Interpreting the spatial triad
A new analytical model between form and flux, space and time

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Introduction

In reaction to the intensified urbanisation and suburbanisation processes after the Second World War, which proceeded very much under the mission statement of the city as a ‘machine’ in accordance with industrialised society, it was Henri Lefebvre’s concern to save urbanity as a place of creativity, innovation, vibrant communication, close encounters and general exchange. His guiding principle always remained the recovery of the collectively used and formed public space (Lefebvre 2009: 108). He formulated this concern in the nowadays established claim of ‘the right to the city’ (Lamare 2015).

With this objective in mind Lefebvre was quite clear about the relevance of symbolic and attributed qualities for the contested urban settings. His famous model framework for a descriptive analysis of urban spaces, the ‘spatial triad’, already integrated conceptually the dimensions of the physical space, the spatial practices and the notion of concepts, perceptions and projections related to it. Among the three constitutive elements of his spatial triad: the ‘representation of space’ (concepts, plans, policy statements), the ‘spatial practices’ (daily routines of people) and the ‘representational space’ – it is foremost the latter which is the realm of symbolic and ascribed attributes, projected meanings and qualities (Goonewardena et al. 2008: 27–45).

In his later works, Henri Lefebvre also came to the notion that the qualities of physical-spatial situations and settings in the urban environment can be read as space-time-functions, as what he described as ‘rhythms’. With his last book Rhythmanalysis, he substantially introduced the dimension of time as a mode or tool to analyse urban situations in an open, rather ‘impressionistic’ way (Lefebvre 2004; Mareggi 2013: 5). But despite Lefebvre’s suggestions, the dimension of ‘time’ has found only limited analytical appliance in geographical and mobility research. Though the concept of ‘space-time-design’ is firmly established in geography and planning studies today, the topics evolve mainly around questions of organising time, or the social effects of organised time, in short: ‘efficiencies versus inefficiencies’ (Henckel et al. 2013: 99–117; 2007).

With reference to these opening observations concerning Lefebvre’s work, we suggest a new model approach, by which Lefebvre’s spatial triad can be linked in a functional way with his ideas about rhythmic time-functions in spatial, especially urban, situations. Though we
developed our own model approach fully independent from Lefebvre’s oeuvre, by revising the works of Lefebvre, his ideas indicate some resounding similarities to our own concerns.

However, we are convinced that our suggested descriptive and analytical model can be helpful to illuminate and to operationalise Lefebvre’s spatial triad in certain respects for practical use, especially with regard to the proceedings in the sphere of the representational space and its relation to spatial practice. As an open and flexible, yet structured method, we hope that our model brings some of Lefebvre’s ideas to life for planners and practitioners.

Nevertheless, the original aim of our own model approach was not so much the problem of urban space and its usage, or the right to the city (RTC), but improving our understanding of the contemporary reality of transport and mobility by incorporating individual and collective relations to spatial qualities as stimuli for mobile behaviour. Fundamental to our approach was the insight that ‘mobility’ is not simply the physical movement of people and goods, but a creation of social patterns in the fabric of society as in the individual life.

We recognise the parallels of our own approach to Lefebvre’s reflections specifically in the understanding about the interrelationship of time perceptions, the projections of meaning and the experience of spatial settings. Quite similar to Lefebvre, we defined the motives for mobile behaviour between a triangle of objective (such as distances, physical conditions and obstacles), subjective (time qualities of spaces) and projective factors (needs, emotions, imaginations).

All in all, the time aspect became the central factor: in our opinion, and in our reading of Lefebvre, it is the dimension of time which is the critical variable in processing projections and symbolic appropriations to spatial settings. From our own research experience (to which we will refer on occasion) and the assessment of similar studies, it is very much the individual time experience and the reaction to it, which transports the passive evaluations and the active projections onto spatial conditions: cultural and collective memories, learned and consumed artistic interpretations of urban settings and realities are very much transmitted by time-related representations.

