Introducing MediaCities

Johan Fornäs

Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q),
Linköping University, Sweden

fornas@acsis.liu.se

The ESF-LiU Conference in Vadstena 25–29 October 2006 gathered more than 50 international scholars to explore and discuss the theme of "Cities and Media: Cultural Perspectives on Urban Identities in a Mediatized World". The main organiser and chair of the conference, musicologist researcher in media and communications Johan Fornäs from the Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q) at Linköping University introduces and sums up the event by outlining the general objectives behind this initiative.

This introduction starts by discussing the recent convergence of two previously distinct research areas: media studies and urban studies. The separation is a particular facet of a more general disjunction between culture and space, which is now being outdated from both sides, as geographers and urban theorists are increasingly interested in the imaginary, mediated and symbolic, while cultural studies and media research express a growing attention to spatial dimensions and locations of communication practices.

The various aspects and forms of this convergence are highlighted, combining the study of space in culture and cities in media or media representations of urban spaces with studies of culture in space and media in cities, comprising urban spaces of media making and use as well as the interspatial flows of images, texts and sounds. The result is a complex and dialectical fusion that may be termed *MediaCities*.

Subthemes and dimensions of this interface between urban, media and cultural studies are discussed, outlining a background to the conference and ideas for future collaborative European research in this hybrid field, based on a set of different previous efforts that have paved the way for this new direction of research.

Cities and media have a long history in common. While new media restructure city life, complex cities nourish new media forms. Today's global megacities accumulate enormous media resources, in the form of mass media and interactive tools for communication. Built urban environments are imbued with mediated city images that attract visitors and transforms modern subjects into spectators of urban landscapes where public and private life mix. This conference brought together themes from urban, media and cultural research to highlight the interplay of symbolic forms and mediated interaction with the development of urban environments, including questions of how cities as well as their inhabitants and visitors identify themselves and each other, in the context of the expanding transnational flows of people, money and media. The interfaces between physical cityscapes, intersectional identity formations and intermedial representations of "place identities" offer unique insights into current processes of cultural change.

Themes like these were highlighted in an ESF-LiU Research Conference called "Cities and Media: Cultural Perspectives on Urban Identities in a Mediatized World".[1] Its starting point was a juxtapositioning of two terms and phenomena, *cities* and *media*, which are mostly studied and discussed separately, and where each set of discourses tends to be differently structured, following apparently distinct logics. Whereas urban studies look at cities as planned and lived technospaces and geographical nodes, media studies investigate communication processes as technologies of culture, forming nodes in the cultural sphere. Behind the two, there has thus been kind of a more general juxtapositioning of *space* and *culture*. While city space tends to be firmly anchored in material structures and coordinates, media culture is often treated as a kind of disembedded virtual flow of meanings and symbolic forms.

That is now about to change. The corresponding research areas have largely been cultivated in mutual isolation but today increasingly converge. (1) On one hand, *culturalisation* and *mediatisation* have been taken seriously in geography and urban studies, with a strong current of interest in *representations* and *interpretations*. Cultural geography is in itself an expression of this current, as is the recent flow of publications on city branding and city images. (2) On the other hand, spurred by intensified processes of *globalisation* and *urbanisation*, there is an ongoing *spatial turn* in cultural studies and media studies, acknowledging the previously neglected importance of "*geographies of communication*", to quote the title of a recent Swedish volume.[2] Traditional media studies have tended to regard media production and use in a rather abstract fashion, but now the physical location of such practices are afforded much more weight.

When Doreen Massey therefore pleas "*For space*" (2005), she expresses vital aspects of this new double turn.[3] Against reducing space to abstract limits and structures to temporal flows, she regards space as "the product of interrelations", a sphere of "coexisting heterogeneity" and "multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality" where "distinct trajectories coexist", and which is "always under construction" as "a simultaneity of stories-so-far". This eminently cultural conception of space goes hand in hand with Massey's simultaneous insistence on the importance of space in culture. In *MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age* (2004), Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy introduced the hybrid term "Media-

2   Jesper Falkheimer & André Jansson (eds) (2006): *Geographies of Communication: The Spatial Turn in Media Studies*, Göteborg: Nordicom.
3   Doreen Massey (2005): *For Space*, London: Sage.

Space" as a gesture towards the many overlapping and interlocking complexities that occur in the intersection of these two conceptual fields: Media and Space. Their intent was to insist that each is implicated in the other, without being reducible to each other. This hybrid concept of MediaSpace built upon how geographers such as Doreen Massey have conceptualised space and place, in approaching the more specific task of thinking about how space and *media* interact.[4]

Nick Couldry wonders if behind the discriminations between levels of the media/space relation there may perhaps hide a wider question of whether media processes serve to *reduce* the actual complexity of space – both material space and imagined space – or in what ways media might inversely serve to *enhance* our experience of that complexity? The trend now in newspapers and television towards condensing what happens in our cities to strips of surveillance imagery is surely a reduction of complexity, with considerable political implications. But other dimensions of contemporary media – particularly contemporary art involving media technologies – instead involve an expansion of our awareness of urban complexity.[5]

Couldry argues that the complexities of both the contemporary city and the contemporary media are so huge that it is tempting to recall Nietzsche's comment in the short section of *The Gay Science* called 'Our new "infinite"' where he writes:

> …today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner. Rather has the world become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations*.[6]

