence (Putnam 1996, Barber 1998, Harvey 2000, Sennett 2002).

From this standpoint, I find problematic the lack of viable alternatives to modern thinking in applied social sciences. As it seems to me, the advantages of technological progress and standardized order overcome in practice the intellectual criticism. For instance, in urban planning we structure urban space according to principles grounded in scientific knowledge, benefiting from its elegance, controlling nature and self-explanatory solutions. But we, planning practitioners, just superficially refer either to particular contexts or to the integration of urban design within a cosmic order. It seems inappropriate that in our tightly integrated world we preserve the current institutionalised order in trying to cope with the intricacy of social heterogeneity and the present dynamics of change. We place human experience into normative universal conditions, and at the same time, often protest the loss of identity and meaning of our spatial environment (i.e. New Urbanism). In other words, in our attempts to create a liveable realm we aim to harmonize, ironically, the constraints of our bounded rationality[4] with the infinite domain of our wishful thinking. Therefore a question to be answered is how can we possibly balance norm and life?

In the context of change, one of the significant reactions to modern rational thinking in urban development -- that respects the rule "form follows function" -- is the social interpretation of urban space. I acknowledge that an appropriate method to understand the evolution of urban space and to evaluate its quality is an institutional approach to urban design, by means of analysing the decision-making processes through the lenses of institutional theory in political science (March and Olsen 1984, North 1993, Hall and Taylor 1996). Myths and history define cultural patterns that further shape political and spatial organisation. That means a) to explore into the systems of meanings and belief, b) to understand behaviours and the organizational systems of particular communities, and particularly c) to deconstruct the rules of the game that define the web of social interactions

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[4] Bounded rationality: an agent's behaviour approximately optimal according to his/her goals as the resources will allow (Simon, 1957); "according to the rational exchange postulates associated with the organizational theory of Herbert A. Simon, there are cognitive limits to the ability of people to pursue wholly rational purposeful behaviour. Rather than seek the optimal solution, actors satisfice; that is, they accept a solution which is 'good enough', within a so-called zone of indifference." Gordon Marshall, 1994, *The Concise Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

that redefine places. As such the study aims to join the body of literature interested in social, political and economic interpretation of urban space, and its main question becomes: how do forms connect with norms?

A general structuring theme of the paper is the tension between local and global influences in the decision-making processes of contemporary urban development. As a consequence of technological progress and economic growth, the process of globalisation reflects those social settings that contribute to diminishing the significance of spatial distance. In the words of Marc Augé that means being "open to differences and the consequences of difference" (1998). This modern phenomenon of intensifying contact entailed by globalisation advances the comparability of social aspects and cultural characteristics of communities. At present coexistent means of communication enable the growth of transnational economy, which comforts rapidly metamorphosing environment that challenges the capacity of contemporary citizens to adapt to the pace of change (Sassen 1998, Castells 2000 & 2003).

These circumstances have profound implications for the conditions of urban living (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000, Harvey 2000, Tajbakhsh 2001), as they accommodate new opportunities and new forms of fragility that have direct impact on the processes of shaping urban space as public arena (Buck-Morss 1989, Sorkin 1992, Henaff and Strong 2001). At spatial level such contemporary feature of urban modernity is best legible in non-places, which are considered those spaces that do not satisfy the condition of common temporary ownership, or in other words that belong to the 'others' without being inhabited by them. As a result they constitute public spaces of solitude where what is temporary is experienced as if it were definitive, and where, besides the excess of space and events, we face an excess of individualism (Augé 1998). They basically configure buffer zones between identifiable and undefined, between the concepts of meaningful place and of abstract space, between private and public realms. Moreover, the meanings of private and public realms transform over time, and mutually manifest new spatial expressions. In pre-modern societies, common places have primarily a civic purpose, if we consider, for example, the medieval squares built near the city hall or the church/the temple. In contemporary cities, paradoxically, private developments include most of the public spaces, and they are intended mainly for shopping and entertainment. What explains this transformation of a spatial urban element?

