Textualities of the city – from the legibility of urban space towards social and natural *others* in planning

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Abstract. 'Text' has been a frequent notion in analytical conceptualizations of landscape and the city. It is mostly found in analyses of textual representations or suggestions concerning a metaphor of "reading" an (urban) landscape. In the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics the idea of the text of St. Petersburg has also been applied in analysing particular cities as organizing topics in literature and in culture more widely, but it has not happened to an equal degree in studies of actual urban spaces. The understanding of text as a semiotic system and mechanism is, however, more promising than revealed by these conceptions. Some potential can be made apparent by relating this textual paradigm to a more pragmatic understanding of the city and its planning. My project in this paper is to uncover an analytical framework focusing on the concepts of 'text', 'textualization' and 'texting' in studying the planning of urban environment. The paper observes the case of the urban planning process of the Tartu city centre in Estonia during 2010–2016, and is particularly concerned with the roles that urban nature has acquired in the process of this "textualization" of the local environment, societal ideals, practices and possible *others*.

Keywords: urban text; city as text; textualization; Tartu-Moscow School; sociosemiotics; Tartu; urban planning

When the city has been conceptualized in terms of text, the notion is not necessarily restricted to literary metaphor or even discursive formations. Considering that the human umwelt is *textual* (Deely 2009: 84), textualization (and texting) would be the central process related to it – particularly in human relationships to environment. In this context, 'textualization' would refer to organizing the environment as an object humans relate to and deal with, and 'texting' to generation of particular manifestations, for example, verbal or visual representations of the environment. Urban planning is an example of the activity of textualization and texting – it is a

process that is largely carried out by verbal, visual and behavioural expressions that can be considered texts. In a very general sense, urban planning can be understood as the generation of a model of an urban area in the future. In its essence, it is an activity of semiotization that has a tangible influence on the material world. It is a form of "dealing" with space. It is a form of semiotic management that involves the dimensions of interpretation of urban space and practices within it, reorganization of these practices, as well as the dimensions of negotiating a cultural world image and self-images and their relationship to the physical space and practices in it. Thus, against the background of three dominant paradigms of the city as text, this paper aims to discuss the applicability of the concept of 'text' to the city from a more processual and sociosemiotic point of view according to which the text of the city appears as a manifestation of textualization, texting and interaction. This approach is closely connected to the sociosemiotic paradigm (see Randviir 2014; Randviir, Cobley 2010) and to the pragmatism-based understanding of urban planning as an interpretive process and social communicative practice, as outlined by Hilda J. Blanco (1992). In practical analysis, the sociosemiotic approach can emphasize a variety of aspects including power relations, interactions, objectivation of communal ideals and world images. A particularly important issue discussed here in the framework of the topic of textualizing nature is the semiotic generation and involvement of other subjects. The topic of semiotic management of subjects and their relationship to the urban environment clearly deserves more attention. For example, children, disabled persons, socially or culturally diverging groups provide special kinds of subject-environment relationship; in addition, the ways of semiotic construction and presence of social and cultural *others* in the planning process should be studied.

In a most general sense, the notion of 'text' can refer to the nature of a semiotic object being a limited expressional whole that is organized, coded and related to its context (see e.g. Nöth 1990: 331–333). The dominant position of linguistics and philology as a model for humanities (also known as 'the linguistic and literary turn') has brought along more restricted interpretations of cities in literary terms. A methodological development relates to the idea of the equality of various forms of semiotic systems (for example, literary texts, everyday behaviours, as well as urban space) in culture; the domain of applied analysis emphasizes again the use of verbal communication and literature as research material. As an example, the communicative sequence '*author-text-reader*' is a model that leads to posing particular kinds of questions, for example, related to the role of the reader. Any terminological system brings along its own ways of outlining aspects of the object domain, as does the idea of urban text, providing a particular type of human subject as the reader of urban text. At the same time, the 'reader' of the city does not fully conform to the 'reader' of a verbal text.

Three main paradigms of urban space as text can be outlined, each focusing on a different kind of relationship between human subjects and the urban space. First, in the human relationship to the urban environment, the material urban space is *readable*, both for mere orientation purposes as well as for more complex interpretations (Lynch 1960; Barthes 1982[1964]; Widgren 2004). Second, urban space is a result of expressions of power relations of various (collective) subjects, thus it is a *text* in the sense of a pattern of traces of discourse (e.g. Barthes 1986[1967]; Duncan 1990). Third, a city, its history and space form a particular recurring structure that organizes a whole complex of expressions in culture (Mints *et al.* 1984; Toporov 1984; Lotman 1984).

These ideas focus on urban space or conceptions concerning the city that are based on more general processes of relating to the environment. In the following, a brief overview of these three directions forms the basis from which to take step towards studying textualization and texting in the urban planning situation of the urban centre of Tartu.

