

Lesson 9

Urban populations: practices, space and time, mobility, spatial conflicts

Contemporary city:
descriptions and projects

Gabriele Pasqui

City, community and society

Between XIX and XX century the distinction between community and society (*gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*) was used in order to introduce the idea that the shift from one form of socio-spatial relations to another can produce alienations, dysfunction, anomie

But, in other interpretations, this shift is also a process of increase of freedom and possibilities, that is typical of urban life (many examples in XXth century literature, cinema, etc..)

Which are the consequences of the shift in the “narrative” of XIX – first part of XX century urban studies?

Near and far

Which are the problems of this “narrative”?

The shift is not linear. “Face to face” relationships are always important because we are bodies in space

It is not true that the death of local is only a pulling apart of all that is truly human in social relationships

There is a richness of spaces and places in cities that is not considered in this narrative, because space becomes only a dependent variable of social processes

Near and far are always intertwined and connected in urban life because of the “built” and social nature of spaces and places

Cities and innovation

When we think to the changes in social relationship
(from direct to abstract, from near to far) we should consider the fact that
cities are sources of novelty

The city, through its complexity, allows for unexpected juxtapositions of all
kind of levels: the meeting in the street, the interaction in public spaces, the
informal day-by-day relationships, the creative use of spaces, ...)

But, first of all, the city, through this juxtaposition, is also a potent generator of
novelty, both in the sense of new spaces and places and in the sense of new
meanings

Distanciated communities

Modern cities as agglomerations of flows

One of the main forms of mobility flows is the mobility of information. Cities are informational kaleidoscopes producing new patterns of understanding (Castells)

In this context of mobility, how can we understand communities?

Some of them are still localized, but many others are no longer localized: they persist at a distance, constructing new forms of intentionality and building new types of presence

Technologies and communities

In these changes ICTs have a fundamental role

The main example of distanced communities are social networks (both universal and specific) and the net

What is the relationship between these communities and urban life? The question is important and it is not easy to answer.

There is a cultural nexus: in some sense Facebook and the other global communities / networks are the consequences of the “cultural urbanisation” of the world.

Communities without propinquity

Using Melvin Webber suggestion and Amin, Thrift classification, we can identify different families of communities without propinquity

Planned communities (map, census, postcodes, joining GIS and other ICTs).
Interaction with the securitisation problems

Post-social communities (relationships mediated not through human groups but through softwares and other technological identities)

New forms of “light” sociality (groups that come together briefly around a particular purpose and then disperse again) or groups linked to specific interests (enthusiasts that choose each other on the basis of sentiments and emotional feelings)

Diasporic communities where the belonging and identification is local (global communities of migrants)

Everyday life, again

Both communities without propinquity
and traditional locally rooted communities
can be considered “events” in the conceptual space of everyday life

Everyday life is the community of the usual and the mundane, but also the community of intuition, improvisation, play. It is a community without an identity in which human beings “co-belong without any representable condition of belonging” (Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Nancy)

Spatial consequences

Which are the spatial consequences of this coexistence of different kind of relationships and communities?

Spaces and places matter. We need to analyse the dimensions of physical space in cities in order to understand the “texture” of distanced and face-to-face interactions and flows

These interactions are connected with the use of spaces/places, through different practices that can re-signify these spaces/places

Time in the city

*Cities are made not only of spaces and places,
but also of time*

Most social analysts treat time and space as “environments” of action, using the Western culture conception of time as measurable clock time, but routinized character of everyday life shows that there are social and physical constraints that provide the boundaries limiting behaviour across space-time (Giddens)

These “boundaries” are principles of *structuration* of urban experience for people, considered first of all human bodies facing spaces and “things”

This structuration is both a tie and a possibility for action

Time in contemporary city

In contemporary cities populations' and individuals' behaviour depend on different time-patterns

The contemporary city is characterized by new space-time morphologies of daily life practices

These new characters of contemporary cities have created new time patterns, more complex and fragmentated.