The study is structured around three main streams of thought related to anthropological and behavioural interpretations of space. The choice for an anthropological approach to the spatial realm is based on the fact that "anthropology has traditionally linked the question of otherness (or identity) to that of space, precisely because the symbolizing process carried out by social groups itself signifies that they set out to understand and master space so as to understand and organize themselves" (Augé 1998: 100). From a spatial perspective I ground the argument on Marc Auge's 'supermodern' interpretation of non-places as a significant dimension of contemporary spaces, because it comprises notions of physical space, time, and relations the individuals have with the places they live or move through. In considering the public debate generated in the context of urban development I draw on the recent revival of Helmuth Plessner's philosophical anthropology as it explains the role of institutions in the public sphere, and in particular the logic of diplomacy into bringing negotiation towards a satisfactory compromise. As a suggestion to future expansion of this paper, I introduce in the concluding part Douglass North's theory of institutional change that is shaped by the theory of human behaviour and the theory of the cost of transactions. This theoretical framework is illustrated through the comparative case study of two economically successful retail and entertainment centres that came into being as fully shaped developments during the last decade: the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, US, and CentrO shopping mall in Oberhausen, Germany. Their selection was based on their hybrid quality as they refer to global desires in order to respond to local needs, and thus embody both qualities of places and non-places, and at the same time they show two different political alternatives to place-making. Other reasons to present them in comparison are explained while the study unfolds.

The Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, California, US

Santa Monica is a small city which has developed in a common Southern Californian seaside setting, as part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Geographically, there are no particular advantages of this location within LA's collage of places. From a temporal perspective, however, Santa Monica captures a distinct age of the ongoing process of shaping urban space in LA. For me it is the singular rococo touch of LA's urban development that is most of the time classical, struggling once in a while to become baroque. Anyway, in context

this is an example of high quality urban life, mainly due to active politicians and the civic sense and awareness of its residents.

At a first glance, there is something special about this community; its people make a difference. On Santa Monica's downtown pedestrian street -- the Third Street Promenade -- yuppies, greens, sophisticated singles, homeless people, cool young parents, weekend crowds, tourists, students, movie stars, corporate blue shirts, organic white linen, and street performers all gather. Its cosmopolitan community is the attraction and also the challenge of this place. Walking on the Promenade the other day, within only one block, music of an Argentinean band, a Chinese musician and a Scottish bagpipe mingled. A multicultural crowd, which takes for granted such diversity, watched the performers. I saw people leaving their cigarettes half way smoked on the litterbin (we are in California where smoking indoors is prohibited), and a bit later homeless guys picking them up. I suppose it was already a habit because it worked out quite fluently. Then I observed two girls giving Subway sandwiches to a group of rebellious teenagers, who looked less mad but hungry. There are gestures reflecting empathy between residents and homeless, Asian kids and Latino kids, restaurant keepers and walkers. And then, there are the encounters of neighbours, friends, or mates that so seldom happen spontaneously in LA. I don't intend to present an idyllic image of this mixed crowd, but everywhere there is a sense of cooperation, which is reflected in Santa Monica's operating rules and also social norms. It can be explained by the homogeneity of its stable population, in terms of wealth, lifestyle and social class.

Secondly there is something about the local politics in Santa Monica, which seems to relate closely to its demographic configuration. Looking only at its pedestrian-friendly streets, public life appears to be similar to that of European cities, but the process of achieving it conforms to contemporary urban development in the US: public initiative coordinated with private interest. The pro-business collective ideology promotes free enterprise and reliance on complex legal rules. That is the framework of the production of the Promenade. Only after the local government adopted a proactive investment-attractive policy for revitalization, this setting became a gathering place for local community, visiting public from the region, and tourists. The Third Street Promenade is a distinctive enterprise relatively to other developments within Los Angeles' immediate surroundings, due to its capability to bring together local specificities and global flavours. The development proves to be very successful

as a shopping and entertainment district in the heart of downtown, and its success includes both economic and civic aspects.

