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# I-Periphery of metapolis

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*ABSTRACT. Contemporary urban landscape is an impressionistic picture in pointillism-like style. Urban plasma extends from the place of one's presence, I-periphery, to the present infiniteness, defined by the points of view and review, surrounded by the seemingly homogeneous space of polis. Moving from one defined point to the another one means passing along the line in the anonymous surroundings or waiting for connection in the absent surroundings. The life of metapolis takes place on different real and virtual public domains, which are becoming the platforms of information exchanges in local and global scale. There is an inequality of real and virtual functions of polis. Virtual representations of metapolis are rather projections than mappings of the real city. I-periphery of metapolis are included or excluded from these domains according to in- and outside or off- and online relations between human being and meta-context.*

*KEYWORDS: place, e-environment, interactive info-space-time, hotspots, peripherals*

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## 1. Paradoxes

Paradoxes of the contemporary metropolis reveal in the phenomenon of coincidences of its expansion and disintegration, explosion and implosion, complexity and fragmentation, degradation and fictionalization of urban tissue at the same time. It is a consequence of a rapid civilization development and transition from hardware to software thinking in the information age (Kwiatkowska, 1997), resulting in the change of a concept of the built-environment from city-jungle (metropolis) to meta-data-environment (metapolis). Transformation of the uniformed-city into limitless liquid urban substances of polis is a process of spreading out of the spatial structures, according to the increase of entropy of all systems, connected with uncertainty of the outcome and information range. It is expected that more than three fifths of the world's population will live in urban areas and more than 50 urban agglomerations will have five million or more inhabitants by 2025 (World Urbanization Trends, 1996). But metapolis is not expressed only *in terms of growth*, but first of all in terms of *combination of simultaneous bits of information* (Gausa et al., 2003).

The real and virtual functions of polis are mixing qualities, not complementary to each other, which create meta-context of a man's living. Virtual representations of metapolis are rather projections than mappings of the real city. Abandoned places of ground reality are absent in virtual one, while livable places of VR have no addresses in the GR (e.g. Internet shopping center, virtual offices, rooms of chatting or rendezvous etc.). The life of contemporary metapolis takes place on different real and virtual public domains, which are becoming the platforms of information exchanges in local and global scale. These domains are both the sceneries of mass performances and individual expressions, anonymous participation in mass discourses and personalized individual talks with other people. I-periphery of metapolis, a private domain of ground and virtual reality, is included or excluded from public areas according to in- and outside or off- and online relations between human being and meta-context.

Urban landscape is an impressionistic picture in pointillism-like style. Urban plasma extends from the place of one's presence, I-periphery, to the present infiniteness, defined by the points of view and review, departure and destination, reference and focus, beauty and ugliness, safety and threaten etc. These points are surrounded by the seemingly homogeneous space. Moving from one defined point to the another one means passing along the line joining them in the anonymous surroundings (distance to pass) or waiting for connection in the absent surroundings (time to pass: *host contacted: waiting for reply*).

## 2. I-periphery

The information age contributes new phenomena on an urbanization process, such as creation of the global e-world based on Internet connections (Mitchell, 1995) and changing the concept of a human being from the idea of physical body, through visually oriented mind (Franck, 1995; Pearce, 1995), to I-body with sensory extensions (Kwiatkowska, 2007). Superiority of habits of visually or sensory oriented mind over behaviors of physical body causes that cognition of a world by the human mind depends more and more on visual perception and knowledge. The world itself exists out of our cognition, but according to cognitive theory of Henri Bergson (Bergson, 1963), there are two more realms such as perceptible reality, becoming aware through the senses, and imaginable reality, reflecting intellectual

human mind's abilities. Both of them constitute meta-context of a man's living. If the way of perceiving is changing, the concept of the world is changing too. Taking other assumption of the world's structure causes the change of its perception. We can experience different realities like Alice in Wonderland, if we change a point of view. We could have also the same problem as she had with caterpillar's advice: 'One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter', which caused her question: 'One side of *what*? The other side of *what*?' (Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865). It seems to be never-ending journey through the infinite dimensions of the world. Dimensions of *what*?

The history of modern art shows the struggle of the artists to accept relativity of different points of view in description of the world, which is no more based on objective reconstruction, but on the subjective visual and spiritual impression. According to the art critique of André Breton (Breton, 1986), the subjective perspective has its origin in the impressionistic interpretation of object in form of light particles, then, in futuristic fascination of the events' simultaneity, deconstruction of the object into smaller parts by the cubists, setting the object from its context and discredited the object itself by dadaists, and surrealist exploration of dream, putting the object into metaphoric landscape and exposing to the accidental interpretation etc.

