

# Changing Landscapes

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Bill Hillier's analysis of the 'hard' and 'soft' versions of modern urban landscape urge to continue the analysis to the postmodern phase, too. Therefore, Sharon Zukin's two versions of postmodern urban landscape and her idea of liminal spaces are presented as a possible starting point for further elaboration. The task of analysis remains for 'syntaxians' and 'hillerians'.

**I**N THIS SITUATION, *the need for proper theory of the relations between society and its spatial dimension is acute. A social theory of space would account first for the relations that are found in different circumstances between the two types of spatial order characteristic of societies – that is, the arrangement of people in space and the arrangement of space itself – and second it would show how both were a product of ways in which a society worked and reproduced itself. Its usefulness would be that it would allow designers to speculate in a more informed way about the possible consequences of different design strategies, while at the same time adding a new creative dimension to those speculations. But more important, a theory would permit a systematic analysis of experiments that would enable us to learn from experience, a form of learning that until now has not been a serious possibility.*

(Hillier & Hanson 1984, p. 29.)

## Hillier's dual message

The above argument by Hillier & Hanson reflects the dual nature of their space syntax approach. On the one hand, 'the social logic of space' can be used for the analysis and interpretation of existing spatial arrangements and landscapes, on the other hand it offers a method for spatial design that is conscious of its social implications.

Urban designers are constantly confronted with a duality. On the one hand there is the individual will of the designer and his or her capacity to innovate, on the other hand there are the confines of collective planning concepts with their inertia and of the longevity of culturally defined landscape formations. Designers do not always have a clear understanding of what be-

longs to the domain of individual creation and what only acquires meaning through intersubjective action and signification.

Vain attempts to innovate new, better urban forms lead to frustration. An example is provided by the failure of the 'urban renaissance' or the compact city. Insufficient understanding of the cultural landscape presents an obstacle to widening the scope of conscious action. It is not perhaps unjustified to say that in relation to the numerous applications of Hillier & Hanson's method to the analysis of specific arrangements and strategic design, the analysis of cultural landscapes has not been carried on with equal enthusiasm.

The purpose of this article is to elaborate some perspectives for further landscape analysis. Propositions are made as to how Hillier & Hanson's method could and should be used in this. The discussion takes as its point of departure from their analyses of the modern industrial urban landscape. Since their analysis in the early 1980s, there have taken place obvious qualitative changes in the urban landscape, often referred to by the term postmodern. The former hierarchically dispersed garden city landscape has changed into a multinuclear fragmentary mosaic. Sharon Zukin's analysis of the postmodern landscape represents here the interpretations of urban research in the early 1990s; it helps us to see in which respects the landscape has changed and how its basic dynamics have remained the same.

As far as the basic space/society relationship is concerned, subsequent analyses of postmodern urban space have largely confirmed Hillier & Hanson's theses. The dominance of global dynamics with its vertical, asymmetric relations over the local and the horizontal solidarities has grown continuously. Tendencies that in the modern phase expressed the nation state level dynamics have only become more drastic as expressions of transnational economic powers.

The notion of postmodern urban landscape inevitably raises the question of the relationship between 'spontaneous' urban development and

conscious strategic design that might have attempted to support some countervailing tendencies. Perhaps a sceptical assumption is that since Hillier & Hanson's proposition, the distance between spontaneous landscape formation and conscious urban design has grown rather than narrowed.

This, however, is no reason to give up conscious efforts to act in the dynamic field of global and local forces. After comparing Hillier & Hanson's interpretations of modern urban landscape and Zukin's interpretations of the postmodern urban landscape, the concepts of landscape and 'liminal space' are scrutinized in order to lead to further elaboration of landscape analysis and strategic design. For those who have not read Hillier & Hanson before or who may have forgotten some of his theses, a short presentation is first offered of those parts of Hillier's method that are used here.

### **The space syntax approach**

The central assumption in Hillier's space syntax approach is that the social is not only reflected in space but that in fact society exists through its realization in space (Hillier & Hanson 1984, pp. 26–27). In this sense the theory is presented as a critique of structuralism. Instead of locating the description centre in the human brain, it emphasizes arrangemental systems, where spatio-temporal event precedes the rule and reproduction is the fundamental concept. In an arrangemental system practical activity and intellectual activity appear combined (Op. cit., 1984, pp. 202–204).

