

## **A Reflection on “The Idea of a Town” and on the Reality of Cities in an Uncertain Time**

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### **Part I: Urban Prospects After the Demise of the Classical City**

#### ***More people in cities than in the countryside?***

Three years ago, it was announced that the inhabitants of the world’s cities had outnumbered the inhabitants of the countryside<sup>1</sup>. In its 2007 report, the UN Fund stated that 3 billion 300 million persons lived by then in urban milieus. One billion of them dwell in what is called slums. The same report forecasts that, if present tendencies continue, by 2030, 5 billion will be urbanites, 80% of them in so-called “developing countries” and adds “many of these urbanites will be poor.” When the UN says “poor,” it means miserable.

We should reflect on the consequences of this change. Crowded by immigrants from the countryside, the “cities,” megalopolis, conurbations, suburban areas of the late 20th and the 21st centuries are no longer the cities known to history. As to the countryside, it is a different one too. A point has been reached in which the quantitative change has become qualitative. In a sense, as Silvia Grünig, a Spanish urbanist writes: “... the city as we knew it... doesn’t exist anymore.”<sup>2</sup> And the country, does it still exist? To use a neologism coined by Abdel Halim Jean-Loup Herbert, there is a *rurbanization*, that is a simultaneous ruralization of the city and an urbanization of the countryside. Even if it needs further precision, the word sticks. In that context, let’s recall Patrick Geddes, a biologist turned

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<sup>1</sup> Report on the State of World Population of the UN Fund (2007) “Free the Potential for Urban Growth.” <http://unfa.org/swp/2007/English/introduction.html>

<sup>2</sup> Silvia Grünig Ibarren, "Promenades et questions d'une urbaniste," *Actualité d'Ivan Illich*, Paris: Journal *Esprit*, no 8, 2010, p. 193-203.

urbanist who, in 1915, coined the word *conurbation*<sup>3</sup>. What the biologist was looking for, was a term aptly defining a process of indifferenciation of the urban fabric in analogy with a cancer, that is a loss of differentiation between biological tissues. So redefined, *rurbanization* is an adequate word for this indifferenciation process. It differs from a conurbation as a sarcoma differs from a cancer.

### ***De-historicizing metaphors***

Those of you who know Geddes's work on the relations between people and people, people and things, things and things and between all these pairs would hardly reproach him to objectify cities and forget about their inhabitants. However, taken up by others, biological metaphors have contributed to the dehumanization and "de-historization" of the discourse on cities. Cities are the products of the cumulative actions of *historical subjects* and as much can be said about the countryside. Due to the division of labor between academic disciplines, "the city" and "the country" are the objects of separate discourses.

In the historical part of my exposition, I will try to show that we can only understand the emergence of cities as an interplay between the emerging "urban" centers and the surrounding "rural" areas, or better between the activities of urban and rural subjects, both in becoming. Following a famous archaeologist, I will define the Neolithic period as the time of the joint becoming of an urban and a rural way of life, a process best illustrated by Anatolian sites. *Urbs* and *ager*, urban and agrarian matters should be seen as complementary realities and not as the objects of strictly separate disciplines. "Tell me what countryside you have and I will tell you how your cities look" should be the adage of scholars who want to be true to that historic complementarity.

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<sup>3</sup> *Cities in Evolution*, London: Williams & Norgate, 1915.

In the naïve 60's, politicians, particularly in the South, still expected to give prosperity to rural people by urbanizing them, uprooting them from their traditional territories and traditions. It was the logic of the omelet: you cannot have an omelet without breaking eggs. You cannot have development without uprooting peasants from their land. Politicians made their "underdeveloped" voters believe that urbanization would improve their conditions of life, integrating them into the modern economy, and hence making them benefit from economic development. We know the tragic outcome of that illusion: suicides of expropriated peasants in India and China. What are these cities that induce peasants to commit suicide? Modern politicians and economists are often blind to the complementarity between the urban and the not urban, the *urbs* and the *ager*, the *polis* and the *chôra*. Carlos Hank Gonzalez, a Mexican politician who was Secretary of Agriculture brought that blindness to an extreme. He claimed that his duty was to expel peasants from the countryside. In the 60s, the reckless urbanization of the country was equated to development. However, since the 90s, the *development* side of the equation has been increasingly questioned<sup>4</sup>. For instance, Majid Ranehama, who was successively a civil servant in his country of birth, Iran, and a high functionary of the United Nations has since become a stern critique of the illusion of development, writing:

Development was then unanimously received as an ideal of liberation from the sufferings and lacks that impeded the poor to enjoy the advantages of others, more developed than them: a dwelling with a postal address in a respectable street connected to the network of the municipal sewerage, a salaried job, a healthy and safe environment without mosquitoes and without thieves, education for their children, in

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<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to knowledge as Power*, London: Zed Books, 1992.

short a package of services that would free them from the squalor of the shanty town [...].<sup>5</sup>