Readability and legibility
of the (material) urban space and landscape

In his book *The Image of the City* that has become a foundational work for urban semiotics, Kevin Lynch discusses the textual character of urban space from the point of view of its users and planners. While not employing the metaphor of a literary text, he sets as his task to research the conceptually broader *legibility* of urban space:

> This book will consider the visual quality of the American city by studying the mental image of that city which is held by its citizens. It will concentrate especially on one particular visual quality: the apparent clarity or "legibility" of the cityscape. By this we mean the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern. Just as this printed page, if it is legible, can be visually grasped as a related pattern of recognizable symbols, so a legible city would be one whose districts or landmarks or pathways are easily identifiable and are easily grouped into an over-all pattern. […] Although clarity or legibility is by no means the only important property of a beautiful city, it is of special importance when considering environments at the urban scale of size, time, and complexity. To understand this, we must consider not just the city as a thing in itself, but the city being perceived by its inhabitants. (Lynch 1960: 2–3)

As Lynch concentrates on the material environment, he is looking for material characteristics that would be related to traits of *identity* and *structure* in a mental image. He links legibility to emphasized *visibility* and *imageability*. Identifying the

latter with legibility, he defines it as "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer" (Lynch 1960: 9).

More recently, Mats Widgren has presented his research problem regarding reading the landscape in a way somewhat similar to Lynch's: "Through reflection and deconstruction, is it at all possible at this time to maintain the idea that landscapes can be read and analysed in a scientific manner?" (Widgren 2004: 455). He specifies: "My use of landscape "reading" refers to the everyday practice of landscape reading, which is also the first step in a scientific analysis of landscapes" (Widgren 2004: 455). Leaving explicitly aside the discussion on reading the landscape as a signifying system (see Duncan, Duncan 2009; Duncan 1990), Widgren understands 'reading' in relation to the potential of understanding and interpreting landscape in daily life:

> People do read landscapes and landscape representations daily. Landscape images form an important part of the media flow. Advertisements, propaganda, rock videos, etc., all make efficient use of landscapes in conveying ideas and feelings, and thus make use of our everyday understanding and subconscious reading of landscape sceneries. (Widgren 2004: 460)

Central aspects of this kind of landscape reading, and especially of conscious engagement with it, are: (1) recognition of forms; (2) finding functions of these forms; (3) seeing the past and ongoing processes in the landscape. This kind of reading itself presumes (4) knowledge about the cultural context – lacking sufficient knowledge of the cultural context, including processes beneath the forms, can be a reason for different ways of reading (Widgren 2004: 461–462).

In order to consider reading the landscape as dealing particularly with *text* and not with a general flow of forms and significations, the dimension of the whole should be added. This is exactly what Roland Barthes suggested to be the outstanding function of the Eiffel tower: "This bird's-eye view, which each visitor to the Tower can assume in an instant for his own, gives us the world to *read* and not only to perceive" (Barthes 1982[1964]: 242).

City as a text – actualization of discourse in urban space

The same motif that Barthes pointed at in the case of the Eiffel Tower was employed by Michel de Certeau (1984[1980]) using the example of the World Trade Centre in New York. While Barthes emphasizes the chance of grasping and conceptualizing by the viewer, de Certeau instead refers to another aspect of urban textuality. Namely this whole, *the most immoderate of human texts* (Certeau 1984: 92) that can be grasped from the position above, presents a planned and constructed structure as

an *expression* of those in power. As a legible and holistic expression of domination to be grasped from above, this text is opposed to practices at the street level. The latter form enunciations and rhetorics of practices, but not a text with the same kind of holistic dimension. Thus, de Certeau locates the urban text on the level of the generation of space and not on that of the practices of using the urban space.

The idea that urban space and landscape is a text expressing power relations is also used by James Duncan. He focuses on power relations that a researcher should find from the landscape either by reading it as a palimpsest or through means of textual analysis. Understanding the landscape as a palimpsest involves the idea of the landscape as a partly erased and partly over-written document of the past:

> Landscapes were seen as palimpsests (documents partially erased and overlain with newer forms and patterns) holding a wealth of information and clues to their histories by those who were able to recognize significant features and relate these to a larger system of landscape features. (Duncan, Duncan 2009: 228)

In contrast, reading landscape as text would involve a plurality of interpretations and also a plurality of forces influencing the social and political production of landscape:

> […] no perspective is thoroughly objective; all perspectives are partial in significant and interesting ways. Given this belief, post-structural research on landscapes tends to focus on different readings or interpretations. These readings are not only individual, but can be understood as shaped by cultural discourses with multiple and complex histories that can only be very partially traced. The meanings that landscape researchers seek in this case can only be speculatively reconstructed. The principal expertise required would not be in decoding artifacts in the field, but in broad-based research into the material (including textual) conditions of the social and political production of meanings. (Duncan, Duncan 2009: 230)

The text of landscape is thus not "innocent" and needs the expertise from various disciplines to be read.