The traditional daily and weekly time patterns in fordist societies have been substituted by new patterns based on the interaction between different time patterns (see for example the changes in working time in the knowledge-based urban economies)

Changes in time patterns

*In contemporary cities new time patterns
depend on many different phenomena*

The crisis of the traditional organisation of daily time patterns linked to the pluralisation of the relationships between work and life in knowledge-based economy

The importance of new technologies (ICTs) for the explosion of socio-temporal rhythms

The distribution of human activities during all daytime, with a new importance of asynchronicity and non-simultaneity

The approach of space-time geography

*Space-time geography describes patterns and dynamics
of urban everyday life*

Principles of space-time geography (Hägerstrand)

- Corporeality imposes limitations upon the capabilities of movement and perception
- Time is a scarce resource for the individual actor
- Human beings are limited also because every task has a duration (turn-taking phenomena)
- Movement in space is also movement in time
- Any zone of space-time has a limited “packaging capacity” and can be analysed in terms of constraints and possibilities of co-use

Describing space-time patterns and conflicts

*Space-time geography gives the opportunity
to analyse individual space-time patterns*

Practising urban time geography involves the detailed dissection of individuals' movements over very short periods, looking at the paths in space that people traverse over time, including daily or weekly space-time paths.

Conflicts in the use of time are very important in everyday life: the control of time and especially the power in defining the agenda is really important in post-industrial cities

There may be trade-offs between expenditure of time and other resources (money, but not only...)

From city time to city rhythms

*In these changes a greater importance is assumed
by everyday life rhythms*

The study of urban rhythms is becoming important in contemporary urbanism

Urban rhythms can be observed:

- in the regular comings and goings of people about the city (interconnection of different kinds of movements)
- in the repetitive activities, sounds and even smells that characterize urban life (routines as rhythmical practices)

Pluralisation of rhythms

*In contemporary cities we can observe
a strong pluralisation of everyday life rhythms*

The pluralisation of rhythms is linked with the dialectics between difference and repetition in everyday life

This pluralisation is not only visible in the daily rhythms, but also in the weekly (week-ends), seasonal (holidays, second houses, travels, ..), and life careers (foreign citizens, staying in our cities for a limited period of their lives) rhythms

This pluralisation is also a fragmentation: we can speak of a “polyrhythmic dynamic” that is mainly a-synchron and non-simultaneous



















Definitions

Urban population is an aggregate of individuals defined by one or more simple common traits. Contrary to the kind of theoretical assumptions we need in order to analyse *classes, movements, groups* or *organizations* it is possible to talk about populations without any strong assumption about their rational collective behaviour (Martinotti)

Urban populations can be seen as aggregates of individuals that temporarily share everyday practices, building themselves as “subjects” to these practices and creating peculiar space-time patterns

Traditional city

The traditional city :

inhabitants and workers correspond to almost the same group of people living in the city .



First generation (early) metropolis

In USA early 1920s and in Europe after World War II growing of two different populations :

Inhabitants people who live and do their daily practices in the city

Commuter population people living outside the city but working in the city , this way they use the central city secluded in working organisations and largely separated from the rest of the city.

First generation metropolis - No disruptive changes on the city , indirect effect on socioeconomic traits of urban region and superimposition of new functional entities on existing administrative subdivisions.



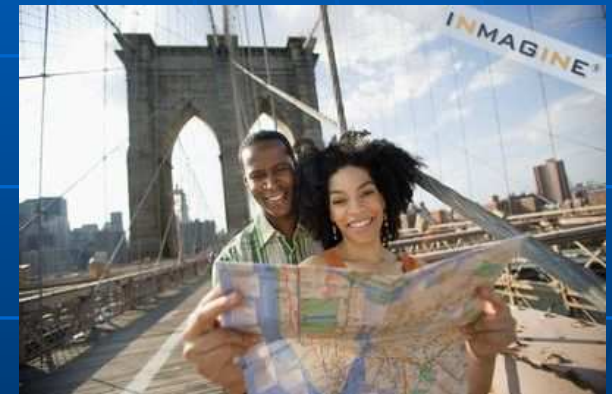
Second generation (mature) metropolis

Further on, as a result of increased mobility of people, greater income and leisure appears in the third population :

City users population moving to the city in order to use its private and public services like shopping, movies, museums, restaurants, increasingly contributing to the economic growth of the cities. But sometimes it tends to be a quite uncontrolled and barbaric way of use.

Second generation metropolis:

is a city we are living in nowadays. Even though indirect, the competition between the City Users and the Inhabitants, has a great impact of the global social structure of the city.



Third generation (late) metropolis

As a product of a service industry the new population that evolved is :

Metropolitan businessmen a nonpermanent population using the city at a relatively high levels of consumption. This population, quite small in number but very specialized , use the central city to do business and establish professional contacts.



