The urbanities.
Osaka and the concept of urbanity in culturally diverse contexts

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What is city? That seemingly simple question, of course, defies all attempts at an answer. Cities are the most representative products of human civilisation, they are the true reflections of the complex web of social relations, times and rhythms onto the specific place – and, thus, essentially undefinable.

Definitions focused at the essence, at *what makes cities cities*, often use term *urbanity*. In his discussions of *the urban*, broadly enough, Spengler wrote about the *soul* of the city. His vagueness might not help the pragmatists in their search for a rigorous definition, but his attempt comes closest to that elusive, undefinable - *something*.

In a globalised world we are becoming aware that definitions of urbanity have to be as culture-specific as the cities are. That they all have their own urban cultures, their *souls*, their very own urbanities. That adds another, necessary and long overdue, level of complexity to the issue.

Our current research focuses on understanding of urbanity in several cities of the West (Mediterranean and Continental Europe) and the East (East and South-East Asia). A number academics, urban planners, urban designers, architects, engineers and policy-makers involved in the shaping of Belgrade, Barcelona, Bangkok and Osaka answered a simple questionnaire. The results offer insights into the ways in which the experts see urbanity of their cities and of their cultures, a view into how those cities and those cultures see themselves. Of particular interest to us was the emerging notion of uniqueness of urbanity of cities in culturally diverse contexts and plurality of corresponding definitions. That provides a specific focus of this paper. In order emphasise urbanity of *the other* we focus at the city of Osaka. As our project is still in progress, a number of open-ended conclusions are an invitation for discussion.

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1 Places and cultures of Midosuji Dori

Even a casual visitor to Osaka would be familar with its grand boulevard. Midosuji Dori, a four thousand and five hundred meters long main street connects key central areas of the city, the *Kita* (North) and the *Minami* (South) and acts as a true urban axis. Its name refers to the important South and North Mido temples, which are located at the Western side of the Boulevard.

The grand boulevard of Osaka was completed in 1937, as part of an ambitious *Comprehensive Osaka Urban Plan* advocated by the then professor at Hitotsubashi University, Seki Hajime (1873–1935). Professor Seki served the city of Osaka as deputy Mayor from 1914 until his death in 1935. He saw cities as "social subjects", "vital organs" of the peoples' national economy and not, as landowners and bureaucrats did, as a mere economic phenomenon (Hanes, 2002). His plan included development of infrastructure (canals, sewers, parks and cemeteries) as well as construction of a splendid promenade. It was an effort to transform Osaka, in Seki's own words, from a "Capital of Smoke" to a "Livable City", to improve the quality of urban life. The Midosuji project was, in its context, comparable with the best streets conceived by Haussman or Cerda. Some call it the *Champs Elysees of Osaka*.

The Boulevard can be seen as a single place. Its unitary identity comes from a coherent overall morphology and a number of built-in unifying elements. For instance, nine hundred ginko trees adore its pavements and add a very special nuance of cultural contextualisation, making the street distinctly Japanese and of Osaka (ginko is the official Prefectural tree). Twenty-two sculptures donated by the companies housed along Midosuji Dori provide an air of highly urbane culture. Elegant western style buildings constructed during the Meiji and Taisho period and old merchants' houses of Senba district (which were lucky to survive an almost total destruction during the savage bombings in 1945) provide an appropriate stage for lively urban activity.

Nonetheless, it would not take long for our superficial visitor to recognise the unitary characterisation of the main street of Osaka as insufficient. Midosuji Dori is strongly influenced by European urbanism, but it is much more than a mere cultural import. It still reflects all the ambiguities of the times of its conception, an era of complex dialectics between the Taisho "catching-up" with the West and the growing auto-orientalism of a frustrated, pre-war society (Befu, 2001). It also accurately mirrors the dilemmas of contemporary Japan. Along its long stretch the street character changes in response to the adjoining areas, which range from the major railway station and business districts to fashionable entertainment and shopping precincts. The immediate hinterland colours Midosuji Dori with spatial and behavioural patterns that are all but Western.