Duncan understands reading the landscape, first, in relation to writing the landscape, that is, the expression and over-writing by someone; and, second, in relation to interpretation and decoding in line with Roland Barthes's mythologies (Barthes 1957). Accordingly, we can trace the idea that the reader of the city (that is, whoever wishes to make sense of the city – a tourist, a researcher, an inhabitant) should read (find out or decode) expressions of the creators of urban forms. In the context of cultural geography, the Marxist idea that each social formation creates its own space can be referred to and, accordingly, reading would be the uncovering of those remains (traces, heritage, residues). In such a context, the city

or, more particularly, urban space is itself a text, a materially actualized pattern of semiotic systems and processes (or discourses and power relations). In his research on Kandyan landscape, James Duncan (1990: 4) claims that "landscapes are communicative devices that encode and transmit information" and that landscape as a text can be studied in an intertextual context, at least partly through the material of (verbal) texts and with the help of analytic textual tools (including rhetorical and discursive principles), as well as in the processes of social life.

Beyond discursive ideological writing and reading of landscape, urban space also has the function of communicating practical guidance; that is, particular ways of life in community have been crystallized in material space which again functions as artefactual guidance for acting in everyday situations. Thus, the meaning of a spatial form is not merely "the function it makes possible" as Umberto Eco (1986[1968]: 60) claims, but often even further, the meaning is found in ways of living and behaving that the spatial form persuades to follow. In other words, it is not the meaning potential but actualized meaning in a system of practices and cultural context. In conclusion, urban space can be a deliberately written text as an ideological rhetoric and intentionally written practical guidance, but it can also be a text not intended for communication or persuasion. Instead, it can be an expression of a particular understanding of the world and particular "normal" manners – and by that still legitimating the world image that serves as its ground and leaving it to be negotiated by coming generations. In a similar sense, Barthes claimed that the city is a true text, an inscription of man in space (Barthes 1986[1967]: 90). However, in contrast to Duncan's search for the semantics of the text or the discourse of landscape in its production, Barthes emphasises the focus on the play of spatial signifiers and multiple readings of the city as the way in which urban text works (Barthes 1986[1967]:97).

Text of a city in culture – the text of St. Petersburg

Diverging from the direct model of writing and reading a city, the cultural semiotic perspective offered by the Tartu-Moscow School suggests the study of the city as a text functioning in culture which is seen as a textual system. Instead of reading and writing, i.e. urban languages and expression of power, the main focus here is on the meaning generative functioning of urban text in an intertextual context, particularly in the field of literature.

> As any other city, so does P. [St. Petersburg] have its own "language". It speaks to us with its streets, squares, waters, islands, gardens, buildings, monuments, people, history, ideas and can be understood as a kind of heterogenous *text* into which a general idea has been written in, the latter enabling the reconstruction

> of sign system realised in the text. […] a particular text of "St. Petersburg" was created, more specifically a synthetic cover-text [*sverhtext*] related to higher thoughts and aims. (Toporov 1984: 13; my translation, T. R.)

The text of St. Petersburg in Russian literature is a semiotic structure that organizes various expressions in culture; it is a code of interpretation or a 'text-interpretator' (Mints *et al.* 1984: 80) and existing not merely in verbal expressions: "At the same time, 'the text of St. Petersburg' involves not merely verbal texts but also architectural and sculptural objects" (Mints *et al.* 1984: 82). In cultural semiotics and related literary studies of the Tartu-Moscow School, 'the text of St. Petersburg' refers to texts with the topic of the city in culture at the object level. More specifically, 'the text of St. Petersburg' is a specifically organized thematic unit primarily in the field of literature. Most generally, 'the text of St. Petersburg' would refer to a unit in culture that organizes expressions concerning the city of St. Petersburg in various fields related to the environment and interpretation of a place – which could as well be an imaginary place.

Lotman (1984) has pointed out that the particularity of St. Petersburg is to be found in the material urban text, that is, in the city built as a realization of an abstract plan preceding the code of its interpretation; the resulting interpretative void gave rise to the particular mythology of Petersburg combining symbolic oppositions. Later, this mythology existed as a cultural code producing and organizing further expressions related to the city and produced the text of Petersburg in Russian literature. In contrast, the act of the founding of the city presumed cultural knowledge about establishing a new capital as a way of regenerating and purifying the nation (for a similar motive in Asian cultural contexts, see Smith, Reynolds 1987), as well as the code enabling a conceptual link between the new capital of Tsarist Russia to Rome and Constantinople. For the power of a communicative act through establishing a new capital to work, a common cultural knowledge is presumed. There are also some central textual elements that can be pointed out in the case of St. Petersburg: a symbolic whole (that is, the city as a name in relation to other cities and cultural space), the beginning and end of the city, and interrelationships of the spatial dimension opposing the up and the down with the material and sensual aspects of the city – for example, the apparent softness and non-persistence of stone in the case of St. Petersburg built into a swamp (see Lotman 1984).