A phenomenological approach: seven examples of urban populations

Everyday commuters

Patients and their relatives coming in the city and using hospital services and facilities

Young (sometimes racially defined) street gangs

Foreign students

Cyclists moving for work and not work reasons

Heavy metal music fans

Online communities of role game players

What have in common?

Urban populations, in this approach, cannot be reduced to Martinotti's four populations

Each and everyone of us can belong to many different populations

Populations are characterized by the share of some localized practice, even if in some cases their belonging to the population is voluntary while in other cases is more or less compulsory (economic and social constraints matter!)

Sometimes populations can change in "communities of practices"

Populations and movement

Urban populations move, creating moving and unstable geographies at different scales

These movements are one on the main phenomenological dimensions of urban population practices (even if some populations are stable: see older people)

Movements create new urban patterns, strictly connected with moving trajectories

These movements are linked with time (and especially with rhythms)

Populations, spaces and places

Urban populations re-create and re-signify spaces and places, through their everyday practices

Different populations have various relationship with space, and these relationship are relevant also for the definition of individual identity

The process of sense-making involving urban spaces/places is also a process of focussing on these spaces/places for a period of time

Populations and the production of common goods

Urban populations sometimes produce common goods (or evils), directly or indirectly

These goods or evils can be considered as urban externalities, affecting other people

These goods are not the effects of public policies produced by public institutions: they are unintended social effects of everyday practices

These goods can be both physical and non physical, both material and symbolical

Populations and public polices

Urban populations can express a demand for public polices and for institutional actions

In some cases this demand is the effect of the constitution of a social subjectivity that is able to practice a “voice” strategy (commuters committee, cyclists associations, ..)

In other cases there is an indirect and unexpressed demand (young players want basketball playgrounds without expressing directly this need through a social mobilization)

Consequences for representation

If we want to describe urban populations, ordinary scales of representation are not usable

We need forms of representation able to take into consideration three dimensions:

- Times and rhythms
- Spaces and places
- Patterns of social practices

Consequences for urban policies

Decision making is not so important for urban populations: the participation of urban population to decision making should be thought in a new way

The main problems are those of “representation” of plural identities on the urban scene

Policies should be “permeable” to social innovation and to the autonomous production of public goods by urban populations

Policies should consider carefully everyday life effects

Mobility of urban populations: definitions

Mobility is the movement in real or “virtual” space of people and objects
(Kaufmann)

But mobility does not consist only of movements: it is also “a system of potentials characterized by intentions, strategies and choice” and it is interconnected with social dimensions (Canzler, Kaufmann, Kesserling).

Movement is a social phenomenon occurring in space
and affecting urban organisation

What's movin'

Movement is not only the physical translation of a physical object from one place to another.

Many things move:

- People
- Goods
- Information

People, companies, organizations are networks based on communication as well as spatial mobility.

Movement and urban populations

Urban populations are always “on the move”. Movement is one of the main features of urban populations.

This is true both for populations directly characterized by the movement (commuters, cyclists..) and for populations more “stable”, whose identity is linked to specific and often more restricted ways of moving (older people, children)

Movement is both a possibility and an opportunity for some populations (tourists, for example) and a constraint for others

Mobility and space

Mobility “builds” space and places through deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes.

Urban spaces and “materials” are often connected to mobility. Mobility machines as airports, train stations, networks of roads and related structures can be considered “immutable mobiles.

The enabling structures that “infrastructure” mobility are also spaces/places for local interaction

The compression of time and space

Technical transportation and ICT systems are generating increasing numbers and forms of speed potential. These systems have produced a new compression of time and space that has manifested itself in a growth of flux.

This compression, for urban populations, sometimes is only a mirage. Commuters, for example, experiment a strong reduction of their mobility speed due to traffic.

In urban everyday practices we can observe that different speeds (and different times) live together and define the “texture” of urban mobility

Motility

Though the concept of “motility” some authors have emphasized the social dimension of mobility.