Couldry finds it tempting to think of both media and urban space as infinite domains of interpretations involving the most complex interrelation of scales: media interpret cities, cities and their resources shape possibilities for media production and circulation, citizens reinterpret and renegotiate the possibilities and constraints offered by both cities and media in countless different sites…

The conference exemplified these intricacies and complexities of MediaSpace, but also suggested sensible complexity reductions in order to draft the outlines of some useful mappings of this conceptual hall of mirrors in which city space and media culture perform their enticing dance. The conference was a decisive step forward in the convergence of *spatial and cultural studies*, and of *city and media research*. It was initiated by a juxtapositioning of two mutually related pairs of concepts and corresponding academic fields: Media and Cities as specific nodes and elements of the more general and abstract dimensions of Culture and Space. I initially pointed out the parallels, correspondences or homologies between the two pairs, in that media as socially institutionalised technologies of communication are specific tools for, modes of and nodes within culture, in a similar manner as cities are specific places, socially institutionalised and technologically materialised nodes in geographical space.
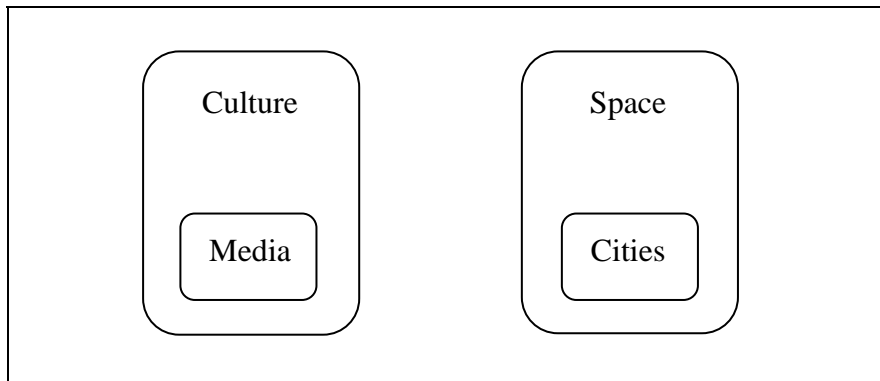
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4   Nick Couldry & Anna McCarthy (2004): *MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age*, London/New York: Routledge.
5   Nick Couldry, personal communication, October 2006.
6   Friedrich Nietzsche (1882/1974): *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, New York: Vintage Books, p. 336.

Figure 1. Homology

One may discern a two-way traffic in this interface, a double flow of determination between each of these pairs, as research scrutinises two levels of media/space interaction:

1. Some scholars focus on *space in culture* and *cities in media*: for instance how cities are represented and interpreted in journalism, fiction narratives and everyday life; indeed, how cities are actually themselves highly virtual or imaginary constructions within mediated culture. Space is inhabited and interpreted as a theme in cultural representations, and cities are depicted and imagined in media texts of all kinds. Various kinds of *media representations of urban spaces* have been studied in a wide range of visual cultural studies but also by the sociology and geography of tourism.[7]

Figure 2. Representation
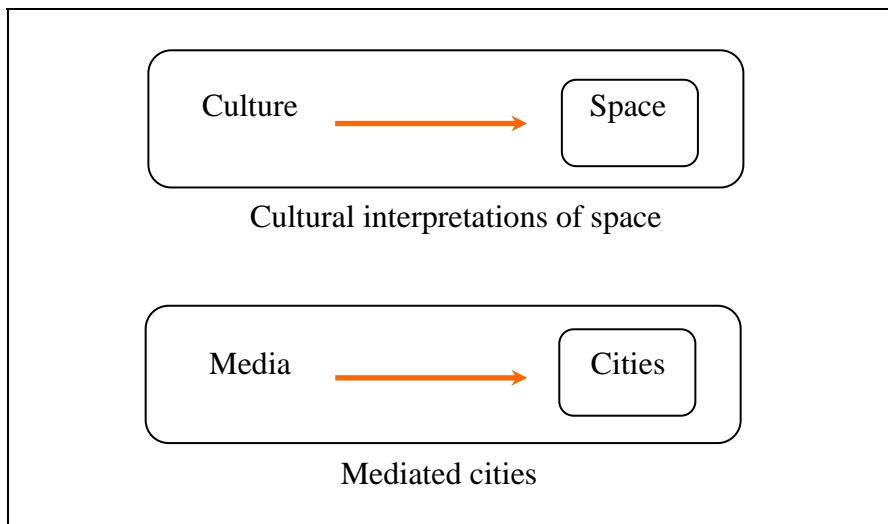
2. There are also studies of *culture in space* and *media in cities*, in several senses, covering all phases of media use, from production over dissemination to consumption and reception of mass media texts, but also including more interactive and mobile media uses. Culture is always localised in space, and media are concentrated in urban environments. Here belongs research on the geography of the *urban spaces of media making and use*, and of the *interspatial flows of images, texts and sounds* between

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7   See for instance David Harvey (1990): *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford, UK/Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

urban contexts: studies of monuments and media buildings, of cultural public spaces and aesthetic practices in cities, and of the ways in which media representations move across city space, contributing to the reconfiguring of social and cultural space. Where is media making and media use located, and through which spatial grids and networks are media circulated?

