From interspace to interface: metaphoric nature of spaces in transition

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Summary

> *... more and more of our work, if we want to work towards sustaining cities, will be bound up with organizing hope, negotiating fears and mediating memories.*
>
> **L. Sandercock [16]**

Sandercock's conviction leads urban designers, artists and planners into a position which invites them to engage beyond the physical and to deal with - or rather start from – mental and social dimensions of space and its uses. This paper considers a phenomenon of heterotopia in contemporary public spaces and sketches a methodology which enables designers to take into consideration human dimensions of hopes, fears, desires and memories.

Transforming space throughout history, people assign new meanings to the artifacts by metaphorical transfer. Spaces in transition with undefined physical articulation and spontaneous use often enabled heterotopias, which influence feelings and change minds, attitudes and, finally, urban practices. These are communicated by spatially embodied images and imagined spaces. The paper introduces an idea of the research, inspired by findings of semiotics (F. de Saussure, R. Barthes, J. Lotman, B. Uspensky, U. Eco), symbolic anthropology (C. Geertz) and cognitive linguistics (G. Lakoff). Such research has to investigate, on the basis of selected case studies, the correlation between the metaphorical nature of an "embodied mind" [12] and spatially incarnated metaphor, to apply semiotic (semantic + syntactic + pragmatic) approach to urban planning, to elaborate appropriate research methodology and graphical tools ("semiotic mapping").

Using metaphor as a key for reconstructing human logic of built space, "city makers" together with politicians and artists as well as a diverse participation of the ordinary people, would be able to design identity (social and individual), feelings of Home, belonging and solidarity.

Key words: public space, spatial metaphor, interspace, spatial interface, heterotopia.

The world in transition

Slowly the representatives that formerly symbolized families, groups and orders disappear from the stage they dominated during the epoch of the name. We witness the advent of the number. It comes along with democracy, the large city, administrations, and cybernetics. It is a flexible and contentious mass, woven tightly like a fabric with neither rips nor darned patches; a multitude of quantified heroes who lose names and faces as they become the ciphered river of the streets, a mobile language of computations and rationalities that belong to no one.

M. De Certeau [2]

The 20th century, coming with wars, social, political and sexual revolutions, industrialization and materialization of the former science fiction ideas in development of technologies, "detonated" the meaning of the vernacular both in minds of the people and in physical spaces. Time which, until now, used "to go", grew wings and started "to fly". Ideologies, fashions, tastes and world outlooks are changing with a speed that mankind had not experienced before. Compared with mental landscape, denser and slower modifiable physical space reacts by creating spatial "pathologies".

Creating new and natural death of the old urban forms that earlier was the matter of several generations, now is taking place within the life of one. Fields became factories and, abandoned, turn into brownfields. Villages grew into mega-cities, overgrown by slums. Simultaneous shift in spatial functions, forms and meanings actualize the notion of anomalous spaces – zones". The image of Strugackianian Stalker [25] comes up when unpredictability and hidden forces of gated communities are spoken of: numerous slums become home to millions, but abandoned industrial areas

Fig.1 Cemetery-park is a metaphor for informally used The Great Cemetery in Riga: currently the former cemetery is most popular slow recreation place for the surrounding neighborhoods [Source: from authors private archive]

scare with polluted soils and energy. The surreal nature of transitive spaces compels the researcher to look for different from measurable –more irrational - "equipment". The tools appropriate to deal with the spatial irrationality can be provided by art which operate with poetical image and its "magic wand" metaphor. The next remark takes us closer to the bridge over the gap between poesy and city planning.