The resulting quality of Midosuji Dori is, therefore, composite and complex. The Boulevard is simultaneously *a single place* and *a system of places* of very distinct characters and cultures. Those separate, fragmented identities are nourished by histories and life of the side streets, lanes, canals and adjoining precincts. Downtown Kita around the Umeda Station; downtown Minami with Shisaibashi and Namba districts; Dotonbori-dori; neon lights reflected in the Dotonbori-gawa; nearby amusement quarters of Minami; arcaded Shinsaibashi street, the largest shopping area of Osaka; major department stores; the European Village; the American Village and its trend-conscious young people - they are all spatially identifiable, they all possess strong individual identities and, at the same time, they all play significant roles in the definition of the quality of a higher order – one orchestrated by the Boulevard. Midosuji Dori grew into a key ordering urban element of central Osaka. Its distinctive urban form is critical part of cognitive maps of both new acquaintances of Osaka and the locals.

Illustration 1 The 1929 map – Introduction of Midosuji Dori into the dense urban tissue

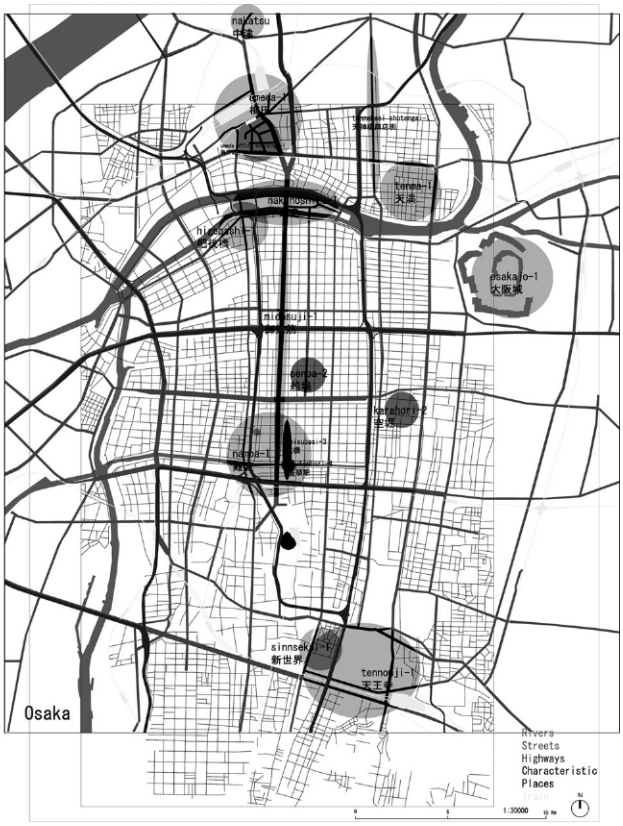

Illustration 2 Field of forces that make urbanity of central Osaka today, held together by the North-South axis of Midosuji Dori

During our recent investigation of public spaces of Osaka we asked a very special group of locals - academics and graduate students in disciplines that focus at production of space - to identify places which constitute and best reflect urban essence of Osaka. The resulting expert view confirms above-defined importance of Midosuju Dori. Although not many of the participants in our inquiry explicitly named the Boulevard as *the* place, their mapping of places critical for experiencing and understanding of Osaka's *toshisei* outlines a zone clearly held together by the cohesive and communicative forces of Midosuji Dori (Illustrations 1 and 2).

We can conclude that Midosuji Dori is a single place, the character of which is strongly defined by its Western origins; at the same time it is a sophisticated system of places deeply rooted in the local cultures of Japan, Osaka and even the tiniest of its precincts.

2 Layered identities

Osaka is much older and larger than Midosuji Dori. Its history was critical for development of those many local cultures that so strongly mark the present identity of the Boulevard. The oldest archaeological findings point at the Jomon era (10,000-300 b.C.), while first written mention of the region dates back to the early eight century. Yamato was the birthplace of Japan. In their authoritative overview of the history of Osaka, McClain and Wakita (McClean, 1999) explain that, in the early Middle Ages place called Naniwa, mainly because of its convenience as a harbour, attracted various activities. That provided an urbogenetic sparkle. By "the middle of the 7th century, the port of Naniwa became Naniwakyo, Japan's first imperial capital" and what was "probably the first community in Japan to be laid out in accordance with Chinese precedents of orthogonal urban design" (ibid., p.3).

