

INTERVAL
IN-BETWEEN SPACE THAT CUTS
THROUGH THE CITY

ZOFIA SOSNIERZ

INTRODUCTION

"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 have many programs but are not programmed. They emerged over time as a consequence of placing other primal and secondary objects. They become used by different agents in unprogrammed or instinctive ways. Due to their undefined nature, they become places of possibilities, change, freedom, and availability.

The aspect of time plays an important role both in creating them, and in their constant development. Firstly, they are created as a consequence of many layers of elements assembled at different time periods. They form a three-dimensional patchwork of layers of history, human actions, nature's impact, and urban and architectural decisions. All the different layers leave traces on the site, which have an impact on one another.

Their constant transformation never ends. Those spaces always evolve. Even if the primal elements do not change for a period- new human activities are always emerging there. This is a fundamental aspect of the intervals- they give a sense of freedom and possibility. The agents feel liberated to express themselves and use the space in an undesigned way and sometimes even random.

This dynamism of the Interval spaces creates many inner tensions and relations between the elements, traces, and activities. The feeling of a memory attracts users to those spaces and stimulates them to add their own impact on the place.

In this paper, I would like to investigate the patterns, nature, elements of the Interval spaces, and their influence on the city. Firstly, by capturing their essence by referring to the philosophical discourse. Secondly, through analysis of existing architectural literature on the topic of empty, residual spaces, which will help to deepen the understanding of what the Interval is and what role it plays in the city.



Figure 1. Example of an Interval Space in the city of Marseille. In-between space, with traces of previous structures is used by agents in an unprogrammed way. Photography made by author.

CHAPTER I TRACES AND MEMORY

Wandering through a city or looking at its plans One can easily distinguish patterns made out of buildings, streets, and squares. They form different types of continuities in the urbanscape. However, from time to time one can distinguish a disturbance in this constancy. It might be an empty plot or an oddly looking square, a space in-between blocks of buildings. Nevertheless, the emptiness is not the main reason that makes One stop and discover that site. It is a feeling of possibility, opportunity, and freedom that accompanies the place. It almost feels as the place has a "soul", a notion that is often used when a materialistic being almost seems to interact with the user. Those spaces of possibility and freedom I will be calling Intervals. They are a gaps in the continuity of a city. Interruptions, that are different from what is in the surrounding, but at the same time function almost like cuts that display hidden layers of the city.

The history of the formation of Interval spaces is crucial to their understanding. Usually at their foundation lies an erection of a significant building or form. Its location is usually connected to its importance. It might be a higher point or a crucial space in the city. The city starts growing around it. However, with time the original form disappears fully or partially and is replaced with new layers of forms, activities, functions. This layering throughout history is a very important part of those spaces. Some of the elements of the layers physically stay at the site and some of them are only in its memory.



Figure 2. Establishment of archaeological excavations and surveys reported on the current cadastre. © SRA, DRAC PACA. Taken from <https://multimedia.inrap.fr/atlas/Marseille/sites/2865/Butte-des-Carmes#.YdyPWwJMJPY>

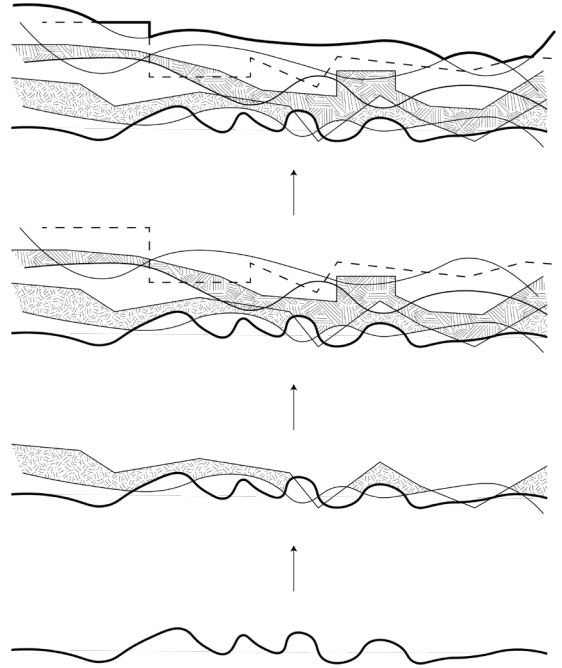


Figure 3. Diagram of the process of creting and superimposition of layers in Interval space through time. Diagram illustrates the tensions between the layers and their interpenetration. Diagram made by author.

