

THE INDUSTRIAL AND MODERN CITY

The Rise of the Multicultural Metropolis

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Not for the first time in capitalist history the diminution of spatial barriers has provoked both an increasing sense of exclusionary nationalism and localism, and an exhilarating sense of the heterogeneity and porosity of cultures and personal-political identifications.

David Harvey

A Matter of Definitions

Even if the formation of enormous concentrations of industry, population, exchanges and consumption is obvious, the effort to describe them with the term 'metropolis' still faces theoretical problems. Mumford¹ rejects the term, Gottman² counterproposes 'megalopolis', while Komninos³ mentions certain, characteristic as for the content of the term, opinions: According to Mackenzie the metropolis is characterized by the extent of its economical, social and functional sovereignty over a given region. Schnore places emphasis on the internal organization of space, viewing the metropolis as a mosaic of specialized regions, interconnected in an organic unit. Castells offers a different view. What, in his opinion, distinguishes the metropolis, is not only its size, but the spatial diffusion of activities, operations and groups, and their interdependence, according to an independent from geographic connections dynamic.

Multiculturalism, a trait that is attributed to the metropolis, could be defined as 'the doctrine that several different cultures (rather than one national culture) can coexist peacefully and equitably in a single country'⁴, or as 'the policy, ideal or reality that emphasizes the unique characteristics of different cultures in the world'⁵. The issue is actually more complex, since we can talk about descriptive or official-legal multiculturalism, even though a lot of writers use the term in both ways. Barry observes that 'a potent source of confusion is the use of terms such as pluralism and multiculturalism to refer simultaneously to a state of affairs and a political programme'⁶. Additional problems occur from the variety of groups-cultures multiculturalism deals with, since they can be defined nationally, religiously, sexually, through class etc.

In this paper, and for reasons practical, we adopt the following definitions:

-Metropolis or metropolises are the main urban centres of a country, regardless of differentiation among them or from state to state.

-Multiculturalism describes the fact of the coexistence of various ethnic groups.

We also admit that the historical evolution of the metropolis, progressively brings forth the question of the centrality of multiculturalism as an essential metropolitan component, whose importance remains to be evaluated.

The Contemporary Debate on Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism emanated from the term biculturalism, which described Canada's official policy in confronting the differences between the anglophone majority and the strong francophone minority. Native Americans and Chinese immigrants pressed for the broadening of the term, leading to multiculturalism, which began to characterize governmental policy since 1971 and constitutes a part of Canada's constitution since 1982. The legal form of Canadian

multiculturalism was then adopted by Australia, while similar programmes and parts of this policy are applied in countries such as the U.S. and the U.K.. Tightly connected with multiculturalism are the terms 'identity politics' and 'politics of difference'.

According to Taylor⁷, one of the key proponents of multiculturalism, classical liberalism is not a 'possible meeting ground for all cultures, but the political expression of one range of cultures'. He accordingly proposes liberalism's fair transformation, that will be culture friendly, offering equal recognition and culture-specific rights, even if these are contrary to basic liberal principles. Although reversing the universalistic claims of the Enlightenment, he sees that in the politics of difference 'a universal potential is at its basis, namely, the potential for forming and defining one's own identity, as an individual, and also as a culture'. He adds that the importance of protecting the various cultures is great, since 'dominant groups tend to entrench their hegemony by inculcating an image of inferiority in the subjugated'.

Habermas enriches the discussion with questioning, whether an individualistic theory of right can deal with the recognition of collective identities. He also distinguishes minorities in those that resulted from immigration and the endogenous ones, although his key remark is that the multiculturalist agenda/discussion is unrealistic, since most immigrants live without elementary rights and under arrangements of exploitation, as illuminated through the German example of Gastarbeiter.

Being part of the current opposing official-legal multiculturalism, Bissoondah⁸ argues that it limits the freedom of minority members by confining them to cultural and geographic ghettos, while Bibby⁹ claims that that it is a divisive force that reduces national solidarity and unity. From a classic liberal viewpoint Barry¹⁰ rejects the basic thesis of multiculturalism, that the basis of all social groups is cultural, and regarding the legal part he states: 'In advocating the reintroduction of a mass of special legal statuses in place of a single status of uniform citizenship that was the achievement of the Enlightenment multiculturalists seem remarkably insouciant about the abuses and inequities of the ancien regime'.

