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Paper

In-Between Spatialities: an approach to the contemporary urban space of (t)here(s)

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary city develops among processes that question the (supposed) fixity and stability of space and the linearity of time. Location media and social networks represent examples of what how spaces and times can be connected simultaneously, forming other formats of collective interaction, other ways of experiencing and producing space. These omnipresent interactions produce meanings, content and subjectivities which result in networks that are constantly being expanded, reshaped and broken.

[...]we find ourselves in the moment of transit when space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion (BHABHA, 1998, p.19).

Time is not just linear\(^1\) just as space is not surface for attachment. The everyday use of the city connects together the practices of participants who carry with them marks of the times and spaces that form their memory, routes and their urban narratives. In this way we are departing from a topological rationale of space: to question the logic and (X and Y) coordinates of Euclidean space; to investigate qualitative elements of spatial forms and adopt correlations between different parts as compositional possibilities (not just as consequences), disconnected from rules that emphasise dualities, and understanding permeabilities as a legitimate part of reality.

From this viewpoint, opposites such as “inside – outside”, “left – right”, “here – there”, “near – far”, “centre – periphery”, “public – private” are suspended in the urban fabric: the permeability of these (and other) dualities are relativised by updated modes of the space-time relationship, biotechnologies, by the “hypermobility of goods, people and information, the ubiquity created by distance communication in real time or otherwise” (ARAÚJO, 2011, p. 21).

Although this malleable and transitory nature of the processes developing in the contemporary city is nothing new, understanding of the resulting urban forms (and content) is still unresolved. This reality calls for conceptual and methodological formulations which – faced with the new possibilities of expanded boundaries of space and time and the socio-spatial motivations driven by them – offer a renewed look at approaches to the production of the contemporary urban space.

A topology-based approach to the contemporary city demonstrates the need for a programme of investigation which questions the notion of the “boundary” of space and time: “it is necessary to investigate […] the multiplicity of spatial varieties. What is the closed? What is the open? …What is the continuous and the discontinuous? What is a threshold, a limit? Elementary program of a topology” (TEYSSOT, 2013, p. 11).

Questioning the notion of boundaries also means addressing understanding of geographical scale. This epistemological approach leads to relativisation of ideas about the fixed

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\(^1\) Diachronic time is successive time, a linear time that orders processes one after the other, constructing an awareness of the world following a continuous line without simultaneities. This study contrasts with this view by considering time synchronically, in which references from different periods, practices and processes can be put on the same plane without worrying about recognizing a starting point or end point, causes and consequences appropriate to a “linear” approach to time.
nature and clear outlines of the boundaries between one scale and another (BHABHA, 1998), which ranges from the spatialities and temporalities of more individual everyday practices to those which develop in networks involving the international mobility of data, people, goods and materials.

New notions of scales need to be considered among formulations of different theoretical traditions which, for interpretation of the production of the contemporary urban space, suggest concepts and terms such as: local–global interaction, glocalisation, glurbanisation, multilocality, plurilocality and translocality (LOW, 1996; SOJA, 1996; RODMAN, 2003; IRAZABAL, 2008; BRENNER 2013; MITCHEL, 2003; IRAZABAL, 2014). Each of these concepts clearly has different contexts and applications, which are beyond the focus of this study. Nonetheless, a brief consideration of this proliferation of terms is needed to clarify that to question the notion of “scales” is by no means to negate them, and on the contrary strengthens their importance as a qualitative conceptual instrument and indicates the need for a review of their application.

Each of these terms seems in their own way to give greater emphasis to the relations occurring at the moment(s) of contact and exchange between different urban scales and their “boundaries”, thinking of them not as “islands” per se and admitting the importance of considering them relationally:

Scales cannot be construed adequately as fixed units within a system of nested territorial containers defined by absolute geographic size (a “Russian dolls” model of scale). The institutional configuration, function(s), histories, and dynamics of any one geographical scale can only be grasped relationally, in terms of its upwards, downwards, and transversal links to other geographical scales situated within the broader interscalar configuration in which it is embedded. (BRENNER, 2013, p.202).

This approach allows us to move away from a view of the prearrangement of scales – suggesting that each has size, shape and content admitted a priori – and gives rise to another meaning for their “boundary lines”, enabling them as fields of exchange which acquire breadth and depth through an intersection of meanings.

The questioning and denaturalisation of this hierarchical condition of scales dates from the work of Harvey, giving greater importance to the content of spatial scales, moving beyond the level of “natural” form as a key aspect of scale, and addressing its essence as a social product. While not denying the influence of natural dimensions on the formation of scales, Harvey’s theory notes that they do not exclusively govern inter-scale production and activation.

Harvey considers the character of continuous construction and dissolution of mobile and fixed (social) structures which therefore produce complex spatial and temporal features involved in the relationships between scales beyond their natural references.

His theories introduce space-time compression (among other objectives) as a possible explanation for the dynamisation of scales – which the author describes: “I mean to signal by that term processes that so revolutionize the subjective qualities of space and time that we are

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Footnote:

1Spatiaility is considered here as the social form and product that develops among the socio-cultural practices associated with space – not necessarily fixed to it – conveying meanings that both qualify it and constitute its relationships of (re)production in constant movement.

Temporality is not a generic term related to time, but is instead used to highlight the coexistence of different times shaped not by dates but by memory, narratives and times experienced and recognized and which therefore have specific meanings.
forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves” (HARVEY, 2004, p. 219).

In the velocity of time – derived from what Harvey calls “compression” –, past and future dissolve, the present acquires emphasis and the locations of different latitudes and longitudes are easily (and immediately) reached, connected and interacted. In this space-time compression, the distance ratio is constant, spatial distances are reduced and constant emphasis on the new and immediate leads to a weakening of specific references and urban identities as they adapt to the volatility of the systems of meaning in which they become immersed (HARVEY 2004).

