

SPACES & FLOWS

AN INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL

of Urban
& ExtraUrban Studies

Volume 2, Issue 2

The Notion of Food Surplus Shaping the Urban
Landscape: A Historical Analysis through the Work
of Paul Veyne and Rem Koolhaas

Andrea Bosio

SPACES AND FLOWS: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN AND
EXTRAURBAN STUDIES

<http://spacesandflows.com/journal/>

First published in 2012 in Champaign, Illinois, USA
by Common Ground Publishing LLC
www.CommonGroundPublishing.com

ISSN: 2152-7857

© 2012 (individual papers), the author(s)

© 2012 (selection and editorial matter) Common Ground

All rights reserved. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the applicable copyright legislation, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the publisher. For permissions and other inquiries, please contact
<cg-support@commongroundpublishing.com>.

SPACES AND FLOWS: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN AND
EXTRAURBAN STUDIES is peer-reviewed, supported by rigorous processes of criterion-referenced article ranking and qualitative commentary, ensuring that only intellectual work of the greatest substance and highest significance is published.

Typeset in Common Ground Markup Language using CGPublisher multichannel
typesetting system
<http://www.commongroundpublishing.com/software/>

The Notion of Food Surplus Shaping the Urban Landscape: A Historical Analysis through the Work of Paul Veyne and Rem Koolhaas

Andrea Bosio, Griffith University, QLD, Australia

Abstract: The paper considers the notion of surplus as a collective benefit linked to the food production and consumption system, influencing the transformations of the urban conglomerates—densely populated places characterized by intense commercial and political activities—and the lives of people living within. It aims to analyse it through a historical comparison of the thesis of Paul Veyne, who explores, in his book “Bread and Circuses” (1976), the notion of Greek and Roman Euergetism as a form of collective pride generating public benefits, and the contemporary analysis of Rem Koolhaas in “Project on the City 2: Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping” (2001), who assimilates the modern notion of surplus to shopping, a consuming process dramatically influencing the contemporary era and shaping the modern landscape. According to the assumption that space and food contribute to the specificity and recognisability of a place, both ancient Euergetism and the modern concept of shopping generate urbanity. While in antiquity, according to Veyne, consumption played an active role as a social, economic, and political force through the habit of gift giving. Today, according to Koolhaas, the consumer has lost his rights towards the products, becoming a passive receiver in a world that no longer needs him to be perpetuated. Following the cultural approach of Paul Veyne, who considers history as the sum of its economic, social and environmental aspects, the methodology of the French sociologist Michel de Certeau, who considers ordinary people as creative entities within a social system, and the theories on consumption of Pierre Bourdieu, who sees in consumption the duality of material goods and the symbolism of a cultural capital, the paper aims to trace a common line between the past and the present on the topic, considering the consumer as the main protagonist involved in the transformation of the space through the action of consuming food surplus.

Keywords: Architecture, History of Architecture, Cultural History, History, Food Production and Consumption, Food Studies, Sociology

“ARCHITECTURAL CRITIQUE IS moving necessarily towards sociology and it is fundamental to investigate on the genetic causes and the psychological determinations of architectural phenomenon to understand the present decay and intervene on it” (E. N. Rogers, 1961, p.102)

The analysis of consumption and the contemporary phenomenon of shopping, which is here considered as a consumerist activity invading and transforming the urban realm, needs a deep investigation on the roots of the dynamics connected to the food system to understand the essence and the transformations of this phenomenon within society through history. Assuming history as “The gradual accumulation of corrections due to the observation of reality” (E. Gombrich, *Art and illusion*, 1960), it seems relevant to analyze the phenomenon from two opposite perspectives through time: through the study and the critical analysis and comparison of the work of Paul Veyne, *Bread and circuses* (1976) and the work of a team of Harvard academics directed by the Architect Rem Koolhaas, *Project on the City 2: the*

Harvard design school guide to shopping (2001), we aim to understand the notion of consumption from a cultural, historical, and sociological perspective, analyzing the two works as poles of an historical and cultural timeframe, where the notion of cultural history is interpreted as a methodology distinguishing different kinds of history (Peter Burke, *What is cultural history?*, 2004); considering the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel De Certeau, who applies a methodology of study considering culture as a series of practices of the everyday life conducted by ordinary men (*The practice of everyday life*, 1984), also allow us to investigate on the consumption phenomenon in terms of “representation of embodiments of the social structure of community” (Burke 2004), performances, and social drama. As for the observation of the contemporary city analyzed in *The Harvard design school guide to shopping*, we aim to criticize its cultural and social implication, assuming Clifford Geertz’s perspective of reading the city “just as one can read a folktale or a philosophical text” (Burke, 2004).