Barry claims at the same time that the 'proliferation of special interests fostered by multiculturalism is conducive to a politics of "divide and rule" that can only benefit those who benefit most from the status quo', an opinion that brings him close to Harvey's¹¹ marxist point of view, against the artificial segregation of people. Harvey also argues that a culture is not a value per se, bringing forth the example of certain sexist communities, the Hindu caste system, 'traditional' capitalist exploitation or Nazi culture. Finally he takes a holistic position: 'The problem with this idealist political argument, is that it fails to understand how places and cultures are constructed, sustained and dissolved. ... The political struggle to protect supposed cultural permanencies as highpoints of human cultural achievement may be understandable at a historical conjuncture when flows and processes are rapidly shifting through time-space compression, threatening the achieved qualities of all places. But if all societies, as Taylor observes, "are becoming more multicultural, while at the same time more porous" and if, as Wolf has it, all attempts to construct places and build imagined communities must "take cognizance of processes that transcend separable cases, moving through and beyond them and transforming them as they proceed", then considerations of social justice cannot be particularized'. Malik¹² adds that the way in which multiculturalists see social groups as 'permanently different' demonstrates that they have lost faith in social change and progress. He realizes that 'western societies have embraced a form of nihilistic multiculturalism' and explains that even the objective of anti-imperialist struggle was not to reject western ideas, but to reclaim them for all humanity.

The main point in which all the relative theories converge is the importance of religion in the formation of cultural differences. The differences between Sikhs and Protestants, Hindus and Muslims, Animists and Christians, create a variety of conflicts and a variety of international practices for their confrontation or composition. In England for example special group rights are granted based on religion, whereas in France, as the headscarf case demonstrated, religion is less important than liberal rights.

The Rise of the Multicultural Metropolis

The birth of the metropolis, the leading capitalistic urban formation, evolved from the economic repression between the 13th and 14th century, that shifted social relations from feudalism to capitalism and from the countryside to the city, and from the first capital accumulations in the rich cities. Political and economic changes during the 17th century shifted power northwards, as the use of steam and the industrial revolution allowed the concentration of factories in the young industrial North. Based on technology, factories and new ways of organization, the evolution of urban centres during the 18th – 19th centuries focused on countries, where the circle of accumulation was established and markets of industrial products shaped. The requirement for the existence of the proletariat and of a backup labor army intensified the concentration of population in the cities, and the explicit geographic localization of the main capitalist centres. ‘The 19th century was a period of rapid growth of urban population, which increased in average at a rate of 2.1% per year. In 1801 roughly 10% of the population of England and Wales lived in cities with more than 100000 inhabitants. This proportion was doubled in 40 years and redoubled in 60. ... Similar changes took place in other European countries as well. The change from a level of urbanisation where 10% of the population lived in cities larger than 100000, to a level where 30% of the population lived in such cities, lasted 79 years in England and Wales, 66 in the U.S.A. and 48 in Germany’¹³. Modern statistics suggest that more than half of the U.S. population live in metropolises and forecast further increase of this percentage.

New (revolutionary) technological innovations, and mainly the automobile, intensified the transformation of cities to metropolises. Characteristic changes were the decentralization of industry towards the suburbs under pressure from the class struggle, the multicentral organization of urban space, the multicultural composition of the population. The explicit subordination of urban organization to the exo-social ‘law of the market’ brought about, according to Bookchin¹⁴, the unhindered and without human criteria extension of the metropolis. The fact that the 20th century was the century of international urbanization, can also be seen through the fact, that at its beginning only 16 cities exceeded 1000000 residents, while in its dues 500. Harvey¹⁵ notices an uncontrolled pace of urbanization in developing countries and cities like Mexico City, Cairo, Lagos, Calcutta and Shanghai.

The multicultural character of the modern metropolises, either in Western Europe, or in America, or even in Asia and Africa, obviously owes itself to the development of mass transportation possibilities, the intensely territorial distribution of wealth (even on a national level) and to their enormous economical attractive force. Their economic role is for example revealed in the report ‘U.S. Metro Economies: The Engines of America’s Growth’ published in 2000, according to which the Gross Product of New York is greater than that of Australia, Holland or other smaller countries. ‘The massive forced and unforced migrations of people now taking place in the world, a movement that seems unstoppable no matter how hard countries strive to enact stringent immigration controls, will have as much if not greater significance in shaping urbanization in the twenty-first century as the powerful dynamic of unrestrained capital mobility and accumulation’¹⁶. Naturally, even if at this moment the role of immigration is enormous, the modern migratory phenomena are not the sole factors that influenced the multinational constitution of metropolitan populations. The cities in the U.S.A. and Australia were from their beginning creations of different groups of immigrants, which were enriched through the violent integration of indigenous populations, and (in the American case) through the massive transport of African slaves. The colonial forces (England and France) had began to absorb immigrants since a long time, whereas another important category of multicultural cities are those that were constituted after wars, either through the obligatory assimilation of conquered peoples, or through the readjustment of borders and the consecutive mixture of populations.

