

environment of everyday activities has, for most people, an unprecedented shallowness: the city seems comprised only of the here and now; historical depth is absent.

The multcenters net, which Lynch and Lloyd Rodwin, his colleague at MIT, jointly proposed as a model for the city of the near future is today becoming the actual pattern of many metropolises.³ These centers, which cater to specific sociopolitical or ethnic tendencies, are not central districts. They are nothing more than options from which citizens, leading varied lives, may choose; their forms too are diversifying.

And what of the urban community—does it still exist? The community model we unconsciously shared fifty years ago—a stable, synchronic group of spaces centered on housing and neighborhood facilities—has been vanishing. The main factors contributing to this development are the geographical mobility of urban residents, the growing inequality among citizens that is promoting that mobility, and increasing treatment of land as a mere commodity. The fall of the Berlin Wall at the end of the 1980s accelerated those trends, particularly the worldwide transformation of cities into marketable commodities. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall gave people in surrounding regions new freedoms, but the elimination of the safety net of state socialism also promoted the sudden expansion beyond national borders of capital, information, and desire. And the breakup of the Soviet Union, until then the greatest hypothetical enemy of the West among Communist states, spurred the liberalization of the Chinese economy and led to a precipitous change in the balance of the world market.

Historically, the city has been an organic entity composed of people of different economic, social, and ethnic or religious backgrounds. However, people of relatively similar background have naturally tended to create distinct communities, and through these communities contribute to the maintenance of the city as a whole. This phenomenon of people of similar background clustering together might be called “territorialization.” The city remains stable as long as balance is maintained among the different territories and friction at boundaries is minimal.

The dynamics of friction can destabilize urban territories and the communities that come into contact with them. The area around the central district of Philadelphia, of which Bacon had spoken so passionately at the 1956 conference, is, in a painful irony, among the most decayed areas in America today. The same destabilization may