



Theo Deutinger

World

A city on which the sun never sets

Imagine the World as one city. Imagine it not as United Nations with one president but as an endless urban field with a vibrant and colorful patchwork of districts and neighborhoods and an equally dispersed power structure. This city is the physical reality of Marshall McLuhan's media and information based global village, which got realized throughout the past 25 years. Eventually the physicality of the World might also end up in a village-structure, but right now, due to the high influx of people into densely populated areas, its urban nature seems to grow ever stronger.

It was 70.000 years ago that Homo Sapiens left a valley in Africa to populate the Globe. 10.000 years ago humans did reach the last corners of it and started to settle and turned into residents. Through technological inventions in transport and communication these remote settlements started to be connected over the past 500 years and finally got stitched together by high speed transport, information flow and accelerated capital into one integrated system, the city of World.

World experienced an incredible population boom throughout the past 200 years where it grew from 1 billion in 1800 to the 7 billion¹ inhabitants of today, and that growth is still not over, since every 8 seconds a new inhabitant is born². It is hard to tell if that incredible population boom caused the birth of World as one city, or whether this boom happened because this city had been established. In retrospect one can conclude that the first signs of World as one city have been exposed by war, to be precise, it was the First World War, swiftly followed by the Second World War. The First – and even more so the Second World War – with its high-tech weaponry and high speed airplanes heralded the retreat of the fighting from the battlefield, and consequently turned its destructive power to the cities; the city. Ever since then attacks are executed from the city to the city, the area in between turned into an annoying relict. Urban warfare is the only official art of warfare left; the countryside is relinquished to guerilla and terrorist groups.

Although these two World Wars accelerated the birth of World as one city, its delivery got postponed by a 45 yearlong cease-fire (generally referred to as 'Cold War') that made it impossible to think about World as one interconnected system. It was also at this time when politics, economists and culturally engaged people were unable to theorize the World as one entity, but divided it in the three parts: First World (the city), Second World (the accepted) and Third World (the poor)³. As the cease-fire eventually turned into peace, the unification process of the three parts gained momentum and the terminology changed from First,

¹ <http://www.census.gov/popclock/>

² By subtracting one death every 12 seconds, the net gain is one person every 14 seconds

³ "Three World's Theory" vs. Western theory of the Three Worlds

Second and Third World to a developed, developing and under-developed world. This intermediate state finally got replaced by the current status in which the three entities are renamed to core, semi-core and periphery⁴, an urban terminology that fully recognizes the unification of the three parts into the city of World. The initial use of that terminology was set by the World-Systems analysis introduced by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970, which stresses the world-system (and not nation states) as the primary unit of social analysis⁵. Taking this thought and applying it freely to the language of urbanism on a global scale one realizes that the results for what are core, semi-periphery and periphery are somehow different. While sociologists and economists are classifying and segregating these three entities along social and economic development patterns, city planners organize landscapes into areas of similar settlement structures and densities. Unlike the organization of World by the World-Systems theory the organization of World according to urban rules of World results in a much less social and economic coherent core, semi-periphery and periphery. Urban planners know that the core, the city center, is not per definition better off than the periphery and vice versa. Living in a city is harsh and locality does not guarantee a successful life, while it certainly helps. The reality of inequality within one system needs to be acknowledged, even if this inequality in World is sometimes striking. For example life expectancy can differ extremely even within the core, were one person lives in one of the richest core-neighborhoods 83 years on average (Japanese), while in one of the poorest core-neighborhoods a person only reaches the age of 48 (Afghans) on average.