In downtown Santa Monica, the transformation of three blocks of the Third Street into a pedestrian area was undertaken within the downtown redevelopment program. Looking five decades back, during the post-World War II years the former significance of downtown Santa Monica altered together with the vitality of its shopping street because of the off-centre location of new regional centres that polarised most of the retail activities. In 1965 the City initiated a spatial intervention in its urban core, in order to alleviate the disadvantages of functional polarisation for the quality of urban living. That materialised, ironically, in a functional solution to interrupt the continuity of automobile traffic on the street grid, in order to create a pedestrian public amenity. An area on the Third Street was closed between Broadway and Wilshire Boulevard. The new spatial element was renamed the Santa Monica Outdoor Mall. However, the Outdoor Mall has not been successful in attracting neither significant shopping crowds nor downtown visitors, as it offered an uninviting space with shops on both sides, built in concrete and barely showing emotional or human touches. Therefore, the developers and city authorities moved on with another functionalist answer, and expected that a retail anchor of larger magnitude would boost the liveliness of the surrounding public area. In 1973 the Santa Monica Place, an indoor shopping mall, was constructed at one end of the outdoor mall by consolidating the block between Broadway and Colorado Boulevard.

Although this was a step further towards downtown revitalisation, it did not imply any concern to create public amenities or to involve users' participation in the creation of space. The need for a public management agency became obvious only a decade later. By 1984, the City of Santa Monica deemed the mall economically unsuccessful, unsafe and blighted. In 1984 the Third Street Development Corporation was formed in order to manage improvements. It was a non-profit, public benefit organization, founded by the City in order to redevelop the mall and its surrounding area into an economically successful, thriving downtown centre. Three years later, the City adopted a mixed-use development plan, the Bayside District Specific Plan, which the Corporation created with the City's assistance. The redesign of the Third Street Promenade was focussed on activity densities and human scale.

But was not until the 1990s that this place acquired its importance as a regional destination point and as a model for downtown revitalisation. It was necessary another decade for all the economic, social, political and urban design sides to come together in shaping the actual successful development. At the same time, the decline of neighbouring shopping districts such as Westwood Village directed here the odds of success. That came along with resolute and well-shaped policies and regulations that required the concentration of successful activities on the Promenade. An example is the presence of three multiplex movie theatres within two blocks of the Promenade, which were required locations at the time of their development. Nowadays locally focused perspectives on success are replaced by the need of worldwide market recognition. That translates into dominant presence of globally successful superstore chains that demanded the relocation of some of the local attractions. A while back *Anthropologie* replaced the colourful *Ethical Drugs*, and only this year two independent bookstores *Midnight Special* and *Hennessey & Ingalls* have had to move to the collateral streets due to an increase of rental prices. Nevertheless, the emphasis on tourism and on attractive retail and entertainment areas of activity brought significant revenues to the City. "At the time when the income of most other municipalities has been flat, Santa Monica's tax receipts have jumped 21%."[5] According to Denny Zane -- the former mayor of Santa Monica who contributed to the creation of the actual configuration of the Promenade -- to achieve a social goal and at the same time to comply with individual choice for economic prosperity required a coordinated political effort. That is a reflection of the socially conscious agenda of local government, and as mayor Rosenstein said by way of justification "[t]his is a community that respects itself and struggles to do the right thing – to provide the best quality of life it can in a difficult urban environment."[6]

The Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica started in the 1960s as a locally focused project to bring back the liveliness of a small seaside community. After four decades it turns to be an ongoing process of shaping urban lifestyle and space, with the ambition to balance the tension between political and economic construction of interests, local identity, and global influences.

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[5] *The Price of Success* <u>LA Times</u>, May 23, 1996
[6] ibidem

CentrO in Oberhausen, North Rhine–Westphalia, Germany

If the forces that currently lead spatial development in Santa Monica could be seen as centripetal, the former industrial town of Oberhausen is in the stage of experiencing centrifugal influences. Stadtmitte, its downtown, and the main shopping areas in the city core are in relative decline, while in the outskirts a new city core develops at fast pace on a former industrial site: Neue Mitte. It is the spatial expression of a deep economic and social transition from the industrial age to a service-based economy. Oberhausen is located in the largest European coal and steel region, the Ruhrgebiet. The nineteenth century industrial progress of the Ruhr region has shaped dramatically its urban landscape. Nowadays, structural transformations and the need for regional regeneration brought about the search for new drivers of the economy in the Ruhr. The City of Oberhausen made a hard choice towards its economic rehabilitation, by reinventing its urban core. The beginning of the new 'downtown' is CentrO, a private shopping and entertainment development. The complex is adjacent to a preserved gasometer, the largest enclosed space in the world, which is currently used for art performances, exhibitions and concerts. It is the only element reminding of the former site land use, as a symbolic presence of Oberhausen identity.