Yet development was not just the promise of a better life, but of a special type of life: the generalization of the living standards of the better off, the “American way of life” for all inhabitants of the earth. Education, healthcare, services, that meant urbanization. In the 21st century, this dream is not dead. It has just become patently unrealistic. To give an idea to what this ideal of development and urbanization has led, I recommend Mike Davis’s book, *Planet of Slums*<sup>6</sup>. About one fifth of the world population lives now in slums. The conditions of life in marginal urbanizations have worsened since the time when John Turner praised the creativity of their inhabitants<sup>7</sup>. Among the alleged causes of this deterioration, the most mentioned is demographic pressure from the countryside, that is internal migration, a phenomenon that in turn would require research into its own causes. In this respect, one of the documents presented at the 2002 Conference of heads of state in Johannesburg stated that the industrialized countries subsidize their agriculture by 350 billion dollars annually, which means about \$1000 million every day. One of the effects of these massive subsidies is the bankruptcy of agriculture in the poor countries, making them dependent of the produces of the rich. It is then easy to claim that the poor’s survival now depends on technology and their integration into the world market. This fallacy hides a legal form of dumping that is never presented for what it is. The ensuing asphyxia of small farming is then taken as a confirmation that only modernized agriculture can nourish the world.

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<sup>5</sup>Majid Rahnema and Jean Robert, *La Puissance des pauvres*, Arles : Actes Sud, 2008. p. 153.

<sup>6</sup> London, New York: Verso, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> *Housing by People. Towards Autonomy in Urban Environments*, London: Marion Boyars, 2000 [1976].

### ***The future is no longer the future we thought to know***

Unable to see the effects of the demise of farming in poor countries, some analysts see cities as the product of a quasi-biologic evolution. Their growth, with its “evolutive” phases, is attributed to endogenous causes or to laws of history which are independent from the volition of historic subjects. Some predict the global village, others the networked city. In analogy to the mathematical catastrophe theory, some city theorists even speak of “catalytic metabolization processes,” “phenotypical expressions of hidden genotypes” or, more modestly and realistically, of “the impossibility of any anticipation” of a growth ...” that is not oriented to the good of man.” The city is no longer the city we knew, the future no longer the future we were used to, with its forecasts, extrapolations and scenarios. How conceptually manageable did it still appear less than forty years ago, in spite of the nuclear threat! In contrast, Ivan Illich, a man with an antenna for change of mentality and epistemic landslides declared in an interview, some ten years ago:

The future, [then], was subject to planning, designing and policy-making, [terms which were part of] the new language of the Harvard Business School. But now, all this is receding very fast. It still finds expression in terms of the United States bombing Milosevic or Qaddafi, or Iraq into the recognition of their own citizens. It still nourishes the new book by Rostow about the need to maintain American police worldwide as a condition for the survival of democracy. But the people who speak to me, as opposed to those who spoke to me twenty years ago, recognize a fallacy in this thinking. They recognize that they are in front of a world, not the future world but the present world, which is built on assumptions for which they haven’t found the appropriate names yet<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Ivan Illich and David Cayley, *The Rivers North of the Future. The Testament of Ivan Illich as told to David Cayley*, Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2005, p.221.

It seems to me that what Illich says of planning, policy-making, the future, and the present particularly applies to city-planning, urban policy-making for a future of the city which is no longer manageable. This should invite us to confront instead the present of cities, a present to which most futurologists and many planners have been blind. This new uncertainty about “things to come” should inspire a liberation from what Illich called “the shadow of the future.” Yet, compare Illich’s sobering words on the lost confidence in planning the future with what French philosopher and urban scholar Henri Lefebvre could still write, in 1970, in *La Révolution urbaine*

We start from a hypothesis: *society’s complete urbanization*. This hypothesis will have to be supported by arguments and illustrated by facts. This hypothesis implies a definition. What we shall call “urban society” results from that complete urbanization, which is, today, virtual and will be real tomorrow<sup>9</sup>.

Since 1973, everywhere in the South, shantytowns, *gecekondular* as you say here, grow much faster than planned, formal urbanization. For instance, in 1973, Sao Paulo’s favelas represented 1% of the city’s population; in 1993, it was almost 20%; since then, it has suffered a yearly growth of more than 16%. The number of Karachi’s *katchi abadî* (squatters) double every ten years. Indian squatter settlements grow 2.5 faster than the country’s general demography. In Mumbai, more than one million persons live on the street, without a personal shelter. Does this explosion of the “urban phenomenon” confirm Lefebvre’s hypothesis? What is the *present* of a world supposedly on the way towards a total urbanization? This virtual object is a totally urbanized world, a total city without a country, an urban whole without its complementary opposite. Lefebvre could hardly have guessed that, halfway towards its realization, his virtual object would become “a planet of slums,” just as little as

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<sup>9</sup> Paris: Gallimard (Idées), 1970, p. 7.

Lewis Mumford could have seen that his “urban prospect”<sup>10</sup> was a “slumization” of the poor countries that would soon extend to the rich.

Despite of all my admiration for Mike Davis, the author of *A Planet of Slums*, I think that his analysis lacks a dimension, which is only palpable to the ones who have immersed themselves into the present of third world cities. It is the *power* that most poor people have, if they can secure a place from where to start, to *found* a human world in extremely harsh conditions. A founding power, as Lisa Peattie stated long ago, that the poor of poor countries still have, and the poor of rich countries have lost<sup>11</sup>. Mrs Peattie, the daughter of American anthropologist Robert Redfield, immersed herself into the reality of Venezuela’s hopeful poor.

