

Introductory Note: I used the term 'strategy' to avoid the usual notion of 'planning.' 'Planning' is active, provocative, imposing measures, interdictions or stipulations. 'Strategy' is reacting to events created by an 'adversary' whose decisions we cannot influence. Obviously strategy could be aggressive, but I am opting for a defensive one.

I will start by describing the situation: people settle in groups, they occupy a territory. Groups have their common behaviour pattern and organisation, which, among other threats, define the area of the territory they appropriate.

'Urban Growth,' according to these definitions, might refer to a function relating the size of a population to that of the area it needs depending on the organisation of those groups, their behaviour and the needs that behaviour implies.

'Future of Cities' refers to formulating a 'strategy.'

The first idea that comes up is that urban strategy should be, as much as possible, inaction. Introducing the least intervention is the Kutuzov strategy, avoid direct conflict.

But the 'adversary' acts: demography changes, people's objectives make them stream to the existing city, or flee it. Even more characteristic to human behaviour is the simultaneous emergence of both objectives.

It is that simultaneous emergence that defines present urban growth within the different economic organisations of our epoch. I will not examine all details of this phenomenon; instead I will only try to sketch the process.

Urban physical conditions imply 'density,' determined by the 'proximity' of individual residential areas one to the other. 'Proximity' is a human need, opposite to 'density,' which is a statistical abstraction.

'Proximity' is determined by the subjective urge of a person to communicate. Personal security, health, survival. All of them are functions of 'proximity.'

The future of our cities might be the result of the change for our notion of 'proximity.'

Indeed, humans throughout history needed several levels of proximity: those imposed by face-to-face communications, those imposed by collective security, those determined by accessibility to livelihood and comfort and those of general organisation.

Let us look, one by one, at these 'proximities.'

1. Face-to-face communication may seem to have gone unchanged. In reality it changed radically, making us, in a way, into a different species than our predecessors: face-to-face communication became global: you can have it at any distance at any moment. Face-to-face proximity is no longer a limit.

2. Proximity of collective security is defined through the speed at which help can arrive to a person, this speed defined the distance between neighbours in a settlement: with present technology of movement the security distance, function of delay of help arriving, increased to a large multiple of that of past.

3. Accessibility to assure your livelihood, through 'work' and through 'purchase' does not impose the same limits as in the past. You can work at home, and acquire supplies directly at home as well, with minimal delay.

A remark to this item concerns automatic supply networks: energy, water and waste disposal. Modern technology of storage, of capture and of disposal made people potentially autonomous, making us more and more free of material supply nets, batteries, rainwater collection, waste incineration can make individual residencies much less 'distance-dependent.'

4. Organisation is largely immaterial, not dependent on physical proximity.

As a result of these changes, 'scattered' residences became equivalent to 'dense' settlements. As we stated in the above description of the simultaneous emergence of the 'double objective' it became technically attainable.

If we add the new trend of living with nature, domesticated, these conditions suggest new provisions.

Urban growth might become a meaningless concept; cities might become 'regions' of a relatively low 'density.' What could keep community individuality alive? This might be their particular praxis of politics.

Indeed suburbs have often more political weight than large city districts. That might be a result of being socially more homogenous.

The scattered city can be seen as a large group of 'villages,' (rather 'urban villages'), a 'region,' it can grow up to become a small 'country.'

'City States' as we know them from history, become a feature of the near future's autonomous regions, eventually forming a net.

Already in the 50s I presumed the emergence of a continent-wide urban network with the arrival of superfast rail systems, existing large cities became suburbs of one another.

In the nineties, I started to propagate the 'metropole Europe' idea, which was based on reality and advocating a sort of inter-European 'Carte Orange,' permitting the use of the 'continental metro' at reduced fares.

Urban growth becoming continental reorganisation might be the future.

As a historical analogue I could cite how mail became 'banalised' by the 'postal union' in the 19th century and replaced in 21st by generalised use of email.

My guess for the future city is the emergence of scattered urban villages, more attentive to fostering a natural environment. Traffic becoming more related to fast rail services, largely public. Automobile traffic becoming more personal, less dependent on fixed hours, thus avoiding peak hours and reducing investments in road infrastructure.

This, eventually forming, 'non-city,' leaves free fluctuation of physical residence patterns and less need for concentrated central areas.

Considering the fact that existing cities are physical infrastructures providing for residential behaviour as we know it, they can be transformed into the new kind of social behaviour and combined with new patterns of living. The growth of Paris, for example, would not imply building up concentrated high-rise buildings, but rather, a shift towards a new use-pattern of the countryside around hubs of the continental metro-system.