The name Osaka was first mentioned in 1496, in a reference to the chapel "on Ikutama manor, at a place called Osaka" (ibid., p.9). The construction of the Osaka Castle was an ultimate recognition of its importance. When in the 1580s Hideyoshi Toyotomi moved into the Osaka Castle, he encouraged many of the Kyoto's leading Buddhist institutions to follow his example and give religious legitimacy to the *joka machi* – the city below the castle. By the time of the warlord's death in 1598, Osaka was an established city of merchants and artisans, in size and importance "perhaps second only to Kyoto in all of Japan" (ibid., p.15). It grew very quickly into one of the Three Metropoles of Japan. When McClean and Wakita stress that Osaka "was not Kyoto and it was not Edo" that must be understood in two ways: rightly - that Osaka was the third among tree capitals, but also that it had an already developed urban character – a particular kind of "Osaka personality", attributable not only of its inhabitants, but also to the city itself.

Early Japanese cities were never completely built as planned (Bognar, 1990, p.15). That may explain an unorthodox, East-West orientation of the grid of Osaka. It was determined more by the rivers and the sea then by geomantic rules of Chinese urbanism. To the East was the Osaka Castle; to the West of the Uemachi Plateau were government buildings and the port, and the grid of streets and canals extended to connect those two precincts. Today, the East-West direction has lost its communicative importance, but it still plays an important part in both physical structure and mythology of the city. It was immortalised in some of the cornerstones of local culture, such as *The Love Suicide at Amijima,* by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (Chikamatsu, 1953). His tragic lovers walked upstream, from the pleasure quarters, along the banks of the river and Nakanoshima island – to die together and thus honour their impossible love. Such stories often preserve places better than the stone walls could.

Like the Chinese capitals, Osaka did not have a centre. Like all Japanese medieval castle towns, it did not have any fortifications. Numerous temples were located at its outskirts for,

besides their primary use, defensive purpose. "Such features prompted Terunobu Fujimori to compare Japanese cities to cabbages, wrapped in soft, protective layers, and Western cities to eggs, encased in hard shells. To further clarify the underlying issues, Shuji Takashuna aptly pointed out that 'whereas Westerners tend to view space in a unified and convergent manner, that is, in terms of a discrete, organized whole, the Japanese see it in a pluralistic, divergent manner, in terms of numerous interconnecting fragments" (Bognar, 1990, p.16).

Midosuji Dori was a conscious effort to introduce Western "order" into the "chaos" of an Asian city. Seki Hajime's grand project reorientated urban structure of Osaka to connect the existing nucleus of urban activity at the river with the prosperous *monzen machi*, or town in front of the gate, which centuries ago "grew up at the approach to Sumiyoshi Shrine and another at the temple complex of Shitennoji" (McClean, 1999, p.6). His gesture was as much a conscious recognition of the old, as it was a brave introduction of the new. Midosuji Dori remains strongly local and of Osaka, as it is global and of the World.

The identity of Osaka is layered. Its urban culture includes layers of the past and the present, physical spaces and ephemeral rhythms, buildings and patterns of use that define and frame the (central) Osaka of today. That multiplicity is simultaneously global and local. It is global at the basic conceptual level, Lefebvrian *conçu* (Sheilds, 1999). Both East-West and North-South directions of urban development were inspired by foreign ideologies – by China and by the West. At the concrete levels of urban space and appropriation, the city grew (*veçu*) into a distinctly local, Japanese quality. Even if not always in superlatives (eg. Kerr, 1996), Osaka has to be described as a truly Japanese city.

