

Mediatization and Memory Policies in the Urban Context

Políticas de mediatización
y memoria en los contextos urbanos

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Abstract

The present article explores the rules of acting and living in the urban space, on which the images inspired by sensitivity and competences connected with digital and web change are regularly superimposed. This “digital imagination” is such a prime mover that it becomes the dominant model of perception, being and acting in the world today. Its presence and influence are especially significant for constitution of the contemporary memory, as well as for the conditions and ways of using it. My reflections on the status of memory are situated within the dynamics of digital change occurring in the urban space, because it is there where the achievements of the digital revolution catch on with the pioneering speed and involvement. Cities of postmodern fate decided through in categories as: identity, culture of places and space, and memory.

Key words

Cultural imaginaries, digital revolution, city culture, memory, visual culture, data.

Resumen

Este artículo explora las normas de interacción y convivencia en los espacios urbanos sobre los que las imágenes inspiradas por la sensibilidad y las competencias conectadas al cambio digital se imponen frecuentemente. Esta “imaginación digital” es una gran fuerza motriz que se torna el modelo de percepción dominante, de cómo ser o actuar en la actualidad. Su presencia e influencia son particularmente importantes para la constitución de la memoria contemporánea, así como para sus condiciones y usos. Mis reflexiones sobre este estado de la memoria se sitúan en las dinámicas del cambio digital que sucede en los espacios urbanos, porque es allí donde los logros de la revolución digital se emparejan con la velocidad pionera y la participación. Ciudades con un destino postmoderno organizadas en categorías tales como: identidad, cultura de lugares y espacios y memoria.

Palabras clave

Imaginario culturales, revolución digital, cultura ciudadana, memoria, cultura visual, datos.

Resumo

Este artigo explora as regras de interação e convivência nos espaços urbanos sobre os quais as imagens inspiradas na sensibilidade e as competências ligadas à mudança digital são frequentemente impostas. Esta “imaginação digital” é uma força tão grande que se torna o modelo de percepção dominante de como ser ou atuar atualmente. A sua



presença e influência são particularmente importantes para a constituição da memória contemporânea, para suas condições e seus usos. As minhas reflexões sobre este estado da memória se contextualizam nas dinâmicas da mudança digital que acontece nos espaços urbanos, porque é ali onde os logros da revolução digital alcançam à velocidade pioneira e a participação. Cidades com destinos pós-modernos organizadas em categorias tipo: identidade, cultura de lugares e espaços, y memória.

Palavras-chave

Imaginários culturais, revolução digital, cultura cidadina, memória, cultura visual, dados.

Introduction: Mediatization and Culture

The new media phenomena and parameters of digital life change the realities of our lives and colonize our cultural imaginations. We live in the Western civilization system and to a large extent on a global scale under the influence of the phenomena most frequently referred to as digital revolution and *mediatization*. They consist in systematically growing dominance of autonomizing signs and their carriers (media and mediation) over things and matter (which has been noted in the discourse of social sciences and the humanities by declaring *linguistic, media* and *visual turns*), as well as diversification of available communication technologies and democratization of the ways of using them, that is somewhere between the *mass culture* system and the world of *popular culture* (as defined by the cultural studies) and *interactive culture* (as suggested by discourses focused on digital technologies). This is the reality where information and data are constantly circulating, where we have a countless number of communication tools available at hand, with which we can create and maintain various communication networks and construct increasingly abstract symbolic layers, called *virtual worlds*.

The tradition of reflection on the media in culture, whether from determinist (McLuhan, 1964) or constructionist (Piaget, 1968) perspective, teaches us that the media always change their users and their world. I share the assumption that the digital change also generates new imagination of culture, new competences and habits, which forms the way we think, communicate, perceive the world and exploit it. However, unlike the perspective introduced by McLuhan (1964), according to which there are no stronger forces influencing culture and social life than energy and cultural-social advancement of media and communication technologies, I am more inclined to Piaget's position where the relations between technologies and culture have a form of continuous exchange and feedback – it is a constant exchange. Culture constructs technologies provides them with the social and symbolic base, responds to expectations and capabilities of its inhabitants, whereas technology transforms then these energies and capital and gives them back, changing culture. There are not only simple influences and reactions here, but there are rather movements in both directions, dispersed in time and space, whose sum is difficult to capture and name other than in the form of a phenomenon.