A perspective proposed by modern artists is becoming a way of perceiving of I-periphery and metapolis now. The memorized images consist of the visions, pictures, photos, postcards and films of seen and never-seen places. It is very difficult to verify whether memorized places exist or not in the real world. The images made by the cameras are the extensions of human sight; they simulate the mirror copy of the reality and becoming a substitute of a human memory. Virtual representations live their own life independent of the real one. Analog or digital images, created by technological tools, are part of meta-context of living. They have a great influence on human imagination, because they can be embellished, reproduced and collected out of memory, constituting the *simulacra* of simulated reality (Baudrillard, 2005).

I-periphery, defined as the telecommuter living in the black box in the network, represents the values expressed in the notions of the relativity, virtuality, beyond-contextualism, chaotic-higher order and fictionalism. Every receiver perceives the sense of message by himself or herself. Context of periphery does not exist in the traditional meaning. Perceiving the context is a singular act of in-formation in the presence of the pulsing images and messages in the network, which establish the seemingly chaotic or higher ordered environment.

I-Periphery is forced by the technological development. Thanks of electronic peripherals, accompanying or built-in human bodies (sensors, chips, mobile phone, recorder, camera, laptop, tablet, hot-spots etc), private zone expands in the space-time while public area takes back or even disappears from the people notice. Human senses are directed to the private domains of interests in both: home and public spaces. Electronic peripherals are sensory interactive spatial extensions of I-body, which interact and communicate with intelligent spatial settings and e-environment (Stelarc, 1995). I-body seems to be submerge in the virtual bubble, which is a portable meta-place of living, I-periphery of metapolis.

### **3. Meta-context of living**

Metapolis as a context of living for human being is very similar to the concept of worldwide web (Internet), based on personal computers connections, data

transmission and information exchange, which creates a network of people communication in the cyberspace, characterized by atomization of the interlocutors and loneliness of the Internet users in face of screens. Similarly, metapolis is a liquid informed space-time, founded on the network, a combination of different motifs of virtual and ground reality, genotypes and phenotypes of the space-time, cultural patterns and codes of the place, images and memories of the people, characterized by the formal or informal connections of the people through the metapolis web. In the information age, mental map of the topography of polis is replaced by the concept of network as the representation of time-links and the Google Earth- or Google Street-like phenomena (Reppesgaard, 2009).

It is possible that the spatial representation of the urban network will be not necessary in the near future, because many functions of the polis slowly disappear or lose their importance, for instance commercial center are replaced by the Internet shopping, offices – by the telecommute system, conference center – by the video-meeting-room, cafe – by the Internet chat-room etc. The process of urbanization follows the direction *from urbs to bits* (Pearce, 1995). Metapolis becomes a website fulfilled with personalized information, pictures, links and contacts in limitless and scaleless space. Everyone can be a sender and receiver at the same time, changing and interfering with picture or animation according to one's esthetic likings and preferences.

Devaluation of physical features of the real and triumph of the hyperreal, in the meaning of *precession of simulacra*, when map precedes territory and virtuality precedes the real (Baudrillard, 2005). Simulacra confronted with the reality leads to *déjà vu* effect. However, there is no chance for such as confrontation because contemporary simulacra lost its references to the origin, becoming *the desert of the real itself* (Baudrillard, 2005). Impossibility of verification of the real nature of the polis causes that its structure has fallen into a state of decay, division and fragmentation, based on islands' phenomenon. It results in the strength of tendency of degradation of the public area to the rank of the network. It seems that public spaces are becoming excluded from the city structure, and they are in use only for the traffic and mass spectacles in the center of the polis.

The concept of the gigantic centripetal center of the polis for the mass spectacles has its prototypes in the visions of the vertical city of Le Corbusier (City for Three Million People, arch. Le Corbusier) (Markus, 1985) and of Archigram (Plug-in-City, Archigram) (Klotz, 1986). This concept expresses the political and economic power of the urban agglomeration, its potentiality, dynamism and vitality. It answers the challenge of our age, characterized by the alienation of the people from one side, and from the other side – by the pressure of participation in the mass-spectacles, such as New Year welcome, rock concerts, festivals, love-parades etc., popularity of which is measured by the number of millions of participants. The urban agglomerations seem to need more and more space in form of the extra-large square, extra-long promenade or extra-large amphitheatre, that the inhabitants could meet. Paradoxically, gigantic center ruins the spatial structure of metropolis, and in a sense, it is deprived of the functional and economic proprieties; this concept signifies a wish to create the visual signs – simulacra of the polis, affecting the imagination of the people. Other example of creation of simulacra instead of usable space for people, is a concept of recreational paradises - the sceneries of the illusions and wonders, the artificial landscapes in which human being manipulates the matter of the reality (e.g. Disneyland, Legoland, Zoo, thematic and wild parks etc.).