CentrO was developed in the 1990s on the site of a former steel plant, as a component project of the brownfields revitalization program.[7] It is the government policy to only locate shopping facilities on former brownfields, while preserving greenfields. In 1991, the Oberhausen City Planning Department prepared a master plan for the development. It gained the support of the state government to modify the Regional Development Plan, and also reached a consensus with the neighbouring cities towards the project acceptance. A year later, the City convinced Thyssen Company to sell the property to a City owned corporation GEG[8] and in cooperation with the State of North Rhine-Westphalia bought the site, the soil was cleaned up and infrastructure was created, all from public funds. CentrO is a private development -- a joint venture of the British firms Stadium Group that holds the overall control and P&O that contributes with its worldwide experience in financing, developing and managing entertainment and retail centres. In any case the project was also publicly subsidized in the form of environmental cleanup and site preparation, as the steel industry was relieved from any legal obligations to clean

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[7] refer also to the IBA Emscher Park program for revitalization of the Ruhr region
[8] Grundstuecksentwicklungsgesellschaft Oberhausen

up existing pollution. The model used for the shopping mall and urban entertainment centre is Meadowhall, the Stadium's development in Sheffield, UK.

In opposing the CentrO project, among the principal arguments of local citizens were a) the increase in traffic and consequent pollution, and b) the decline of neighbouring centres. Also the City was aware of the spatial fragmentation and polarisation of activities generated by a large-scale isolated development, and of the contradiction with the environmental objectives of the State and broader planning goals. However, the motivation of local authorities to build the CentrO was primarily economic. The officials expected that this shopping and entertainment centre would revitalize the former industrial region, which was facing high unemployment and lack of attractive activities in comparison with other western European regions. As a result it was reached a political compromise, by advocating spatial connection with the existent built up, providing access by public transportation, and encouraging business proactive policies.

From a broader perspective, currently all over the world transformations in retail business result in trends towards homogenisation and polarisation of activities within off-centre isolated zones, with severe consequences on the urban scale (Peron 2001). As a consequence, traditional European towns are being reconfigured, accessibility becomes essential, and there is a decay of public spaces as civic arenas. Is that a reflection of slowly changing habits of European consumers?

CentrO benefits of a central location within the Rhine-Ruhr region that is the largest European conurbation. As one of the largest urban entertainment centres in Europe, CentrO Oberhausen is not only a creative reuse of a former industrial site, but also demonstrates the effects of globalisation, particularly on the young European population. Although the regional peculiarity of CentrO confers its success that contributes to the increase of revenues of the City of Oberhausen, the development is still a compilation of various extraneous meanings.

On a Saturday afternoon, in Stadtmitte Oberhausen the pedestrian street is crowded with people. The clothing is generally greyish in colour, maybe due to the cloudy climate, taste developed in an industrial past, transitory mood, or simply European fashion. Most of them are shopping, as some of the closing stores have great sale

offers, and obviously enjoy walking, watching, talking to each other. It is a provincial atmosphere of a former steel industry town that made it through the restructuring crisis of the late 1980s. Only fifteen minutes away from there, if one takes the state-of-the-art transport system, and does not make the mistake to descend a stop before where the unemployment office is located, will reach the next stop: Neue Mitte Oberhausen. Here there is colour and neon light, action and crowds. At the end of day, after rushing through the 70.000 square meters of retail space or, watching the beach games on the *Venice Beach* improvised in one of the indoor mall courts, one could happily stop at the food court that offers delights from all over the global cuisine. While there, one can relax from a demanding visual experience along the shopping galleries, by watching the commercials advertised on large colourful screens. It is good enough, only a 'supermodern' experience at the shopping mall.