Society takes on a definite spatial form in two senses.

"First, it arranges people in space in that it locates them in relation to each other, with a greater or lesser degree of aggregation and separation, engendering patterns of movement and encounter that may be dense or sparse within or between different groupings. Second, it arranges space itself by means of buildings, boundaries, markers, zones, and so on, so that

the physical milieu of that society takes on a definite pattern. In both senses a society acquires a definite and recognizable spatial order.” (Op. cit., pp. 26–27.)

Spatial order reveals to us cultural differences. We can recognize various ways in which the members of respective societies live out and reproduce their social existence (Op. cit., p. 27). Life is obviously organized differently in the dense blocks of Tokyo than in Tapiola Garden City. Yet in spite of the seeming differences between the postmodern New Towns of Paris and monotonous American small house suburbs, both may be based on the same description. In order to understand the ‘social logic of space’, a distinction has to be made between the level of appearance and the level of space (Op. cit., p. ix).

The same superficiality that has characterized mainstream urban development in relation to recognizing the social logic of space, has unfortunately also been the burden of its critics. Major efforts have been wasted in attempts to define ‘the quality of environment’, without really knowing what makes the environment meaningful to its inhabitants. Equally powerless has been the opposition to modernism, the only recipe of which has been the myth of ‘urban’.

Attempts to intervene in urban space lack a proper understanding of the relationship between society and space, Hillier & Hanson say. The mainstream approach is ‘a moral science’ of design that seeks to combine a consensus-based action to analytic objectivity. However, because of its normative and active (and not analytic and reflective) institutional setting, this moral science is doomed to failure in producing better theories about society and space. “Rather it is forced to act as though this relation were well understood and not problematical.” (Op. cit., pp. 27–28.)

The critics have tried to overcome the ‘loss of urban space’ caused by the ‘moral scientists’ through a hierarchical dispersion of urban space

based on the open space concept. However, “no clearly articulated alternative has been proposed, other than a return to poorly understood traditional forms”. The reason for this, they contend, is the lack of understanding of both the possible consequences of alternatives and the failure of the current transformation. (Op. cit., pp. 28–29.)

Hillier & Hanson’s answer to the problem of reaching the level of space beneath the level of appearance and of interpreting spatial arrangements adequately, is space syntax.

“Syntaxes are combinatorial structures which, starting from ideas that may be mathematical, unfold into families of pattern types that provide the artificial world of the discrete system with its internal order as knowables, and the brain with its means of retrieving a description of them. Syntax is the imperfect mathematics of the artificial.” (Op. cit., 1984, p. 48.)

Artificial entities which use syntax can be called morphic languages. “A morphic language is any set of entities that are ordered into different arrangements by a syntax so as to constitute social knowables.” Space is a morphic language, and so are social relationships.

“For example, each society will construct characteristic encounter patterns for its members, varying from the most structured to the most random. The formal principles of these patterns will be the descriptions we retrieve, and in which we therefore recognise an aspect of the social for that society. Viewed this way, modes of production and co-operation can be seen as morphic languages.” (Op. cit., 1984, p. 48.)

The two basic methodological problems of space syntax are: a problem of morphology – what can be constructed so as to be knowable; and a problem of knowability – how is it that descriptions can be known (Op. cit., p. 45). The concept of morphic language links together these two problems by proposing that both are problems of understanding syntax. The problem of know-

ability is defined as that of understanding how characteristic patterns in a set of phenomena can be recognized by reference to abstract principles of arrangement. The problem of morphology is defined as that of understanding the objective similarities and differences that classes of artificial phenomena exhibit. (Op. cit., p. 48.)

“To explain a set of spatio-temporal events we first describe the combinatorial principles that gave rise to it. This reduction of a morphology to combinatorial principles is its reduction to its principles of knowability. The set of combinatorial principles is the syntax. Syntax is the most important property of a morphic language. What is knowable about the spatio-temporal output of a morphic language is its syntax. Conversely, syntax permits spatio-temporal arrangements to exhibit systematic similarities and differences.” (Op. cit., p. 48.)

The analysis of space syntaxes reveals that each arrangement has both a ‘p-model’ and a ‘g-model’. P-model is a term for local phenotypes, for individual cells seen in terms of their particular configuration of local spatial relations. G-model is a term for genotypical relations that exist in the set of p-models in an arrangement.