The Japaneseness of urban from (*perçu*) was the topic of many studies and publications. The most commonly expressed view is summarised in Botond Bognar's comparison of Japanese cities with the text: "The evolution of the urban environment in Japan indicates that the city is created, perceived, and understood as an additive texture (text?) wherein preference is given to the parts (or episodes) in a network of independent places; the whole (or the story) as an aggregate or incomplete form, remains elusive, to be conjured up only in the memory and imagination of the perceiver. As typified best by Tokyo, the Japanese city has neither the structural clarity of European cities. Instead, it has grown up in a pleat-like, irregular way around a number of nuclei or, as Vladimir Krstic remarked, 'it has developed with no apparent concept of its totality'" (ibid., p.16).

Osaka possesses all the dramatic difference to the usual Western spatiality summarised by Berque (1997a). Yet, being profoundly Japanese it does not fail to also be distinctly - Osaka. Its uniqueness among the Japanese cities is proverbial. Locals elevate that difference to their major source of pride; on the other hand, others often ridicule the very same "Osaka character".

What matters to us here is that Osaka does possess a distinct urban culture reflected in its spaces, their form and patterns of use. The clue for definition of that culture cuts across three distinctive layers – cosmopolitan, national and local. The local layers provide the finest nuances of cultural difference, even within their most immediate contexts.

3 The urbanity of Osaka

Probably the critical force behind the cultural specificity of Osaka dates back to the time of the foundation of the city and stems from the original reason for settlement – commerce. Japan had two clearly defined types of culture - "one was the culture of Kamigata (the 'upper region', the area including Kyoto and Osaka); the other was the culture of the city of Edo. (Since the early times) Kyoto continued to have an elite aristocratic cultural community. By contrast, the culture of Edo centered on a far larger upper-class warrior stratum" (Nishiyama, 1997), while

Osaka developed a distinctly different cultural charge, one provided by the class of entrepreneurial merchants.

Therefore, the "vulgar" culture of Osaka has strong class roots. In the beginning that was not very helpful. Historically, commerce was not highly regarded in Japan. The Tokugawa rulers distinguished four social classes: "First the samurai, in some thirty-one gradations; then the peasants; next 'below' them on the scale, craftsmen; and finally, at the bottom of the social structure, the merchant class, whose 'money grubbing' and greedy nature was despised and downgraded in the increasingly Confucianized Tokugawa ordering of society" (King, 1993, p. 57).

From the beginning "Osaka was a city not of samurai, but of merchants (*chonin,* literally 'townspeople')" (Hunter, 1991, p. 86). Over the time "merchants sought outlets for their wealth and desire for influence within the system. They found ways of evading the restrictive sumptuary laws. They fostered the development of a new, urban, cultural tradition" (McClean, 1999). Since the Middle Ages, initially to please their rulers, the merchants of Osaka had invested in public projects. When "Matsudaira began the reurbanisation of Osaka by enticing the commoners who fled during the battles 1614-15 to come back to the city. … (he) initiated what became a regular government policy of cooperating with wealthy merchant families to dredge out a network of canals and waterways to transport good conveniently and cheaply into and around the community" (ibid., p.50). Canals and bridges became the most distinguishing features of urban structure and life. In a fashion unique to Japan, some of the major bridges and canals still celebrate not their location, but the names of those who donated them to the city – such as the famous Yodoya family and their major bridge over the Tosoborigawa, Yodoyabashi.

Very early on, the commercial activity promoted Osaka into the "'country's kitchen' because it was a major consumption center, a city of perhaps four hundred thousand persons in the 1620s and 1630s, and was located at the primary nodal point conjoining the rivers and coastal shipping routes that had constituted the arteries of commerce in the economically advanced Kinai region from the medieval period … The establishment within Osaka of the Three Great Markets provided physical evidence of the city's emergence as the leading urban consumption center in Western Japan" (ibid., p. 56).