The second part, urban strategy.

(Beside the change of proximity factor as explained before) there is also an important change to employment patterns.

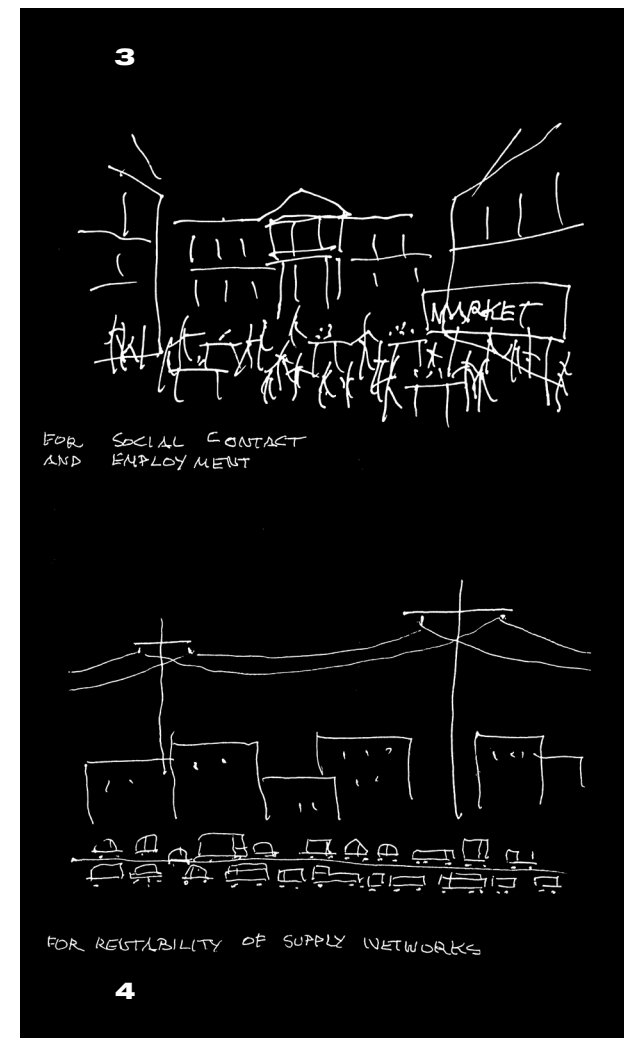
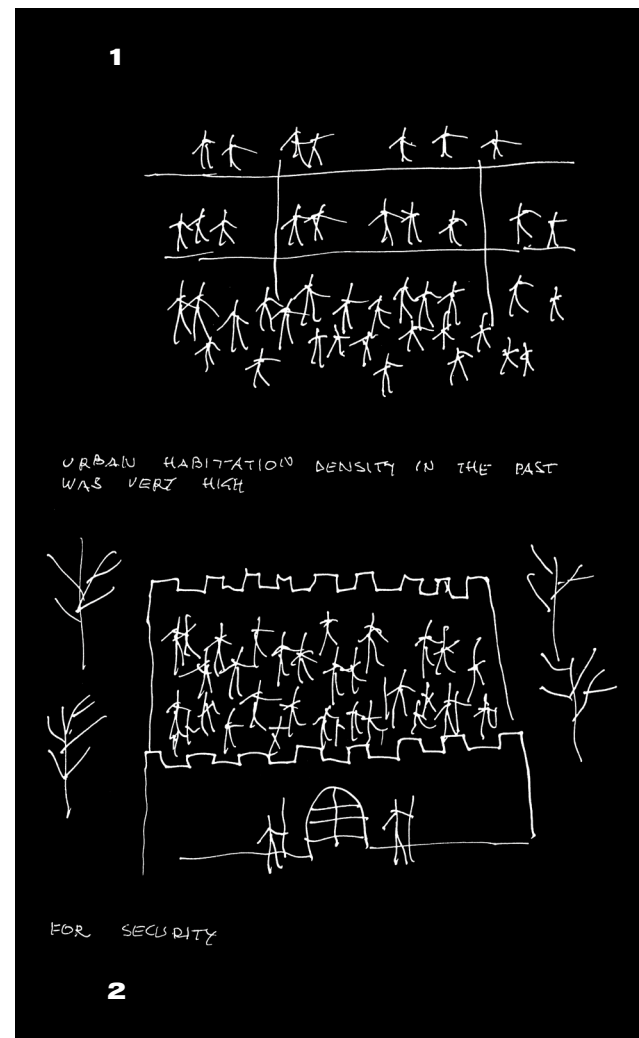
Digitization and computer are necessary to reduce mass employment, jobs that are tied to a special site: factory workers are more and more substituted by machines.