According to Oswyn Murray¹, the resonance of Veyne is due to the fact that he delineated the activity of human society as a struggle to dominate and exploit the scarce raw materials of wealth, or as an attempt to harness scarcity to profit through the inventiveness of man and his entrepreneurial skills. In a context like the antiquity, where the notion of modern economy based on supply and demand was unknown, Veyne tries to explain the economic forces of the past as connected to society through the notion of *gift giving*, a different form of economy regulating scarcity and abundance: economy can be seen and interpreted in terms of power relations, where the activities of society are at the center and are officially recognized by the community. At the same time, though, in a society based on a *gift giving* economy, return and reciprocity are necessarily unequal and incommensurable, shaping the concept of gift as a ritual, or the basis for a social and political organization, creating and expressing relations of power. Through the explanation of the *gift giving* economy Veyne wants, ultimately, to study the history of everyday life, in particular the history of pleasure connected to food and drink rituals, entertainment, and the values they express: the particular ritualization of food and beverage consumption characterizing different societies is determined by the use of the surplus produced by the society itself.

Here we refer to the notion of surplus as an excess produced and then either consumed or stored, and characterized, under a Marxist perspective, by a cultural and a physical aspect. Quoting Carolyn Steel, we stress the fact that food surplus has always existed in human history², and has been consequently shaping the built environment³. Through a perspective considering Bourdieu’s theory on taste, we argue that the notion of surplus is influenced by the cultural way through which it is produced and used. Upon this premises, we therefore argue the Greek and Roman society to have considered food surplus in an inclusive way within economic and social habits, integrating its notion with the fundamental characteristics a society needs to survive. Today instead we stress food surplus having become a commodity,

¹ In Veyne, P. (1976) *Bread and circuses: Historical sociology and political pluralism*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, pp.vii-xxii

² “Grain was the means by which the land could be made to yield a food surplus—one which over the course of two millennia became increasingly more secure, as the intensive gathering of wild grasses evolved into the conscious management of crops, through the saving and scattering of seed: until it became what we would now describe as farming” (Steel, 2008, p.12)

³ “City-dwellers in the past had no choice but to acknowledge the role of food in their lives. It was present in everything they did” (Steel, 2008, p.6)

outside the fundamental logics of survival and therefore non-essential. In this perspective, even monetary wealth appears differently: while in a society considering the excess in its general term as an intrinsic entity to society even monetary excess in the hand of few people becomes a collective benefit, in a society, such as our contemporary one, considering the excess as a commodity, money becomes a unilateral medium to individual wealth.

Veyne offers an inventory of differences in the Greek and Roman society, through which it is possible to analyze modern society by the reflection and the comparison with a coherent alternative. We have to stress that, for his aim of observing the phenomenon of *gift giving* restricted to antiquity, he doesn't continue the narrative after the dissipation of the Roman empire, but gives the reader just the brief notion that the *gift giving* phenomenon is still visible in Italian Principates as a remnant of the network of devotions between magnates during the Roman Republic, or in the French courts during the Ancient Regime, as a dualistic relationship between the Emperor and the plebs as found in the Roman Empire; these parallelisms are useful to us in order to understand that the essence of the peculiar phenomenon of *gift giving* has survived and evolved in different shapes. Veyne produces also some clever parallelisms between Greek and Roman society and our more recent history, as he quotes J. Lambert's assertion on the Brazilian political election in 1958, making the reader understand the fact that gift giving in the Roman political context is not comparable with our modern notion of corruption by describing a real modern case⁴.

These parallelisms are the links to the second author examined, Rem Koolhaas, through two of a series of four books analyzing the city and its social, economic and cultural aspects; in *Project on the city 1: Mutations* (2001), the notion of the city is explored in terms of a programmatic configuration, taking the Roman city and its structure as a model, seen by the authors as the medium used to assert and maintain imperial authority, and the physical entity through which Rome expressed and consolidated a global temporal power. Jean Attali⁵ explains that the Roman city can be seen as "an articulated system of movement in all directions, and its buildings, spread across the inhabited universe, are but the vessels or relays-points of this system" (Attali 2001, p.22). The urban peculiarity of the Roman Empire lays in the application of the same urban model, responding to the local conditions, in all of its cities, annulling the relation between the center and the colonies in terms of spatial and external appearance, and assuming interaction as the principle of variation; the city assumes the character of *specific* and *generic* at the same time, creating a contradiction of *global* and *local*. He claims however that the contemporary city has ceased to be the main object, and has become instead the condition within which urban interventions happen and take control.