Never-ending process of simulation of metapolis, connected with implosions of its fragments to I-peripheries settled by I-bodies, is rather a time-machine than a

space-machine. Metapolis absorbs the relative concept of time from physics, in which the meaning of *right now* is a combination of past, present and future events.

#### **4. Interconnections**

I-periphery contacts with the metapolis through the network. Network expresses interconnections between different levels of structural and metaphorical complexity of metapolis. While I-periphery is characterized by implosive discontinuity, metapolis simulates explosive continuity thanks of the network support. Network is represented by the transport channels or the loops of hot-spots, Internet access points in metapolis.

Human activities, whether they are every-day trips from home to work or occasional journeys to other places, are canalized in channels and guided by information, visual signs or GPS system. Therefore the representation of the network, and not of the urban topography, is created in the mental maps. The space of channel is characterized by repetitious liquidness. It is defined by the walls, floor and ceiling, which construct the one-point convergent perspective and by the sequences of frames or graphic signs – the spatial milestones, which allow to measure, in relative way, the speed of the passers-by. The milestones confers the symbolic meaning upon the channel as time-machine.

Loops of the Internet hot-spots are the communication gates for movable I-body with electronic peripherals. The architectural objects and built-environment become responsive and intelligent to interact with the users (Brayer et al., 2001; Spiller, 2002). Interconnections between I-periphery and metapolis are founded on gaming strategies (Kwiatkowska, 2007). The influence of the gambling-architecture on the built-environment can be defined as coding architecture and urban landscape, built *in seminal way*, gathering and control of the passive resources of the spatial structures, all-seeing power of the users over the built-environment to make it more prosperous, cinematics and dynamic view at any point of the built-environment, spatial attractiveness of the architectural forms and interiors (e.g. secret area, optical camouflage, 3-D projections) or projecting yourself into the built-environment (e.g. design puzzles, add-on packages, expanding or modifying the built-environment). The gaming strategies introduce new design patterns based on selection, codification, combination, permutation and variation of the personalized information messages, in the results, metapolis is becoming of platform of many narrations, playing and stories, according to Marcos Novak diagnosis *form follows the functions of fiction* (Novak, 1995). I-body with sensory and interactive spatial extensions interact simultaneously with many levels of the spatial structure of metapolis.

Simulated built-environment is changeable and transformable thanks of information flow in the network. Place means a perception of moment of time, when user stops off. Near and distant places are connected thanks of the timing communication, and not spatial mediation. The mutual relations between I-periphery and metapolis are fuzzy, it means, they can traverse into each other; metapolis can implode into I-periphery [Fig.1], while I-periphery can explode into metapolis [Fig.2].

## 5. Conclusion

Metapolis is a network-jungle, in which *urbs* are replaced by bits, *archs* – by images and narrations, people – by avatars or extended I-bodies with peripherals. Metapolis is founded on language of info-codification, which causes that it is transparent and opaque, unified and diverse at the same time. I-periphery is a meta-place of someone on- or off-line presence in the network, which is characterized by possibility of expansion into the whole metapolis, playing the multi-layer on-line games, multiplication and connection of many disconnected meta-places at the same time, creation of personalized view of the world with own narration or implosion into the state of immortal watching or absence of *I*.

## Legends



Fig.1 I-periphery: implosive metapolis  
\*drawings by author

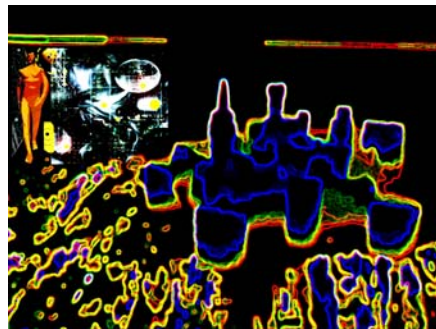


Fig.2 Metapolis: explosive I-periphery

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## **Biography**

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