Another example of such an immersion is Robert Neuwirth. To write his book, *Shadow Cities. A Billion Squatters. A New Urban World*<sup>12</sup>, he spent successively several months in the shantytowns of Nairobi, Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul, and Mumbai. He was particularly impressed by Sultanbeyli, near Istanbul. He reports that Turkey has a unique law, called “*gecekondu* law” that states that whoever erects a building during the night and occupies it by dawn cannot be evicted by force. Half of Istanbul’s inhabitants, according to Neuwirth, live in shantytowns comparable to Sultanbeyli. However, there is a point on which I cannot agree with Neuwirth: he calls the *gecekondu* law a “legal loophole.” Though I personally know the Turkish situation very little, I understand this law as an acceptance of what, in the part of the world where I live, is an illegal custom that can only be tolerated. This custom has the spirit of the old English Common law as it was described by Sir Paul Vinogradoff: If a man builds a house in a forest clearing in one night and by dawn, smoke is seen escaping from the roof and a woman is spotted on the threshold, he acquires the possession of his house and the surrounding land and can consolidate it. We know that in

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<sup>10</sup> San Diego: Harper Books, 1968 [1956]

<sup>11</sup> *View from the Barrio*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968.

<sup>12</sup> London: Routledge, 2004

Medieval England, a group of friends would systematically train to erect a house in one night. Interested in Latin American settlements, I have always considered that they had established a custom, a kind of informal law, that allows them the same feat on a much larger scale. The works of William Mangin,<sup>13</sup> who has studied this process in detail have confirmed me in my conviction. The *gecekodu* law, rather than a “loophole” to be amended, gives testimony of deep anthropological and historical insights of the legislator.

### *A reassessment of people’s creativity*

It is often argued that squatter settlements must be removed because their inhabitants lack services, particularly of sanitation. Yet, according to the testimony of many of their inhabitants, they offer a place, a point from which to start. As John Turner insisted, this freedom to build is a freedom to found a place to start with. Neuwirth rightly insists on their decency, their good will, their organization capacity. Lisa Peattie has insisted on their optimism, compared with the pessimism of the American poor, who are better provided with services. In a period of uncertainty, people tend to go back to old practices that have proved to be effective. It becomes vitally important to free the imagination from illusions. Perhaps a glimpse into the joint origin of the city and the country, urban and agrarian life can free our imagination and encourage a new pact between city and country. A pact that cannot ignore history.

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<sup>13</sup> *Peasants in Cities. Readings in the anthropology of Urbanization*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970.

## **Part II: Cities in the Mirror of the Past**

What I now propose to you is to contemplate the urban dilemmas of our time in the mirror of the past. Understand me well: I will not search the past for models for the present but rather for a liberation of the imagination. Things will never be again as they were, but they will not always be as they are now. Ankara is a very good place to start from, since it is the seat of the *Anadolu müzesi*, with a unique collection on one of the world's first cities, *Çatal Hüyük*.

### ***The two theories about the origin of cities***

Since its discovery in the early 60s, this site from the 7th millennium B.C. has led to a complete revision of the origin of cities. It is now generally admitted that the first cities emerged either in the transition between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic periods, or shortly after the onset of the latter.

Paleolithic and Neolithic define here modes of life or, as archaeologists prefer to say, *arrangements*. The Paleolithic arrangement was based on foraging, hunting, and fishing. It was nomadic, and ignored agriculture, ceramic and weaving. Pierre Clastres<sup>14</sup> has insisted on the egalitarian and libertarian character of Paleolithic “institutions,” characteristics that also permeated gender relations. According to Rita Gross, it is now generally admitted that Paleolithic societies did not discriminate against women.

[I]t is difficult to imagine that humanity could have survived if early humans had insisted on wasting female productivity and intelligence in the way that patriarchal societies have always done. It is no longer supposed that earliest human foragers could have depended solely on men for their food supply, or that men alone were responsible for the discovery of tools, the development of language, or other crucial

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<sup>14</sup> *La Société contre l'État*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974.

advances made by early humans. All cogent reconstructions of early foraging life posit an interdependence and complementarity between women and men, rather than male dominance and patriarchy<sup>15</sup>.

The Neolithic arrangement comprised sedentary settlements, agricultural – or more precisely horticultural practices—pottery, weaving, and the domestication of animals; it allowed for social stratifications, political inequalities, and a tendency to male dominance. According to French ethnologist André Leroi-Gourhan,<sup>16</sup> Paleolithic space is symbolically *itinerant*, Neolithic space is *radiant*, centered on the hearth and the granary. The contrast between the hunters' itinerant and the horticulturists' radiant senses of space can be illustrated by the frescoes on the walls of Çatal Hüyük's houses. This contrast permits to think that men's symbolic world continued to be "Paleolithic" while women elaborated symbols based on a new attention to plants and insects (viz. bees) and invented abstract patterns inspired by weaving. It is now admitted that the "Neolithic revolution" and the "urban revolution" were unleashed in the time span of a few centuries. Yet, whether agriculture or cities came first is still a matter of debate. I will try to illustrate how the archaeological findings in Çatal Hüyük and other Anatolian sites have profoundly changed the terms of this debate.