A Sense of Place and the Logic of Diplomacy

Today's exchanges of meanings, lifestyle and spatial patterns generate organizational as well as morphological transformations of our urban environment. The assumption is that the ways people order their environment relate to the type of public realm they want to express. Lyn Lofland explains the necessity for spatial delimitation and segregation within the modern urban space, and the predominance of homogeneous environments, as a result of the decrease in the power of appearance, and of the dissolution of social hierarchies (1973). However, contemporary urban environments provide evidence that daily life incorporates less conventional spaces within the network of places, as elements of transition between developments that respond to uniform partiality. I argue that keeping urban interventions flexible and sensitive to their context, both spatial and organizational characteristics of a development – acknowledged as being at the same time physical space and process of completion -- will satisfy the condition of quality.

Beyond physical dimensions, there are symbolic connotations attached to certain spaces that invest them with meaning. Compared to the abstract notion of *space*, *place* refers to temporal dimensions that potentially create animated scenes. For instance anthropological place "includes the possibility of the journeys made in it, the discourses uttered in it and the language characterizing it" (Augé 1995). As implied in the introductory part, the extrapolation of Klee's understanding of quality of form suggests that the capability of urban space to acquire

quality, and thus become place, resides in its ongoing predisposition towards shaping a flexible and interactive nature of space. Apparently the conditions of flexibility and interaction are satisfied within hybrid spaces. That is meant to accommodate various identities, taste preferences, ways to make sense of space, motivations and uses. To a certain degree that could be extended also to the notion of non-place, because:

> First, notions of place and non-place obviously include notions of limit. There is non-place in every place and in all non-places places can be recomposed. To put it in another way, places and non-places, while they correspond to physical spaces, are also a reflection of attitudes, positions, the relations the individuals have with the places they live in or move through (Augé 1998: 106).

Along similar lines, Patsy Healey defines the place by means of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, "a material and social space, a *habitus,* infused with meanings and transected by relations through which particular "cultural capitals" are formed and transformed." She argues that understanding the quality of places refers to the internalisation of structure and agency (Giddens 1984), "moving beyond just the actors, and incorporating the networks of social relations within which systems of meanings and ways of acting are constituted" (Healey 1999). Although theoretically appealing, the applied value of Healey's formulation does not appear obvious to me when it has to be practiced in complex human environments. In order to be capable to evaluate our spatial developments according to the above-mentioned theoretical formulations, I briefly introduce the adaptive strategies to integration in the public sphere defined by Plessner in his endeavour to draw political conclusions from anthropological premises.

In the 1920s Helmuth Plessner attempted to defuse the attacks on modern society, considering the interpersonal distance and respect for privacy as one of the positive characteristics of modernity. On one hand, his understanding that the human being lives eccentrically means that the individual is capable to fulfil himself the further he gets from the centre. On the other hand, Plessner advanced a flexible notion of the individual who is contextually defined, and is characterised by 'positionality' that "juxtaposes the idealistic 'I' with a self-dynamic 'it' (environment) to which it relates through dynamic bordering" (Ernste 2002: 8). These two perspectives are brought together within an important aspect of his argument, namely the antagonism of human existence between being and becoming, "for behind every determination of our being lies dormant the unspoken possibility of being different" (Plessner 1999: 109). Life is both a process and a project.

Such inbuilt human characteristic advances institutional change within the public sphere in order to achieve a balance between norm and life. Because there is not a predefined centre, the balance between norm and life should be found through negotiation and agreed upon agreements.

> All agreements that are carried out in the public sphere must be artificial according to two sides: they must be schematic and arbitrary up to a certain degree, and they must satisfy constantly the aura that produces a demand for distance. Goal-oriented actions characterized by such artificiality are called *transactions*.[9] They have an objective face and can be separated from the persons performing them and judged. The will has to obey their logic when it concerns itself with specific conditions (Plessner 1999: 151).