Although the natural reference still exists in the realm of biophysics – and serves as a basis for apprehending superficial dimensions like form and extent –, the contemporary processes of social interaction that occur in and between the “scalar planes” deconstruct the logic of fixed space and linear time: through the shortening of distances, the temporary nature of updated cultural production and the generalisation of everyday practices and experiences.

In a given reality formed by the flux, movement and shifting of meanings, information, powers, symbols etc., urban micro-geographies become potentially more suspended from their local relations and connected to networks where content comes from everywhere.

With no point of reference or convergence, the production of urban space is based on mobility, on passage, “on the extension of mobile frontiers” (AUGÉ, 2010) which in addition to drawing routes from one side to another, acquire depth, breadth and non-neutral content that will define what we call here “between zones” or “threshold zones/fields” (AUGÉ, 2010; TEYSSOT, 2013).

These threshold fields have multiple codes and meanings, characterised neither as places with individual features, sociocultural, historical, aesthetic values etc., shared by a group, nor as territories with symbols, powers, standards, rules etc. determined by an agent or group over a particular section of space. As between forms, these zones assume a place of identities in transition and transformation, in a creative process operating between contrasting meanings, (such as based on dualities) and bringing them together once again (BHABHA, 1998).

We therefore propose to look no longer “into or out from” the limits and scales (if it is still possible to use such terms), but instead at moments of contact, thresholds, on the margins, towards this “zone between” times and spaces. Binary divisions are questioned and dynamic intervals explored in the production of urban space and the processes that develop between the supposedly fixed identifications mentioned previously: “inside – outside”, “right – left”, “here – there”, “distant – near”, “centre – periphery”, “public private”.

We should add here that these dynamic intervals are transitory configurations established in everyday life, which temporarily transgress the normative repertoire of existing physical and social structures, allowing the creation of identities that overcome cohesion and unity. They are mobile, suspending existing social controls to explore other directions, enabling other possible identities, the expression of difference, and therefore running the risk of conflict through the creation of friction.

Moving the discussion forward from the implications in observation of the production of space from this “place”, it is first necessary to clarify what is understood here as “between zone”, based on contributions from fields such as philosophy, sociology, architecture, anthropology and critical literature, which together recognise its approach as a strategy for interpretation of the forms of contemporary social production. But it is important to note that
our discussion is located in the field of the production of the contemporary urban space, its forms and content, and that an approach along these lines makes greater efforts to mobilize the idea of “between zones” as phenomenon and instrument of interpretation.

ELUCIDATING ASPECTS OF THE BETWEEN

The linear form of a text can at times seem to limit the development of certain concepts which – like those addressed in this paper – require more dynamic and open decisions about what is stated “first” and “later”. It should be stressed that while it is inevitable that the strategies adopted for discussion of these considerations should follow a linear path, they should not lead to the reading of “between zones” as an ordered structure.

One of the conditions involved in addressing “between zones” is the existence of a referential element from which these zones are enabled and emerge. Adopting an element as referential does not involve mimesis, however: the nature of the “between” arises out of juxtapositions, superimpositions, concurrences and planes, meaning that we assume dialectic relationships that can develop new content – which may even be subversive – in relation to the context in which it manifests itself (LUZ, 2008).

As a moment of encounters, intersections, the flux of times and spaces, these zones occur through movement rather than stable boundary lines. As a manifestation of threshold moments it is necessary to differentiate the idea of “boundary” from “between zone”: while the former suggests a line, a division “between one side and another”, differentiation and barrier; the latter develops in the encounter between spaces, time and content, developing breadth, volume and form through indeterminacy and being always an outcome (AUGÈ, 2010).

The threshold must be carefully distinguished from the boundary. A Schwelle (threshold) is a zone. Transformation, passage, wave action are in the word schwellen, sweel, and etymology ought not to overlook these senses (TEYSSOT, 2013, p. 87).

It is not the aim of this study to enter into exhaustive investigation of “limit”, but it is necessary to call up some aspects to establish its meaning in this text. Limit comes from the Latin Limes, meaning track, lane, a strip of land marking a boundary, and also determines the beginning and end of something (MACHADO 1998). Limit, following the original meaning of the word, will be associated with the marking of lines that delimit units and the outline that suggests “from where” each of them begins, bordering areas that begin at the same time and in their different identities (LUZ, 2008).

Limit also conveys exhaustion, marking the end of a process, activity or duration (SANTOS, 2011). So, while it also begins the moment of the start of the “other”, limit also clarifies something that has ended – or is inside its demarcation – rather than something that “is not”: we do not talk about the limit of conjunctions that we do not yet know (apart from hypothetically) and in principle the limit will say much more about an identity inside what it refers to – since we recognise the limit “of something” (ARROYO, 2007; SANTOS, 2011). We should point out that the limit also marks the experience of crossing, which will be considered in more detail later.
A complimentary yet not synonymous concept is that of the frontier. The origin of the word concerns a zone adjacent to the track (limit) that separates two areas, something situated “in front of”. Unlike limit, the definition of frontier involves focusing more outwards (in front of), as a margin not so clear in terms of beginning and end, and able to expand even while the limit remains fixed (MACHADO, 1998; SANTOS, 2011). In this sense, the openness and greater indefiniteness of the frontier zone makes it a Locus of communication between different political-cultural content and thus a real field of possible conflict between the different interests crossing it:

The frontier came about as a phenomenon of spontaneous social life, indicating the margin of an inhabited world. As patterns of civilisation developed above subsistence levels, the frontiers between ecumenes became places of communication and consequently acquired political features (SANTOS, 2011, p. 3).

So when we talk here about between zones, that field of thresholds, the frontier might present itself as a concept that offers a more suitable approach. The between zones – in relation to their application to the production of urban space – can be understood as what Arroyo proposes as a “border phenomenon”:

[...] the border as transit between places [...] borders create a phenomenology registered both in the physical and symbolic order of the city [...] The orders of the city raise doubts about the actual meaning of the public space which is assumed as physically continuous, and socially and culturally universal. Borders update, convey and signify different spatial and temporal qualities of the city (ARROYO, 2007, online).

