

### ***Dimensions of Public Space (A Proposal for a Possible Theory)***

Public space can be generally understood as a place of individual and collective articulations of the world (moving from bodily articulations up to completely abstract and formalized ones) through communication. In this working definition, it is possible to bring together both dimensions (the public as a social category and space as an "ontological" category) by interpreting them in such a way that they exist in mutual tension and reciprocal conditioning. We can also start from the fact that the spaciousness of space is based on corporeality (i.e. that which enables man to understand the sense of space and spatial relations). Various socialized forms of space can thus be summarized as various corporeal dimensions ("lived" extensions in phenomenological theory) of existence.

### ***Public Space As an Extension of Body (The Statics of the Open Space)***

Public space as an extension of body, that is, public space accentuating localization and situation, is first and foremost a place of overstepping and overcoming that idiomatic singularity which is "privacy". Firstly, it is the space of communication, the basis of which is space as "existential" (the corporeality of human existence: movement, action, relations) in interaction with what is denoted as co-existence. Communication is that kind of behavior through which codes, schemes and paradigms, along with differences, controversies and contradictions, are constituted as a condition of universalization. The lower limit of public space as an extension of the body is a pre-lingual experience, the upper limit is the attempts at a universal language, overcoming the factuality that is, in the totality of human experience, represented just by corporeality. A universal language would mean moving beyond location and would entail an annulation of space (system is a non-spatial entity). In this sense it holds true that constants of public space as an extension of the body are, for instance, the contrasts of inside (at home) and outside (outdoors), far and near, on the horizon and within reach, along with their symbolic values, which enable us to classify the space thus constituted and form hierarchies for it.

This valorization of space forms the grounds for the sociology of public space as a form of social topology:

"The social reality discussed by Durkheim is a set of invisible relations that create a space of separate positions defined by mutual relations among themselves, proximity, vicinity or distance and also relative position (under, over, between, in the middle)."

(P. Bourdieu)

Space as an extension of the body thus becomes the basis of social "symbolism" in which individual and private experience permeate, for example: way and road, the overcoming of distance, running to and overtaking. Not even advancing formalization can interfere with this anchorage in corporeality: map, plan (both in a literal and figurative sense), arrangement.

The specification of the public continues: the basis of the spaciousness of public space is communication. Space is therefore also understood as a place of potential translations, transactions and transpositions.

Public space as a space of communication is a place where "habitualized" experiences with different degrees of the general are created and accumulated, ranging from schemes of perception, through

patterns of acting, up to paradigms of thinking, and where -- just "in public" -- all these schemes, patterns and paradigms are being unsettled. Public space is thus an unsteadily balanced structure. In describing various degrees of its generality (locality, culture, world), we are describing its increasing openness.

### ***Public Space As an Extension of the Face (The Dynamics of the Open Space)***

Public space as rooted in corporeality is an area of reflection on the individual through the public. In this sense, in the sense of "revealing in public", the expressiveness of the body, that is to say of the face, is also accentuated. Public space is therefore an extension of the face; it becomes a scene and a field of "theatralization", a visual presentation of meanings. With the opposites of at home vs. outside, the contradiction of the visible and the concealed also begins, as does a specific kind of overlapping of these contradictions, that is to say a space of representation, constituting the visual semiology of public space: politics and its rituals, architecture and its (public and publicized) hierarchies, the sphere of sign (information, advertising) and space of pretension and simulation.

Public space as an extension of the face does not separate, but rather mingles, contradictions, being a privileged field of the visible and the concealed, the latent and the manifest, the open and the encoded, the accessible and the inaccessible, ultimately even the distressing situation of a "double bind."

Public space as an extension of the face is a space of undecided interpretations, irony and a Bergsonian laugh.

### ***Public Space As an Extension of Brain (The Chaos of Open Space)***

Within the never-ending play of interpretations the face becomes an absent referent of communicated messages. Public space as an extension of the face loses its anchorage in corporeality, de-materializes itself and becomes, in the form of communication networks, hypertext and fractal structures, an extension of the brain.

Public space becomes complexity.

Complex systems lack permanent dominant centers which means that the metaphor of "perspective", conditioned by corporeality and expressiveness, loses its meaning. Complexity is its own interpretation and any description of it cancels out its identity.

Public space as a complex system is the extreme form of openness because the openness is transferred from the borders into the middle.

Openness is everywhere. Notions like "public" and "space" begin to lose the clarity of their meanings.

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