

REVIEW ARTICLE

The future of heterotopic city

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Abstract

The concept of heterotopia has been introduced to the architectural world in the late sixties, but to only a small circle of individuals who have been present at Foucault's lecture at the *Cercle d'études architecturales*, only to be revived twenty years later in a journal called *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*. Ever since, there have been studies in fields of geography, urban theories and sociology on that subject, but it was never fully understood or interpreted. As contemporary urban (as well as political, sociological, geographical, philosophical) space has more similarities with heterotopias than any other spatial phenomena, it is important to draw the line between what heterotopias are and aren't. Now, more than ever in our history, we are closer to the understanding of the concept itself. The aim of this paper is to try to clarify in what form or shape the urban heterotopias (especially cities) of the future will be and if there is a future for heterotopia (smart city, Junkspace, non-place)? More importantly: are future heterotopias *political* or *virtual* spaces (or both?) and will they have the power (if they already don't) of changing the models of our social behaviour? If the concept of identity is the initial point in understanding heterotopia, will it and how change in future?

1. Introduction

“In our contemporary world heterotopia is everywhere. Museums, theme parks, malls, holiday resorts, wellness hotels, festival markets – the entire city is becoming ‘heterotopian’. Heterotopia has, indeed, become very obvious and central to our society. This central position of heterotopian space is not new. Most of Foucault’s examples are important institutions of the city: the graveyard, the museum, the library, the theatre, the fair“ (Dehaene & De Caeter, 2008, p. 5).

The importance of Lefebvre’s and Foucault’s ideas of “*representational*”, “*other*” and more recently Soja’s “*third*” space is crucial in new ways of perceiving space in contemporary spatial theories. The “spatial turn” in social studies of the twentieth century, according to Soja, derived from Lefebvre’s and Foucault’s ideas of “*thirthing*” (Soja, 1996). Space was, according to Foucault (loosely based on Hegel’s ideas of idealistic philosophy) (Stanić & Pandžić, 2012) “treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile”. Time, on the contrary, was “richness, fecundity, life, dialectic“ (Gordon, 1980, p. 70). Foucault explains that the new discoveries in science made space their preoccupation, leading to it being forgotten in social studies for almost two centuries. Related to Foucault’s heterotopia, there are many recent studies on the matter of urban, sociological, philosophical and architectural space, among which are notable works of Bhabha, Spivak, Johnson, Hall and the theories of cultural hybridity. Edward Soja is responsible for introducing the concept of herotopias to cultural studies, geography and urban theories (Saldanha, 2018). Also, cultural hybridity has an important role in creating new identities from its multiple cultural origins (Davis, 2010), but furthermore in changing “power flows” in a way that they create a certain visibility to new social, cultural, racial and economic groups of people, marginalized before. As Cenzatti states, “power flows in all directions” and changes can go both ways, so that “regulatory

controls are not just produced by top-down interest... They also respond to movements from below” (Cenzatti, 2008, p.4).

“The city is a space that can still encompass internal conflicts and diversity. But if the city is to survive as a space of great complexity and diversity – and not become merely a built-up terrain or cement jungle – it will have to find a way to go beyond the fact of conflicts – conflicts that result from racisms, from governmental wars on terror, from the future crisis of climate change.” (Sassen, 2013, p.2)

Michael Dear and Steven Flusty ask the following question: “Have we arrived at a radical break in the way cities are developing” (Dear & Flusty, 1998, p. 1)? It is rather obvious that we have, given the year of their research, but the question is have we fully understood this break, and acted on it accordingly, or are we still in process of understanding and overcoming it?

Cities of today are a mixture of highly contrasted urban spaces, immigrant camps, favelas, work camps, slums, where demonstrations and strikes take place, filled with asylum seekers, refugees, dissatisfied residents and an overall disintegration and pollution. Capitalist space is characterized by fragmentation (segregation, division, separation) and homogenization (coherence, conformity, uniformity). But, in contemporary urban spaces, heterotopias have the power of “juxtaposing many sites in one space”, so that they “reveal the extent to which knowledge relies on spatiality” (Topinka, 2010, p. 67).

2. Identity and threshold – creating and entering heterotopia

“Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (Foucault, 1984, p. 7).