Figure 3. Localisation

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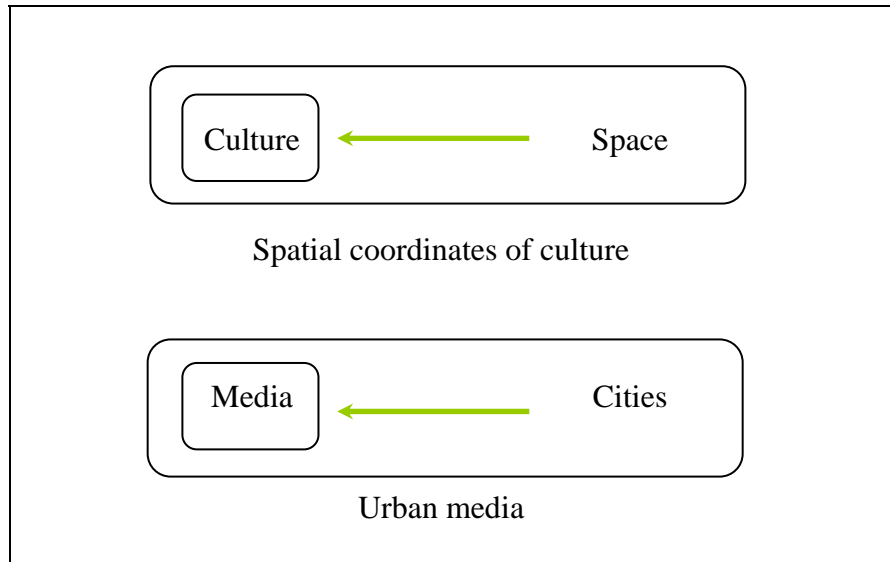
This leads to a never-ending series or spiral of determinations and a situation of extreme complexity, which almost all of you have in various ways underlined. Just to take an example from the conference papers, Giacomo Bottà's study of Manchester city as represented in pop music simultaneously also situated Mancunian pop in its urban landscape – a both physical, social and political location which at the same time frames musical expressions and are in turn produced by them. Such processes may result in highly reflexive media genres, where the mediated character of a place is consciously explored in new media texts, which in turn determine how the place is lived and experienced, etcetera. Through making and using media texts and media technologies in urban spaces, these spaces and the movements made in them are reconfigured and reconstructed. And as these media texts and technologies both represent and fill the same urban spaces, it becomes impossible to assign any single priority or determination to any side in this model.

On this basis, my initial models above may have been slightly misleading, in that they gave the false impression that culture and space, as well as media and cities, may be regarded as two separate entities that affect each others from the outside. But culture is never something "other" than space, and vice versa. We may likewise be mistaken to think of media is something completely different from cities. As geographical conglomerations, cities are from the start mediated as well as mediating machines, and media always already co-construct urban settings. New urban art using advanced communication technologies to fuse virtual representations with physical townscapes makes clear how immediate are today the transitions between representations and material artefacts.[8] This is not a recent convergence of previously distinct entities, as also old houses have façades that are like images of past epochs and cultural ideas. Speed, intensity, complexity and interactivity have certainly increased by the advent of new digital media, but the intertwining of cities of media was there long before, all the way back to the emergence of them both! Cities are not only built environments but also from the

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8   This was certainly true for the Berlin Art+Com projects presented by Joachim Sauter at the conference.

beginning socio-spatial sets of relations between people and artefacts, that is, they are intrinsic parts of culture as well as of space at the same time. The ongoing convergence or rapprochement between geography and urban studies on one hand and cultural and media studies on the other may thus well be pushed forward by late modern transformations and processes of culturalisation, mediatisation, globalisation and urbanisation, but there is no justification of any idea that the two sides have ever been completely distinct from each other.

Let me therefore provisionally suggest that media and cities may instead be seen as two dimensions of the same phenomenon. This three-dimensional figure may perhaps help to see how, viewed from a cultural studies perspective (i.e. from a viewpoint at the bottom left corner, looking diagonally up to the right), cities mainly appear as mediated representations or virtual spaces, while from a geographical perspective (bottom right looking up left) instead media appear as particular facets of urban practices. In a more comprehensive view, they are rather aspects of the same "MediaCity", never actually existing as such in mutual isolation, but as separate entities only resulting from an analytical procedure of abstraction. Media and cities are dimensions of this MediaCity node in our multidimensional CultureSpace world. Together, these vectors result in a complex and mutually configuring interface of *spatial cultures* and *cultural spaces*, whose maps of flows deserve to be explored in a wide range of specific and situated investigations.

Figure 4. MediaCities
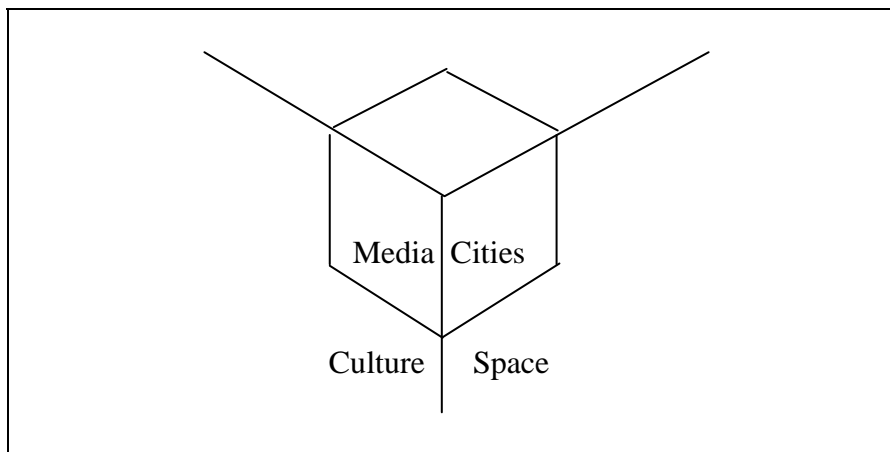
3. In an open dialectic, certain aspects of media geography are in turn themselves represented in media narratives, feeding back into the first level, in a potentially endless series of reflexive spirals. This implies a co-formation of urban and mediated spaces that may be termed *MediaCities*, related to broader issues of scale and time-space compression in CultureSpace, in that city mediations as located in urban spaces continually reshape the very spatial structures and social interactions in late modern societies.[9] Those scale-effects of media are themselves lived, experienced and understood in part through media representations, including media's role in the construction of notions of "centre" and "periphery", whether in the cultural, economic, social or political domains.