Transformation points between spatial practices and representational space

We can observe daily many such conflicting space-time functions between spatial practices and the representational space in the form of transformative situations in our urban routines and surroundings. We like to call such situations ‘Transformation Points’, because at those points our perceptions of spatial and mobility-related needs, wishes and realities may change, or become conscious to our mind. We just want to bring the five most prominent examples of such Transformation Points in our contemporary lives to attention, each representing one specific observational level. These observational levels we want to address as ‘Landscapes’, a terminology that will be explained in detail further down. It has to be stressed, however, that transformative processes affecting one of those observational ‘Landscapes’ inevitably influence the other layers as well.

Transformation Points regarding the Nature Landscape

Starting with the most archetypal geographical setting of any kind, the Nature Landscape, we can currently observe how urban mobility-related qualities and practices invade progressively into natural and rural areas. The resulting conflicts are very much about the question as to what extent the natural environment should keep its unadulterated qualities, or whether careful interventions for recreational and sportive activities should be allowed in line with social
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needs and practices: wilderness versus the parkland-ideal. The combat terms of ‘ecology’ or ‘green’ do not so much solve these conflicts, but rather obscure the fact of competing notions of nature. Notorious are the clashes in nature resorts between traditional hikers and new sports like mountain-biking – often resulting in violent outbursts and even assaults.

Transformation Points regarding the Mobility Landscape

The sphere of classical transport and traffic activities, the Mobility Landscape, represents itself today very much as the battlefield between established goals for reducing or abating transport activities, and the thrust to modernise public and private transport systems. Planners and politicians today are torn about whether existing trends and developments should just be adjusted by planning activities or redirected towards utopian ideals. Such unresolved targeting can be observed specifically in ambitious ventures to develop once again holistic drafts for the future mobilities of entire nations, like the Vision Mobilität Schweiz 2050 (Stölzle et al. 2015). It goes without saying that such visions of mobility are intensely related to specific ideas about urbanity – notions of an assumed hyper-modernity to be realised in an agglomerated urbanised environment.

Transformation Points regarding the Settlement Landscape

Closely related to the speculations concerning the Mobility Landscape are therefore the topical debates on settlement structures: are new residential areas destined to become the homes of a commuting population, the backdrop of multi-local biographies, or new anchors of locally contained life-styles? To what extent should the workplace be integrated into the home? Are classical neighbourhoods hence to be recreated? Do new residents adapt to established communities or create new neighbourhoods? This discussion is reflected for example in new town planning schemes in the region of Zurich, Switzerland (Meier Dallach 2016).

Transformation Points regarding the Communication Landscape

The fourth level represents the most dynamic and expanding of mobility activities of our time: the Communication Landscape. The related potentials, challenges and even threats are still not yet resolved – popular reactions ponder between the still-powerful promise of an ever-greater expansion of personal communication skill and ideals of voluntary restraint, even ascetic usage. This communication layer of mobility activities is therefore today the centre of most foci scrutinising future life-styles and place-making. But, in addition, euphoric visions, scepticism and pessimistic outlooks are on the rise. The prospects of the new and still emerging Communication Landscapes are relevant here.

Transformation Points regarding the Societal Landscape

All these preceding topics culminate at last on the level of the Social or Societal Landscape: how valid are old neighbourhoods, how viable are new forms of familiarity? With what instruments could social relations be enhanced; which infrastructural conditions are needed? And what are the roles of institutions or private initiatives for these processes? Aspects of the spatial and architectural planning may promote or obstruct the formation of new and agreeable forms of cohabitation, but the actors involved are decisive in terms of their value orientations and plans for life (Meier Dallach 2016).
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Specific Transformation Points are Indicators and Examples of new Crises of Mobility, of our Perceptions of Space-Time Qualities

These five Transformation Points do indeed dominate consecutively or at the same time all our contemporary controversies about mobility and the urban space (see Figure 18.1). However, it is not to be forgotten that these phenomena are embedded in the currents of the great global transformation. The European migration crisis since 2015 highlights how mobility means so much more than transport. The latest images of an assumedly triumphant Euro-Atlantic modernisation paradigm – like opening the massive railway transversal of the Alps (NEAT) – are blatantly confronted with starkly differing images of another form of globalisation. The achievements of the technical mega-structure, defying all geographic-historical realities of the European collective memory, are suddenly taken into question. The still prevalent assumption in many fields of traffic and mobility research that accessibility and reachability are the most relevant concerns seems obsolete (Figure 18.2).

