



## **Heterotopias as Urban Public Spaces?**

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### **Resumo:**

Michel Foucault's theoretical work raises insights that can be productive in efforts to study urban public spaces. It is worth exploring his concept of 'heterotopia', from which Foucault envisages potential ways of approaching space, power and social relations. In this paper, we highlight a movement in Foucault's early spatial thinking of discourse to his emphasis on how space integrates processes of power, and the role heterotopia has there. We present and discuss heterotopia and its counterpart utopia as relational spaces, followed by a discussion on Heterotopia as an analytical tool, contemplating its possible interface with urban public spaces. Heterotopia's open-endedness is then discussed through its potentialities for being a productive analytical strategy for investigating particular time-spaces. We conclude considering heterotopology as a path for investigating policies that can restrict or facilitate the social production of heterotopias, or 'other spaces'.

# HETEROTOPIAS AS URBAN PUBLIC SPACES?

Taking Foucault's conceptualization into account

## AN INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault's theoretical work raises insights that can be productive in efforts to study urban public spaces. It is worth exploring his concept of 'heterotopia', from which Foucault envisages potential ways of approaching space, power and social relations. In the first part of this paper, we highlight a movement in Foucault's early spatial thinking of discourse to his emphasis on how space integrates processes of power, and the role heterotopia has there. In the second part of the text, we present and discuss heterotopia and its counterpart utopia as relational spaces, followed by a discussion on Heterotopia as an analytical tool, contemplating its possible interface with urban public spaces. Heterotopia's open-endedness is then discussed through its potentialities for being a productive analytical strategy for investigating particular time-spaces. We conclude considering heterotopology as a path for investigating policies that can restrict or facilitate the social production of heterotopias, or 'other spaces'.

A 'shift' in Foucault's thought can be traced from an abstract notion of space or spatial discourse (*i.e.*, discourses described with the help of spatial metaphors) to a complex and real-world notion of space as a crucial element in practices of power and contestation (*i.e.*, discursive spaces, in which discourses about space interact with physical space in its architectural, urban, institutional forms) (WEST-PAVLOV, 2009, p. 112). In Foucault's writing on literature throughout the 1960s, remarks on the spatiality of language already begin to shape the concept of epistemological space that he will work with later. After *Les Mots et les choses*, published in 1966, Foucault directs his attention away from literature and textualist theories, towards a wider interest in the social space as a site for contestation, watching out for practices, power relations, interactions of institutions and material spatial environments (*idem*).

Russel West-Pavlov (2009) points out that this shift from the literary site, as the center of attention of spatiality, to social space in general as a site of contestation is heralded by the notion of 'heterotopia'<sup>1</sup>. This idea was introduced in *Les Mots et les choses* as places of epistemological and representational disorder on the margins of a society's order of

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<sup>1</sup> The literal medical definition of heterotopia describes the displacement of organs, deriving from the Greek *topos* (place) and *heteros* (otherness) (HETHERINGTON, 1997, p. 8)

representation but was revisited in *Des espaces autres*<sup>2</sup> (Of Other Spaces), a late publication of a lecture Foucault gave to a group of architects in 1967 (cf. FOUCAULT, 1986 [1967]). The notion of heterotopia slides, through his work, from a literary concept to one situated in concrete social sites at specific moments in history (WEST-PAVLOV, 2009).

Scholars from various fields - arts, literature, cinema, sociology, geography, architecture and urban studies - responded to Foucault's text with different perspectives. The idea of heterotopia has been extensively interpreted, applied, but also subjected to several strands of criticism, as we point out in this paper. Nevertheless, as Hilde Heynen (2008) acknowledges, different positions can be taken in this seeming controversy, reinforcing tensions or agreements in research efforts. We attempt to underline that Foucault's conceptualization of heterotopia does present a useful groundwork for unfolding interdisciplinary understandings of complex features of today's urban spaces (cf. SUDRADJAT, 2012; JOHNSON, 2006; 2013; VALVERDE, 2007; DEHAENEM; DE CAUTER, 2008).

Although questioning the idea of heterotopia, for its allegedly small possibilities of being 'converted' in a tool for politics, Harvey (2000) recognizes that it has the virtue of providing a better understanding of the heterogeneity of space. Foremost, this notion of heterogeneity puts aside the idea that we live in a homogeneous space. As Foucault highlights:

"... we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (FOUCAULT, 1986 [1967], p. 23).