A prime example of a g-model dominated spatial arrangement is a Bororo-village, where each single detail is determined by the social order of the tribe and cannot be changed. The prime example of a p-model is a beady ring village, where the only repeated rule is the joining of houses to the streets and where parts can be removed and added rather freely. (Op. cit., pp. 82–97.)

The relative length of p-model characterizes a more probabilistic system, which allows random events. The relative length of g-model characterizes a more deterministic system, which might be violated by random events. In fact, each spatial arrangement is at the same time affected by a global-to-local and a local-to-global system. Depending on the dominating direction, the exteriors and interiors of spatial systems have different roles. Generally, the more

a system grows, the more dominant it seems that the global-to-local becomes. (Op. cit., p. 260.)

Spatial arrangements support different kinds of social solidarities. On the basis of studies concerning specific arrangements, Hillier and Hanson sketch in their postscript an outline of a theory of contemporary space, of the city of ‘industrial bureaucracies’ (Op. cit., pp. 262–263).

### **The two versions of modern urban landscape**

#### *Traditional/modern*

The modern urban landscape is clearly distinguished from its historical precedent. One can see a fundamental shift from a system that is continuous and based on a distributed street system to one that is discontinuous and divided into several relatively closed local domains.

“The essence of this change is encapsulated in a change in habitual terminology: a street is an open and distributed local event in a larger open and distributed system, whereas the generic term that has replaced it, the estate, refers to a discrete, probably closed local domain with some degree of segregation from surrounding estates.” (Op. cit., p. 263.)

Concrete examples of the change from traditional to modern city are found in Benamy Turkienicz’s doctoral thesis, where he has analysed some Swedish residential blocks before and after modernist renewal. The former street-based encounter system of small units has largely vanished in the privatized inwards turned systems of large units. (Turkienicz 1982.)

The change of spatial systems also means a change of spatial thought. The basic alteration of the landscape means a basic alteration in the way in which society thinks itself out in spatial terms. The concept of space is deeply ingrained:

“it is a concept we think *with* rather than a concept we think *of*. Within the overall shift variations occur, although a certain common core is recognizable even over cultural boundaries. (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p. 263.)

The common core of modern urban landscape is an attempt to solve a paradox. The paradox follows from the tendency to control social life in conditions of industrial growth. There is a fundamental inequality between those who have control over production and reproduction and those who have not, and there is a state intervention that aims to mitigate the consequences of this inequality. Vertical control relationships can best be maintained by spatial asymmetry and minimal distribution, whereas horizontal social solidarities at the lowest level are typically found in dense spatial aggregations where symmetry and distribution prevail. While both ways of organization are at the same time necessary, an industrial bureaucracy is constantly facing a spatial paradox: too much control makes the system vulnerable.

#### *Variants*

Attempts to solve the basic paradox have been industrial utopias, Ebenezer Howard's garden cities and Le Corbusier's technological visions. (Op. cit., p. 263–267.) These two versions of industrial landscape present the two principal solutions: 'the hard form' and 'the soft form'. The morphological origins of the hard form is the philanthropic housing of London from the 1840s onwards, whereas the paradigm statement of the soft form are Howard's garden cities. The more the system of production dominates over reproduction, the more the hard solution dominates over the soft, as for example in France and in Brazil. Soft solutions prevail in regions where the system of reproduction dominates over production, as for example in England (Op. cit., p. 267). On the basis of the ultimate similarity of descriptions we might speak of 'a vertical garden city' and 'a horizontal garden city'.

The hard form emphasizes production and thus simply aims to reproduce in space the essential syntax of relations of the social system. The idea is a strong descriptive control, realized through asymmetric and nondistributive syntaxes. However, the more successful the control

function, the more in danger is the social balance in reproduction. The isolation of people in towers with the no-neighbours principle may lead to disturbances. (Op. cit., p. 266.)

The soft solution works by meaning rather than by syntax. An ideological order or g-model is built up in a small aggregate. G-model stability is based on the concept of small community and on the dispersion of these small units. The suburban ideal and the use of nature as softening imagery support the symbolic content of the small community principle, where life is strongly conformist and where encounters are few. (Op. cit., p. 267.)