The model approach: representational space between form and flux

With reference to these presented five Transformation Points and their respective Landscape-layers, we now want to draft our suggested model approach in detail. For this we have chosen four main thematic areas or foci. In each of those focal areas we introduce some concepts and terminology. These focal points will build on each other, culminating in an overall theoretical and historical framework. We start with outlining our understanding of the relationship between individual spatial experiences and projective expectations, between the physical and the symbolic/emotional dimensions of mobility (Focus I). Then we will introduce our analytical modes of ‘Form’ and ‘Flux’ (Focus II). Our already introduced term of ‘Landscapes’ will be explained

Figure 18.1  Mobility causes experiences of transformations and breaks by the effects of objective, subjective and projective impressions: the five most expressive Transformation Points of the landscape layers in our time. Source: cultur prospectiv Zurich Switzerland, (author) conference presentations and papers.

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Focus I: Mobility – a symbolic as much as a physical experience

By now it is well accepted and established in transport as in mobility research that mobility events are triggered not only by objective obligations and rational choices, but by emotional and symbolic meanings as well. However, there is still some confusion and unease among classical mobility researchers about how to describe and analyse this dimension in a systematic way. Though it is also accepted that these emotional motivations are somehow related to the physical qualities of spatial settings, this insight is still more based on pragmatic observations, less on systematic research. There is a lack of comprehensive understanding about how to link the experience of physical movement with emotional and symbolic needs and motivations. In our first focal area we therefore want to give some initial indications about our understanding of this interaction between individual physical mobility experiences and their interpretative sphere.

All of us are aware, though not always reflective, about how mobility creates sensations of movement, allowing us not simply to endure or to tolerate, but to enjoy the impressions of acceleration, braking or resting and relishing in situations of exertions and relaxation. Though in practice well known and understood by the motor industry, this passive emotional experience is hardly scientifically researched, with some exceptions for the public transport sector (Schiefelbusch 2008). Similarly, we are personally quite aware of the symbolic dimensions of travel and transport, emotions of familiarity, crossings of personal or public boundaries, visible or hidden, events of estrangement and arrivals. Personal perceptions of mobility situations usually oscillate between fluidity and arrestment, excitement and contemplation, even tensions and
boredom. And such emotional and symbolic experiences are essentially caused, enhanced and transmitted by given spatial surroundings, like architecture, a busy shopping road, the quietness of a secluded residential area, by the impressive presence of a cathedral or the commotion of an illuminated tourism hotspot. Spaces are therefore firstly defined and rhythmised by physical sequences and material formations.

This array of physical factors we subsume under the notion of ‘Form’ (relating to ‘Gestalt’ in German), encompassing all observable images of shapes and patterns in our physical world: the size and design of houses and buildings, artistic details of architectural forms, the outlay of roads, the shape of squares and places, the composition and configuration of greens and wastelands. Geographers and planners are well aware of these factors, pondering about practical measurements and material devices to create the ‘beautiful city’ and to enhance the public acceptance of planning provisions or infrastructural implantations (Lynch 1960; Florida et al. 2009; Leslie et al. 2005: 227–236).

