Heterotopic Urban [A]Destinations

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Abstract. Different from the Utopias, normally treated as a unique projection of an ideal future, despite their multivalent potentiality of refusal, the heterotopies are always plural, multiple unique places in their existences; places at the margin of universal and universalizing logics. The term is connected to one of the discussions held by Foucault [1] on the existence of unique spaces, which dispositions in the society transform them in deviant or diachronic spaces in relation to the cultures, in which they are inserted. They are spaces administrated and managed according to quite specific laws, on the one hand, inverted images of the logic to which they belong or which they reflect; spatial differentiations resulting from the social realities and logics of which they are repressed and begin to illustrate in an inverted manner and, on the other hand, they take on the role and the chance to be spaces with a onto-teleologic dimension (existence and purpose) that may be disturbed by temporary situations capable of introducing other impermanent operating logics (events of heterochrony). Which were the logics that came as social and spatial becoming “with” the heterotopics places: The Viaduc des Arts in Paris, the Spitellau Viaduct in Wien, the High Line Park in New York and the still “hesitant” transformation of Elevado João Goulart, in São Paulo, into a park? Which infrastructural spectra are those which, when they return as antagonists of what they were or what they insist on being, deflagrate other sociabilities? What was expropriated from these infrastructures at the moment they returned and return, and are socially re-appropriated, according to another city-planning logic? What is in front of us and what is still to be seen as an urban and social phenomenon? This entity that returns is edited by visible and spectral forces, invisible, or by what is apparently beyond and beneath the thing, surrounding it, underlaying it but, even so and despite of it, already is or still is the thing itself.

1. Introduction

According to Foucault, the heterochronic heterotopia (temporal, provisory spaces) would be a place fed by events that are not controlled or determined by pre-existences that induce the use; it would be a place without a prior place in its existence; only a place to become; the place of the party is, perhaps, the best example to illustrate such other place.

The heterotopies relate to the discussion on the platonic concept of Khôra (de)constructed by Jacques Derrida [2], which was based on Plato’s Timaeus. In both concepts, it is possible to observe a possibility of counterpoint to the need of the “postal address”, an alleged identity or destination defined as a priori. In opposition, the heterotopies and Khôra may be places (without
a place) that can enhance destinerrances (concept created by Derrida to discuss the transitory and
instable positions of the entity), receptacles of unpredictable, circumstantial, accidental events
capable of printing out and leaving other trails, traces of traces, an ontology in permanent
mutation.

If in Plato’s Khôra, the Western thought is the history of the thought of the truth, the presence
as eidos, ideal idea, substance, essence, meaning and purpose allegedly “original” of the
conditioned nature of things, the limits that convey how things must be, Khôra is the concept by
means of which Derrida deconstructs said metaphysical value of the limit in its many layouts.

Khôra is the trail of the trail, permanent deferral, temporalization and spacing of the space; it
is no longer essence, foundation, but a becoming, trail of itself when it becomes other. Khôra
would be the place without place, unnamed, which confirms and subverts the destination that
comprises it, at the same time it becomes another place, established based on a destination that
subverts it without erasing it, only changing its “addressing”. The element that was a postal
address (place) “legible” only by some “addressees” would become “legible” also by others with
the interventions (in time and space).

But in order to become available to other legible and illegible readings, maybe the thing must
become at least legible in its “addressing”. To what extent could the functional addressing of the
thing that is considered to be “dysfunctional”, and the aesthetic “improvement” of the thing that
is considered to be ugly/ degraded, initiate a movement of reification of the thing by means of its
“recovery”, causing a social mutilation [selective place] based on the state that is deemed as its
primordial existence, as spatial designation and purpose? To establish the destination of
something, on its precise purpose means to establish the “gift” (donation/offer) as its natural
principle, naturalized in its own purpose. However, the “gift” may be also understood as the
capacity to simply give itself, donate itself or be given, donated to something. The gift may say
nothing about its destination and the gift may wish to say something about its destination. Which
gifts can we assume when we think about the destinations of the four infrastructures?