The social and cultural susceptibility to the language of technology, ability to adapt its forms and a skill of attributing the already existing cultural codes to them is *collective imagination*. *Collective imagination* familiarizes technologies and implements them in our everyday life, fits them into our world – its ideological foundations, legal and social norms. This category has already its sociological

and culture-related tradition. In interpretation by Pierre Bourdieu (1977), the *collective imagination* encompasses relations of particular *habitus* that is internalized structures of knowledge and a number of imaginary and practical dispositions depending on them, which we use as the basis for thinking and action. Charles Taylor (2004), a Canadian culture sociologist, uses the term of *social imaginaries* to refer to social self-knowledge accompanying modern morality, as well as practices, perspectives and expectations resulting from it, which are seldom directly expressed, but constitute something like co-shared images and references building the community and setting the shapes of the collective life. On the other hand, Appadurai (1996) points at the presence and permeation of the constituting spheres inside the collective imagination. These are global “landscapes”: media-related, technological, ethnic, financial and ideological. In their mutual permeation, the social and cultural knowledge of modern societies develops and becomes consolidated (Jasanoff, 2009).

While sharing the understanding of *collective imagination* from these three proposals I refer primarily to the forms of collective thinking about the media and communication and to their translation into cultural and social sensitivity and competences. The social and cultural imagination concerning the nature, role and language of the media and the ways of using them currently have crucial significance to our orientation in the reality in general, especially in the conditions of the process called mediatization of the world by sociologists, culture researchers and media experts (Lundby, 2009; Hepp, 2012; Meyers, Neiger, Zandberg, Hoskins & Sutton, 2011). This significance is even greater because we actively witness the “tectonic movements” in the ontological foundations of the technological world. The dominant “continent” so far, which can be called the *analogue culture* with its passive tools and machines to put it simply (referring to features and position of the analogue media) recedes and falls inside the *digital culture*. The latter one devours greedily (digitalizes) everything which used to be analogue – both old formats and contents – and establishes a new order of communication, effectively transforming all earlier media codes into the universal format of zeros and ones (Stalder, 2018).

Focusing on this media-related dimension of the social landscape, I would like to limit the scope of discussion on the contemporary culture to the area of urban practices and the condition of a city. After all, this domain is in the vanguard of modernity/postmodernity; a laboratory where technology, communication and social processes are confronted in the most interesting way, reconcile the fastest and resonate the loudest. The development of the media and mediation has become integrated with the city, and the aforementioned *digital culture* is to

a large extent a synonym of the urban culture – the city life and the urban space are something which could be called a meta-startup of digital culture and its most important field. *Collective imagination*, media, digitality and city are my starting points for discussion on the issues of memory and postmemory, of key significance to this dossier.

Memory is one of the foundations of our cultural imagination and identity. This belief introduced to humanities by Halbwachs (1980) is now shared across the field and developed by media scholars as well. Among the popular and influential takes on the problem there is the concept of *remediation* which focuses on the memorized rules that drove past media and its adaptation into the cultural languages of new media (Bolte & Grusin, 1999; Garde-Hansen, 2011). There is also the idea of media memory which connects popular culture semiotics and way it is distributed with forms of media sequences and narratives (Meyers et. al, 2011). Therefore, I would like to try and answer the question how cultural memory functions in the conditions of mediatization – circulation of data, networks, interfaces – the phenomena which today define the status of collective imagination and cultural sensitivity. How is collective imagination programmed nowadays and how does it cope with a multitude of data and information? These are the questions answered that I will address in this article from the position of media and culture theory adapted to understanding city as cultural phenomenon. I will analyse here memory and its urban and technological incarnations/interfaces primarily through analogies to the cultural and social grammar of the digital media.

Urban Space and Memory: ROM and RAM

The lesson we could learned from Plato's idea of external memory is that any forms of its mediation, that is taking knowledge outside the organism, such as speech, and its technological mediation/storage are not good ideas. Recognizing dangers connected with export of knowledge outside the natural, biological remembering and entrusting its resources to external memories, media and specifically writing, Plato (2005) concludes that they cause loss of meaning. For the functioning of the digital media systems "remembering" is the key parameter – it consists in processing data from outside the system, hence stored somewhere, to which there is technological access, and operational continuity of procedures and software necessary for action. In the fundamental structural rules of digital ecosystem we have, on the one hand, Read Only Memory (ROM) which is a stable memory used for orderly storage of information, and on the other hand Random Access Memory

(RAM) which is handy, temporary and fluid. The former permanently stores these resources which we process digitally. It refers to the centuries-old tradition of the analogue media which managed information and enabled its storage. The latter is a kind of a temporary storehouse which keeps, for the time being, various resources necessary for operation of the system and its applications. RAM manages and moves information which is currently being processed, so it can be considered a postmodernist supplement to the long storage of resources in memory of the first type, enabling free flow of these resources and ways of using them.