Analyzing the critical position of Rem Koolhaas, Attali suggests that the strength of Koolhaas' thought is the opposition between architecture and urbanism, since maintaining a difference between the two elements permits a renewal of our understanding of cities. Even if urbanism remains still theoretically the art of acting in the city revealing the possibilities within it, Koolhaas thinks architects have to look away from historical models, and therefore from the system of judgments.

⁴ "When elections take place the candidate presents his followers with gift in kind or in money, but what would be corruption in an advance society is here only the legitimate result of the relations of personal solidarity that unite the leader and his followers. The leader is not buying their vote: they were already his." (J.Lambert 1963, in Veyne, P. *Bread and Circuses*, p.216)

⁵ in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 1: Mutations*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp.20–23.

Clearly, Koolhaas displays a cynical and detached approach to reality, which is expressed also by his architectures, a-contextualized and a-critical toward the surrounding world, either mirroring the context like the CCTV in Beijing or falling from the sky like a meteor as the Casa da Musica in Porto⁶. We'll see how this approach to Architecture and reality can be productive in capturing the essence of the pictured moment, although it needs an historical integration in order to be critical and criticisable. *Project on the city 2* starts from the premises of *Mutations* and moves on to explore the consumerist aspect of life in the contemporary city in the form of *Shopping*, although it gives no resolution or alternative strategy for the future. However, the methodology of Michel De Certeau can give us the necessary instruments allowing to analyze and criticize the work of the Harvard team; in *The practices of everyday life* (1984), De Certeau stresses that analyzing the everyday practices of production only through statistics is not enough to comprehend the phenomenon, since statistics study the material aspects of these practices, but not the inner forms and movements within. In analyzing those movements he proposes the distinction between *strategies*, force-relationships acted in a specific space by subjects of will and power towards other exterior elements, and *tactics*, fragmented actions made by the others in order to manipulate events turning them into opportunity. Tactics, in opposition to strategies, don't have any specific space of action, and count on time to catch the propitious moments. According to De Certeau, the modern issue connected with tactics and strategies lays in the relationship between the consumers and the technical system: since the involvement of the subject diminishes in proportion to the technocratic expansion of these systems, individuals progressively detach themselves from them without being able to escape and therefore act through uncoordinated and fragmented tactics trying to trick the systems. When the consumer is not able to manipulate and re-model the product, he disconnects from it, becoming a pure receiver, like a television viewer, the mirror of the producing system that no longer needs him in order to produce itself. Consequently the system of production separates the actual action, or engagement of the consumer, from other limited spaces of action where the consumer is allowed to move, in indirect and errant trajectories.

In the Antiquity the acts of *giving*-which here we can link to the modern notion of production-and *receiving*-which implies both in antiquity and in modernity a consumption activity-were not separated, but linked by the notion of moral value. Veyne refers to Aristotle's discussion on the art of gift giving and receiving, picturing the liberal man as the one who is inclined to give away his fortune rather than increasing it; he is naturally required to give more than others, and imposes upon himself this duty as a moral and ethical code. Gifts, generally called *Euergesia*, which the liberal man distributes, can be considered as a public benefit, since they were directed to the community and not to a few specific subjects. Euergetism was therefore a phenomenon happening from above towards the community, involving the totality of the population of the society, but being directed by a small group of privileged individuals, linked to the people below by a mutual relationship of wealth and power. "Euergetism is thus seen as a form of pride that causes collective works to be performed" (P. Veyne 1976, p.17), in the sense that the community expected a contribution to the public benefits, mostly in the form of banquet, given by the rich, who, by doing so, was enlarging his honour and his moral power within the society. Analysing the two main different types of Euergetism, *voluntary*, stating for gifts provided without any obligations, and *ob honorem*,

⁶ Projects contained in Koolhaas, R. (2004) *Content*. Taschen: New York.

including gifts given on solemn occasions, the author pictures an inner contradiction, or, in our opinion, an antithetic consequence of this phenomenon, that sees on one side the Euergetes—the people donating gifts-competing with each other in inventing liberalities bigger than the others, and on the other side the plebs pressing them to obtain games and pleasures.

Significant is the contrast between the figures of the notable and the merchant, representing in a figurative way *leisure* and *labour*, respectively: the notable was traditionally involved in agriculture, an activity that made him rich and was not regarded as work, through which he was considered able to fulfil a political position as a second activity and to manage the affairs of the community without being paid, except for symbolic wages, as only the excess produced was involved in trading; the merchant was instead involved in economic activities and therefore in a speculative trade he had to manage in order to survive. Since the ruling class possessed the surplus and decided what to do with it, we can then say that “Euergetism is based on unequal distribution of the surplus and unequal power in deciding how the surplus is to be used” (P. Veyne 1976, p.56). Although Veyne suggests that managing the surplus for redistribution in the form of games or banquet logically must have been much less costly than adequately feeding an entire population, which reinforces the notion of a gift giving society as an unequal social system based on an equal redistribution of surplus. It is interesting what Veyne says in relation to growth and economic crisis: he stresses that, since the power of investing was concentrated all in the ruling class hands, any economic crisis should be interpreted as a moral crisis perhaps, since it would be caused by bad strategic actions by those who detain the power.