The following excerpt from an Air France advertisement in a Swedish in-flight magazine distributed and to be read on a flight between cities illustrates some of the reflexive complexities involved when media and cities mirror each other on many levels.

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9 Compare Saskia Sassen's account of global cities, Doreen Massey's concept of the "power-geometry of time-space compression", and Couldry's and McCarthy's discussion of scale-effects of media.

Figure 5. Air France ad from in-flight magazine June 2006 ("34 destinations in France")

City Mediations

When preparing this event with my colleagues at the interdisciplinary Department of Culture Studies and the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden, I was inspired by experiences from another kind of ESF resource, the *Changing Media, Changing Europe* (CMCE) network programme, headed by Ib Bondebjerg and Peter Golding 2000–2004. Its 60 European schollars were divided into four subgroups, and I took part in the one focusing on cultural identities, co-ordinated by William Uricchio. We visited various "liminal" cities such as Bilbao, Palermo, Berlin, Budapest and Istanbul, discussing with local media producers and cultural centres, trying to come to grips with how local urban, national and European identities were negotiated and mediated in each setting.[10] Some of us are here today, and we have since then nourished a wish to go on with more substantial joint research along similar lines.

My own contribution to this previous network programme was double. I made one study of money as medium, analysing national and transnational identifications in the design of the

10 The result is a forthcoming volume edited by William Uricchio, with the working title *We Europeans? Media, Representation, Identities*, Bristol: Intellect Press. The same team has already published another volume, Sonia Livingstone (ed.) (2005): *Audiences and Publics: When Cultural Engagement Matters for the Public Sphere*, Bristol: Intellect Books.

Euro. This study is soon to be published. More relevant to this conference, I started thinking of a comparison between popular music texts that thematise different city identities – comparing examples from Stockholm to others from the cities mentioned before. It was for instance fascinating to see – and hear – how some Istanbul music celebrated its city as a cosmopolitan place of hybrid crossings between East and West, and on the level with other global metropolitan centres such as London or New York, whereas the popular music from a city like Bilbao instead often depicts its home city as an isolated corner of the world that now wants to build new bridges from scratch, and then prefers to connect to other relatively more modest and localised cities, such as Stockholm. I hope to be able to continue this analysis in my future research work.

At our Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q), we also share an interest in these issues, arriving there from diverse backgrounds. Peter Aronsson is an historian who has specifically looked at the uses of history and cultural heritage, in museums, monuments and popular culture in local and regional settings. Tora Friberg is a cultural geographer with a focus on transports, gender and regional planning. Economic historian Svante Beckman focuses on cultural policy and the economy of culture. Erling Bjurström combines cultural sociology with media studies, in research on youth culture, popular culture and media culture, with a focus on taste history and style formations. At our department, he is responsible for the area of cultural politics and cultural production. Karin Becker is a media researcher at Stockholm University but also responsible for the area of creative processes in arts and the media at our department. Her focus is on visual culture: from documentary photography and photojournalism over museums and public art to vernacular pictorial practices. Becker and Bjurström have also worked with me in the large media-ethnographic Passages project, inspired by Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project, and contextualising studies of media use in a contemporary shopping centre, where issues of urban public space have become a main subtheme, as will be obvious in our forthcoming English volume.[11] My own background is as first a musicologist studying popular music, youth culture and intersectional identity issues, then a media and communication scholar looking into a wider set of media texts and media uses. Together at Tema Q, we are starting new collaborative research on processes and discourses on culturalisation, including a project on media and cities that comparatively and ethnographically will investigate relations between local urban practices and city representations.

This present conference is for us thus a step in a long series of partly interrelated activities. It is our hope that it may also be a milestone for the forming of a possible future European project. This has been discussed by a loose grouping of scholars in the aftermath of the previously mentioned ESF network, and at this 2006 Cities and Media Conference, the plans were discussed and the existing network for forming such a joint project was considerably widened. Let me elaborate just a little bit on the topic of cities, to indicate my own line of interest in this topic.

Big cities are dynamic "*attractors*" along a series of dimensions, as nodes of convergence for work, commerce, criminality, politics, NGOs, leisure, culture and the media. The production and use of media are centred on big city cores, and it is in mediated texts, sounds and images that these city cores are displayed, performed, interpreted and socially constructed. In a world of fleeting identifications and increasing insecurity, flux and confusion, the big city centres that are strong sources of complexity and mobility still also manage to remain key "*focalisers*" in people's lives, serving as nodes of orientation and belonging as well as transit spaces for global flows – both as physical structures and as mental representations of centrality.