While the text of St. Petersburg can appear as a concrete text in culture, as a cultural fact, its functioning is intertextual. Conceptualizing it in terms of either 'archetext', 'covertext', 'crosstext', or 'code-text' is partly a methodological cjoice that also depends on the analytical perspective. A context for the idea of the text of St. Petersburg is the more general understanding of 'text' as a key notion for the Tartu-Moscow semiotics. Lotman (1970) has emphasized that a 'text' is expressive, hierarchically organized, and constitutes a whole, that is, it has a boundary and

distinctive internal and external domains. In addition, 'text' is something that has evolved in time and thus involves traces of layers. Furthermore, it can be integrated into several domains, practices and layers of culture and is thus intertextual and variably coded, that is, participating in the intertextual domain of culture. Accordingly, urban textuality should be seen as textual functioning of the city in culture – including representations, urban practices and the generation of urban space, society and culture.

From texts and towards texts: textualization as (re-)semiotization and spatialization

The notion of text in its apparent heterogeneity has a twofold potential usefulness for studying urban planning. First, it provides a framework for describability and analysability of the city as a system of signification. Considering the object as a text enables the analysis of it in relation to a context that is textual (for example, descriptions, representations) or that can be analysed in terms of 'text' or 'textuality' (for example, everyday practices). Second, considering texts as objects and products of actions directs the focus to underlying processes and procedures of text creation, as well as the relevant situation and actions more generally.

The latter, more processual aspect becomes actualized especially when we turn from reading the urban space and discourses about the city in culture towards the analysis of the ongoing urban planning process. Thus, texts are results of texting which is based on a more general process of significant categorization and structuration, namely textualization (see Randviir 2004: 28–29, 2010: 67–72). While described in a sequence, processes of texting and textualization are not necessarily coherent and univocal or isolated from other processes of the same kind. The polyphonic nature and involvement of multiple stages of texting in the planning process has been conceptualized as *resemiotization*. While otherwise more engaged with media studies from a social semiotic perspective, Rick Iedema (2001) has analysed the planning process of a hospital in terms of a resemiotization process. In its essence, *resemiotization* refers to several stages of a process of concretization during the planning process. According to Iedema, various discourses in planning and negotiation processes go through numerous phases of (re-)semiotization where particularly problematic issues are textualized. This involves content becoming more and more abstract and depersonalized, and giving the discourse of negotiations an ever more durable form, literally from thoughts and speech into stone. During this process, ambiguous ideas, arguments and forms gain new modalities (modalities as forms of expression and also as a perceived degree of truthfulness and the means for ensuring it – see Hodge, Kress 1988). For example, until its actual building, the

general need for a hospital (or a part of it) goes through stages of subjective ideas, proposals, regulations, discussions, drawings and so on – stages during which all of these inputs are formalized, systematized, categorized, given new statuses as guidelines or prerequisites, personal tasks, etc. From the moment of actual building and already before it, the rich new world of actually using practices, interpretations and descriptions begins.

Resemiotization can, instead of additional semiotization, act as "de-semiotization". The latter is not to be understood in absolute terms, but as claiming a non-semiotic nature for a text through objectivation and naturalization in a particular context. In the process of urban planning, for example, interests and values of various individual, collective and also imaginary (e.g. mythological or mythologized) participants are brought together and are organized internally and in relation to one another. In the process of textualization and texting, an intertextual field is formed where, among other issues, the structure and ideals of the community are negotiated and spatialized. Spatialization involves both the structural organization (for example, the structure of values) as well as the form of existence as spatial relations and as physical-spatial form. While re-semiotization, if seen as concretization, could appear as de-semiotization, at each new level the object is placed into new relationships with different semiotic systems. Thus it is indeed a process of additional and altering semiotization and the emergence of different spatialities and objects.

Planning is a process that interrelates two types of integrations, those of spatial aggregation and meaningful wholes, or in other words, *spatial* and *logico-meaningful types of integration* (see Sorokin 2006: 4). While an example of overlap between spatial and logico-meaningful integration can be found in the nature of the sociocultural world being a given and, as such, taken for granted by a subject who is thus "placed into" a meaningful reality, planning is deliberate work of relating the two types of integrations. The interrelationship of the two principles is also a core aspect for Lotman's conceptualization of 'text' (especially Lotman 1970, 2012[1992]; Lotman *et al.* 2013[1973]). In line with Lotman's use of the term 'text', textualization can be described as generation of organized meaningful wholes that acquire their meaningfulness largely by being of expressive character and based on multiple semiotic systems or languages. As Lotman points out, spatial organization is a basic and universal language (Lotman 1986, 2012[1992]) that, being related to other languages, forms a meaning-generative mechanism: "The complex dialogical and playful relations between the different sub-structures of the text that constitute its internal polyglotism are mechanisms of meaning generation" (Lotman 2012: 12). In addition to this heterogeneous spatial structure – involving separation of something from its externalities by a boundary and establishment of internal hierarchical organization with internal boundaries – due to their polyglot nature, texts can involve spatial codes of various structure and origin.

