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“From *citadels of education* to *cartier latins* (and back?). The changing landscapes of student populations in European cities”

Antonio Paolo Russo

Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona

antonio.russo@urv.cat

Laura Capel Tatjer

Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.

laura.capel@ietcat.org

Abstract

Student communities are among the most active agents in the transformation of European cities, due to the concurring circumstances of booming international student mobility, the restructuring of university residence patterns, and the acknowledgement of the importance of knowledge assets and creativity for sustainable urban development. This paper presents a conceptualization of emerging student landscapes, especially focusing on the spatial configuration of mobility and activity flows. It is argued that while student landscapes are determined in the first place by the structure of the city and university settlements, they undergo a peculiar dynamic which, in most cases, leads to a decoupling of education spaces and the habitats where students spend the rest of their time. This result may not be the optimal for a sustainable, competitive city. Using evidence from two cities, Barcelona and Lille, our paper derives indications for the planning of new higher education facilities and student settlements which may produce more coherent student landscapes.

Introduction

Students constitute an important but understudied group in the making of urban structures. Literature has dealt with the economic – and in a few cases the social – impacts of universities in the urban or local environment¹, but little has been produced referring specifically to students as urban agents.

Nonetheless, work by geographers and others is beginning to explore the impacts of students on cities both in term of patterns of residence, their behaviours within space and their impact on the social, cultural and economic landscapes of cities. In the remainder of this paper, we review these literatures, making particular reference to European student cities. The main aim of this paper is thus the identification and conceptualisation of a pattern in the evolution of student landscapes in cities, which may guide policy in the anticipation and management of unwanted social tensions between ‘town’ and ‘gown’. We do this by proposing a stylised model which we apply to the analysis of two case studies of university cities in Europe. We begin, however, by outlining the rising significance of students as an urban social group, relating this to changes in educational mobility, changing housing markets and transformations in the nature of urban economies.

Students as an “urban population”

Students, and especially higher education students temporarily residing in a university city, have been an important group of city dwellers since at least the “democratisation” of universities. Today, all major European cities boast student residences and other student facilities. Yet, only recently did students acquire critical mass and visibility as agents of urban transformation, dictating the pace of social interaction, animation and cultural change, and being finally acknowledged by policymakers as “stakeholders” who are worth attracting and taking care of, rather than just counting and regulating.

There are at least three main reasons for the growing influence of students within cities and urban economies. The first concerns the recentralisation of universities and the “externalisation” of student residence services. Housing regulations in the 1960s-1970s in most European countries did not allow or strongly discouraged short-term lettings, so that University-managed halls were the only alternative left to students moving out of parental households and migrating into university cities. Moreover, mounting pressure on the real estate market and the increasing social and political turmoil throughout Europe generated a move of universities out of the city centres and into suburban campus locations (Hall 1997, 301 quotes several examples). In the 1990s, the widespread perception of a failure in the “campus” model (to be discussed below), associated with the rebirth of central cities as consumption and leisure spaces, led to a renewed attempt by the public administration to bring back the university and its students to the city centres. At the same time, the massive expansion of student numbers made existing University-managed residences insufficient; furthermore, increasing deregulation on the rental market in most western European countries made it a good business for private households to rent spare rooms to students and short-stayers. For instance, In Spain, the Land Use Law (*Ley de Arrendamientos Urbanos*, 1984) suppressed long-term rent contracts and introduced one-year contracts; the law was modified in 1994 to accept contracts up to five years. Analogous processes are described for the French and Italian cases by, respectively, Merlin (pp. 175-212) and Savino (pp. 213-248) in Bellet and Ganau (2006).

A second factor underpinning the growing importance of students in cities relates to increased student mobility, especially in Europe. International mobility programs and participation rates have increased dramatically in the last decade, with more than 2,200 higher education institutions in 31 countries are currently participating in the largest student mobility funding scheme of the European Union, the Erasmus program. In 2004/2005, 144,000 students have benefited of the program to spend short study periods in foreign host universities; they have been 1.2 million since the creation of Erasmus in 1987 (see Teichler, 1996; King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). At the same time, transcontinental mobility schemes are increasing, Asian and Latin American students and researchers being the main beneficiaries. International students, especially those spending a short period in the host university (like exchange students and visiting researchers), are likely to express a preference for city-centre residence². The presence and demands expressed by foreign student communities is arguably a major lever for the internationalisation of the business environment and for the enhancement of the local tourism and cultural industries. Indeed, students are eager consumers of cultural and recreational products (Wynne and O'Connor 1998), and, in many instances, are producers themselves (Griffith et al. 1999).

A third significant factor foregrounding issues of student residence is the urban policymakers' quest to cultivate an international and creative learning environment. The process by which the knowledge generated in each context translates into local economic gain is widely debated (Van Oort 2002), yet there is agreement on the importance of the availability of a variety of skills in the region (Amin and Thrift 2002). In particular, educated young people are presently seen as the backbone of the "creative city" (Florida 2002) where lifestyles, social networks and cultural assets blend in a unique environment supporting the growth of competitive and sustainable economies (Youl Lee et al. 2004). This notion is today very popular with public managers and economic stakeholders, triggering a real "global competition for talent" (Florida 2005) between cities. Given the rediscovered power of knowledge (and by extension of students as urban actors), university developments have been utilized and steered by local governments to sustain area regeneration processes (as in the case of Barcelona's Ciutat Vella, illustrated further) and image change campaigns (as in the case of Bristol, documented by Griffith et al. 1999).

Hence, student communities have grown in quantity and diversity; their impacts have also extended remarkably, both in intensity and in variety. As such, they have to be considered a distinct urban population in the sense introduced by Martinotti (1993), interacting with other groups – residents and workers but also "transient" city users, like tourists and business travellers - to produce a global cityscape. Following Martinotti's argument that a sustainable city is one where different patterns in the various populations' use of urban resources are made compatible and generate synergies, the new global "élan" of student communities represents a clear challenge for urban governance. While policymakers today recognise that there is development potential from students and academic communities, they have to provide just the right mix of services and urban conditions to attract, host and retain them. This may not prove an easy task, because the presence of students is likely to generate a new social geography in the city, which to a certain extent may interfere with the original residents' habitat and with the global forces leading the reconstruction of post-modern cityscapes. That is to say, the presence of students in the city may follow unstable cycles in relation with the social structure of the local community.

A balanced, sustainable³ student city is one that stays attractive and affordable for students, and whose studentscapes are integrated to the multiple landscapes generated by other city users, preventing the negative effects of dispersion on the quality of academic life (e.g. by enlarging commuting times, loss of diversity in academic networks, efficiency in faculty uses). At the same time, a sustainable student city produces major benefits for the host community (increased quality, diversity and safety of the public space, attraction of creative workforce, night-time animation, etc.). However, producing sustainable student cities demands a strategic attitude by policymakers, university managers and other urban stakeholders (firms, social organisations). They need to be aware of the expected benefits and pitfalls in this process, and coordinate efforts so as to generate the best conditions for a smooth and stable integration of the student community into the urban fabric.

Historical evolution of higher education settlements

Students populate urban space according to the main elements of their life organisation: study time, but also social life and residence. They express specific demands in terms of urban resources and services, and generate a whole new environment or *landscape* based on their activities, which we could call “studentscape”.

Taking widely used definitions of landscape⁴ into account, “studentscapes” could be defined as the spatial configuration of the interaction between students and their living and working environments. Thus, studentscapes not only encompass the spaces that they use for education (faculties, etc.) (*formal* elements of the studentscape) but also the different spaces in the city which are used and define them in their social condition of students (*informal* elements of the studentscape). This includes the public space around the university but also residential neighbourhoods, certain types of cultural centres, leisure facilities, and shopping districts. In conclusion, studentscapes are largely determined by the physical constraints and opportunities that the city offers to students, shaping their interaction and the forms of their integration in the multiple landscape of global cities.