Many other features of Osaka's development strengthened urban aspect of its identity. The city did not sprawl, but grew denser. By the 1620s "most of the newcomers to Osaka built homes or moved into appartment-style dwellings located west of the castle, filling up the area familiarly known as Senba, originally opened to settlement in 1598 …". An increased density meant higher complexity of urban governance. "The shogunate acted quickly to develop procedures to govern and police … Appointed on a regular basis from 1619, the two city magistrates issued legal codes, dispensed justice, collected taxes, oversaw the maintenance of roads and waterways, regulated commercial activities and artisan organisations, and exhorted commoners to exhibit appropriate behaviour" (ibid., p. 53).

A *chonin* city developed fast and soon it became dominant in some of the most refined domains of culture. The growing, rich merchant class sponsored the success of local literary and theatrical production. It was only in the 18th century that Edo managed to catch up with Kyoto and Osaka in the publishing output, and the competition among the three is still fierce. Respected productions of *bunraku*, *kabuki* and other theatrical forms make a continuing legacy of that era (Lowe, 1985). In those early times the three main cities were the sites of fierce competition, (Nishiyama, 1997), while Osaka often led both in numbers and quality. It produced its own shows and attracted numerous performers to Dotombori area, which maintains its centuries long reputation for high standard theatres. Performances often spilled into the streets. Traditional *funa norikomi* festival still brings famous *kabuki* actors out, on the boats, to

Dotonborigawa river, where they announce new Kabukiza and Nakaza programmes. This and similar events regularly contribute to the "Osaka character".

Probably the most interesting example of that urban and urbane need to generate and nurture local pride dates back to the time of construction of the Osaka Castle. Records show how "… Nobunaga enunciated at Azuchi another tenet of the new castle architecture: the fortress should dazzle with its opulence and aesthetics as well as with its might" (McClean, 1999, p. 12).

That flourishing of local culture and the resulting pride can be compared with the amazing exuberance of urban culture in Medieval, Mediterranean Europe, where cities like Siena or Dubrovnik fiercely competed to best express their *urbanity*.

4 Urbanity denied

It is as difficult to define urbanity as it is to spell out what the cities are. Ramage, in his well documented *Urbanitas, Ancient Sophistication and Refinement*, underlines the original essence of the term: "... a Roman's urbanity revealed itself in what he said and how he said it" (1973, p.59). Urbanity is usually seen as "a synonym of suavity: a refined politeness or courtesy. An urbane person is someone who knows his manners. It comes close to civility, derived from the Latin *civilitas*" (Zijderveld, 1998, p.21). Urbanity is a deeply political phenomenon. We are often reminded how the origin of *politics* is in Greek *polis*, the archetypal urban settlement of the West, "the locale where the density, the *gravity of discourse* was greatest" (Steiner, 1976; Radovic, 1994). Cities are not simply good or bad; dialectics between their positive and negative aspects contribute equally to an urban profile.

Originating in patterns of speech and behaviour, urbanity features in all fields of human endeavour with expressive capacity. As we can distinguish urbanity of what *one said and how he said it*, we can equally judge the refinement, and indeed the politeness, of what one builds, of how his building relates to its context, or how the street orchestrates the movement etc. In Osaka, its theatres, publishers, bookstores, public projects, residential and job densities, active public spaces, governance, passionate aspiration towards beauty, as well as the row and competitive energy of the markets and commercial streets, all in their own way contribute to the potent flow of cultural energy – an truly amazing *urbanity*.

Yet much of contemporary urban theory would deny the very possibility of urbanity to Osaka! An *éclatant* example of such thinking is Anton Zijderveld's *Theory of Urbanity*. At the very opening of his treatise Zijderveld makes his position clear (italics are ours): "Urbanity, I shall argue, has been, from its start *at the end of Middle Ages in Europe*, an economic as well as civic culture, and as such the source of energy and inspiration for *Western European democracy* – the prime example of a *truly civilised society*". He continues how urbanity "is a *typically Western species* of the genus economic and civic culture. As such it is comparable to and *closely related with the Protestant ethic*. In fact, both urbanity and the Protestant ethic stood at the cradle of western capitalism and beyond that of Western modernity" (ibid., p.11, our italics).