Such a double technological manner of organization and understanding of memory forms the contemporary foundations of the digital communication environment – it provides a functional matrix for possible flows of data, multimediality and interactivity. In this environment, knowledge becomes a technological – and thus also social – construct, an interactive and multimedia communication process, a result of millions of correlated clicks and links, of which the web is built. In this structure both elements are equally important: permanent ones, remembered in the traditional form, that is stored, and their simultaneous, incessant processing and variation. As a result, constantly moving electronic data freeze in various communication forms just for a while, owing to various media (algorithmic) calls. Such knowledge is dynamic, assumes the form of fluid databases and many possible algorithmic operations, adjusts to various functional interfaces. Its environment is movement and changeability – constant flows, allocations and reconstructions. Let us analyse as an example a typical post in an Internet forum. This material can be edited by the author but also deleted by the moderator. Its position in comparison to other posts depends on the algorithm which organizes the forum, while hyperlinks contained in this post become another binding layer among thousands of other references in the data structure. Lastly, we can view it with various applications and devices. Due to all these variables, the final shape of this resource is nor predefined but fluid and dependent on circumstances and situations of communication.

Digital memory, based on such a dual formula, is surely different than its stable analogue version, integrated with carriers. Certainly, it does not mean that there is any unchangeable, non-programmable cultural memory. However, in the digital conditions, the significance and speed of change, temporariness of memory, seem to be of crucial importance. Theories of media and culture try to capture and name this state of affairs. Peter Weibel, one of the most important researchers and practitioners of media culture today, writes succinctly about this, referring to a famous phrase by Frank Lloyd Wright: *Machinery, materials, and men*. Weibel suggests that it should be transformed into: *Media, data, and men* (Weibel, 2015): The matter and the

ways of its processing, that is technology, under the influence of the media and media communication fulfil primarily the role of screens and interfaces. What is permanent and traditionally material recedes, or rather is obscured by the media layer presenting signs and meanings which things can have many.

In the case of urban space, two analogous phenomena – the RAM and ROM formulas – can be indicated. On the one hand, this would be Read-Only shape present by traditional understanding of the aesthetics of space which pertains to the matter and its invariability – architecture, urban planning, but also semiotics, which are the resources for reading and decoding. Space and city are material texts which we read, interpret, but also use for social and cultural actions, presence and meetings. On the other hand, it is possible to think about the contemporary urban space as a fluid structure similar to Random-Access digital memory, constituting a kind of a screen and an interface which not only transmit but also facilitate interactions. As a result of their presence and operation, traditional appearances and views of the city change. LED displays, artificial light from projectors, interactive facades and billboards more and more frequently cover the concrete, plaster and similar visually passive surfaces and textures below them. In this way, city and space in general cease to be static in information, passive and slow in communication of change. They are no longer a secure visual anchor, a space of fixed topography on the basis of which we get orientated in the structure and meanings of the existing cultural codes. Instead, they become a hybrid creation whose shape and senses fluctuate with unprecedented speed, even though the concrete and steel foundations of this scene last in their firm positions.

The hybrid quality of the matter and a multitude of its possible visual incarnations can be, and frequently are, open to many co-authors and co-editors, and become polysemic and interactive with their participation. The inhabitants of a contemporary city-screen still read cities the way books are read, but they more and more boldly demand to have some rights to their edition and they increasingly co-write and co-edit such an informational shape of cities. First, these were signboards, posters and traditional forms of advertising and communication. Nowadays, many city windows become screens for various spectacles. We more and more often decorate urban spaces, not only individually but also collectively, giving them meanings and invalidating the previous ones. In other words, cities also become theatres of digital revolution which transforms passive consumers of politically controlled and rationed story about the world into participants who get emancipated from their analogue positions in order to actively remix the existing stories and perhaps to construct their own. An artistic collective *killku.com* based in Lublin directed a projection in which a perfectly fitted light was

cast on the shape of a monument of one of the eminent Poles, which completely changed the meaning of the statue. Like that, citizens take possession of space and try to turn it into an environment for debate and polysemy.

The traditionally understood city is still primarily a deposit of material memory of the Read-Only type, written in its physically hardly changeable shape, similarly as culture in the analogue version, by elites and designed for passive reading by the general public. It is defined by urban planners, licensed architects and stylists, hired by the political authorities. Such a city constitutes a permanent record of historical layers and thus can be understood as a traditional space serving the purpose of geographical, historical, political and social orientation and mobility, as one of canonical emanations of the social order and visual evidence of government structures.

