

Order and disorder in the cities

Umberto Pagano*

Abstract

In recent years a paradigm has emerged for which urban liveability coincides with the existence of conditions of order, rationality, predictability and safety. If we combine this with the enormous technological progress applied to the management of urban ecosystems and the strongly transitional nature of our age (digital transition, climate change, ecological transition ...), we understand why in the last twenty years the concept of “Smart City” has been one of the most successful. But exactly what are we talking about when we talk about Smart Cities? Actually, the process of smartification does not only concern the urban dimension but, in some way, seems to apply to so many aspects of life. What kind of rationality is hidden in the dynamics of smartification? Are there dark sides of the Smart Cities? Are there alternatives to the Order based on standardization, digital surveillance, massive use of increasingly invasive technologies? These are categories whose application is generally argued with the need to generate “sustainable” ways of life but to what extent are these categories sustainable themselves? Martin Heidegger warned that the fact that “everything works” is exactly the problem and not the solution. Is humanity generating an increasingly *irrational rationality*?

The provocation launched by some Authors (above all Richard Sennett) is that there is the possibility of an antagonism to this process, designing cities as something open, never concluded, *dis-organized*. But what exactly does this *disorder* consist of? Is it a mere utopia or is it really possible to develop concrete categories and urban planning practices consistent with it?

Keywords: Sociology, Urban Planning, Architecture, Smart City, Transition.¹

* University “*Magna Graecia*” of Catanzaro, Italy; umberto.pagano@unicz.it

¹ Received: 2022-10-29; Accepted: 2021-12-28; Published: 2022-12-31; doi: 10.23756/sp.v10i1.943.

1. Introduction

The “escape from the city” is a myth that, in macro terms, has a negligible impact on the process of progressive – and rapid – urbanization of the world. It is estimated that by 2050 70% of the world’s population will live in a city or a megacity (UN, 2018), a threshold that Europe has already crossed for some time². If we add to this the projections on population growth and the effects of climate change, with the associated migratory dynamics, it is well understood how a considerable portion of the near future of humanity depends, more or less directly, on the way in which the challenges posed by pressure on urban centres and the need for complex urban regeneration processes will be met.

For twenty years now, an enormous interest has developed around Smart Cities, as part of a wider process of *smartification* of the world, in which the term “smart”, weighed down by abuse, now appears substantially transfigured and often reduced to a mere marketing etiquette. Basically, nowadays it refers to a product or process based on an “intelligent” optimization of resources and results, thanks to the advanced and integrated use of ICT and digitalization. But exactly what kind of intelligence are we talking about? Who is the subject that generates it? And more: what exactly is a Smart City? The optimization of resources takes place according to which perspective? For whose benefit? Of course, “smart” is everything but neutral term, with an aura of positivity that already in the beginning makes explicit the determination to deny the critical aspects, which instead are by no means marginal. On closer inspection, the rationality behind *smartification* is mostly the capitalistic rationality, the interest of capital in creating forms of functional “order”, predictability and control that do not necessarily coincide with the interest of citizens and community as a whole. In the *smartification* take place predictability, “positivity” and pornographic over-exposure – as intended by Jean Baudrillard (1995)³ – that lead to a sort of “closure”, to a scientific (or *scientistic*) and *dataistic* organization of life, which also has precise implications on spaces.

The result of *urban smartification* – and other forms of *smartification* – generates a situation that is only apparently paradoxical: increasingly “intelligent” cities – and/or systems of objects –, increasingly “rational” spaces and temporalities and, at the same time, increasingly dumb citizens.

Perhaps today the role of Urban Planning and Sociology is also unfolding in all its implications and consequences – and more or less symbolic violence

² Already in 2018 the European urbanization rate was 74% (UN, 2018).

³ For a discussion of the subject, see: Pagano, 2007. The theme of the *annihilation of negativity*, as a progressive elimination of the dialectic with the *Other* and of all that is indeterminacy and mystery, has also been developed, with noteworthy results, by Han (2013; 2015), who frames it in a Hegelian perspective.