Considering the heterotopic places created through the infrastructures, Elevado João Goulart
and Spittelau Viaduct distance themselves from their destinations when they fail and/or abandon
the presuppositions according to which they were adjusted. On the contrary, Viaduc des Arts and
High Line receive a gift that make their urban destinations addressed to the point of adjusting
them to new ontic requests, multi-environment linear urban parks. By the way, the High Line,
with a sophisticated design, becomes a vector not only of urban “revitalization”, but also of the
“Manhattization” of a distant area, which was up to that moment marginal in its existence, in
relation to what the “Manhattan machine” (Figure 1) of production of real estate and marketing
value should be. Heterotopia that executes and consolidates the thing that was insufficient or
“misadjusted” as the Manhattan territory, the High Line allowed for the injection of “Manhattan”
where Manhattan was insufficient in its presuppositions and urban addressing.
In relation to Elevado João Goulart and Spittelau Viaduct, there is a deviation of “conduct” in relation to their old and renewed destinations, respectively, which allows their destinations and urban donations to be quite different and distant from their urban addressing initially imagined and planned. High Line and Viaduc des Arts, on the contrary, despite being “renewed”, maintain their social addressing clearly connected to the respective gifts attributed to them by the new design.

The four infrastructures present themselves as the urban heterotopies, but Elevado João Goulart and Viaduc des Arts become heteroclite structures when they distance themselves from the rules and precepts imagined as their destinations, their respective gifts. In relation to Elevado João Goulart, it is not a simple detachment from the established rules when it ceases to be what it should have always been (a viaduct for vehicles), but the apparent continuous expansion of said rules rarefied as the use destination rules.

Involuntarily - in case of Elevado João Goulart, with a certain level of willfulness, a desire to become something else – Elevado and Spittelau become supports for transversal social and urban agencies, which are insufficient in relation to their presuppositions. They are not a simple passage (whether temporary or permanent) from one pre-conceived form to another, such as High Line and Viaduc des Arts, but urban efficient machines of mobility, which architectonic and urbanistic codes - that should give them in their urban destinations - find a way that offers them supplementary variables, responsible for the de-codification of their imagined forms and formats. The margin of de-codification, hasty and unexpected, respectively, of the “incomplete” machines Elevado and Spittelau is quite larger, considering the incompleteness, insufficiency and “distortion” of their “gifts” – onto-teleologic silence - when compared to the “vibrant” High Line and the “bucolic” Viaduc des Arts, different from each other, but, both full of suggested situations of use.

2. The onto-teleologic silence

Derrida states in his work Parages [3]: “Le présent y est aussi disjoint du proche, mais le mode de disjonction s’écarte de la simple opposition, aussi bien que de la hiérarchie, la valeur de valeur s’en trouvant aussi éloignée: les deux “seulement” – “seulement présent”, “seulement proche” – font osciller le trop et le pas assez sans promettre aucun arrêt :”je ne renierai pas ce seulement. Le disjoint du proche et du présent produit, engendre et décèle à la fois une fissure sans limits : dans
le savoir ou dans le discours philosophique. Mais une fissure que tient encore ensense, proches
et présents l’un à l’autre, les deux qu’elle sépare. Qu’elle sépare sans séparer, maintient sans
maintenir ensemble. La syntaxe tout à fait singulièr du sans dans l’écriture de son récit, voilà ce
qui, avec celle du pas, nous tiendra désormais sous la puissance fascinante de son attrait” (p.31-
32). (The present is also disarticulated from the thing that is near, but the form of disjunction
deviates itself from the simple opposition, and the hierarchy, the value of value is distant: the two
“only” – “only present”, “only near” – make the insufficient oscillate without stop:”I will not
deny this only”. The disjoint of the near and the present produces, generates and detects at the
same time a breach without limits: in the knowledge or in the philosophic discourse. However, it
is a crack that still keeps itself united, near and present between them both, the two that are
separated by it. The thing that separates without separating, maintains without maintaining
together. The syntax quite unique of the “without” in the text of its history, the one that, with the
“pas” (“not” and “step” at the same time), will maintain us hereinafter under the same fascinating
power of its attractivity).

If Derrida makes here an endless conceptual digression in relation to the ambivalences of the
term pas in French, evoking the work of Blanchot for such a purpose, we borrow its reflection to
think about the pas (“not” and “step” at the same time) and the sans (without) based on and with
Derrida. Without their original predestinations – mobility infrastructures – the four infrastructures
became something else when they ceased or cease – in case of Elevado – to be the thing they
carried as a gift or a meaning and an essence as the essential entity.

When they become another thing because they ceased to be something else, in some of these
cases there was the need to interrupt the ontic silence produced by the “no longer, already
another”, by the actual construction of a new entity. Interesting disjunctions between what is left
from the old entity, and its becomings were produced by project-related actions variable in their
intensities of definition of the new urban entity that appeared or appear (Elevado) routinely.