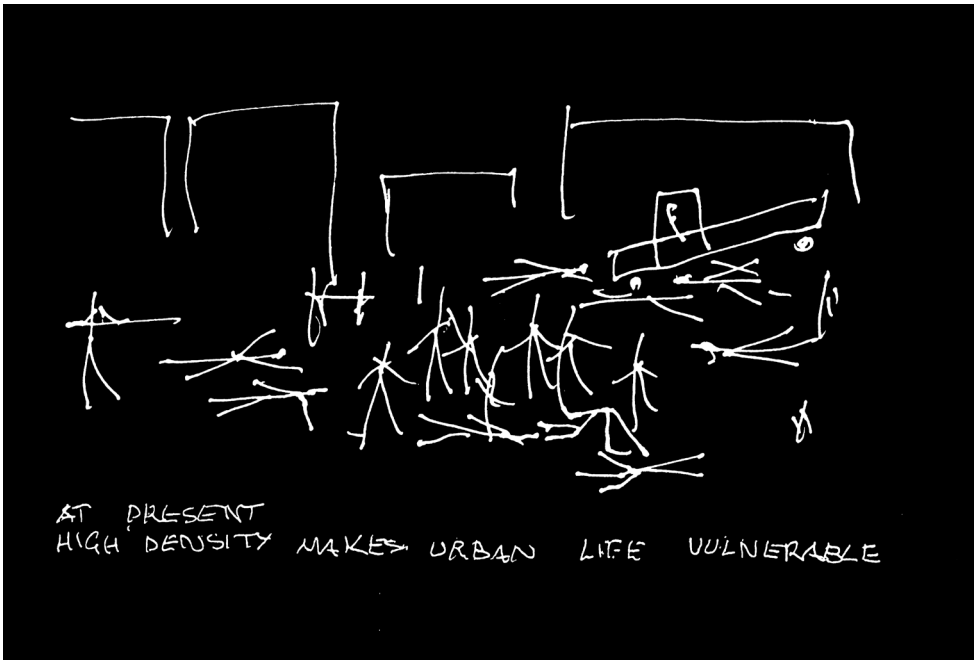
On the other hand, the service industry, particularly personal care, repair shops and retail implies mass employment that is either an 'at-home service' or performed in dispersed small units. They don't impose concentration; they rather follow customer's individual sites, or small settlements.

Probably the number of people working in garages and repair shops are greatly higher than all the workers in the global car industry.