The site of the Interval not only consists of archaeological and materialistic layers. Looking at the Interval according to Derridean philosophy of absence and presence the absolute absence or presence does not exist, nevertheless, there is a 'trace'. "Every so-called 'present', or 'now' point, is always already compromised by a trace, or a residue of a previous experience, that precludes us ever being".¹ Therefore the Interval is not only the actual physical site but a collection of traces. Those traces are layers of history. According to Derrida, "Each element (...) is constituted of the trace within it or the other elements of the chain or system."² Therefore, the trace creates the structure of what stands as a possibility of existence. It does so through its many possibilities and fore-shadows that existence. Derrida argues: "we must think of the trace before the existence"³. Following this thinking, it is important to think about those spaces not only through what is physically visible but also through what there was or what could have been. All those layers leave traces and those all go in interactions with one another forming that space.

The notion of memory is an obvious result of the traces. While exploring the Interval space One is more connected to the memory of the city. The city and the man are always connected to the memory of the past. It is a part of our lives and the future of the cities. It is the source and the driving force for the continuation and development of our civilization. The Interval space lets us see this continuation, lets us explore it, lets us mingle with the different traces and memories, which had and have an impact on the city and on us.

Freud compared the human mind to the city of Rome, where the new city's developments are built on its old phases. A city in which there is a superimposition of traces from different periods. "Where the Coliseum now stands we could at the same time admire Nero's vanished Golden House"⁴. He explains how just like in a human mind nothing disappears and has an impact on the new layers created. Freud uses the image of the city of Rome to argue "that in mental life nothing that has once been formed can perish, that everything is somehow preserved and that in suitable circumstances (when, for instance, regression goes back far enough) it can once more be brought to light"⁵. Just like in the Interval, the deeper and older layers affect the emerging layers. The past always has an impact on the present. It shapes the new. The cities are formed through the superimposition of traces. The Interval space is where it is revealed. It shows what the city was really built on.

Another interesting aspect of the superimposition of the layers is the complexity of the ground of the Interval space. Just like in Rome we can imagine that while digging into the ground we would always come across some layer of history. The same is with the Interval space, the traces form a complexity of the ground. The in-between space has many subdivisions, voids, and even smaller intervals. Due to this, it is a highly heterogeneous space, where the user has different experiences depending on what trajectory he chooses to take through the space. The cities need spaces like this, as they are the source of experience and the awakening of the imagination.



Figure 4. La calle mayor de Roma- The main street of Rome. Photo illustrating the ruins from different time periods in Forum Romanum, Rome. The main street of Rome The Via Sacra ran through the center of Rome, between the Capitol, the Forum and the Colosseum. In this image you can see the section that crosses the Forum, with the Arch of Titus in the background. Photography edited by author and taken from <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/14496030034294363/>

CHAPTER II GROUND-GROUND RELATION

To fully introduce the concept of the Interval Space it is important to compare it to existing contemporary architectural discourse. When one looks into voids and figures it is hard not to think through the figure-ground diagram introduced by Colin Rowe in his book.⁶ Interval in fact could be seen as a kind of a void between the figures, however, it would miss its essence. The nature of the interval does not lay in its emptiness, it lays in its fullness. The interval space is in fact a space in-between, but it is full of different elements and layers. When looking at it just through figure-ground relation the most important aspect of the interval is missed- the ground. Rowe's approach misses the relation that ground has with the space and the relations that are able to emerge from it. A very complex ground has a big impact on the surrounding.

Another interesting perspective on the figure- ground dialogue gives Campo Marzio by Giovanni Battista Piranesi from 1762. It is a folio of etchings that are reconfigured and recombined forming a new 'plan' of Rome⁷. It contains detailed drawings of the buildings with empty spaces around them. It is a great example of a figure-figure relation, in which the objects relate to one another. The complexity of the drawings creates tensions between the figures, but also interactions between elements in their interiors. The Interval Space if shown as a diagram could be represented as a negative of Piranesi's work. This experiment would make the Interval space stand out and bring focus to its complexity It would form a ground-ground relation.