Order and disorder in the cities

(Cfr. Bourdieu, 1997) and violations – the dialectic “*Order*” vs. “*Disorder*”, for the conceptualization of nowadays’ and tomorrow’s cities

2. Order

Although it has been a topic of discussion for twenty years, there is no uniformity on the meaning of the term “Smart City”. This is partly inevitable, since it is an “object” that can be conceptualized and treated from multiple perspectives, in which the wide and intense use of information and communication technologies remains however essential. The schematization of Obringer and Nateghi (2021, 2) provides a useful framework to grasp heterogeneities, convergences and specificities of the different approaches proposed over the last 15 years, starting from the well-known conceptualization by Giffinger *et al.* (2007) (Table 1), based on 6 fundamental dimensions, of which Murgante and Borruso (2013) made a useful synthesis, framing the principal variables involved⁴.

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Definition/Conceptualization</i>
Giffinger <i>et al.</i> (2007)	A Smart City has several characteristics: <i>smart economy</i> (competitiveness), <i>smart people</i> (social and human capital), <i>smart governance</i> (participation), <i>smart mobility</i> (transportation and ICT), <i>smart environment</i> (natural resources) and <i>smart living</i> (quality of life). [See note n.4 for details].
Caragliu <i>et al.</i> (2011)	A city which invests in “human and social capital and

⁴ *Smart Economy*: Employment rate; presence of innovative enterprises, presence and quality of universities and research institutes; infrastructures (roads, railways, airports, electronic infrastructures, etc.). *Smart Environment*: Air quality, percentage of separate collection of municipal waste (also electrical and electronic equipment waste), presence of green spaces in the city, efficiency and quality of water supply (water leakage and water treatment). *Smart Governance*: Not only related to e-government, percentage of ecological cars, use of recycled paper, energy saving, adoption of ecological policies for city planning and development, ability to network with other municipalities. *Smart Living*: Investments in culture and welfare providing several services, from childcare facilities to community libraries, from counselling structures for old people to cinemas, number of people below poverty level, hospital emigration rate, immigrants social integration, criminality rate. *Smart Mobility*: Extensive and efficient public transportation network, park and ride, great diffusion of ecological cars, limited traffic areas, cycle paths, bike and car sharing. *Smart People*: Education and early school leaving level, number of women working and holds positions within the administration, presence of foreign students, political participation, involvement in voluntary associations, newspapers diffusion and level of participation to cultural events (Murgante e Borruso, 2013, 635).

	traditional (transport) and modern (ICT) communication infrastructure fuel sustainable economic growth and a high quality of life, with a wise management of natural resources, through participatory governance”.
Deakin and Al Waer (2011)	A city that works with the community to implement ICT that ultimately improves the quality of life for the community.
Nam and Pardo (2011)	A city that “infuses information into its physical infrastructure to improve conveniences, facilitate mobility, add efficiencies, conserve energy, improve the quality of air and water, identify problems and fix them quickly, recover rapidly from disasters, collect data to make better decisions, deploy resources effectively, and share data to enable collaboration across entities and domains”.
Batty <i>et al.</i> (2012)	A city in which “ICT is merged with traditional infrastructures, coordinated and integrated using new digital technologies”.
Kitchin (2014)	A city which has an extensive network of sensors and is capable of harnessing big data analytics to improve the function of the city.
Neirotti <i>et al.</i> (2014)	A Smart City should “optimise the use and exploitation of both tangible (e.g. transport infrastructures, energy distribution networks, natural resources) and intangible assets (e.g. human capital, intellectual capital of companies, and organisational capital in public administration bodies)”.
Angelidou (2015)	A city that takes a “humane” approach to integrate technology throughout the city, with a goal to advance human and social capital.
Marsal-Llacuna <i>et al.</i> (2015)	A city which improves “urban performance by using data, information and information technologies (IT) to provide more efficient services to citizens, to monitor and optimize existing infrastructure, to increase collaboration amongst different economic actors and to encourage innovative business models in both the private and public sectors”.
Ahvenniemi <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Smart Cities use technology to enable sustainable development.