Looking farther back in the History of Cities one can realize the existence of historical points that foreshadowed the metropolis, or even created the suitable conditions for its evolution. The first proof of the possibility of mass cohabitation of individuals (of different origins) was the

city of Alexandria, a city designed and built ex novo. It had 300000 residents (excluding slaves), while its population included Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, Gauls, and a variety of mercenaries. Multicultural Rome followed, the population of which is estimated to have reached 1000000 people, whilst another important centre, that attracted people of many nationalities, was medieval Baghdad. The European Dark Ages on the other hand, had a more direct consequence on contemporary urban forms. During that period the whole of the continent was colonized and urbanized. On a cultural level the ground for the Enlightenment was prepared and on a political-economic level the ground for the predominance of capitalism. This new economic system bloomed in the small cities of Italy (Venice, Genoa,...) and in the Hanseatic League. The 80 millions of Europeans at the end of the period reached the critical demographic volume, 'which prompted Western culture to break its limits'¹⁷ via colonialism, connecting Europe for the first time through powerful bonds with the other continents. That was the era when the foundation for the western exploitation of the world and for the later immigratory waves was set, and also when the relations between Europe, Africa, Asia, America (and later Oceania) were founded.

Multicultural Athens

Instead of trying to present each and every urban multicultural form or pattern, we decided to approach Athens, a young metropolis of the E.U., where the main immigrant currents are recent, while older installed minorities also exist. The distribution of the various cultures in Athenian urban space presents many variations: slums in suburbs, secluded pockets in the centre, diffusion of immigrants among the indigenous population.

The cultural and national homogeneity of Athens up to the dues of the 70's constituted a unique exception among European capitals of the era, like Paris, London or Berlin. The key reasons why foreigners avoided Greece and particularly Athens, must have been: the geographic and economic isolation of the country, the difficulty of the language, the absence of workplaces, the inefficient urban infrastructure and the complicated-hostile bureaucracy. The situation began to change with the arrival of workers in shipping companies during the 70s (Pakistan, India), as well as agriculture workers from the same countries. Hindus settled in working-class Piraeus in the regions of Perama, Agios Ioannis Rentis, Tavros, while the Pakistanis settled outside Athens, close to their places of work in Marathon and Koropi.

At the same time the rising Athenian bourgeoisie, needing servants (maids, housekeepers, gardeners, etc), began importing through various ways personnel from the Philippines. The end of the 70s was marked by the arrival of a huge number of Lebanon war victims in numbers that approached 100000 inhabitants, who imported their alimentary and cultural habits, and settled in middle class regions by the sea and along most of the coast of Athens (Faliro, Glyfada, etc). The big change in the urban, social, economic and cultural tissue of Athens came about with the collapse of the so-called 'socialist' countries and the simultaneous rise of the Greek Gross Product. Those two facts shaped the 1990-2000 decade through the arrival of roughly 300000 immigrants in Athens (according to estimations by the National Statistical Organization).

Albanians were the dominant group, who were followed by Bulgarians, Poles, Serbs, Georgians, Russians and Ukrainians. Their main employment was public construction, construction and domestic services. Their main places of residence were aged or abandoned regions of the urban core (Patissia, Kipseli, Pagrati) or areas outside the main city such as Mesogeia, Menidi, Thriassio (or later Zefiri, where slums were constructed). Fundamental reason for these settlement choices was the availability of cheap accommodation and the centrality of the locations, or in the case of suburban locations their adjacency to industrial or agricultural workplaces.

Parallel to these immigration movements the arrival of Greeks from abroad still continues. Former inhabitants of Istanbul move to Nea Smyrni and Faliro, people from Pontos move to the

northwestern regions of Athens: Menidi, Ilion, Kamatero, Elefsis. It seems that a work related specialization trend could be seen among the various ethnic groups:

Ethnic Group	Occupation
Asia – Indian Ocean	Agriculture, shipping, shipbuilding
Albania	Domestic services, construction
Lebanon	Commerce, services
Eastern Europe	Domestic services, construction, garages
China	Commerce, illegal commerce
Africa	Illegal commerce, shipbuilding, garages

Concluding Thoughts

The issue of the multicultural organization of the metropolis, or of multiculturalism per se, cannot be fully addressed in a single paper. We attempted therefore to ignite a discussion on the cross-correlation of city, culture, history, planning and politics. We understand that multiculturalism, as expressed in modern day metropolises, cannot sustain the equal and unhindered growth of different cultural models, or bring forth an osmosis and dialectical composition of the various cultures to a new common (even global) one. Ethnic pockets are territorially fixed and usually hostile to each other, while immigrant protecting policies are virtually non-existent or do not function as they should.

We would though like to pose certain questions on subjects we believe deserve to be studied and analyzed, namely:

- Can multicultural spatial forms be categorized?
- Can the foreign workforce politically link itself with the local workers? Can their economic and cultural differences be overcome?
- What is the role of religion and of urban religious symbols?
- and finally regarding Athens: Will Athens follow the course of the other European cities in addressing multicultural issues?

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