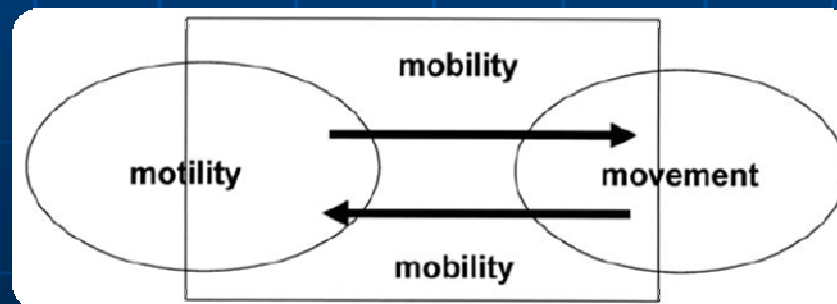
Motility is a concept referred to “mobility potentials”. At the individual level, can be defined as the way in which an actor appropriates the field of possible actions in the area of mobility, and uses it to develop personal projects.

At the collective level, motility is an interpretation of the relationship between transport systems and actors’ mobility.

Motility is the social possibility of mobility.

New definition (Canzler, Kaufmann, Kesselring): mobility is a **change of condition** regarding 3 dimensions:

- 1. Movements:** refer to geographical dimension [origin-destination(s) – identifiable on a map – measureable
according to flows – not only concerning transportation or people]
- 2. Networks:** framework of movements → define the field of conceptualized possibilities [there are:
 - **technical networks:** characterized by the quality of infrastructure and services and access conditions to such services;
 - **social networks:** groups of institutionalized relationships]
- 3. Motility:** capacity of an actor to move socially and spatially → how an individual or group endorses the field of movement possibilities and uses them.



Relationship between movements and mobility

Deconstruction of the synonymy between movement and mobility

1. One can move without being mobile

2. One can be mobile without moving

3. One can move and be mobile

The social dimension of mobility

The analysis of urban populations show that the capacity of actors to move socially and spatially can be very different and depends on:

1. Economic, social and technological access possibilities
2. Skills possessed to take advantage of this access (technological divide)
3. Appropriation capacity (what actors do with this access and these skills)

Populations, social conflicts and mobility

Urban populations can conflict each other not only for the use of spaces, but also for the possibility of mobility.

Mobility, that is a central value of our culture, appears as an indicator of inequality. The increasing importance of possibilities of movement for urban populations is not accompanied by social fluidification.

Motility can be considered a type of capital similar to education and social capital.

Representing mobility

Different forms of mobility define different geographies.

These geographies are tras-scalar and are connected with different “patterns”

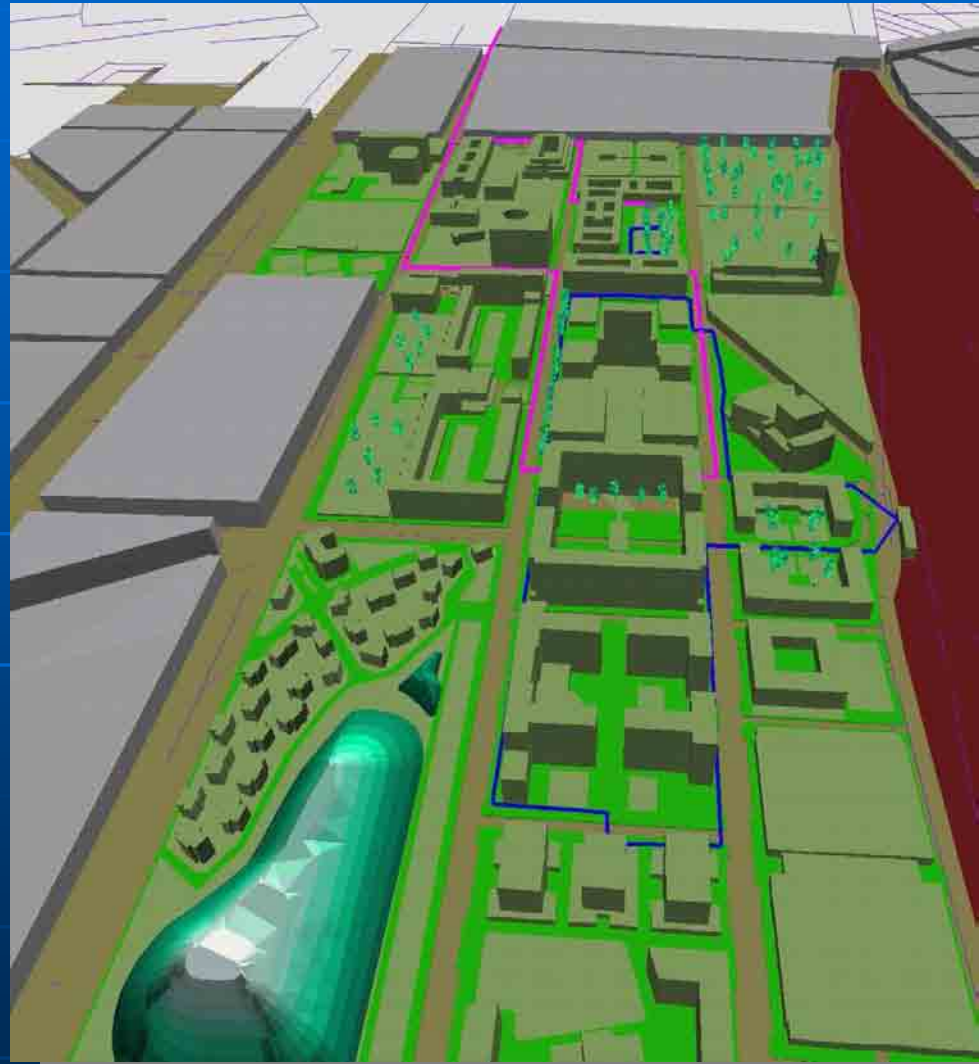
The problem of mobility representation is important both for description and for design and planning of contemporary city.