The between zone, the border, suggests more the experience of crossing: not a before or after but a during. These zones, as commonly considered by the authors assembled here, are produced neither based on the subjects interacting inside them nor by the spaces that form them, but by what lies between them: encounters, “in the proximity of what is most distant” (TEYSSOT, 2013), in the threshold moments of places, cultures and powers whose transience provides them with physical presence as space-time categories still little explored in the urban space (IRAZÁBAL, 2014).

The meanings in this field are driven by everyday practices of individuals and groups living in conditions of space-time compression, who connect references that transcend “particular” cultures and territorial specificities (AUGÉ, 2010). To be “between” is therefore to allow an ambiguous formation that establishes arrangements of times and spaces of “here(s)” and “there(s)”, accommodating – with greater or lesser ephemerality – content that is neither totally referenced according to the context from which it emerges nor totally related to (and conditioned by) the powers of an “external” reality (AUGÉ, 2010; LUZ, 2008; BRIGHENTI, 2013; NETTO, 2008; TEYSSOT, 2013; IRAZÁBAL, 2014).

The historical origin of the word shows that its use was not associated with any legal concept and neither was it a concept that was essentially political or intellectual. [...] the strongest use of the term is therefore the field in which this discussion takes a more accurate conceptual shape, be it in a legal sense or in the geographic sciences, relating to spatial categories, and more specifically, the phenomena and definitions that come into existence in the territory (SANTOS, 2011, p. 4).
“The bridge gathers as a passage that crosses” (BHABHA, 1998, p.24, original emphasis). This extract from Bhabha looks back to Simmel, who in one of his essays uses the figure of the bridge to show that isolations, closures, ruptures and splits are produced just as socially as experiences of connection, union, and encounter of that which is assumed to be distant: “we experience as connected only what we have previously isolated in some way […]. We are, at each moment, the ones who separate what is connected and connect what is separate” (SIMMEL, 1994, p. 5).

Progressing from Simmel, this moment of connection, encounter and frontier can be assumed to contain possibilities for experiences that include social interaction, establishing a key role for between zones as mediators of alternative social interactions from those of the social fragmentation of urban spaces: in the split, the between zone operates as a “bridge” that gathers.

The capacity of the “between” to assimilate, relate and produce meanings linking time and space leads to exploration of this phenomenon of the threshold as another perspective of production of the urban space. By bringing together practices and contexts, but without ignoring the spatial dimension of the city as an active field, between zones operate as interfaces of the co-creation of political-cultural content, between consensus and dissent, re-adopting fragments of the urban fabric – sometimes quite ordinary ones – as flexible, permeable performative spaces capable of transcending the geography that “contains” them:

In our correlated world, the lives and practices of many individuals and communities often transcend the boundaries of particular cultures and localities, destabilizing previous geographic and power arrangements. […] Such places are new assemblages of “heres” and “theres” spanning plurilocally, and places that have fragments of “theres” embedded in their actual “heres” (IRAZÁBAL, 2014, p.2).

Unlike analytical approaches that emphasise specific attributes of the city by giving greater weight to numbers and values than to physical quantities, land use, fluxes, density of occupation etc., the between zones appear as phenomena and instruments that work with deeper dimensions of shaping the production of the urban space, allowing recognition of the transversal and relational nature of sociocultural, political and economic processes that develop in this environment (IRAZÁBAL, 2014) – issues that broadly determine their production, shaping and configuration beyond physical relationships (ALVES, 2010).

The identities, meanings, materialities and powers in these “places” of transitions are situated at intervals: they are produced and reshaped by the integrations they can establish (both through consensus and dissent). Their forms and locations are therefore unpredictable, since they will take shape in passages, extending the edges of space and time (TEYSSOT, 2013): “‘To cross the line between’ is to give corporeality to this threshold line of transition. The location of the in-between comes into existence in the exact moment when the boundary line is crossed, overcome and experienced” (LUZ, 2008, p.144).

The interval dynamics of between zones are marked by coexistences that are not always undisturbed, since different codes overlap and sometimes introduce points of tension through the diversity of practices in contact with each other. These dynamics lead to the temporary suspension of political-cultural content associated with the identity of a particular section of space and time. So the systems in these zones find themselves “at intervals” in a dual sense: the
sociospatial and cultural conditions existing where these fields appear are left in suspension, together with the meanings seeking to be legitimised as part of identity.

The interval regimes in this field that establish “interaction of between” here(s) and there(s), self and other(s), us and them, past(s) and present(s), etc. (NETTO, 2008; IRAZÁBAL, 2014) allow for moments of negotiation that bring together different individual and group strategies to allow the admission of alterity.

Its indeterminacy prevents us from calling it a phenomenon a priori: the between zone will be constantly updated (since it is enabled through movement). It is therefore essentially eventual, that is to say it continues to occur and takes shape contingently. As it has no specific location, we might say that in spatial terms it is less a field that “is” than a field that “is being” produced, a field that becomes known in the occurrence of encounters.

Augé (2010), Deleuze (1995) and Teyssot (2013) point out that the careful reading of sociospatial processes should also include mobility, passage and routes, not just as something that “occurs on the surface” but as something that defines surfaces with content being put into contact. By seeing movement as a formative element of these threshold zones, we move from traditional maps towards recognition of forms of social interaction and force lines that reveal another topology of the city (AUGÉ, 2010).

The mobility considered here refers not to mere movement from point A to point B, but to the points of contact established between content inscribed in everyday practices that connect portions of space and time together, forming them into a broad dynamic network that reveals a breakdown of urban limits (LOW, 1996; SMITH, 2001) and questions the stability of the territory. “We know that it is no longer possible to imagine a city today that is not connected to the network of other cities” (AUGÉ, 2010, p. 87). The between zones therefore allow the experience of different “pieces” of spaces and time simultaneously.