I believe that common imagination and sensitivity introduced by the digital revolution, and the duality of ROM and RAM among other rules, have energy and potential to significantly change this state of affairs. The city space and our thinking about its use, under the influence of mediatization of culture in general and saturation with various communication technologies, especially the visual media, seem rather to bear features of Random-Access Memory. The focus is here on semiotic fluidity and cognitive accidentality, the logic metaphorically called “timeless time” and “spaceless space” by Castells (2009, pp. 33-36). The place of material solutions, such as facades, agoras and landmarks is more frequently and more densely filled by various media and messages not connected with the space itself and its material character. The urban and cultural hardware is obscured by software, data circulation, interaction networks. Among these post-material, offering rather *random access* media forms present in the urban space I would like to select three to which I will pay special attention. These are city screens, interactive sensors and interfaces, and mobile database architecture. Their presence and influence are the symptoms of change which, coming out of the city, will alter the culture of space in general. All these become parts of the processes which enable us to talk about memory after memory.

City Screens

Among these post-material media forms, contemporary cities succumb primarily to the screens colonizing them – first those static ones, reflecting the existing light, such as billboards, posters and signboards, and nowadays also to those

designed as sources of moving pictures and autonomous light emitters: monitors, jumbotrons, interactive facades, projections, mappings. In this way, the dominant visual media and the *visual culture* in general have assumed power over the urban landscape. That constitution of images and screens present in the city space could be referred to the distinction between two kinds of memory presented above. Passive screens and images, powered by the reflections of waves and atoms from existing sources of light are stable parts of traditional city “outfit”, it is more like a read-only space. New screens that emit light instead of reflecting it are able to show various kinds of images but also to veil whatever is behind them. Therefore, it is more of a *random access* type of space and we can perceive number of visual layouts of it. It is a fluid substance which, in particular cases such as big squares in the middle of modern cities, is constantly moving, always different by the power of images transmitted on the people in front of it. In general, main streets of big cities do not need any lighter than this emitted by their screens showing films, commercials, light installations. These media-based sources of light have successfully replaced traditional street lamps and have defined the spatial arrangement. An extreme example of such a space is Times Square in New York, but more and more city centres in the Western world look like this. It is easy to imagine the logic of visual development which will gradually turn the urban space into one overwhelming medial spectacle which will encompass and be simultaneously screened by LED facades of buildings, highlighted fragments of pavements and streets, billboards and projections on various urban media. Fantasy visions are well presented in sci-fi movies, such as *Ghost in The Shell* (Oshii, 1995) or *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), for instance, and nowadays we find such elements in the urban tissue around us and we supplement them with light generated by our own smartphones and laptops.

The accumulation of artificial light and images in the urban space changes its status. The space lit in this way no longer provides the comfort of orientation and secure stability offered by old analogous places. Instead, with generated light and its movement, it violates the eyes and sight of all those present. Places dazzling with intensive light, a huge mass of projected messages and intensity of their visual language obscure in this way their traditional materiality and meaning. The roles have changed – a stroller (*flaneur*) and an observer, as an open book (*software*), used to walk in the hardware of a city, compiling for own needs its reading and programme of being inside it. Today, the city with its images and light surrounds and corners a passer-by, intimidated by a feast of colours and the speed at which senses move. I guess a thesis can be put forward that the urban space commits visual violence against its users forcing them to operate their perception mechanisms on the border of their biological capacity,

which precludes concentration necessary for comfort and distanced reflection – reading with comprehension and healthy perceiving. Reading of a city-text is replaced with stimuli and, in response to them, instinctive reactions resulting from the basic biological mechanisms.

The urban space has a flickering surface and texture, tries to seduce with its visual grace, proves the cultural validity of its facades and media. This is a sensual city, perceived instinctively, where there is no place for remembering – contemplation, contextualisation and reflection. Instead, there is space here for accidental experiences and excitement with visual spectacles. Such a Random-Access space poses a biological, cognitive and cultural challenge for all those who stay in it, even for those who cope successfully among images and their media.