> The elaborated anomaly, the effect of "without sense", is the condition of possibilities for creating a new significance. "One sees that the metaphor takes the precise position where sense develops into non-sense…" [22]

> At once it is an index for the presence of a metaphor. It is the unusual, the misplaced (in-appropriate) [23]

Shift or misplacement, occurring within spatial and time dimensions, influences the core human feeling –privacy. Syncretization of modern life and "ritualization" of public space, namely, shrinking of the pure "private" and pure "public" as well as the increasing number of all imaginable hybrids of publicity and privacy (aspects of ownership and use) overlaps with the semantic diversity of the notions "public/private" in the contemporary human perception. The X - spatial axis of 'heterotopias' - shopping malls, petrol stations, resting places along *autobahns,* brownfields, informally used urban green

areas (Fig. 1) crosses with the Z axis of the perceptive (both sensual and rational) aspect of privacy/publicity; from publicity of "my threshold" through expressions "my street", "my town" – to privacy of "my country", which is bordering

with the notions of "individuality" and "national identity". Both the spatial, somatic X and the extra-somatic Z are organized in and by the time dimension (Z), (Fig. 2) which in a unique way shows itself in an ambiguous materiality of transitive spaces and creates an energy that is tangibly and perceptibly different from the "defined", "normal" spaces.
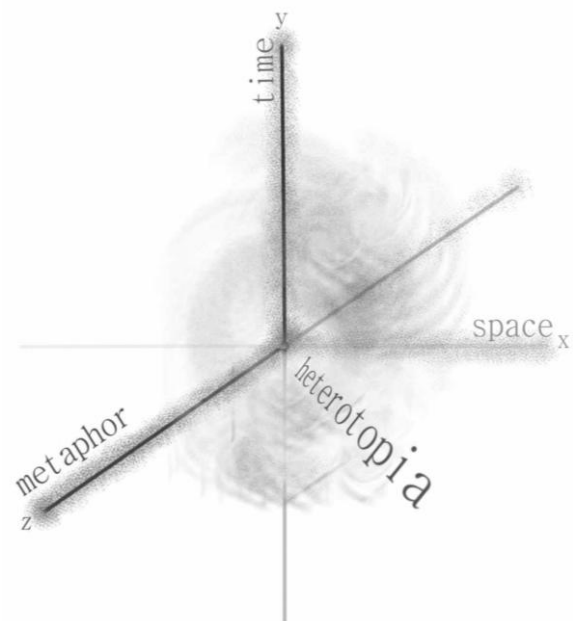

Fig. 2. [Source: construction by the authors]

Life between buildings: interface

... Now after a while the parents decided to place these two boxes across the water-pipe, so that they reached from one window to the other and looked like two banks of flowers ...

... The little girl had learnt a hymn, in which roses were spoken of, and then she thought of their own roses, and she sang the hymn to the little boy, and he sang too ...

H. C. Andersen [26]

The notion of interspace has multiple uses. Irrespective of whether it is being used as a metaphor for generalized software and domain-independent knowledge manipulation [27] or as a name of the company producing wireless PowerPoint control and traffic light indicator systems [28], the meaning of the word includes the dimensions of both time and space. It is a space between two things, an interval. Thus physicality of urban tissue is interplay between the statics of architecture and movement of the space in between. The roses of Kay and Gerda are flourishing between the houses of their parents, in the space "from one window to the other". In this "interspace" happens their Meeting; there they share Time together, Care about the roses and each other, their Friendship. They sing "the hymn of roses", by artistic act transforming Space between buildings into Life between buildings [11]. Without being revived by the art of Friendship, architecture is only "two boxes across the water-pipe" and parks and gardens are only "ugly roses, just like the box in which they stand". Shared friendship or, in Greek, *Philia,* is "the solidarity that keeps the polis together as a political entity. … *Philia* can thus be defined as a "social sympathy". .. And it is particularly significant in a world where human fabrication has taken precedence over cosmic order" [16].

Thus interspace – defined broadly – can be seen as the physical section of an urban environment in its public representation, including its social aspect.

The notion of interface, mostly known in the field of computer sciences as a metaphor for the point of interaction between "hard" and "soft" components, is also applicable to the non-virtual dimension of life. There interface could be understood as an emanation of spatially articulated social action. Using Arendt's metaphor [1], the interspace is a table which humans divide and share in social interaction, but "life of feelings" and its incarnation in space can be understood as interface, or, in other words, as mediatory nature of interspaces.

