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**A CONCEPTION OF, AND  
EXPERIMENTS WITH  
“HETEROTOPIA” AS A CONDITION  
OF STABLE, UNPURPOSIVE,  
EVERYDAY MOVEMENT**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: HUMANITIES  
WP BRP 70/HUM/2014

## A Conception of, and Experiments with “Heterotopia” as a Condition of Stable, Unpurposive, Everyday Movement.

The paper is based on the outcomes and inferences from the experiment with urban *heterotopia* found on the Manezhnaya square in Moscow. The main point of the experimental design (ethnomethodological in its intent) is to explore *in vivo* the heterotopical properties of the urban environment as the condition of this environment’s creativity and its *interaction* with the mobile actors. Creativity of the urban environment was interpreted as a particular kind of spatial order accumulating in counterfinal effects of collective behavior in the unique constellation -- “heterotopia”. The flâneur was chosen as the most appropriate actor displaying the properties of an object and that of a receptive mobile interactant.

The object of the experiment was the fragment of the metropolitan environment which combines the logic of the urban social organization (embodied in its concrete place) and the paralogy of the counterfinality of the mobilities inside this particular environment. Two modes of interaction were provoked in the experiment: first, intended, but unpurposive action observed by the passage through the ambiances of the specific fragment of the city by the flâneur, and focusing on his affective states during these actions (the affective profile of the place thus was achieved); and second, observing and mapping the flâneur’s movements as a purposive interaction with the same fragment of the environment, but in the form of *dérive* (observation of the movement by the means of movement). The end of the observation in movement was to focus on the flâneur’s movements and to depict his route through the observable details of the spatial/social order of the environment.

JEL Classification: Z.

Keywords: urban history, history of sociology, new urbanism, heterotopias, creative environment, counterfinality, psychogeography, flâneurism, *dérive*

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## What is the “Creativity” of the urban environment?

The creative capacities of the environment, with respect to the conversion of interacting social units within it (communities, groups and individuals), has been generally ignored, if not denied in the urban studies.

The revival of interest in this type of research in the modern city can be definitely observed in the modern theories of "New Urbanism". This trend of urbanism was influenced by post-structuralism, theories of non-representation, complexity theory, and ANT. A city within this new vision penetrates all social relations. "City is anywhere and everywhere" - proclaim A. Amin and N. Thrift<sup>2</sup>. From the point of view of "New Urbanism", the modern city is a "hybrid", "porous", "trans-local" entity, not the spot in space, but a "site" which is a point of intersection for multiple networks, more or less extended and constant in time. A similar phenomenon was anticipated by Robert Park when he described the modern city as crossed up by cultures, economies, and civilizations, and where local and tribal cultures are constantly stirring constantly, though soon disappearing altogether. Park described the modern city as an environment, where many worlds intersect, but never fully interpenetrate<sup>3</sup>. The best metaphor for this hybrid creature, a "body without organs» (BWO), may have been proposed by Deleuze and Guattari<sup>4</sup>, and influenced by A. Artaud<sup>5</sup>. This kind of visualization of

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<sup>2</sup> Amin A., Thrift N. *Cities: reimagining the urban*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> For the Chicagoan theory of the modern city see: Park R. E. *The city: suggestions for the investigation of human behavior in the urban environment* // *American Journal of Sociology*. 1915. Vol. 20. № 5. P. 577–612; Park R. E. *Human nature and collective behavior* // *American Journal of Sociology*, 1927. Vol. 32. № 5. P. 695–703; Park R. E. *Society: collective behavior, news and opinion, sociology and modern society*. Glencoe: Free Press, 1955; Park R. E., Burgess E.W. (Eds.). *Introduction to the science of sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926.

<sup>4</sup> Deleuze G., Guattari F. *A thousand plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987

the formless, disordered, and unstratified city situated in a constant process of formation / deformation, is described as a "transitive nomadic space-time, which can not cut any city into segments and things, nor on the structures and processes»<sup>6</sup> (Smith, 2003). Modern "new urbanists" prefer not to use the classical organism-centered metaphor to emphasize the fact that the city is growing and developing as a living organism while escaping exclusively rational planning. Still, they suggest that the city's main characteristics are spontaneity, unpredictability of development and growth, and the futility of a mechanistic description strictly employing functionalist schemes.

