

Just in Time: Logistical Imaginaries of the Cosmopolis¹

Montserrat Cañedo

(Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, UNED)

mcanedo@fsof.uned.es

Addressing the supply of consumer goods in a large city allows us to imagine the city as a space of shared life marked by needs, material infrastructures, sociocultural institutions and the circulation of information, and by the interaction among people and between people and animals, plants and objects. Like other big cities, Madrid does not produce what the seven million inhabitants of its metropolitan area consume. I propose that we consider urban space not as a container defined by physical limits but as a dynamic process that unfolds through a multiplicity of relations. This process expands the idea of the city as a political-administrative, social and imaginary 'object' in order to include relations beyond its territorial limits. Thus, space is intended not as distance but as a configuration of multiplicity; as interaction, not as a container. I will address two theoretical questions. First, how to think about urban time and space from a relational and performative approach that allows us to question the imaginary of globalization as a time-space phenomenon that is homogeneous, separate from or 'superimposed' upon the local setting. Second, how experience in and of these time-space frameworks at once conditions and expresses forms of subjectivity that are different from those traditionally described as specific to the modern city.

Keywords: Madrid, logistics, globalization, urban theory.

Introduction: The Nature of the Urban Condition in a Scenario of Globalization

Thinking about the supply of goods and objects of consumption in a large city allows us to imagine the city as a space of shared life that needs a specific architecture. This architecture includes infrastructures and sociocultural institutions, as well as the sustained effect of the circulation of information and of the interaction among people and between people and animals, plants and objects. Like all other big cities, Madrid does not produce all that the seven million inhabitants of its metropolitan area consume. Its citizens' lifestyles could not be sustained without the connections between its territory and places near and far (including intermediate places of traffic) that shape spatially and temporally the city's supply networks. These networks are an excellent empirical place for us to explore a conception of urban space that is different from the intuitive, widespread idea of the city as a discrete entity defined by a more or less porous frontier and related to an exterior through a network of discrete and interconnected points. Following others (Whatmore 2002; Massey 2005 and 2012; Thrift 2008), I propose that we consider the urban space as a process that unfolds through a multiplicity of relations. Accordingly, the city is intended here as a political-administrative, social and imaginary 'object' that includes at its heart relations that go beyond its territorial limits. Therefore, space is intended, here, as a configuration of multiplicity of interactions, not as distance or as a surface or a container.

¹This research received funding from two National Research Programs: the *Prácticas culturales emergentes en el Nuevo Madrid* [Emerging Cultural Practices in the New Madrid] (CSO2009-10780, MICINN 2009-2012) and the *Madrid Cosmópolis. Prácticas emergentes y procesos metropolitanos* [Madrid Cosmopolis. Emerging Metropolitan Practices and Processes] (MEC, CSO2012-33949). Funding was also granted by The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (Post-Ph.D. Research Grants).

In today's context of globalization, the vision of the urban condition as something not strictly identifiable with the kind of city that played an important role in classic urban studies (Wirth 2005, Simmel 2005) acquires special importance, pointing to complex time-space reorientations and to the challenge of redefining the character and meaning of key processes. A social theory that remains anchored to distinctions like global/local and macro/micro that tend to render invisible the mutual relations between the two poles is manifestly insufficient to deal with the emergence of new urban chronotopes. One of my theoretical concerns is how to address fact that the Madrid's connections with the 'outside' are part of its idiosyncrasy as a *place*. Through the empirical study of supply networks for consumer goods, I develop an analysis of the more general concept of cosmopolis. I am also particularly interested in these networks as 'bundles of trajectories' (Massey 2005), as embodiments of worldviews with a performative role — that is, as fictions; as stories that organize what they say. In their heterogeneous, dialogic, processual and overdetermined nature, these networks do not promise an absolute coherence, but they do promise a continuous renewal of the urban condition that shapes the city as a shared task.

The classic urbanologists who understood urbanism as a way of life saw as especially significant the ways in which the experience of inhabiting the city affected, on a phenomenological level, the forms of social relation and subjectivisation. For Simmel (2005), the modern city was the place where the rationalist intellectualism linked to the money economy developed, as well as a place of great complexity derived from the variety of stimuli and interests that stressed the need for integration, synchronization and precision. Following him, one wonders what kind of subjectivisation marks today's experience of living in the cosmopolis.

In this article I will first try to answer important theoretical questions. How can we look at urban time-space from a relational and performative perspective that allows us to question globalization as a time-space category that is homogeneous and separate or 'superimposed' on local settings? What perspective should we take in order to achieve an ethnography of globalization(s)? How does the aforementioned different approach to the production of time and space contribute to reshape the ideas of 'city' and 'global space'? How can this approach be empirically based (in this case, supply networks of consumer goods)? I will then address the ways in which experience in and of these time-space frameworks at once conditions and expresses specific forms of subjectivity that are different from those described in the classic literature.