In the process of understanding heterotopia and “otherness“, it is important to mention the Self and the Other and the relation between them, known as Lacanian “field of non - meaning “ – a threshold or a gap characterized by “a lack and a void“ (Boano & Muzzonigro, 2013, p. 10). In this gap, where the subject (*being*) and the Other (*meaning*) join, a new entity is born, that is “*neither one, nor the other*” (Lacan, cited in Boano & Muzzonigro, 2013, p. 10). Relation between the Self and the Other is presented in the domain of liminality, where the “attributes of liminality or liminal personae are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (Turner, cited in Boano & Muzzonigro, 2013). Turner also believes that social life is a “dialectical process”, and in those liminal zones, as Bhabha states, elements of different identities come together, overlap, and produce a new level of identity, or so called cultural hybrid (Bhabha, 1994). This is the exact point where third space, heterotopias, cultural hybridity and liminality connect and intersect, and it is at this point that we are able to encounter Otherness. In this “third zone” where cultural hybridity is born, political change is also happening. Since heterotopias are extremely associative spaces, they tend to create different spatial identities for different consumers of such spaces. Spatial identity is connected to social identity. Heterotopias are a crucial point in understanding spatiality between Self and Other, but, heterotopias “can describe a collective experience of otherness”, as well (Stavrvides, 2007, p. 1).

For an identity to be formed, it is necessary to go through different processes and zones, and those processes are actually happening in heterotopias, in the in – between zones. Threshold is both mental and physical, it presents acts of “connecting while separating and separating while connecting”. It is a social act as well as a spatial one, and has an ability to regulate the passage from a familiar to “other” place (Stavrvides, 2007, p. 2). As Stavrvides states, “otherness is a process, not a state” (Stavrvides, cited in Boano & Muzzonigro,

2013, p. 12). Though otherness is not necessarily a bad thing, just because it is unknown, it could provide a possibility for a different (better) future.

From an urban standpoint, thresholds have dual meaning too: they are borders between two different entities (enclaves) and social groups with different identities. This is found in residential areas such as favelas and ghettos on one side, and suburban areas and gated neighborhoods on the other, where a person enters such area through a system of imaginative or actual borders (Stavrides, 2007). Heterotopias are their spatial actualizations. All residential areas mentioned above have their distinctive identities, so to be able to enter one, a person has to leave their present (familiar) state and, through urban thresholds, get into the (different) zone of *otherness*. In contemporary urban places, instead of discriminating, urban thresholds are rather inviting, by creating certain opportunities for change, in a city of today that is marked by discontinuity and heterogeneity (Stavrides, 2007).

2.1. Not such a bright future

Many interpretations of third space, non - place and heterotopia itself are made in the last two decades, and some of them are crucial at this point of unraveling heterotopias of the future – for example Koolhaas’s *junkspace*, or Auge’s non – places such as: metros, supermarkets, airports – places making our world a place of “transit and leisure“ (León, 2017). Just like heterotopia, “non – place is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society” (Auge, 1995, p. 111).

Junkspace is, as Koolhaas describes, “what remains after modernization has run its course“, or “the sum total of our current achievement“ (Koolhaas, 2002, p. 175). What is interesting about Junkspace – and also reflecting heterotopia – is that it has the ability to “decentralize power“ and produce a space in which architecture is not responsible for creating a certain identity, atmosphere, purpose – it is formless and “utterly unpredictable, yet intensely familiar“ (Koolhaas, 2002, p. 177). Junkspace is composed of

different spaces, it is a “Bermuda Triangle of concepts“, and a place that “cannot be remembered“. For Koolhaas, it is partly architect’s fault, since they have always had troubles explaining space, whereas Junkspace is a ”punishment for their mystification” (Koolhaas, 2002, p. 176). While being a death bed of design (it will apparently “be our tomb“), it is only consisted of calculation and instant gratification. What also resembles heterotopia is the idea that Junkspace “represents a reverse typology or cumulative, approximate identity“. And finally, just like heterotopia, Junkspace is fluid. What ship is to Foucault, for Koolhaas it is airport (Li, 2016). It is a locatable space, but also a non-place in terms of being able to “create relationships between spaces while simultaneously subverting them“ (Li, 2016, p. 6).