Another layer of correlation "interspace/ interface" is perceptive: there interspace could be seen as a 'naïve' interpretation of how people can 'share' space, while interface could refer to a less naïve interpretation which starts from the conviction that public space has to be negotiated.

Ascribed to urban practice, the meanings of interspace/interface reflect the increasing tendency of modern world towards syncretization. Derived from modern Latin *syncretismus*, drawing on Greek *συγκρητισμός* and used differently in the realms of culture, religion and linguistics, the term 'syncretic', however, commonly means the merging of two or more categories in a specified environment into one [30], or conjunction of seemly dissimilar elements in one underlying unity. Syncretic unity of the early genres of arts – epos, lyric, drama – displays the holistic worldview of the ancient people. Just like petroglyphs or pictographs, dance, song and performance are ritual acts not so very different from those of working, eating or procreating. The ancient ritual provides contact with cosmic order and ensures the physical existence. The range of transformation of the human consciousness from syncretic to the individual perception of the world appears in the oral and built art. National epos with the absence of an author, but containing the anonymous narrator, reflects the absence of division between "I" and "the World" in the mind of man and at the same time indicates a stage of transgression towards individuality.

For all the individual initiative indicates, without announcing itself explicitly, such a stage of evolution when the individual creative act is already possible, but is not yet objectified in the consciousness as individual process which separates Poet from Crowd. The gift of song

does not come from him, but from outside: it could either be gained by trying the wonder drink or by becoming infatuated with the nymphs-muses. In Greek *nympholepto*s, which means poet, literally translates as "mad, obsessed with nymphs". That is the period of the great beginnings in the realm of poetry and educative arts. The national epos is anonymous, like the Middle Age cathedrals [18].

The ancient ritual evolved into modern genres of drama, lyric and tragedy. The archaic and classic Greek drama, according to Perez-Gomez, going back to the ritual of Dionysus, becomes a model for architectural representation. Ancient ritualized art containing public images of sentiments and symbolic

Heterotopian nature of interspaces

Humans, being emotional as well as rational, take decisions and make steps in their lives according to or in opposition of what they feel about things. Information about feelings is provided by public images of sentiment, which are brought continuously through history by cultural expressions - art, mythology and rituals. Humans permanently perform different kind of rituals, from casual (like making morning coffee) to most solemn prescribed religious practices. In performing them we give structure and significance to our activities, minimizing chaos and disparity in our actions [13]. Poetical image, used by ritual as a symbiotic "carrier" of meaning is "tooled up" with an appropriate device – metaphor. The transitive nature of metaphor [21] fulfills the "high mission"– to preserve by transfer. It preserves a significant part of humanity's information by creating new forms, (re)creating 'deep', 'another' meaning, harmonized with the new chronological environment [20]. Metaphor is embodied in spatial tissue where environment should be perceived as a symbolic system. Ability of metaphor to "feel home" in the Different (*hetero*), transferred from noumenon to phenomenon at a particular place (Greek *topos - τόπος),* creates heterotopias (Fig. 3).
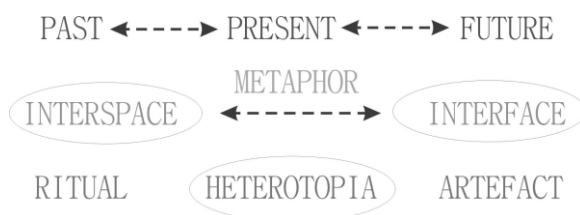

Fig. 3. [Source: construction by the authors]

models of emotions through ages has been transformed into contemporary built environment.

> *Daidala* are the constructions made *of well-adjusted pieces,* capable of inducing wonder and providing existential safety for a community. In later periods of Greco-Roman culture, the same wonder or *thaumata* remained the silent quality of artefacts that today we recognize more readily as "architecture", such as theatre, temples, and the space and political institutions of the agora and the forum [17].

Thus conjunction of "real" life, symbolic act in ritual and poetical image appears to be a basic quality both of architecture (building and landscape) as well as of human settlement in general.

In heterotopia metaphoric "playfulness" (similar/different/common) is embedded as an experience of the common in a place, as the exposition of the common in public.