According to the conventional version of the story, the foundation of the first cities was preceded by a slow transition to agriculture that started in the Mesolithic, that is in the transition between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic periods. Mesolithic *phyto-improvers* would first pave the way to agriculture with their attention to the characteristics of certain

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<sup>15</sup> Rita M. Gross, "The Pre-patriarchal Hypothesis: An Assessment," Sylvia Marcos, ed., *Gender / Bodies / Religions*, Adjunct Proceedings of The XVIIth Congress for the History of Religions, Mexico City: ALER Publications, 2000, p. 73-91. Translated into Turkish as "Ataerki-Öncesi Hipotezi: Bir Değerlendirme" (transl. by Balkı Şafak), Sylvia Marcos, derleyen, *Bedenler, Dinler ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet*, Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi (0 312 43388 28), 2005, ISBN 975-6361-35-2 .

<sup>16</sup> *Le Geste et la parole*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1964.

plants. Agricultural *surpluses* would then permit the formation of hamlets, villages, big villages that, then, would fuse into the first urban units. This theory is known as *synecism*, from the Greek preposition *syn*, together and *oikos*, the house or the village (cf Latin *vicus*). It is the theory popularized by Gordon Childe, for instance in *New Light on the Most Ancient East*.<sup>17</sup> According to the synecist theory, agriculture permitted sedentary life and engendered the agrarian landscape centered on the fireplace and the granary, with its fields, hamlets and cemeteries.

The findings at Çatal Hüyük were at the origin of a new version of the story that postulates that the Paleolithic *arrangement* can generate enough surpluses to allow for a first division of labor, that is the existence of groups subsisting from others' surpluses. It is defined by the slogan *cities first*. The “cities first hypothesis” was first proposed by the archaeologists that unearthed Çatal Hüyük, and then brilliantly exposed and illustrated by Jane Jacobs in *The Economy of Cities*.<sup>18</sup> According to this hypothesis, the urban revolution was contemporary with, or even preceded the Neolithic revolution. In the third part of my exposition I will argue that, if this is true, current views on cities, past, present, and to come must be profoundly modified.

Studies by the Danish economist Esther Boserup have confirmed that dense settlements preceded agriculture.<sup>19</sup> The late Günhan Danişman, architect, archaeologist and historian of oral culture agrees with the assumption that agriculture is not necessarily a prerequisite for the founding of sedentary settlements:

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<sup>17</sup> New York: Norton and Co 1969 [1952].

<sup>18</sup> New York: Random House, 1969. Jacobs questions what she calls *the myth of agricultural primacy*, that is the assumption that people first established agriculture, then established cities. In pre-historic Europe and the Near East, pre-agricultural settlements of hunters have been identified, some of them quite dense in population. As Jacobs shows, cities and agriculture co-evolved, and the “urban-rural divide” emerged from that co-evolution.

<sup>19</sup> *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change Under Population Pressure*, Chicago: Aldine, 1965.

Thus it seems necessary, at least in Anatolia, to search for some other explanation than the emergence of agriculture in order to understand the reasons behind man's impetus to create permanent settlements.<sup>20</sup>

If it's not necessarily agriculture, what is it? First of all, I think that the term *agriculture* is used abusively. The first dwellers of permanent settlements and of Neolithic towns were not agriculturists but horticulturists. Their significant tool was the *hoe* and not the *plow*. Primitive urban horticulture often required working with the fingers on a soil in constant formation, because it was made of the town's wastes and night-soil. It was a task in which women excelled. Assimilating the original *horticultural* revolution with a general *agricultural* revolution falsifies history and blurs the subtleties of gender relations. Let's recall the origin of some words. *Urban* derived from *urbs*, Latin for city. *Agrarian* and *agricultural* derive from *ager*, the cultivated field. In classical Antiquity, *urbs*, the city and *ager*, the field - or *polis* and *chôra* in Greek – formed a pair of complementary poles. *Both* were understood in opposition to the *saltus*, the wild. The complementarity of the urban and the agrarian worlds – of *urbs* and *ager* - speaks of the cultural, “artificial” nature of both city and countryside. In recent time, it has led to the persuasion that the country's agriculture feeds the cities and has always done so. In modern times, it is politically “convenient” as far as it permits developers to take possession of urban spaces and open them to the practices of land speculation. Yet, the transition from foraging in the wild to cultivation was *not* a transition to agriculture but rather to *horticulture*, gardening. The word *horticulture* derives from Latin *hortus*, the garden. What the “cities first” hypothesis teaches us is that the Neolithic transition was between foraging and small-scale gardening, and not between hunting-gathering and agriculture. To insist on the fundamental difference between gardening and agriculture is no

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<sup>20</sup> Günhan Danişman, “The architectural development of settlements in Anatolia,” Peter Ucko, Ruth Tringham and G.W. Dimbley, *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, Gloucester Crescent: Duckworth, 1972, p. 505.

hairsplitting. It is essential to the undoing of an ideology that paralyses the imagination and blurs the distinction between technocratic utopias and the sense of *what is possible*. Let's recall that, while agriculture uses the *plow* and draft-animals, horticulture uses the *hoe* and the fingers. A way to assess the specificity of gardening would be to coin a new word for it.