The Logistical Architecture of Globalization

Logistics do not figure prominently in citizens' political discussions. As the British journalist Rose George demonstrated, this is, nonetheless, one of the main urban activities in the contemporary scenario of globalization. Rose tellingly titled his book *Deep Sea and Foreign Going: Inside Shipping, the Invisible Industry That Brings You 90 per cent of Everything* (2013). He boarded one of the seagoing vessels of the largest merchant navy company in the world with the aim of writing a report on the maritime transportation of merchandise. His

investigation revealed that 90 per cent of the total volume of goods consumed by an average western citizen is transported, in part or wholly, by sea. Logistics can be defined as the science (and practice) of moving objects in an optimal fashion. It is no surprise that it originated in the military context in the 18th and 19th centuries and that some of its procedures have been developed in contexts of international war (Larner 2014: 272).² The extension of logistics to the world of commerce after World War II followed the concept of supply chain, understood as the process of ‘planning and coordinating the materials flow from source to user as an integrated system rather than, as was so often the case in the past, managing the goods flow as a series of independent activities’ (Christopher 2011: 9). The supply of merchandise came to be seen as a permanent flow in which different actors and actions must be coordinated rationally and strategically in order to bridge the time and space gap between production and consumption, thus making it possible for the consumer to receive the product in the most adequate time and condition and at the lowest possible cost (Leslie and Reimer 1999). The logistics development has gone hand-in-hand with the development of specific practices, condensed in processes and objects that mark today’s globalized merchandise. Two such practices are barcodes and standardization, which is well exemplified by the famous twenty-foot units (TEUs). Standardization facilitates the coordination of the actions involved in the production of ‘globalization’; this is particularly clear if we understand the mentioned change in the time-space scale not as a leap to an order (and quality) of processes different from ‘local’ processes but as a kind of ‘extended reach’ based on the articulation of several different practices. Relationships, connections and synchrony are, in this context, the axes of the production of time-space.

Recently, computer software has greatly boosted the logistical possibilities for objects in movement. Accordingly, regulations on flows of information, objects and people have been created that define emerging time-spaces. On one hand, the global logistics pertaining merchandise has engendered a scale economy in which as long as goods circulate within the logistics networks themselves their great physical movement is not proportional to their cost.³ Thus, ‘a sweater can now travel three thousand kilometres for two and a half cents. It costs one cent to send a can of beer.’ (Rose 2013: 39). The logistics networks superimpose the map of traffic on the world map; its main features being some of the larger ports — such as that of Rotterdam, the largest in Europe — and the transportation networks that connect them. In this new topology of the world the new time-space scenarios — in terms of distances-proximities — defy the traditional time-space logic. Examples abound. It is not only possible but more profitable to freeze Scottish cod, send it to China to be sliced, frozen and then sent back to Scotland to be sold in stores and restaurants (Rose 2013: 18). Tea is transported to England from the different locations in the world where it is produced, to be processed by ‘testers’

² See, for example, the standardization protocols driven by the International Organization for Standardization, ISO (Larner 2014).

³ For example, ‘746 million bananas, one for every European, can be loaded on a single boat. If the containers of Maersk alone were lined up, they would stretch eleven thousand miles or nearly halfway around the planet’ (Rose 2013: 3).

who guarantee uniformity of taste for each variety; then it is distributed worldwide.⁴ Notably, even though the global logistics landscape requires a continuous standardization of products and processes, the ubiquity of computer software and the articulation of the continuous flows of information make it possible to track continuously the merchandise. This, in turn, offers previously unsuspected possibilities for rearticulating the connections based on new, on-the-go calculations that make it possible to minimize the impact of contingencies that ‘break’ the time-space logistics. This means an increase in the ‘elasticity of synchrony’ (Thrift 2008: 100). To give a simple example, cold storage containers allow temperatures to be tracked from afar, making it possible to react to possible breaks in the cold chain or to vary the temperature in order to keep the merchandise as fresh as possible. Also, one thinks of the management of delivery trucks in so-called urban ‘last mile logistics’, which includes avoiding traffic congestion using systems that allow the real-time management of data on traffic and road conditions. These opportunities in logistics processes and the attendant ‘decision-making landscape’ have made possible a global landscape where the continuous introduction of novelties is the embodiment, on the one hand, of capitalist dynamism and, on the other, of the interweaving of the consumer goods in people’s lifestyles in the cosmopolis. This technological scenario does not, however, include the classic figure of a panoptic with one (or a few) control room(s); instead, it is an extended, diffuse landscape of ubiquitous calculations (Callon and Law 2005). In such a landscape, new forms of subjectivisation and relations linked to the time-space of urban lifestyles are born.