An interesting example of Junkspace is the office, according to Koolhaas. Since our working hours are alarmingly higher in comparison to non-working ones, our offices become our “urban homes“. The possibility of work-from-home has made offices more domestic, with all the commodities of pseudo idleness, and opposed to this, the possibility of a “portable“ job (lap-tops on vacation) made our vacations – leisure offices. Just like heterotopias, Junkspace provided an identity change in relation to work/home/vacation space. In the era of technological progress, “*espace* becomes E-space“, and “time becomes *real time*” (Koolhaas, 2002, p. 186). Language is turned into Junkspace too, landscape is turned into Junkspace, ecology is turned into Junkspace (actually a hybrid “*ecolomy*” – ecology + economy). This is very similar to the notion that gradually more and more spaces could be considered heterotopias, but not *everything* is heterotopia. Finally, Junkspace “engulfed a whole city“, making World a public space (Koolhaas, 2002, p. 186).

“Instead of cities of light soaring towards heaven, much of the twenty-first-century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay” (Davis , 2006, p. 19).

This is an introduction to the book “Planet of slums” by Marc Davis, who is stating that hyper-urbanization and megacities as much as neo-liberal

economy made our planet „a planet of slums“ (Davis , 2006). In his not-so-bright visions for the future cities, he argues that accelerated urban growth, city mega structures and (especially) Third World urbanizations produce more than 332 million slum-dwellers, “a number that will continue to double every fifteen years“, in Black Africa for example. He also envisioned New Delhi to have more than “10 million slum population“ by the year of 2015, and Brazil to have “urbanization and favelization made synonymous“ (Browder and Godfrey, cited in Davis, 2006, p. 17). At the other end of the world, Beijing is predicted to have approximately 200 000 immigrants per year where the vast majority of them is located in the illegal slums (Davis, 2006). “Residents of slums, while only 6% of the city population of the developing countries, constitute a staggering 78.2 % of urbanities in the least – developed countries, that equals a third of the global population.” (Davis, 2006, p. 23). Countries with the highest number of slums are Ethiopia, Chad and Afghanistan. Nepal, Bombay, Mexico City and Dhaka are cities with the highest number of slum squatters.

But there are different types of slums. Not all of them have the same social status, living and residential conditions and resources. “Megaslums” can be found in South America (such as *barriadas* in Peru, and popular *favelas* in Brazil) and South Asia (*thika bustees* in Kolkata). Dhaka is challenged with extreme poverty in almost every part of the city, and Cairo has an infamous camp for construction workers. Third World countries struggle with different kinds of slum related problems than First World countries, naturally. Majority of the poor in American metropolises live nearer the city center (example: New York’s “mole people” that live in the tunnels of subways) or inner suburbs, while majority of the poor in Europe live on the periphery or in the outskirts of cities (mostly immigrants).

There are also different types of housing, such as “hand-me-down” properties like brownstones in Harlem, USA, or built-for-the-poor tenements in Europe, but the most unusual type of “inherited housing” is the one that can be found in Cairo’s City of the Dead, where nearly one million people live in the tombs, on the graveyard that once belonged to sultans and emirs. There are different kinds of shanty towns all over the globe; some people live on

the roofs, while others live in the deserts, or float on rivers. And finally, there are the streets, where in some parts of the world living isn't free at all, since there are certain fees for police or syndicates (Davis, 2006) .

However, some profits on the poor have been made in recent history. Despite the NGO's, friends of the poor, architects that build for the poor, philanthropists, and other good-doers, slumlordism has taken its toll. Paradoxically, there have been very high profits in renting in the slums (Davis, 2006). Following the poor conditions, crime and politics come along. What also follows are segregations and borders between the rich and the poor, symbolically and physically.

According to the UN, 68% of the world population will live in cities by 2050 (United Nations, 2018). Our cities are evolving, but does this process happen at the right speed? Changes are happening in social, political, economic and touristic spheres as much as in infrastructure, climate, and geography, but cities lack management, architecture, and governance to keep up with these changes. Another (better) solution is to create changes that will eventually lead to better socio-economic structures and life conditions.

Crisis heterotopias (Pugliese, 2009) such as islands of Lampedusa (Italy) and Christmas Island (Australia) serve as both leisure islands (getaway) for the rich tourists and immigration prisons or "identification and deportation center" for asylum seekers and refugees (Totaro, cited in Pugliese, 2009, p. 667). This is another example of extreme heterotopias, where two opposite worlds coexist in one place. In Foucault's words, "we live in the epoch of simultaneity and juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (Foucault, 1984, p.1). The two "absolutely dichotomous figures – the wealthy tourist from the Global North, and the utterly disenfranchised refugee from the Global South" are found within "the same geographical space (Lampedusa)" (Pugliese, 2009, p. 671).