We should become increasingly aware that the idea of homogeneous space does not describe the complexity of different spaces embedded within each other as they are experienced by people in urban spaces. The idea of space taking for us the form of relations among sites stresses an important detachment from a space of binary oppositions and brings in a third term to situations where strict dichotomies (e.g., public/private; urban/rural or local/global) no longer seem to provide us productive frameworks for analysis (HEYNEN, 2008, p. 312).

## RELATIONAL SPACES... THE METAPHOR OF THE MIRROR

We can, as suggested by Iwan Sudradjat (2012), analyze space considering Foucault's notion of the site and its positioning in a web of divergent spaces. Foucault directs his attention to those sites or emplacements "that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked

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<sup>2</sup> This text was not reviewed for publication by Foucault, and is not part of his official *corpus* of work, but it was released in 1984 into the public domain for an exhibition in Berlin (FOUCAULT, 1986).

with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types” (FOUCAULT, 1986 [1967], p. 24). Utopias and heterotopias.

Utopia, a concept we will come back to, is considered by Foucault as a theoretical counterpart to the heterotopia. Whereas utopias are unreal, fantastic, and perfected spaces, heterotopias are real places that exist like ‘counter-sites’, simultaneously representing, contesting, and inverting other conventional sites (SUDRADJAT, 2012, p. 29). Utopias are sites with no real place, but they do have a relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society since they present society in a perfected form (or turned upside down). Heterotopias, on the other hand, are places that do exist, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which other real sites are at the same time represented, contested or inverted (FOUCAULT, 1986 [1967]).

The term ‘heterotopia’ was presented by Foucault to portray various institutions and places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space. He called these places heterotopias, or ‘other spaces’, because they inject alterity into the sameness, the commonplace, the topicality of everyday society. When one considers all the examples he mentioned – the school, military service, the honeymoon, old people’s homes, psychiatric institutions, prisons, cemeteries, theatres and cinemas, libraries and museums, fairs and carnivals, holiday camps, Moslems *hammams*, Scandinavian saunas, motels, brothels, the Jesuit colonies and the ship – one gets an idea of the vastness of the concept (DEHAENE; DE CAUTER, 2008, p. 4). But, as of now, we can highlight that heterotopia assumes a set of aspects (social, political, spatial) that surpass the more restricted literary or discursive parameters of Foucault’s earlier thinking. Attention shifts to the complex bundles of discourses, institutions, bodily practices, architectural monuments which overcome his earlier idea of spatial discourse (WEST-PAVLOV, 2009). In the next section, we approach this issue.

Since heterotopia presents a juxtapositional, relational space, a site that represents incompatible spaces and reveals paradoxes (SUDRADJAT, 2012), a key aspect to consider is Foucault’s allusion to this “sort of mixed, joint experience” between utopias and these other sites, the heterotopias (FOUCAULT, 1986 [1967], p. 24). To refer to this combination or ‘joint experience’ he considered the mirror:

“The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it,

and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (FOUCAULT, 1986 [1967], p. 24).

The mirror is a metaphor for utopia because in this ‘placeless place’ the gazer sees its reflection in a virtual space (ERSÖZ KOÇ, 2015); but it is also a heterotopia because the mirror is a real object that shapes the way we relate to our own image (SUDRADJAT, 2012). This emphasis on the duality and contradictions of utopia and heterotopia is relevant, since we may inquire how, both as utopia (*e.g.*, a depiction of an unreal place such as an ‘ideal’ or ‘just’ city) and heterotopia (a concrete place), specific public spaces serve as a mirror that forms a web of relations with prevailing urban conditions. How do specific public spaces and their use contribute to ‘suspect, neutralize or invert’ sets of relations, such as those regarding spatial segregation? What would be the heterotopic qualities of such spaces? What roles, relations or values would be questioned or challenged in this ‘joint experience’? Anyhow, we must further problematize the possibilities and constraints of heterotopia as a framework for thinking and analyzing urban spaces.

For Foucault, six principles govern the existence of heterotopias, principles he described for a ‘heterotopology’<sup>3</sup>: their universality among world cultures; their transforming functions throughout historical periods; their ability to overlap various incompatible sites in one real place; their links to ‘heterochronies’; their system of opening and closing; and their function in relation to spaces that remain outside them.