One could question which social and economic forces are driving these interactions, and while this is indeed a relevant question, – which has been treated by authors such as Wynne and O’Connor (1998), Chatterton (1999), and Chatterton and Hollands (2002), – it is beyond the scope of this article, which instead aims to identify different models of student landscapes and analyse their evolution.

[FIG. 1]

Studentscapes are indeed subject to specific evolutionary patterns. The original model can be traced in the peculiar settlement structure of universities in the burgeoning towns of the late middle ages. Still under the control of the Church, it was only at the end of XV century that most academic functions moved out of religious complexes like monasteries and abbeys, and into buildings made on purpose for academic uses. Classrooms and faculties, residences and other student facilities were located in separate buildings, generating an intense flow of students and academic staff throughout the city centres. In that way, the first studentscapes were born, including monumental faculty buildings, university chapels, hospices for students,

refectories, and public open spaces, which used to concentrate the rituals and daily life of the academic population (Fig. 1).

The passage of Universities under State control – often in opposition to the Church or specific religious orders – started in the XIX century and led to the generalised dissipation of that model. Under the pull of the new economic rationale of industry, new universities were created in national and regional capitals, often merging local professional schools, or recentralising smaller institutes previously located in secondary regional centres. By the end of the century, urban universities needed to expand “extra-muros” to accommodate new (typically scientific) faculties and increasing student numbers: the cases of Utrecht, Edinburgh, Amsterdam could be quoted. At the same time, the emerging metropolitan environment produced an unsustainable pressure on student facilities, which were “crowded out” to peripheral neighbourhoods.

Hence, at the turn of the century there were few “university-cities” left in Europe, conserving the original landscape of academic life and its original functions within the historical setting. Mostly it is the case of small- and medium-sized university-cities, specialised in educational programmes in liberal arts and human sciences (and not, for instance, in technical disciplines, which require extensive spaces for laboratories), with a limited and stable student population. Among them, are Urbino, Durham, Coimbra, Pisa, Uppsala, Tartu: all places where student life and education have remained to the present day, characteristically concentrated in the walled perimeter of the medieval city. In each case the local economy is dominated by the supply chain of educational functions.

However, remarkably, that model was exported, even in its aesthetic forms, to the young and booming US, giving birth to the tradition of the *university campus*, an isolated “citadel of education” (Gumprecht, 2003) providing formal and informal elements of student life, including dormitories, large faculty buildings, sport and cultural facilities, and green spaces. The campus concept was emulated in Latin America, and afterwards, on the wake of the American successes, was transferred back to European countries, as happened with the *Cité Universitaire* in Paris, and the *Ciudad Universitaria* in Madrid (1927). Only in the early 1960’s, though, the campus concept started to be applied as the main model of university development, under the pull of increased welfare and democratisation of the access to higher education, which brought about an explosion in the number of students.⁵

One of the drivers of campus developments, even in countries with no such tradition, and characterised by political regimes as diverse as in France, Spain, Italy and Czechoslovakia, may have been the turmoil culminated in the riots of May 1968 (Dubet and Sembel 1994). On one hand, the “peripheralisation” of academic life was a way to isolate student movements and dilute organisational connections with other social forces (workers’ movements, citizens’ associations, cultural circles) (Capel 2002); on the other, it was also upheld by “left-wing” forces opposing regimes – see Kagan (1981) for the case of Spain – as a statement of emancipation and autonomy with respect to the central, more controlled universities.

The process of “democratization” in access to higher education, and the ensuing pressure on existing university facilities, continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s. It was only in the early 1990s, for instance, that New Labour reformed access to higher education in UK, causing a near doubling of students by the end of the decade. Widening participation to higher education has contributed to breaking down cultural barriers between host and guest

communities in British cities (Chatterton and Hollands 2002), generating major changes in urban landscape (Allinson 2006).

However, in recent years the campus has been criticized (Vassal 1987) and progressively dismissed as the higher education development paradigm (VV.AA. 2001). Capel (2002) quotes structural reasons, like the proliferation of different universities in the same campus (with ensuing congestion and coordination problems), and the reduction of public investment in higher education, which hinder large-scale development projects in continental Europe.

A recent report of the European Commission (2003) discusses the challenges faced by European higher education institutions face to the evolution of demographic growth and the goals set by the majority of countries to increase the number of university students (the report mentions that UK and Denmark set a target of higher education participation for the 50% of pupils in given age cohorts within 2010)⁶. In Spain, it is acknowledged that the democratization of higher education generated material, human and financial problems which have not been completely resolved in spite of the increasing public and private economic investment. Only 26% of the funding of Spanish universities comes from private sources, and it is used for provision of university services, research or loans – the latter only alone accounting for 6% of the private funding in 2000 (Hernandez, 2000).

Another factor encouraging the decline of the campus model is the change in the perception of students, who now tend to see campuses as unattractive and culturally sterile enclosures (Dubet and Sembel 1994, Brockliss 2000). Changing lifestyles⁷ and increased purchasing power leads an increasing number of them to pay higher rents to stay in central areas with a higher appeal and diversity. The last (and arguably most important) factor is the acknowledgement that universities have the power to enhance the urban space. Ending a history of distance and diffidence, today city governments and university managers finally see the mutual advantages of working together and give full right of citizenship to the university. Accordingly, the student population is increasingly conceived as a customer base for the city, rather than as a problem group. That said, the expansion of student occupation in areas previously student-free is not uncontested, with ‘studentification’ prompting concerns over anti-sociality, late night noise and house price decline (Smith and Holt, 2007).

Yet, even before city governments enthusiastically endorsed the “creative class” concept and put the attraction of creative workers at the top of their policy agendas (Florida 2005, Fainstein 2005), the failure of the campus model, or at least its incapacity to retain informal student activities within suburban locations, triggered a process of *spatial decoupling* of education and student life, which is probably the most popular characteristic of studentscapes in the largest European cities. Such decoupling is a source of private and collective costs for the community (e.g. higher demand for mobility by a user group mostly made of taxpayers) and for the student themselves, but also of potential benefits, for instance opportunities for regeneration and increased social dynamism (Van den Berg and Russo 2004).

While most local governments did not feel the need for a student settlement policy, which they believed was a responsibility of state-managed universities, students started to seek for affordable housing on the private market (Christie *et al.* 2002). To the fading attractiveness of controlled campus life, many preferred the equally deluding greyness of dilapidated suburban

neighbourhoods, which however they felt compelled to transform with their very activity, as if it were a blank palette for new models of social interaction (which may also be induced by house sharing: see Kenyon and Heath 2001). Alternatively, students set on to re-populate city central neighbourhoods, often of historical value, which had lost their original resident base; that could happen, for instance, in declining industrial cities (Rotterdam's Witte-de-With, Vieux Lille, Manchester's Northern Quarter etc). Ethnically and socially mixed, colourful with graffiti and posters, always at the edge of creative expression and lifestyles, contemporary student quarters are not only important as levers of urban dynamism, for instance generating also at the medium-sized city level the conditions for a 24/7 economy and a global image (Chatterton 2000). They are also formidable attractions for the experienced traveller who disregards the cliché cultural offer of tourist brochures, and, arguably, they may be the *humus* of talent, the perfect nursery for the development of the social and creative skills of the future top workers in the knowledge economy.

This account suggests that as a consequence of different historical circumstances, the spatial articulation of studentscapes has been changing continuously. In the next section we introduce a number of studentscapes "types" characterised by stylised spatial characteristics, and then an ideal model of evolution leading from one to the other, focusing on the factors which determine the direction and the impacts of such changes. Such model can be used to evaluate the "stability" of existing and future higher education developments, and to sustain desired changes in the urban landscape.