As it is expected, Lampedusa is not the only case where this type of heterotopia exists. Another example would be the "offshore paradise island" Dubai, where in one place, the world's most luxurious hotel, a gated community for

the rich, and labor camps, are to be found (Petti, 2008). Gated communities, such as archipelagos of Palm Jumeirah, The Palm Jebel Ali and The Palm Deira, provide the elite in enclosed and homogenous community with all the luxury lifestyle necessities, but also design, free time planning, events planning, etc... or with "a way of life in opposition to the normal life in the city" (Petti, 2008, p. 289). But, on the other side, there is a labor camp, made up of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indians – the people who made Dubai, who live an excluded life, on a territory that is not even shown on the maps of Dubai. They are "neither the inside nor the outside of the city", they "form a third space excluded from the political space" and are only allowed to enter archipelagos in the process of making them (Petti, 2008, p. 292). The only visibility they have is when they are in yellow buses, in transport from the camp to the construction site (Petti, 2008). Dubai provides a luxurious lifestyle to one social group, and a hard-working, on-a-rub-of-existence lifestyle to another, in the same place, but what Dubai also provides are discrimination, exclusivity, segregation and inequality.

The political space is controlled by surveillance and biopolitics (DNA checks, fingerprints). Airports, stations, houses, offices, sports centers... are "subjected to meticulous and widespread control, making as such the passage from specific to generalized surveillance" (Petti, 2008, p. 294). More and more examples of those hybrid types of heterotopias are being created in the world, but to what ends? Are the spaces discussed above also the future of heterotopia, or its very critical present?

3. City center as a non - place – a thematic park for tourists / City as a shopping mall

Modern city is a "city of interventions" where buildings have their own character, identity and history that are "contradicting but also mutually enriching" with respect to their surroundings (Armstrong, 1996, p.

524). Dislocated city is a XX century term used for explaining such cities. Buildings in dislocated cities exist “nowhere, they are not related to a landscape and not to a coherent, urban whole, but live their abstract life in a kind of mathematical – technological space. “ (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p. 190). In a consumer oriented society, what is left of the city center is its ability to attract tourists and provide a museum – like feel to it. Accumulated time with “untouched” architectural and historical heritage makes the basic layers of the heterotopic city center. Postmodern contemporary city center acts as a heterotopia in ways that it is almost a counter-site (it represents everything that a certain city used to be, but not what it is), it is its own “alternate reality”, its purpose is inverted (acts as a theme park for tourists) in most consumerist way (by selling everything: from souvenirs, art and history, to the certain idea built in the core of the city itself), it is “outside of all places” (since the special treatment, a slice of history and an architectural heritage are nowhere to be found in other parts of the city) (León, 2017). This leads to inhabitants now being located in the outskirts of the city - family life moved to suburbia. Museums, libraries, shops, boutiques, prominent buildings, famous squares; they all contribute to creating an illusory world with an illusory identity where an individual experiences the same feeling as others and has no real relationship with space or time, making it a non – place, “other” place – heterotopia. “The city is now understood as a shopping center, in which every symbol refers to consumption and leisure as a theme park.” (León, 2017, p. 62)

4. City edges – crisis neighborhoods versus gated communities

With structural changes in city centers, changes in city’s surroundings are happening as well. City edges and suburbia have different clusters of neighborhoods made of different social groups, with increased inequality and segregation. Particularly, the demographics in such places are shaping the spatial experience.

Here, two extreme residential cases are presented: gated communities and crisis neighborhoods, with one extra case of a shopping gated community.

Gated community is a residential structure that provides a safe, homogenous community, secured with walls, shrubs, fences...with gates that are operated by a card, guard or a key, whose residents share similar socio-economic status, education, interests, etc. (Low, 2008). The number of gated communities is rising mostly out of fear of crime and violence, but there are also many other reasons to contribute to this, such as globalization, increasing heterogeneity and the growing differences between rich and poor. Hence, the gated community is “the preferred form of dwelling in the postcivil society” (Low, 2008, p. 155). It is a modern day heterotopia, with its systems of openings and closings, inclusivity and distinct identity inside the gates; and almost acts as a social club with its carefully selected members. Public space in such community is a part of a collective-private ownership. The community “serves as a government-like service provider” (Low, 2008, p. 166).