Therefore, for Anton Zijderveld the Middle Ages were the time when urbanity emerged. The West, within narrowly defined boundaries, was an accurate location of its birth and continuing existence. Democracy is a unique and unquestionable political framework of urbanity, and Protestant religion is the only possible value system of urban culture. Such determinism excludes possibility for urban quality before or after, elsewhere or within different ideo-political contexts. It denies urbanity even to the *Urbs* itself!

Important for understanding of exclusivist worldview is Zijderveld's use of the term "*truly* civilised society". It exemplifies his readiness to be an arbiter, the one who defines the rules and

the one who judges, even the issues as elusive as the truth and culture. At the roots of such cultural arrogance is a progressist concept of human development. The progress of the "West", as defined by the "West" is seen as only path for all. The "West" is an unquestionable global leader, one that provides direction to the Rest (Mahbubani, 2002). Referring to the theories of Zijderveld's ideological forefather, Max Webber, Schulz rightly emphasises how "one has to question how domination rooted in a North American or Western European context can be useful tools for analysing cities in other cultures" (ibid., p. 284). Webber (correctly!) claimed that in East Asia the city in European terms does not exist. Zijderveld follows by saying how "the great cities of ancient India, ancient China, Babylonia, pre-Columbian Mexico, and Peru may have been true cities in the quantitative and morphological sense of the word", and concludes that "they lacked distinct economic and civic culture which could have forged their inhabitants into specific social bonds, thereby molding them into *true* citizens as happened in many late medieval and early modem cities of Europe" (ibid., p.17, our italics).

But, "unlike Europe, Japan was already economically and culturally determined by urban phenomena from the mid eighteenth century on. At that time the city of Edo was inhabited by more than one million people … and was therefore the largest city in the world." (Schulz, 2003, p.285). In 1700 Edo had twice the population of Paris. Edo and other cities of Japan could not be based on the ideals defined thousands of kilometres to their West (or East). The streets of Osaka were rich in traditional Japanese theatres and bookstores. The canals of Osaka were built to both carry goods and express local pride. The lanes and bridges of Osaka were, still are, and always will be different from those of Protestant Europe – or any other city in the world. They stem from the cultural substrate of their own city. Similar difference adors *souks* of Cairo, *sois* of Bangkok or even *sokaks* of an distinctly European Sarajevo. Cultural frameworks of those cities were carved out by different etiquette – and therefore resulted in *different* urbanity.

Without spending much space on that, here we want to emphasise that those urbanities should not be idealised. Urbanity as city's cultural energy is "in principle, axiologically neutral" (Zijderveld, p.9). Osaka is a great city, but it also faces a fair share of global and national problems. Some of the local reflections of the crisis are immense. Osaka is the capital of the homeless of Japan. The city centre was deserted by the majority of its residents. *A mizu no toshi* – 'a city on water', "a city of 808 bridges" (Fiévé, 2003, p.219), has lost almost all of its canals. The economy is far from flourishing. Those are all grave problems, and they add to the citiness of Osaka, to its genuine urban energy – to its urbanity.

The colonial mindset and its theories prove to be unable to grasp the possibility of different urbanities, of urbanities other than those defined by their own cultural framework. It seems incomprehensible to that worldview that "what the Romans called *urbanitas*, life at Rome, the Chinese termed *chengshi shenghuo*, 'life within the walls and the markets'" (Berque, 1997, p. 50), and that we can speak about the corresponding quality and complexity within two different cultures. Here we will not dwell on the roots and reasons behind the colonial doctrines in urbanism (for a more detailed discussion of that issue see Radovic, 2003). We only want to emphasise how extremely damaging such neo-imperialist positions are, and to support the position that "imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.19).

5 Need for vagueness and accuracy

In his discussions of *the urban,* Oswald Spengler wrote about the *soul* of the town (Spengler, 1992, p.90). His vagueness might not help the pragmatists, but it suggests the critically important, fundamentally undefinable *something* which makes cities - cities. Spengler's

vagueness is pregnant with meaning. It is similar to the thrilling elusiveness and ambiguity of another *something,* proposed by Yukio Mishima. When asked by his guest how to explain that his house contains "nothing specifically Japanese", the novelist "smiled and said: "Here, only what you cannot see is Japanese" (Random, p.14).