However, the silence seems to be disrupted by a vehement action of transformation of the
entity’s meaning, particularly in case of the High Line – which ended up echoing as its contrary.
As an example, the High Line, an infrastructural green line with an efficiently enough design
(reification and fetishization of the former ruin), becomes a vector of concretization of the
Manhattan logic in a territory where said logic had not yet became concrete. Mega-towers, eye-
catching and sumptuous as an aesthetical and formal exercise of some architectonic designer
labels populate its edges, disrupting its silence (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. High Line. Project Zaha Hadid [4]](image-url)
The High Line becomes the central corridor of some architectonic “stars” and its own architecture, which define it as a walkway of the skillful exercise of the design, through which iconic object couples and bucolic atmospheres are engendered. The corridor becomes the walkway through which anonymous passers-by go, oftentimes astonished with the stars that surround them and dispute looks.

The absence and the loss of the fundamental and foundational meaning of the High Line, as well as its consolidation as an infrastructural green line conducts said infrastructure to a place beyond the absence, which becomes a constructive presence that reproduces an urban logic, from which it seems to distance itself. The “High Line” becomes a direct connection with the remaining portion of the island, of junction and completeness, no longer disjunctive. Manhattan, as an ideal territory of production of autonomous buildings castrated of urban mundanity, finds the possibility to fully realize itself in the High Line, but as Manhattan, where its logic was reluctant to emerge.

With an equally regenerating logic of a decadent region, Viaduc des Arts, a line that was also transformed into a green park, similar to the principle [bucolic place], predecessor of its New Yorker relative, maybe because it does not have the exuberant design of the High Line “park” (Figures 3 and 4) and the marketing permissibility of Manhattan, falls short of the ontic vibration of its American correspondent, but it is something beyond the urban “silence” of the similar constructions – all of them are infrastructural elevated lines of mobility – Spittelau and Elevado João Goulart.

Figure 3. Images Project High Line [5]
The new ontic and teleologic presences (existence and purpose) of Spittelau and Elevado João Goulart take place by means of what they cease to be, and at the same time, what they do not fully become. The housing complex, projected by Zaha Hadid [4], does not consolidate itself as an engine of urban regeneration. Probably because it was poorly conceived in light of the real estate marketing standards of Vienna (place and design of the units were the major elements responsible for that), the marketing failure contributes to Viaduc des Arts to become an unpredicted center of urban graffiti and spray painting, an environment diametrically opposed to the exuberant, ascetic and monumental Vienna, as previously mentioned.

Quite different, but equally precarious in their evident differences, the lower structures of Spittelau Viaduct and Elevado João Goulart also became places, because they have never been places, they were never conceived as a place. They are not places, because they are not places intended for something. A residual place, that gradually became a place for homeless people, cart drivers, bike lanes, graffiti; less attractive than their higher structure, also residual, which does not cease to be an improbable palimpsest of situations that accumulate themselves, without a project that would ensure its full operation.

The presence of said two urban structures in their respective contexts does not ensure the ontic proximity of what they should or could be, unless in a precarious, residual, fragile and uncertain way (Figures 5, 6 and 7). The lower and higher structures of both – particularly the higher structure of Elevado João Goulart and the lower structures of Spittelau dilacerate themselves in their fragile and almost silent, minimum onto-teleologic existences [6], but maybe because of that, they become supports that generate improvised, improbable, spontaneous and adherent micro-urbanities.
On the contrary, the clear onto-teleologic presence of the High Line and Viaduc des Arts brings them close to an urban logic that ends up surpassing themselves in relation to what they could be as an “almost nothing”, in which almost everything is allowed, that means silent structures close to Khôra, an almost unconditional receptacle. In different levels, they become places of the consumption of situations made available and actions regulated and guided by a design of designations, which promotes limited uses and occupations.

With the High Line and Viaduc des Arts, new sources of urbanity and micro-sociabilities are established (Figures 8 and 9), but the chances of complementary, creative, inventive and unpredicted actions and appropriations are reduced insofar as the movement of deferral and differentiations in relation to the designated space and uses are discouraged by the clarity and “inductions” of use by the design of the spaces proposed.

Little “space” is left for the onto-teleologic logic of signification and purpose of the spaces, whether deleted and displaced by movements of incontrollable differentiations in relation to the project defined. Already quite sown by the design, the dissonant, aberrant, “incongruent” disseminating meanings (the desirable imperfect and disjunctive machine of Deleuze [7]) found and mapped at Elevado João Goulart and Spittelau (in a lower level), multiplied by the absence of designatory designs, are weakened by sowing actions of the spaces that bear many attributes, which always return or seem to be bound to the source of dissemination, that is to say, to the “solid” architectonic design and intention proposed.