Is it possible, in this case, to talk about *interacting* with the urban environment which is extremely variable, uncommittable in more or less stable conditions? How could such a "hybrid", and "fluid" environment of the modern city interact with its inhabitants as its entire population, and with each of its individual members? What would be the result of this interaction and what type of "agent" would this environment form (if it forms)? Which properties of the "environment" appear as the *agents* of the interaction and are able to guide the actions of the individual members inside? Finally, how it is possible to observe such effects and interactions if "significant" actions (performances and practices) of the participants of the interaction (i.e, the actual space of the urban environment and the "actor") can not be recorded as fundamentally non-cognitive or not-reflexive, or are simply taken for granted?

### **On the Constitution of the Environment's Creativity**

If "classic" scholars believed that all individual characteristics of a person (his/her vices and virtues, fantasies and phobias, hidden and not always reflexive

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<sup>5</sup> Artaud A. The theatre of cruelty // The theory of the modern stage / Ed. by E. Bentley. Penguin, 1968

<sup>6</sup> Smith R. G. World city topologies // Progress in Human Geography. 2003. Vol. 27. № 1. P. 25–44

attitudes), are enhanced and proliferate in an urban environment, we can then assume that the urban modern life of the megapolis also shows hypertrophies and opportunities of urban spatial environment, that is, its ability to influence and *interact* with its inhabitants. What is the basis of such a possibility? First of all, the fact that the urban environment accumulates and objectifies aggregate actions (although not always consistent, rational, or observable) of its inhabitants and is unintentionally caused by the actions of each individual's activity. The contingent, emergent main result of joint actions is perceived in the form of space-time, and objectively determines and guides further action. The urban environment and quality of its habitat consists of many everyday, quite deliberate, rational, and irrational actions of its inhabitants, and clearly and *witnessably* represents the resultant aggregate of collective action of urban residents.

### **Counterfinality as the Condition of Creativity.**

It is also worth mentioning the counterfinal nature of such a constellation as the "urban environment". Counterfinality, (a term introduced by Jon Elster<sup>7</sup> (Elster, (1978)), refers to a situation where each actor pursues an individual policy bound to be frustrated by the joint predicament of multiple actors; or in other words, in those cases where it is rational for a single agent to follow a given policy provided he does so alone; however, all may come to ruin when this policy is taken up by many agents.

An urban environment acquires the properties of a subject in the mobile interaction since the environment embodies the unpredictable counterfinality of the overall effect of multiple mobilities. The mobile actor, in his turn, acquires the properties of the manipulated (though reflexive) object of the environment. Counterfinality (along with "suboptimality") is regarded by J. Elster as the

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<sup>7</sup> Elster J. Logic and society: contradictions and possible worlds. Chichester; New York: Wiley, 1978.

phenomenon of ambiguity and "postponed" inconsistency of social processes<sup>8</sup>). Elster describes a kind of "reverse effect" which manifests itself as a result of targeted, rational action of many acting individuals, although not matching their actions with each other. The prerequisite of counterfinality is a targeted mass standardized action when each of the actors is aware of the existing available purpose and are equally aware of the most effective means to achieve this end. However, the calculation of the effectiveness of the goal is justified for a single case and when such an action is carried out by multiple actors. Simultaneously, when the result of cumulative (mass, or collective) action becomes a principally unattainable desired goal, the most likely outcome is a conflict situation. Counterfinality is spontaneous, unpredictable, and often out of control. This is a phenomenal property of the environment generated by its spatial trait (multiplierity), as when a certain degree of the concentration of the members on the limited spot have the equal access to the same objectives and means to achieve them. A rational action of the individual, multiplied in mass performance, gets deprived of its advantages of efficiency. Then, it becomes converted into its opposite, that of an inefficient action when the action itself as it approaches the goal, reducing the chances of achieving it. The result of this combined effect is a situation that not only was not the intent of each individual participant of this action, but is also contrary to their expectations and goals.

The urban environment with its mass accumulates such effects of counterfinality. Each environment's unique counterfinal situation provides the potential for the external forcing of each individual action.

### **Environment as an Actor.**

Perception of the impact of the environment involves reactivity as the basic characteristic of individual action. The "environment" actually gets a quality of an actor: it is not just a depositarium of the material resources or the container of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

acting individuals, but is also independent of the individual's actions and the embodiment of their resulting unpredictability. In other words, we can speak about the actual nature of the creative environment that generates something that is more than a simple aggregate” of the individual actions. How can this "more" be identified, and in what terms? Obviously, spontaneity, irregularity, and the constellation manifestation of the creative characteristics of the environment does not allow to fix them in strict concepts suitable for this purpose, but rather as a metaphor. This kind of metaphor is used to describe, explain influences, and predict changes in the urban environment by "new urbanists". The three most important among these metaphors are "transitivity", "imprints", and "rhythmanalysis."<sup>9</sup> .