Traditional methodologies for the study of mobility

- Surveys with questionnaires and interviews
- Diaries
- Main problems:
 - Not enough precise
 - Not complete
 - Not geo-referenced
 - They considered mainly the resident populations

GPS and new technologies

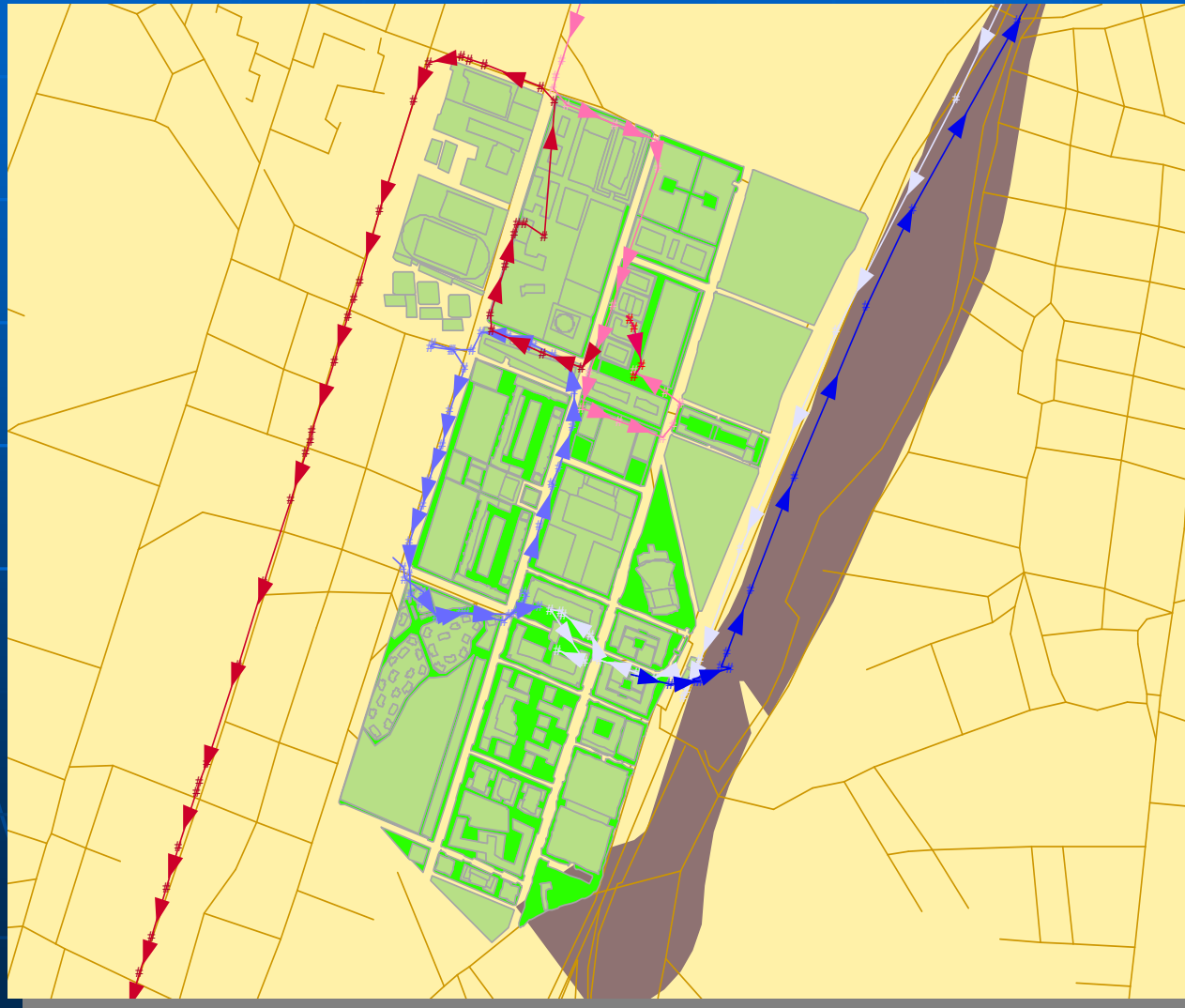
- GPS allows the collection of:
 - Coordinates
 - Time
 - Speed
- Through the use of the GPS we can have the shape of the mobility of people