But we want to turn the attention to another, mostly overlooked category for the personal perception and evaluation of spatial and mobility situations: the time dimension, or better, the time experience. It is the time dimension by which the symbolic and emotional quality of places and spaces transmits itself most vividly. Time, as we all know, is nothing objectively fixed in our perceptions, not a universally and constant quality, but it is flexible, can expand and contract and can leave us in a mood of relaxation or distress, depending on exterior obligations, constraints and also by how comfortable we feel in our environment. Thus spaces, like the natural landscape, an urban environment or a specific transport infrastructure, are not just containers of physical objects – natural or artificial – but are laden with intrinsic time qualities as well. These time qualities vary between tranquillity and speed, sedateness and change, expressiveness and regression. Time is therefore an emotionally highly loaded quality and a main cause for spatially related sensations of attraction or repulsion, but also for the symbolic meaning for inhabitants, commuters or passers-by (Heinickel 2013: 201–203). These time-related factors for spatial appeal we subsume under the term of ‘Flux’.

And there is a third dimension which influences the human valuation of spaces and accompanying mobility events: the personally and collectively motivated projections, which can transform any environment or setting either into a backdrop, into a screen or into an image, but also to an inner landscape. But these projections do not occur at random and are not detached from the respective settings they are directed at. These projections correspond closely with the endogenous material elements as with the intrinsic time qualities of those settings. Such projections are most easily to be observed in leisure and tourist travel activities (Heinickel 2013; 2005). They constitute the ‘tourist gaze’, which may charge surroundings and landscapes with varying meanings, depending on the individual, their own cultural background, but also on the cultural outlook provided by different historical epochs (Urry and Larssen 2011).

Now we can sketch these preliminary considerations about the interaction of space-time relations and the connected human projections and expectations into a first simple model. In this we can differentiate between the passive level of experienced spatial (Form/Gestalt: G) and time-related qualities (Flux: F), and a level of active projections, namely demands, wants, desires and expectations directed towards specific spatial destinations (Figure 18.3).

It is easy to imagine how these three kinds of differing factors – objective spatial, subjective space-time perceptions and active projections – shape our reality of mobility experiences and intertwine and may cause an array of clashes and conflicts, because the experience of competing space-time relations with social demands causes psychological stress. These arenas of conflict have been called ‘Transformation Points’ (see above). Transformation Points can be interpreted as functions of personal experiences within given spatial settings and projected wants and needs.
versus those settings. They provoke transformative processes, changes or alterations in the daily routine or demands of mobility and may influence subconsciously allegedly rational decision-making about mobility styles, strategies and adaptations.

**Focus II: ‘Form’ and ‘Flux’: the central denominators for spatial qualities and mobility impressions**

In our second focal point we want to develop the idea of ‘Form’ (G) and ‘Flux’ (F) even further and give illustrative examples to elucidate our terminology. As stated above, ‘Form’ and ‘Flux’ refer to objective as well as to subjective factors, which generate the impressions of a specific space-time relation in a given environment.

‘Form’, as we have seen, refers to the stable, the lasting qualities of environments, like the features of the natural landscape, but also of man-made structures of buildings and infrastructure. For the observer these various but constant features cause the impression of relative stagnation, a rather static, stable and motionless setting. In other words: an extreme introverted situation. ‘Flux’, in contrast, represents the factors of instability, of movement and ruptures. Most noticeable are motions caused by human activities: traffic, of course, but also other occupations like building and working situations, leisure activities like sports and even communication; these result in impressions of constant alterations and ruptures, transformations, pace, even general acceleration and restlessness, and are therefore extreme extroverted situations. ‘Form’ factors are part of the natural world as well as a result of human activities, whereas ‘Flux’ factors, according to our understanding, are created exclusively by humans.

As to the problem of space-time functions, uncompromised Form gives the environment, natural or man-made, the possibility to perform all its inherent potential of stability, which

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**Figure 18.3** Mobility causes experiences of transformations and breaks by the effects of objective, subjective and projective impressions. Source: ScienceScapes Berlin Germany, (author) conference presentations and papers.
brings specific details and structures to the full awareness of the individual. A relaxed and concentrated focus on those elements and their quality is possible. Under the conditions of extreme Flux, however, the stable qualities of a landscape or urban situation may be totally lost to the subjective impression of time constrains, with impressions of constant flow and even speed. In general, though, the experience of mobility proceeds constantly between Flux and Form, and not only in a physical sense, but also symbolically and emotionally – as varying commotions will transmit sensations of time pressures or urgency, independent from our own personal state or social obligations: the contrast between sitting in a cathedral or at a busy train station.