The first principle considers that all cultures constitute heterotopias; but there is not a universal heterotopias norm. The two types defined by Foucault include heterotopias of ‘crisis’ and those of ‘deviation’. The first are privileged, sacred or forbidden places reserved for individuals who are (for society) in a state of crisis (*e.g.*, modern societies suggest this role would be played by honeymoon hotels, boarding schools, military service for young men, old age homes). The latter, heterotopias of deviation represent sites for people whose actions deviate from the norms in some way, and thus would need to be spatially isolated (*e.g.*, Foucault’s examples include rest homes, clinics, psychiatric hospitals, prisons). Age, for example, can be a crisis, but also a deviation in a society where youth or idleness is posed as such (FOUCAULT, 1986, [1967]).

A second principle emphasizes how society can make heterotopias function in different ways, altering their use over time, while maintaining their overarching functionality of being places where incompatible or contradictory kinds of space converge. A third principle holds heterotopia as capable of overlapping in one real place several different spaces that are incompatible. The theater and the cinema, for example, where several places strange to each other converge on the stage or the screen, would represent a heterotopia of many spaces combined in one.

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<sup>3</sup> “Well! I dream of a science - I mean a science - which would have for object these different spaces, these other places, these mythical and real challenges of the space where we live. This science would not study utopias, since that name must be reserved for what really has no place, but heterotopias, absolutely different spaces; and inevitably, the science in question would be called, it will be called, it is already called ‘heterotopology’” (FOUCAULT, 1966, p. 1-2).

Heterotopology's fourth principle considers how heterotopias are often linked to 'slices in time'; 'heterochronies' would be these spaces that welcome such temporal breaks. This intersection and phasing of space and time allows the heterotopia to 'function at full capacity' based on an ability to arrive at an 'absolute break' with traditional experiences of time and temporality (FOUCAULT, 1986 [1967]). Foucault highlights some of these sites in the modern world, such as museums and libraries, as heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time that attempt to generate an archive, or festivals or fairgrounds as fleeting, transitory, precarious spaces of time.

A fifth principle highlights that heterotopias presuppose some sort of opening and closing system which allows them to become isolated and penetrable. Foucault emphasizes that heterotopias are entered either by compulsory means (e.g., barracks, prisons) or through ritual purification ceremonies or hygienic cleansing (e.g., Moslems hammans, Scandinavian saunas).

The sixth and last principle asserts that heterotopias have a function, unfolded between two poles, in relation to those spaces that remain outside them. The function of heterotopia of 'illusion' is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space as still more illusory, and the function of heterotopia of 'compensation' is to create a space that is other, another real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged since ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled (FOUCAULT, 1986, p.27). Thus, heterotopias enable us to both confront our illusions and to create new illusions of the utopias we cannot have. Foucault points out the oriental gardens as heterotopias of illusion, and some 17th century puritan societies in America and the Jesuit villages of Paraguay as extreme examples of heterotopias of compensation, a 'realized utopia' (SUDRADJAT, 2012).

As suggested by Foucault, although the mirror is like a utopia, it is also a concrete site that disrupts our spatial position, that is, the space occupied is at the same time real and unreal, forming a dislocation of place<sup>4</sup>. This disruption provides a rich imaginary space, a provocation (JOHNSON, 2006).

From Foucault's perspective, still, we point out that a simulated utopia of a good urban setting represents, at the same time, the real world. This implies acknowledging different relational features of these spaces, including relations of power that are spatialized in specific forms. Thus, there are ambiguities and ambivalent aspects related to such a conception of time-spaces, a conceptualization that seems potentially useful for approaching policy enactment in its interface with spatial experiences in Brazil's big cities.

## HETEROTOPIAS AS PUBLIC SPACES?

Would heterotopias, as implied by Sudradjat (2012), be necessarily different from what is usually conceived of as more freely accessible public space? The classic heterotopias highlighted by Foucault were spaces quite different and set apart from the common world

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<sup>4</sup> Johnson (2006) refers here to a third English translation of the talk Foucault gave to architectural students in 1967: Foucault, M. (1998) [1967] 'Different Spaces', trans. R. Hurley, in J. D. Faubion (ed.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault Volume 2*, London: Penguin, 175-185.

most people inhabited, including hospitals, mental institutions, prisons. Streets are part of everyday life (KERN, 2008). Considering debates on the transformation of public space in the last decades, Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (2008), in *Heterotopia and the City*, point out how those debates have been marked by a lament over a 'loss' of public space. This lament relates to a public-private dichotomy that has, in their view, worn out its analytical force. Although there are no means towards an easy description of today's urban reality, they understand Foucault's notion of heterotopia can shed a new light.