Types of student settlement and their evolutionary patterns

Our central assumption is that depending on the structure of the city and the location of education settlements, different geographic patterns will arise, affecting the city in specific directions, some desirable, some others less so. Studentscapes have indeed distinctively marked spatial patterns: not only are "hardware" elements like classrooms and residences physically located somewhere; also "software" elements, like educational activities, networking and socialisation, are spatially produced and expressed. Moreover, the continuity in student life between formal and informal elements is represented by spatial flows.

Simplifying, three main components of the students' daily routine could be considered: *education* (*A* in the scheme that follows), *residence* (*B*), and *social life* (*C*). These components may roughly coincide with time sections of the day, namely day time, night time and after-class or evening time; yet such correspondence is increasingly blurred due to the complexity and diversity of student life patterns (e.g. the proliferation of evening courses for working students) (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006). Hence, five different studentscape types could be stylized, paying attention to the locations of the three elements considered.

TYPE 1: A-B-C coincide in space. This is the "citadel of education" model, where all three components of the studentscape coincide in space. There are two variants of this studentscape. The first corresponds to the monumental university-city: the whole city is a campus, and there is a functional and spatial logic in the proximity and distribution of the various elements of the studentscape. Some examples of university cities which conserved their historical structure are Oxford, Coimbra, Heidelberg, Urbino. The

second derives from the reconstruction of the “citadel of education” concept in a contemporary setting, and sometimes its physical translation into suburban spaces. In the US, campuses expanded into “college towns” (defined by Gumprecht 2003 as any city ‘where a college or university and the cultures it creates exert a dominant influence over the character of the community’). The European planning tradition generated a local variant of the college towns, the “*villes nouvelles*”, whole new cities focusing on science and education (well-known examples are Lovuaine-la-Neuve in Belgium, Otaniemi in Finland, and Villeneuve d’Ascq in France, dating from the end of the 1970s), followed, more recently, by complexes abiding to the lighter concept of “Science Park”, like Sophia-Antipolis in France and Gärching in Munich.

To survive as higher education locations, “citadels of study” must provide their students and staff with the complete package: state-of-the-art research facilities and top educational programs, which they normally have, but also an appealing environment, good commercial services, and a dynamic social profile. From this point of view, both “traditional” and new univer-cities which have been for a long time at the top of European higher education are now facing some problems, because, due to their “vernacular” environment – as opposed to the multicultural imagery and post-modern aura of larger cities –, they cannot attract or retain all the human capital that they need.

In some cases, when distance is not excessive, these university campuses may market themselves as leisure suburbia within metropolitan region, characterised by a high level of cultural provision, similarly to Berkeley in the San Francisco region. But when the opposite happens, that is, all cultural capacity is drained away by the “magnet” exercised by the large city, then this model may be not sustainable, as in the long term students would consider relocating their residence, thus causing this model to collapse into one of the following types.

TYPE 2: A-B coincide, C independent. The second type of studentscape could be called a “night-time campus”, indicating that students’ residences are mainly in campus or in its immediate proximity, and students return there for the night, but the after-class activity of students generally takes place somewhere else. Examples include Lyon and its peripheral campuses, the *Universitat Autònoma* of Barcelona, and the *Cité Universitaire* of Lille in Villeneuve d’Ascq. These campuses lack social spaces, or have worn them out, due, for instance, to excessive isolation from the foci of social dynamism. Most student facilities are located on-campus: cafeterias, laundries, and even cultural facilities, but students leave these campuses at the late hours of the afternoon to come back for the night. That is likely to diminish further the social connections generated by the campus environment, and to question its stability. Furthermore, students are heavy users of public transport, even at late hours, causing inefficiencies and high costs in transit provision, which may eventually lead to cuts in night-time services, and to a consequent reduction in the quality of student life. In some cases, student react to the erosion of time budgets due to commuting, and to the cultural sterility of campus life, by selecting alternative private residence in central locations or half-way between the campus and the city centres.

TYPE 3: A-C coincide, B independent. In this studentscape, central historical neighbourhoods that retain their educational facilities are also the main stage of student life and socialisation. However, due to their very “success” and centrality, they are subject to substantial real-estate market pressure, which tends to expel students. The typical *cartier latin* can be animated with students’ activities during the day but it gets desert at night, or rather populated by a very different crowd, like high-income residents citizens and tourists. This type of studentscape generates a strong stress for students in terms of housing stability and mobility, as they tend to “migrate” throughout the city in search for convenient alternatives to a central location. It is the case of central London and Paris, where historical “student-intensive” areas in the proximity of the main universities were progressively gentrified (see Smith 2002, for an illustration of the case of Paris and a thorough discussion of the concept of “gentrification”), while other areas have been emerging as student locations with no other attractiveness for students but cheap rents associated, in some cases, with fast underground rail access to the university. Students tend to live passively their relation with residence areas, which they perceive as scarcely more than dormitories. That sometimes generates a tense relationship (described as “town-gown issue” by authors as McGirr et al. 2003, and Gumprecht 2003) with the original residents of such areas – feeling “colonised” by an external social group which *uses* rather than *lives* their habitat, with little perspectives of social and economic integration. Examples of such tensions emerging in British cities are numerous (see Allison, 2006, Groves et al., 2003, Smith and Holt, 2007); see also Rugg et al. (2000) for a thorough account of the impacts of renting to students on the real estate market performance.

TYPE 4: B-C coincide, A independent. This type of studentscape can be found in the case of suburbanised universities which offer students almost exclusively education, but hardly anything else in terms of student facilities like residence and socialisation spaces. That may be the result of university developments urged by a shortage of city central space for classes and labs, counting on good metropolitan accessibility, but not planned to be comprehensive “communities”, like in the case of Milan’s Bicocca University and Rome’s Tor Vergata. Alternatively, such studentscape may emerge with the migration of student life and residence out of congested city centres where educational functions are still located. In any case, formal and informal elements of the studentscape grow disconnected one from the other. Compared with the previous two, both versions of this type of studentscape can be less taxing for students in terms of mobility: they only go to a different place from the usual social habitat when they have classes. In this sense, this model could be more stable than the others, as mobility flows are reduced and so is the conflict with other city users’ demands.

TYPE 5: A-B-C all independent. This follows from the “degeneration” of the historical university-city studentscape (type 1), where educational functions, residence and nightlife have been independent from one another, implying a progressive loss of spatial coherence between different elements of the studentscape. The city develops a “leopard skin” pattern in student settlements, with chaotic flows of students throughout the city, day and night. This model is highly unstable and inefficient, both for students, and for the local community: there will be a pressure to polarise on one of the previous studentscape types, with informal studentscape elements shifting to suburban student residential areas, while city-centre social activity will be progressively substituted within consumptions landscapes increasingly populated by tourists and wealthy young professionals.

[FIG. 2]

These five studentscape models are simplified descriptions of socio-spatial developments, which may fit and adapt in different ways to the social and physical idiosyncrasies of the cities where they are applied. Indeed, they are unlikely to be observed in their “pure form”, especially as far as spatial discontinuities are concerned. Furthermore, the five types may coexist in a city, and mutually interfere. Any university, and even any group of faculties or colleges within the same university, generates its own studentscape; distinguishing mobility and activity patterns of different student populations may make little sense. However, valid considerations can be expressed at a “micro-scale”, focusing on the evolution of student habitats as an opportunity for area regeneration, or searching for common trends regarding all or the majority of city athenaeums.

After proposing this taxonomy and observing that in some circumstances the various types may not be stable or sustainable, we outline an evolutionary model leading from one to another. Different articulations of such evolution are illustrated in Fig. 2. The point of departure is the “historical” model of the university-city of the XV century, which we can consider a “type 0” studentscape, exhibiting a full “spatial coherence” of various elements of the higher education sector. The bases for the stability of this type have been first undermined with the development of modern urban economies, requiring an expansion of the space available to educate and host the pupils from the burgeoning middle classes, but also to accommodate the specialised faculties and laboratories nursing industrialisation.