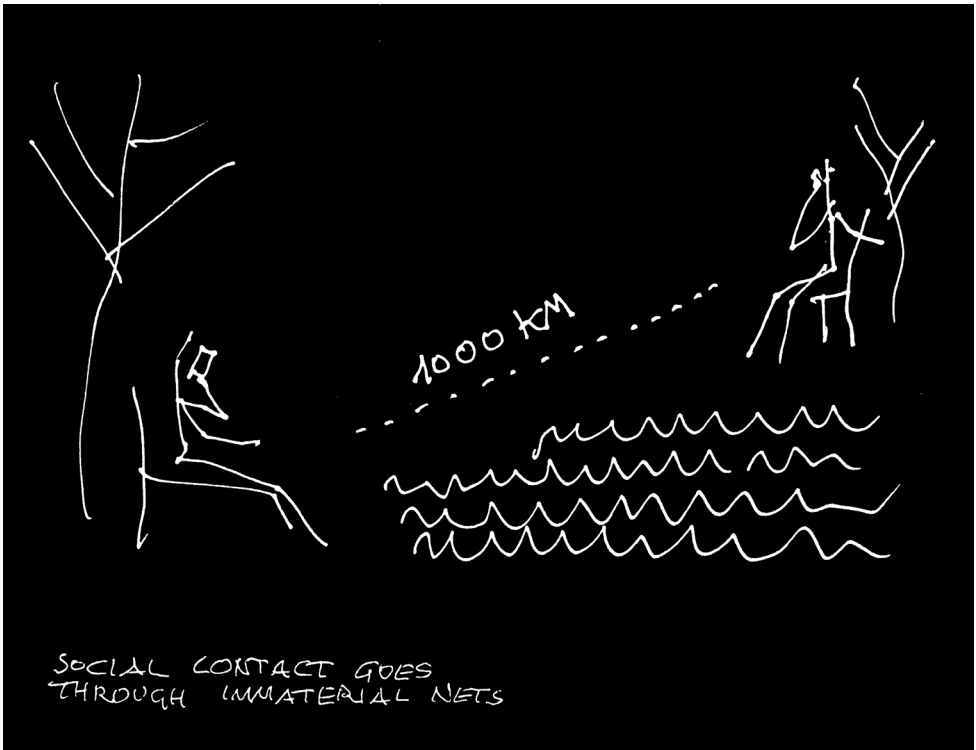
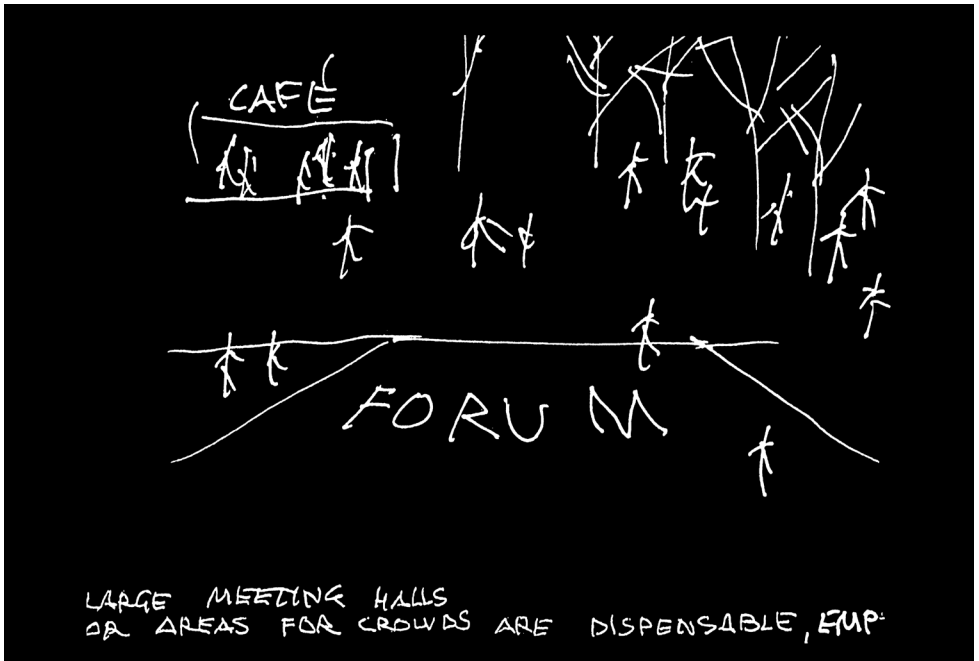
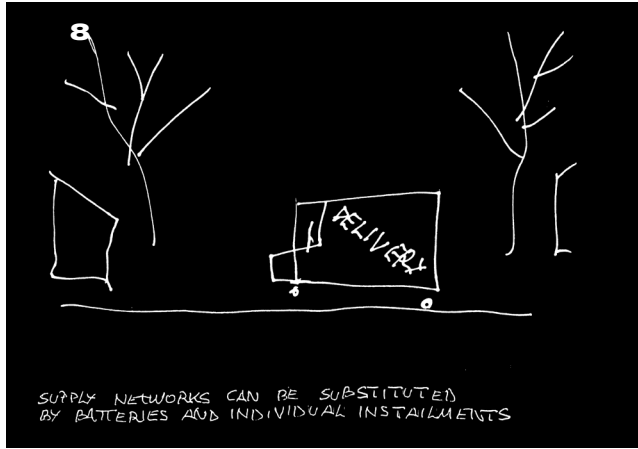
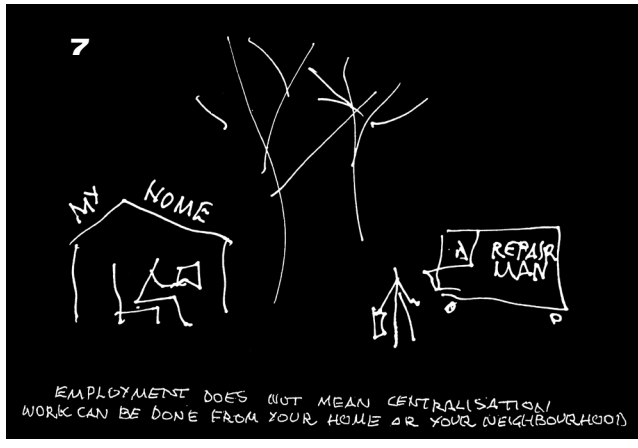
The situation is similar in nearly all fields of the service industry. The hypothesis of the 'new pavillonnaire' means an increase in such jobs.

Society getting more prosperous permits most people to be able to afford such services. ♥





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