The City of Sensors and Interfaces

City spaces full of screens and images shown by them is the present condition, in a sense already historical. Its meaning is currently changed by transformation of the screens themselves and ideas about interactivity of devices, which appeared together with the emergence of such projects as *Internet of Things* or *Smart City* (Greenfield, 2013; Greengard, 2015). The sense of these huge political-social-communication projects results from the revolution which is described by media experts as transformation of a medium into an interface. This is a process in which previous media formats are absorbed by a digital platform able to reproduce them, but also to treat them equally with the new ones which are still tested, prototyped or only potential. Nowadays, books, films and the cinema, channels and TV or radio are just some of the possibilities offered by the environment of digital multimedia encoded/digitalized in the form of zero-one data. Not better, not worse, not more or less privileged, just ones of the many available media languages to choose from. In this environment, previous media forms and languages become the content of ways of access to them by means of interfaces, that is rules of communication of digital machines and the whole digital environment with their users. The media have been absorbed by digitality and remain under the power of interfaces providing access to them, they have entered the state of *postmediality* (Celiński, 2014). That process could be also framed within my memory metaphor. Technocultural order of traditional media would be the one of a read-only and the order of interfaces connected to database and software would be the representative to the fluid territory of a random-access culture of *postmedia*.

A similar situation is in the case of mass culture and communication, dominated by a politically controlled and correct model of distribution of content which was convenient for political, social and cultural elites who, owing to supervision over technologies of communication and their one-way use, were able to build and support social imagination devised by them. The media addressee had to remain passive – to see, hear and read, but not to talk, create images or write. In the era of the digital revolution, such a communication model (one to many) is replaced by a more egalitarian and democratic model – many to many and in many ways.

This diagnosis of the communication phenomena, made in the media culture theory, seems to overlap with some changes which nowadays affect the cultural and technological space of cities. Similarity and interdependence can be noticed in the context of the process of transition from the material stability of urban forms and landscape arrangement towards communication and mediality, turning the space and the matter creating it into interactive and responsive forms – that is understanding them as another cultural layer of mediation, in this case as interfaces. This evolution pertains to buildings, facades, architectural and urban arrangements, design of objects. They all become *postmedia* of access, interfaces of interaction with the digital world – they not only reflect sunlight (such as posters, facades and billboards) or emit electric light (as urban screens) enabling their users to read them aesthetically, politically and spatially, but primarily they become able to collect and process data about reality and individuals, and they make objects and spaces sensitive to stimuli and responsive.

As it has already been mentioned, the general logic of mediatization, following the analogue media, first turned buildings and spaces into media-screens, similar in perception to experience of books and printed text. Then, these static screens began to change into the moving picture media, corresponding to the era of cinema and television, and finally they started to transform into screens-interfaces of hybrid reality. This new type of visual mediations combines the material and the symbolic, activity and knowledge, reading of the world and its writing, with generation and supervision, in the interactivity formula. The key words, apart from an interface which joins their functionalities, include: a sensor, that is an input device which reacts to specific factors and converts them into sequences of data; software, that is ways of using devices and things in the form of automated instructions; touch and *tactility*, term first introduced by Walter Benjamin, then developed for media theories by McLuhan (1964). Such sensors are camcorders, infrared sensors, climate sensors, or gates in public places, whereas software is the aforementioned Internet of things, or applications enabling “intelligent” objects to share data between each other and between various networks. They all generate

more and more data and they become increasingly sensitive and responsive to these and other data and their providers, that is tactile, referring to notions from the media studies. The material space – concrete, stone, steel, wood and glass – is covered/supplemented with pixels, lasers, sensors, LEDs, aerials, cables and range, and this combination is managed by touch and software.

Referring to a number of visions unfolded by producers of technological solutions, we can imagine the interactive future of spaces and things. Interactive, that is such in which all pixels of screens showing images operate simultaneously in the modes of emitting light and being photosensitive and tactile sensors, while all other broadcasting media become two-way interfaces, that is they emit and probe at the same time. Smartphones, equipped with tactile and interactive screens evaluate in this direction. They are provided with an increasing number of perfect sensors of temperature, location, movement, light, GPS, steps, pulse etc. In this way, one of the most eagerly cited narrations could become reality: the narration about the emancipating force of a *digital culture* which transforms consumers into players and authors, and addressees of media messages into creators of the cultural ecosystem. The urban space as an interface of interactions with the material world and the world of information at the same time, opens the matter to symbolic but also substantive touch of those who live in it. It is symbolic, because they, being perceived by sensors and interpreted by software, shall leave in the information tissue of a place real traces of their presence, decisions and actions taken. It is substantive, because objects, buildings and spaces saturated with sensors shall be susceptible to physical contact with people who will start to operate them, download from them, upload to them, manipulate many available options. Becoming tactile, they will begin to “understand” our touch and respond to queries and instructions issued in this way. Nowadays, intelligent home gadgets become very popular, including voice assistants, camcorders interpreting movement, light switches reacting to commands, such as Amazon Alexa, Google Home, Apple HomeKit.