Potential applications



People: focus on behaviour, social features or motivations. Thematic map showing the different paths of a man and a woman in the studied area.

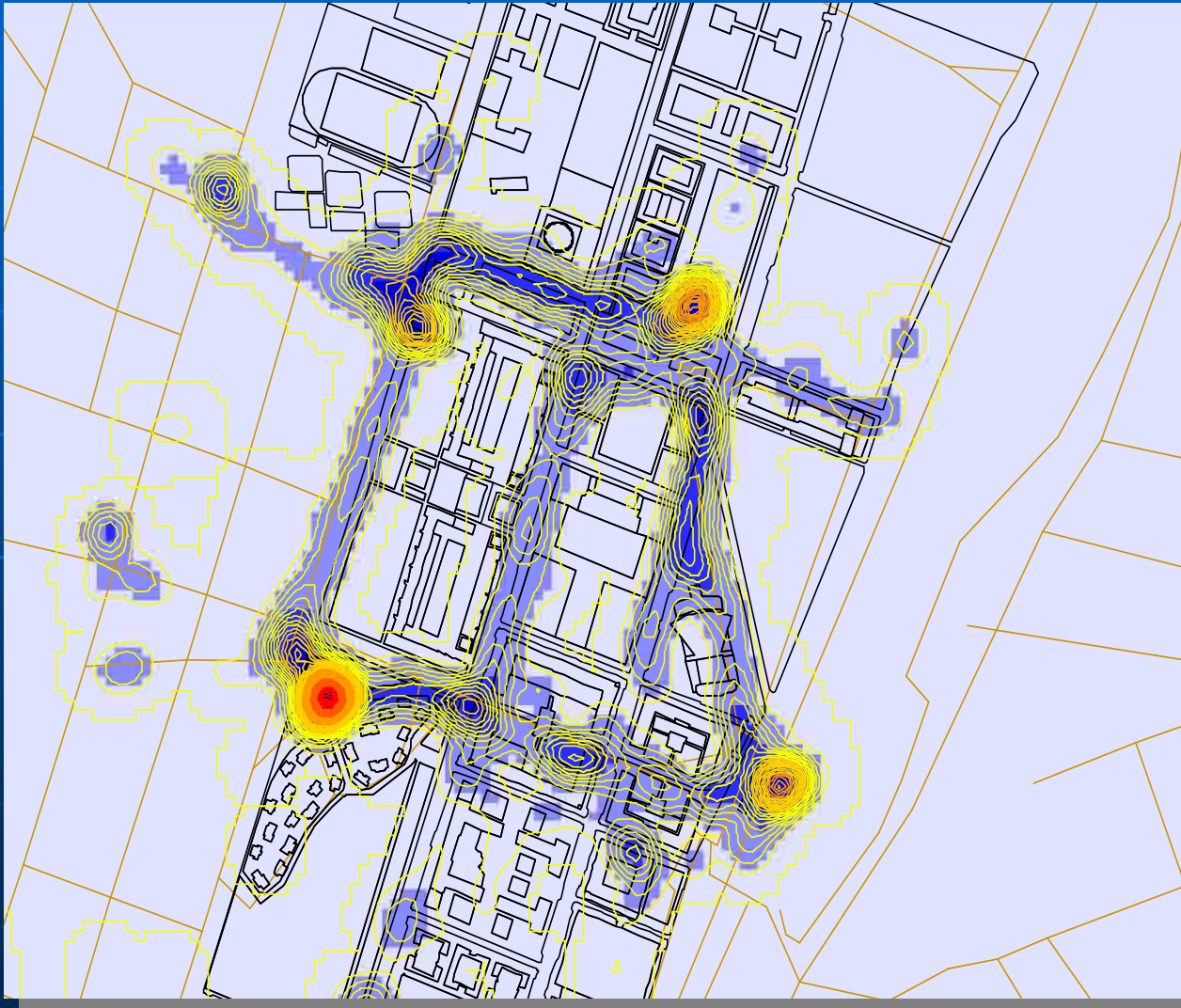


Daily mobility of ONE person



In the figure it is possible to follow the “interviewee’s path” during his daily mobility: from home to working place, in the spare time, and so on...

Analysis of mobility: the land use



“Hot spots” identify place and time where walking people are more concentrated.

Conflicts: definitions

Cities have always been arenas of social and symbolic conflicts.

As places of encounter between different classes, ethnic groups, and lifestyles, one of the major roles they are predestined to play is that of a powerful integrator; yet on the other hand urban contexts are, as it were, the potential setting for marginalization and violence.

Urban populations live together in urban space, but this space (and time) is both the arena and the object of many different conflicts

Cities and power

Cities are also “diagrams” of power.

Cities can be seen as nexuses of systems of discipline. But in cities all the uncertainties and risks are left in, and the cities’ inhabitants and users get the chance to redefine what is to be ordered about and interrogated by these systems (Amin, Thrift).

This “play” between power and contingency is important to understand the frame of social and spatial conflicts in the city, that take place in this “space” between powers and actions.

Examples

There are conflicts between populations already living in the city and new populations (for example the conflict between long term residents and immigrants).

There are conflicts between populations that use the same space in different ways and with different aims (the struggle for public spaces between different users: for example young and older people; residents and tourists; ...)

There are conflicts between population for scarce resources (for example mobility services and infrastructure: see the conflict between cyclists and car drivers)

One “classical” conflict: the competition between inhabitants and city users

As Guido Martinotti has pointed out: “although direct competition or conflict of the users with the inhabitants is not evident, indirect competition (in the sense in which the classical social ecology uses this term) is in fact taking place.”

Users and inhabitants use the same physical and symbolic (scarce) resources and their competition can be more or less explicit, but is important to understand the nature of new urban conflicts.

