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Language, Translation, and the Telematic City

Drawing inspiration from Vilém Flusser's writings on translation and on city space, this paper locates language and translation as material elements of city life. I begin by outlining the ways in which language is implicated in the form and operations of cities. I extend this discussion to the metaphors of translation employed by Marshall McLuhan in building his theory of media and the global village, and Jacques Derrida's approach to translation and linguistic variability. These positions allow us to consider the implications of computer technology for universal language and machine translation, each of which have been wrapped up in discourses about the city. I finally connect this discussion to Flusser's writings on the city and his concept of the telematic society, which will have profound implications for the future of the city.

Keywords: Language; Translation; Cities; New Media; Telematics; Urban space

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