Thus, the traditional *empire of signs*, as the condition of culture after the linguistic turn was described by Roland Barthes (1982), changes into the *empire of interfaces*. What kind of memory will we format in these conditions and how will we use it under the rule of this empire? The most important parameters for it can be: an incessant need to share information with the environment and to keep it available in movement and relations, and using the space mainly in its interactive and software layers. In interactivity of space and life we can notice another force which transforms remembering into continuous accidental touching of the matter, informing it and thus looking for senses. What is remembered and already available is replaced by what is yet possible to be evoked and/or processed.

Fluid City – Databases

Interactivity of urban areas is not the last feature of the city space which results from the progressing mediatization. The final one of the three examples of reprogramming of the traditional constitution of the city – which, as I was trying to follow, stands for the reprogramming collective imagination as well – under the influence of new media imaginaries is following the database format in architecture. Within this new shape of collective mind, as intended by creators and designers, buildings of the future are not only supposed to be intelligent in the sense of coping with information and adaptiveness on the symbolical level. In terms of their substance they shall also resemble a group of building blocks which can be restructured and managed like databases.

A design of a building in the form of a module structure, called Eco-Pod (Squared Design Lab, 2017), has been recently presented by an American architecture studio. It is supposed to manage itself just like algorithms manage databases – particular components can be arranged according to specific parameters and criteria, thus creating sequences of various shapes. It should be susceptible to new readings and recordings, can be adapted to expectations of its residents, reprogram itself and mutate under the supervision of administrators. The building-system shifts and compiles single modular functional elements, adjusting itself to the environment or weather conditions. Selected modules can be placed on upper or lower storeys, while others can be taken to the facade from inside the construction. Perhaps this shall be the architecture of the future – self-organizing architectural “organisms” constantly changing their shape and structural arrangement, fluid and “intelligent” in the algorithmic logic of incessant transformation. Such an idea of architecture probably has its roots in the practice of interior design which is one of the most important visual acts of the contemporary time. In pursuit of our ideas, we frequently redefine the form of our homes, workplaces and shared space. Transforming them at least in this manner, we have a feeling that we give them new senses and adjust them to currently binding trends. Household objects, such as furniture or decorations, are also created on the basis of the systems of individual small elements which, after purchase and unpacking, must be connected in some way.

Stiegler, a French philosopher of technology, discussing the fluidity of the material world and its constant mediation, suggests that, in general, we deal with *grammaticalization* of everything visible. Under pressure of the media, former objects have turned into pictures, so they have become dominated by the rules of the communication order, being a visual language for writing and reading

(*grammaticalization of the visible*). It can be added that visual *grammaticalization* of the matter is also concerned. Objects, buildings and space became the components of the visual language of the digital world in which everything is mobile, adaptive and reactive, ready to take on new syntax and stylistics any time.

These and similar city practices contribute to urban fluidity and accidentality, destabilize previous long lasting of architecture, urban arrangements, systemic/ logical and aesthetic permanence of space. Due to such functioning of space and objects, our experience of memory becomes something different, not only on the visual and interactive levels. The Random-Access and real time logic determines also the material shape of the space and enforces constant reorientation. It is necessary to maintain compatibility towards new variables.

Urban Policies of Postmemory

I have pointed to the media forms which change our understanding of the world and our ways of living in it. Construction of imagination, sensitivity and cultural practices with participation of technology and communication devices has additionally a social and political dimension. We construct memory and ways of remembering also in this manner – in this case, collective memory and ways of managing it, modelling of imagination about the social structure and group identity.

In my opinion, memory and cities are subject to similar digitalization influences these days. One is the technocultural as I analyse them earlier and the other one is being drawn between two political, economic and social strategies. On the one hand, technological standards and the idea of a *smart city* are more and more effectively implemented. This is a project which, in practice, technocratically, commercially and politically takes possession of the area of communication, culture and social life due to implementation of an increasing number of surveillance systems, automated control of data and things, and artificial intelligence systems. On the other hand, largely as a counterbalance, cities become open and democratic, thanks to grass root initiatives of inhabitants and citizens. Their aim is to transform public spaces into decentralized areas of free circulation of content and resources. They exploit the ideas about the forms of electronic networks and act on the basis of models and structures which proved effective in the case of the digital ecosystem. The ultimate point is to integrate both these dimensions of contemporary practices within the framework of a holistic cultural project.