Starting from the 1920s, campus universities were developed at the outskirts of large urban areas (X1 at the left side of Fig. 2). In other cases, in which the mass of student population was limited and the historical extension of the universities could accommodate new functions (mainly liberal arts and human sciences), and when the conservation of the “intramuros” location of the university was a goal in itself, the university-city structure has been maintained (Y1 at the right side of Fig. 2), though only in a limited number of cases did the original spatial consistency survive to the present day. In most cases, increasing pressure led to the acquisition of available spaces throughout the historical centres without any necessary spatial or functional coherence, generating the “leopard skin” studentscape of Model 5.

The two possible evolutions of the “citadel of studies” types might be considered equally unstable in the medium term. As argued above, with the advent of the knowledge economy and the renaissance of inner city economies, campus-style settlements grew obsolete as students’ habitats. Thus, most European campuses, originally conceived as self-sufficient communities, have been losing some of their studentscape elements to the closest city cores during the 1980s: first the social life (X2) and then residence (X3). At the other end of the development spectrum portrayed in Fig. 2, also “leopard skin” downtown settlements would undergo a process of “rationalisation” pushed by gentrification and the ensuing suburbanisation of student residence (Y2), followed by the loss of soft elements of the social life to the new student areas (Y3).

Both “ramifications” of the original studentscape, though, seem to converge to a “steady state” in which there is spatial segregation between education and other “informal” elements of student life. Campus universities cannot retain student life and, increasingly, residential

attractiveness in their increasingly dull (or perceived as such) and “socially disconnected” peripheral locations, while downtown universities cannot resist the gentrifying trend which pushes students at the margins of urban development. This result challenges the notion that the quality of higher education gains from its firm embedding in the social and economic networks which surrounds it, while on the other hand, cities derive important economic impacts from university settlement. Instead, we claim that the economic and social forces of the city lead to a “decoupling” of formal elements of the studentscape from informal ones. That is arguably not an “optimal” settlement model. In fact, the residential university settlements tend to be highly segregated between different groups, as noted by Gumprecht (2006:232), reducing the diversity and intercultural exchange that are central to the cultivation of creativity (Florida 2002). This intuition, though, needs to be supported by empirical observation.

Two cases of student cities and their evolving studentscapes

In this section, we illustrate the case of two important higher education poles of Europe, and analyse the main patterns and trends regarding student settlements. In both cases, empirical observation confirms some traits of the stylised model; further insight for planning is also provided.

The Case Study of Barcelona

Barcelona is widely considered to be a city with one of the most interesting and dynamic socio-cultural environments in the world. It is a service- and leisure-oriented urban economy, excelling in a variety of fields, ranging from architecture to gastronomy or design. “Creative” and technological industries are among the fastest growing; a whole project of area renewal (22@, in the former industrial area of Poble Nou) is devoted to stimulating and attracting such specialisations. The process of construction of the successful new image of Barcelona, mixing cosmopolitanism and a global landscape with a strong local cultural identity, is described (and in some cases criticised) by authors such as Degen (2003), Delgado (2004) and Palou Rubio (2006).

[FIG. 3]

Part of this success is arguably due to Barcelona’s excellence in higher education, and to the appeal that it exerts on young students and researchers. The local higher education sector hosts more than 200,000 students, 12,600 of which are foreigners. Some 400 degree programs are offered by the various universities. As many as five of them are public: University of Barcelona (UB), Autonomous University (UAB), University Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) and the Open University of Catalonia (UOC), the latter a prestigious distance-learning institution. There are also two private universities: Ramon Llull and International University of Catalonia, as well as two among the most prestigious business schools of the world, IESE and ESADE. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution and variety of knowledge centres in Barcelona, with university faculties marked in red. The highest concentration is in the Diagonal area (north-western edge of the map) and in the central district of *Ciutat Vella*, the medieval core of Barcelona.

Such vast educational offer generates and embeds different models of “studentscape” as analysed in the previous section. However, the case of Barcelona stands out for the ability of the city to use student habitats, both formal and informal elements, to sustain the regeneration

of the historical city centre. In particular, much attention is being paid to the role that higher education had in the regeneration of the Raval, formerly a no-go neighbourhood for visitors, and now the creative hotspot of Barcelona, popular with tourists, high skilled professionals and foreign students.

The oldest university in Barcelona (UB) was created in 1450. Its headquarters are located, still today, in the very heart of the city, in between the “new city” of the XIX century and the *Ciutat Vella*. In the 1960s, the expansion of the university was undertaken following the campus-model; the new development took place in a peripheral, yet prestigious area of the city, La Diagonal, at the western municipal limits. Today, the universities located there, UB and UPC, express their interest to redefine the profile of the campus as a “knowledge district” based on denser social and academic relations, which are enhanced in an “urban” environment, but the local residents are just not interested in transforming this high-income residential area into a leisure district for students. UAB is located in Cerdanyola, a municipality in the northern part of the Barcelona Metropolitan Region. Created in the 1960s, this campus was conceived as a typical “ivy league” settlement, offering students education, social facilities and residence. However, only a small part of the UAB students nowadays lives in the campus, and opportunities for social activity (shopping, culture, nightlife, etc) are very limited. Most students enjoy the good accessibility of UAB by train to commute from Barcelona’s centre (30 min.) or from neighbouring “belt cities” like Terrassa or Sabadell (15-20 min.). It could be argued that the UAB focused on its role as a part of a research pole that has been growing in the same area (the university is close to a large technology and business park), but missed to produce any complex studentscape integrating A, B and C elements.

In both cases of peripheral campuses (La Diagonal and Cerdanyola) interaction with the local community is limited, generating little direct benefits to the areas concerned; area regeneration was clearly not the main objective of campus development⁸. The informal elements of the studentscape have progressively lost cohesion with the formal ones, approximating the 4th studentscape type, and today it proves very hard to invert the trend.

It was almost twenty years after the creation of UAB – coinciding with the newly-acquired recognition of the Catalan autonomy within the Spanish state – that higher education moved back to the centre, with the creation of a new university, Pompeu Fabra, a prestigious educational facility modelled on the Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition. As a statement of a new socially-sensitive government style, the first building of UPF was located in the proximity of the Raval, a neighbourhood plagued by a century-long history of social marginality, crime and physical degradation. Students were attracted by the Raval’s bohemian atmosphere and cheap rents, and elected it as the favourite socialisation and residence area. While the integration with the original residents has not been problematic, students brought with them a demand of higher-quality and diversified services, as well as a fresh breath of social and cultural dynamism.

The enhancement of the area would probably not have been possible without a thorough program of area renewal (*Programa Especial de Reforma Interior*), which foresaw the provision of new public infrastructure (day-care centres, schools, sports facilities), the renovation of the building stock, the improvement of safety, and a few flagship interventions aiming to change the image of the area. Among these were the new Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona, and a “new Rambla” in the heart of Raval. These catalysts contributed to give to the area a

fashionable air; from that moment on, many social and academic activities of students converged to the Raval. It did not only attract UPF students, but also students from the farthest campus locations of other universities, who started to use UPF central facilities, as the library (the one with the longest opening hours in Barcelona, and conveniently close to cosy squares and bars). Other universities followed, as the Faculty of Communication of URL, and UOC, which set up its research centre there. A studentscape approximating the ideal concept of “citadel of studies” (type 1) has been emerging from this seemingly unplanned race to the centre, leading to a high concentration of student facilities, educational and social activity, and cultural infrastructure in this area (Fig. 4).

