1.

Movement

Submitted by Vincent Kaufmann on Mon, 12/10/2012 - 16:33

Movement can take place in and between different spaces: a designated area, a network and the rhizome. For people today, it's common for a journey to take place in two different spaces simultaneously: to be on a train (travelling on a network) and connected to the internet (travelling in a rhizome space), to be on the phone while driving, etc.

The growing differentials of the speed of travel in a given area has led to a redistribution of different spatial forms – the areola, the network and the rhizome – in the various modes of social integration (Kaufmann 2011). Each of these three forms refers to a different concept of space:

The areola space

This is a static space that presents itself as a delineated area, characterised by identifiable limits – within which one can either be inside or outside. Everyone has their place in this space. Movement consists of going from one space to another. A large amount of the conceptual and methodological approach used in social sciences is based on this model.

Most of the available statistical sources refer implicitly to such areola spaces, their criteria for both social differentiation (socio-professional categories, the make-up of homes) and spatial differentiation (country, administrative regions), and make reference to spaces defined a priori as being relevant for observing social phenomena, such as movements, that are supposedly homogenous and clearly

delineated by frontiers.

The network space

This space is designed as a functional arrangement of lines and points, discontinuous and open, which has identifiable limits, but has a topological nature. With this concept, everyone has accessibility to the network that constitutes this space. Access is a key challenge, and the physical transmission platform is clearly at the heart of the analysis (Rifkin, 2000). At a conceptual level, the notion of a network has been the subject of numerous developments – in the field of analysing social relations (social networks, social capital), technical and territorial networks (agglomerations, car dependency) and their effects (fragmentation).

The literature on Global Cities draws heavily on this notion of a network when it seeks to highlight the interdependence of cities through air travel links or telephone connections (Taylor, 2004).

The rhizome space

This space is conceived as the advent of a world in which distance no longer counts. In this case, the populating of time takes over from the idea of populating space. Space therefore becomes smooth, undefined and open; it is a source of opportunities that are in a permanent state of reorganisation, like a rhizome. The world becomes nothing more than a vast interface. "The immediacy of ubiquity leads to the atopy of a single interface" (Virilio. 1984: 19).

This concept of space as a rhizome is inspired by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on de-territorialisation (1980), and its conceptualisation follows the development of remote communication technologies, which provide immediacy.

Nobody would deny the fact that whole areas of finance are now conducted instantly and that 'virtual' communities have developed on the web. And yet, this concept suffers from a sort of technological zeal, which believes that technical innovation will radically change the world, in this case, the digital space of remote communication.

Further details

These three spatial forms broadly correspond to the three generic "species of space" suggested by Jacques Lévy – the area, the place and the network (Lévy, 1994). If the area and the network reflect what we have already defined as areola and network spaces respectively, the question of the place is a more delicate one.

The place is defined by Jacques Lévy as "a space in which the concept of distance has no relevance". When it does become a question of distance, we move from the idea of place to an area. But is it possible to define those areas where distance has no influence? In a café, do we not choose a table according to the distance that separates us from other people? Comfort implies interpersonal distances in such places, and when these are not available, as in a crowded bus, the sense of wellbeing suffers as a result.

In the same way, in a room, when two people lower their voices to talk to each other so that a third person cannot hear them, distance plays a part. Within geographical areas, it's clear to see that distance has an impact. This brings us back to the form of the rhizome. As defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1980), it's clearly a space in which distance has no relevance, and therefore a place in the sense described by Jacques Lévy. But fundamentally, it relies on the digital communication spaces and the immediacy that they provide. The pure place, in this sense, is above all a virtual space.

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