However, what differs the Interval the most from Campo Marzio is its three-dimensionality. The complexity of the interval lies in its layers. Those are on different levels and are superimposed over one another in different ways. Those interactions form the ground-ground relation. In Campo Marzio it all happens on one plane and does not have depth. Furthermore, this is a very interesting aspect of the Interval space- when the levels and heights can change the tensions that the elements have between one another. Peter Eisenman in 2012 created the three-dimensional version of Campo Marzio, when participating

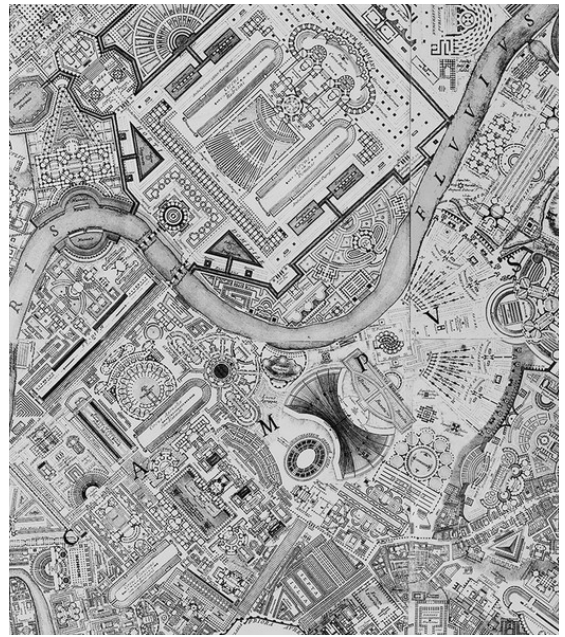


Figure 5. Part of Campo Marzio by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1762). Taken from <https://www.archisearch.gr/wp-content/uploads/piranesi-campo-marzio-%CE%91%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%AE.jpg>

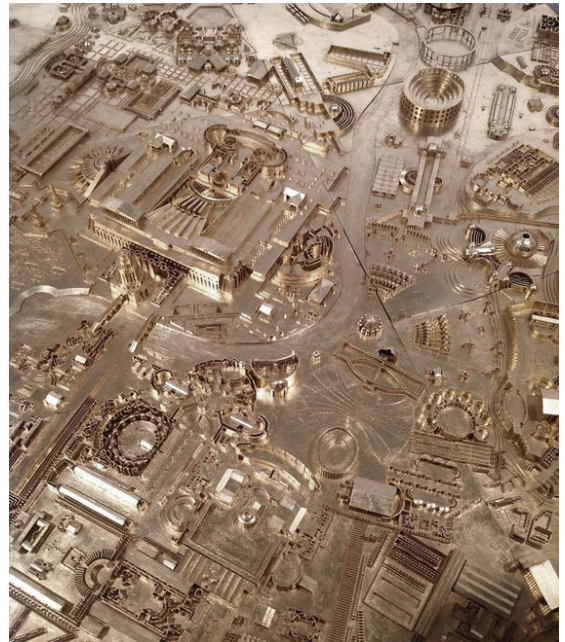


Figure 6. A 3D-printed gold model of Piranesi's Campo Marzio in an exhibit continuing Peter Eisenman and Jeffrey Kipnis's research on the subject. Edited by author taken from <https://www.pinterest.de/pin/637751997212725130/>

in the Biennale exhibition "Common Ground,"⁸ There he created the 3d model version of Piranesi's etchings. This resembles the Interval Space more, however for it to be more complete, it would need to dig into the ground and uncover new layers underneath which would become a part of those interactions.

Next, I would like to look into the notion of residual spaces already existing in the architectural discourse and compare it to the Interval Space. Spanish Architect Ignasi de Sola-Morales in his text "Terrain Vague" talks about "Empty, abandoned space in which a series of occurrences have taken place"⁹. He sees them as places of possibility and freedom. At first, it almost correlates with the Interval spaces, however the essence of Terrain Vagues is their strangeness in the city. Alike Intervals they are in a way "outside to the city's effective circuits and productive structures"¹⁰. Nevertheless, a very important aspect of the Interval space that differs it from Terrain Vagues is how they attract people, new activities and programmes. Due to the notion of the "soul" in those places, people are always drawn to them. They might not be useful to the city from the effective point of view, but they become centers of undesigned interactions and activities evoked by inhabitants of the city. Users do not feel oddity with themselves or towards the city like Morales suggests, instead they feel an even bigger connection. The interval contains traces that make them closer to the past of the city and makes them part of it. The users become authors of new layers in that space.

