The Interval

Examining the interval spaces basing
on a case study in the city of Marseille

Research Plan

Zofia Sosnierz
5352436

General Introduction

This research aims to define and look into the notion of a type of a side-effect space, which I will refer to as an *Interval*. In short, it is a left-over or side- effect space that is programmed, but does not have a program. Due to this, various spontaneous activities evoke in it.

Secondly, my research will try to examine the role of the *Interval* in the urban context; the elements it consists of; activities that arouse in it and the inner relations between those elements and activities. I will locate my study in the city of Marseille.

Lastly and most importantly, it will aim to understand the influence those spaces have on the context and examine the extent to which they define the city.

While working on the group project which aimed to create a Territory and Border map of Marseille in P1 I had to ask myself many times what defines Marseille? What defines a city in general? What elements is it made of? Which are important and which are less? It made me understand that the answers to those questions really depend on One's perspective and they are very subjective. Further excursion to Marseille deepened this feeling and made me ask myself: what defines a city for me?

After deep analysis and research, but also while discovering Marseille I understood that for me the city is defined through secondary spaces, where spontaneous and unplanned activities happen. I believe that those spaces show the real "face" and reality of the city. They uncover various dynamics happening between the users/ inhabitants and the spaces.

In my research I will try to answer what can we learn about the city of Marseille through those spaces? How is their use different to the use of other parts of the city? Of what elements, patterns, characteristics do they consist of? And lastly, what role do they play in the urban scape?

Definitions and Research Framework

"The music is not in the notes, but in the silence between."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

With this short statement the famous composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart aptly captures the essence of the *Interval* space I am defining. Those are left-over or side-effect spaces, which are programmed, but do not have a program. They emerged over time as a consequence of placing other primal and secondary objects and began to be used by different agents in unprogrammed or instinctive ways. Due to their undefined nature they become places of possibilities, change, freedom, availability.

The notion of a side-effect space or residual spaces were already talked about by various authors. Sola Morales in his text "Terrain Vague" describes a similar notion of spaces as the *Interval Spaces,* but calling them Terrain Vagues. He states: "The relationship between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding the evocative potential of the city's terrains vagues. Void, absence, yet also promise, the space of the possible, of expectation. (…) this absence of limit precisely contains the expectations of mobility, vagrant roving, free time, liberty".[1] The nature of *Interval Spaces* is very relatable to the one mentioned in Terrain Vague in the sense of freedom and liberty. However, an indelible element of an *Interval Space* is the use of it by various agents in many different ways which differs it to the Terrain Vague.

The *Interval's* notion of emptiness and freedom can be also visible in architecture. Jeffrey Kipnis in his text "Towards a New Architecture" writes: "The entire issue of spatial heterogeneity rests in (…) opposition between unprogrammed event and function. In passing, it is worth noting that the risk of proposing that the dominant (and most expensive) space of a building be nothing other than residual space should not be underestimated." [2]This quote rightly points out the importance and opportunity in residual and free spaces. The *Interval Spaces* can become the most important places for interaction in the neighbourhood or spaces where people feel free to express themselves. Jeffrey Kipnis calls to rethink whether residual spaces shouldn't be the dominant spaces in the building. Which leads me to ask: shouldn't we rethink if the residual, *Interval Spaces* shouldn't be seen as the most important in the city?

As mentioned before, the notion of side- effect, secondary, liminal spaces, voids, residual spaces, terrains vagues has been talked about before and described in the architectural research. However, I believe that none of those descriptions define the notion of the *Interval.* This is why in my research and work I would like to define this kind of space and highlight its importance in the cities. I believe that my research can change the angle from which the cities are defined and direct the base understanding of the nature of the cities to *Interval Spaces* where human interactions happen free from constraints and imposed rules and programmes.

1   Ignasi Sola-Morales Rubio, "Terrain Vague". *Anyplace*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, (1995): 120.
2   Jeffrey Kipnis, "Towards A New Architecture." *AD Folding in Architecture*, profile No. 102, John Wiley & Sons Ltd (1993): 105.

The research into the concept of the *Interval* will be carried out parallelly through the top down and bottom up approaches. Both of these methods are crucial in defining the *Interval*, learning about its nature and understanding its correlations in and with the city.

The top down approach consists of the theoretical research, theory paper and mapping of the potential *Interval Spaces* from the Aerial View on the map of the city of Marseille. The theoretical research will involve reading and analysing texts that define or explore the notion of voids, thresholds, secondary, side-effect, left-over or residual, interstitial, liminal spaces etc. This will help me to define in a more accurate way what an *Interval Space* is and how it is different to the ones already defined.