Ramage explains how "some of those who have examined *urbanitas* in one or more of its manifestations, failing to recognize that *sophistication or refinement is an essence, an aura, a subtle abstraction that makes itself felt in impressions, feelings, and attitudes*, have treated it as a specimen that can be slipped under a microscope" (ibid., p.6, our italics) - while it obviously could not. He uses an example of the great connoisseur of and the contributor to the Roman urbanity, Cicero, who - when pressed for a definition of the term *urbanitas* - admits "that he *does not really know what it is* (our italics): 'I just know that it is a certain [urbanity]' (ibid., p.59)."

But, our exclusivist theorists "know". They come from a cultural tradition accustomed to use knowledge as power for appropriation and domination of cultures other than their own. The colonialists mind needs clarity; it seeks the approved "truth" which then provides them with authority to dominate. They, tragically, fail to be puzzled in front of the phenomenon of urbanity.

When dealing with complex cultural issues such as urbanity, we must not only be satisfied with the vagueness – we must *insist on vagueness*. At the general level it should be sufficient to say that urbanity is the cultural energy of the city, the essence of the urban, that it's meanings are variable over time and space. It is important to always stress that urbanity is fundamentally *elusive, ambiguous and conditional* upon various circumstances. All that is necessary in order to open space for localisation and contextualisation of the phenomenon. While general definitions of urbanity must be vague, those which deal with local urbanities can be extremely clear and very accurate.

As we enter *any* city and zoom into its spaces and activities, we discover new forces and layers of difference. Our own project lists multiple places and identities – and, therefore, separate urbanities of Belgrade, Barcelona, Bangkok and Osaka. Is Barcelona Raval; or, is it Eixample; or Ribera? Or, isn't Barcelona, logically, all of them at the same time? Urbanities of all its precincts add up to an exciting synthesis which makes Barcelona one of greatest cities of Europe. The way urbanity of Barcelona is changing defies cultural exclusivists. (Alas, the urbanity of Raval is so non-European!)

6 Conclusions

Urbanity exists whenever and wherever the cities are. It may take different forms (in the very same way the cities do), but a city without urbanity is a contradiction in terms. A settlement without urbanity cannot be a city. Urbanity is a global concept, yet its ultimate quality develops through the innumerable local variations on a key theme.

Our example of Osaka shows a delicate balance between the global, what all cities are, and the local, kaleidoscopic variations and differences.

We can conclude that:

Potentially, there are as many urbanities as there are urban cultures.

Urban culture of Osaka is uniquely shaped by the place and the circumstances in which it grew. As cultural layers of the merchants city were multiplying, Osaka was becoming simultaneously a city of theatres, a city of shrines and temples, a city of printers and booksellers, a city of the "floating trade". Global, Japanese, and uniquely Osaka. All those interdependent cultures shaped the distinct spatial and behavioural niches of urbanity, which all constitute the

totality of today's Osaka.

Urbanity of any city is plural.

In Osaka, Midosuji Dori transforms its own citiness through a series of complex variations on the theme introduced by Hajime Seki. Some very distinct cultures strive along the Midosuji spine, and beyond. Those are conceived, lived and can be perceived both in their spatial definition and in their rhythms of existence.

Definitions of urbanity at general, global level benefit from vagueness.

That level is universal and it has to be broad enough to embrace the difference of *the other*. All cities are characterised both by tangible aspects of urbanity and by that invisible *something*, the *soul* (absence of which we can feel and essence of which we can not define). Osaka is as much a city as Barcelona, Belgrade or Bangkok are. Its uniqueness is established at the finer levels of urban life.

Definitions of local levels of urbanity can (and probably must) be very accurate and precise.

Those levels are particular; they are culture - place and time - specific. Urbanity pulsates, in longer and shorter time-frames – in an interaction between the ephemeral events and the *longue durée*.

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