A couple of years ago, I proposed the word *urbiculture*, cultivation within the *urbs*, urban gardening. Agriculture is on the contrary cultivation on the *ager*. As to Günhan Denişman's question, it can be affirmed that agriculture is not the only surplus-producing activity. Horticulture also leaves surpluses, and often abundantly, but foragers and hunters too can often keep something to barter with once they have fed and clad themselves and their kin. Archaeological evidence from both the Old and the New worlds shows that many of the first large settlements are rich in obsidian tools. Jane Jacobs has dubbed obsidian the "Neolithic steel." It's a natural glass whose cutting edge is sharper than that of the first copper and bronze knives. The Aztecs knew some metals such as copper and gold, but they never used them to make knives. They never abandoned obsidian (*itztli*). It is supposed that the first people who prospered from what other's subsistence produced were the makers of obsidian tools. Obsidian was the great mobilizer of surpluses of the Neolithic world.

Instead of one, we must consider two historically important transitions or revolutions: 1. the transition from Paleolithic foraging to Neolithic gardening and 2. the transition from small scale gardening to organized agriculture. Acknowledging this second transition implies the understanding that, at some time between the 2nd and the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B. C., due either to internal changes or to invasions by violent outsiders — be they called "Proto-Indo-Europeans" or "Kurgans" — or to a slow peaceful diffusion of farming,<sup>21</sup> most societies of the Old World went through a change that deeply affected their material culture, social hierarchies, the organization of cities, and gender relations. The overall result seems to have

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<sup>21</sup>For an assessment of the "Anatolian Homeland Theory," that postulates a peaceful spread of farming from Anatolia beginning shortly after the "Neolithic Revolution," see Colin Renfrew, *Archeology and Language*, London: Jonathan Cape (Random House), 1987.

been the propagation of male dominated social orders centered on organized violence, that is warfare. Warfare is associated with agriculture because armies depend logistically on huge granaries. The Antique world of Egypt, Greece and Rome was a male-dominated and agrarian world ruled by war specialists from cities. Since the historicity of this second transition is not completely recognized, it retains the character of a hypothesis.

Because the scholarship on which this hypothesis is based is quite technical and difficult, and because of the passion with which [certain groups] argue for and against this hypothesis, one can feel as if one is walking through a mine field when attempting to survey these materials.<sup>22</sup>

In order to gain clarity, we must first untangle this hypothesis from the passions of “certain groups,” among them some radical feminist groups of the 60s and 70s, and then compare the militarization and “masculinization” hypothesis with archaeological and historic evidence.

### ***The first city, a matriarchal paradise?***

Starting in 1961, the successive publications of the archaeological findings in Çatal Hüyük by the controversial archaeologist James Mellaart gave rise to a wave of early feminist enthusiasm. The ubiquity of female images of power, the paucity of male figures, the distinction, in the abundant paintings on the houses’ walls, between the old itinerant sense of space of man the hunter and the abstract motives and delicate stylizations of plants and animals in frescoes most certainly inspired by female weavers, gardeners, and potters seemed to testify to the predominance of women both in power and cultural inventiveness. Here was the confirmation that a matriarchal golden age preceded the patriarchy that characterizes most historical and modern societies. For many pioneers of the feminist movement, this alleged matriarchal past opened to the possibility of an equally matriarchal future. However, many

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<sup>22</sup> Rita M. Gross, “The Pre-patriarchal Hypothesis: An Assessment,” op. cit., p. 73-91.

feminists came soon to understand that substituting the image of an original female dominance for male dominance was ideological. An assessment was needed. This assessment is a *pre-patriarchal hypothesis* that does not substitute female dominance for male hegemony but considers rather the possibility and actual historical reality of gender relations based on solidarity and equity.<sup>23</sup> The pre-patriarchal hypothesis claims thus that “the *creation of patriarchy*”<sup>24</sup> or male dominance is a historical event that occurred “in the relatively recent past, due to certain causes and conditions.”<sup>25</sup>

### ***Comparing the hypothesis of a violent transition to agriculture with archaeological data***

The re-assessment of the hypothesis about a non-patriarchal past implies that ...an era of peace, prosperity, stability and egalitarian social arrangements that prevailed far and wide for a long period of time before being destroyed violently and relatively quickly by patriarchal and pastoral nomads...<sup>26</sup>

Let's now compare this assumption with materials about the evolution of patterns of urbanization in the Konya plain between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.

- 6500-6000: “Çatal phase”: a single big agglomeration, Çatal Hüyük, with clear “urban” characteristics: a population of 10,000 or more, sophisticated forms of art and handicraft, excellent construction techniques.<sup>27</sup> James Mellaart has compared Çatal Hüyük with a supernova “that burnt itself out amid the rather dim galaxy of

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<sup>23</sup> This is also one of the main insights of a book that would deserve such a thoughtful commentary that it would explode the limited frame of this essay: Ivan Illich, *Gender*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

<sup>25</sup> Rita M. Gross, “The Pre-patriarchal hypothesis: An Assessment,” Sylvia Marcos, ed., *Gender / Bodies / Religions*, Adjunct Proceedings of The XVIIth Congress for the History of Religions, Mexico City: ALER Publications, 2000, p. 73-91.