#### *Scope*

The two versions of modern industrial landscape offer only very limited scope of choice, however. The solutions have a common ideological basis: both share the assumption of a correspondence between the social and the spatial. This has defined the limits of urban debate: the reformist discourse has only been interested in siding either with the hard or the soft model – the underlying correspondence theory of social and spatial groups has not been questioned. Therefore no real alternatives have in fact been proposed. (Op. cit., p. 267–268.)

What they would have liked to see is the possibility to argue for 'p-stable' communities: for communities that instead of structure emphasize contingency and variety, that instead of controlling and excluding events generate and include events, that allow movements across local boundaries and that are not too vulnerable to change. This would in fact mean arguing for the 'historical' city: for large, non-corresponding, encounter-rich urban communities. (Op. cit., p. 268.)

#### *Future perspectives*

Since the early 1980s when *The social logic of space* was written, the global-to-local logic has become more and more dominating in the development of urban communities. Besides the nation state level, the transnational field of eco-

nomic action leaves its imprint on local communities. The driving force behind the urban renewal of old city centres and new commercial superstructures – Docklands in London, Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Delft Port in Rotterdam or any other – is global competition, not a strengthening of horizontal spatial solidarities. The specifically local is subordinated to global purposes.

New spatial arrangements emerge faster than remedial efforts in the existing ones can proceed. Although the critique of modernism has resulted in serious efforts in urban planning and design to revive local-to-global systems, the spontaneous dynamics of urban development seems constantly to marginalize these approaches. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to look at how the latest versions of urban landscape have been analysed.

### **The two versions of postmodern urban landscape**

#### *Modern/postmodern*

In postmodern urban literature it is quite common to make a distinction between the modern and the postmodern urban landscape, just as Hillier & Hanson earlier made a distinction between the traditional and modern city. However, opinions about the fundamentality of the modern/postmodern distinction vary. Most writers accept the concept of epochal change in some general sense. But there are some who would like to emphasize the continuance and interpret postmodern as an ultimate outcome of modern.

Sharon Zukin says carefully that “while no clear understanding separates modern from postmodern cities, we sense a difference in how we organize what we see: how the visual consumption of space and time is both speeded up and abstracted from the logic of industrial production, forcing a dissolution of traditional spatial identities and their reconstitution along new lines”. Postmodernity can be seen

“to exist in general as both a social process of dissolution and redifferentiation and a cultural metaphor of this experience. Consequently,

the social process of constructing a postmodern landscape depends on an economic fragmentation of older urban solidarities and a reintegration that is heavily shaded by new modes of cultural appropriation.” (Zukin 1992, p. 221.)

A remarkable difference between modern and postmodern landscape lies in their identification: while Hillier & Hanson’s modern landscape is primarily ‘lived’ space, Zukin connects the postmodern landscape to consumption – either in the sense of visual consumption or in the sense of acting in the property markets. A new important agent in the production of postmodern urban landscape are the property investors, who “invert the narrative of the modern city into a fictive nexus, an image that a wide swathe of the population can buy, a dreamscape of visual consumption” (Zukin 1992, p. 221). This development indicates that postmodern space works rather by meaning than directly by syntax – as did the soft version of Hillier & Hanson’s landscape. It also points at the importance of the changed production process.

The change from a landscape defined by production and reproduction to a landscape defined by consumption could be explained by a culmination of Zukin’s three processes that she finds characteristic of the whole 20th century: the increasing globalization of investment and production, the continuing abstraction of cultural value from material work and the shift in derivation of social meaning from production to consumption. (Op. cit., p. 222.) The postmodern landscape could be seen as a culmination of the dominance of Hillier & Hanson’s global-to-local system over the local-to-global system.

#### *Variants*

Postmodernity suggests two contrasting archetypal landscapes. These transform differently older cities like New York, London and Paris and newer cities like Los Angeles and Miami. The model of the older cities is gentrification, a transformation of inner city areas into middle class or upper middle class housing areas with a distinct

cultural quality. The model for newer cities and mainly ex-urban development projects is the form of Walt Disney World in Florida, a transformation of space by means of imagery and with a minimal local bond. Both landscapes map culture and power as well as the opposition between markets and place. (Op. cit., p. 223.)