Allowing the simultaneous entry and exit of different lines of force, the between zone becomes a parallel figure of space and time “that, by allowing entry, opens up the possibility of being in between” (TEYSSOT, 2013, p. 88). This reciprocal state of opening and closure forms interactions that, as we have discussed, are not neutral but are activated by players and processes that coexist between different positionings and intentions (TEYSSOT, 2003; LUZ, 2008; BRIGHENTI, 2013).

This suggests another view of the production of urban space in relation to its forms and their extent. The occasional, mobile and indeterminate nature of between zones adopts the statements, subjectivities and confrontations of invisible (but sensory) forces as raw material for the formation of diagrams that extend beyond the conventional representations of the city and question their order and discipline.

Their unfinished nature calls attention to moments of expansion rather than to the “constituent” centrality of their spatial conditions, emphasising strategies open to the creation of new experiences “of the public space [as] an occasional territory for episodes of territorialisation/de-territorialisation that are as disconcerting as they are intense and productive” (ARROYO, 2007, p. 5). By valuing duration, the fleeting and open, they manage to escape normative correction and instead explore the scale and autonomy of sociospatial interactions without concern for the permanence of the incursions, to the extent that the transformations caused are an implicit part of their own formation; in other words, these zones
can be both ends in themselves and also the creative devices of another reality of political possibilities and signification of the urban space.

The between zones thus appear as privileged instances of intervention in the rigid organisation and hegemonic narratives of the production systems of the urban space (BHABHA, 1998; TEYSSOT, 2013). They are suspicious of and challenging to the normative and structuring material rigidity of the urban space and instead value a symbolic, fluent narrative stemming from collective practices that allow and enliven the material and symbolic, physical and social conflicts of the contemporary city (ARROYO, 2007).

An approach to these threshold fields becomes a strategy for analysis and critical investigation of the movement of places and powers; of the need for a cartography that considers fluxes more than fixed positions and of a formation that unfolds through time and space (FILHO; TETI, 2013). This experience of the unpredictable involves considering the everyday not as routine but as a possibility for unfamiliarities and experiences that can produce an urban space founded upon multiplicity.

By connecting spaces and times contingently; bringing together different elements and gradations; establishing experiences of outcomes; being a formation that allows for multiple approaches and released from pre-established scales and boundaries, the between zones operate as rhizomic formations (in the sense used by Deleuze and Guattari:

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\text{[...]} \text{open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation. (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1995, p.22).}
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As an experience of ruptures, these zones acquire a position beyond that of a phenomenon and object of study to become a strategy flexible enough to accompany and explain the instability of the forms of the contemporary urban space (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1995; ARROYO, 2012). This methodology involves consideration of the visibilities and invisibilities, the speakable and the unspoken, the texts and subtexts involved in group practices that are constantly updating the meanings of the urban space. By addressing a rhizomic formation we need to admit the instability of the lines it follows without there being a “where to” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1995):

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\text{A rhizome has no beginning or end: it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be,” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and... and... and...” This conjunction carries enough force to shake the verb “to be.” DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 1995, introduction).}
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Using botany as a resource for developing the idea of the rhizome, the authors introduce the underground aspect of this formation as something to be considered as well; the rhizome therefore has no immediate visibility (FILHO; TETI, 2013), its form is naturally profound, complex and unavoidable.

In this sense, being “between” – once again – is not to be “in the middle” of poles or contrasting times and spaces, but instead “amidst” a multiplicity of relationships. In this
multiplicity the between zone maintains a state of co-presence of elements, in which the city is considered as a creative environment and cannot be thought of as a “reflection” of meanings determined by external rationales and formations of “cause-effect, infrastructure-superstructure, subject-object, image-world or sign-signified” (ARROYO, 2012, p. 1).

This multiplicity allows an approach to space produced by instabilities and detachment from a prescribed and regulated space, a space qualified by social life (DELEUZE, 2006), open and possible in difference, the unfamiliar and therefore more liable to be recognised as public (SENNET, 1992):

When I suggest that between places shape and qualify urban spaces as public spaces, it is precisely because they are what become places of visibility, of symbolic debate, practices and the pursuit of public recognition of difference. This type of space is the result of a kind of misunderstanding (Rancière, 1996) between the meanings constructed by places – which reflect different and unequal representations, social relations and modes of interaction (LEITE, 2010, p. 12)

Deleuze recognises that the elements or forms based on multiplicity “imply no prior identity, no positing of a something that could be called one and the same. On the contrary, their indeterminacy renders possible the manifestation of difference freed from all subordination” (DELEUZE, 2006, p. 174). By allowing juxtaposition of content in reciprocal play, this position of the between therefore values multiplicity as a fundamental factor and thus reveals the spaces of a type of social practice typical of public life (LEITE, 2010).

Exploration of the “between zones” thus becomes part of a hypothesis – still in development – of overcoming dichotomies such as public and private, seeking to recognise more current forms that produce the urban space and its corresponding content, in an attempt to avoid the politics of polarity and enter deeper into other instances of reality:

These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining society itself (BHABHA, 1998, p.20).

By challenging constantly assumed physical, social and cultural meanings, these zones qualitatively change our relationship with the urban space: “The edges update, express and signify different spatial and temporal conditions of the city” (ARROYO, 2012, p. 4).

Their appearance as an “open map” – without borders for space and time – points towards network formation, a geometry of simultaneity which through its own movement recognises lines and establishes links. Its indeterminacy requires detachment from form and attention to the connections it can establish, break and (re)shape.