3. [In]sufficient Places
Since Aristotle, the place is related to a precise situation, a recognition of something; therefore, it implies precision. A topos, locus, situs, is a place recognizable, defined, habitable (Figure 10), a space oriented and a space of orientations that allows us to guide and locate ourselves because it bears references and orientations. The role of the architecture is to create and manage places in the world. Would it be possible to think about insufficient places as incomplete places, which would become places only when they are qualified by a wish of dwelling that surpasses the inaptitude or the gift of that place for dwelling?
As all major infrastructure of highway and railway mass mobility, we know how Elevado João Goulart historically created a territory against the dwelling place in the city, the permanence, whether under and over it or even in its edges. It was inserted in the City as an aberrant structure of concrete, imposing a well-known highway logic at the same time it ruined the space that it would inhabit, making it inhabitable, in the sense of Aristotle.

However, on the contrary to the other three infrastructures examined, which ceased to be what they were when they remained deactivated and abandoned for a certain period, a process of urban “lobotomy” gradually distanced Elevado João Goulart from its own memory, launching it in a process of insufficient becoming in relation to its presuppositions. Instead of effectively becoming another thing, during decades, it increasingly ceased to be, and it never ceased to preserve, at the same time, traces of what it was or continues to be. Incomplete processes, Elevado becomes an insufficient structure in its onto-teleologic dimension, neither one nor the other, neither a highway artery, nor an urban park, launched to a limbo, its undefinition becomes its virtue.

On the contrary, when the High Line and Viaduc des Arts are settled and redesigned to become linear parks, they become sufficient places for said new existence, to the point they induce forms of occupation, forms of action and appropriation when they induce forms of existence. They become structures that represent a new logic that displays their own virtues – other forms of existence – and limits – limitations of said forms of existence. Spittelau (Figure 11) and, particularly Elevado João Goulart (Figure 12 and 13) display their own limits when they fail in their becomings as urban places, but maybe precisely because of that, they bear the virtue of being spaces of almost nothing, dispersive, unpredictable, apparently misadjusted events.
As Khôra, the insufficiencies of Elevado and Spittelau as autocratic places, as places to be seen or that hold a social art of construction of a society, are precisely the possibility of said almost places to give place to places, other places. Places that are formed based on the desirous tactile action of the bodies that inhabit and enable them with unpredictable inscriptions and not based on the empire of the optic (High Line), they are only territories of reception of the thing that was not invited by a previous design.

Giving place to the endless and unpredictable inscriptions that comprise it as another place, always in process, Elevado is a spectral return of itself, day by day, an insufficient return as an entity that is not consolidated or crystalized in its [other] being, whether previous or subsequent. On the contrary to the High Line and Viaduc des Arts, Elevado João Goulart (Figure 14) is an entity in permanent process of updating, without continuing to be the same, a daily ghost
(insufficient entity) of its own urban ignominy and infancy which, as we are able to observe, according to the posthumous and testament-like traces it still bears, it transforms itself in a paradoxical source of virtue.

Figure 14. Elevado João Goulart, a park not parked, 2017

4. Conclusion
The High Line is born based on a slogan, “Keep it”. Before the works of reactivation of the metallic fossil, the spectral presence of a modernity depleted in its success, its surroundings changed into a vertiginous rhythm, maybe an answer for another modernity, transfigured in its presuppositions. Mega-buildings, urban soliloquies, fragments of a display of the “expertise” and formal skills took the place from a build stock, but inappropriate for a new “modernization” of Manhattan. The structure of the old elevated line was preserved, in addition to the stretches of existing vegetation, fetishized in its own naturality.

On the one hand, it is possible to realize that the relative onto-teleologic neutralization of an urban place – made into a support of becomings – such as Elevado João Goulart, becomes the chance for the construction of another place – a counter-place, perhaps – based on the uncontrollable and unpredictable appearance of “immaterial” occupations and events that populate its almost nothing. On the other hand, the onto-teleologic redefinition of similar infrastructural supports may serve as a source for the manufacture of advertisement events, both material and immaterial, which will feed the expansion of a new “style” of urban place; in the contemporaneous logic of places, hyper-places, counter-places, and finally, other places.
References

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