Rational calculation linked to efficiency measured in terms of economic profitability is the basic premise of the logistics of commercial flows. This logic belongs to the capitalist model, and some of its effects are left out of the calculations because they are considered to be externalities; for instance, the ecologic footprint, issues of environmental sustainability and the effects of social inequality on the global level, such as the dualization of job markets on the international scale. There are also problems linked to the difficulty of controlling what travels through the extended logistics networks in the interchangeable, opaque TEUs of intermodal transport, to the emergence of new forms of exploitation linked to people’s displacement and to the political challenges posed the ‘mutation of forms of citizenship’ (Ong 2006).⁵ These issues are not contemplated in logistics calculations and often remain hidden under the mantle of the widespread myth of the happy, instantaneous and universal interconnection made possible by technology. Instead, connection and synchrony are always partial and need to be continuously sustained through maintenance and repair work. Moreover, connections also produce dis-connections, engendering landscapes that are very different from the ‘freedom of flows’ frequently associated with globalization.

There is no doubt that the growing importance of logistics affects the city of Madrid. The Spanish logistics sector is the fifth largest in Europe in terms of volume, representing

⁴ An interesting account was given in “Food Super Highway”, by Ross Harper’s 2009 documentary for the BBC.

⁵ The crews of merchant cargo ships also make an interesting case (Rose 2013, Sampson 2014).

11.5 per cent of the GDP.⁶ Its development is linked, above all, to the import of goods for an increasingly solvent market that demands more and more consumer products. Madrid absorbs 60 per cent of the international flows of merchandise that take place in Spain and 33 per cent of the national flows, and accounts for 54 per cent of national invoices for transport of merchandise and logistics. There has therefore been a constant increase in the space devoted to logistics (storage, and so on) and linked to the huge development of transportation networks that has taken place in the Madrid metropolitan area since the 1990s; these networks include transport centres, air cargo centres at Adolfo Suárez Madrid Barajas Airport, logistics distribution platforms managed by the public and private sectors and the dry port.⁷ 37 per cent of kilometres of existing highway in 2004 had been built during the previous eight years. Thus, Madrid is a fundamental logistics node in the country, especially for globalized products, and a great importer of merchandise.⁸ The growth in the transport of merchandise since the 1980s has indeed been ‘tremendous’ (De Santiago 2008b: 162), prompting some researchers to speak of an ‘uncontrolled Madrid metabolism’ over the last thirty years (De Santiago 2008b: 163).

Home Delivery Dilemmas (1): Last Mile Logistics in the Smart City

On Thursday 6 November 2014, in one of the spaces prepared for the LOGISTICS seminars taking place at the IFEMA Fair in Madrid a conference sponsored by *Telefónica* and the Spanish Logistics Centre (*Centro Español de Logística*) was devoted to the challenges of the urban distribution of merchandise in large Spanish cities.⁹ The speakers were people who were in charge of the mobility of goods for large companies and logistics consultants who worked in Madrid. Also present was the person in charge of the Energy Agency (*Agencia de Energía*), which is part of the General Directorate of Sustainability of the Madrid City Council. The aim of the conference was to pool information on the needs and problems related to the activity of the companies supplying merchandise in what is known as ‘last mile distribution’. *The Descartes Systems Group Inc.* is a company that presents itself as ‘a global provider of on-demand, software-as-a-service (SaaS) logistics technological solutions that help its customers make and receive shipments’. The representative of this company discussed the ‘persistent problem of having to wait in the big city’, an issue that recurred in the rest of the contributions, including those by members of the public, which included mainly professionals from the logistics sector. The local version of this problem is: ‘Madrid

⁶ These data, regarding the importance and evolution of the logistics sector in Madrid since the 1980s, have been taken from the analysis by Eduardo De Santiago (2008a, 2008b).

⁷ ‘A dry port is an inland intermodal terminal directly connected by road or rail to a seaport and operating as a centre for the transshipment of sea cargo to inland destinations’. *Wikipedia: ‘Dry Port’*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dry_port, accessed 25 June 2015.

⁸ In contrast to what was happening with services, in 2000 the amount of imports in Madrid was more than twice that of exports.