[FIG. 4]

However, after more than a decade, the “downtown” model is showing signs of not being a completely sustainable studentscape. The weak element is – as may be anticipated from the application of the evolutionary model – residence. In fact, housing prices in the centre of Barcelona are currently among the highest in Spain, with an increase of over 80% from 1998 to 2004 (Nel·lo 2004).

In addition, tenure regime is mostly own property, with a low proportion of housing available for rent. As Nel·lo (2004, 9) argues, this situation hinders access to housing for youngsters and low-income groups, and causes a delay in the age of emancipation. According to a recent survey of the Barcelona City Council, 64% of the 15-29 age-group still live with their family. Among those that emancipated, foreigners are the most numerous group (three out of ten). The university system in Spain does not provide substantial financial support to students⁹. In Barcelona only 16.2% of the people aged 15-29 claims to depend on some kind of subsidy, scholarship or other support (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2003). As a result, the student community of Barcelona has traditionally presented a high mobility linked with residence-education commuting, while the flows related with social life have followed the location of new universities. Thus, residence is not the most important element in defining this studentscape; certainly not today, when a flat in the fashionable Raval may be very expensive and of below-standard quality. The software elements, instead, stay linked to the city centre. Indeed, most young people choose the *Ciutat Vella* (the old central city neighbourhoods, including the Raval) as the place where to spend their leisure time, even if they do not live there. According to a survey on the activities of young people in Barcelona, Ciutat Vella attracts almost 40% of young people in their free time, and especially university students (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2003).

The case of foreign students is different, as they do tend to choose the most central areas of the city for residence, and especially the Raval¹⁰, adding to the cosmopolitan and multicultural feel of the area. International students represent now 6.3% of the residents, the majority of them being Europeans in exchange programs and visiting researchers, followed by Latin Americans registered to complete courses, and students staying for shorter periods, especially summer students from the US. European and North-American students tend to have a higher purchasing power than the locals¹¹ (if only for the fact that the cost of life in their home countries is higher than in Spain) and therefore can afford the higher rents of the central districts. This can also be explained by their housing preferences: they attach value to the “bohemian” conditions of the housing stock that can be found in historical central neighbourhoods, something which is inherently linked to their condition as “transient” citizens, who do not necessarily aim at starting a life career in the neighbourhood. Those who

do stay after their study periods, are likely to go through the same process of “normal” citizens who migrate to less expensive and more spacious housing in the first or second belt. Even if the residential structure of the Raval did change in the last decade, the proportion of non-family households still accounts only for 40% of the total households in the area (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2003), and are mainly occupied by immigrants. This is paradoxically slowing down the regeneration process, as it gives no incentive to enhance the housing stock: a low-quality housing “bubble” is emerging, which represents an element of fragility in the metropolitan development of the city, as was recently noted by Nel·lo¹².

In any case, the Barcelona planners continue to believe in the regeneration power of student activity, as is shown by the decision to locate the Audiovisual Campus of UPF in the “hi-tech” neighbourhood of Poble Nou. This new project is a challenge to the regeneration power of the studentscape, as it will have to count almost exclusively on the education element of the model. The case of the Raval illustrated above shows that this might not be sufficient if it is not accompanied by other measures. The Raval itself is under increasing pressure to preserve its open, dynamic social structure (in 2006, for the first time in almost three decades, the number of foreigners in the Raval dropped by approximately 5%). In 2006, the Faculty of History and Geography of the UB moved into a new building just in front of the icons of the new Raval, the MACBA-CCCB complex. That, however, arises questions whether this already gentrified area is in real need of an additional inflow of students, especially considering the overload with leisure-connected function and users in that area.

To conclude, Barcelona’s higher education has first expanded through the suburbanisation of student settlements in campuses, but this potential studentscape has never really gained ground, mostly for the lack of a convincing “vision” of a lively student habitat beyond physical planning. The most remarkable development in this sense has been the recentralisation of higher education and student habitats in the old city centre, which, in the 1990s, has played a fundamental role in the regeneration of this area. However, this “downtown” model is also getting to be unstable, because increasing pressure on the real estate market is currently expelling students who seek for good quality housing. One is then led to reconsider the advantage of peripheral settlements like Diagonal. In any case, the surge in vitality of other districts of the city at the margin of the historical city centre (without being suburban) – which are traditional residence areas for university students, like Gracia and Poble Nou – indicates that the dynamism of the historical inner city could be less and less associated with the social life of students in a fiercely competitive tourist market, and steadily drifting towards the 4th type of studentscape, a central educational settlement with extensions in peri-urban neighbourhoods for socialisation and residence. This can be considered a sub-optimal solution, but stable enough, given by the compact structure of the city and the good accessibility system serving the main universities.

The Case Study of Lille

The metropolitan area of Lille (LMCU) is located in the Nord-Pas-De-Calais region, the youngest in France, yet, paradoxically, the one with the highest unemployment rate and the largest share of economy in manufacturing (CUDL/CCILM 2002-2006). Despite the area’s apparent unattractiveness for professional careers, it is the third largest higher education pole after Paris and, with the exception of Toulouse, the largest concentration in terms of students per resident. Its student population amounts to almost 100,000, among which two thirds are enrolled in one of the four universities and more than a tenth is represented by foreign

students. While the total number of students has been stable over time in recent years, the number of foreign students (mostly from Africa) has almost doubled in the last six years, replacing the decreasing French student population. Within foreign students, two quite different groups for social habits and spatial behaviour can be considered: short-stayers (often Europeans, taking part in some exchange programme) and long-stayers (mostly Africans). The common element is that both do not normally enjoy large housing budgets, and their knowledge of the region is quite limited, so they typically find accommodation nearby the university campus premises.

The higher education establishments of Lille Métropole (four universities and several other private institutions) serve about two thirds of the whole student population of the Academy of Lille, an administrative grouping of most academic institutions of the region, counting in total 160,000 students. The largest node is represented by the *University of Lille* (Fig. 5). It was started in Lille's city centre in 1896, recovering the concept of university of the region, which was formerly (XV century) located in the in the county capital of Douai, then closed due to the Flemish domination and the French Revolution. In the meanwhile, in 1875, also the private *Université Catholique* had opened in the centre, becoming a strong competitor for the University of Lille, thanks to its liaisons with industry leaders.

[FIG.5]

In 1968 the public university was relocated away from the city centre and split in three specialisation poles: the University of Science and Technology *Lille 1*, the University of Law and Health Sciences *Lille 2*, and the University of Human Sciences, Letters and Arts *Lille 3*. This decentralisation implied the birth of Villeneuve d'Ascq (1970), a brand new municipality that became one of the most important *villes nouvelles* for higher education in France.

As far as the range of education programmes offered and the research are concerned, the main university in the region is today *Lille 1* - University of Science and Technology, located in the Scientific Campus of Villeneuve d'Ascq, hosting more than 21,000 students and 1,000 academic staff. The campus, after the setting up of Lille 1, has attracted other higher education institutes like the architecture school and various schools of engineering. Next to the *Cité Scientifique* lies *Haute-Borne*, a Science Park clustering research laboratories, education institutions and companies, in close relation with the technologic and scientific vocation of the university. *Lille 3*- the University Charles de Gaulle of Human Sciences, Letters and Arts, is also situated in Villeneuve d'Ascq, in a campus half way between the *Cité Scientifique* and the City Centre. Its 14 faculties have very strong social and cultural links with the host community, and they equal Lille 1 in terms of number of students. *Lille 2* includes the two autonomous faculties of Health Sciences and Law Management, situated respectively in the peri-urban areas of *Lille Sud* and *Lille Moulins*.