In the book "Heterotopia in a post-civil society" the authors give the idea about the notion "heterotopia" as a place of "otherness".

> Michel Foucault introduced the term "heterotopia" in a lecture for architects in 1967, pointing to various institutions and places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space. Because they inject alteration into the sameness, the commonplace, the topicality of everyday society, Foucault called these places 'heterotopias' – literally 'other places' [3].

This draws a line with the nature of the metaphor. However, metaphoric movement is the opposite – it "injects" sameness into the different. Metaphor creates a common place for the meaning during the meaning's lifespan. The same principles of transfer, difference and sameness express the nature of metaphor. Opposing Foucault's view, the editors of "Heterotopia…" argue:

> Rather than interrupting normality, heterotopias now realize or simulate a common experience of place. Because of its special nature, heterotopia is the opposite of the *non-place*... Today heterotopia, from theme

park to festival market, realizes 'places to be' in the non-place urban realm of Castells' 'space of flows' (De Cauter 2004: 59–63). In other words, heterotopia embodies the tension between place and non-place that today reshapes the nature of public space [4].

The other common characteristic of metaphor and heterotopia is the presence of "the unusual" or "the inappropriate". Heterotopia is, argue De Cauter and Dehaene, "not appropriate" to the other, "normal" expressions of the human activities when analyzing the triadic model of ideal city of Hippodamus.

That 'third space' is neither a political (public) nor an economic (private) one. Rather, it is a sacred or *hieratic* space – to use Hippodamus' term *hiéran*. This qualification renders the otherness of other spaces – *les espaces autres* of Foucault – explicit. The other space is different from the *oikonomia* of the *oikos* and different from the *politeia* of the *polis* debated on the *agora*: heterotopia is the other of the political and the other of the economic [5].

According to the authors, heterotopias are also more time than space; it is time-space [6]. Similarly to the sometimes invisible sameness of the transferred meaning in metaphor, which invites to discover it, heterotopias also are places "where appearance is hidden but where the hidden appears" [7].

Metaphors and heterotopias are of a similar nature, where the latter, one might argue, is the incarnation of the former. If one understands heterotopias as an embodiment of metaphors, the answer to the question which De Cauter and Dehaene ask in the introduction to their book, "can the everyday of today survive outside heterotopia?" [8] appears on its own accord.

The symbiosis of ritualized metaphors and spatial publicity raises the vitality of spatial "carrying capacity" to the height of catharsis.

Methodology: from Space to Man

Unlike architecture, which traditionally is seen as a static "piece of art", public spaces are a quintessence of different kind of movements, a carrier of urban life in all its complexity. The methodological approach concerning research of public spaces thus has to follow the urban nature of public space itself. Therefore the notion "metabolism" is used as a metaphor for the research methodology in urbanism. Physiology understands metabolism as a set of chemical and physical processes in a living organism. In order to achieve

a scientifically and practically qualitative result, a research has to be seen as a live "organism", where the "physical" (raw material for research and theoretical discourse) is interconnected with the "chemical" (unfolding spatial etiology by designing the spaces). However, the aforementioned aspects draw a "two-dimensional" picture, where morphological and typological analysis of built environment is merely the initial step on the path leading to the understanding of the urban complexity.