This harsh reality becomes reinforced by an extremely advanced system of segregation. As a habitual relic from nationalist times, going from one neighborhood to the other, people are forced to show a passport. Yet for some neighborhoods this seems to be not enough and they even fence themselves off from the rest of World. Especially the rich core with its fancy and affluent quarters is enclosed within a high security fence and protected by a high-tech surveillance system, forming some kind of gated community. All this would be not so severe, if this gated community would not be the economic and political heart of World. Like a European medieval city, these core areas carved themselves out of their surrounding and grant its inhabitants special "civic" rights which allow them to travel freely through all territories, within its walls and even grant them a special status to move anywhere in World. If World has a center, if there is an ultimate attractive area to all of World's inhabitants, than it is right in the middle of this fenced-off territory where the wealthiest, most well housed and most educated people live. The rich core is reserved for about 15% of World's inhabitants, enjoying the highest quality of life while the majority that lives outside of this high-class area has no rights to enter, growing up outside reinforced fences. At this time World is a repressively ruled city. Its political power is in the hands of suit wearing managers of space from the Western Core that have their work cut out to keep the poor separated from the rich.

Sure, World is huge. Due to its spherical shape, overlooking World in on glance is practically impossible. Therefore its inhabitants were forced to invent tools to simplify and flatten the surface in sake of overview. The most basic device was provided by the map, printed and drawn on paper, with the coordinate system as organization method, which captured the entire surface by a grid and assigned and baptized every spot of the city with two numbers. To eliminate the delay cause by drawing and printing the map, the captured globe was supplemented with a real time surveillance system that, with the help of satellites which steadily hang above the city, monitor it 24 hours – 7 days a week. Lately this "system of the skies" got connected with the terrestrial system of the internet and eventually enabled the

⁴ World-Systems Theory, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World-systems_theory

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World-systems_theory

full real time exposure of *World*, since exactly this interconnected monitoring system provides the means to communicate organize and control such a vast city. Undoubtedly, without the satellites in combination with the Internet this city would not have come into place.

Physically and politically *World* is dispersed over the four main islands America, Australia, Africa and Europe, with a conglomerate of districts that seem to have little in common yet eliminate differences at a very high pace and work ever more as one entity. Every meeting of representatives of the various districts ties the bonds between them, every financial transaction is a glue, every product send around the globe is a string and even every conflict, no matter its outcome, is only tightening *World* together. There is no escape form *World* becoming one city and the more one wishes to avoid it, the faster it becomes reality.

The core as the center of *World* draws its legitimacy from its high population density that intersects with financial and political concentration of power. The so-called semi-periphery and periphery, inhabited by 20% of *World's* inhabitants which occupy three-quarter of *World's* surface, is the gatekeeper of resources. *World's* population in all three parts is still growing at unchanged speed yet the epicenter of growth has shifted from the western core, where population growth has been stagnating for decades, to the eastern core. Especially the district of South Asia is hit by an unprecedented march towards dense neighborhoods resulting in a tremendous need for housing. Where once food production and distribution was *World's* major concern, it turns out that now housing faces the most structural problems. Food and clothing became part of the global production and distribution cycles, which have their asymmetries but can be balanced out through worldwide trade. Housing on the other hand, as the only immobile basic need, comes last in being influenced by global cultural, economic and political factors. But change may come very soon. Real estate investment trusts (REIT) are set up at unprecedented speed and after the Western Core is saturated, other areas of *World* will be affected by real estate ownership that is entirely detached from locality. Houses might be not mobile but money is, and it is speeding up tremendously which results in the monetization of any real estate that has or could have value one time. In the nearby future it is possible that US/EU/China REIT will retain Brazilian slum dwellings as portfolio diversification and risk-reduction tool.

In the western core where heavy growth is over and inhabitant figures are even dropping, the housing situation is under control and will remain fine throughout the next 35 years. In the eastern core however, parts of the semi-periphery and periphery, were people already suffer from insufficient living conditions, often referred to as slums, the situation will get worse in the following three decades. Today, the current housing stock of *World* is about 1,7 billion units. This means that, on average, 4 people are living together in one house, which sounds perfectly ok. Yet if one looks closer into the different neighborhoods, one discovers that in certain areas up to 14 people are living under one roof. Taking into account that each citizen of *World* is dreaming of a 90m² apartment inhabited by two people, as it is the standard in the western core, one realizes, in order to fulfill this dream, the existing housing stock of the city needs to be doubled, while the total residential surface has to quadruple!