In spite of the large number of students studying in Villeneuve d'Ascq (more than 40,000), only a tenth of them lives in this town. Its image of quiet, green place, together with the residential structure, mostly made of large detached units, makes it a more suitable living environment for families. Generally, students in their first year of studies live in one of the nine residences of Villeneuve d'Ascq, but, as soon as they settle in and get to know better the

metropolitan city, they choose to move to the much frothier environment of Lille. In addition, the fact that the subway train connection works only at daytime makes it much easier for the students to live in Lille (where all the nightlife takes place) and travel every morning to Villeneuve d'Ascq, rather than living at the campus and having to wait for the first morning train every time they wish to have a night out. As a result, the students staying in Villeneuve d'Ascq are mainly freshmen and exchange students, as well as those who can't afford to live in the more expensive central neighbourhoods of Lille.

The hospital campus in the south-west of the city (CHR *Lille Sud*), *Eurasanté*, is the largest in France, and includes a science park, a bio-tech centre, and many incubator facilities. Although this development represent a case of successful regeneration of a neglect part of the city belt, *Lille Sud* continues to be considered an unprepossessing and even dangerous area by the students, who prefer to live in nearby neighbourhoods closer to the centre, like *Wazemmes* or *Vauban*. Similarly to the case of *Lille Sud*, also the move of the Law faculty (1995) in a former industrial complex situated in the rundown quarter of *Moulins* was done with the intent of revitalizing the neighbourhood. However the operation encountered many problems, not last the disapproval of the local community, mostly made of workers who didn't mix with the up-class students. Still today, despite the creation of cultural facilities for the Lille2004 European Cultural Capital event, only 26% of the residents are students (while they are on average 40% in the rest of the city), with a very low impact on the local economy. According to a survey carried out by FORS for the development agency of Lille, the image of Moulins has improved over the last years, yet it still suffers from proximity with the deprived area of Lille Sud, and even those students who live there have chosen it for the low rents but would prefer to move elsewhere.

More successful examples of regeneration can be found in the peripheral townships of Roubaix and Tourcoing, where students have repopulated run-down districts counting on cheap rent process, and successfully mixed with the local residents. In these two declining industrial towns, several engineering schools have been located, as well as other innovative higher education institutions like the *Ecole de Gestion et de Commerce* in Roubaix or *Le Fresnoy* in Tourcoing, a high standard international art school that improved the run-down image of the municipality. Although the student communities of Roubaix and Tourcoing did contribute to the economic and image improvement of the area, also in this case it should be considered that this was only one aspect of a much wider redevelopment project that involved also the makeover of the town centre and the refurbishment of former industrial structures that were transformed in cultural facilities. Furthermore, despite a real improvement of the conditions of Roubaix and Tourcoing and a larger presence of students, the area's atmosphere remains one of danger and unattractiveness.

Today, the only large higher education establishment still situated in the city centre of Lille is the Catholic University. *La Catho*, with its 13,000 students, is the largest private campus in France, is located in *Lille Vauban*, one of the liveliest and wealthiest districts of the city, at the edge of the historical area of *Vieux Lille*. Differently from all the other neighbourhoods considered so far, *Vauban* has a problem of over-population of students (80% of households are made of students), and the municipality is undertaking measures to invert the trend. Many factors may explain this unusual situation. Firstly, landlords find more profitable to rent large apartments to groups of students rather than families and, as a consequence, the overall estate

prices continue to rise (a trend similar to that described in the case of Selly Oak, Birmingham, by Groves et al. 2003). Secondly, the area is especially attractive for students, being in the middle of all the cultural and nightlife districts: the chic historical area of *Vieux Lille*, the Arabic quarter of *Wazemmes* with its colourful market, and the green space of *Parc Vauban*, where fun fairs and cultural events are frequently held. The large inflow of students to this neighbourhood happened at the expenses of original residents' households, who prefer to move to quieter areas of the city.

Also very popular with students, probably their favourite, from anecdotic evidence and field research conducted by Van den Berg and Russo (2004), is the district of *Vieux Lille*, a former rundown area, now transformed in a lively hub with plenty of cafés, restaurants, art galleries and boutiques. The gentrification of this neighbourhood has made it too expensive for most local residents, yet students still populate it, preferring to share big apartments in its old (and mostly not refurbished) buildings, rather than better quality flats located in less fashionable areas.

The district of *Wazemmes*, concentrating a large Arab population, can be considered a model of urban regeneration achieving a good social mix. It is currently following the path of *Vieux Lille*, and undergoing gentrification. During the XIX century, *Wazemmes* was an important industrial site that attracted workers from all over the world (South and East Europe first, Africa and Asia later) and, as many other areas, was then severely struck by de-industrialisation. Nonetheless, it managed to capitalise on its cultural diversity and, after a first period of decline, it is today one of the most thriving areas of the city. Its colourful Sunday morning market, second-hand shops and laid-back cafés make it one of the most popular districts. Those who lived in other areas of the city and came to *Wazemmes* in their free time, are now starting to choose it as a place to live, to the point that almost half of the residents are currently students, and the estate prices are beginning to rise. The consequence is that also in this case less affluent families are obliged to move to cheaper neighbourhoods, like *Fives* and *Hellemmes*. These two peripheral areas, not especially vivid in terms of social life, are starting as well to become popular places to live for students (who are anyway still only 17% of the residents), due to their proximity with the campus of Villeneuve d'Ascq and their affordable rents. The municipality of Lille is trying to encourage this trend, hoping to achieve the revitalization of those neighbourhoods, however their cultural and recreational offer is still very poor and the two districts, especially *Hellemmes*, still suffer from an image of deprivation and crime.

In conclusion, *Vieux Lille* and *Vauban* are favourite residence places for students, with *Wazemmes* becoming increasingly popular. *Vieux Lille* is the leading social-life space, together with the centre of Lille and, again, *Wazemmes*. The university campuses (with the exception of the central campus of *La Catho*) are, on the contrary, not very appreciated in terms of "informal hardware", especially because of their unexciting social and cultural environments.

The case of Lille may therefore illustrate the evolution of an original "citadel of studies" model towards other studentscape types, according to the different university settlement models present there, and to the different profiles of students. The dominant studentscape type here is that in which residence and social life coincide spatially (i.e. four in our

typology), while education is independent. The students take advantage of the good metropolitan accessibility to live in the proximity of cultural and recreational facilities, in fast gentrifying neighbourhoods like Vieux Lille, Vauban, Wazemmes, and commute every day to the campuses in Villeneuve d'Ascq, Lille Sud, Moulins. The campus of Villeneuve d'Ascq, originally planned as a *ville nouvelle* encompassing all aspects of student life, has failed, in the long run, to represent a “life-project”, even temporary, for the academic community, and remains an option only for less affluent students, who often follow a social-spatial model in which either education and residence coincide (in campus) and socialisation stands apart (second studentscape type), or the three elements are all independent, as in the fifth studentscape type: for instance it is quite typical that a student may live in Fives, study in Villeneuve d'Ascq and hang out in Wazemmes or Vieux Lille. Foreign students normally belong to this group. The studentscape of the *Catho*, instead, could be referred to the first type, in which living, studying and socialising happens in the same area of the city (Lille Vauban/Vieux Lille), that maintain a certain spatial and functional coherence as “citadel of education”.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

This article introduced a taxonomy of landscapes generated by the presence of student populations (“studentscapes”) according to different settlement patterns and development strategies of the higher education sector in European cities, and proposed an evolutionary model which may explain the instability of such landscapes face to market forces and changing social preferences of students.

The cases of Barcelona and Lille, like many other examples quoted in the paper, provide an ample illustration of the concretisation of different types of studentscapes and give evidence of the main forces shaping their evolution. The cases support to a fair extent our argument that we are currently facing a trend of “decoupling” of formal and informal elements of the studentscape – isolated, peripheral or straightforwardly suburban campuses no longer can retain student residence and socialisation activities, while downtown academic settlements have increasing problems to sustain the settlement of sectors of the student population which competes on the real estate market and in the market for commodities with global urban dwellers.