The problematic of urban research methodology touches several aspects: the "scientific" character of the architectural studies, the cultural aspect (more specifically - history and art) in relation to open space, measuring of the human feelings – necessity and tools. Nowadays it is very important to develop knowledge about the historical section of cultural and social interrelations with its incarnation in the built fabric, thus understanding the meaning of the artifacts including the human being itself. Yet exploring the meanings is, according to C. Geertz [9], more an art of interpretation than a set of measurements. Interpretation as a methodological approach adds a third dimension to the investigation of human settlements – the one of human "life of feelings" (Fig. 4) [15]. A comprehensive method of analysis of environment should be elaborated within the contemporary urban studies. It can continue in the direction "shown" by K. Lynch [14] who applied the method of mental mapping to urban studies.
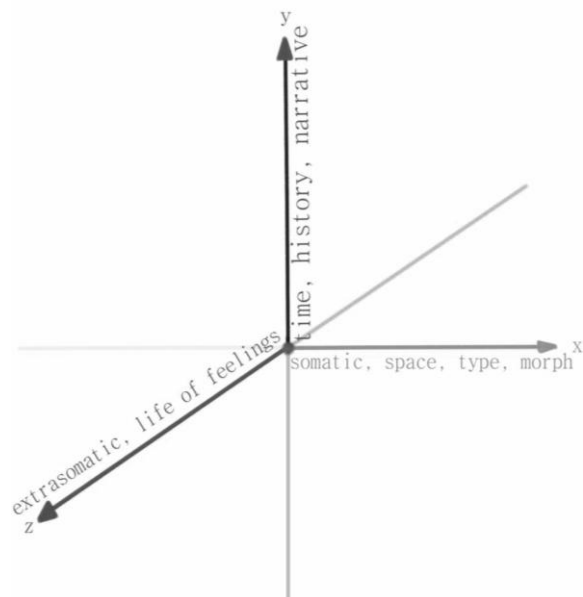
Fig. 4. [Source: construction by the authors]

Fig. 5. Heterotopian nature of the cemetery-park Assistens Kirkegård, Copenhagen, Denmark [Source: photo by the authors]

Fig. 6. Heterotopian nature of the cemetery-park Assistens Kirkegård, Copenhagen, Denmark [Source: photo by the authors]
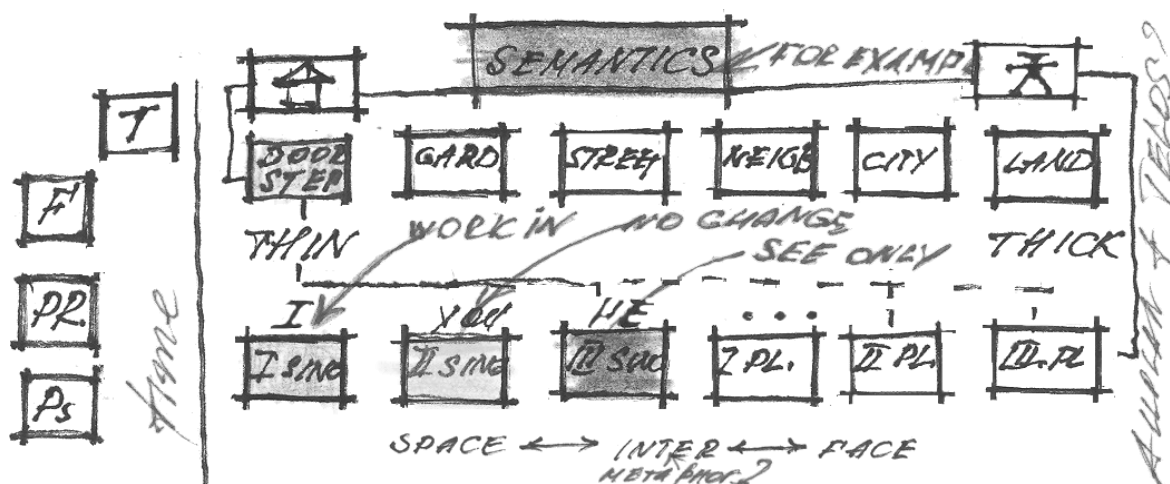
Fig. 7. Application of the organizational principle of the software ALLPLAN to the research methodology.
Conceptual sketch [Source: construction by the author's]

The term "mental mapping", also used as "cognitive maps", is applied to the learning methodology as well, where it means the graphical image of the impressions or the results of perception. In other fields like geography, sociology or urbanism mental maps are the graphical images of the perception of the space – landscape and environment. Lynch's research logic has developed during last decennia in interdisciplinary investigations as "semiotic mapping" (P. Andersen, A. Nielsen) [19], recently applied in urban studies as urban heritage analysis (D. Reinar, DIVE) [24].