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11   Johan Fornäs, Karin Becker, Erling Bjurström & Hillevi Ganetz (2007): *Consuming Media: Communication, Shopping and Everyday Life*, Oxford: Berg.

Capitals are particularly contradictory places. While they serve to manifest and reassert the *nation*, they also are specific *local* units, often remarkably distinct and different not only from the surrounding countryside but also from the nation at large and its other cities. At the same time they are nodes in *transnational* networks of cities and cultures that disrupt the national unities and destabilise any fixed imaginary of an enclosed nation centred on its capital. The very concentration of central institutions and the different life forms that big cities enable make capitals diverge from the nations they are supposed to head and represent. Big cities are thus spaces for *subnational*, *national* as well as *transnational* identifications, constructed through signifying practices in media and culture. The double image of city space as both specific and universal is mediated in a variety of ways through monuments, works of art, songs, poetry, novels and the press. Urban spaces are dominant contexts and themes of media texts, as sites of transitory meetings and experiences, but also as carriers of memory and tradition.

The historical dimension invites us to assess what may be properly new or changing. City branding and event management are part of contemporary economic and cultural policy but also part of a more long-term dynamic of power, representation and meaning. There is actually a very old history of links between media and cities. The city of Vadstena was for instance founded on the mediation of ecstatic hallucination of Saint Birgitta, which was then caught up in national and international powerplays. Already then, the virtual and imaginary had enormous material effects. Today, a plethora of media forms have certainly widened the scope for such interplay, but one needs to carefully scrutinise the situation in an historical perspective in order not to overestimate the uniqueness of the present.[12]

These are just some of the ways in which cities, culture and communication – or material spaces, mediated representations and social practices – interact in forming local, national and transnational identifications. Let me heuristically mention four possible subthemes.

1. *City lives* concern identifications *in* cities and the intersectional identity formations constructed in vernacular urban practices. How do different citizens identify in and with their city, by using mediated narratives and cultural artefacts? There is a need for more research on the actual social life people live in cities and the way they use media, the identifications they make in and with cities and the intersectional identity formations constructed in vernacular urban practices. How do people inhabit and use material and virtual cityscapes? How are local identifications bound to cities, regions or nations crossed and inflected by other identifications along dimensions of gender, class, ethnicity and generation? How is the conceptual geography of a city as physical and artefactual structure related to its thick geography as an (inter-)subjectively experienced and lived set of sociocultural relations? Which effects do various technologies, including new media and communication technologies, have on the phenomenological qualities of urban life? How have the relations between public and private changed and been mediated in our time? How has this affected the relation between public spheres and public spaces? How is public and private history manifested and articulated in present symbolic forms? How are publicness and privateness defined and interconnected, and what is the fate of the cultural public sphere? How does public debate and mobilisation on Internet public spheres relate to physical encounters in material public places? How does today's urban planning affect this relation, and how is culture used to either limit or open up public practices? There is a long-term trend towards the de-spatialisation of the public sphere, spurred by the media. Habermas' "ideal speech community" was also an ideal image of how cities ought to work on a community level, and was from the start dependent on media (for instance books and newspapers). But accelerating

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12 This paragraph is inspired by Peter Aronsson's summary words at the end of the Cities and Media conference.

mediatisation has deeply affected the shape of the public sphere and the dialectics of the private and the public, as can for instance be seen in the changes of rituals and ceremonies not only for celebrities but also in people's everyday life, where media play an increasingly central role. Private life is becoming more and more mediatised and staged as a public event, although there are also developments in opposite directions, i.e. in the use of mobile sounds to cut off the individual from the public world. Phenomena like "home pages" on the Web may be used to reconsider George Simmel's, Walter Benjamin's or Erving Goffman's classical works in the age of digital reproduction. Both media and cities are at the same time focal sites for fears of chaos and risks, but also for efforts to overcome such threats by institutions or individuals taking control. Issues of surveillance and regulation induce a paradoxical dialectic whereby technologies of control always tend to create new forms of complexity, unintended side effects and forms of dissent. How have new media in new cities affected this dialectic? Which utopian and dystopian versions are there today of the emerging fusion of city planning and digital communication technologies? How can democratic forms of political and social life survive and develop in this new context? Which are the implications for creativity and citizenship?[13]

2. *City representations* point at identifications *of* cities in words, images and music of the arts and the media. How are different cities identified in mediated representations? How do cities present themselves, and how are they interpreted by inhabitants and visitors? City branding is a prominent and fascinating example here, but this also connects cultural aspects to spatial planning, architecture and transports. How is centrality and size produced, managed and signified in mediating urban practices today, and in historical perspectives? Big cities attract narratives of historical becoming and of the contemporary present. Novels, films, song lyrics and monuments formulate the development and current meaning of each such nexus of social and cultural life. Comparative studies of such narratives may find general generic patterns but also typical differences between cities that are conceived as national or transnational, enclosed or open, unified or divided. A more specific example is city tourism: How do cities market themselves in printed or web-based tourist information material, compared to how they are presented by others in published guidebooks or on personal homepages or photo albums. Which kinds of identification are made for various cities, and how do public expectations match vernacular experiences? Cultural or symbolic representations also connect to political representation in terms of citizenship and collective agency. Who are included and excluded by such representations, and which struggles develop around place-bound identity politics?