The cases also illustrate different developments in the evolution of the original planning concept for higher education, which was the pursuit of spatial coherence in higher education functions and student habitats. This was not only the characterising element of contemporary planning for new “citadels of study”, like the campuses of the 1970s, but also, noticeably, of the original “university-city” model.

In the case of Barcelona the evolution of studentscapes was remarkably dictated by urban planning, whereas in the case of Lille it had a more spontaneous and idiosyncratic events. Yet, in both cases, we appreciate the impact that university settlements had on area regeneration, although in the case that has been more successful and focused, Barcelona's Raval, some “upper limit” related with the residence element could soon be met, involving the loss of spatial coherence and the drift towards a different studentscape type.

The generality of these findings is undoubtedly challenged by the wide variety of contexts and regimes in which university development occurs. While our observations are limited to cases and models which may apply well enough to continental Europe, they fit with more difficulty the traits of the Anglo-American campus tradition, which has been developing under thoroughly different conditions as far as planning concepts and financial supports are concerned. We are nevertheless convinced that at the local scale (area, neighbourhood) the considerations expressed in this article may still provide insight for planning.

The key lesson coming from these cases and the analysis of the shortcomings in their development is that the loss of cohesion in studentscapes should be contrasted or attenuated, overcoming obsolete concepts from the point of view of the city-university interaction: the “enclosure of knowledge” at the expenses of a higher level of integration of the academy into local networks, in the case of campuses, and the defence of “status through monumentality” at the expenses of the quality of student facilities, in the case of downtown settlements.

In fact, the model presented in this paper assumes that the student populations react tactically to emerging opportunities to increase their utility or quality of life through a change in the studentscape, whereas the location strategies of higher education – pursued by university and city governments – are increasingly driven by market calculus. Instead, institutions should look closer at the balance and sustainability of the studentscape configuration that they determine through their decisions. In the end, a stable and cohesive studentscape will equally benefit the long-term capacity of higher education to get rooted in the host community, which turns out to be a competitive factor for universities; and the attractiveness of the city for the high-skilled social capital, on which cities increasingly depend to establish their competitive position. This is demonstrated by the economic success of old univer-cities like Cambridge, Heidelberg, or Lund, where the historical association between city and university has been revived in the last decade through the endorsement of the “knowledge economy” as the driving development model, allowing those centres to retain their physical and social structure, also in term of studentscape, and at the same time be the thinking brains of “knowledge regions” where the hard infrastructure is developed.

Leaving further planning considerations aside, we suggest that, in general, a balanced and stable interaction between city and university, integrating formal and informal elements of the studentscape, can best be achieved in locations just off the commercial centre of the city, often left behind from the process of reconstruction of the city for the visitor class (Eisinger 2000), sometimes discarded historical areas (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990), or centres of immigration, where the perceived isolation from the buzz of a central location may be less compelling, and at the same time the pressure from competing urban functions less strong. The very social acceptance of such developments may be changing according to Costello (2005).

To the extent that universities and local government value this stability as a precondition for the capacity to attract and nurture talent in the city and spur social regeneration, it may be desirable to accompany this process with specific policies, for instance improving the accessibility of universities from such student areas and channelling public and private

investment to developing student residences in those areas, thus minimising the confrontation with original residents.

It remains to see whether this apparently sustainable end-point is compatible with the ongoing process of “tourismification” of the urban space. Visitors, disenchanted with the stereotyped construction of global consumption landscapes, are on the hunt for “genuine” and dynamic cultural environments (Maitland 2007), and may find student areas particularly attractive. That could represent a further challenge to the stability of the studentscape: another issue that we leave for further research.

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NOTES

¹ See Hall, 1997 for a general introduction in a special journal issue dedicated to this topic, and the cases of Cardiff, Abruzzo region, Lancaster, treated by □– respectively □ – Huggins and Cooke (1997), Ricci (1997), and Armstrong *et al.* (1997) in the same issue.

² Various “Erasmus testimonies” collected on the website of the Erasmus programme (<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/>) reveal how major selection criteria for exchange destinations, aside faculty specialisation and language, is an urban location and the city attractiveness. Moreover, a positive Erasmus experience is a key factor in explaining mobility choices of postgraduate researchers.

³ We refer here to the conceptualisation of sustainability given by Martinotti (1993). While there is no accepted definition of urban sustainability, many commentators agree it has to do with the «improvement of the quality of life in a city, including ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social and economic components without leaving a burden on the future generations. It is therefore with achieving an equilibrium between economic, social and environmental development.» (Girardet 1999). A wider theoretical discussion of what is required from planning and urban policies in order to achieve local sustainability can be found in a number of works including Smith and De Filippis (1999) and Selman (1996).

⁴ In anthropological terms, the concept of landscape refers to the material (spatial) representation between humans and their environments. It is thus different from “place” in that the experience of place involves “time” and the act of memory associated with it. According to Relph (1976), «landscape can undergo significant changes but the place stays constant»; hence, landscape could be conceived as the product of co-evolutionary relationships between biophysical spaces and cultures. Critical geographers and sociologists have shifted the focus of the analysis of landscape on the political discourse. The concept of landscape is thus associated with the cultural implications of social and economic “markers” which forge and constrain the action of the individuals (Harvey 1990, 211). Thus, landscape is co-determined by capital and society, and changes in landscape imply paradigmatic cultural changes and power shifts. According to Zukin (1993), *landscape* is the arena of mediation – both symbolical and material – between the socio-spatial differentiation of capital implied by market and the socio-spatial homogeneity of labour suggested by place.

⁵ That also led to a process of decentralization of higher education, which meant the creation of faculties in cities that did not have a university, as well as of new public universities, also pursuing objectives of regional cohesion and balance in urban hierarchies. In various countries, the number of cities with university seats multiplied throughout the 1970s. In Spain, the number of seats rose from 34, hosting 700,000 students, in 1968, to 61 and more than 1.5 million students in 2000 (Capel 2002), with a significant pace change in 1995, when high education competencies are passed over to Autonomous Communities. In Italy, there were 64 university seats and 760,000 students in 1971, which rose respectively to 226 and 1,800,000 in 2005 (Savino 1998). In the UK there were 22 universities and 4 university colleges in 1961; these rose to, respectively, 46 and 5 in 1969, while in 2001 higher education institutions are 132, hosting around 1,236,000 full time students (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk). In the last decade only (1990-2000), the number of students in European universities rose from 9 to 12.5 million (European Commission 2003).

⁶ The report questions the capacity of European Universities to face this challenge considering their limited financial capability. Even if public expenditure in education in Europe is on average comparable to that of the US (about 5% of the GDP), the report mentions how total expenditure on higher education alone has not increased in any member state in proportion with the growth in the number of students. The gap with the US widens, stemming primarily from the low level of private funding of higher education in Europe. This stands at a meagre 0.2% of European GDP compared with 0.6% in Japan and 1.2% in the USA. The report argues for need to diversify universities income sources in such a way to enhance quality without compromising the independence of research. For instance, a recent initiative of the UK government urged universities to follow the American example and chase donations from philanthropists and alumni (The Guardian, 16 March 2006).

⁷ «The age-old conflict between town and gown has now been submerged in the universal fast-food culture of McDonalds». (Brockliss 2000, 161).

⁸ From interviews with local policymakers conducted in March 2005.

⁹ Only low-income households are eligible for scholarships or reduced fees at university residences, which are relatively high compared to purchasing power. However, in the city of Barcelona there are special prices in public transportation for students, made necessary by the spread distribution of housing compared with the concentration of the educational facilities in specific areas of the city.