According to our basic model, environments can therefore be assessed by differing gradients between those two factors, between introversion and extraversion. This flexible and open scale between Form and Flux allows us to equally evaluate urban environments, rural landscapes, building ensembles or street situations, using a coherent terminology and comprehension (Figure 18.4).

For the purpose of research and analytical operationalisation, it has to be emphasised, however, that the specific scale and criteria for Form and Flux factors have to be defined and adjusted to the specific environment under research. Flux and Form factors vary of course starkly when ascribed to an industrial city or to a medieval town of half-timbered houses; and introverted and extraverted situations in a mountainous region express themselves differently than at the seaside. And applying a defined scale between Form and Flux only makes sense if the settings under scrutiny belong to the same spatial context of a researched city or natural environment. A direct equation of single situations between different urbanities and even natural landscapes is therefore not advisable if not impossible. Nevertheless, this model approach does allow a comparison of one typified urbanity to another: such a comparison was ventured for instance for the urban contexts of Zurich and Berlin, and their respective consequences for stimulating regional and multilocal mobility patterns, or rhythms (Meier Dallach et al. 2003: 175–185).

**Figure 18.4** Highly differing settings in the urban realities of Berlin: sometimes Flux factors are more prevalent, sometimes Form factors. *Source: cultur prospectiv Zurich Switzerland, (author) conference presentations and papers.*
Focus III: Landscapes – five observational and analytical layers

As already introduced and exemplified at the beginning of this chapter, we distinguish five significant observational and descriptive perspectives or layers, called ‘Landscapes’: the Nature Landscape (Naturlandschaft), the Mobility or Transport Landscape (Verkehrslandschaft), the Settlement Landscape (Siedlungslandschaft) and the Communication Landscape (Kommunikationslandschaft). At this point we want to explain our notion of ‘Landscapes’ further. Again we have to stress: this term of ‘Landscape’ does not refer to the classical term of a landscape as the totality of material elements in an environment. ‘Landscape’ in our sense is a descriptive and analytical tool to structure and group the various material elements of Form and the Flux factors alike in a given spatial setting. It is the term of ‘spatial setting’ with which we address the totality of a specific urban situation.

In our understanding, the Form (G) and Flux (F) factors express themselves on the various analytical Landscape levels within such settings. Therefore all five defined Landscapes can be identified and addressed in any given setting at the same time! Moreover, several of observed and identified elements of Form- and Flux-factors may even be attributed to different analytical Landscapes within one setting.

These Landscape-layers can be hierarchically ordered, bottom up, according to their assumed impact qualities on settings, starting at the ground level with the profoundest characteristics, the Nature Landscape elements, over which the other Landscape layers are positioned. What we receive is something like a tectonic model, and we can imagine how the lower layers or Landscapes influence the shape of the levels above, all together creating a characteristic and tangible ‘surface’ of space-time functions, namely urban rhythms. But it should not be forgotten that these layers with their respective elements are volatile and changeable over time. Landscapes in our sense are nothing fixed and defined for all times, but apt to change. That is why we like to represent them as broken lines in our sketch (see Figure 18.5).

Figure 18.5 The five landscape layers can be imagined like a tectonic structure – and like a tectonic structure, these layers and their respective elements (symbolised by the broken lines) are volatile and changeable over time. Source: ScienceScapes Berlin Germany, (author) conference presentations and papers.
The Nature Landscape addresses the most profound spatial characteristics, because those qualities are the most lasting in any given setting. On top is the layer of the Mobility or Transport Landscape, as the transport infrastructure influences the quality of given settings like no other human intervention today. The shape of layers further up are influenced by the lower strata respectively, but still, as we send down some testing tubes into the tectonic ground, we would discover different relief formations of Form and Flux factors, depending on what layer we research. Therefore we would like to add some remarks about the respective effects of those Landscape layers for our contemporarily experienced space-time functions, or rhythms.