According to McDonough and Braungart (*Cradle to Cradle*, 2002) the expansion of the Roman Empire was not only motivated by political and social implications, but also by the need to support the vast usage of timber, food and other resources by expanding to unspoiled territories and take natural resources from them. They stress that early agricultural communities continued the practice of discarding biological waste into the ground to fertilise the soil until the first big stable communities emerged and sanitation became a problem; while humans began to find ways to discard their waste, at the same time they began to take more from the soil and to use natural resources without caring for their regeneration. The consequent crisis of the Roman Empire can be then considered, upon these considerations, also as a crisis of the strategic plans for the use and consumption of natural resources and the political and social implication connected to their control, and possibly, assuming it as the first collapse of the western world, having similar dynamics with the contemporary global food surplus crisis. Through Veyne’s interpretation of Euergetism⁷, our first interpretative conclusion deals with the concepts of equality and equal distribution, apparently similar, but indeed greatly different: it appears in fact that, thanks to the inequality—which, by the way, opens up the question whether or not the Roman system was considered unequal by the Romans themselves—of the ancient Roman and Greek society, food surplus could be distributed ‘equally’, according to social and moral laws, thus maintaining, thanks to those laws, a balance between consumption and production from natural resources, as the speculative use of the land was balanced by the use of its products by a restricted group of people.

⁷ “euergesiai are satisfactions granted to the indefeasible rights of individuals or groups. They redistribute social advantage between the ruling class and the ruled and in this way ensure the equilibrium of the community. People receive collective benefits which compensate for the unequal sharing of wealth and power.” (P. Veyne 1976, p.75)

Arguing the difference of the social gap existing between a Roman senator and a plebeian and between a Greek notable and a citizen, and the importance of political activity in Roman society as a way to achieve glory, Veyne stresses that Euergetism in Roman society became an instrument to boost political careers, where games were not considered as public ceremonies anymore, but as a gift from their producer, a *munus*. Games were originally entertainments offered by the city to the Gods, followed by banquets and a sacrifice, but, since the need to satisfy the people with pleasures, and the thirst for the political rewards connected to them overtook piety⁸, during the last two centuries of the Republic the games lost their religious dimension. Banquets were anyway less widespread in Rome than in the Greek world, or at least they were restricted only to a part of the population, since the plebs could not participate. Redistribution was also very different in Roman Euergetism from the Greek Euergetism, since the pressure from the state to induce the notable to pay Euergeries was inexistent⁹: according to Veyne, Caius Gracchus's corn law, which required to have corn permanently on sale at a competitive price allowing the citizens to buy just a certain amount of bushels per month, was created to prevent famine and speculation guaranteeing subsistence only to a minority of the people, failing to achieve an equal distribution and a reduction of relative inequality. The author stresses the fact that during the Roman Empire the people involved in this shared consumption of luxury were only those living in the city of Rome as only Rome was in the sphere of action where the monarch's magnificence would be displayed, more or less like a French royal court during the Ancien régime. Redistribution during the Empire meant then "an approximation between justice and the *status quo*, between the two aims of politics" (P. Veyne 1976, p.417), as the author claims that Euergetism as redistribution existed, but subordinately: bread and circuses were distributed in fact in connection with festivals and entertainment, which acted like an instrument of mutual power, showing to people symbolic proofs offered as a service by the ruling class, which at the same time was detaining the power over the population.

Our next step will be trying to define a possible connection between Euergetism in the Greek and Roman world and our *Supermodernity* (Marc Auge', 1995), in a process following De Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics, and the lesson of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, who stresses the necessity, in analysing the contemporary protagonists, of looking at them as we look at historical figures, or, in other words, looking at them from a different temporal perspective, from far away, as the differences then will blur into a whole cultural entity, still characterized by peculiar vibrations. As we look at the phenomenon of gift giving, we can trace its evolution, its transformation and its decadence, from its Greek form, where it appeared to be perfectly integrated into the society as a social and material way of redistribution, to the Roman Imperial age, where it started to be a tool for the rulers to acquire and maintain power; even its further transformation, through the Italian Principates and the French Ancien Régime, were still the remnants of the ancient Roman form. In this opinion, therefore, the great transformation of gift giving as surplus redistribution started with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the consequent transformation of the city from pre-industrial to post-industrial.