Simultaneously, I will be writing a theory paper based on the notion of the *Interval Space* in architecture and the city. It will be supported and developed based on theoretical research. The paper will first clarify and explain the terms and notions of similar kinds of spaces present in the existing literature. Afterwards, I will compare them with the *Interval Space* and explain the differences. The paper will clarify the nature of the *Interval* and understand its relation to time and space.

Furthermore, the top down research is also present in the initial method of defining the *Interval* through finding examples of it on the Google Map of the city of Marseille. The initial search for the case studies of an *Interval* began with looking at the city from above and trying to understand where the *Interval Spaces* could be present. This action helped a lot in the process of defining the topic and also in understanding the relation and patterns between the city and the *Interval Spaces*.

On top of this, all throughout the research the method of problematisation by Henri Bergson will be incorporated. It will help me answer and ask questions of how the interval develops through time, how it differs from itself. Also, a sense of intuition will be a part of looking for the answers on how the *Interval Spaces* influence the city. [1]

Methods:

- Research Methods:
- Typological Research
- Comparative Analysis
- Interpretive research
- Problematisation Method
- Theory paper
- Top down mapping of the intervals and the context

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1   Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Methaphysics*,(Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998), 7, 19-20.

Figrure 2. Aerial View of a part of the city center of Marseille, where the case study is located. Shot taken from Google Earth Pro.

Google Earth

Figrure 3. Photography of the case study of the Interval Space in Marseille. Author own photography.

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Methodology
Bottom Up

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Even though the Top Down approach will give me a great theoretical foundation for defining the *Interval Space*, I believe that the Bottom Up approach carried out parallelly is necessary to fulfill the research and fully understand the topic. The latter approach consists of spending time in the city of Marseille, observing it, observing patterns, looking for a case study that best defines an *Interval* in the city of Marseille. Once the latter is done, at the site the research methods will be: observing, tracing patterns and situations, documentation of the site through photography and drawings, talking to people present at the site.

Finally, the site will be drawn to understand the elements and relations that the *Interval Space* consists of. This will start the process of deconstructing and unfolding the *Interval Space* which will lead to full understanding of these kinds of spaces and recognition of the elements it consists of. Also, what kind of activities emerge there and its relation with the city.

Methods:

- Observing
- Walking
- Interviewing

- Photographing
- Drawing
- Sketching

- Mapping
- Tracing
- Documenting

Research Question:
What the *Interval Spaces* tell us about the cities?

Mapping

Google Earth
Intuition
Analysis of the patterns
in the city through the
search of the notion of
the Interval.

THEORY

Academic Literature
Bibliography
Drawing Inventory
Theoretical background
used at every step of the
process.

THEORY PAPER

Looking into the notions,
definitions and use in
architectural design of:
notions of voids, thresholds,
secondary, side-effect, left-over
or residual, interstitial, liminal
spaces, terrain Vague etc.
After compared with Interval.

PRACTICE

Site
Walking
Interviewing
Photography
Documenting
Observation
Sketching

Deconstructing the Site

Drawing
Mapping
Creating collages
Tracing
Sketching

Reflection

Constant revaluation of
the notion and
definition of Interval.