Table 1 – Some significant definitions of “Smart City” in literature (Obringer e Nateghi, 2021, 2).

However, despite the heterogeneity, a fairly precise line of development can be identified in the evolutionary process of the conceptualization of the theme. A line that goes from the mere automation/digitalization of processes and services (with a focus mainly on physical and infrastructural aspects) – at the beginning of the 2000s – to a more mature idea of Smart City as a socially inclusive context (in which generation of human capital and citizens’ participation in the processes gain an increasing importance), and then moves – around 2010 – to a greater centrality of the “quality of life”, up to nowadays, to a major attention (undoubtedly favoured also by the pandemic scenario) for the aspects of social interaction in respect of health and environment (Borruso and Balletto, 2022, 94).

Order and disorder in the cities

But, for the purposes of this essay, I do not consider particularly interesting to dwell on these aspects (that was anyway appropriate to recall), which have been widely analysed in the literature, because they are essentially reasonings on the ends, mostly agreed in their generic nature, where instead the crucial discourse, in my perspective, is the relationship between means and ends or, even more, the typical tendency of means, especially in hyper-technical societies, to become ends.

The current concern is that society is moving towards dystopian scenarios in which the application of algorithmic mechanisms and mass surveillance, through a very dense and very extensive network of sensors, is consolidating the power of a superior and homologating Intelligence⁵, which proceeds by progressive weakening of any other intelligence and rationality. Paraphrasing Marx, we could say that the dominant smartness is the smartness of the ruling class. Although today the concept of class has a lower explanatory efficacy than in the past, what we mean here is that the rationality implicit in *the smartification process* is that of advanced Capitalism. And, in its essence, it is the kind of *irrational rationality* which – as Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) taught us – connotes the “short circuit” of the Enlightenment.

The *Order* of smartness is an order in which takes place the progressive separation between technical rationality and reasonableness, thus becoming less and less human. In the smartification scenario based on Big Data and algorithms, man becomes more and more a dataistic, more and more reduced to a string, set of measures, mere quantity (infinitesimal quantity, compared to the dataistic bigness that overwhelm us).

These might seem like abstract speculations but, on the contrary, they have extremely concrete implications. Think of digital bureaucracy: if in some fields digitization has triggered de-bureaucratization mechanisms, in other cases it is generating forms of *absolute bureaucracy*, in which the rationalization process has gone so far as citizens do not interface (albeit through standardized procedures) with a human bureaucrat but with automatic computer-driven systems (automatic vocal responders, automatic emails, etc.), with which they can interact only using choices and language settings provided, thus undergoing a total subordination to algorithmically determined times and methods, preventing any form of protest. It is about squaring the circle of the process that Max Weber described. It is a further and long step

⁵ It is increasingly common to combine Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning with other emerging technologies (such as IoT, autonomous vehicles, cloud computing, big data, cobots, cyber-physical systems...) to generate advanced urban solutions. Examples include: the use of deep learning and high-performance computing (HPC) for traffic predictions using sensor data, incident prediction, disaster management, logistics and urban planning, event detection for urban governance, disease detection. For an effective overview of these topics, see: Yigitcanlar *et al.*, 2020, which also provides a wide bibliography on the subject.

toward a more and more de-humanized form of “rational” bureaucracy that introduces us to a more and more inhuman and unreasonable order.

The fundamental trait of Smart Cities is an *Order* based on predictability. The *System* fears all that is not predictable with acceptable precision, and tends to establish, through advanced technology, a scopic regime aiming to the total control of minds and actions, to increasingly sophisticated measurement of every performance, in which man transubstantiates himself into data. It is a system where «Es funktioniert alles. Das ist gerade das Unheimliche, daß es funktioniert und daß das Funktionieren immer weiter treibt zu einem weiteren Funktionieren und daß die Technik den Menschen immer mehr von der Erde losreißt und entwurzelt»⁶ (Heidegger, 1966/1976, 208).