For this reason, a sociocultural phenomenon can often appear spatial in multiple ways that are not reducible to one origin (e.g. to the physical environment). For example, *city* can simultaneously be a point in discursive space, a unit in a world image, a spatial structure, the object of actions, a physical environment – and accordingly, the space of the city as a sociocultural phenomenon and a study object cannot be reduced to a single "spatiality" (see also Remm 2011, 2012).

Elements of textualizations and interaction situations in urban planning

Urban planning involves multiple kinds of textualities: the generation of textual documents, the planning situation as a cultural text and as an interaction focused on textualization, textualization of participants, articulation of ideas, motivations and attitudes, negotiation of models of the future. As a procedure, urban planning is largely a discursive activity that is targeted at the *production of particular texts* – especially normative models of the future of the city in the form of verbal documents and maps.

This generation of texts is again rather strictly regulated by other texts, including normative statements concerning the urban space and prescribed procedures for planning itself. Thus, planning is not a linear process of arriving to an artefactual plan; instead, it is a process and situation of a multiplicity of texts organized at various levels and in different ways. In other words, urban planning is a discursive process and situation of generating *theoretical* and *applied texts* (as distinguished in Lagopoulos 1988) – that is, enunciations of the discourse on the city and designed urban space as texts. The process functions through various (sub)texts and textual organization. For example, every public meeting in the planning process is an organized whole which is also coded as a fact in a particular sociocultural system, in this sense it appears as yet another kind of textual formation, a *cultural text* (see Lotman 1981; Lotman *et al.* 2013: 62). This external coding is also the reason for starting a public meeting with an explanation of the legal status of the event, of statements made during it and of the procedure of processing comments and proposals. As a legal event, "public discussion", and as an actual interaction of partici-pants, the meeting can have incongruent organizations, meanings and values, or even not fully exist from the perspective of either the community or the legal system.

However, instead of well-articulated and coherent cultural models of settlement space [also named 'code-texts' (Randviir 2004: 21–24) or 'models of settlement space' (Lagopoulos 1983) that have later also been discussed in relation to textual terms (Lagopoulos, Boklund-Lagopoulou 2014)], the process rather involves observable aggregations of bits and pieces of partly shared individual knowledge (see also

Holy, Stuchlik 1983: 49–50). This textual and processual complex forms a case of *meaningful interaction*, the most generic part of any sociocultural phenomena and, accordingly, the essential study focus for the analysis of sociocultural phenomena according to Pitirim Sorokin (1947: 40). Thus, there are three main aspects of urban planning to be studied: meanings, vehicles and agents (see Sorokin 1947: 40). In this interaction, which is characteristically a situation and process of textualization, the domain of vehicles consists of forms – of physical urban space, flows of mobility, signifying forms of maps, verbal documents, etc. While this domain might appear to be neutral and technical planning, it is actually an expression and a mediating tool of the other two domains, meanings and agents. In this field we find both applied texts of designed urban space as well as representations (like scaled models) pre-mediating visions in tangible form.

   In the domain of meanings, it is the ideal models and visions of the future as well as values and norms that should be emphasized in the case of urban planning. Urban planning is about negotiation of community values, ideals and visions for the future and future environment – thus it is part of the *connotative level of the semiotic urban system* (Lagopoulos 1983: 278). Besides envisioning the future, urban planning is also meant for controlling sporadic development. As far as culture can be related to a specific signifying order, that is, to a particular 'semiotic', urban planning is targeted at defining and ensuring these principles concerning urban environment – both spatial forms and actual functioning through daily practices. Thus it connects negotiation and articulation of ideal models and articulation of particular images of the future – which can then be expressed in theoretical and applied urban texts, shared and executed. Accordingly, Blanco (1992: 234) stresses "the importance of planning for society as the basic forum for constructing frameworks for public purpose and meaning in an increasingly economically uncertain and environmentally turbulent world".