3. *City events* offer a way to look closer at the two-way traffic between cities and citizens. People are drawn to city cores, seeking excitement and stimulation in "the centre of events". One example could be the ways cities market themselves in competitions for Olympic games, the effects of organising European or World championships, the local celebration of homecoming winning national teams or sports heroes in manifestations of urban and national identification. But also other kinds of official or subterranean events such as state visits, national celebrations, cultural festivals, film festivals, art exhibitions, major concerts, the Eurovision Song Contest or the Nobel Prize ceremonies show how city identities are constructed in media and culture. How do ritualised mass events in urban settings relate to media events? How do public events reaffirm national

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13 This paragraph – as well as the subsequent three themes – synthesises ideas from the CMCE network and from Ien Ang, Karin Becker, Svante Beckman, Erling Bjurström, Giacomo Bottà, Michael Bull, Stephen Graham, Ulf Hannerz, André Jansson, Rolf Lindner, Floris Müller, Roger Odin, Catharina Thörn and others at the 2006 conference.

bonds as well as bring together diverse populations and transnational cultural streams? Events are often full of tensions, and various forms of city activism show that open conflicts are an important form of city event. Conflicts arise over access to urban space between public institutions, commercial interests, criminal networks, oppositional movements and marginalised groups, in an intersectional interplay between gender, class, age and ethnicity. Big city cores are not only where visiting state heads pass through but also where Reclaim the Streets and other NGOs organise actions, related to the centrally placed buildings of societal power centres and to the intense flow of people and transportations. This is also where the chances to become visible in the media is maximised. The convergence of power systems and sociocultural attractors is thus a precondition also to activities of resistance, protest and alternative movements. How do these counter-practices restructure and rethink the big city cores? Some locations even acquire a sacral or "secular holiness" as sites of pilgrimage. Traces and memories of events charge places with meaning, being regularly re-enacted and commemorated.

4. *City networks*, finally, is a theme that goes one step up and looks at relations between cities. Cities are not singular or self-enclosed entities, but develop in complex interrelations with each other, as well as with their suburban and rural surroundings. The urban is not only a fixed set of built structures but also a flexible network of social relationships and symbolic meanings attached to these material forms. How do media texts thematise differences and exchanges between cities and the countryside, the urban and the rural, and how do these differences and exchanges in turn affect media use? On one hand, links of co-operation and competition are forged from above between different metropolitan cities, for instance in the competition for European Capital of Culture. On the other hand, webs are woven from below when individuals, groups and NGOs link between cities in different countries and continents. Which axes and divides predominate on these maps? How do cities differ from each other, and how do they connect or compete on a global market of metropolises, where conditions are changing due to the relative weakening of nation-states? It appears to me that new vistas for MediaCity research may be opened by focusing precisely on the multileveled interrelations between cities rather than by making transnational comparisons that just add monocentric analyses of each urban site as a separate entity of its own.

These are only some of the avenues opened up in the cultural spaces of MediaCity. The doors have been opened, so let us start exploring its fascinating labyrinths.

Appendix: Conference Summary

The ESF-LiU Research Conference "Cities and Media: Cultural Perspectives on Urban Identities in a Mediatized World" in Vadstena, SE, 25-29 October 2006, explored the multiple intersections between cities, media, culture and identity in a series of *sessions*, each highlighting one specific set of aspects. Let me here present all conference talks, even though not all of them are published in the electronic proceedings.

Session 1, "*Cities in an era of global mediation*", focused on the historical development of city culture in the modern and late-modern world of mediatisation and glocalisation. While new media in each period restructure city life, increasingly complex cities in turn breed new media forms, and today's global megacities accumulate enormous technological resources in terms of mass media and interactive tools for communication. The first presentation was *André Jansson* (Media and Communication Studies, Karlstad University, SE): "Texture and Fixture: Understanding Urban Communication Geographies". Based on classical urban sociologists and philosophers like Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, Jansson locates city textures and fixtures in between two crossing tensions, one of the (concrete, lived) thick city and

the (abstract, imagined) concept city, and another between the time bias of sedimentation and the space bias of circulation.[14]

Session 2, "*Cities, communications and publicness*", discussed the problematic of mediation in relation to public spheres and public spaces. The mediated and mediating complexities of communication in urban areas problematises traditionally rigid dichotomies of the public and the private, as the fit between virtual domains and material forums for public interaction is even further loosened. This session highlighted three aspects, all with a rather pessimistic perspective on recent developments of urban public space, where control and exclusivity seem to increase on several levels. The session opened with *Michael Bull* (Media and Film Studies, University of Sussex, UK): "The Privatising Rhythms of Urban Life: New Media and the Transcendence of Public Space in Everyday Life".[15] Bull has compared uses of mobile phones and iPods and found that while mobile phones provide individual users with "links to society", iPods offer "links to oneself". This focus on the role of ears and listening in urban life opens up new perspectives on the fate of public space. In Lefebvre's classical rhythmanalysis, urban experience was understood as polyrhythmic, whereas iPods tend to let everything move in step with you as you move in step with the music, erecting sensory gates around sound ghettoes, in line with the growth of gated communities. People use them to warm up their private experience in chilly city environments, while mobile phones are experienced as disruptive. The result is a negative dialectic of urban culture, with increasing privatisation forming a lonely crowd. *Mats Franzén* (Urban Sociology, Uppsala University, SE): "Glamour scenes, glamour zone – the case of Stockholm" is a study of the people who fill the central city spaces of Stockholm with "relaxed spending" and entertainment.[16] Franzén shows how the new economy has created clubs that are hybrids of private and public, functioning like celebrity courts without kings, with hierarchical mirrors of a class society where the goal is to produce exclusivity by the club effect of s/electing the happy few while excluding the others. *Stephen Graham* (Geography, Durham University, UK): "Cities and Ubiquitous Media: The Politics of Automated Urban Space" overviews computerised systems that underpin the "ordinary" sociotechnical world, with a focus on techniques of control and surveillance through identification, classification and standardisation. Graham discusses "Code-Space" as software-sorted mobilities through cities, with biometric passports and individualised road-pricing enabling a mass-customisation of road space; "Code-Face" as software-sorted streets through facial recognition and gait (walking style) recognition, reaching dystopic heights in the tracking and security culture of algorithmic war that view cities as battle-space in the wake of 9/11; and "Sentient Cities" where consumers are tracked by radio frequency identifiers, paving the way for an intensified commodification of urban public spaces. He shows how the politics of processual infrastructure has created new rights of passage and remediation of urban space, where perspectives and positions have been replaced by interconnected movement-flows.