Besides, the general worry about "the loss of public space is often mingled with a nostalgia for a vision of public space that perhaps never truly existed: public streets have always been, or included, a porous zone between public and private; and the idyllic public spaces of the *agora* – the town square – were often not freely accessible to members of society who were not deemed citizens" (KERN, 2008, p. 112-113).

On the other hand, if the concept of heterotopia is to be made consistent, not everything can be considered a heterotopia (DEHAENE; DE CAUTER, 2008). We must recognize that there is a very broad *spectrum* of illustrations and interpretations of the idea. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fragmentary and evasive features related to this concept, it continues to engender conflicting interpretations and research (JOHNSON, 2013, p. 790). As it stands, heterotopia's supposed theoretical shortcomings have been left for others to resolve (GALLAN, 2013). Indeed, this 'open-endedness' of the idea has resulted in a vast range of scholarly interpretations (JOHNSON, 2006). However, it's unfolding for an urban policy conceived as politically open in this sense, that is, an 'openness' that can lend itself to the provision of good outcomes, suggests we insist further with Foucault's idea.

Before Foucault's well-known lecture given to the group of architects in 1967, in a brief radio talk he reflected on the possibility of studying - via heterotopology, as we depicted - these spaces that in some ways challenge or contest the spaces we live in (FOUCAULT, 1966b). He opened his talk illustrating these 'other spaces':

"These counter-spaces, these localized utopias, the children know them perfectly. Of course, it is the bottom of the garden, of course, it is the attic, or better yet the tent of Indians set up in the middle of the attic, or, it is - on Thursday afternoon - the parents' big bed. It is on this large bed that we discover the ocean, since we can swim between the covers; and then this great bed is also the sky, since one can leap on the springs; it is the forest, since one hides there; it is night, since there is a ghost between the sheets; it's the pleasure finally, since, as the parents return, we will be punished. These counter-spaces, to tell the truth, it is not only the invention of the children (...). The adult society has organized, and well before children, their own counter-spaces, their localized utopias, these real places out of all places. For example, there are gardens, cemeteries, there are asylums, there are

brothels, there are prisons, there are the *Club Méditerranée* villages, and many others” (FOUCAULT, 1966, p. 1-2)<sup>5</sup>.

In Foucault’s work, remarks on children’s games disappear, but other illustrations follow and expand those pointed out in this initial radio broadcast. The examples are extremely diverse, but they all refer in some way or another to a relational disruption in time and space (JOHNSON, 2006).

De Cauter and Dehaene (2008) try to advance an understanding of the activity proper to heterotopias, the ‘other spaces’, as play. They explain how a ‘third space’, the sacred space from Hippodamus’ division of the city (*i.e.*, the public, the political and the sacred) is the ‘other’ of the political and economic, coming closest to the space of religion, arts, sports and leisure. The authors sustain that “by remembering this third sphere” - between the private space of the hidden and the public space of appearance -, the ‘space of hidden appearance’, “we can understand and articulate the relevance of heterotopia today” (p. 91). The spaces of the *polis* that belong to this third category do not abide by binary oppositions; a triadic conception ‘public, private and other spaces’ points to a way out of a private-public dualism. They understand heterotopia as more easily identified by its time than by its space; not simply a space, but rather a time-space. In this view, heterotopia interrupts everyday experience, opening protected spaces, spaces of rest, refuge and play. Peter Johnson (2006) reminds us that there is a political and economic base to heterotopias, but nevertheless, the spaces make room for something anti-economical and politically experimental. They are spaces of and for the imagination.

“These localized utopias ... well recognized by children” (FOUCAULT, 1966b, p. 1) are emplacements for inventing dream-like spaces that are firmly connected to and mirror the outside world, enhancing an imaginative quality in experimental terrains (JOHNSON, 2013). Johnson (2013) refers to Foucault’s fascination with the work of the experimental writer Raymond Roussel since for him Roussel’s literature springs from something akin to children’s games, exploring to another level the ‘core of childlike imagination’. He clarifies that heterotopian sites are not enclosures where ‘normality is suspended’; they do not sit in isolation as reservoirs of freedom, emancipation or resistance; they coexist, combine and connect.