Nowadays, the tension between these two strategies determines the communication character of cities to a relatively small extent. However, with intensification of technocratic tendencies, actions towards the opposite direction shall also become more visible. Business and politics treat the city as a battlefield in the fight for full control over consumers and citizens, whereas they, encouraged by the social energy released and concentrated by Internet and the digital ecosystem, prefer to define the city as an open format where data and networks are free from the political and business control and are a public property of the open community. Many rules and forms of our social life are at stake here – relations of power, control, empowerment of citizens, causative abilities, memory and identity. I will discuss now both strategies, analysing their capacity for transformation of cities and memory.

Smart and Open City

Under the brand name of *Smart City* powerful technocratic project is to imbue the space with technological solutions which shall be capable of autonomic operation within the web structure of the Internet of Things. Behind it there are huge investments and IT business powers, such as IBM, Intel, Google and Oracle. They share a conviction that, at a certain stage of technoculture development, participation of the human factor can be limited and replaced with artificial intelligence which shall take care of the needs and wellbeing of citizens better than they do themselves. The technological market supplies the consumers with increasingly intuitive, convenient and self-steering machines whose task is to autonomously organize movement of data, goods and services. In a smart city, intelligent things and services will operate side by side with people and will manage many activities which have been “analogue and human” so far, for instance do shopping, monitor and adjust houses and public spaces. Such a city and its space are supposed to take care of people staying in them, to satisfy their demands and cater for their needs.

One among few important among the neoliberal ideology, so called free market, technocratic regimes of urban politics and yet probably the most controversial, at least if we judge by the current state of the public debate, the political and market face of this project is connected with the phenomenon of control and surveillance of citizens by means of digital technologies – *a digital panopticon* (Lyon, 2013; Datta, 2015). All interactive and web technologies, the whole digital ecosystem, make their users pay a high price for freedom of interaction and multimediality.

This price is the consent, given more or less consciously, to redefinition of intimacy, privacy and acceptance of constant surveillance and supervision by the media mechanisms – CCTV, sensors, data and software. Using data and interfaces we leave our digital footprints which are eagerly noted, gathered and exploited. Software, additionally, serves as a tool for political production and control of space. In the mutual constituency of ‘code/space’ when the software failed, the space could not be produced as intended (Kitchin, 2014). Market entities (just to mention such Silicon Valley giants as Facebook, Amazon or Twitter) and the state apparatus have joint interests here, which can be summarized as the most detailed knowledge about citizens and consumers. This is the best possible capital to monitor their decisions and actions, and to control future. Through total knowledge about our moves, preferences, logistics and social networks in which we function, the state and market entities learn who we are, how we act and what we think. There is a general social conviction about the face of this surveillance that Internet sees and remembers everything, that is to say, economic, administration and military entities operating within it.

In this respect, *postmemory* can be defined not only in the spirit of Plato’s fears about taking knowledge out of the natural, biologically credible medium of thought and speech by individuals or cultural and social systems. In this case, the point is the organized, systemic draining of knowledge outside organisms and parallel construction of a technological system of knowledge management at the semiotic level, concerning the ways of understanding of the world and meanings attributed to it, and at the behavioural level where data registering the biological and cognitive operations are drained and processed. Such total knowledge of surveillance systems about us and our actions is a politically controlled surrogate of total perception. Furthermore, it seems to start implementing the principles of total recall – mediatized and mediated by politically controlled technologies.

The opposite of the technocratic panopticon concealed behind the concept of a Smart City seems to be two trends of the urban culture which try to domesticate the achievements of the digital and web technologies. What I mean here is turning the space into an open interface, as well as social management of digital data creation and circulation – turning the city into an Open City formula, a part of Open Culture meta-project. The first trend consists in hacking of technological solutions applied in the urban space, as well as supplying it with alternative, open and socially managed solutions. In this case, opening of the city is achieved on the basis of experiences of street art, free and open culture movement, city movements and performance actions (Ring, 2013; De Waal et. al, 2015). These are, for instance: interception of pictures from CCTV, extraction of data unavailable to citizens or

concealed from them and making various analysis on their basis. This is the way of action followed by e.g. the authors of the NYC Surveillance Camera Project, who mapped the location of CCTV cameras and on this basis, they compiled city maps showing the location of these cameras (Mediaeaters).