While *World's* entire population growth only requires 300.000 new units annually, the influx of people from the countryside to the densely populated urban areas account for 25 million units per year over the following 35 years. The most affected areas in the eastern core, and in large parts of the semi-periphery and periphery are not able to catch up with this huge demand since household sizes are increasing every year instead of becoming smaller. The massive movement from sparsely populated areas towards the densest places might amaze, but the truth is that in dense populated quarters the need for labor is high, education

is good, and social security is organized in a much better way. At the same time substantial infrastructural and social investments in sparsely populated areas are diminishing which only reinforces this phenomenon. This leaves enough reasons to leave the countryside where even catching a cold might lead to death due to the lack of medical service. It is projected that in 2030 almost 5 billion or 60% of World's 8,32 billion inhabitants will live in high dense urban neighborhoods, and this figure is about to increase to 66% by 2050.⁶ On all scale levels of World the denser populated areas consolidate ever more while the countryside population is thinning out.

The massive movement from the countryside to the city ought to be received with mixed feelings. On one hand this movement has been a major force behind poverty reduction⁷ while on the other hand the capacity of the affected neighborhoods to deal with this enormous population growth is challenged by huge structural problems, which sustains the rise of slums. In some districts, like Sub-Saharan Africa, 70% of the citizens are living in slums already.

World's housing stock was nearly 2.0 billion units in 2012 and is projected to grow to 2.2 billion units in 2017.⁸

The district of Asia/Pacific has the largest housing stock, with nearly 1 billion units accounting for 51% of the world total, with the neighborhood of China, alone, represented 21% of the world total.⁹ Through 2017, more than 80 percent of new housing construction is projected to take place in the Asia/Pacific and Africa/ Mideast regions.¹⁰

Increases in the housing stock in Central and South America will also surpass the world average at 1.9% annually through 2016, to 155 million units.¹¹

Increasing urbanization drives the trend that multifamily units will exhibit faster gains in new construction than will single-family units through 2017.¹²

By 2017, the average size of new housing units is projected to increase nearly one percent per annum to 92 square meters. New units are generally larger than those in the existing stock, reflecting rising global per capita incomes and standards of living.¹³

Generally speaking the above shown figures are correct, however, more and more oddities seem to appear to torpedo these general assumptions. To illustrate, some years ago in the middle of the neighborhood Mumbai, in the quarter of India – which is generally considered as a rather poor neighborhood of the core, the most expensive single-family building has been erected. Similarly, the neighborhood of Luanda in the district Africa, which is considered the poorest and most crime-ridden district of World's periphery, turns out to be the most expensive place to live. The ever higher concentration of capital, together with the acceleration of money transactions, the forces that tie World constantly stronger together, lead to increasing disparities within the different neighborhoods of the city. The ever-growing economic and monetary freedom is clashing with ever stricter and choking political constraints. While information and money can freely move within fractions of seconds everywhere, the citizens largely stay where they are.

The detection of World as one city caused the sudden awareness of the cities finite surface, which eventually led to a rediscovery of land and land value. World experienced another

⁶ World Urbanization Prospects - The 2011 Revision; Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Population Division; United Nations New York, 2012 http://esa.un.org/unup/pdf/WUP2011_Highlights.pdf

⁷ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/04/17/developing-countries-need-to-harness-urbanization-to-achieve-mdgs-imf-world-bank-report>

⁸ <http://www.freedoniagroup.com/industry-study/2942/world-housing.htm>

⁹ <http://www.freedoniagroup.com/industry-study/2942/world-housing.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.freedoniagroup.com/industry-study/2942/world-housing.htm>