As Rem Koolhaas (2014, 58) has well pointed out: «This regime has had a very big impact on cities and the way we understand cities. With safety and security as selling points, the city has become vastly less adventurous and more predictable». The ultimate goal of this process is the total predictability of man, his submission to the system in which he is completely deprived of autonomy. In their each and every activity, the citizens of the Smart City will be increasingly dependent, like children to be controlled, from an Order aiming at the progressive elimination of all that is ambiguous, opaque, unpredictable, mysterious, unclear, different, *other*.

When we look at the visual language through which the smart city is represented, it is typically with simplistic, child-like rounded edges and bright colours. The citizens the smart city claims to serve are treated like infants. We are fed cute icons of urban life, integrated with harmless devices, cohering into pleasant diagrams in which citizens and business are surrounded by more and more circles of service that create bubbles of control (...). Where is the possibility of transgression? And rather than discarding urban intelligence accumulated over centuries, we must explore how what is today considered “smart” [compares] with previous eras of knowledge (Koolhaas, 2014, 58).

Virtually, the Order of the Smart City is an Order that is based on the High Definition of the data, but – as Baudrillard would likely say – to the highest definition of the data corresponds the lowest definition of meaning (*Cfr.* Baudrillard 1995; Pagano, 2007, 37-38). This Order works incessantly in the minds, incessantly smoothes the sphere of values.

Maybe it is no coincidence that “liveable”, flat, cities like Vancouver, Melbourne and even Perth are replacing traditional metropolises in our imaginary (...). Because the smart city movement has been apolitical in its declarations, we also have to ask about the politics behind the improvements on offer. A new trinity is at

⁶ «Everything is functioning. That is precisely what is awesome, that everything functions, that the functioning propels everything more and more toward further functioning, and that technicity increasingly dislodges man and uproots him from the earth». [Trans. Sheeha, ed., 1981].

Order and disorder in the cities

work: traditional European values of liberty, equality, and fraternity have been replaced in the 21st century by comfort, security and sustainability. They are now the dominant values of our culture, a revolution that has barely been registered (Koolhaas, 2014, 58-59).

An Order whose ultimate goal is that “everything works” orderly, predictably, smoothly, with no harshness, no contradiction, without dialectics, *hygienically*. The Smart City is *smooth*, in the sense suggested by Byung-Chul Han:

From the perspective of hygienic reason, any ambivalence and any secret are also perceived to be dirty. Pure is transparency, and things become transparent when they fit into the smooth streams of information and data. Data have something pornographic and obscene about them. They have no inside, no flip sides; they are not ambiguous. In this they differ from language which does not permit things to come into perfectly clear focus. Data and information deliver themselves total visibility and they make everything visible. Dataism introduces the second Enlightenment. Acts, which presuppose a free will, belong to the dogmas of first Enlightenment. The second Enlightenment smoothens such acts into operations, into a data-driven process which takes place without any autonomy or dramatic orchestration of the subject. Acts become transparent when they are operationalized, when they submit themselves to computable and controllable process. Information is pornographic form of knowledge. Knowledge also contains negativity in the sense that is often gained against a resistance. Knowledge is altogether different temporal structure from that of information. In stretches between past and future. Information, by contrast, dwells in a smoothed-out time that is made up of indifferent point-like presences. This is a time without events [*Ereignis*] and destiny. The smooth is something one just likes. It lacks the negativity of opposition [*Gegen*]. (...). Smooth communication is free from any negativity of the other or alien. (...). The resistance coming from the other disturbs the smooth communication of the same. The positivity of smoothness accelerates the circulation of information, communication and capital. (Han, 2015/2018, 9-10).

3. Disorder

The basic idea of this essay came to me when a few months ago I read the essay by Richard Sennet and Pablo Sendra “*Designing Disorder. Experiment and Disruption in the City*” (2020), which was born with the interesting idea of a sort of connection with the famous text by Sennet himself “*The uses of disorder: personal identity and city life*” (1970), published exactly 50 years earlier, where he argued that the idea of an orderly, functional and perfectly functioning city, designed in a completely rational and efficient way, expresses a profoundly undesirable paradigm. Half a century later this idea not only maintains its own logic but, somehow, appears even more current and convincing.