In the public sphere Plessner considers that institutions are necessary to satisfy two requirements of human existence. First they respond to the drive of individuals to avoid ridicule and subsequent loss of significance. Second they satisfy the need for social integration within the public sphere, which is the "place where unattached persons meet through the distance of value" (ibid: 151). From this standpoint, he identified five adaptive strategies: ceremony, prestige, tact, diplomacy and politics. By ceremony Plessner means all rule-governed interactions. Nevertheless it varies with culture and depends on historical and social context. Prestige is the representation of strength within the public sphere. However, due to diplomacy and tact, the public sphere becomes a cohesive realm.

> Diplomacy obeys the logic of tactic and strategy. Its purpose is to finesse a situation in such a way that all the parties involved are led to believe that their interests have been respected and their integrity preserved, even if, or despite the fact, that they have not been [sic] (Wallace in Plessner 1999: 23).

These adaptive strategies of integration within the public sphere are capable to bring light into the process of development of modern spaces. For the logic of diplomacy can explain why "the paradox of supermodernity culminates in non-places, where one is neither *chez soi* nor *chez les autres*" (Augé 1998: 106). The user of non-places reduced to his function of passenger, consumer, or user, experiences a particular kind of solitude because he is excluded from the negotiation of space. The overly controlled and privately owned spaces discourage any individual initiative towards participation into their creation. That is the case of the CentrO development, which at the end of the day becomes a space of fatigue and boredom due to its reluctance to interaction.

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[9] [*Geschafte*] meaning impersonal, utilitarian social interactions

Half an hour away from Neue Mitte, in downtown Essen there is another brownfield redevelopment that implies a new IKEA store. The profile of the IKEA company is based on the ideas of the functionalist movement in its Swedish version that can be dated back to the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930.[10] That proposed a particular style of urban design, shaped through rational thinking that is contextually deferent and responsive to the environment. Such legacy continue not only through the fact that IKEA products keep a simple design with a personal touch about it, but also the presentation of products promotes an interactive style similar to that of an exhibition. The worldwide success of the company is not surprising, and among the means to achieve its policy to globally market a local culture a few are relevant to mention here: the deference to the context, the dissemination of mutual features of space, and the assurance of a flexible process of shaping space.[11] This is an example of privately owned space that provides for common temporary ownership, and in which every individual has the opportunity to find his role and satisfy her preferences in action.

The Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica provides the example of an ongoing debate over the space. For instance, there is a debate of conducts, with local magnitude, that refers to the regulation of street performing activities, and also a further reaching debate with respect to ownership values and the negotiation of property.

Once the Promenade was opened to the public in 1989, street performers profited of this opportunity of a freely accessible public arena. As they were seeking revenues for their performance, business' owners and other citizens complained to the City, and the Council responded through various municipal ordinances (in 1991, 1993, and 1997). These restrictions on street activity brought forth counteractions with respect to constitutional rights to freedom, from the side of street performers (1998). Currently the performing activity on the Promenade is regulated through a lottery system, which specifies the exact location, the allowed time to be spent, and the type of artistic products to be marketed by each performer.

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[10] Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 was conceived by architect Gunnar Asplund and 'the ideologist' Gregor Paulsson
[11] IKEA's success is an example of inverting the slogan "think globally, act locally"

At the end of the 1980s in Santa Monica, the City authorities together with the non-profit development agency and real estate developers promoted the idea to create a new image of the Third Street Promenade resembling the atmosphere of Parisian sidewalks. That shows another way of global forces to influence the project by means of exchange of patterns and symbolic meanings. The idea was put into practice by allocating a semi-public space to restaurants and cafés, as an outdoor extension of their commercial area, and through emphasis on design tools such as landscaping, street furniture and public art. The compromise on property ownership by creating a common element of both private and public domains is a relatively seldom-occurring enterprise in the context of Los Angeles, where there is a clear delimitation of ownership boundaries. That constitutes an example that has the potential to model future institutional change because the Promenade as a public arena has an important role in providing information, and in shaping people's preferences according to the appropriated reality (North 1993).