Having accepted this construction so far, it is necessary to stress, however, that in terms of production of the contemporary urban space these threshold zones do not necessarily correspond to empty areas, interstices or ignored spaces, but primarily to temporal-social-space fields which are active and resist their own reproduction, manifesting different levels of contact and hybridisation of individual and collective meanings (BRIGHENTI, 2014; IRAZÁBAL, 2014) and raise doubts about the meaning of the public space (ARROYO, 2007).
Cartography as been indicated as a methodology for the reading and analysis of between zones, for possible orientation rather than adoption of a random vocabulary, because the cartographic eye is able to follow the singular lines of the production of these threshold zones; it can explore the twists and turns of space and time existing in networks and observe strategically, not in totality – which would not even be possible –, but through the individual features of these formations, which seems appropriate for discussing a phenomenon that is rhizomic.

AT A SLOW PACE: EXPERIENCES OF MOVING BETWEEN THRESHOLD ZONES

I don’t like points, dotting the ‘i’s seems stupid. It is not the line that is between two points but the point is at the intersection of several lines. Line is never regular, the point is just an inflection of the line. For it is not the beginnings or ends that count but the middle (DELEUZE, 1992, p. 200)

As we have seen so far, between zones fit not into the urban order in which they develop but instead strategically create cracks in ordinary life to open possible entries into realities that are seen as supposedly stable and regular.

These cracks provide openings for a return to urban space’s capacity for communication and exchange, forming what will here be called “creative instances” that in different ways bring about (re)combinations of physical, social and symbolic elements. Acting as lines of flight, they are able (momentarily) to release reality from segmentary relationships based on a rigid line⁴: which is not just oppressive but harder, cutting our lives into binary codes such as leisure-work, centre-periphery, and public-private. “In this sense [by following the lines of flight], we are not just fighting against the State or the authorities when we modulate the hard line that forms us, but also against ourselves” (PELBART, 2014, p. 158).

These creative instances enable between zones to stimulate adverse – and certainly contentious – functions, structures and content in relation to those previously established or favoured in a particular reality. Their creative capacity allows them to shine light on “another urban”: one that is fleeting, resistant, living and recreated in the everyday life of an urbanity that diverges from the dominating structures of the urban fabric.

These creative instances promote different modes of active participation in the city which restore hidden content, interrupt the inertia of users (as receptors, consumers and reproducers of a reality of indifference), to awaken them as subjects participating in experiences of collective exchange that is able to restore symbolic centralities. These instances include the questioning of forgotten, silenced, routine or ignored realities, restoring them in creative and

⁴ The meaning employed here follows that introduced in the dialogue between Deleuze and Parnet (1998), when they say: “Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines and these lines are very varied in nature”. The first line is segmentary, dividing us in various senses, such as family – profession, man – woman, black – white, etc. The second would be “more supple”, tracing out “little modifications, they make detours, they sketch out rises and falls”. The third, the “line of flight”, has the capacity of cutting across segments and offering us that experience of crossing threshold fields, in an unknown, unpredictable direction. Being abstract, the authors state this to be the most complex, and of the greatest gradient: “What we call by different names – schizoanalysis, micropolitics, pragmatics, diagrammatisation, rhizomatics, cartography – has no other object than the study of these lines, in groups or as individuals” (DELEUZE; PARNET, 1998, p. 101).
shapeable spaces and driving – albeit temporarily – subjects as transformative agents and part of this whole that is also in transformation.

The liminal nature of these instances of “between” attracts the possibility of experiences, memories and imagery in the face of the programmed (recalling that everything here is at an interval, in suspension). Their formation enables alternative forms of social interaction and is constantly negotiating between different practices in the space. This means that the power structures in the threshold zone are (momentarily) not fixed and therefore become flexible and disconnected from binary oppositions.

So, if we are unable to bypass these formations of the between due to its movement, an attempt at understanding the character of their creative instances, their modes of occurrence and what this means in terms of production of the city, involves a study of the phenomenon that moves beyond a cataloguing of experiences of the “between” and towards a critical reflection of reality.

The meanings that support these instances are not closed in on themselves, nor do they shut off the ways in which the between zones can be enabled. Considering instead that they sometimes overlap and exist together between different levels of manifestation; that they cannot be reduced to fixed models; and that in the light of the possibility of emergence of threshold fields there is still a need for some slow progress towards their lines of flight, to discovery of their folds, depths, extents and formats. An attempt at understanding their different lines of entry aims not at categorisation or generalisation, but instead at recognising and valuing different strategies of destabilisation of the “primary configuration” of the urban space.

I return here to instances that this study has so far been able to identify, aware that there may be others yet to be discovered:

- **SUBVERSION**: cartographies of dispute in favour of possibilities of enabling other practices and significations in the urban space. This instance does not emerge as a direct response to the particular episode or normative action of a player or agent, or develop strategies in response to a given question. It arises as a process of insistent dispute (with greater or lesser degrees of intensity) stemming from and fed by different divergences with reality (and its factors that are sometimes more local and sometimes more distant), appearing in various forms that might occur just once, in the same section of emergence (e.g. ghettos, occupations, invasions, enlistments, etc.).

- **PROPULSION**: cartographies that value the practice of sociospatial formations parallel (coexisting) to those already established and which, even when not subverting the existing reality, maintain (material, social and symbolic) resources in an attempt at operating multiple, unexpected and unprogrammed meanings that exist and are produced in this reality, negotiating with it while not fitting into its normative criteria (e.g. spontaneous appropriations that drive other significations, economic alternatives etc.).

- **COUNTER-ACTION**: cartographies that develop as a direct reaction to the particular normative action of social appropriation/production of the city. Associated with processes of (social, cultural, political) affirmation and resistance that might privilege other socio-spatial-temporal features and reaching beyond the micro-geographies driving their emergence (e.g. demonstrations and marches; networked occupations; people’s assemblies; temporary protests – with more or less episodes, etc.).