Local history modifies the landscapes. Modernity (postmodernity is here seen as its continuation) can be mapped with notions of centrality and power, as in New York, or with notions of comfort and power, as in Los Angeles (Zukin 1992, pp. 239–240). However, the two models remain within the same dominating social logic, in this case the socioeconomic production of the environment and the function of symbolic landscape in producing and reproducing the social relationships. Zukin admits that not all variations of postmodern landscape are included in her typology. Yet the essential postmodern mappings of culture and power are gentrification and Disney World. (Op. cit., p. 223.)

In the older cities, in the model of gentrification, artists have an important role as 'primary consumers' in shaping the new spatial identity. In newer urban areas, in the production of imagery the landscape itself – ocean, mountains, freeway, shopping centre – takes the primary role in cultural mediation. In the older cities history is in the streets and the spatial transformation remaps the old loci. In the newer regions history has been mythologized since the end of 19th century: it is fabricated in images of the past and sold to the consumers. Both modes of consumption are primarily visual and mix motives. But while the mode of consumption in older cities leans towards the didactic, in newer ones it tends towards entertainment. (Op. cit., pp. 228–229.)

#### *Scope*

Just like Hillier & Hanson's models of modern landscape, Zukin's postmodern landscapes are two versions of the same basic spatial logic; they are not real alternatives. Furthermore, in spite of the symbolic emphasis on the consumed space,

postmodern landscapes can be considered as later variants of the basic modern landscape. These later variants are characterized by a rupture of the centralized hierarchical overall order of the modern city into a fragmentary multinuclear postmodern urban landscape (including the process of 'recentralization'), which requires a stronger and stronger ideological order and g-model description in each fragment.

In the 1980s it was customary to welcome the epochal change as a liberation from bureaucratic rigidity to a broader scope of choice called pluralism. It is true that the one-to-one description of society's hierarchic order in the overall structure of the city was no longer as simply offered as in the modern garden city. It was believed, for a short while, that regionalism was the new supporting ideology that would bring with it uniqueness and local variety. However, a closer scrutiny of the developments at the local level reveals an amazing standardization and homogenization of urban projects – quite modernism on a par. These projects, often isolated from the rest of urban structure, have the task of mediating essential descriptions.

#### *Future perspectives*

Postmodern urban development has by no means made the defence of the local-to-global system any easier, nor does the scope of choice seem to have increased at all. It is obvious that a socio-spatially enlightened design in specific object areas is not alone a sufficient counterstrategy to the 'spontaneous' dynamics of urban development – especially in the changed, complicated conditions of cultural production. We cannot give up landscape analysis – rather we will have to include in it the aspects of cultural production. We will constantly face the problem of how to optimally combine landscape analysis with urban design so that we can adequately respond to changing situations. We may emphasize the autonomy of urban architecture or we may try to promote interdisciplinary urban discourse. We may also ask whether it is possible to do both.

To me the concept of landscape appears as one possible tool that allows for interdisciplinary elaboration of the urban problematique without losing sight of the spatially concrete. The concept of landscape allows us to grasp spatial formations synchronically as well as diachronically. There is no limit to the dimensions that can be included.

### **Landscape as the key concept to grasp in spatial transformation**

The concept of landscape has been used in urban literature to refer to the complex transformation of spatial constitutions through social and cultural processes as well as to the interconnectedness of the spatial to the social. Helen Rosenau has discussed the historical formation of the ideological landscape from the early images of heavenly Jerusalem and the medieval dual concept of the good and the bad city up to the social utopias and the social reformist concepts of modern industrial city (Rosenau 1983). Rosenau's emphasis on the history of ideas is complemented by the view of the human geographer Denis Cosgrove, who maintains the interconnectedness between the production basis and the symbolic landscape. For Cosgrove, the roots of modern industrial landscape include Palladian villas and landscape painting as representations of the man/land relation (Cosgrove 1984; Pakarinen 1988, p. 97).

Both Rosenau and Cosgrove have traced the origins of modern landscape to the preceding symbolic presentations. This point of view emphasizes the cultural formation of landscape, *landscape as a form of consciousness*, that evolves during centuries. The tradition of ideal city concepts first treated the city as a totality. The development of public interventions in urban space on the basis of its symbolic significance, started during the 16th century. These two approaches offer the dual perspective to urban space: urban space as a socially and culturally determined landscape and as a potential object of intentional spatial intervention, spatial 'surgery'. (Pakarinen 1988, 108–109.)