Among various spatial implications of this urban transformation, the most relevant for its context is the actualisation of a hierarchy of places. The Promenade itself configures a place for representation, while the Second and Forth Streets provide the service supply for both patrons and visitors (e.g. eight public parking structures accommodating more than 5,000 spaces). The choice to be present in a representative public space stimulates businesses' conformity to higher property taxes, and high costs of maintenance of buildings or public amenities. For instance the public parking structures provided by the City are maintained in a private-public partnership. At present the Bayside District Corporation manages the development area. It is a public-private management company that works in partnership with the City of Santa Monica on issues impacting downtown. For sure during this four-decades-long process the Third Street Promenade was created as an identifiable place in downtown Santa Monica, and as an expression of the image this city intends to project to the world. Moreover, by promoting a particular lifestyle that establishes the identity of the Promenade, the operational agencies are basically concerned to manage success. Although the main purpose of visitors is consumption, there is a civic dimension to this public space. The Promenade represents a common place that spontaneously gathers a crowd potentially representative for the Los Angeles region.

There is nevertheless a downside of the process of shaping space through public debate. Federal Realty Investment Trust is one of the development corporations involved in the development of the Third Street

Promenade. In a *Washington Post* article concerning the development of mixed-use infill projects, the developer expresses the difficulty to reach a general agreement between various interested actors -- business leaders, planners, environmental activists, and citizens -- with respect to the beneficial impacts on the urban region of dense infill developments. "There are far more people with a vested interest when you have a close-in site that is adjoining other property. […] In the distant suburbs, on a 'greenfield' site, you get people who are theoretically opposed to development on philosophical grounds, but their interest is abstract. It's not like they own a house butting right up against the development."[12] As community activists are more likely to delay or block a project in urban areas than in outer areas, the financing institutions -- the bankers -- do not know how to quantify the multiple "complications and political risks" involved in these projects. In consequence the real estate company decided that infill developments "do not make economic sense," as they demand long time and they are labour intensive, as "you have to have lots of lawyers, patience and money." That happens in the context of two satisfied conditions: the market is willing to supply the demand, and, moreover, there is general agreement on the collective good.

There is a paradox in the way decision-making actors in American urban development preserve the current institutionalised order in trying to cope with progressive and/or alternative development proposals. Institutional change, as structural transformation in the economic and governance systems, seems to be a precondition in the global world for the production of hybrid spaces. In developing the theory of institutional change Douglass C. North bases his arguments on other values that guide human actions besides wealth maximizing behaviour, such as altruism, trust, or need for public recognition (1993). That connects to Plessner's interpretation of the realisation of the self, and the need for institutional agreements to integrate into the public sphere. North accepts though that the more complex are the societal structures, the more complicated is to achieve agreements, and there are no universal answers in reaching a satisfactory solution for all parties. Only politics and diplomacy are capable to mediate the negotiations within the decision-making process of urban design.

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[12] Irwin, Neil, 2003, *For Urban Developers, A Hard Row to Hoe: Bethesda Row Is A Hit, but Many Builders Say That For the Effort Required, They'll Stick With Strip Malls*, <u>Washington Post</u>, January 13, 2003

Conclusion

This paper argues that there is a large variety of ways to configure urban environments of agreed upon quality, and interpretations of public discourse and intellectual politics of place-making provide theoretical tools to evaluate the quality of places. There are various traditions to determine the identity of an urban region, and also to define what is representative for it. On one hand, there is a city image that refers to homogenous social preferences. It is based on the assumption that citizens' expectations are along with the aspirations of those authorities holding the power of decision-making in the direction of city improvement. Such urban image is created by charismatic leaders and entrepreneurs led by the ambition of having competitive advantages in the global market. They are acting yet according to their own understanding, needs, and/or capability to decipher the urban environment and its future growth. However, their decisions do not constitute an exhaustive manner to define and project a holistic image of the city. To what extent is that image representative for the urban region?

Because on the other hand there is the ongoing process of urban restructuring influenced by the cyclic flows of everyday life, which defines a city image that refers to heterogeneous social preferences. In multicultural regions this is mainly determined by the variety of social groups laying claims to a place, by shaping it in specific ways matching diverse local identities. Urban space is negotiated, shaped, and reshaped according to a large variety of values, customs, or ways to interpret and to give sense to places. Individual or group preferences are many times in conflict with each other. The tension inherent in the global aspirations within local affiliations is manifested both at the level of institutional instruments and spatial outcomes.