The Nature Landscape (Naturlandschaft)

The Nature Landscape contains the potentially highest grade of pure Form elements. Here we find the most constant physical conditions, promoting strong perceptions of introversion. Hence, the Nature Landscape offers to the observer the primal experience of ‘being’ – a quality in high demand in modern times! But even nature was and is transformed by human activities. Today, Natural Landscapes differ from each other not only due to their own inherent qualities. But also by the intensity by which human intervention introduced pathways and roads, farmed land, buildings and settlements, implementing considerable amounts of Flux factors: the transformation from untouched nature to the highly cultivated landscapes of agricultural and industrial society. Today, even many nature resorts rather resemble carefully tended and managed parkland, and the impassable characteristics made way for more targeted and defined movements.

The Mobility or Transport Landscape (Verkehrslandschaft)

The mobility and transport infrastructure appeared historically as the first human artefact upon nature, even before settlements – from the paths of hunter-gatherers to the great transgressional routes of the nomadic peoples. From then to now, with our modern motorways and railway lines, the Mobility Landscape carries the central notion of experiencing ‘being here and there’. Because mobility means essentially movement between defined points, leaving and returning, and eventually staying in a destination of purpose, in other words: movement is a relational activity and creates a dialogue between fixed settings. Such an understanding is dissenting with the still dominating notion of mobility as an autonomous reality between locations. The infrastructural elements of the Mobility Landscape bring out the strongest Flux factors of all landscape layers. Hence, the Mobility Landscape affects all other landscape levels.

The Settlement Landscape (Siedlungslandschaft)

Similar to the Mobility Landscape, the Settlement Landscape has experienced dramatic changes over the ages, and especially during recent decades. Urbanisation today is in the full grip of globalising processes. Habitation as the classical setting for ‘being at-home’ – housing, sheltering and guarding the closest social relationships – increasingly gets under pressure. Historically the Settlement Landscape stresses sedentary and bonding qualities: ‘being-at-home’ or ‘being-here’ are its classical expressions. Today, this shell for securing the most personal existence becomes more and more fragile: various factors may disturb, compromise or even destroy this intimate bond. However, in the highly urbanised environments we still find the entire spectrum of potential living conditions, the most varied compositions of living quarters, business areas and production, entertainment and shopping, showing all the contradictions between the illuminated, silent, chaotic and wild city.
Historically the factors of Form signified most prominently in the Settlement Landscape, but since the industrial revolution with its modern transport means and infrastructures that has changed profoundly. Today, the extreme influence of the Mobility Landscape is almost at par with the stable characteristics in the urban environment. And what is more: currently even city planning and the architectural designs are often subjected to the logic and the requirements of Flux – for instance, housing estates are frequently structured accordingly to transport considerations. But still, buildings and quarters, despite their open and ill-defined interspaces, contradict and even break the forces of Flux. The resulting rhythms are often paradoxical.

The Communication Landscape (Kommunikationslandschaft)

Ever more important in our contemporary life is the dimension of the Communication Landscape. It is probably the most dynamic factor in our everyday life, introducing extreme levels of almost constant ‘togetherness’ in a virtual reality. The new communication technology makes us part of a network, of a grid, changes traditional forms of communion, superseding established forms of ‘neighbourhood’, and with it the familiar coordinates of time-space relations. Virtual communication surpasses frequently even the Mobility Landscape with its dynamic Flux factors. ‘Being together’ has become a highly obligatory form of existence, being player or subject of information channels, overbidding time and space. Conventional neighbourhoods and private encounters, with their necessity to coordinate time and space, are increasingly replaced by these new forms of socialising.

The Societal or Social Landscape (Soziallandschaft)

The Societal or Social Landscape unites all forms of (direct, not virtual) social activity, the social interaction of persons and institutions. The Social Landscape can be read as a function of all the other Landscape-perspectives. Because sociability is based on all forms of exchanges and activities, in contrast to the Communication Landscape, this form of ‘togetherness’ is neither separated from spatial conditions, nor segregated from the daily chores and obligations. ‘Being with’ is the central expression on this level of observation. In stark contrast to this, the dominating observable space-time dynamism is disintegration!

