URBAN STORIES

PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE BY
READING THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

City: Los Angeles | Tools: The urbanization of suburbia

The fast development, growth and merging of communities and whole cities is one of the most heavily discussed topics in the field of urban design. The attempts to describe this urbanization phenomenon of why and how cities grow, spread, sprawl and what terminology to use: metropolitanization, conurbation, poly-centralization, suburbanization etc. is very present and visible in numerous publications. As some authors see it as an inevitable and irreversible direction of urban development and socities, others favorize the argument of a contant change in cycles - also pointing out the negative implications and possible scenarios. Below you see can read the theories of two very renowned scholars: Lewis Mumford and Patrick Geddes and some of their visions and ideas:

"What matter to us, who look at it for the moment in this detached way from very far above, or even really to the actual citizens themselves to-day, those old boundaries of the countries, which were once traced so painfully and are still so strictly maintained, from use and wont or for purposes other than practical ones? What really matter nowadays the divisions between innumerable consistent villages and minor boroughs whose historic names are swallowed up, apparently for ever, like those microscopic plants, those tiny plants and animals, which a big spreading amoeba so easily includes, so restlessly devours? Here for most practical purposes is obviously a vas new unity, long ago well described as a 'province covered with houses'".

Geddes, Patrick (1915): 'Cities in Evolution'. Williams&Norgate. London. p. 26-27.

"The persistence of such overgrown containers would indicate that they are concrete manifestations of the dominant forces in our present civilization; and the fact that the same signs of overgrowth and overconcentration exist (...) show that these forces are universal ones, operating almost without respect to the prevailing ideologies or ideal goals. While one must recognize such facts, it would be premature to believe that these processes are final and irreversible: we have already surveyed a vast amount of data that demonstrates that, even in cultures far less committed to quantitative growth than our own, there comes a point when the tumorous organ will destroy the organism at whose expense it has reached such swollen dimensions. Meanwhile normal birth, growth, and renewal may elsewhere shift the balance."

Mumford, Lewis (1961): 'The city in history-its origins, its transformations, and its prospects'. Harcourt, Brace&World. New York. p. 526-527.

Explain briefly the authors' points of view, supported by the knowledge extracted from the Los Angeles lecture. Use the rear page for your explanations.