¹¹ <http://www.freedoniagroup.com/industry-study/2942/world-housing.htm>

¹² <http://www.freedoniagroup.com/industry-study/2942/world-housing.htm>

¹³ <http://www.freedoniagroup.com/industry-study/2942/world-housing.htm>

Columbus moment. Not a new continent has been discovered, but a new city. An inclusive city that contains everything we know. What was once considered a foreign investment was discovered as internal investment and what was once considered as foreign territory was recognized as homeland. It goes without saying that the first who recognized the existence of the city of World were private and large-scale investors, while the citizens of World will be the last that accept this fact. For the inhabitants the different districts of World are not even like Buda and Pest or Chuí and Chuy, for the inhabitants the districts and neighborhoods are still World's away from each other and it will take some hundred years to admit to the real size and shape of the city we are living in. Who could blame us considering that this city grew so vast and quickly, a city without end and beginning, a city that never sleeps and never awakes.

The end of globalization coincides with the beginning of endless urbanity, the triumph of the urban over the rural and the triumph of culture over nature. Exactly at the point when humankind was able to destroy World it turned into something man-made, into something cultural, into a city. With the ability and possibility to destroy World, it turned into our creation.

Living in the city is not a choice anymore. To be a human being means to be a *citizen* of World. Outer space is the unknown hinterland of World who's size grows with every technical invention, yet the further we look, the more difficult it gets to imagine to ever go there. To only get a glimpse of World from the outside is a very difficult endeavor and only a few selected people can leave World and enjoy looking down on it for a few days or weeks.

Zapatista Supremo, Sub-Commander Marcos:

The Zapatista is just a little house, perhaps the smallest, on a street called "Mexico", in a neighborhood called "Latin America", in a town called "World"¹⁴

LET OVER TEXT

The spherical condition of World could evoke a constant discussion about its center. Yet the two natural centers, the poles as the spheres pivoting points, are rather uninhabitable so they are excluded by nature. Based on climatic, geologic and historic factors the center of World established itself in a belt at the northern hemisphere between the 10th and the 60th latitude, which houses 90% of the cities entire population.

After the First World War¹⁵ there was a strong urge to introduce of a peaceful World-spanning cultural, political and economic system. Architectural and urban models were developed and applied in all districts under the name of Modernity and International Style. The devastating Second World War brought these ideals to a grind. The formal language of this time not only survived, but is alive as it never has been, thanks to its economic feasibility. The modern architects did their math's right, since they saw the enormous challenged faced by the huge increase of inhabitants and the enormous attraction of the city. Thus they systemized the construction of houses in order to speed up its development, bring down the costs and raise the standard of living. Modernity's unbeatable practical success makes theoretical proof redundant.

¹⁴ (La zapatista è appena una casetta, forse la più piccola, in una strada chiamata "Messico", in un quartiere chiamato "America Latina", in una città chiamata "Mondo")

<http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2005/11/13/un-pinguino-en-la-selva-lacandona-iii/>

¹⁵ the inauguration of World as a city

It is true that in the year 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was introduced which stated that every inhabitant of the city has a “human right to housing”¹⁶. Yet the declaration is a nonbinding law and therefore the right to housing is a wishful thinking for many. About one fourth World’s citizens are living in slums, which often means a lack of access to clean drinking water and working toilets, surrounded by desperation and crime. Given a projected urban population increase by 1,43 billion between 2010 and 2030 and adding to this the existing slum population, the number of people in the most urgent need of housing within the next two decades can be estimated to be at least 2.25 billion. Assuming an average household size of 5 people, 450 million housing units have to be built worldwide to accommodate this population – that is, 22.5 million units annually or more than 60 thousand units each day, from this very moment. But even this is just a tip of the iceberg, as there is also the need to improve the inadequate housing conditions of non-slum residents and to replace existing housing stock that will come to the end of its life or will be destroyed due to natural disasters and social conflicts.¹⁷

¹⁶ **Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

¹⁷ SUSTAINABLE HOUSING FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES: A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES; First published in Nairobi in 2012 by UN-Habitat