<sup>26</sup> Rita M. Gross, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>27</sup> Günhan Danişman, “The architectural development of settlements in Anatolia,” Peter Ucko, Ruth Tringham and G.W. Dimbley, *Man, settlement and urbanism*, Gloucester Crescent: Duckworth, 1972, p. 505.

contemporary peasant cultures.”<sup>28</sup> [NB: I would substitute “rural” for “peasant” in the sentence]. Then starts a process that evokes the opposite of a synecism: a kind of dispersion of much smaller settlements over the whole territory.

- 5500-4000: Multiple small agglomerations.
- 3000-2000: Small agglomerations and farmsteads. From there on, we can speak of the onset of a synecist agglomeration process: bigger and bigger villages will appear. Yet, up to this point, no defense systems are attested in the Konya plain.
- 2000-1000: Large and small agglomerations, cities. Two sites are larger than Çatal Hüyük: Domuzboğazliyan and Karahüyük.<sup>29</sup> Traces of fortification attest to the practice of warfare.

...warfare is an *effect* rather than the *cause* of the end of the pre-patriarchal society, though some individual pre-patriarchal societies were destroyed by outsiders who had already become patriarchal warriors. We should probably look to increased population pressures.<sup>30</sup>

At the end of the five millennia between Çatal Hüyük and Karahüyük, the societies of the Konya Plain seem to have passed from arrangements based on Neolithic horticulture to a form of agriculture that allowed the capitalization of foodstuffs in granaries controlled by warriors. Though I have little direct evidence of it, it is logical to think that the transition from communal gardening to agriculture has profoundly affected gender relations. The hoe favors equitable relations between women and men. The plow and the horse drive women out of the fields.

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<sup>28</sup> James Mellaart, *A Neolithic Town in Anatolia*, London: Mortimer Wheeler, 1967.

<sup>29</sup> David French, “Settlement distribution in the Konya plain, south central Turkey,” in *Anatolia*, Peter Ucko, Ruth Tringham and G.W. Dimbley, *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, Gloucester Crescent: Duckworth, 1972, p.,231-238.

<sup>30</sup> Rita Gross, op. cit., p. 85.

From then on,

[t]he plow, draft animals, complex irrigation systems, a new emphasis on labor intensive grain crops favored men as the primary producers, while women were reduced to processing agricultural produce. [...] All these factors are essential in the transition from a kin-based society to the process of early state formation.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, gardening, mainly performed by women, didn't die out with the organization of agriculture around cereal crops that could be capitalized in granaries and that fed armies. Like women themselves, horticulture entered into a cloud of relative invisibility. Peasant women kept their kitchen-gardens and their orchards around the house, but domestic gardening was now considered a mere extension of the processing of men-generated agricultural produces. As societies were restructured around economic values, gardening was relegated to the invisible domain of subsistence, a domain that contributes little to the GNP and does not generate what now counts, money. However, this domain was not completely invisible. Besides, it seems that, through the ages, rural people, "peasants," have opposed resistance to their definition as agriculturists by external powers interested in capitalizing their surpluses.

E.P. Thompson has shown how, up to the late 18th century, women knew how to defend their *moral economy*. Armed with sickles and scythes and often supported by men clad as women, they were often able to stop the convoys that were transporting the wheat requisitioned from the villages' to the king's granaries.<sup>32</sup> The people's – the "crowd's" – moral economy was not based on *value* but on a shared sense of the *good*. At the eve of industrial society, almost all cities of the world sustained the greatest part of their inhabitants' livelihood with the produce of urban gardens. In Paris' markets, the peasants from the countryside sold wheat, wood, chickens, eggs, and other produce from their farms, but bought vegetables for their households. In the mid 19th century, Paris still produced a surplus of

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<sup>31</sup> Rita Gross, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>32</sup> E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century," Oxford: *Past and Present*, 1971, 50, p. 76-136.

vegetables. A couple of years ago, I had the curiosity to re-read Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. From his descriptions, you can deduce that at least one third of the city's soil was occupied by gardens. In 19th-century New York City, dairy farms proliferated:

By the mid-19th century, "swill" milk stables attached to the numerous in-city breweries and distilleries provided [New York City] with most of its milk. There, cows ate the brewers grain mush that remained after distillation and fermentation ... As many as two thousand cows were located in one stable. According to one contemporary account, the visitor to one of these barns "will nose the dairy a mile off ... Inside, he will see numerous low, flat pens, in which more than 500 milk cows owned by different persons are closely huddled together amid confined air and the stench of their own excrements."<sup>33</sup>

Some thirty years ago, the American *Farallones Institute* has reintroduced the "French intensive mode" of urban cultivation in its "urban house" in San Francisco and shown that the productivity of *urbiculture* based on vegetables can be four to five times higher than that of organized agriculture based on grain crops. I have encountered still more striking yields in Mexico's remaining Aztec urban gardens, the *chinampas*. At the beginning of the 20th century, about two thirds of French adults still worked in their own houses, often in small domestic enterprises,<sup>34</sup> many of them still growing food in gardens or in allotment gardens. Today, we attest to a certain revival of urban gardening or *urbiculture*, often in the less-than-favorable locations, the suburban wastelands of industrial cities in the North as well as in the South (see, for instance, *Le Grand Yoff* near Dakar). This is not a proof that its produces are always healthy, but it testifies to the vitality of a mode of life, an "arrangement," a mode of