- **STIMULATION**: cartographies driven by more performative, festive, interventional or artistic manifestations aimed at momentarily occupying the space with practices that bring visibility to unusual autonomous content, which promote or encourage political thinking about the modes of interaction in/with the space. Their strategies involve (re)creation of meanings and the promotion of alternative social interactions that
awaken sensibility to other collective sensations beyond those of programmed, repetitive assimilated movement (e.g. alternative mobility such as cycling; festivals; performance as a group and/or with the body etc)

These instances notably share grey areas and do not fit into any exclusive operational logic. Although they retain differences in terms of content and strategy, they contain certain common foundations: the potential of alterity; challenge (more or less strict) to power structures and reversion to other processes of signification of reality; the admission of social exchanges of dissent, dispute and agreement that (re)call upon individuals as subjects aware of the relations they establish and processes they participate in; the introduction of cartographies that can unfold “here” and “there” simultaneously, transversally connecting the spaces, times and content of the city, questioning binary contrasts such as local and global, public and private; and finally, critically energising the city as a space of political action and interlocution.

In an attempt to clarify some practical possibilities of these instances I suggest we consider some happenings which, although now over, can be seen as representative of “between” processes that raise awareness of other modes of producing and thinking about the city, its spaces and times.

Some important points: these representative examples are not intended to encompass all possibilities of the threshold fields discussed in this study; while they are clearly not case studies, they can be seen as instances of the “between” that provide tangible and sensory routes to these experiences of crossing; and since they are not case studies they will clearly not have the depth and character of discussion corresponding to that kind of methodology.

(Urban) extracts of a subversive poetry

Subversion as an instance of the between can take on various strategies. Its key aspect of emergence is much more a questioning of existing knowledge and power rather than dependence on an isolated point of dispute.

The example considered here is located in the city of Curitiba (in southern Brazil) and is related to graffiti in the urban space. In Curitiba, the practice of tagging – graffiti markings on surfaces such as walls, streets, facades, street furniture etc. – is considered as vandalism and a criminal act if it occurs without legal authorisation, irrespective of its artistic content.

In 2014, Curitiba resident Giovanna Lima (codenamed G.L.) decided to spread poetic inscriptions throughout the city, starting with the phrase, “Vandalism is not talking about love”. Choice of the parts of the city for these texts is arbitrary: according to G.L., his work is addressed to all those passing by, sometimes in abandoned, ignored or everyday places such as a bus stop, public telephone or piece of pavement.
The artist says that the idea behind this work comes from his time in São Paulo, where he was able to see the city as a group of pictures open to various forms of expression. Curitiba, she felt, had many white spaces with no content, which led to critical thinking about our relationship with the world. The existence of a legal barrier to her practice strengthened her motivation to resist and, as she put it, only showed the power in reach of her “poetic arm”, or at least momentarily destabilising the norm, the rules or framework for our relations with the urban space.

The subject matter behind her practices ranges from poetry as a strategy for awareness to issues such as feminism, corruption, poverty and homophobia, and aims to activate the city itself as a space of struggle and visibility of voices silenced by powers that inhibit their expression. At the same time, the inscriptions do not just subvert the assimilated routine space into a space of reflection, but also encourage “slow movement” through the city to reveal the fissures, cracks and folds which offer other semantic possibilities to the spaces and times of the city: “I’m encouraged by the fact that what I do changes people’s routines, even if just a little. Although in a hurry, they stop to read, to photograph and think about what is written” (G.L., 2016).
Beginning her actions in the silence of the night, when there is less surveillance, G.L.’s phrases are now reverberating on social media and in other cities, where people have begun to spread the content and expand the subversive scope of her work, connecting spaces and times in an unpredictable, resistant cartography adaptable to different realities. Between here(s) and there(s) this subversive procedure has become collective, touching and combining practitioners and urban space alike. The inscriptions have been activated as a platform of resistance that is now spreading rootlessly and unpredictably.

*Propulsion: new experiences in the (re)cognised city*

In 2014 the Praça da Liberdade in Belo Horizonte – the third-largest city in Brazil – was transformed by an alternative form of public presence. A temporary collective intervention called “Instant house” activated the plaza as an experimental structure free of hierarchical organisations and aimed at encouraging thinking about the public space of inter-action on another critical level.

Destabilising the operation and use of the plaza, the Instant house” introduced vertical panels as unusual surfaces into an easy-to-understand open space of great visual permeability, unfolding the “internal” edges of the square to create spaces that were surprising and provocative. Restoration of proximity between strangers occurred as a constitutive factor from the outset: the intervention required the spontaneous and active participation of the general public bringing a wide range of objects from their homes to “inhabit” this temporary home. This act of “constructing” with the other was also an exercise of releasing oneself: once the objects had been put in place they were available to be taken away to inhabit another home.

More than just a form of exchange, this act reduces distances between participants and space, reduces their different trajectories and histories, and connects and extends their places into an everyday space. Instances of ordinariness that usually pass unnoticed acquire another
value as passers by cease being spectators and contribute towards the collective construction of a meaningful moment, involving reflection about how instantaneous events can develop cartographies and produce content that typically remains hidden.

In addition to these interchanges creating a new space of exchange, this event led to several other spontaneous interventions. The sensibility of this intervention was expanded by participants being invited to produce phrases and photographs suggested by the theme of “the culture of the streets and squares of Belo Horizonte” to be projected in different city contexts.

Activities such as games, circus performances, street theatre etc. also took place as a way of enabling new possibilities for a pre-existing, assimilated and predictable space. This collective imaginative transformation became the motivation for other forms in which the people of Belo Horizonte began to occupy the public space.

The city today demonstrates a wide range of platforms for activities fostering creative practices and processes of signification, incorporating deeper narratives of political awareness into the urban space and the need for public transformations beyond materiality.

“Praia da Estação” offers another example of how people have occupied one of the squares of Belo Horizonte. This event occurs on Saturdays, creating a meeting point for constant open discussion about dissatisfaction with political processes that have not been working in favour of the public space.
Although participants have tried to formalise these (usually temporary) events as more permanent structures, it seems that the action in itself – albeit not “objectified” – is already leading to a return of political awareness of the urban space, able to attract collective attention in favour of a critical view of the city, and whose key factor includes active participation between strangers and their spaces of inter-action.