   In the central question of the planning situation "how to plan a common future?" the 'communality' refers to planning as a social action process that involves visions of the future society as well as actors involved in the communicative planning process. There are various individual and collective subjects involved in this action situation, both as acting agents and as presumed others (see Parsons, Shils 2008). Following the analytic framework of *symbolic interactionism* (see Blumer 1969; Bridge 2005: 125–146), one can see participating actors continuously presuming and negotiating their roles, actions, objects, as well as ideals in the planning process. Texting and textualization goes on in and through all of the three domains. Besides text generation in the domain of vehicles and textualization of ideals, agents are also constructed by means and for purposes that can be called textual. Frequently, conflicts during planning processes are not as much derived from conflicting ideals or non-functioning forms but from an unclear social situation, in the centre of which are problematic role expectations. As a result, values and ideals do often turn the

conflict emotional but are themselves not bridged in negotiations. Accordingly, extended and intensified involvement of the public in the process introduces new subjects and new fears: who are they, what do they want, how do they relate to others' interests and can their involvement be a threat to someone else's? One can observe a process of negotiating the actual form of involvement in the planning that is taking place. This typification of roles and expectations for involved subjects can be seen in terms of textualization. More particularly, involved subjects can be constructed purely due to their presence in rules of procedures – for example, previously non-integrated local inhabitants or entrepreneurs could become collective subjects due to their prescription as local interest groups in planning procedures.

Aspects of the planning situation were outlined above with the focus on *textualization*; in parallel, the same practical planning process can be considered as spatialization of the social life and social spatialization:

> I use the term *social spatialisation* to designate the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, pre-suppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment). This term allows us to name an object of study which encompasses both the cultural logic of the spatial and its expression and elaboration in language and more concrete actions, constructions and institutional arrangements. (Shields 1991: 31)

In a sense, spatialization is textualization. Compared to this process-oriented approach, the concepts of 'city as text' tend to be focused on urban space. Semiotization of the environment is the mediation between the social process of planning and the material and semiotic urban space.

Textualizing "nature" in urban planning: The example of the central area of Tartu

In the following I will focus on a specific aspect in this domain between social interaction and the environment, namely on a number of ways in which nature or the natural environment has been involved in a particular local planning process. The material for the exemplary case is derived from the planning process of the central area of Tartu. Tartu is the second largest city in Estonia with approximately 100,000 inhabitants. It was first mentioned in 1030. The city centre was extensively bombed during the Second World War and later it was partly rebuilt, partly turned into green areas. The planning process of the 1.8 km^2 central area took place from 2010 to 2016 and involved a variety of activities from student workshops to envisioning scenarios, environmental assessments, public discussions and preparing final planning documents.

Being a university town, Tartu has been considered to be a relatively (or sometimes even overwhelmingly) "green" city with its parks and the river, which makes focusing on the aspects of textualization of nature as an example particularly appropriate. Tools of textualization that position nature within the semiotization of the environment include: (1) framing nature as a part of institutionalized procedure; (2) involvement in a cultural text becoming more specific in various normative regulations; (3) articulation of more or less abstract conceptual entities and problematic issues in the environment as another layer of concretization of the environment; (4) particular objects and places making the textualization most tangible; (5) emergence of subjects in the textualization of the environment.

(1) Concerning norms and regulations, the role (and the procedure of the textualization) of natural environment in urban planning is clearly defined. Accordingly, the draft version of the plan is followed and accompanied by *strategic environmental assessment*; later, more concrete action plans also involve *environmental impact assessment*. This is the part of the planning procedures during which nature is institutionalized as an important topic to be involved. By prescribing a particular place to environmental topics, nature is also excluded from the rest of the process. For example, the strategic environmental assessment report of the comprehensive planning of the central area of Tartu involves various aspects from social, cultural and natural environment on 114 pages[1]; the report is, however, integrated in a wider planning context through the following brief conclusion:

> As a result of the assessment of impact it appears that in general the realization of the draft version of the comprehensive plan of the central area of Tartu presumably would not bring along directly any significant negative environmental impact.[2]

Besides some specific suggestions and highlighting of certain topics, this statement is the main function of environmental assessments. Environmental impact assessment is the main tool for dealing with environmental issues (in a wide sense) and at the

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[1]   Strategic environmental assessment report (OÜ Hendrikson & Ko 2012–2013. Tartu kesklinna üldplaneering. Keskkonnamõju strateegilise hindamise aruanne) can be accessed at: http://info.raad.tartu.ee/webaktid.nsf/fc7763c017c9f110c22568cd004625d4/ 5acb0cd21a9087fac2257d7100322703/$FILE/Tartu_kesklinnaYP_KSH_aruanne_linnale_ 5aug2013.pdf (26.01.2015).

[2]   In the announcement by Tartu municipality about the publication of the strategic environmental assessment *Tartu kesklinna üldplaneeringu keskkonnamõju strateegilise hindamise aruande* avalikustamine that can be accessed at http://info.raad.tartu.ee/webaktid.nsf/ fc7763c017c9f110c22568cd004625d4/5acb0cd21a9087fac2257d7100322703/$FILE/KSH% 20aruande%20teade.pdf (26.01.2015). My translation, T. R.

same time, also the means for framing these out as marginal elements in the system. A similar function inside the draft plan is held by the topic of *green network*, focused on trees, recreation and panoramic sights.