⁸ from the Latin *Pietas*, meaning the devotion to Gods or ancestors that could be expressed in form of gifts or donations

⁹ "The power of the oligarchy was not founded upon bread and circuses." (P. Veyne 1976, p.261)

The invention of mechanization and the consequent advent of mass production shifted the attention from the man to the machine, and therefore disintegrated not just the relationship between the man and natural resources, but also between all the social, economic, and cultural components of society. Since Euergetism was a phenomenon strongly linking the man, the urban landscape, and the social and cultural rules and interactions, the disintegration of its ground brought about the fragmentation of Euergetism itself, in the form into which we deem it to have evolved during the centuries spanning from the dissolution of the Roman Empire and the Industrial Revolution. Looking at the present age with ancient eyes, we can in fact observe Euergetism in different aspects of society: we can see the remnant of Euergetism *ob honorem* in our respect for the deceased and our material way of bringing alive their memory through physical monuments; we can see political Euergetism, in the form typical of the Imperial Roman age, in the present political corruption. Here, the only difference is that, while it is understandable through Veyne's work that Roman corruption was a *strategy* of the rich to rule a world that would be sustainable only in that way, in our present time, dominated by the democratic and egalitarian ideas of Enlightenment and the French Revolution, corruption appears to be only a *tactic* of common people that, by tricking society, want to achieve a relative higher status through the destruction of common social and moral values. It is more difficult to trace a connection between Euergetism in regards to food surplus and its redistribution: by observing the contemporary world one could argue that the phenomenon of a systematic redistribution of food surplus has disappeared; indeed, here we argue that this phenomenon is still alive, but in a form acting with great material and moral disparities, due to its complete disconnection from the essence of society and its surviving values.

While imperial Euergetism was an expression of power through entertainment, banquets, and public feast, could we argue that the countryside fairs described by Rubin in *Beyond bread and circuses: professional competitive eating* (2008), could mean the same expression of control? Here we see the American modern countryside fair, a phenomenon involving food consumption, both visual and material, in a communal sharing, as a depiction of modern consumerism, a placebo to distract the masses, through pleasure, from the unequal food distribution in the world and our disconnection with our land. McMorrough¹⁰ stresses that shopping exists in a state of tension between the need to be physically limited by distinctive borders in order to impose restrictions registered in language, and the need to consume surplus, identified as a non essential excess, as an emancipatory action that creates "an equivalence between market and festival, which underlies both the jubilation of shopping and the flexibility of its representation" (McMorrough 2001, p.198). Although from an historical perspective, the ingestion of food in country fairs or public events has ancient origins, from Roman pagan traditions like Bacchanalia to religious ritual gatherings organized to celebrate the harvest and the connection with the Earth, in the post-industrial world fairs and festivals instead became the celebration of the dominance over nature through the exposition of domestic and agricultural technology pieces, thus breaking the connection between the physical environment and the cultural transformations operated by men over it. Rubin then sees eating competitions, or "sanctioned high-speed feasting" (Rubin 2008), as a popular phenomenon attempting to reconnect to the historical origin of feasting.

¹⁰ in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 2: Harvard Design School guide to Shopping*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, p.192–203.

In *Snacking as ritual: eating behaviour in public places* (P. Vannini, *Food for thought*, 2008), food consumption is described as the ritual focusing on the specific action of eating snacks, seen as one of the main activities relating to how food characterized the living of the urban and social contemporary space. According to Vannini the social ritual aspect of eating strengthens relationships and can reinforce ethnic and religious group identities, acting as a functional mechanism for maintaining a social and ecological balance through the distribution and redistribution of food. Furthermore, food is considered by Vannini as a medium of communication through which social dramas, narratives, and cultural performances are practiced and negotiated. We can see here a similarity with antiquity in the way food and communal eating act on community and social habits, as snacking in public still today is a communicative and generative ritual of action, a social drama involved both in biological regeneration and cultural reproduction, and therefore generating and transforming personal or communal cultural identities: what has been the shift to the contemporary approach to consumption then? What is its cause?

In *The Harvard school guide to shopping*, Shopping is described as *the defining activity of public life and the pre-requisite for urbanity*¹¹. Shopping has become the biggest medium by which the market interacts with our life and influences it, either in its physicality and its virtuality, which is naturally characterized by instability and temporality. Rem Koolhaas analyses the virtuality of shopping, claiming *Junkspace* as a modern way of thinking, spreading in digital world, in languages, in economy and ecology, through the confusion between reality and virtuality itself. Mc Morrough stresses the apparent contradiction of the Greek Agora, used both for public life and as a marketplace, although the market began outside of the town, differentiating shopping from the daily activities. An evolution of the Agora is represented by the French arcades (*passages*) in Paris, connective spatial elements linking the experience of the urban with spaces of consumption. With the contemporary advent of big isolated shopping malls, shopping then finds in the suburban setting a model within which to operate without the city, embracing the idea of urbanity as an instrument to fulfil the need of consuming surplus; in the organization of the regimes of entertainment Rem Koolhaas thinks the shopping space, by removing the unpredictable from the urban space, reduces the concept of urban to an undetermined urbanity. What The Harvard guide to shopping does not seem to do is to consider the older shopping space in history, the market, as a fundamental component in social and urban life, and new forms of consumption relating to the use of technological instruments like the Internet.