The drawing software (ALLPLAN) can be used as a metaphor for analytical structure of possible research. The "files" can be organized in "folders" according to the same maxim of "thinness" and "thickness": from already metaphorically mentioned doorstep (min. complexity) to the heterotopia, for example, of Sunday market or music festival as a symbiotic ritual (medium or max. complexity) on different scales. In the range of case studies some "sacred places" with a strongly expressed heterotopian nature (like the Assistens Cemetery-park [32] – space-time) (Fig. 5), events with a meditative character (like music festivals) and virtual space (like websites – time-space) should be combined within research. All layers, files and folders are interconnected within one project and can be "switched on" or "off" in the process of research (for instance, the files of "I-perception" and "non-I perception" in connection to the "doorstep") (Fig. 7). The "whole picture" can be seen by "switching on" all layers in the design project.

To conclude

Growing complexity of spatial and social relational dynamics requires a shift of the professional attention and interests from "somatic", physical to extrasomatic sources of information, unfolding the meanings of the material and non-material artefacts in particular cultural environment.

The use of both "interspace" and "interface" notions within one concept draws the line with the methodology of "thin" and "thick" description of Geertz (using G. Ryle's terminology) [10]. The application of this methodology to the analysis of urban environment:

1) enables the "scan" of the different "layers" (physical, social and mental) within the particular "files" of public spaces in transition from "thin" to "thick" description, without unnecessary separation of these aspects;
2) inserts time dimension of the cultural realm;
3) enables interdisciplinary approach, leading to a more comprehensive "picture" of the human settlements in minds of professionals.

The application of the findings of the research in everyday professional practice can bring to a new approach to urban practices in general, when the top-down organized exclusive development could be replaced by socially and economically more friendly and inclusive act of city making in the process of co-production.

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Kopsavilkums. No starptelpas uz saskarni: pārejas telpas metaforiskā daba. Divdesmitais gadsimts atnesa kvalitatīvas pārmaiņas attiecībās starp sociālo un fizisko telpu. Tā rezultātā notikusi un notiek vienlaicīga telpisko funkciju, formu un nozīmju maiņa, un tiek aktualizēts anomālu vietu - „zonu" - jēdziens. Brāļu Strugacku radītie tēli - Stalkers un Zona - uzpeld atmiņā, kad tiek runāts par slēgto kopienu neprognozējamību un slēptiem spēkiem, kļuvušiem par mājvietu miljoniem graustu rajoniem vai pamestām rūpniecības teritorijām ar piesārņoto augsni un enerģiju. Pārejas telpas sirreālā daba prasa no pētnieka meklēt atšķirīgus no mērāmiem – iracionālus - „instrumentus". Poētiskā tēla un tā „burvju nūjiņas" metaforas spēja absorbēt vairākas nozīmes padara tos par piemērotiem urbānās telpas izpētes rīkiem. Nenoteiktā, anomālā

telpa „bez jēgas" rada nosacījumus jaunās nozīmes izveidei. Metafora ieņem precīzu pozīciju tieši tur, kur jēga pāriet „bezjēgā" un viss neparastais, „nobīdītais" kļūst par metaforas klātbūtnes iezīmi. Telpas un laika dimensijā radusies pārbīde ietekmē cilvēka pamata - kaut kā vai kaut kam piederības - sajūtu.

Publiskās ārtelpas „sinkretizācija", proti, tīri „privāto" vai tīri „publisko" ārtelpu formu sarukšana, visu iespējamo publiskuma un privātuma hibrīdu (gan īpašumtiesību, gan izmantošanas ziņā) skaita pieaugums pārklājas ar šo jēdzienu semantisko daudzveidību mūsdienu cilvēka uztverē un robežojas ar jēdzieniem „individualitāte" un „nacionālā identitāte".