Society forms space and space forms society, as Sharon Zukin observes in referring to the geographers Soja, Gregory and Urry. As the confluence of individual biography and structural change, space is potentially an agent that structures society. Seen structurally as well as historically, landscape is a spatial order that is imposed on the built or natural environment. Thus landscape is always socially constructed: it is built around dominant social institutions and ordered by their power. Landscape is the key concept to grasp in spatial transformation. (Zukin 1992, pp. 223–224.)

Landscape as cultural appropriation can have a dual meaning. On the one hand there is the societal and cultural determination of landscape, described by J. B. Jackson as the political landscape. On the other hand, there is the inhabited landscape, which develops alongside the political one. As a result of the tension between these two sides, landscape necessarily gives material form to an asymmetry of economic and cultural power. This asymmetry of power shapes the dual meaning of landscape. (Op. cit., p. 224.)

The same asymmetry of power is revealed in Hillier's analyses. Zukin's landscapes of the powerful and the powerless, institutions and inhabitants, correspond to Hillier's g-stability and p-stability: the tendency to control and exclude and vulnerability to change versus flexibility and generativeness and local variety. The centralized and structural offers a counterpart to the multinuclear and contingent.

The basic features of modern urban landscape have unfolded in a process extending across several centuries. Therefore no sudden changes can be expected, and there also is a limit as to what can be done by means of conscious design efforts. However, various phases within the same basic spatial constitution can be distinguished; an example is provided by the distinction between modern/postmodern as described above. The similarities of the modern and postmodern landscape support the view that the cultural formation of epochal landscapes is not some-

thing that can be planned, but rather something for which planning can give an expression.

The slow formation of epochal landscapes does not, however, make the process less interesting for planning and design; rather the contrary. Designers would most likely benefit from landscape analyses and gain a better understanding of intersubjectivity. Meanings are only attached to the landscape intersubjectively. No matter how good the designer's intentions and how eloquent his arguments for his proposals, only those meanings will be realized that have been produced in a dialogue and interaction between the partners.

The better the landscapes are analysed and understood, the greater is the scope of conscious choices in urban design. It would be most interesting to extend Hillier & Hanson's analysis of urban landscape to the postmodern versions as well. A syntactic analysis would probably reveal some similarities in basic morphological features, but it would most likely also help to define the qualitative differences that make the distinction. In order to find the essentially postmodern syntaxes, we should probably focus on so-called 'liminal spaces'.

### **Liminal space as a possible focus**

'Liminal space' could be a possible starting-point for an interdisciplinary effort towards a joint landscape analysis and enlightened design. Liminal space is a term suggested for certain spatial formations that are specific to postmodern urban landscape. It refers to a public-private space in new urban forms, occurring typically in a fluid social space that joins market and non-market institutions. (Zukin 1988, p. 438). Liminal space can result in urban redevelopment carried through by public-private partnerships as well as in a privatization of public water fronts to an extension of private institutions. (Op. cit., p. 441.)

A central hall or square of a commercial complex is typically a public-private – or private-public – liminal space in that it forms a public arena open, in principle, to everyone, although

mostly withdrawn from the traditional street network to an enclave where the embrace of surrounding private institutions gives it a semi-private nature and where these private institutions actually set rules for behaviour. The same thing happens when the ground floor of a head office building is extended to a semipublic pedestrian area with cafeterias and benches. Disorientation of the users of space, confusing their cognitive maps, has been interpreted as intentional.

Whether these new urban forms can be interpreted as fostering a renaissance of publicity, as has sometimes been proposed, can be questioned. In Fredric Jameson's terms these 'hyperspaces' that reflect the dominance of the global over the local, would tend to supply a new mode of congregation of individuals, 'the hypercrowd' (Cooke 1988, p. 480). Encounters in a liminal space may be numerous. Yet in relation to its outside the spatial system is discontinuous, nondistributed. The relationship between exterior and interior may be reversed so that users of space have difficulties in co-ordination. They are supposed to identify themselves as consumers and to be receptive for the imagery in which the signs do not necessarily refer to anything else but other signs.