In *Food and cultural studies* (2004) Raymond Williams analyzes various forms of retailing and observes that all cultural formations contain elements of the dominant, represented by the supermarket, existing in uneasy and uneven proximity with the residual shopping spaces, represented by markets. The author claims that, although the dispersal of working class communities into outer suburbs and new towns generated the possibility for the proliferation of big shopping malls, the markets and the new online shopping also have been adapting to the new fragmented urban landscape and the new mobility, by extending the individuals' spatial relationship with the site of consumption and making them feel like sovereign consumers. In this context the supermarket assumes the role of mobile event: due to its position outside of the city it makes the distinction between local and global collapsing, since the consumer

¹¹ "The relationship between shopping and the city has, over the last half century, inverted from shopping as a component of the city to shopping as the prerequisite to urbanity." (Mc Morrough, 2001, p.194)

would use the car no matter how far the shopping place would be, disabling then the perception of going from the textured, heterogeneous space of locality to a more homogenized space. If we compare the modern urban distribution of shopping sites with the Roman urban disposition, we find no difference in terms of principles: the *specific* and the *generic* are condensed in the application of the same urban model. Our argument therefore lays in positions reaffirming the necessity to reconnect architecture and urbanism and to study the cultural patterns within this integrated system, in opposition with the thoughts of Rem Koolhaas exposed before. We agree with Rem Koolhaas and his position on the modern shopping space expressed in the small text titled *Junkspace* (2001)¹², as he argues that the modern space of shopping cancels distinctions and confuses intention with realization; it replaces hierarchy with accumulation, composition with addiction¹³.

Sze Tsung Leong¹⁴ explains the dynamics of the contemporary relationship between shopping and shoppers through the notion of control space: control space tries to predict, understand and influence the processes of urban life through the medium of information, reducing space to a mere ever-changing and mobile physical background recording urban life in terms of numerical quantification and categories. We have to stress that in the antiquity, as the concept of the supermarket and its illusion of the unlimited availability of products had not yet being implemented, the distinction between a mobile and uneven distributed shopping space and the more localized and event-like space of the market was absent.

We can now see clearly the similarities in terms of power relations between Roman society and its gift-giving system, and our contemporary system: assuming the market as a stable form of exchange between food production and consumption and as the historical place involving the conscious and unconscious expression of freedom and differences¹⁵, we can argue that the supermarket and the associated mass consumerist system has the same logic of the ancient Roman entertainment system, provided to sedate the masses with the illusion, through food, to feel free, with the only difference that, while the ancient Roman system was based upon rigid moral codes and ethical and religious rules, modern food shopping has no moral buffers, and acts for the mere sake of economic profit. Modern food shopping is represented as a constantly available activity that abstracts from the traditional shopping rhythm, offering the illusion of difference and distinction. Opposed to it, the market is a deliberate display of the clash of local and global, as the locality of the place is a specific temporary event where local products are mixed with products coming from elsewhere, as local people are mixed with foreigners, involving then unpredictable processes of both localization and globalization. In spatial terms, since the contemporary city is generated by default through numerical calculation and not by intent of an urban program, control space generates a dissolute and amorphous landscape characterized by moments of consumer saturation and activity, where the urban is constantly recycled because it is controlled and driven by the market. According to the author control space drives the contemporary city because it provides the infrastruc-

¹² in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 2: Harvard Design School guide to Shopping*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp.408–421.

¹³ “Junkspace pretends to unite, but it actually splinters. It creates communities not of shared interest of free association, but of identical statistic and unavoidable demographics, an opportunistic weave of vested interests.” (Koolhaas, 2001, p.415)

¹⁴ In Leong, S. T. (2001) *...And then there was Shopping*, in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 2: Harvard Design School guide to Shopping*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp.128–156.

¹⁵ In De Certeau, M. (1984) *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley CA: University of California press.

tural support for the enjoyment, inhabitation and experience of the contemporary public spaces in a sort of mutual benefit. While it is, for the retailer, a form of control and prediction of the urban dynamics through customer tracking and data mining, for the consumer it represents a secure and accessible way of access to entertainments and a customized shopping experience.