**A space of counter-action**

The Viaduto Santa Tereza, also in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), has established itself as a living territory of counter-action movements. Although the nature of the cartographies discussed here (including cartographies of counter-action) need no specific address or fixed material conditions to occur, the key strategy of this particular example involves collective struggle for the right to a specific public space, attempting to resist State regulations forbidding certain forms of appropriation and use.

Since 2007 collective activities have begun to bring greater visibility and meaning to a long-abandoned neglected space under the viaduct, selecting it as territory for collective protests questioning the representative actions of the State in relation to issues of public interest. In addition to its material aspect, this space had established itself as a political and cultural arena, hosting a wide range of activities bringing together groups from many different backgrounds, such as MCs (Hip Hop masters of ceremony), street dwellers, traders, students, different associations, artists etc.
According to those frequenting the space, works began without being widely publicised in the city and many groups using the area were surprised to see the huge hoardings surrounding the whole open space, preventing view and access to the works.

The regeneration proposals argued for retaining the space for the people already using the area beneath the viaduct, while the users alleged that their voices had not been heard in the design of a project that they claimed was contrary to the usage and content that had been developing and which sought to delegitimise it as a public space of spontaneous and horizontal use and signification, free from any homogenising standards.

In a counter-action to the aims of the project drawn up by the authorities, the area is important to the population as a space for open meetings, discussion, shows and free exchange of materials, Hip-Hop encounters, spontaneous events such as Samba Night: a cultural event that has been celebrating *candomblé* and *umbanda* since 2012, bringing together various urban tribes for street samba and extending the culture of the “ritual centres” to the urban space.

Image 08: collective use of the space (left), Samba Night (right)

The multiregional and oral nature of the fortnightly event in the space and streets of Belo Horizonte expresses the heritage, memories and ancestral experiences of a particular culture originating from Bahia.

Between the institutional authorities and collective struggles to retain its meanings, the Santa Tereza viaduct space is much more than an address for demonstrations: it has become the territory of the unpredictable, inseparable from the practices and players involved in creating meanings, distant from centralised organisation and constantly updated as a strategic field of resistance related to content extending beyond its own geography.

*Lines of stimulation in motion*

Cartographies unfolding out of stimulation involve no incisive procedures of infiltrating the urban fabric. They occur subtly, but powerfully enough to question a city constructed according to a functionalist logic that mechanises life and leaves no room for the creative construction of an open imagination.
Stimulation leads to the most ordinary moments becoming exciting and provocative, the release of spaces and times apparently devoid of possibilities for experiences that lead to new meanings – even if temporarily. Lines of stimulation will infiltrate the city by questioning ideas of reality and accessing possibilities of reconnecting people and spaces more deeply, sensitively and creatively.

One example of this way of unfolding new cartographies in the city can be seen in the “Picnic in transit”, which in 2010 used a public bus line in Rio de Janeiro and occurred again in 2013 on the public transport system in São Paulo. The experience of public transport as a space of passage is, with rare exceptions, an experience of mere coexistence rather than co-presence or a time of individuals coming together in transit in a space connected with the haste of arrival (each at their final destination), in a space in which the idea of speed and swift arrival undermines the possibility of “thinking slow”.

In this context the Picnic in transit offers a way of overcoming the barrier of superficial perception of the other (as another body occupying a space) to stimulate effective interaction, exchange and group participation that questions the idea that public transport is just a representation of non-place.

The participants in this action took food and drink onto public transport and shared it with other passengers, shifting their position as users of the public transport system to that of participants in an event constructed and shared collectively.

More than an intervention event in the ordinary practice of movement, the Picnic in Transit destabilises the transport system’s characteristic as a place of passage and expands its interactive and imaginative possibilities among individuals who, despite sharing the same space, do not often relate to each other. Instead of simply questioning, the act is an attempt at showing that even in a society immersed in the value of the individual, it is still possible to encourage interpersonal relationships (MICROPOLIS, online).

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5 As suggested by the participants in Picnic in transit themselves: “The experience of public transport can be directly related to the idea of non-place developed by the French anthropologist Marc Augé” (MICROPOLIS, online). According to Augé, non-places are spaces of passage occupied by individuals in transit, and which therefore do not form identities. Unlike place as an anthropological space, non-places have no identity and therefore hinder the development of relationships.
By enabling an inventive approach and unlikely context for social interaction, this action allowed experience of other (slower) times even in the speed of movement; it turned a critical eye towards other meanings for a space whose main purpose seems to be speed; and questioned the idea of a need to move rapidly through the city.

THE NEED FOR NON CLOSURE: THE MAP STAYS OPEN

The indeterminacy of the “between” allows ordinary moments and spaces of the city to become resources for other forms of production. The open and unpredictable arrangement of these zones calls for a different way of seeing the city: a way of seeing that takes no fixed positions but instead moves with the flow of the phenomenon, acquiring movable positions and speed, which with the between zones also assume an interval status as an attempt at seeing from a distance and close up, from inside and outside, from one side and another – if we can still use such terms.

An approach to these threshold fields emphasises the everyday; the urban fabric needs to be reconsidered as a design that is still not fully representative and which has white areas of untraversed spaces (and times!). The webs that form it need to be visited in depth and not just on the surface of maps already known.

Rather than opening out the conceptual approach to the urban space, I believe that this strategy allows us to reclaim elements of our (individual and collective) urban experience through practice, as the productive raw material of a reality beyond that accepted as hegemonic.

Everyday life not as an assimilated routine, then – as we might exemplify and question according to creative instances –, but instead as an arena of the unpredictability of certain practices, encounters and fluxes that do not always fit into accepted practices and can develop through diversions, inversions and contest leading to moments of the “between”. This return to
a “1:1” observation allows sensitive reconsideration of specific elements, leading to restoration of the porosities of sociospatial dynamics that hegemonic action seeks to hide.