The transitivity (also known as "permeability ", or "porosity ") assumption proposes spatial and temporal openness of the urban environment , a fundamentally unbounded urban space that allows the city to be continuously formed and deformed. The internal structure of the urban environment is also characterized by the "fluidity", or the "transparency " of its spatial formations. The metaphor of an imprint describes the city as the embodiment of continuity in time, as the process of applying traces of different historical epochs, as the intersection of daily traffic routes laid along and across the city, and as communication across time. Finally, the metaphor of rhythmanalysis<sup>10</sup> (Lefebvre, 2004) depicts the city as a place where diverse rhythms converge, and as a discrete temporal integrity where the continuity of the flow of time in the daily life of the city is broken into many and varied cycles of alternation of the beginnings and the ends in general, and

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<sup>9</sup>Amin A., Thrift N. *Cities: reimagining the urban*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002

<sup>10</sup> For Rhythmanalysis see: Lefebvre H. *Rhythmanalysis: space, time and everyday life*. London: Continuum, 2004; Lefebvre H., Regulier-Lefebvre C. (1985). *Le project rythmanalytique // Communications*. 1985. Vol. 41. P. 191–199.

daily incidents and events. All three metaphors converge in the concept of heterotopia<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup>Hetherington K. The badlands of modernity: heterotopia and social ordering. London: Rouledge,1997.

## Interaction with the Creative Environment

What kind of action on the part of the actor is able to most clearly demonstrate the potency of the creative environment to the greatest extent? Interaction is complicated by the fact that this environment is heterotopic and does not imply well-defined functional limitations when we clearly know what we can or should do in one place, and what we can not and should not do in the other.

In answering these questions, it is necessary to delve into the structure of action (on the part of the actor) that we observe in the actor/environment interaction.

We should keep in mind the distinctions (using formal logic, at least) in the very structure of action itself. We must differentiate, first of all, *internal* and *external* aspects of action: the internal one could be defined as a mental act consisting of the *intention* of an act and of the object of this intention, to wit, the *purpose* of an action. The external action, observable and witnessed, consists of the perceivable with our senses, such as physical acts like *movements*, sounds, colors, etc., and of the perceivably accomplished results of actions that are connected with the changes in the behavioral environment or in the situation of action, which could be referred to as *events*. Sociologists analyzing the social action usually are interested in both aspects of the action, but more so in the character of the correlation between the two aspects, nomical, or logical<sup>12</sup> (von Wright, 1971). This correlation is usually put in the language of sociology as a relationship between purpose and the outcome of the action, or between purposive action and event. Still, the other two structural components of the action –intention and the very act *in vivo*– are mostly disregarded as less attributive to the meaningful/purposive action. Nevertheless, the connection between the intention and the very start of the action, witnessed bodily movements, replacements, etc., could be helpful in

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<sup>12</sup>von Wright G.H. Explanation and Understanding. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971

describing and accounting for the behavior represented by the intended but unpurposive action.

This kind of action is induced in the so-called empty place, which becomes filled according to this kind of 'unpurposive but intentional action' and events, and the outcomes of that action. To use Weberian terms, these events are 'specifically senseless', being perceived by the very producers/actors of them as being strange, causally indeterminate, arbitrary in occurrence, and without a relevant history of future, means character or moral necessity. The actions surrounded by this kind of environment with such properties would gradually come to a total cessation. If not this extreme in nature, then these actions will be marked by bewilderment, uncertainty, massive incongruity, and loss of identity, etc. But we are far from assessing this kind of action as inferior or as an improper one.

### **The Flâneur as a member of Stable, Unpurposive, Everyday Movement**

The empty space of the square gets filled by actions which are intended but purposeless, and are mainly the actions of transition, movement, "and visualizing the movement. Thus the main actor, the member of the population filling the spot in the event in the environment with these properties, becomes a well known urban type – a flâneur.

The flâneur is a pedestrian, a wanderer, and a stranger to some extent. He explores the emptiness of the place, and eventually interacts with the a-topical properties of the environment of this kind. The transitivity, contingency, and heterotopia (as Foucault puts it) of this space makes it interactive and potentially creative – at least in the creation of the contingent, fluid forms of solidarity (for

example, soccer players and their audience, or sudden groups of discussants and disputants of “what could it mean?”).