In conclusion, we return to our initial questions: are there elements of connection between the work of Paul Veyne and the philosophy of Rem Koolhaas? Can we trace a continuum between the idea of the phenomenon of gift giving in the antiquity as a strategy for food surplus redistribution and the modern notion of shopping within a consumerist society? Assuming a culture-historical point of view, we can observe that the aspect of social drama, the ritual of consumption, and the importance of performance connected to food is present in both. While Veyne depicts the performances of Euergetai and the social dramas of spectacle involved in games as fundamental and integrated aspects of the society, where everyone has an active part in the production of a common cultural benefit, Koolhaas delineates the profile of a society that has lost the main actors of the drama; gradually, the modern urban landscape has imposed to consumers rules that have lost any connection with history and the territory but with production logics. The consumer itself is perceived as a potential actor that has to work harder against the market forces, to actively take part in the world and not to become just a passive receiver. At last, we can find an essential difference between Koolhaas and Veyne on consumption discourses: Veyne seems to be approaching reality as if he were neither a producer nor a consumer, through the detached eye of the historian which allows him to give a critical account not just of the past, but especially of the present; Koolhaas on the other hand, is playing the conscious part both of the producer and the consumer, although the first seems to be playing the game with the existing rules, while the second one seems to be criticizing those rules.

At last, What are the present and future physical implications on the urban landscape? Although Koolhaas never deals directly with food production and consumption in his projects, he is very aware of their logics at the general scale, and of the way architecture interrelates with them. However, his difference of approach between practice and theory is problematic. At the lecture held on 10 November 2011 at the Barbican Art Gallery in London, in occasion of the exhibition *Progress*, he talked about the distinction between the *Starchitect* system of today, dominated by competition and by the figure of the architect as a celebrity, and the Japanese Metabolism of the 1970s. Stressing how Metabolism was not purely playing inside the architecture discipline—being instead a movement orchestrated by the government, acting as a creative agent connecting architects with the public realm—he reaffirmed the necessity of architecture as a discipline to play an inclusive role in economic, social and cultural dynamics. However, the already cited project for the CCTV in Beijing shows a friction between practice and theory: while we argued the project to act a-historically and a-critically towards the cultural surrounding, Koolhaas in his lecture argued the building to be a skyscraper which does not only consume space, but is also intended to provide places able to exist independently from the building itself. By providing the image of architecture as an entity not entirely consumable—referring to the CCTV as a structure of Roman scale—Koolhaas shows his awareness of the necessity of a more balanced relationship between production and consumption, both on a cultural and on a physical level, through an architecture which seems to be able to exist and act towards this balance only through a complex and contradictory approach to its cultural context.

References

- Attali, J. (2001) The Roman System, or the Generic in all Times and Tenses, in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 1: Mutations*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp.20–23.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste*. Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, Melbourne and Henley. Translated by Nice, R. from (1979) *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Les editions de Minuit.
- Burke, P. (2009) *What is cultural history?* Cambridge UK: Polity.
- De Certeau, M. (1984) *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley CA: University of California press.
- Gombrich, E.H. (1960) *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Phaidon: London.
- Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Junkspace*, in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 2: Harvard Design School guide to Shopping*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp. 408–421.
- Koolhaas, R. (2004) *Content*. Taschen: New York.
- Koolhaas, R. (2011) *On Progress*. Lecture delivered on 10 November 2011 at Barbican Art Gallery, London
- Leong, S. T. (2001)... *And then there was Shopping*, in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 2: Harvard Design School guide to Shopping*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp.128–156.
- Leon, S. T. (2001) *Mobility*, in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 2: Harvard Design School guide to Shopping*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp. 476–499.
- McDonough, W. & Braungart, M. (2002) *Cradle to Cradle*. New York: North point press.
- McMorrough, J. (2001) *City of Shopping*, in Koolhaas, R. (2001) *Project on the city 2: Harvard Design School guide to Shopping*. Cambridge MA: Taschen, pp.192–203.
- Roger, E. N. (2009) *Editoriali di Architettura*. Rovereto: Emanuela Zandonai editore.
- Rubin, L. C. (2008) *Beyond bread and circuses: professional competitive eating*, in *Food for thought: essays on eating and culture*. Jefferson NC: McFarland & company Inc. publisher.
- Steel, C. (2008) *Hungry Food: how food shapes our lives*. Vintage books: London.
- Taylor, B. (2004) *Food and cultural studies*. London: Routledge.
- Vannini, P. (2008) *Snacking as ritual: eating behaviour in public places*, in *Food for thought: essays on eating and culture*. Jefferson NC: McFarland & company Inc. publisher.
- Veyne, P. (1976) *Bread and circuses: Historical sociology and political pluralism*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.