Jēdzieni „starptelpa" un „saskarne" paver aptverošākas izpratnes izspēju, runājot par mūsdienu publiskās ārtelpas sociālo un telpisko daudzveidību. Starptelpa tās plašākajā nozīmē ir saprotama kā fiziskās pilsētvides griezums tās publiskā izpausmē, ieskaitot pilsētvides sociālo aspektu. Saskarnes jēdziens, galvenokārt lietojams datorzinātņu jomā kā metafora „cieta" un „maiga" komponentu mijiedarbībai, ir piemērojams realitātei arī ārpus virtuālās dimensijas. Tur ar saskarni varētu apzīmēt telpiski artikulētas sociālās darbības „izstarojumu". Izmantojot Arendta metaforu, starptelpa ir galds, kuru cilvēki dala un pie kura tie dalās sociālā mijiedarbībā, bet saskarne ir „jūtu dzīve" un tās iemiesojums telpā vai, citiem vārdiem sakot, starptelpas starpnieciskā, vienojošā daba. Vēl viens „starptelpas / saskarnes" korelācijas slānis ir uztvere. No uztveres viedokļa starptelpa varētu tikt uzskatīta par „naivo" interpretāciju tam, kā cilvēki telpu koplieto, bet saskarne varētu attiekties uz mazāk naivu interpretāciju, kas sākas no pārliecības, ka publiskās ārtelpas koplietošanu ir jāapspriež un par to ir jāvienojas. Attiecināti uz urbāno praksi, starptelpas un saskarnes jēdzieni atspoguļo mūsdienu pasaules pieaugošo tendenci uz sinkretizāciju - „reālās" dzīves un rituālizētās simboliskās rīcības savienojumu. Poētisks tēls, kuru rituāls izmanto kā simbiotisku nozīmes „nesēju" un kurš ir „apbruņots" ar metaforu, no jauna rada „dziļu", „citu", ar jauno hronoloģisko vidi saskaņotu jēgu. Metaforas spēja „justies kā mājās" visā atšķirīgajā (*hetero*), pārnesta no ideju pasaules (*noumenon*) uz konkrētās vietas (*τόπος*) fenomenu, rada heterotopijas. Mišels Fuko ieviesa terminu „heterotopija" 1967. gadā, lasot lekciju arhitektu auditorijai, norādot uz dažādām iestādēm un vietām, kas pārtrauc šķietamo parastās ikdienas telpas nepārtrauktību un normalitāti. Pretēji Fuko izpratnei, Dekauters un Dehāne apgalvo, ka heterotopijas šodien nevis pārtrauc normalitāti, bet stimulē kopīgu vietas pieredzi un realizē - no atrakciju parka līdz festivālu tirgum - „vietu, kur būt" Kastelsa „ne-vietas" „plūsmu telpā". Heterotopija, citiem vārdiem, iemieso spriegumu starp vietu un ne-vietu, un šis spriegums šodien pārveido publiskās ārtelpas raksturu. Pilsētvides un tās publiskās ārtelpas pētniecības metodoloģijai ir jāseko to daudzdimensionālajai būtībai. Jēdziens „vielmaiņa" varētu tikt izmantots kā metafora pilsētvides pētījuma metodoloģijai, lai attīstītu visaptverošāko pieeju artefaktu, tostarp paša cilvēka, nozīmes izpratnei. Nozīmēs izpēte ir, saskaņā ar Gīrcu, vairāk interpretācijas māksla nekā mērījumu komplekts. Interpretācija kā metodoloģija – Gīrca izstrādātais „plānais" un „biežais" apraksts - ievada pilsētplānošanas un dizaina pētījumā trešo, cilvēku „jūtu dzīves" dimensiju. Fokusa pārnese no telpas uz cilvēku rada priekšnosacījumu visaptverošās pilsētvides analīzes metodoloģijas izstrādei.

Šis metodoloģijas pielietošana urbānās vides analīzē ļauj

1) „skenēt" dažādus „slāņus" (fizisko, sociālo un mentālo) konkrētā publiskās ārtelpas „direktorija" ietvaros, pārejot no „plānā" uz „biezo" aprakstu un neatdalot mākslīgi vienu aspektu no otra.

2) ieslēgt kultūras vēsturisko / laika dimensiju telpas analīzē

3) attīstīt starpdisciplīnu pieeju pētījumam, kas veido daudz visaptverošāko cilvēku apdzīvoto vietu „ainu" profesionāļu un pētnieku prātos.