## EXPLORING SPACE THROUGH THE IDEA OF HETEROTOPIA

A great variety of spaces have been explored through the idea of heterotopia, including: Largo da Carioca, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (VALVERDE, 2007); the pub The Oxford

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<sup>5</sup> “Ces contre-espaces, ces utopies localisées, les enfants les connaissent parfaitement. Bien sûr, c’est le fond du jardin, bien sûr, c’est le grenier, ou mieux encore la tente d’Indiens dressée au milieu du grenier, ou encore, c’est – le jeudi après-midi – le grand lit des parents. Et bien c’est sur ce grand lit qu’on découvre l’océan, puisqu’on peut y nager entre les couvertures; et puis ce grand lit, c’est aussi le ciel, puisqu’on peut bondir sur les ressorts; c’est la forêt, puisqu’on s’y cache; c’est la nuit, puisqu’on y devient fantôme entre les draps; c’est le plaisir, enfin, puis que, à la rentrée des parents, on va être puni. Ces contre-espaces, à vrai dire, ce n’est pas la seule invention des enfants (...). La société adulte a organisé elle-même, et bien avant les enfants, ses propres contre-espaces, ses utopies situées, ces lieux réels hors de tous les lieux. Par exemple, il y a les jardins, les cimetières, il y a les asiles, il y a les maisons closes, il y a les prisons, il y a les villages du Club Méditerranéen, et bien d’autres” (FOUCAULT, 1966, p. 1-2).



Tavern, in Wollongong, Australia (GALLAN, 2013); Ibirapuera Park, in São Paulo, Brazil (CHAVES; AQUINO, 2016); the fictional city Pleasantville (ERSÖZ KOÇ, 2015); the 'streetscaped' mall (KERN, 2008); Gated communities in South African security parks (HOOK; VRDOLJAK, 2002); The Citadel LA – the civic center of Los Angeles (SOJA, 1995), computer and videogames used by children (McNAMEE, 2000), and many others.

From these studies, we highlight some aspects. Rodrigo Valverde (2007) depicted three examples that reveal a 'tendency' towards heterotopia in the Largo da Carioca, central region of Rio de Janeiro: the creation of public policies for that space; different uses of that urban equipment; and the organization of social actors in the appropriation of that place. He endorses a disassociation from a discourse of the crisis of public spaces and assumes heterotopia as an alternative via for studying public spaces, suggesting that the association of the idea with the notion of public space is capable of offering a good analytical tool in which we can reflect on multiple conflicting socio-spatial representations within a same spatial setting.

Ben Gallan (2013) envisaged interpreting the temporalities of heterotopia by studying a sub-cultural music scene located in a drinking space, a pub called The Oxford Tavern, in Australia. He tries to understand youth transitions through spaces of night-time cultural infrastructure and discusses how live music venues are valued as spaces of the urban night even as generations pass and effective participation in them shifts. Gallan's study exposes how youth transitions are poorly understood in policy debates, as well as reinforces the idea that seeking a connection between understandings of youth transitions in such spaces with heterotopia's theoretical framework has practical implications for cultural policy.

Ana Paula Chaves and Julio Aquino (2016), in turn, studied the Ibirapuera Park, the most important park in the city of São Paulo, which offers innumerable leisure activities; they considered three main aspects for analysis: the functional variation of the Park's buildings linked to the installation of municipal public offices; the polyphony in manifestations of protest and conflicting spatialities; and social 'cleansing' through gender and gentrification. The narrative produced exposes traits of an 'urban heterotopia'. Even though the municipality invoked a modulation of spaces and spatial behaviors, the heterotopic daily life of Ibirapuera Park provoked an escape, induced juxtaposition, and created its own rhythms. Heterotopia's relational space not only communes there with prescriptions instituted by State power or market logics, but also with the interests of its regular users, their goals and desires. A daily counter-conduct seems to 'keep alive' the production of new spaces by inciting different uses and modes of circulation and appropriation, stimulating other spatial experiences (CHAVES; AQUINO, 2016).

Sara McNamee's (2000) work discusses how childhood is subject to increasing boundaries, especially spatial and gendered boundaries, and how 'other spaces' created through everyday leisure activities – such as videogames and reading - are used by them as strategies of escape from and resistance to control. Derek Hook and Michele Vrdoljak (2002), in turn, attempt to advance an analysis of Dainfern Estate (a South African security-park), depicted as a paradigmatic example of a 'gated community', as heterotopia. Interestingly, here an emblematic example contributes by providing a connection between references to

more global 'gating' phenomena and the specifics of the South African situation (by references directed to Dainfern Estate).