⁹ The analysis that I present in this section is based on participant observation in the conference. All of the quotes that are not bibliographic are from participants in the event, as I recorded them *in situ* in my field diary.

residents have to wait in line for everything'. Urban 'congestion', a commonplace problem that has long affected the modern city, worries the Director of the Energy Agency and the interested companies, which experience merchandise delivery problems in urban areas that are traffic clogged or that are altogether closed to traffic. The business sector translates the problem as follows: 'citizens today have to wait a lot and often, but they don't want to'; adding, 'technological logistics solutions can help them to stop having to wait'. The question is, 'Wait for what?' For the merchandise that they have bought on internet to arrive at their homes (or wherever they have chosen for delivery). 'Wherever and whatever people want and however they want it' seems to be the goal, expressed for example in the following advertisement of a fruit distribution company quoted by a member of the public attending this conference, 'Tell me a fruit. Now a date. Don't tell me anything else'.

The task of the logistics operation, as can be deduced from the discourses of the conference participants, consists of facilitating a totally unrestricted merchandise movement in order to satisfy the desires and preferences of the urban consumer. During the conference, the debate focused on home delivery in view of the exponential growth predicted for e-commerce (on line commerce) in the next few years, which will have a direct impact on the circulation flows of merchandise in the Madrid urban perimeter. The representative of *Ibird*, an urban logistics consultancy, pointed out that in December 2017 around 655 thousand packages will be delivered in Madrid.

A new ecology of Christmas presents, the volume of Christmas shopping in large multinational e-commerce companies (such as *Amazon* or *Alibaba*) and their shopping practices (for example, the generalization of last-minute discounts), allow us to imagine new challenges for urban home delivery. The speaker imagined the scenario of the Puerta del Sol and the Gran Vía — the urban centre *par excellence* and a commercial hub in the city's imaginary — as the place where 'Madrid residents will no longer go shopping. They will go to see musicals and exhibits'. This prospect is as uncertain as any other, but it does profile the reality of e-commerce as a novelty that has arrived in the city to stay. Also in this scenario the problems are 'congestion' and 'saturation'. How to organize a foreseeably increased population of vehicles and traffic flows in a limited urban centre? Moreover, how to do this through a kind of organization that no longer seems to follow a unifying logic of rational planning 'from above' (be that the City Council, the company selling the product or the carrier). The main problem of urban delivery, as businessmen call it, is client dissatisfaction. What tends to happen is that, for a package to be delivered at an address, several attempts need to be made, with the carrier making several trips from the logistics operator's warehouse to the client's address. There is the obvious problem of costs, of inefficiency. Above all, the client becomes exasperated waiting for a package that does not arrive. There is nothing worse than receiving the note, 'Today at whatever time, we were unable to deliver the package because no one was present at the address'.

The mechanics of home delivery work *grosso modo* as follows. The computer system of the logistics company records the purchase made by clients on line. Deliveries are scheduled — they are 'optimized' — the day before. The optimization is done on a static model of

Madrid divided according to postal code (with some adjustments). The delivery of the orders registered for a specific day follows the logic, ‘Five deliveries are grouped together in Móstoles, planned for 8 to 10 in the morning’. This system is rigid, basically because it does not allow on-the-move readjustments based on new information inputs. What the delivery person does between 8 and 10 am is prearranged the day before and is basically unalterable. The company ‘updates’ the information on the state of the deliveries when the carrier reports on the deliveries that have actually taken place among those scheduled for the day. However, a product acquired at a later time and also to be delivered to, say, Móstoles is not include in the delivery schedule, whereas including it would have speeded up the delivery process and contributed to reduce costs. The system of logistic management linking a flow of data to a sequence of actions at a fixed moment in time does not allow this flexibility.

As it was said throughout the conference, technological developments make possible a different model of optimization of deliveries according to a ‘timeline system’. Organizing the deliveries in the most effective way according to the proximity of the addresses no longer takes place at a specific time (the day before each delivery) but right from the moment the order is processed; and this is done continuously, keeping open the possibility of readjusting deliveries right up to the moment of delivery. This model increases ‘efficacy’, understood in terms of fluidity of delivery, rapidity and cost saving. The timeline system — that is, a logistics management software that generates a permanent flow of information allowing on-the-go adjustments to the sequence of actions involved in home delivery — includes the delivery vehicles, registering unexpected incidents (traffic jams, breakages, and so on) so that the daily delivery calendar can be re-optimized ‘up to the last minute’.¹⁰ Optimizing home deliveries by timeline makes it possible to track deliveries and, therefore, readjust the practices that guarantee synchrony and connection in what is described as a ‘dynamic and incremental’ optimization. Thus, citizens’ relationship to a broad landscape of merchandize becomes sustainable without then having to go through the traditional shopping experience linked to the physical location of the commercial establishment in the city. Logistics as a technologically advanced domain of action makes these emerging temporality-spaces, synchrony and connection potentially ‘elastic’.