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<sup>33</sup>Melanie DuPuis, *Nature's Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink*, New York: New York University Press, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Antoine Prost, "Fronteras y espacios de lo privado" (Frontiers and spaces of "the private"), Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, *Historia de la vida privada*, vol. 9, Madrid: Taurus, 1991, p.21. (Spanish translation of *Histoire de la vie privée*, Paris: Seuil, 1987).

subsistence that has been conceptually negated, socially obscured, economically disvalued because, like the moral economy of old, its aim was *the good* and not *economic value*.

### **Part III: After the Demise of Urban Utopias**

#### ***The rise and the fall of high-energy urban networks***

I felt compelled to compare the demise of a broad period of history with its beginning in Anatolia. I could call this broad epoch the era when the *idea of a town* was pregnant, to quote the title of a beautiful book by Joseph Rykwert.<sup>35</sup> By insisting on the *idea* upon which a town was *founded*, Rykwert hoped to revive the perception of the *meaning* of urban patterns and textures, of the relation between houses and open spaces, the public and the private. The renewal of the understanding of the *why* of urban spaces can be an antidote to sheer blind market forces.

In contrast with this historically grounded conception of towns and cities, let's now quote some authors who see in these market forces the irresistible agents of a complete reshaping of what was once call "urban." Michel Bassand is a sociologist based in Lausanne, where he headed the School of Architecture of the Swiss Polytechnical Institute. He is mainly known for his sociological studies on the city of Geneva:

Certain scholars speak of the urban phenomenon as if they were living in the 19th, or even in the 15th century. This mental gap is particularly conspicuous when these scholars analyze contemporary urban realities as if there still were 'the city,' [and if they had the mission] to revive it. This attitude is not only wrong, it is dangerous, for the city is dead. It only survives as a myth, a trace, a sediment. 'City' and 'town' are no longer the names of real territorial collectivities. (Bassand 1983 [translation .J.R.], quoted in an unpublished RATP-sponsored study by Gabriel Dupuy, 1985).

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<sup>35</sup> *The Idea of a Town. The anthropology of the Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World.* Cambridge (USA): MIT Press, 1988.

According to this author, the city, once a place for real experiences, has no place in the wires of high-energy networks. Listen now to Gabriel Dupuy's eulogy of the city:

[In this new realm], the city is particularly questioned. Unless one considers it as an entelechy, the city, as a form of actual territorial order, is being wiped away by the fantastical developments of the technical networks. So I ask: why not consider whatever will be 'the post-urban network' as a kind of gigantic terminal, that is as the last avatar of that 'social commutator' of which P. Claval spoke? (Dupuy, 1985, p. 4).

French engineer and traffic specialist Gabriel Dupuy thinks that none of the models on which present-day city planning operates can help us to understand today's transformations of urban landscapes. According to him, the future belongs to the "networked cities."<sup>36</sup> As to the view of urban theorists and historians, they are – according to G. Dupuy – enmeshed in old conceptions and perceptions of space, time, and people. A completely new view of the relations between space, time, territory, and man would be required. This new conceptual frame should give primacy to the *New Communication Technologies*. Dupuy argues that it is they, the *N.C.T.*, and not city-planners and culture-imbued urbanists, that engender the new spaces, times, and relations forming a future (*des*)-territoriality that Dupuy dubs "*reticular territoriality*." This territory-negating "territoriality" of the new times will no longer be based on center-periphery relations, on the urban-rural polarity, on geographic and historic boundaries, on zones and limits but on the general requirement to *let circulate*, on the intensification of material and immaterial flows of water, wastes, electricity, messages, vehicles and [last but not least?] people. Independently of the generally obsolete ideas of

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<sup>36</sup>G. Dupuy first expressed this view on "networked cities" in English, in Joel Tarr and Gabriel Dupuy, ed., *Technology and the Rise of the Networked City in Europe and America*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988. He then elaborated it anew in a book published in French three years later: Gabriel Dupuy, *L'Urbanisme des réseaux. Théories et méthodes*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1991.

planners and urbanists, really existing cities grow and will continue to do so under the logic of *distribution networks*. The new (des)-territorial imperative is and will always be more an imperative to get involved in “*networking*.” The expansion of the *reticular territory* that it engenders will proceed independently of all ideal models. All ideas and models that do not acknowledge this independence of urban growth from traditions, models, ideas, and, finally, history can be declared *passé*. It is typical that, among the few authors who escape that condemnation, Dupuy mentions Ildefonso Cerdà and Arturo Soria y Mata who, in the 1850s and 1890s respectively, pioneered cities without historical centers, cities proliferating at the rhythm of traffic flows.