Liminal spaces slip and mediate between nature and artifice, public use and private value, global market and local space. The originally anthropological term referring to an age group's transition from one social status to another has been adopted to a new use. It reflects the confusion and disorientation of the users of space 'betwixt and between' institutions. "Liminality complicates the effort to construct spatial identity. The very features that make liminal spaces so attractive, so competitive, in a market economy also represent the erosion of local distinctiveness." (Zukin 1992, p. 222.)

Liminal space has also to do with the new organization of cultural production. "The liminal space of postmodern urban forms is socially constructed in the erosion of autonomy of cultural producers from cultural consumers" (Op.

cit., p. 438). It results from a growing convergence of the activities of producers and 'cultivated' cultural consumers (Op. cit., p. 439).

This convergence is structured by new, major urban attractions: trade fairs, department store promotions and museum events. New York and Los Angeles, for instance, compete for the position of world centre of design by using these new sociospatial elements. A new linkage between designers, mass consumers and wealthy patrons of high culture is created. Department stores frame 'the democratization of luxury'. Cultural producers no longer preserve the critical distance from the market. The very essence of postmodern cultural institutions is to blur the distinctions between high and low culture. Similarly, it is the very essence of postmodern urban forms to provide the liminal spaces for such meanings to be played out, blurring the distinctions between privacy and publicity and market and nonmarket norms. (Op. cit., pp. 439–440.)

Postmodern space is ambiguous. On the one hand it means 'tall, sleek towers that turn away from the street and offer a panorama of the bazaar of urban life by their technical virtuosity'. On the other hand postmodern space refers to the restoration and redevelopment of older locales. These are abstracted from the logic of mercantile or industrial capitalism and renewed as up-to-date consumption spaces behind the old facades. Liminal spaces mediate these transformations of specific locales of the modern city, situating the general globalization, abstraction and shift in emphasis from production to consumption in our life experience. (Zukin 1992, p. 221–223.)

While a growing privatization and reversed, pathological spatial orders were what could be found in typically modern spaces on the basis of syntactic analysis, liminal space – with its complicated relations between public and private and a self-sufficiency of signification without referents – seems to be an essentially postmodern spatial constitution. It is a cultural product, a specific form of the cultural appropriation of space, worth its own syntactic analysis.

However, the analysis has to be connected with the notion of the altered conditions of cultural production. The designer's role is not the same as was perhaps hoped in the opposition towards modernism.

The central issue remains the relationship between the cultural production of urban landscape and the possibilities of intervention by means of design. Liminal spaces were construed while the remedial surgery of modern spatial pathologies had just started. The socioeconomic dynamics behind the production of liminal spaces proved to be strong enough to force urban design to adapt to the new spatial order and to forget the urban renaissance (except where it could be connected to the restoration of old locales).

### **Analysis and intervention**

It seems to me that the spontaneous forces of urban development are at their strongest in the nexus of new urban forms, in liminal spaces. In those places the intervention of design might not easily be able to produce alternative landscapes fostering local-to-global dynamics. There are, however, such vast tasks in more 'marginal' areas as for example the renewal of the post WWII suburbs that call for spatial and social intervention. The limits to this possible reurbanization are set by the ongoing fragmentation of urban wholes. In order to get hold of the essence of the postmodern city instead of just occasional fragments of it, we need a constant analysis and interpretation of the cultural landscape. Spatial interventions by means of design are a complementary task to this, although by no means less worthy.

If we seek to apply space syntax to the interpretation of postmodern landscape, we will first have to emphasize the interpretative potential of Hillier & Hanson's dual method. Zukin's analysis points at a possibility that we would partly be confronted by new kinds of spatial arrangements. Yet the newness might be more a matter of appearance than a matter of basic syntactic logic. The comparison of Hillier & Hanson's and Zukin's analyses makes me believe that certain

basic features of modernity have remained essentially the same. It is most likely that the 'qualitative' differences between modern and postmodern space are more matters of emphasis than signs of a basically different spatial order. However, urban research provides sufficient evidence of remarkable changes in our urban landscape to suggest an in-depth syntactic analysis of new urban forms. I have here merely sketched some possible starting-points, main-

taining the important interactive simultaneity of the interpretation of cultural landscape and more operative efforts at the level of specific subsystems. This view, I think, is true to Hillier's space syntax approach which says we should not stop asking: "How and why do human beings reproduce what they do, and how does this unfold through the dialectics of thought and reality into a morphogenetic, unfolding scheme" (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p. 205).

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