The apparent banality of companies’ ‘home delivery dilemmas’ conceals not only transformations in the practices of inhabiting the city, but also in the forms of subjectivisation of the citizens of the cosmopolis. The speakers at the conference made numerous comments on this issue saying, ‘People live in the world of possibility of bytes and they have a hard time putting up with the inconveniences and delays of physical inertia.’ The immediate satisfaction of desires related to merchandise generates affective loops linked to urban lifestyles that are fundamental in people’s attachment to the landscape of globalized consumer goods that is sustained by logistics networks. Translated into commercial language, in e-commerce the

¹⁰ In the concept of Smart Cities, addressed in this conference and widespread in recent years, linking physical infrastructures to technological infrastructures — the introduction of data into any element of street furniture — is central to the evolution of contemporary cities. Thus, continuous flows of ‘real-time information’ can be obtained, leading to new forms of urban management.

‘fluidity of the shopping experience’ — from accessing the company’s webpage to receiving the purchased object — is decisive in establishing customer loyalty. The consumer wants the purchase to arrive quickly. But in the delivery process there may be problems with synchronicity, leading to frustrating experiences: ‘The package arrives when I’m not home’. ‘When I try to talk to the carrier company I get an answering machine’. ‘There are no time slots for delivery outside of working hours’. ‘The delivery person cannot connect with me or I with him once “the delivery has gone out”’. Preventing these frustrating experiences requires rethinking delivery from the point of view of the client’s desires. Several possibilities exist. For example, the consumer could be allowed to choose a time slot for the delivery; the system could calculate and propose a date and time (because it is capable of automatically fitting it into the established routes in an optimal fashion), which the customer would be allowed to accept or not.

In this context, logistics itself is presented as a consumer good, an opportunity to ‘package’ the customer’s desires in the context of a highly time-sensitive market economy. Some companies offer broad delivery times at zero cost and narrower delivery times (faster or more compatible with the customers’ requirements) for a fee. The client pays to sustain the consistency — connection and synchrony — of his or her experience of a globalized flow of merchandise in the specific urban context.

The representatives of the companies at the Logistics Fair also envisaged new possibilities for a flow of globalized merchandise that accounted for social relations, including neighbours and neighbourhood delivery outside working hours. I was told, ‘The client wants his package, but now, he’d prefer it to go to his mother’s house! How wonderful to receive it right there!’ ‘The *Amazon* book, the *Privalia* dress, the shopping from *El Corte Inglés*. Bags, boxes, packages: at home. And if I don’t like it, they’ll take it away’. The experience of mobility, the reversibility of decisions and the fluidity of desires and of their satisfaction are sustained, among other things, by logistics flows that link people to their objects in the context of the city as a way of life. Thus is endorsed the image of unlimited, unrestricted flows ‘with no inertias’ that logistics somehow projects on urbanites.

The person in charge of the Energy Agency of the City Council took a different view, expressing his concern with the environmental sustainability of a city that is increasingly permeated by the logistic flows of on line commerce. Not only the intensification of traffic but also its impact on the morphology urban life were mentioned. The increasingly close fit to customers’ demands has determined changes in the material aspects of delivery in Madrid. Instead of dealing with a fixed departure-arrival point, the person in charge of the mobility section of a large company must now deal with a network of decentralized distribution nodes scattered across the capital. The local government representative asks, ‘How can this network of flows be materially articulated, particularly considering issues of ecologic footprint and environmental sustainability?’ In a commercial logic, some of the answers heard in the auditorium were not surprising: ‘ecologic appointments’ for home delivery can be commercialized in a way that allows the client to choose a delayed delivery according to criteria that prioritize something different from the immediate satisfaction of opening the

purchased package. The consumer would be ready to wait if the wait had an ecologic meaning. This meaning, added to the intangible dimensions of the merchandise landscape, is another kind of nourishment for citizens' lifestyles.

Home Delivery Dilemmas (2): Ecologic Consumption

The concern with environmental sustainability and other issues external to contemporary modes of production and consumption engenders social, political and business initiatives. *Terra Madre* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYwbbITT3_4] is a small Madrid company pioneering the sale on-line and by home delivery of food products (mostly fresh fruit and vegetables) with ecologic certificates.¹¹ Its founder, originary from the United States, has been long concerned with food issues. He described his approach as follows: 'making the world of food more rational', 'recovering the producer-consumer link', 'avoiding adulteration', 'eating more locally', 'weaving the community through food'. Driven by these ideas, ten years ago he started his company, which promoted national ecologic food consumption in Spain, and more specifically in the metropolitan area of the capital, taking advantage of the opportunities that this market, still in its infancy, offered.