So, the flâneur and his movements and performances at the ‘empty’ place was the object to experiment with to depict some traits of the creativeness of this environment. These traits were depicted by the two modes of the transient movement through this space: the flâneur’s performances, movements (as intended, but purposeless action) that were largely free from any route regulations and were to be registered as his/her immediate emotional, aesthetic, physical, or mental states during the stroll around the square, while giving the psychogeographical profile of the square; and the observation (as a purposive action) of the flâneur’s performances and tracks of movement. This can be called ‘chasing the flâneur’ and involves the fixation of his interaction with the artifacts on the spot in details, while forming the socio-geographical profile of the square.

The interference of the profiles can provide more details for the fluid, performative, solidarities emergent on the spot, and to grasp the creativity of this environment. Thus, referring again to the figure of the flâneur allows us to demonstrate some of the features of urban space and situational solidarities that characterizes it.

This was an example of a single square in a single urban center, but in our opinion, something of the kind is observable in any large city where there are large, empty (or emptied) spaces, regardless of the origins of that emptiness. If it is not filled with public activity (political, or cultural, for example), it serves just one thing – the place for the fluid solidarity of the flâneurs.

A suggested interpretation of the ‘environment’ as *creative* (due to heterotopical properties) could be referred to as ‘interactional’, without any

unnecessary connotations. It involves only the *interaction* between the "environment " and the "actor", suggesting that the presence of an object qualities in the acting subject (a the member of the population of the environment), and the subject properties of the environment (it 'manipulates ' the acting individual as its integral part for an individual can not chose the stimuli of the environment, forcing him to react ) .

Thus, in order to identify a subjective side of this environment and its creative impact, it is necessary to minimize the subjective side of the acting individual . The subjectivity of the actor is primarily the ability to set goals and to accordingly focus on its achievement. Thus it should be exactly the 'action' of the individual, and not the physical body, that is, the body reacting reflexively to environmental stimuli. In other words, the individual's action must be intentional (reflective and meaningful), but remaining non-purposeful. This should be 'pure movement' that is focused on the interaction with the environment. The same interaction with the environment by the current limit can be in two forms: the movement in the space environment, and the visualization of this movement.

### **Interacting with the environment: the metamorphosis of the flâneur.**

It is now possible to identify the carrier of the intentional non-purposive action who is appropriate for the interaction with the environment, and to identify its creative quality. In social literature this carrier is referred to as a flâneur.

The flâneur as a social type and as a type of an actor is interesting since it points to a central position of the movement of the actor in contemporary social life.

Who is a flâneur? On the one hand, it is the Gawker, the time embezzler, the man of the crowd, but on the the other hand, it is the disinterested observer, the one who constantly monitors, classifies, or, according to Benjamin, is the "nerd on the pavement."<sup>13</sup> He tends to dive into the crowd, to dissolve in it, to obey random impressions and surprises; he is a *scopophilus*. But at the same time, he is an observer of the crowd, albeit an disinterested observer.

A modern metropolis with its heterotopia, navigation, and increased complexity and diversity of the temporal modes of movement, turns a flâneur into a researcher of the urban environment; often it is not necessary to take a great effort to "estrangle" the known place as it is constantly changing. Aimless, relaxed movement is increasingly disturbed by the need to "work their way" into the unpredictable, changing environment .

New forms of flâneurism are accompanied by new forms of identity, coupled with the departure of physical limitations, and spatial configurations: increasingly, researchers report on new forms of "fluid subjectively and free/contingent construction of the identity (Free-style Self)"<sup>14</sup>.

The flâneur, finally, is increasingly becoming an "ideal type" in the sociological sense of the term, an embodiment of which is possible only in the experimental settings.

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<sup>13</sup>Benjamin W. *The Arcades Project* / Trans. by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Featherstone M. The flâneur, the city and virtual public life // *Urban Studies*. 1998. Vol. 35. № 5–6. P. 909–925

## **Methods for detection of exposure of the active space/environment**

One of the basic methods of studying the interaction of the environment and the flaneur, the environment and the observer for the flâneur , and the actual method of detecting transitivity, can be considered as a so-called derive<sup>15</sup>.