This kind of conflict is “classical”, in the sense that it is linked to the modern phenomenology of disjunction between residence and life in big cities.

Another “classical” conflict: the struggle for control of urban space

The struggle for control of urban spaces is an ambivalent mode of sociation, one that cuts systematically across the whole of everyday life: in and by producing themselves, groups produce exclusive spaces and then, in turn, use the boundaries they have created to define themselves. The spatial politics subscribed to by social actors at the same time shape the contour of the city's inner order and the symbolic universes of the groups living in it.

The struggle for territorial control and spatial arrangements and orders focuses some of the motives apparent in all types of urban conflict .

Social and spatial exclusion: movement

Movement can be the field of many conflicts between different populations

- Social practices and obligations compel proximity and generate the need for mobility
- Infrastructures (road systems, parking spaces, cars, public transport etc.) influence peoples' ability to meet these obligations and at the same time shape expectations of normal social participation
- Individuals are variously able to marshal resources and capacities to meet such obligations in the context of existing infrastructures.

This suggests that social-spatial exclusion is best viewed not as a state of affairs or an attribute of one or another social group but as an emergent property of the three-way interaction between social obligation, individual or collective resources, and physical infrastructure.

Social and spatial exclusion: boundaries

Social sciences (and planning theory) have identify a strong relationship between social and spatial exclusion.

This relationship is not completely clear: nevertheless it is possible to recognize a connection between phenomena of social deprivation and poverty and the spatial organisation of cities.

From the Chicago school studies in the 30s of XXth century, spatial organisation of the city has been connected to the concentration of social classes and ethnic minorities

Social and spatial exclusion: planning

Even land use planning can be considered a tool for spatial control, and also a strategy to promote spatial and social exclusion.

Land use regulation can be both a tool for promoting ethnic and social mix and a mean to produce differentiation between different groups and populations

The example of land use regulation in US cities: zoning as a tool for socio-spatial control