'Ecologic fruit and vegetables delivered to your home' is the slogan that dominates the *Terra Madre* webpage. Throughout the year, the company buys from an average of thirty ecologic suppliers of fruit and vegetables and, to a lesser extent, of canned or bottled products such as milk, cleaning and personal hygiene products, and so on.¹² Preference is given to suppliers that are close geographically. However, this 'company policy', says the owner, is necessarily flexible because 'if we provided only what is produced in Madrid, we'd be a potato, onion, melon and cabbage company. That's it. Ours would be an unviable business because our clientele wants a complete, varied shopping basket'. Therefore, suppliers are located 'as near as possible'. And yet, production rhythms may cause a nearby supplier to be unable to supply the product; in these cases *Terra Madre* must resort, at least temporarily, to a geographically more distant supplier in order to satisfy market demand.

Suppliers must have their product certified as ecologic by the competent authority in their community. As distributor, *Terra Madre* comes under the scrutiny of the control board of the Community of Madrid, which grants the certificate of 'distributor of ecologic products' and checks that what is sold is what it says it is; for example, in the case of fruit and vegetables, the adjective 'ecologic' mainly relates to the non-use of pesticides in the production. 'Being ecologic' carries specific conditions and this company's business depends on its abiding by such conditions. To give a few examples, the label 'ecologic' implies a direct relationship with the producers who must be paid a fair price; it requires that quality food should be 'humanized' and healthy, and that food practices should be linked to the social fabric of the community. Satisfying the requirements does not happen on its own; it involves

¹¹ This section is based on an ethnography collected in 2012 through participant observation in the activities of *Terra Madre* and several interviews with the owner and workers. The quotes are literal transcriptions from the interviews.

¹² Fresh meat and bread are about the only products not sold by *Terra Madre*.

a complex, multi-participative and technologically mediated work. However, transportation of the product from the supplier to the company's warehouses is dependent on the logistic networks established for conventional food flows. This is a main source of tension, as it conflicts with this business' underlying non-commercial values. At *Terra Madre* they acknowledge that 'Without Mercamadrid [the great wholesale food market in the city], none of this would be possible. For example, there's no fruit in Madrid; it has to come from Murcia. So, it would be unfeasible to pay transport costs for 20 kilos of peaches here and for 50 kilos of orange somewhere else...'. So, *Terra Madre* uses the carriers' pre-set routes, which make transport costs viable because they link the production centres to the city's logistic platforms. 'In a way, we adapt to the flow of non-ecologic food. For example, a truck is coming from the Jerte and my supplier agrees with the carrier to put a couple of boxes of ecologic cherries on top for me'. This makes business possible but, as I have mentioned, it also poses a challenge to the ecologic policy of the company for, thus, the model is no longer exact and it is no longer a radical alternative to the current food model.

At the other end of the chain, *Terra Madre* has a portfolio of clients to whom every week it emails a link to its order form. The clients fill the form specifying products, quantities and method of payment and can add observations on the products or the delivery. 20 per cent of the clients are commercial establishments and consumer groups. The latter have different profiles, although they can all be described as 'communities of experience' in which the consumption of ecologic food is the key element. I was told, 'We have groups of neighbours who are very politically aware regarding ecologic issues; for example, this is the case with a group of young people who moved here, in the Sierra, from the city. There are also groups of friends who get together to hike or because they like nature and they take the opportunity to buy as a group. There are families. There are the parents of children who go to the same school and are aware of the importance of eating healthy for their kids' sake, and for whom this is also an excuse for socializing.'

To survive, *Terra Madre* has opted for a 'customized service'. 80 per cent of the customers are families or individuals who order what they need every week or two. The company does not reject the means by which the ecologic food market traditionally restricts the client's 'freedom' in favour of other values or needs (such as promoting consumer groups or offering 'model baskets'); it complements them with a more personalized purchase. As I was told, 'It's what the client demands: To be able to choose how to meet their needs and appetites. Not for us to offer them Swiss chard, even say for two weeks in a row, if they don't like it'. Thus, this niche in the market can be extended to bring ecologic food to a broader spectrum of consumers. Thus, however, the tension between freedom (of the client) and limitation (of the logistic framework) emerges strongly, jeopardizing the meaning of 'ecologic product'. Is it possible to combine the values of the ecologic product with the demands of the consumer city? Is 'ecologic', in the end, a characteristic of the products, of the social relations, of the values systems or of the possibilities offered by technology? *Terra Madre* actively struggles with these doubts.

To summarize, the City Council, large companies and small social or business initiatives all address the sustainability of flows of merchandise in the urban landscape, though they do so in different ways. The questions are many and varied, and so are the answers. In any case, it seems clear that the complexity of commercial logistics is related to the ways in which the inhabitants' forms of subjectivisation and social relation are involved.