About the Author

Andrea Bosio

Andrea Bosio is a PhD student studying at the Faculty of Environment at Griffith University. His research investigates the relationships between food culture and the transformations of the environment linked to food production and consumption. His studies deal with interdisciplinary discourses involving architecture, gastronomy, social science, and linguistics. He completed his Bachelor and Master of Architecture at Milano Politecnico in Italy and worked in various Italian architecture firms in Italy before coming to Australia.

Editors

David Wilson, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Bill Cope, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Mary Kalantzis, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Please visit the Journal website at <http://www.SpacesAndFlows.com/journal/>
for further information about the Journal or to subscribe.

The Spaces and Flows Community

This knowledge community is brought together around a common shared interest changing human spaces and social, economic and informational flows. The community interacts through an innovative, annual face-to-face conference, as well as year-round virtual relationships in a weblog, peer reviewed journal and book series—exploring the affordances of the new digital media.

Conference

Members of The Spaces and Flows Community meet at [Spaces and Flows: An International Conference on Urban and ExtraUrban Studies](#), held annually in different locations around the world. In 2010, the Conference was held at University of California, Los Angeles, USA, and in 2011, the Conference was held at Monash University Prato, Italy. In 2012, the Conference will be held at Wayne State University, Detroit, USA.

Our community members and first time attendees come from all corners of the globe. The Conference is a site of critical reflection, both by leaders in the field and emerging artists and scholars. Those unable to attend the Conference may opt for virtual participation in which community members can submit a video and/or slide presentation with voice-over, or simply submit a paper for peer review and possible publication in the Journal.

Online presentations can be viewed on [YouTube](#).

Publishing

The Spaces and Flows Community enables members to publish through three mediums. First, by participating in The Spaces and Flows Conference, community members can enter a world of journal publication unlike the traditional academic publishing forums—a result of the responsive, non-hierarchical and constructive nature of the peer review process. [Spaces and Flows: An International Journal of Urban and ExtraUrban Studies](#) provides a framework for double-blind peer review, enabling authors to publish into an academic journal of the highest standard.

The second publication medium is through the book series [The Spaces and Flows](#), publishing cutting edge books in print and electronic formats. Publication proposal and manuscript submissions are welcome.

The third major publishing medium is our [news blog](#), constantly publishing short news updates from The Spaces and Flows Community, as well as major developments in the various disciplines of the spaces and flows. You can also join this conversation at [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) or subscribe to our email [Newsletter](#).

Common Ground Publishing Journals

AGING Aging and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal Website: http://AgingAndSociety.com/journal/	ARTS The International Journal of the Arts in Society. Website: www.Arts-Journal.com
BOOK The International Journal of the Book Website: www.Book-Journal.com	CLIMATE CHANGE The International Journal of Climate Change: Impacts and Responses Website: www.Climate-Journal.com
CONSTRUCTED ENVIRONMENT The International Journal of the Constructed Environment Website: www.ConstructedEnvironment.com/journal	DESIGN Design Principles and Practices: An International Journal Website: www.Design-Journal.com
DIVERSITY The International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations Website: www.Diversity-Journal.com	FOOD Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal Website: http://Food-Studies.com/journal/
GLOBAL STUDIES The Global Studies Journal Website: www.GlobalStudiesJournal.com	HEALTH The International Journal of Health, Wellness and Society Website: www.HealthandSociety.com/journal
HUMANITIES The International Journal of the Humanities Website: www.Humanities-Journal.com	IMAGE The International Journal of the Image Website: www.OntheImage.com/journal
LEARNING The International Journal of Learning. Website: www.Learning-Journal.com	MANAGEMENT The International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management. Website: www.Management-Journal.com
MUSEUM The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum Website: www.Museum-Journal.com	RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society Website: www.Religion-Journal.com
SCIENCE IN SOCIETY The International Journal of Science in Society Website: www.ScienceinSocietyJournal.com	SOCIAL SCIENCES The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Website: www.SocialSciences-Journal.com
SPACES AND FLOWS Spaces and Flows: An International Journal of Urban and ExtraUrban Studies Website: www.SpacesJournal.com	SPORT AND SOCIETY The International Journal of Sport and Society Website: www.sportandsociety.com/journal
SUSTAINABILITY The International Journal of Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability Website: www.Sustainability-Journal.com	TECHNOLOGY The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society Website: www.Technology-Journal.com
UBIQUITOUS LEARNING Ubiquitous Learning: An International Journal Website: www.ubi-learn.com/journal/	UNIVERSITIES Journal of the World Universities Forum Website: www.Universities-Journal.com

For subscription information please contact
subscriptions@commongroundpublishing.com