(2) There are also some more specific frames for involving the natural environment beyond the institutional role, for instance, regulative relations to environmental issues – that is, norms, values and ideals expressed, for example, by prescribing the use of sustainable materials and technological solutions, or alleys to be minimally 3m wide[3].

(3) There are also some relatively abstract, intangible phenomena, typically objects or conditions, but also concepts, that organize planning discourse into relations with nature. For example, the *green belt* and the *wind corridor* along the river, the latter limiting the height of buildings for a pleasant climate for people between the buildings avoiding strong currents of air. Similarly, the climate is also a strong argument for considering the reasonable distance of parking places from restaurants during the three months of darkness, moisture and rain, snow and ice and occasionally also roof tiles and plaster falling down from buildings due to the harsh weather conditions. The issue of species diversity is also taken into account in a similar way in environmental assessment and in planning more generally. Besides being a part of the general conception of supporting diversity in green areas, diversity also appears to have problematic relations with public security as green areas with bushes support both species diversity as well as diversity of unauthorized (human) activities. The practice, widespread in some cities but not in Tartu, of locking public parks by night is a potential solution for the conflict emerging from valuing both protection of species diversity and security.

(4) Focusing on particular objects and places, the future of the public parks has been one of the most emotionally discussed issues during the planning process. Several reasons can be found for this. First, *common interest,* as parks are recreationally oriented public spaces; in contrast, neither streets nor squares receive the same amount of attention. Second, *collective memory,* as building in the present-day green areas in most cases also involves the issue of re-constructing the built space that was destroyed in bombings during the Second World War and turned into parks later. Third, building in parks is related to the density of the city and depends on the envisioned future, including the role and the size of the city – as a local, national or international centre. However, more detailed plans for green areas are *framed out* of the comprehensive plan – to be dealt with in thematic planning of green areas at some point in the future. This more focused planning would again mean both

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3   In the explanation of the draft plan of Tartu central area (Tartu kesklinna üldplaneering. Eskiislahendus, seletuskiri, 2013. 6.2.15.). http://info.raad.tartu.ee/webaktid.nsf/fc7763c017c 9f110c22568cd004625d4/5acb0cd21a9087fac2257d7100322703/$FILE/Tartu_kesklinna_YP_ eskiis_%20seletuskiri.pdf (26.01.2015).

more thorough work and, at the same time, less concern with common visions of the future in the community. In contrast to this official *framing out*, the debate over constructing buildings with public functions into parks at three locations finally became to dominate the public discussions, largely re-framing the perception of the whole planning process, topics, proposals and solutions.

A major natural object in Tartu is the River Emajõgi, which thus is a central element in the local identity and also an ambiguous entity that has given rise to the yet unresolved challenge of engaging the river in everyday and festive practices. While it is an important natural object in environmental assessment, in planning itself the river mainly emerges as a (prospective) resource for water traffic (with partly nostalgic associations with the activity in the early 20th century) and an element in a recreational green network, thus primarily functional in socioeconomic terms.

(5) The last aspect to be pointed out here is the involvement of possible *others* – providing a central sociosemiotic (see also Randviir 2014) dimension in textualization of urban nature. While planning is centrally concerned with spatial development of functional use, the *social aspect* (as the subjects' relationships with various others) as well as *cultural aspects* (as shared ways of orienting to the surrounding world and especially values and shared cultural ideals) are side aspects not directly focused on but worked on through functional use. The presence of *others* in planning is, however, an interesting question. Meeting the *other*, more or less known and more or less wanted, is the core of urban life (an aspect that has been emphasized in various traditions of urban semiotic research, for example in the Chicago School and its further developments in relation to the pragmatist tradition (Park 1915; Bridge 2005), in cultural historical studies by Lewis Mumford (1938, 1961) as well as by authors working explicitly on urban semiotics, like Barthes who called this sociality the *erotic dimension* (Barthes 1986[1967]: 96). Besides cultural others, also non-human organisms (as well as fictional actors) can be *others* to be met. This would presume paying attention to someone as an agent with organismic or even personal agency. What can be found in the planning of the Tartu central area, is involvement of a limited number of *natural others* as other organisms with their needs, but not as social others in the sense of *social objects*, presuming the responsiveness of the other (Parsons, Shils 2008). Involvement of natural others can be seen in the normative width of alleys as related to the organismic needs of trees for light, water and soil. Most remarkably, however, the other appears in the case of bats[4] who are the most emphasized non-human organisms mentioned in the planning process, especially in the environmental assessment, because several species of bats

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[4] The *Strategic environmental assessment report* (2012-213: 51) lists eight species of bats living in the Tartu central area: *Myotis daubentonii*, *Nyctalus noctula*, *Myotis dasycneme*, *Plecotus auritus*, *Pipistrellus nathusii*, *Eptesicus nilssonii*, *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, *Vespertilio murinus*.

live in central Tartu and also because they are under protection. Thus, specific good practices and precautions are suggested directly in relation to bats as other organisms with their needs and habits as regards demolishment and construction works as well as cutting down trees and lightening up green areas, and especially as concerns the river which is their main feeding area.