Gated communities have their non-residential, shopping actualization in “lifestyle centers”. Lifestyle centers provide a mall-like feeling in a safe, almost gated, urban space for wealthy shoppers and tourists, located in the city surroundings/edges (Kern, 2008). Actually, lifestyle centers are in competition with city centers, since they both promote shopping as a “different” experience and strive for uniqueness and authenticity, but are also mutually challenging. The city center and its downtown retailers adopted and incorporated some of the shopping mall management policies, while lifestyle centers borrowed spatial models of streets, squares and urban design, in order to be competitive with each other (Kern, 2008).

Opposed to gated communities and lifestyle centers, there are crisis neighborhoods and ghettos that can also be found in the city surroundings, but their demographics, life conditions and socio-economic structures are different. Ghettos as we know them – American and European ones, are marginalized

but visible spaces in the urban tissue of the city. Suburban areas of the city are now experiencing a decline in economy and birthrate, but growth in crime and poverty. Similar to the gated communities, they are also inclusive in a way that a certain group of people with shared socio-economic status, education, and occupation inhabits it, but the identity may vary from one enclave to another. What is striking about marginalized and excluded places is their formation and disappearance. Michel Agier examines another type of ghetto, the refuge ghetto, with a population that has an “uncertain future” such that refugees, migrants and asylum seekers have, in political and social places that are “set apart and separated” and the urban formation that “takes root in camps, informal encampments and all sorts of off-places that have a role as places of refuge” (Agier, 2012, p. 265). There are constructed refuges and self-settled ones, the latter having developed distinct architecture over time. He states that refuge, asylum and confinement make up three principal figures of heterotopia today (Agier, 2012).

5. On the bright(er) side

There is a topic of smart cities viewed as heterotopias, but only a few remarks on that matter were made, some of them with the idea of smart cities perceived as a paradox – a city and a non – city (Wang, 2017). Smart cities could, on the one hand, be read as heterotopia, since they are designed to free contemporary cities from crisis and deviation by providing efficiency, simplicity and formality, but to what extent? Could cities, or even world, ever regulate their chaos and messiness? Such city (world) is rather more utopian than heterotopian one. So the question is not whether a smart city is heterotopia or not, but is there a smart future for our society?

Another characteristic of a smart heterotopic city is the accumulation of time spent in it as much as juxtaposing the ideas and organizational culture between different aspects of past and future. To develop a smart city, designers and planners need to go through a set of challenges, conflicts and

crisis – all related to heterotopia – in order to bring together differences in approach to the city management and transportation model in communities that are still governed on principles of the past. Also, new technologies are to be used in spaces built with technologies invented centuries ago. In relation to that, there is a fundamental problem with smart cities and it starts and ends with technology.

Smart city could be understood as an assemblage made of both human and technological factors, as well as “urban imaginaries” (De Waal & Dignum, 2017). Just as some heterotopias have changed their role in both society and city throughout history – such as cemetery – there is a possibility that the smart city could change as an idea itself. Smart cities are related to future, but strongly rely on ideas from past and present – our ideas of *resilience* and *information (sustainable and intelligent city)* (Vanolo, 2013). This refers to a cultural shift in society too. Thus, to live in a smart city, one must first become a smart citizen. But, could it be vice versa: is smart citizen mentality with the use of the right tools capable of *creating* a smart city? There surely is a heterotopic notion here - society changes space as well as space changes society.

Recently, there have been many studies about smart citizens and the relationship between the smart city and its users, but also the roles that different residents of such cities have. The roles vary from categories – where different groups of people have their different roles and duties, to individual roles - such as leaders, decision makers, participants, consumers, etc... Also, there is a variety of involvements these citizens have and they could go from giving ideas and visions, giving feedback and suggestions to consuming. (Cardulo & Kitchin, cited in De Waal & Dignum, 2017). Furthermore, a study in citizen’s contribution to social innovation shows that there are four types of citizens: Senior Citizens, Sharing Citizens, Collaborative Citizens and Entrepreneurial Citizens (Angelidou & Psaltoglou, 2017). All these studies conclude that some major social changes are necessary and will be happening in the future when it comes to considering living in smart cities.