Some short talks also linked to this session theme. *Shannon Mattern* (Media Studies and Film, The New School, New York, US): "Anchors Amidst the Flows: Urban Public Libraries and the Importance of Media Places", stresses the materiality of media and the role of library reading rooms for media access and media production. *Kim McNamara* (School of Arts, Roehampton University, UK): "Celebrities and the Reconfiguration of Public Space", shows how celebrities have the power to privatise public space in order to protect themselves from paparazzi. *Gabriel Duarte* (Urbanism Spacelab, Delft University of Technology, NL): "The Emer-

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14 See also Falkheimer & Jansson (ibid.).

15 See also Michael Bull (2000): Sounding Out the City: Personal Stereos and the Management of Everyday Life, Oxford/New York: Berg.

16 See also Mats Franzén (2005): "Mellan stigma och karisma. Stureplan, Sergels torg och platsens politik", *Fronesis*, 18.

gence of the Dirty: Tele-Commerce, Metropolitan Sub-Systems and Parallel Economies", analyses formal dimensions of transport infrastructure and communication systems.

Session 3, "*Interaction, representation and citizenship*", dealt with intersectional identifications, cosmopolitan practices and state policies. The meanings of cities are always contested in confrontations between different social groups. The condensed interactions between individuals and collectives in city spaces activate struggles for citizenship and diversity of lifestyles that relate to issues of both cultural and political representation. *Ulf Hannerz* (Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, SE): "Milieux of Cosmopolitanism" argues that what makes a place more or less cosmopolitan is a level of heterogeneity and variety plus a kind of openness towards learning from encounters with others.[17] This makes it different from the multiculturalism that often is conceived as plural monoculturalism. There are important communicative skills involved in managing diversity – a situated learning to deal with local diversity as a practical knowledge. Urban life tends to imply a wide media access, creating a tension between trust and fear. Hannerz also points at parallels with academic scenes, where disciplines tend to behave like tribes and where interdisciplinarity equals cosmopolitanism. The second presentation in this session was *Ien Ang* (Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, AU): "Tales of the City and the Nation: Mediating Urban Citizenship".[18] Cities are unable to control their borders as tightly as can nations, and even the most hybrid of them cannot cross national borders. Like nations, cities are abstract imagined communities, but they are also much more concrete, lived realities. The city is more defined by daily life in city space than is the nation. Urban citizenship as the right to belong to a city is regulated by a combined politics of presence and of representation. Ang used the 2005 Cronulla riots in Sydney to understand the processes whereby people and media strive to regulate the permeable borders of a local community. Here, violence of representation and of the streets interacted, as did the dimensions of race and space. *John Eade* (Sociology and Anthropology, Roehampton University, UK): "Identity Politics, Super-Diversity and Contested Localities: Settlers and Circular Migrants in the Global City of London" explores the intersections of politics, class, race, ethnicity and religion in a context of post-colonial British developments related to the loss of empire and the postindustrial trends that give rise to a globalising class structure, hybrid transnational cultures, identity politics and faith communities. Eade presents two case studies, one of British Bangladeshi Muslims in London's East End and one of old and new generations of Polish immigrants, with a focus on the contestation of urban space in the context of mosques, pilgrimage and multicultural festivals.

Again, elements in several short talks reminded of this session theme. *Fiorenzo Iuliano* (American, Cultural and Linguistic Studies, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", IT): "Imagined Bodies, Virtual Landscapes: The Subversive Power of Corporeality and the Marginal Scene", discusses simulacra, power and corporeal sexual identity formations, with references to a range of postmodern writers. *Liedeke Plate* (Comparative Arts and Cultural Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen, NL): "Doing Cities by the Book: Literary Walking-Tours and Cosmopolitan Identities", analyses mediations of urban experiences in forms of productive media reception that express a desire for the lived real.

Session 4, "*Urban place identities and city images*", approached trends in how today's cities present themselves and are interpreted in media discourses. Built urban environments are inseparably linked to mediated city images that attract visitors as spectators of urban landscapes. A growing competition in markets of attraction makes cities use increasingly sophisticated and multiple strategies of branding, and both arts and popular media genres contribute

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17 Compare also Ulf Hannerz (1996): *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, London/New York: Routledge.