Situationists brought this method to develop techniques of passage through the various kinds of 'ambiances' in the city space. The *dérive* technique involves 'constructive-play behavior' and the constant reflection upon the psycho-and social-geographical effects of communication with the environment of the city, an essential distinction from the famous classical descriptions of flâneurism. This difference lies in the fact that for a certain period of time a person, although not necessarily a researcher, uses this technique to leave aside ('forget') his usual, traditional motives / reasons / explanations which he subjects his moves to around the city . He permits the surrounding environment to directly enthrall him, to stop altogether, or to alter the direction of his movement. The derive technique, unlike flâneurism, is more akin to the study of military strategy and navigation, where movement is defined as 'a calculated action defined, due to the lack of clear markings place.' In this sense, the *dérive* serves as a strategic device for on-site reconnaissance, or familiarization with a place in the event of its takeover in future time<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Debord G. Theory of the Derive // Situationist International Anthology / Ed. by K. Knabb. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981. P. 50–54.

<sup>16</sup> Debord G., Wolman G. J. Methods of Detournement // Situationist International anthology / Ed. by K. Knabb. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981. P. 8–14; Debord G. Introduction to a critique of urban

Another method fixing the imprints in the city environment is known as *détournement* (returning, or rehearsal). Any components, no matter where they came from, may be used for the new combinations; when two objects collide and coexist (no matter how different the contexts of their descendance are), the necessary relationship is always established between them. This relationship produces the synthetical organization which exceeds the effectiveness of its original components.

In other words, *détournement* releases the meaning from its original context. In the case of the implementation of this method to the counterfinality of the environment, it could be argued that the result of the action involved into the counterfinality is freed from the context of its teleological explanation, that is, from the context of the initial goal set by the actor himself. *Détournement*, considered as the urban realization, might be seen in the various examples of 'disneification': the exact reconstruction of the architectural object or its fragment in the other place where it has never been before.

The techniques of *dérive* and *détournement* could hardly be referred to as techniques or methods of research in the proper sense; they are rather the ways of observation and description of the interaction (spontaneous, non-calculated, and non-planned) with the environment in the very process of the interaction *in vivo*<sup>17</sup>. This approach differs from the cognitive sociology of space and from the "new social/cultural geography" with its interest in mental maps, in the meanings of the

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geography // Situationist International anthology / Ed. by K. Knabb. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981. P. 5–8.

<sup>17</sup>Debord G., Wolman G. J. Methods of Detournement // Situationist International anthology / Ed. by K. Knabb. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981. P. 8–14

different spatial forms, in the perception of the space, and in the social production and representation of the space, etc. The peculiarity of this approach is set by the focus on the “creativity of the environment” and its manifold of manifestations, such as ‘representative places’<sup>18</sup>, ‘marginal spaces’<sup>19</sup>, ‘liminal/liminoid places’<sup>20</sup>, ‘paradoxical spaces’<sup>21</sup>, and ‘heterotopias’<sup>22</sup>. The study of such a kind of place, marked by the transgression and ambiguity motion and disorder, new order formation, and alternatives to the order<sup>23</sup>, infer the specific interpretation of the ‘order’. ‘The order’ here is not what the actors produce, but what all of the actors along with their actions are inside the order. The actors just fill in the order<sup>24</sup>, they are ‘the members’ of the collectively produced phenomenon of the local order, the order here being the milieu possessing the qualities of a subject and the capacity to manage and to order — the same as the actors (insiders) possess.

Thus, the Experiment is to be designed as to find the patterns of the interaction between the spatial object with the intentionally acting. Flâneuring as a non- purposive action reveals the ways/patterns/phenomena of the space configuration's impact on the action. The action most exposed to the influence of

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<sup>18</sup> Lefebvre H. *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991

<sup>19</sup> Shields R. *Places on the margin*. London: Routledge, 1991.

<sup>20</sup> Turner V. *The ritual process*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969

<sup>21</sup> Rose J. *Feminism and geography*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1993

<sup>22</sup> Foucault M. *Of other spaces // Diacritics*. 1986. Spring. P. 22–27; Foucault M. (1980). *A question of geography // Foucault M. Power/Knowledge / Ed. by C. Gordon*. London: Harvester Press, 1980. P. 63–77

<sup>23</sup> Law J. *Organizing modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994

<sup>24</sup> Garfinkel H. *Ethnomethodology's program: working out Durkheim's aphorism*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002

the space is most appropriate to detect the active spots of the place, providing its “profile of the interaction”. It makes it possible to see the place under observation as “live”, capable to impact the actor, to interact with him, and to make its action instructed. Finally, the particular profile of the place also makes the appropriate type of the flâneur.

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