The Hypermodern Citizen in an Economy of Experience

The French sociologist François Ascher (2005) coined the expression 'hypermodern eater' to describe a contemporary kind of *homo consumens*.¹³ He argued that we inhabit a third modernity that represents an intensification and deepening of the dynamics of previous modernities; basically, individualization and rationalization. This is not in conflict with the proliferation of new social links related to consumer practices or with an aestheticization of these practices that privileges an emotional and perceptible experience. The subject-who-consumes is increasingly differentiated and more reflexive. If consumption has always been a vector of identification (which is the same as saying of distinction), today this has become more complex because the individualization of the consumer has intensified.¹⁴ There are new regimes of meaning and of co-production of bodies, subjects and food; among others, regimes of 'health', 'food safety' and 'light diet'. What stands out in all this is an aesthetic and aestheticizing dimension of consumption. In an economy of experience of the senses, daily life is *tasted* (Pine and Gilmore 2011). This is, in a way, contrary to the 'entropy of taste' typical of industrialization, the second modernity in Ascher's chronology.

These new forms of consumption produce an acceleration of the dynamics of innovation, understood as the constant production of differences in the merchandise; nuances, versions and degrees of difference that affect what is consumed and, of course, how, when, where, by and with whom. These economic dynamics of accelerated innovation are directly related to the consumer's hyper-reflexivity when faced with the 'options' on offer in a merchandise landscape that is particularly broad in large cities. This reflexivity corresponds with that that the agents in the chain of value apply to their own practices — the *agencements* (Hardie and MacKenzie 2006), themselves merchandise. These processes would be unintelligible without reference to the enormous extension and omnipresence of technological applications (Thrift and French 2002, Thrift 2008) that make possible the ubiquitous calculations and judgments of both the hyper-modern consumer and his suppliers, and that outline an(other) ecology; an informational ecology or *datascape* which affects urban consumption decisively. In this landscape, choice in consumption is exacerbated through practices that shape mobile time-spaces in which changes in direction, opinion or location do not necessarily interrupt the continuous flow of merchandise or the attachments that it

¹³ Obviously, this refers exclusively to a limited fraction of the world population; specifically, the middle and upper classes in industrialized countries.

¹⁴ Regarding food consumption, examples go from the sale of individual portions to the exponential increase in food choices, the delocalization of many, of time and spaces of everyday community meals, and so on.

produces. Paradoxically, the practices of calculation in the logistics networks — standardization, geo-localization, and so on — favour a (partly imagined) ‘freedom of movement’ that is qualitatively different from that which characterizes contemporary forms of subjectivisation, especially in large cities.¹⁵

Conclusions: Logistics as an Urban Imaginary

It is unlikely that an ordinary citizen would see the advertisements of global logistics companies because, normally, they are found in specialist publications.¹⁶ However, it is fascinating to look at these ads because they are an unending source of depictions of today’s time-space production. Showing a photograph of a company cargo ship in transit, the reefer operator NYKCool states that their relationship with their clients follows the route of relationships not of ‘territory’. Through a word-play between ships and relationships, they conclude: ‘We believe in loonger [sic] relation-ships’. Siter Transporti also uses an image of a vehicle in transit, this time on a highway, to state their ‘commitment on the go’. Space as connection and time as synchronicity are the promises contained in this logistics publicity. Maersk, one of the most powerful companies in this sector, uses a page with a long, three-column text in which they ensure their ‘absolute reliability’ on routes between Asia and Northern Europe. In the unforeseeable and always-to-be-created world of logistics mobility, a commitment of operating ‘on-the-go’ is, above all, a commitment to control: the projected operations that *can* be calculated perfectly. Shipping ‘is predictable’. ‘We just made shipping boring’. The almost impossible image proposed by the GoReefers advertisement shows a woman in a lab coat and a Mardi Gras-ish hat with fruit against a background of containers and cranes; a combination that is meant to say, ‘this is what we think makes us the best’. The discontinuities of territoriality — shipping to new markets such as China, Thailand and India — are translated into a reassuring advertisement. As I was told, ‘What happens if your