¹⁰ Several web pages for international students in Barcelona mention almost exclusively bars, cafes and restaurants located in the Raval area when advising their visitors where to go out in Barcelona (see for instance: <http://www.brighterplace.com/ie/play.php>).

¹¹ A paper in progress about the economic impact of the international students in Barcelona estimates that an average north-American student spends about 1,700 € per month while living in Barcelona (information at www.brighterplace.com).

¹² Communication held on 27/9/2006 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

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Fig. 1 – Ancient studentscapes: the University of Padua, XVI century (left), and a refectory of the university of Heidelberg. Sources: <http://www.unipd.it/1000annidiscienza/visita/bo/scienza.html> and <http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/university/welcome/history.html>



Fig. 2: evolution of studentscapes from the original historical university-city environment

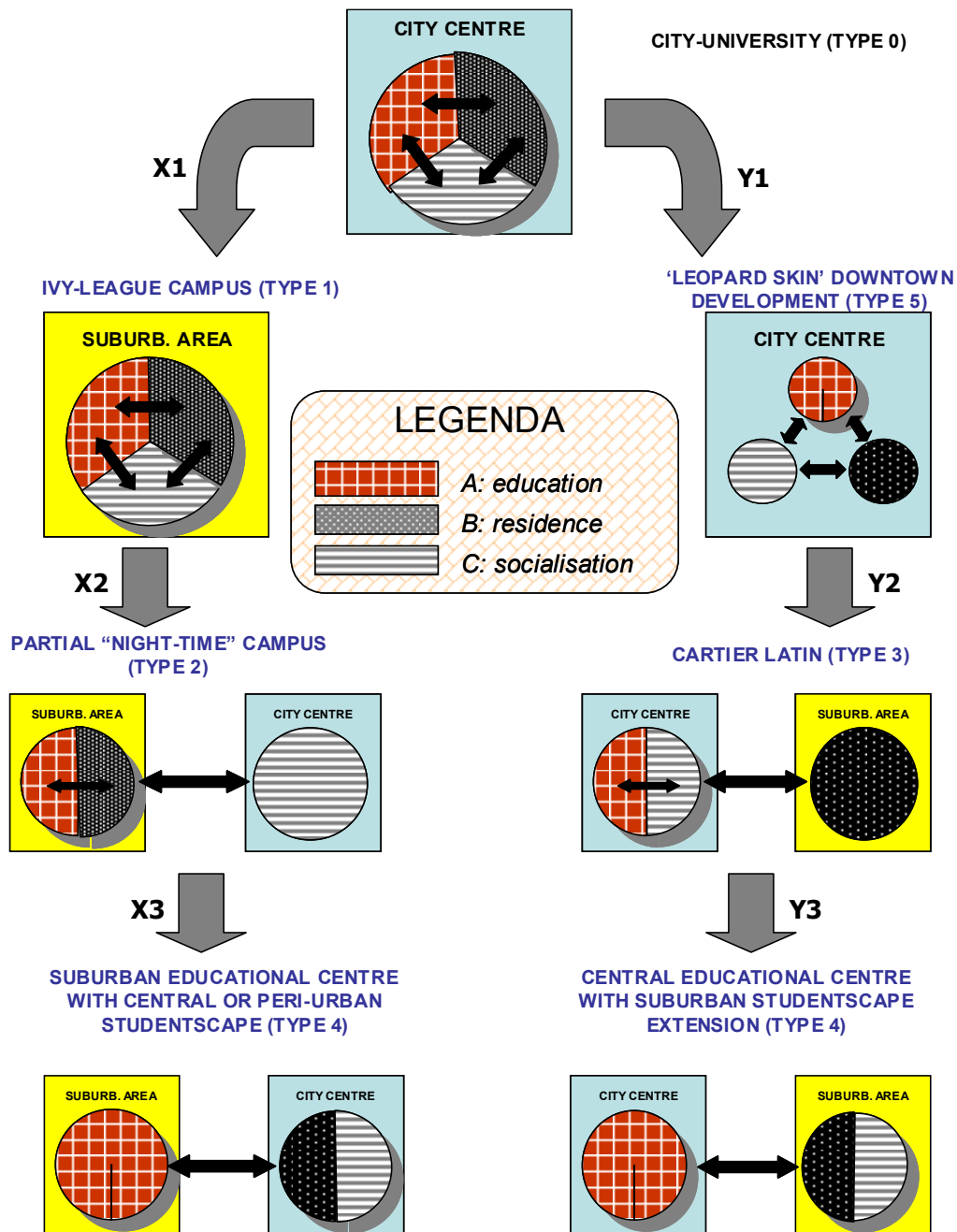


Fig. 3: Distribution of knowledge centres in Barcelona. *Source:* City of Barcelona 2001, quoted in Jabaly-Salamanca (2003)

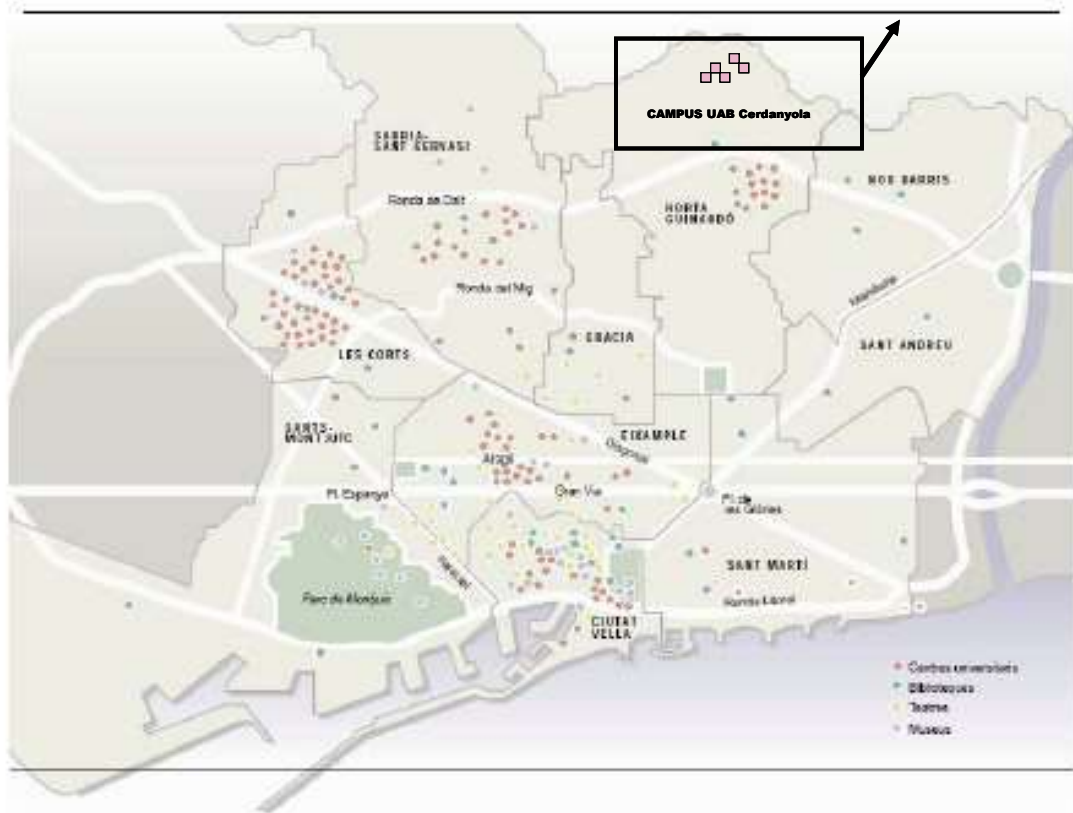


Fig. 4: The Raval neighbourhood and the main educational and cultural institutions in the area



Fig. 5 – Lille’s higher education locations