18 On transnational identities, see also Ien Ang (2001): *On not speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*, London/New York: Routledge.

to this growing flow of city images. *Rolf Lindner* (European Ethnology, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, DE): "The Cultural Texture of the City" compares cities to books and takes up a thread from Jansson's paper, by exploring the dialectics of urban texts and textures.[19] Symbolic representations in anecdotes, legends, monuments, songs and sayings show cities to be narrative spaces in which different lives and practices are inscribed. Lindner exemplifies how different cities through street names and other intertextual referential networks form complex cultural rhizomes (Deleuze). *Maria Rovisco* (ISCTE Institute of Social Sciences and Business Studies, Lisbon, PT): "Cinematic vistas: City, Memory and Place" analyses how four films – Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966), Tati's *Playtime* (1967), Kassovitz' *La Haine* (1995) and Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) – depict London and Paris in the 1960s and in the last decade. While the late 1960s gave a critique of utilitarian values in modern cities seen as dystopian and de-humanising, the modern city of the 1990s and 2000s is instead depicted through people out of place, with cultural diversity as a key challenge. *Roger Odin* (Cinema and Audiovisual Studies, Sorbonne Nouvelle III, Paris, FR): "Cities Identity and Amateur Productions" analyses the Saint-Etienne Amateur Films Archive in France.[20] His typology distinguishes between (a) commission films depicting official identities, (b) hobby films presenting pacified identities, (c) activist films showing conflictual identities, (d) conversation films constructing subjective and multiple identities, and (e) home movies with identities to be built, since they say nothing without being interpreted by commentary speech. His pragmatic approach criticises the dominant mode of authenticity in these archives for blocking all questions and creating consensus in the service of the political right, finding it deeply problematic that such archives appear in towns that feel to be in a state of crisis.

Several short talks primarily connected to this session theme. *Claudino Ferreira* (Economics, University of Coimbra, PT): "Big Events, Tourism and Cultural Regeneration of Cities: On Lisbon's Expo'98 and Porto 2001 – European City of Culture", points at a disconnection between the imagined city and the real city as lived, resulting in exclusion and segmentation between places in the city. He also shows how culture is supported by such big city events but at the same time also reduced to a means rather than an end in itself. *Catharina Thörn* (Media, Culture and Aesthetics, Göteborg University, SE): "'Clean and Neat': The Visual Fight over Gothenburg Cityscape", shows a series of examples of how Göteborg markets itself as an "event city" that is also "clean and neat", through efforts to control its visual look. *Amanda Lagerkvist* (Media and Communications, Stockholm University, SE): "Future Lost and Resumed: Media and the Spatialization of Time in Shanghai", illustrates how Shanghai presents itself as a fully mediatised city of the future, linking up to the global world and activating retroactive images of futures past in a temporal co-existence here and now. *Melissa Aronczyk* (Culture and Communication, New York University, US): "Logo, Slogan, and Symbol: Branding Montreal and Toronto", shows how Toronto had used the same firm to brand their city as previously London, resulting in the same slogan ("Toronto Unlimited"/ "London Unlimited"), indicating a transnational homogeneity in city branding. *Giacomo Bottà* (Social Policy, University of Helsinki, FI): "Pop Music, Cultural Sensibilities and Circulation of Places", coherently analyses the interfaces between the music and the city of Manchester, UK, through landscape, textscape and soundscape, showing how music texts are situated in a city, mirroring it but also affect its development.

Session 5, "*Visual memory and city space*", thematised how urban memories are enacted culturally in space and time. The role of memories and of visual images were touched upon in preceding sessions as well, but were here specifically addressed in ways that also returned to the question of whose city is visible and privileged in dominant representations. *Esther Sha-*

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19 See also Rolf Lindner (2004): *Walks on the Wild Side. Eine Geschichte der Stadtforschung*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus.

20 Compare also Roger Odin (1999): "La question de l'amateur", *Communications*, 68.

lev-Gerz (artist, Paris, FR): "The Perpetual Movement of Memory: Projects in Public Space" presents a set of art projects in public space, thematising the perpetual movement of memory. One theme is here the issue of political and ethical responsibility in such interactive projects, in the interaction between artist, commissioning authorities and urban citizens. *Joachim Sauter* (University of the Arts/Art+Com, Berlin, DE): "New Media in Public Space: Memory of the City" presents another series of arts projects in public city space, where new and interactive media technologies of simulation have been used to explore "invisible cities" and let mediatised memories from the past interact with spaces of the present. *Floris Müller* (Communications, University of Amsterdam, NL): "Constructing City Identities: Popular Communication Policies and Ethnic Tension in Amsterdam after the Theo van Gogh Murder" gives concrete examples of how this city has chosen to organise mediatised activities to deal with inter-ethnic tensions and diversity, often with the unintended consequence that divides between ethnic groups are deepened. He shows how concrete practices such as soccer tournaments articulate ideas of urban citizenship, and thus links back to the third and fourth sessions as well. Müller argues for avoiding harmonious utopianism and acknowledging that the formation of urban citizenship must be an unfinished process.

Seventeen posters were also presented at the conference, adding concretion and forging links between sessions. Poster presenters were Anastasia Deligiaouri (GR), Laura Forlano (USA), John Grech (AU), Terri He (UK), Ingrid M. Holmberg (SE), Annarita Lamberti (IT), Tommy Lindholm (SE), Donald McNeill (UK), Anna-Maria Murtola (FI), Catalina Neculai (UK), Brett Neilson (AU), Francesco Odella (IT), Egle Rindzeviciute (SE), Scott Rodgers (UK), Claudia Westermann (DE), Norbert Wildermuth (DK) and Berrin Yanikkaya (TU).

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