At the basis of the reasoning there is an idea in some ways provocative but stimulating. After decades of hyper-rational urban planning, the elimination of amorphous, imprecise, incomplete spaces and areas, in favour of a perfect rationalization and separation of spaces, times, functions, the streets of many cities – also and above all those considered most liveable – are more and more “orderly” but increasingly lifeless, similar-morgues as sterile as oppressive. Liveability has become synonymous with “order”, an order based on predictability, rationality (often increasingly irrational), certain boundaries, separation, in the illusion that controlling bodies and behaviours increases safety. For the sake of argument, let’s assume for this to happen, what is the price?

Throughout the essay by Sennett and Sendra the term “Smart City” is never used, yet the Authors’ discourse is profoundly close to the considerations developed in the first part of this contribution. Smartification is a manifestation of the Order as Sennett understands it.

(...) something has gone wrong – radically wrong – in our conception of what a city itself should be. Imagining the good city became ever more difficult as planning became legalistic and bureaucratic after World War II. This presents a paradox (...) [which] can be traced to one big fault: the *overdetermination* of both the city’s visual forms and its social functions. *The technologies which make possible experimentation have been subordinated to a regime of power which wants order and control* (Sennett in Sennett and Sendra, 2020, 27).

This paradox affects the very spirit of the city. Hyper-determination and predictability can only be the result of “closed”, “finite”, predetermined, standardized functions and processes, of containment of vitality and imagination, informality and improvisation. Ultimately, one of the final results of this process is people less and less autonomous in handling complex and unexpected situations.

Smooth and waterproof cities, without harshness, as beautiful as they are non-sensual, like Jeff Koons’ sculptures, with their “sacralization of smoothness” (Han, 2015, 6); cities where borders, limits, edges are impenetrable and generate compartments functionally connoted and watertight. The opposite of openness so important to Sennett, continuously generated and re-elaborated inside the city, through negotiable limits and borders, non-absolute separations working like osmotic membranes, which absorb and expel, breathe, gasp, even cough. In short: *porous cities*. An open city is not smooth but it is rough, contradictory, unfinished. The open city, in this sense, is a profoundly human city, which presents fundamental flaws, fractures in the mechanisms of overdetermination, hyperdetermination and predictability; a city that “knows” how to surprise, destabilize, even disappoint. Disorder is, in short, the ability to break the order of technologically assisted dataistic predetermination. It is not a chaotic city,

Order and disorder in the cities

although this may be a weak point of the argument: the subtlety of the distinction between disorder and chaos. The difference is clear in logical terms, perhaps more nuanced in concrete reality. Naples, that Sennett proposes as an example of open city (p. 30), is undoubtedly a very porous city, partly dis-ordered (in the positive sense) but in the meantime chaotic and full of pockets of profound decay.

The way of designing cities with the logic of smartification produces a functional rationality that claims to provide spaces with pre-established endowments of meaning, thus failing in «providing communities the time and space to evolve, which is needed for growth» (p. 29). The outcome is a city, contrary to appearances, fragile. «The ‘*Brittle City*’ is a symptom of society operating on a large scale as a closed system repressing anything that doesn’t fit in, ensuring that nothing sticks out, offends or challenges» (*Ibidem*).

For Sennett and Sendra, then, the role of the urban planner – at least a urban planner not subservient to the system – should be close to Jane Jacobs’ vision:

In her view, big capitalism and powerful developers tend to favour homogeneity: determinate, predictable and balanced in form; the role of the radical planner is therefore to champion dissonance. In her famous declaration, «if density and diversity give life, the life they breed is disorderly» (Jacobs, 1961). The drivers of fast time – developers, investors, national actors – want their cities to be closed in form; that is, to be quantifiable, determinate, balanced and well integrated. The investor knows what he or she is getting» (Sennett and Sendra, 2020, 30-31).