On the surface, the profile of the Social Landscape is most visible and most easily researched. Therefore, the Social Landscape reigns supreme for observational and analytical purposes, because all the effects and consequences of the various Landscapes converge on this highest level (see Figure 18.6). It is also the classical arena for all conflicts about the ‘right to the city’ (RTC). The Social Landscape therefore is ideally suited for studies comparing contrasting urbanities and their inherent rhythms.

Summary (Focus IV) – from description to conception

By combining our conceptual considerations concerning Form (G) and Flux (F) factors and the various observational Landscapes into one graphic depiction, a possible periodisation suggests itself. As the five Landscape layers present themselves in their relative dynamics between the two poles of Form (G) and Flux (F), the typified space-time functions, as described under Focus III, indicate a successive acceleration of Flux dynamics over time. And this acceleration corresponds with an evolutionary or historical logic, as demonstrated in Figure 18.6.

As a first historical period we may identify the chthonic age, the time of the most archaic forms of human life, when the conditions of the Nature Landscape reigned supreme even in
the artistic self-presentations of humans, as the impressive cave paintings of Ice Age Europe demonstrate. In that time period it was essential for humans to adapt to and to interact with the landscape, and to communicate something with and through the landscape, to inscribe themselves onto the landscape.

The second historical period could be called the time of residential existence. At this stage, constant settlements started to redefine the landscape but also agricultural activities. It is in this period that the Natural Landscape gradually gives way to garden or park-like structured nature, showing Flux elements increasingly as part of the natural setting. This acceleration of rhythm by Flux elements continues during the following third and fourth periods of modernisation. This leads to an increasing number of transformative situations, or Transformation Points in the daily human experience. The result is the experience of major social and cultural disintegration processes.

Nevertheless, it becomes apparent today that this thrust towards hyper-modernity and hyper-mobility is somehow broken, finds a new resistance, gets resented, objected and actively encountered: the intensified experience of disintegration provokes reactions, with an abrupt reorientation to reclaim space and time (Animeto 2015) – a movement which in its ideals somehow indicates back to the chthonic period. The resulting new utopias, for instance the new urbanism, voice their concerns about losing the ‘authenticity’ of places, namely the disappearance of ‘history’. Whereas imperfection, the irregularity of structures and places, and the existence of non-defined public spaces are interpreted as tokens of a genuine existence – and as a safeguard against too ‘sleek’ forms of routines and neighbourhoods (Heinickel 2013).

**Conclusions**

Despite the sentiments set out above for regaining more satisfying space-time relations, urban planners, architects, decision-makers, public transport and automotive providers are
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still setting their hopes predominantly onto the introduction of new digital communication and information devices – promoting even more acceleration! Being ‘smart’ is still marketed as ‘doing everything at all places and times’. Data crunching seems therefore to be considered as the ideal solution for everything: not only for the introduction of alternative transport modes, the endorsement of new mobility routines, the establishment of alternative destinations, but also for guiding settlement choices. The urban dream is still sold as optimised space-time efficiency for everybody in their daily life, be it for transport or residential purposes.

Overlooked are the longings for retreat and intimate communication. While ignoring the deeper motives for movements and voices reclaiming the space, namely the urge to reclaim time, many new planning and mobility tools, organisational devices and infrastructural sanctions would seem to be in danger of becoming detached from the reality of individual mobility needs and daily routines. And indeed, unprepared planners and decision-makers are regularly running into resistance and protests against their well-meaning planning schemes.

On the other hand, debates, concepts and struggles for the right to the city (RTC) must address more than just accessibility and affordability of urban areas for the wider public. Hence, with the support of our model approach, we want to turn the attention to the importance of location-related space-time functions. Concepts of RTC have to find their own answers to the trends of codification, virtualisation and technical deprivation of authentic and personal autonomies in handling space and time.

References