Catalogue of the Interval

A set of drawings of the elements of the
Interval, relations, dynamics, characteristics.
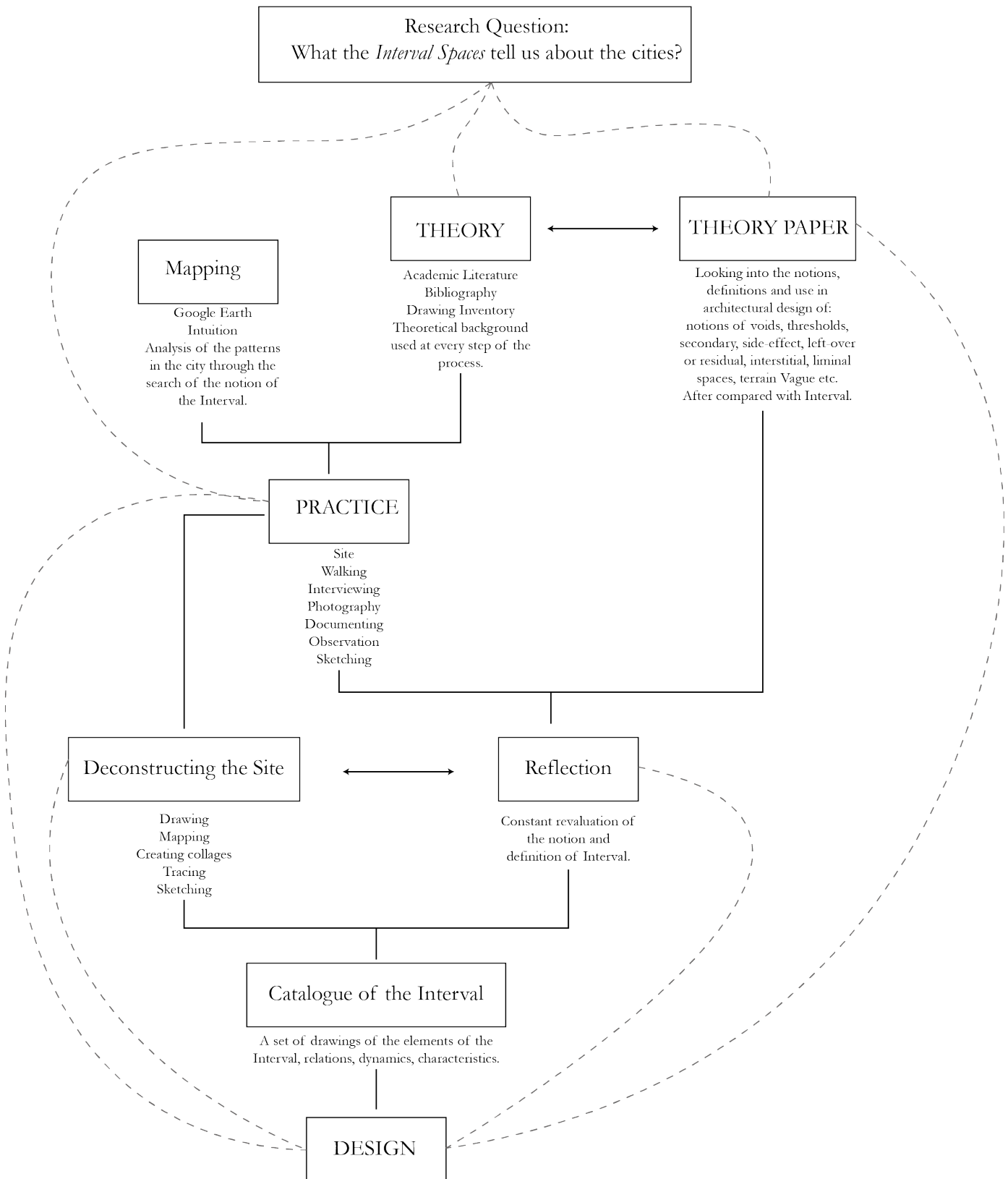
DESIGN

Figrure 4. Diagram showing Research Plan Process.
Created by Author.

Preliminary Conclusions and Relevance

Context Relevance

Marseille is the second biggest city in France and at the same time a city with a history of big immigration and multiculturality. The streets and public spaces of the city show a constant battlefield between representing the city as "French" and showing its multicultural nature. Due to this character the city has many "faces" and is hard to grasp. Moving around the city, the urban scape, people and the dynamics between the two are constantly changing.

This is why I found Marseille an ideal location for a case study of the topic of the Interval. When a city is as diverse as Marseille, I found out that the Interval spaces uncover many hidden dynamics of the city that wouldn't be easily visible. I discovered a very interesting site for my case study and while observing and documenting it I could see the interactions of people that were different from the ones on the streets. I could see that people were feeling a sense of freedom there and identifying with the space, some through hanging out there, some camping there and others using it as a hidden pathway. Through spending time in the Interval space, not only it helped me to understand and define the notion of the Interval, but also the city dynamics.

Preliminary conclusions

In conclusion, the approach I have chosen is helping me in uncovering the notion of the Interval and its relations to the context. So far, the theoretical background combined with research of the aerial map of Marseille has led me to finding a site that suits perfectly the notion of the Interval. It has already taught me of the variety of elements the Interval consists of and that time is an inherent element of these kinds of spaces.

Further work on the theory paper together with mapping and deconstructing the case study site of the Interval space will help me in finding new layers to this space. By always reevaluating my work and looking back and forward to the notions already existing in Academic literature I will be able to form a strong position that will later lead me to the design.

Figures

Figrure 1. Collage made out of strips different photos of the case study in Marseill. Created by Author.

Figrure 2. Aerial View of a part of the city center of Marseille, where the case study is located. Shot taken from Google Earth Pro.

Figrure 3. Photography of the case study of the Interval Space in Marseille. Author own photography.

Figrure 4. Diagram showing Research Plan Process. Created by Author.

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