¹⁵ The concept of ‘calculative self’ refers to the link between processes of technologically-based rational calculation and contemporary forms of subjectivisation. For example, it helps us to understand how the extension of ‘audit cultures’ (Strathern 2000) affects working subjects and, in general, forms of citizenship, if we consider the audit as a kind of Foucaultian governmentality. The expression ‘lifehacking’, derived from the computer world, has become popular as a way to name an urban trend. A lifehacker is someone who uses all kinds of methods, tricks and shortcuts in everyday life to increase ‘productivity’ and ‘efficiency’. ‘Liberation’ from the inconvenient ties of everyday life allows one to have time for activities that one finds more interesting or that one simply chooses to perform. Soylent, a kind of nutritive drink that substitutes the need to eat anything else (except at chosen moments of socialization around a ‘habitual’ meal) was invented by a United States software engineer to ‘save time’ at meals (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soylent_per_cent28drink_per_cent29), which shows a calculative logic at the service of our imaginaries of freedom. Even though it could be seen as a reactualization of old utopias of self-sufficiency, the concept of lifehacker is symptomatic of a contemporaneity that mixes in an original way the ubiquity of calculations in technologically-based datascares with processes of individuation through choice (and consumption).

¹⁶ The advertisements that I consider here were found in several 2013 issues of the magazine *Eurofruit*. *The international marketing magazine for fresh produce buyers in Europe*, <http://www.fruitnet.com/eurofruit>

container does not meet the requirements on arrival? The fruit is sound but one of the probes failed and your fruit is declined entry? Do you re-run the cold treatment, or do you ship your fruit to a different country? Who pays for the additional costs?' GEODIS offers the definitive solution portraying logistics as an activity that guarantees the connections and translations that make globalization, in terms of traffic of merchandise, possible. GEODIS advertisement reads, 'Your reputation and success depend on whether you receive or deliver your products on time at a reasonable price from anywhere in the world'. 'Global logistics solutions made for you'.

In a digitalized economy that is globalized and functions 24-hours-a-day, the continuous flow of objects and data is an indispensable requirement; one that demands extended periods of maintenance. On the other hand, the vicissitudes of everyday urban life, the rhythms of activity and the processes of interrelation, identification and social differentiation that define the urban condition as a way of life are interwoven with this flow of merchandise. Through continuous performance, time-spaces emerge which are based on the production of connection and synchrony. Embodying the just-in-time model of global commerce, logistics practices draw scenarios that could easily constitute an imaginary for the cosmopolis, beyond the uncertain ideology of freedom of flows; an imaginary made of old dreams (and new means) of rational control of urban life that both reshape and are reshaped by the continuous emergence of contingencies.

References

- Alber, A. and Benach, N. (eds) (2012). *Doreen Massey. Un sentido global del lugar*. Barcelona: Icaria.
- Ascher, F. (2005). *Le Mangeur Hypermoderne*. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- Callon, M. and Law, J. (2005). On qualculation, agency, and otherness. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23 (5): 717-733.
- Christopher, M. (2011). *Logistics & Supply Chain Management*. Dorchester: Prentice Hall.
- De Santiago, E. (2008a). El sector logístico y la gestión de flujos globales en la region metropolitana de Madrid. *Scripta Nova*, XII (259).
- De Santiago, E. (2008b). Madrid 'ciudad única' (II). La explosión urbana en la region madrileña y sus efectos colaterales. *Urban*, 13: 138-164.
- Hardie, I., MacKenzie, D. (2006). Assembling an Economic Actor: The *Agencement* of a Hedge Fund. Paper presented at the seminar 'New Actors in a Financialised Economy and Implications for Varieties of Capitalism', Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, May 11-12, 2006.
- Larner, W. (2014). ISO 9000. In N. Thrift et al. (eds).
- Leslie, D., Reimer, S. (1999). Spatializing commodity chains. *Progress in Human Geography*, 23 (3): 401-420.
- Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. London: Sage.
- Massey, D. (2012). Imaginar la globalización: las geometrías del poder del espacio-tiempo. In A. Alber and N. Benach (eds).
- Ong, A. (2006). Mutations in Citizenship. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23 (2-3): 499-531.
- Pine, J. and Gilmore, J. (2011). *The Experience Economy*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Rose, G. (2013). *Deep Sea and Foreign Going: Inside Shipping, the Invisible Industry That Brings You 90 per cent of Everything*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Sampson, H. (2014). The Globalization of a Labour Market: The Case of Seafarers. In N. Thrift et al (eds).
- Simmel, G. (2005). La metrópolis y la vida mental. *Bifurcaciones*, 4: 1-10.
- Strathern, M. (ed.) (2000). *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies on Accountability, Ethics and the Academy*. London: Routledge.
- Thrift, N. and French, S. (2002). The automatic Production of Space. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 27 (3): 309-335.
- Thrift, N. (2008). *Non-Representational Theory*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Thrift, N. et al. (eds) (2014). *Globalization in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Whatmore, S. (2002). *Hybrid Geographies*. Londres: Sage.
- Wirth, L. (2005). El urbanismo como modo de vida, *Bifurcaciones*, 2 s/p.