It is necessary to unhinge the hyperdeterministic, “second-illuminist” smartification, through the logic of incompleteness: creating gaps, openings, meanings, even though contradictions, asperities, dissonances.

For Sennett and Sendra, in this process it is fundamental that the interventions on the places should not be top-down but the result of a participatory planning by the population, in which the urban planner from time to time, also according to the contexts and the mandate received, takes the commitment of facilitator, mediator, even activist, but without ever replacing the population involved.

I believe this is something that can work in some places, maybe in many places, but it’s not a recipe for all places. In the population the different opinions are unlikely to have the same weight and social dignity, the same chance to determine, for the existence of minority but preponderant subjects, for the pressures of lobbies and capitals from outside the context, also for dynamics of overwhelming and criminal behaviour, and so on. Furthermore, there are contexts where there is a deep distrust of many people towards politicians and decision makers, so they are very sceptical about being involved in co-planning initiatives.

No doubt that an effective and far-sighted urban project can rarely be the result of simple standardized or slightly re-modelled replicas. At the very basis of a demanding intervention on the places, especially if it intends to be “vivifying”, opening, un-closed, *non-smart*, there must be the ability “to read” the community: «(...) and you need to come up late with a proposal once you’ve listened» (p. 128).

This somehow reminds me of the first pioneering experiences of a new kind of urban design carried out in Italy after the World War II⁷, based on collaboration of Italian scholars with foreign colleagues (mainly American): multi-disciplinary research groups in which architects and urban planners worked in the field together with sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, economists, historians, even philosophers, in an attempt to listen the populations and understand their *Weltanschauung* and their real needs.

The vivid stories of those experiences, told by protagonists as extremely stimulating and fruitful, convey a lesson that is perhaps worth recovering by contemporary urban planners and sociologists.

One of the most interesting projects was the one on Matera, a city that at the time represented a *unicum* of peasant culture, since in a very ancient settlement, dug into the tuff, in about 3,000 caves (called “*Sassi*”⁸), over 16,000 peasants lived in precarious and demeaning conditions, forced to walk for hours every day to reach the lands (that they did not own) where they worked. Adriano Olivetti, at the time president of the National Institute of Urban Planning, convinced the U.N.R.R.A.⁹ to promote an intervention through the construction of a “new town” (“*La Martella*”), a “model” of village innovative for architectural and urban planning solutions. However, there was the need to preserve the balance of an ancient peasant culture, to understand the needs and desires of the people, often reluctant to leave the settlement, despite the awful living conditions, as well as to select which families should be relocated, since the new village could not accommodate everyone; in short, to avoid or at least “manage” a “*cultural apocalypse*” (Cfr. De Martino, 1977). It was then decided to create a “*Study Group on the Sassi of Matera*”¹⁰, first experience in Italy of a deeply interdisciplinary approach to urban planning issues, which would then be the reference for several

⁷ Among the most significant experiences were those animated by the “*Portici Group*”, directed by Manlio Rossi-Doria, and the Adriano Olivetti’s “*Community Movement*”.

⁸ “*Stones*” in Italian Language.

⁹ “*United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*”, an international humanitarian organization founded in 1943 to provide aid and assistance to the countries most affected by the war. It began operating in Europe as soon as the allied forces began the liberation of the Mediterranean and Balkan countries. Its action was mainly concentrated in some European countries, including Italy, through programs aimed at supporting the weakest sections of the population but also at resuming both agricultural and industrial production.

¹⁰ For further information see: Musatti *et al.*, 1956; Bilò e Vadini, 2016.

Order and disorder in the cities

subsequent projects. Also part of it was the American philosopher, of German origin, Friedrich G. Friedmann, who wrote this in a letter to Ludovico Quaroni, the urban planner in charge of the project:

The community we are studying is a human community, it is more than an environment (physical and human), it is the activity of suffering and creating. It interprets what it undergoes and tries to transform by interpreting. It is culture (that is, the way of feeling and solving problems) in crisis. It is a society with a type of consciousness, which changes (which enters the historical consciousness, as they say) (...). In certain areas of life a void is created – old forms of life fall and the new ones are not yet ready – and therefore pseudo-solutions, abstractionisms come out.