### ***Is another world impossible? An opinion and two arguments***

Being grounded in history, I must confess a certain dislike for such metonymic tautologies based on one aggrandized aspect of reality, in that case the actual predominance in most modern cities of pipes for water and sludge, cables for electricity and the telephone, roads and tracks for turnpikes, highways and railways. But expressing a dislike is no argument.

My first objection is to identifying people with matters and energies in motion, of submitting people to the laws of material flows and entropy. Ivan Illich, when he was writing *Energy and Equity* still equated the powers of the human body with *energy*, the entity that permits a price to be put on a steam engine’s “duty” or on the fuel stocked in your basement for winter heating.<sup>37</sup> In 1983, he expressed regrets for what he considered a lack of scholastic distinctions:

Fifteen years ago, I worked on a multi-dimensional model of thresholds, beyond which tools become counter-productive. To make my argument, I was then delighted

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<sup>37</sup> London: Ideas in Progress (Calder and Boyars, 1974).

to find others working on energy accounting. I was happy to compare the efficiency of a man with that of a motor, both pushing the same bike—to the clear advantage of the man. I was delighted to belong to the race that had invented the ball bearing and the tire when I found out that, on a bike, I was more “energy efficient” than a sturgeon of my weight.<sup>38</sup>

In the same essay, he confessed that he was not fully aware, then, that by measuring both forms of locomotion in terms of kilowatt-hours, he made himself blind to the essential difference between the two. People and motors do not move in the same kind of space. People constitute the commons on which they walk. Beyond certain thresholds, motorized vehicles transform the commons into abstract spaces, unlimited thoroughfares for the circulation of economic resources. In the quoted passages, Bassand and Dupuy speak the language of technocrats who abolish all limits of energy intensities, blur all distinctions between the urban, the rural and the wild, and submit all ideas about town and cities to the iron law of scarcity.

Because I refuse to live “under the shadow of the future,” as Illich said, “a future that does not exist,” I only mention in passing a second counter-argument: those who claim that the era of cheap oil, cheap gasoline, cheap plastic, cheap trips, and cheap imported food is over might soon be proved right. If they are, the model of the necessarily *energy-intensive* networked city will soon be one more still-born child of an era of technocratic illusions and join Lefebvre’s total city in the gallery of last century’s utopias and dystopias. All these forecasts and futuristic schemes were finally little more than extrapolations of then existing trends and projections into an unforeseeable future of their authors’ trivial certainties. All

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<sup>38</sup> “The Social Construction of Energy,” opening talk to a seminar on “The Basic Options within Any Future Low-Energy Society” held at the *Colegio de México* in July 1983, unpublished English manuscript recently published in French translation in the Parisian journal *Esprit*, no 8, 2010, p. 211-227, under the title, “L’énergie, un objet social.”

these extrapolations excluded by construction of what mathematicians call *discontinuities* and that I prefer to conceive as the always possible emergence of the “radically new,” that is of surprises. In my view, good surprises are never a total departure from the past but are open to reinventions of the good in the present.

### ***Liberating our paralyzed urban imagination***

We have seen that the past of cities is pregnant with many good things and that the possibility of an age of equity between women and men is not the least of them. If communitarian gardening was really the rule in the first towns and cities, as I think it was, then the *hoe* can be seen as a symbol of gender equity in a “moral economy” centered on subsistence and the *good* rather than on the capitalization of grains and economic *values*. Either by endogenous evolution or by external conquest, from the second and first millennium B.C. on, an agriculture using draft animals, managed by men, and protected by the arrow visibly relegated women to the consumption and sale of agricultural products. In spite of all its technological merits, the *plow* could be the symbol of gender inequity and domination by militaristic, male, proto-capitalists reigning on a landscape of cereal fields and granaries, keeping guard of their own reserves and ready to plunder others.’

Yet gardening did not die out with the spread of granary-centered agriculture. It entered the same sphere of shadow as most female contributions to subsistence and domestic economy. The story Gabriel Dupuy and Joel Tarr did not tell is the one of the demise of the modern and efficient urbiculture of late 19th century under the joint assaults of urban sewerage, railroads, highways, and all the NCT’s of which their book explores the history.

As a conclusion, like the wanderer who could not enter the new landscape himself, I can only invite you to reflect on the variety of authors, civic initiatives and popular

movements that, from Teodor Shanin's "expolar economies"<sup>39</sup> to Cuba's urban gardens<sup>40</sup> and Via Campesina's<sup>41</sup> aim at the recovery of "gardenable" territories in and out of cities. Noteworthy too are Chiapas' Zapatistas initiatives in Mexico.<sup>42</sup> It entices me to think that another world than that of contemporary high-energy cities is possible and that there are alternatives to the networking of counterproductive patterns of deadening dependency.

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<sup>39</sup> "Chayanov's Message: Illuminations, Miscomprehensions, and the contemporary 'Development Theory,'" introduction to ---, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1986. See also <http://www.msses.ru/shanin/index.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Scout G. Chaplow, "Havana's Popular Gardens: Sustainable Urban Agricultura," publication of the *World Sustainable Agricultural Association*, Washington, Fall 1996, vol. 5, no 22.

<sup>41</sup> See <http://www.viacampesina.org>.

<sup>42</sup> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, *La Ley Agraria Revolucionaria de los Zapatistas*, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico, January 16, 2008.