The other trend is opening and making public of data sources and collections and using them outside the official rationed circulation. Transparency of data is today one of the fashionable policies of cities and the state, but only when it is followed by citizens or non-governmental circles it becomes fully authentic. Such actions have an emancipating, grass roots and democratizing character – in the Polish conditions, they are implemented mostly by NGOs, culture institutions and partly the education sector. The entities of this kind undertake e.g. to make public various types of financial statements, contracts, archive information, analyses and reports, which officials frequently close in filing cabinets, in fear of their possible controversial nature and impact. In Lublin, the Freedom Foundation regularly “wrests” information from the public bodies, which is concealed by them while it should be publicly available – this sometimes results in proceedings before courts and judgements imposing such transparency (Fundacja Wolności). Another way to open the city and the space in general is aiming to use in them such technologies which have an open character by nature, that is, instead of systems protected by patents and by legal and functional restrictions it is possible to use non-profit open source solutions which enable application of many procedures blocked in the commercial versions. An example can be an installation *Cyanometer. A monument to the blue of the sky* by Martin Bricelj Baraga, placed e.g. in the public space of Wrocław, whose task, apart from a number of aesthetic aspects, is to gather and process data connected with the amount of light above the city and to make the data public. The work has been created on the basis of open source computational technologies and software, and shares knowledge generated by it in the same way (Cyanometer).

The result of implementation of the open city idea will probably not consist in effective weakening of the smart city narration, but it will surely enable its certain disarmament and opening. Interactivity, access to data and opportunities of their processing can cease to be only the domain of technocrats and become a public property, potentially available to all those interested. Applying these changes to remembering and memory we can try and assume that the argument between technocrats and citizens, users and consumers pertains to being authorized to co-write scenarios of collective memory, to a multitude and a variety of sources feeding them, and possibilities to use them as resources for various, non-predefined, actions.

Coda: Digital Postmemory

The fate of the city, culture and memory immersed in digital and web transformations and imaginations following them is an extremely dynamic phenomenon. Digitality changes memory and remembering in many ways: it is hungry for any symptoms of knowledge and data concerning all what we think, do and leave behind; it digitalizes these resources and launches on the basis of them a feast of processes and algorithms to manage them; it focuses on immediateness, post-spatiality and being beyond time. In these conditions, all anthropological, social and cultural parameters of our life and self-definition become subjected to far-reaching reconstruction and negotiations.

It is most of all the case when we consider modern cities as cultural spheres where our lives are happening. It is the city where the modernity was created and where modern collective imagination was shaped. Is it now the cities where the traditional material space was first converted into mediated space of communication, information flow, politics of panopticon and now, where its mediated shape is translated into algorithmic, databased, software driven and available through visual interactions environment.

In the conditions of the analogue culture and its dominant model of one-way, hierarchical communication, I remind you that an addressee of the media had to remain in the role of a passive recipient succumbing to the charm of media spectacles – to see, hear and read, but not to speak, create images or write. In the era of the digital revolution such a communication model (one to many) is balanced by the model: many to many and in many ways. Therefore, also in memory there is a clash of two competing communicative imaginations – analogue and digital cultures and, along with them, also of memory understood in its traditional sense and its digital incarnation, which I have represented as a dialogue whose participants are: traditional ROM format and accidental and mobile RAM logic. Same applies to the cities: from being a book to be read and memorized, they're becoming an interactive playgrounds.

These changes can be understood in accordance with Bauman who pointed to the fluidity of the contemporary life and identities being inside it. However, Bauman's description should be supplemented with an account how this fluidity is created and influenced by digital technologies and the social and political arguments and exchange taking place around them. As I was trying to show that new understanding of memory, imagination and public space is

mediatized. Particularly by the imaginaries created around the influence of digital ecosystem which suggests that the media are being symbolically disassembled into independent parts of data, software and interfaces. There is also another imaginariium stimulated by digital ecosystem where the interactions with fluid data networks are the replacement for passive media sensing. Immersed in this fluidity of memory and life, their interactivity and digitalization, we need to remember about the fundamental differences exceeding technological rules and their imaginary adaptations and social translations. Traditional actors, functioning in accordance with the unchanging principles of rule and control and unwilling to lose their position to the benefit of new distribution of roles and communication possibilities, want to have a strong influence on this new ecosystem. However, it seems that citizens, media technology users and co-authors of media sensitivities and ideas, that is most of us, should be active in this area and get empowered not only to be able to understand digital technologies and their social contexts, but also to become actors and creators of change by means of them. Otherwise, in the face of the technocratic version of memory and total control we could be in danger of equally total civic and cultural amnesia and dispersion of ideas other than those imposed by the market and politics in the carnival of visual spectacles, smart interactions, charm of tactility and variation.

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