(...) It is evident: where a whole culture, a way of life, changes (or even collapses), technical aids are not enough; they are, at best, aids towards new forms of culture. What right do we have to intervene? What is or should be our philosophy of intervening? Of course, we must distinguish between problems and problems. There are the ultimate problems, those poetic-metaphysical tensions, a certain human sensitivity, which are expressed in various aspects of life. By studying them, we help ourselves, expanding our human experience: we cannot think to provide solutions for problems of this kind (it would be like wanting to abolish humanity itself). But then, there are other problems (it would be useful to trace the exact limits between the two groups of problems), I would say external tensions, which claim to be resolved in one way or another. What is our motivation for trying to help others to solve them? Why do we want to take the peasant and transfer him to *La Martella*? Why in the historical configuration does this represent a peaceful rational development (as opposed to irrational and violent developments)? It is important to clarify the philosophy of intervention, of our intervention, also for the efficiency of our attempts. It is important to make a list of problems (which means understanding the community in its true vitality) and of relationships between these problems (intangible and explicit ones); it will be necessary to distinguish those that must be solved by means of “external” intervention and those that, on the other hand, must find their natural course (...) I believed, and still believe today, that in order to understand human reality we do not need a detailed description (I would say: from outside), but we do need intimate penetration, dictated not by sentimentality, but by a deep sense of social responsibility. In other words, not a coldly positivist study: I am convinced that there is objectivity beyond the narrow field of today’s science, moral objectivity, if you like... (Friedmann, 1951)¹¹.

I quoted a long passage, but I think it is worth reporting it because, despite it concerns an experience distant in time, it returns an ethical dimension of research and urban planning that I believe is still valid today, regardless of the specific context. Whether it is about a Cambodian countryside or a New York neighbourhood, I believe that this type of approach may represent one of the greatest safeguards against smartification of the world.

¹¹ This is an extract from the letter sent by F.G. Friedmann to Ludovico Quaroni on November 18th, 1951, reported in: Marselli, 1990, 222-223. [My translation from Italian].

References

- [1] Adorno T., Horkheimer M. (1947), *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Amsterdam, Querido Verlag.
- [2] Ahvenniemi H., Huovila A. (2020), “How do cities promote urban sustainability and smartness? An evaluation of the city strategies of six largest Finnish cities”, in *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 23, pp. 4174-4200.
- [3] Angelidou M. (2015), “Smart Cities: A conjuncture of four forces”, in *Cities*, 47, pp. 95-106.
- [4] Batty M., Axhausen K.W., Giannotti F., Pozdnoukhov A., Bazzani A., Wachowicz M., Ouzounis G., Portugali Y. (2012), “Smart cities of the future”, in *The European Physical Journal Special Topics*, 214(1), pp. 481-518.
- [5] Baudrillard J. (1995). *Le crime parfait*, Paris, Éditions Galilée.
- [6] Bilò F., Vadini E. (2016), *Matera e Adriano Olivetti*, Roma/Ivrea, Comunità Editrice.
- [7] Borruso G., Balletto G. (2022), “Smart Cities: nuove sfide”, in Morri R., Pasquinelli d’Allegra D., Pesaresi C. (a cura di), *Il cammino di un geografo, un geografo in cammino. Scritti in onore di Gino De Vecchis*. Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- [8] Bourdieu P. (1997). *Méditations pascaliennes*, Paris, Le Seuil.
- [9] Caragliu A., Bo C.D., Nijkamp P. (2011), “Smart cities in Europe”, in *Journal of Urban Technology*, 18(2), pp. 65-82.
- [10] de Martino E. (1977), *La fine del mondo. Contributo all’analisi delle apocalissi culturali*, Torino, Einaudi.
- [11] M., Al Waer H. (2011), “From intelligent to smart cities”, in *Intelligent Buildings International*, 3(3), pp. 140-152.
- [12] Giffinger R., Fertner C., Kramar H., Kalasek R., Pichler-Milanovic N., Meijers E. (2007), *Smart cities – Ranking of European medium-sized cities. Technical Report*, Wien, Centre of Regional Science.