De Waal and Dignum provide smart city visions and practices in their study and these are: The Control Room, The Creative City and The Smart City Discourse (De Waal & Dignum, 2017). Some smart city projects (especially in UK, such as: City Verve in Manchester, Smart Dublin, Future City Glasgow) work in a way of producing *smart parts* of the city, which will eventually, by connecting, create a *smart city* (Wang, 2017). So the *smart parts* become heterotopias in existing cities, since they are inclusive, “other”, combine the “old” and the “new” and are representatives of what future holds, but exist in the present time. And being heterotopias, they tend to bring a desire for an alternative reality, the constant longing for surreal and different. When talking about traffic efficiency, every smart city project tends to change traffic management in order to make it more stable, faster, safer and overall productive. By setting sensors and cameras, smart cities are able to: act in “real time” in cases of traffic congestion, manage parking crowds, calculate the best routes, etc. The ability to act in “real time” is the first and foremost “smart” activity of the city. With actions of data gathering and archiving information, the city acts as a museum or a library, always “accumulating time”. Cameras and sensors, although allegedly having different aim, somewhat represent Foucault’s ideas of surveillance and power, in a theory of Panopticism (Soja, 1995).

Furthermore, smart city acts as a heterotopia in a way of opening and closing systems in Foucault’s fifth principle of heterotopias. There is an obstacle to entering a smart city: one must be a “smart citizen” and be able to afford smart technology while having digital literacy to enjoy the life that smart city provides. This brings the paradox of privilege and exclusivity opposed to the “empowerment” and “city for all” agenda that smart city developers promise to enact (Wang, 2017).

6. Virtual spatiality

It has been studied and mentioned many times during the last decade, but virtual space is becoming our reality, and all the actions that took place in

real life spaces, such as: public squares, markets, boutiques, conferences, almost all kinds of socializing, are moving into virtual space, so it is only natural that the economy and capital flow have changed in that direction too. Online encyclopedias, fan groups, social networks, support groups, online communities, online games... are just a few types of virtual realities (spatialities) that imitate the real world, or create a new - imaginary one, where a person is alone, but has a feeling of togetherness and belonging, as Varnelis calls it “networked publics” (Varnelis, 2008). These heterotopias have endless options for change, creation and destruction of identities, since their space is infinite. With that in mind, it is presumed that our social life has gotten a new dimension, and it is changing rapidly.

Online community “Second Life” is based on connecting virtual alter egos of its users in a way that they engage in everyday activities with each other, creating a community of online personas that choose their online “friends” and “partners” for conducting social interactions alone in the real, but together in the online world. It is almost like a game of life, a playhouse for adults, but with a feel and hope for a “different”, yet the same world as the one that they live in. MMORPG or Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games such as World of Warcraft (WoW) has approximately eight million players. This is the approximate population of London, for example. Having avatars in virtual life makes our bodies insufficient in some aspects of our lives; while we’re on-line, we use our physical body only for managing our mobile devices or computers.

Shopping has turned online too, with stores having their own web-shops, or even shops that only operate through online orders, payments, and shipping. World economy is online as well, recently through bitcoins, online banking, digital economy and so on. Going deeper into analysis of such heterotopias, one can conclude that “the web has a growing presence in our lives” (Varnelis, 2008, p. 25). Saskia Sassen proposes “global city” as the new location for the world economy. She states that although some major

global cities might have the attributes of world cities or informational cities, with changes in economy, technology and globalization, there is a necessity for a better and more connected organization of those cities (Sassen, 2005). The most important characteristic of such a city is network, where the city is “a function of a network of cities”. These metropolitan areas “do not function independently but rather act as nodes in a planetary economic system” (Sassen, cited in Varnelis, 2008, p. 27). Is the global city as an idea progressive enough to connect all the aspects of both real and virtual life, providing a safe, multicultural and economically stable society in a future city which is a constant subject of change?

7. Conclusion - The future is heterotopic!

What is the future of our cities? In a world that is changing faster than ever, with emerging technologies, new political agendas, socio-economic differences and globalization, the city has changed its role in society, as well as its urban structure. Cities of the future could only be imagined through the lens of today's practices, so the analysis of specific cases is both a means and a necessity. Heterotopias can help us understand the potentials and deficiencies of our contemporary cities, but they can also help us change and improve them for the future. Starting from a space subjected to a threshold, or turned into a junkspace, through shanty towns and slums, redefined city centers, gentrified neighborhoods, gated communities, and finishing with smart cities and virtual spaces, one can only conclude that the city of today is a highly heterotopian one, and that through the present day heterotopias we can understand and change the future of our cities. Always a case of paradox, heterotopia could be understood as a space *between* freedom and control, a space where both extend beyond their own limits (Hetherington, 1997). That leads to the idea of a future heterotopia as an exit from reality – virtual space or imagination, and a space of endless possibilities, where a different (better) world could exist. Heterotopic spaces, in their ever changing glory, challenge and intimidate us where we are the most vulnerable – our Self in relation to “Other”.

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