Soja (1996) applies Foucault's ideas to explore the Citadel LA and an exhibition held there in 1989 as part of a multi-year celebration of the bicentennial of the French Revolution. Soja explores Foucault's idea of a heterotopology to advance an approach for 'reading' specific sites related to Soja's conception of 'thirdspace'. Kathleen Kern's (2008) study is about lifestyle centers, which have been conceived to supply urbane 'experiences' for sophisticated wealthy shoppers, but in a hermetically 'safe' 'public space'. She problematizes "the way in which the heterotopian logic of exclusion characteristic of shopping malls and theme parks has also come to dominate the makeover and governance of public commercial streets, as the managerial techniques constructed within the confines of the mall increasingly provide the model for the organization and management of public spaces" (KERN, 2008, p. 105).

Evrin Koç (2015) explores how heterotopian principles provide a lens to negotiate forms of control and resistance. He analyses Pleasantville, a film that presents the experience of David and Jennifer, teenage twins who are transported to a 1950's TV soap opera via TV remote control. A clash of cultures provokes social unrest as the residents of this 'perfected town' become aware that the order is an outcome of submission, and challenge roles assigned to them. This sort of interplay, in heterotopian spaces, between normative disciplining and liberating transgression is often underlined.

As Heynen (2008) explains, heterotopias can "be presented as marginal spaces where social experimentations are going on, aiming at the empowerment and emancipation of oppressed and minority groups"; but can also "be presented as instruments that support the existing mechanisms of exclusion and domination, thus helping to foreclose any real possibility for change" (p. 322).

Therefore, an important elucidation we must point out is that heterotopias are not necessarily sites of resistance. Indeed, as suggested by Johnson (2006), we should complain about a tendency (*e.g.*, VALVERDE, 2007) to directly associate heterotopias to sites of resistance and transgression; this link is not substantiated. As sites of an alternative ordering, heterotopia can be a site of resistance, but it can, too, be a site of order.

## RELATED CONCEPTS... SHORTCOMINGS AND POSSIBILITIES

Johnson (2006) contrasts heterotopia with the notion of 'utopia' presented by Lefebvre. At first sight, a lefebvrian description of utopic spaces seems to resemble Foucault's notion of heterotopia, since for Lefebvre the utopic is a non-place and a real place, 'half-fictional and half-real', present and absent. For Lefebvre, utopian urban dimension emerges dialectically by 'uniting difference'. But Johnson argues that Lefebvre's notion of the utopic, and similar forms of utopianism, do not convey with Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Although Foucault describes heterotopia as 'actually existing utopia', the conception is not tied to a space that necessarily promotes promises, hope or forms of resistance or liberation. In describing the space in which we live, Foucault refers to that which 'draws us out of

ourselves' in peculiar ways by challenging the space we are acquainted with. Lefebvre's brief ideas capture this but with Foucault there is no inevitable relationship with spaces of hope. It is about conceiving space outside, or against, utopian frameworks (JOHNSON, 2006, p. 84).

A specific way of conceiving this distinction is to note the difference between the utopian Panopticon and real prisons. Most remarks and analyses of heterotopia avoid prisons and asylums as examples. These coercive places do not seem to fit into most interpretations and are frequently ignored. But unlike Bentham's Panopticon, prisons exist. In this sense, heterotopias unstitch, undermine and transform utopias; these different spaces, which contest forms of anticipatory utopianism, hold no promise or space of liberation (*idem*, p. 85).

Some critics point out how Foucault's spatial thinking neglects much of the dynamics of texture of social experience, that is, the lived textuality of spatial experience (WEST-PAVLOV, 2009). Nigel Thrift (2007), in particular, points out what he sees as some 'politically disabling' blind spots in Foucault's work. One particular 'blind spot' refers to Foucault's "seeming aversion to discussing affect explicitly" (p. 54). Thrift points out that nearly every practice Foucault is drawn to comes charged with affect, sometimes even involve bodily violence or death, but there is a gap. One possibility considered by Thrift is Foucault's concentration on power, instead of desire, a main distinction between Foucauldian and Deleuzian perspectives.

