



Megalopolis and Nomadism, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, 2000

"Spatial city", "hanging city", "archipelago city", "invisible city": architects have always dreamt of other kinds of cities, such as the ideal cities of the Renaissance. And then this city happened: the non-city of the twentieth century, a meta-city or a megalopolis - Tokyo, Mexico City, Los Angeles and the others. Without beginning or end, without a centre, or with many centres, encircled by a ring road, or pierced by motorways and spaghetti junctions, the megalopolis is nothing more than an immense network, impossible to explore or know completely. A virtual city, of which I have only a spatial schema, a map, developed gradually and made up of experiences and journeys, far from the stroller evoked by Baudelaire or Benjamin. Passages everywhere: proximities, interactions, near distance and more inaccessible distance, transport and still more transport. The megalopolis is basically the planetary urban conscience, its globalisation. A perversion, inversion and metamorphosis of the future of every city. For if the city in the historic sense of the term presupposed roads, circuits and stratifications - a network with its centre - here it is the networks which create the urban environment of endless megamachines, like immense mountains and heterogeneous architectural collages which constantly require the city to be "made anew". Indeed, the future city is self-generating in a chaos of dynamisms and non-programmable flows.

Such energies of "territorialisation" and "deterritorialisation" have given birth to a new nomadism. Displaced or excluded people, or people plugged with various technological appendages, telephones and portables of every kind, all generate a "culture of encapsulation" (Michael Sorkin) which undermines old divisions between public and private. The megalopolis as theatre and ring for a "battle of images", which little by little I occupy, along with part of my home. Sport as a model: fast, very fast, extrafast, drugged, between appearance and disappearance. A permanent competition where the eye - world of the ephemeral - is given up to a new Icarism. That of airports and aerial views from the sky, and that of a "mass individualism" (Virilio) on earth. Here, distances are abolished in an eternal present where the frontiers become fluid. Also, if Icarus, obsessed with the infinite, fell while losing his technological wings burnt by the sun, now the infinite is no longer a horizontal plane of immanence. Our wings are only commercials and bits of fluid, digital light. And it is in these electronic folds that we move about, like the new Icarus, or the new artist, of the 21st century. The map is the landscape, and the landscape is an artificial or virtual megalopolis.