This other look at the city allows unconventional productions, which do not always occur through visible routes. So while on the one hand we cannot predict where to start or stop – since we have no boundaries of time and space –, on the other hand this allows us to readdress elements of our (individual and collective) urban experience as raw material and possible routes of the emergence of between zones.

Henri Lefevre (1974) emphasised that the city is much more than what we can see: it is revealed in states of “spirit” and also formed in the atmosphere produced by various orders of interaction. Resumption of the urban fabric should therefore allow other forms of experience of space and time and awareness of the rhythms that interact and produce unexplored spatial conditions (LEFEBVRE, 1974).

Lefebvre’s discussion of urban rhythms encouraged an approach to the different emphases – of meanings – that certain parts of the city can acquire. While rhythms can be considered as a composition of pulsations between “highs” and “lows”, sound and silence in alternating patterns conveying different sensations, our attention needs to turn much more to the dynamics involved in their formation than to the material conditions involved.

To return to the examples mentioned here, although the material conditions of the city are part of the actual way in which its rhythms will reverberate, we need to understand that they are not determined by the city: different rhythms can coexist in the same spatial configuration (even in its asynchronies), just as similar rhythms can be separated from each other and occur in different urban forms at the same time.

The suggestion here is that these “rhythms” can be interpreted as intensities that we notice at certain moments and spaces in the city, discovering and participating in them as moments of creation, which this study has so far identified as being of subversion, propulsion, counter-action and stimulation. The intensity offered by particular moments can be understood as a strategic operator-concept in the perception of occurrences of between zones whose contingency is driven by fluxes, coalitions, entries and exits, fractures etc., which clearly acquire some recognition through the emphasis, vibration and vigour of the experiences they provide.

As considered in an earlier study⁶, intensity will concern the emphasis of meanings, the reinforcement and/or aggregation of means that give intense urban moments some sensibility. Intense spatial conditions – through their own contrast – therefore feed political-cultural content that is clearly not established neutrally:

This contrast left by intensity explains its potential for being perceived, sensed by someone who is “outside” and “inside”. It also explains how some intense processes can – through mobilised and connected content – drive the reproduction of other intensities which, even in specific realities, can bring together symbols of these other experiences and communicate them, reproduce them and subvert them in other forms of intensity (CRESTANI; ALVES, 2016, p. 6).

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Authors such as Massey (2005), Mumford (1937) and Certeau (1984) agree that intensity – in the newness, (re)creation and vibration it can create – is also where one of the most distinctive aspects of the life of different urban spaces lies. The point of view formulated here relates intensity to creations that suspend significations, spaces and times to introduce other political possibilities for these pieces, these between zones, which for a moment it makes autonomous (CRESTANI; ALVES, 2016).

By breaking or at least interrupting dynamics whose reality has (until then) been assimilated, intensity seems to be the element that can guide our eyes towards the quality of exchanges, shifting us from commonplace significations and their syntheses and allowing other types of interaction to expand the horizons of our experience of space and time: a channel for elucidation of between zones.

While these moments of peak – of intensity – are not completely free from the contextual relationships from which they emerge, they are expressive enough to challenge them and escape their defining conditions aimed at creating repeating ruptures.

By challenging the pure physicality of the city, intensity allows an impressive interface of symbolic contrasts that occur between the different rhythms of everyday encounters. This means that the between zones cannot be perceived or conditioned from without: the “heres” and “nows” are also inside, formed in the collective experiences of the city between the breaks and continuities in their semantic layers. The interactions that take place can, through the intensity produced, endow the most ordinary spaces of the urban fabric with a sense of monumentality (MASSEY, 2005).

These findings explain the initial argument that the study of between zones needs to question and be detached from scales. Sizes, formats and boundary lines no longer make sense in this approach. We are considering here the quality of networks of interaction between places, powers and intentions that shift together with people and escape fixed coordinates.

The reading of these movements in pursuit of traces of between zones leads to altercations – quiet and noisy; visible and invisible – affected by perception through the representations of the content they cause. These representations can take different forms depending on coalitions of strategies and power plays, which are not self-explanatory and whose generative content, which in this study we are calling creative instances, needs firstly to be decoded.

This content will be difficult to recognise, since it is formulated at the limits of identities that cross, interact and are updated in the threshold fields, questioning also the limits of their representation. Which is why intensity has been indicated as a line of exploration: for besides being sensed by someone from “outside”, it can be “spoken” according to (individual or collective) experience, allowing the interpretation of very specific aspects sensed by their participants. Content will thus be revealed and meanings will be expressive enough to bring depth and sensibility to the between zones.

The “threshold state” of reality offers an opening to the creation of new identities and transformative forces, converting the usual into unusual and the known into unknown. While this occurs, the social order is temporarily reversed and its normative bases challenged, revealed as expressions of new possible geographies and the project is released from a specific function to become a vehicle for new investigations and problematics.
This involves thinking slowly, through the practice of diversion (in Benjamin’s terms), exploring other possible political forms for the public space beyond its accepted classification, which no longer covers the conjunction of a reality of new conditions of social interaction, display and visibility that give preference to private realms and technological mediations; to an excess of information that disconnects the individual from space as a real experience; to an increase in physical, economic and informational mobility that places more value on flux than permanence, in anticipation of a virtual world of false, distracted experimentation disconnected from the space of experience.

This (contemporary) city needs new directions, and we are here attempting to restore consideration of territories of the indeterminate, of suspension and doubt as an alternative to hasty classifications or obsolete dualities (CRESTANI; ALVES, 2016). It seems pertinent in exploration of the between as a research project to retain investigations into the operational strategies of the aspects that enable their understanding: how can these zones be observed, in the light of their contingent character? How can their empirical explanation in the urban space be addressed? What types of social interaction can be observed in these zones? Is it possible to talk of sociospatial form(s) that are established in these threshold zones?

This study will be unable to come to an assertive conclusion, however: the phenomenon and hypothesis in question make it preferable to risk taking a position amidst its lines of diversion and question the need to define an end point.

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