Another aspect could be, in Thrift's view, Foucault's attachment to discourse, although his "notion of discourse could hardly be more corporeal" (p. 54). Thrift recognizes Foucault's 'spatial sensibility' but complains it would be a sensibility that he did not do much with: "It seems to me that (...) Foucault tended to think of space in terms of orders, and I think that this tendency made him both alive to space as a medium through which change could be effected and, at the same time, blind to a good part of space's aliveness. Thus, when he wanted to signal this spatial quality he often found other not-categories for it, like heterotopia. (...) [I]t has been left largely to other authors to construct a Foucauldian spatiality" (p. 55).

Marco Cenzatti (2008) tries to advance, in this sense, a connection with Lefebvre's work on the production of space, specially the idea of 'spaces of representation' as an aspect that overlaps with Foucault's 'space of relations' and is relevant for the production of heterotopias.

Cenzatti points out how the ability of space to "change, vanish and re-form" picks up importance when we try to understand heterotopias (p. 80). Lefebvre sees spaces as composed of three 'moments' that coexist, interact and are produced in relation to one another: 'spatial practice', as the process of production of physical spaces (the built environment, or material space); 'representation of space', that is, a sort of 'epistemological space' – the organization of our knowledge of space, as can be found in mental images, plans and maps; and 'spaces of representation', the spaces that are directly lived, occupied and transformed by inhabiting them (lived space). This third aspect overlaps with Foucault's 'space of relations' and is relevant for the production of heterotopias. In this view, heterotopias, as spaces of representation, would be produced by the presence of a set of specific social relations and their space. As soon as the social relation and the appropriation of physical space end, both space of representation and heterotopia disappear. Foucault's principle regarding

the 'mechanisms of opening and closing' are temporal systems, responding to the presence-absence of lived space. Heterotopia is not, however, just another name for 'space of representation' because it advances in making explicit how fragmented, mobile and changing the production of space is (idem, p. 81).

In this sense, heterotopia is presented as a quality of lived space, thus spatial forms are not in themselves heterotopic, but rather can accommodate heterotopia's temporalities (HEYNEN, 2008).

## CLOSING COMMENTS AND A LINK TO PARTICULAR TIME-SPACES

We highlighted some of many studies that illustrate analytical work dedicated to urban spatialities that favor heterotopia as a thought-provoking concept. The notion of heterotopia and its 'undecidability' (HEYNEN, 2008) suggests that pursuing this idea can be a productive analytical strategy for investigating particular time-spaces.

Moreover, Foucault's thoughts on heterotopia, although marginal, "highlight how our world is full of spaces that fragment, punctuate, transform, split and govern. (...), these sites are particularly productive because they illuminate how they reflect or gather in other spaces and yet unsettle them at the same time; they provide rich pictures" (JOHNSON, 2013, p. 796). A heterotopology could be, in this sense, an exercise for providing new accounts for understudied aspects of urban policy's interface with our experiences in specific public spaces.

Let's consider, for instance, 'closed streets'. In the context of recent urban development policies, 'closed streets' refer to an initiative where local State action blocks the use of motorized vehicles in specific streets in order to enhance the use of that space by people on Sundays and holidays. In effect, in a closed street it seems we face a sort of split or shifting of urbanity as we experience it from a daily basis. In such a space, that formulates a 'break in time', is it possible we question prevailing urban conditions, maybe looking in 'the mirror' at glimpses of a 'utopia'? It contrasts with the rest of the space by creating a setting that exposes the chaos we tend to live in during the week. This kind of displacement of time matches a disruption of space since car-centered facets of urban life are temporarily 'suspended' in favor of other spatial experiences that, at least apparently, seem to embrace presence in public space and recognize our right to the city.

Our interpretation of heterotopia as other spaces that do not entail (spatial) fixity or a necessarily prescribed promise are relevant. As time-spaces, closed streets are locatable but their use is not necessarily prescribed. Before policy enactment, the idea of a right to the city seems to represent a utopia, an unreal place presenting urban society in a perfected form. Once policy is enacted, and the street is 'closed' for cars and 'open' for people, this time-space is, although transitorily, a real place experienced and lived through in multiple forms, attaining imaginative and experimental qualities, heterotopic features.

Besides, although the State can produce space in a different manner, maybe a 'compensatory' space of some kind, how are these heterotopic spaces maintained? What can

different 'formats' of public space, such as 'closed streets' or other spaces, produce in terms of new relations or values?

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