Order and disorder in the cities

- [13] Han B.-C. (2013). *Im Schwarm. Ansichten des Digitalen*, Berlin, MSB Matthes & Seitz.
- [14] Han B.-C. (2015). *Die Errettung des Schönen*, Frankfurt am Main, S. Fisher Verlag. Eng. Trans. *Saving Beauty*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2018.
- [15] Heidegger M. (1966), *Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*, interview, September 23rd, 1966, published in *Der Spiegel* on May 30th 1976, pp.193-219. Eng. Trans. “Only a God Can Save Us”, in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. Sheehan T., pp. 45-67, Chicago, Precedent Publishing Inc., 1981.
- [16] Jacobs J. (1961), *The death and life of great American cities*, New York, Random House.
- [17] Kitchin R. (2014), “The real-time city? Big data and smart urbanism”, in *GeoJournal*, 79(1), pp. 1-14.
- [18] Koolhaas R. (2014), “Cities that are truly smart”, in AA.VV. *Digital Minds for a New Europe*, Brussels, The Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness and Social Renewal, pp. 58-59 (the essay is an adaptation from a talk given at the High-Level Group Meeting on Smart Cities in Brussels on September 24th 2014).
- [19] Marsal-Llacuna M.-L., Colomer-Llinas J., Melendez-Frigola J. (2015). “Lessons in urban monitoring taken from sustainable and livable cities to better address the smart cities initiative”, in *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 90, pp. 611-622.
- [20] Marselli G.A. (1990), “Sociologia del vecchio e nuovo Mezzogiorno”, in *Storia del Mezzogiorno* Vol. XIII, pp. 173-233, Napoli, Edizioni del Sole.
- [21] Murgante B., Borruso G. (2013), “Cities and Smartness: A Critical Analysis of Opportunities and Risks”, in *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, June 2013, 7973, pp. 630-642.
- [22] Musatti R., Friedmann F.G., Isnardi G. (1956), *Lo studio di Matera: saggi introduttivi*, (ed.) Commissione per lo studio della città e dell’agro di Matera, UNRRA-CASAS I giunta, Roma.
- [23] Nam T., Pardo T.A. (2011). “Conceptualizing smart city with dimensions of technology, people, and institutions, in *Dg.o '11 Proceedings of the 12th annual international digital government research conference: Digital government innovation in challenging times*, pp. 282-291, College Park, Maryland, Association for Computing Machinery.

- [24] Neirotti P., De Marco A., Cagliano A.C., Mangano G., Scorrano F. (2014). “Current trends in smart city initiatives: Some stylised facts”, in *Cities*, 38, pp. 25-36.
- [25] Obringer R., Nateghi R. (2021), “What makes a city ‘smart’ in the Anthropocene? A critical review of smart cities under climate change”, in *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 75 (2021) 103278
- [26] Pagano U. (2007). *L'uomo senz'ombra. Elementi di sociologia dell'inautentico*, Milan, FrancoAngeli.
- [27] Sennett R. (1970), *The uses of disorder: personal identity and city life*, New York, Knopf.
- [28] Sennett R., Sendra P. (2020), *Designing disorder: experiments and disruptions in the city*, New York, Verso.
- [29] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2018). *The World's Cities in 2018 - Data Booklet* (ST/ESA/SER.A/417).
- [30] Yigitcanlar T., Butler L., Windle E., Desouza K.C., Mehmood R., Corchado J.M. (2020), “Can Building ‘Artificially Intelligent Cities’ Safeguard Humanity from Natural Disasters, Pandemics, and Other Catastrophes? An Urban Scholar’s Perspective”, in *Sensors* 2020, 20(10), 2988.