The notion of a "soul" as one of the main reasons for the user's attraction to residual spaces, might have been overlooked by Jeffrey Kipnis. While in his text he was examining the direction the New Architecture was developing, he talked about the importance of residual spaces in the buildings. He mentions "the entire issue of heterogeneity rests in the aesthetics of the form and in the 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"¹¹. We can compare the operating of the building to the functioning of a city, finding correlance in scrupulously designed rooms with certain functions- theatres lobbies, etc.-, to parts of a city that also have very fixed roles-streets, squares, etc. And then there are the empty residual spaces that Kipnis talks about, which can be compared to the Interval Spaces. However, the aspect that he does not mention is that for the residual space to actually work well and have an important role in a building or in a city, it has to have some-



Figure 7. Site of Gestapo Headquarters, Niederkirchnerstrasse, Berlin 1984 and Topographie des Terrors Museum, Niederkirchnerstrasse, Berlin 2019, © John Davies. Taken from <https://www.michaelhoppengallery.com/artists/123-john-davies/overview/#/artworks/11711>

thing more- the soul. Only emptiness does not stimulate activity. It is important for the space to hold traces of past and present and at the same time to keep the continuity of time. That is what will attract users and create conditions for new activities to emerge.

Finally, I would like to talk about the essence of the Interval Space in combination with the work of Matta Clark. His exceptional work is based on cutting through buildings, uncovering and exposing their anatomies. These incisions offer new angles of perceptions of the building, but also of the relation of the surrounding with the building. The Interval is like a cut into the city. It chops through the layers of past and present. It becomes the place of understanding the city from its core but also understanding One's position in it. Just like in Clark's work, the cuts oscillate between interior and exterior, between visible and invisible, private and public, between past and present. The Interval unveils the anatomy of the city.



Figure 8. a deeper cut: art & architecture, Gordon Matta-Clark: MACBA: Barcelona. Taken from <https://openhousebcn.wordpress.com/2012/06/19/openhouse-barcelona-macba-shop-gallery-installations-deeper-cut-art-architecture-gordon-matta-clark/>

CONCLUSION

When it comes to making city plans the efficiency and functionality of spaces play a big role. For the designers, it almost seems as if vague, interstitial, undesigned spaces have no reason to exist. Almost as if they were adding nothing new to the city. However, I argue that beauty, human creativity, and interaction come from that kind of places- the Interval spaces.

As discussed in the previous chapters the trace plays a big role in the existence and development of the cities. Interval spaces are places of accumulation of those. Throughout time its various layers formed traces that embody what used to be there, what is and what could have been but maybe never got erected. That is how the continuity and relation between past and present are kept. Its undesigned nature lets the different traces mingle with one another creating interesting tensions and relations.

Also, the layers and elements gathered through time give the site a notion of a “soul” which is the main driver for people to want to explore the space and have an input in it. The emptiness of the residual spaces does in fact give certain freedom for people to use it, however, it is the character of the place and the notion that things already happened there before, which are what attracts people. The feeling of past human activities in a place stimulates new users to want to explore the space.

The superimposition of different layers makes the Interval spaces intriguing. Those places are full of subdivisions, voids, unusual structures, which juxtaposed together make visitors explore the space always in a new way. The Interval spaces are very heterogeneous. Cities need places like this, as they are the source of change and inspiration.

Finally, the Interval spaces are like cuts in the city. They uncover the layers and make One discover their own city.



Figure 9. Spontaneous and unplanned camping in an Interval Space in the city of Marseille. Photography by author.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 68.
- 2 Jacques Derrida, trans. Alan Bass, *Positions* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 387-88.
- 3 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
- 4 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Penguin, 2002) 70.
- 5 Ibid., 69
- 6 Colin Rowe, Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (London: The MIT press, 1983), 62, 78.
- 7 "Giovanni Battista Piranesi | Campo Marzio \\ Peter Eisenman | The Piranesi Variations", accessed November 20, 2021, <https://constructionofa2dcity.wordpress.com/2012/10/31/0019/>
- 8 "Piranesi Variations", accessed December 20, 2021, <https://eisenmanarchitects.com/Piranesi-Variations-2012>
- 9 Ignasi Sola-Morales Rubio, "Terrain Vague". Anyplace, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, (1995): 119.
- 10 Ibid., 120.
- 11 Jeffrey Kipnis, "Towards A New Architecture." AD Folding in Architecture, profile No. 102, John Wiley & Sons Ltd (1993): 105.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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