This comparative case study refers to the analysis of a European style pedestrian shopping street in Santa Monica, California, US, and an American suburban mall in Oberhausen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. A general perspective on the planning practices in Santa Monica versus Oberhausen reveals many differences: short-term versus long-term solutions, efficiency versus spatial equity planning, incremental planning at local scale versus regional approach, bottom-up versus top-down control, emphasis on private property versus common ownership. But these two examples show that there are particular trends at the global level that impact local tradition and transform local decision-making processes. Global challenges influence social criteria such as

preferences, the construction of political interest, and the system of choices.[13] There are, however, main differences in the two planning systems and governance, as the concentration of power and control is vastly different, and the level of cooperation between administrative levels also varies. By logic of diplomacy, according to Plessner, in both cases the final agreements apparently satisfy all parties involved in the negotiation process, and even those that were not involved by way of decision-making tradition of local planning (e.g. the citizens of Oberhausen).

If hybrid spaces are accepted as means to shaping identity, I have selected to study these two projects due to their differences. First, I considered them as models of privately (CentrO) and publicly (The Promenade) owned public spaces, which configure urban areas for representation. Second, besides their different type of ownership, they show differences in use/users, CentrO being a destination place isolated in fact from the urban context, while the Promenade became in the last decade a common place integrated into the urban fabric. Both of them are the result of public initiatives within redevelopment programs: CentrO within the regeneration of brownfields and The Promenade within the downtown revitalization program. However, the initial information that inspired their creation and their symbolic meaning are distinct. CentrO is modelled as the omnipresent suburban mall while the Promenade aims to revive the Parisian pedestrian areas.

As a result they both imply global characteristics in responding to the slogan "think globally, act locally," and embody all the features of Marc Augé's 'supermodern' space: excess of time (events), space (bringing the whole world together) and individualism. As such their sense of non-place is due to foreign spatial connotations and cosmopolitan pretensions, but nevertheless, their flexibility through superfluous and generic labelling accommodates a mixture of taste preferences. As it seems to me that defines with an acceptable approximation a 'successful' development in a diverse world. Although they do not configure places that are adaptable to various anthropological roles and transformations of the self, as "one is neither *chez soi* nor *chez les autres*" (Augé 1998), these developments reveal similarities in terms of their apparent public success and their uniqueness in

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[13] In *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment* the authors suggest that "hybrid environments do not always accommodate pluralistic tendencies or multicultural practices," and because hybrid spaces are not necessarily a mix of two cultures, they require a more sophisticated understanding. Moreover, "[d]espite strong forces toward globalization, much of late 20th century urbanism demonstrates a movement toward cultural differentiation. Such factors as ethnicity and religious and cultural heritages have led to the concept of hybridity as a shaper of identity." (AlSayyad, Nezar 2001)

each specific urban context. However, if we take into account variables such as performed activities, and physical configuration, a successful place would not be predefined as "forms already dead and established" and would allow for ongoing organic relationships between users and urban scenes. Considering the image associated with a certain symbolic meaning conferred by the local community, they are hybrid products using unfamiliar models of public space, which have been adjusted, and have been marketed as fitting the aspirations of local users. One of its main reasons is that the authorities having the power of decision-making expected that they would achieve similar success to that of their initial places. As a matter of fact, after their implementation, the interaction of users with the places is according to the initial expectations. The actors concerned with the creation of the Third Street Promenade aimed to boosting the public life in downtown Santa Monica like that on the sidewalks of Paris, and hence its quasi-inclusive space is configured as a result of negotiations. The goals of the development of CentrO as a suburban entertainment and shopping mall were mainly to improve the economic performance of the decaying industrial region. That occurred effectively, and it is further conditioned by the shift of behavioural patterns in the Ruhr, from self-contained provincial traditions of local population towards consumerist global integration of visitors of the new downtown of Oberhausen. In this sense I believe this case study becomes suggestive for the structural transformations in the economic and governance systems as a result of globalisation.

> *There is no new world that you make without the old world.*
> *[...] But I know things won't go on as they are now.*
> Jane Jacobs

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