Conclusion

The city as a text in the human textual umwelt is a result of textualization and texting of the environment, as well as of the community itself. Nature framed in this text is specifically *urban nature*, not natural environment or the *other*, alien in the city, but a part of the city and its logical-meaningful system. In parallel to the text of the city in literature, what appears due the above-mentioned means of textualization can be called the *text of nature* in the situation and processes of planning. The emerging text of nature involves abstract categories, particular objects, values and *other* subjects. While planning is itself a situation and action of textualization and texting of the (community's) orientation towards its environment, the text of nature (and natural environment) in it paradoxically remains a peripheral text.

This paper started with a discussion of the remarkable difference between the conceptions of the legibility and readability of the material urban space or landscape; the city as a text; and the text of the city in culture, or more precisely, the text about the city in culture. However, they come together as aspects of the community's and its culture's relationship to the environment. The rich potential of this moment of semiotization is specifically due to its multidimensionality. This could be variably modelled in diverse paradigms – for example, one could think about the distinction of three aspects in the *social production of space* – perceived space, conceived space and lived space, or spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces – according to Henri Lefebvre (1991: 38–39), or, in line with Lotman, the multidimensional relationship could again be discussed as a struggle of various modelling languages in culture (see e.g. Lotman 2000: 419, 425). The textual paradigm discussed in the present paper enables a perspective focusing on the variety of text generation and textualization processes and relations in order to study this rich and active semiotic moment. In particular, this includes the textual structuration of the social and cultural world of the community as well as the respective aspects of the "non-cultural", for example the "natural". Even more, it includes the textual generation of particular participants in and for communicative situations, as for example *social*, *cultural* and *natural others* in the processes and situations of urban planning.[5]

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Текстуальности города: от возможности чтения городского пространства по направлению к социальным и природным *другим* в городском планировании

Понятие *текста* часто использовалось для аналитического изучения пейзажа и города. Прежде всего его можно найти в анализах текстуальных репрезентаций, где предлагается метафора «чтения» города. Также идея «Петербургского текста» (изначально в Тартуско-московской школе) более широко применялась для изучения функционирования города как организующего принципа в литературе и культуре, вне зависимости от конкретного городского пространства. В то же время понимание текста как семио-тического механизма и системы предполагает больше возможностей. Часть этого потенциала обнаруживается, если соотнести текстуальную парадигму с прагматичным подходом к городу и его планировке. В данной статье анализируются понятия «текста», «текстуализации» и «текстирования» (*texting*) для изучения планировки городской среды. В качестве примера используется планировка центра города Тарту (2010–2016), особое внимание уделяется роли городской природы в этом процессе текстуализации местной среды, общественных идеалов, практик и возможных *других*.

Linna tekstuaalsused – linnaruumi loetavusest sotsiaalsete ja looduslike *teisteni* linnaplaneerimises

ˈTekstiˈ mõistet on maastiku ja linna analüütilisel mõtestamisel sageli kasutatud. Seda võib leida eelkõige tekstuaalsete representatsioonide analüüsides ning pakkumas (linna-) maastiku "lugemise" metafoori. Ka Tartu-Moskva semiootikakoolkonna ˈPeterburi tekstiˈ ideed on kasutatud, et uurida linnade toimimist korrastavate teemadena kirjanduses ja kultuuris laiemalt, ent mitte seoses tegelike linnaruumidega. Arusaam tekstist kui semiootilisest süsteemist ja mehhanismist pakub siiski enam võimalusi. Osa sellest potentsiaalist tuleb ilmsiks, kui suhestada tekstuaalset paradigmat pragmatistlikuma lähenemisega linnale ja selle planeerimisele. Siinses artiklis toon esile ˈtekstiˈ, ˈtekstualiseerimiseˈ ja ˈtekstistamiseˈ mõistetele keskenduva analüütilise raamistiku linnakeskkonna planeerimise uurimiseks. Uurimuses kasutan Tartu kesklinna planeerimise (2010–2016) näidet ning võtan vaatluse alla linnaloodusele omistatavad rollid selles kohaliku keskkonna, ühiskondlike ideaalide, praktikate ja võimalike *teiste* tekstualiseerimise protsessis.