NARRATING A FUTURE PICTORIALLY: TEMPORALITY IN ARCHITECTURAL RENDERINGS

by
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This paper takes architects' pictorial renderings of planned urban projects as a case for inquiring into the capacity of still visual images for narrative meaning making. In doing so, it considers two issues addressed by postclassical narratology: prospective, or future-tense, narrative and pictorial narrative, which despite its lack of temporal progression can compel temporal, narrative interpretation. Following a discussion of key concepts from narratology and semiotics, the article offers a social semiotic-based multimodal analysis of the renderings, to understand how the logic of temporality is conveyed by spatially arranged images. The paper suggests that visual cues to modality judgements play a central role in this process.

1. Introduction

This paper takes architects' pictorial visualizations of planned urban settings as a case for posing a question particularly vexing to narratologists: how can a monophase visual image – a static picture representing a single scene in a single moment in time – give rise to a narrative, when narrative is defined by temporal progression? As a narratologist, I explore here how a social semiotic approach to pictorial analysis can provide means to understand this process. The focus of my paper therefore is not urban narratives as such, but an inquiry into temporality in pictures which focuses less on the thematic content of these images than on their semiotic meaning making.

The pictorial visualizations are a point of departure for a discussion of two issues addressed by postclassical narratology, a development that seeks to expand the methods of narrative analysis beyond structuralist and formalist approaches, and to include, as the object of analysis, works other than prototypical verbal and literary narratives (Herman 1997; Prince 2008). The first issue is that of prospective narrative, the narrative sense-making of future, which challenges the paradigm narrative tense, that of narrative as the retrospective activity of creating meaningful, causal connections among temporally and spatially discrete events (Genette 1980: 217; Margolin 1999). Prospective narrative raises the question of what is involved in the creation of such connections **before** the fact: in this case, visualizing transformed places and the affordances they enable for users before these affordances are realized.

The second issue is the problem of accounting for narrative interpretations of monophase images. This issue falls within postclassical narratology's inquiries into whether, and how, narratological categories – many of which are derived from analyses of verbal narratives – can be useful in understanding narrative in other media (Herman 1997; Prince 2008; Ryan 2004, 2005, 2012). How can a non-temporal medium compel a temporal logic? How does a picture provoke the response that we need a story in order for us, as readers/viewers to fully interpret the image?

In the present paper I explore how features of images encourage inferences of temporal progression. In particular, I suggest that the concept of modality can be key in helping us understand both of the issues mentioned above, as it provides a conceptual bridge between them. According to Hodge and Kress (1988: 124), modality "refers to the status, authority and reality of a message, or to its ontological status, or to its value as truth or fact". But as Kress and van Leeuwen also assert, modality judgments are not assessments of the truth or ontological status of a 'proposition' as such, but the degree to which it is **represented** as true or real (2006: 154-55; my emphasis).

Human beings make modality evaluations constantly, both as senders and receivers of signs. As I will discuss below, reading the future through visual images involves the viewer's decoding of modality on the basis of cues of the sender's modality judgments. The modality of the future tense is inherently one of uncertainty – of the unknown that one cannot be certain will unfold, however likely or probable. This modality plays a role in the signification of futurity, which in turn demands a temporal bridge between present 'now' and future 'what is to come.' Uncertainty in these visual images is encoded in such a way as to compel a temporal logic and stimulate a narrative progression.

In the following I will begin by presenting the project *Fra gade til by*, from which the renderings are taken, and then construct a framework for their analysis in light of discussions of 1) prospective narrative and modality and 2) visual narrative and social semiotic analysis. The subsequent reading of the images accounts for how narrative inferences are stimulated by visual elements, including modality cues. Although the renderings stem from one specific city planning project, the techniques of representation analysed here are common in architectural representations. Thus, while they were chosen for their exemplary narrative potential, they are by no means isolated instances, and thus they have bearing on our understanding of the visual representation of temporal progression.

2. The case: Fra gade til by

The renderings stem from a project in the city of Odense, Denmark entitled *Fra gade til by* ('From street to city'). The project entails the closing off of a highly trafficked thoroughfare, the 'street,' Thomas B. Thriges Gade, which runs north-south through the downtown area of the 'city', Odense (figure 1).

Figure 1. *Thomas B. Thriges Gade. Current view from future 'Torvehal' position (google.com).*

Figure 2. *Thomas B. Thriges Gade, seen from 'Torvehal' (Entasis, architectural firm).*

The thoroughfare is to be converted into a pedestrian area that will create a cohesive 'city' by connecting the two areas of town east and west of the 'street', which currently divides them (figure 2). The intention is to create an area that is joined and cohesive – in the words of the project planners, to ''heal'' the divided city and make it whole again (Entasis TBT 5000C [Winning Project Proposal]: 4).

This transformation entails radical changes in the affordances of place: from an area used mainly for transit, into a space intended for the city's residents, visitors and tourists to **be**: to walk, to stop, to look, to shop, to interact with others, and so on. The project is controversial and has met with strong opposition from those who regularly use the thoroughfare, for example for their daily commute or for conducting business in different parts of the town.[1]

In order to inform the public and allay the opposition, the project planners have designed numerous materials intended to 'prime' people for how to use the space. The materials have a strong focus on the process of transformation, which is a fundamental narrative structure.[2] The title of the project itself suggests a process of change from one thing (a street) into another (a city). A film made of archived material narrates the original construction of the street in the 1960s; another, computer animated film uses models to depict the planned construction in sections over time. In addition, verbal texts in brochures and on the website convey the intentions of the planned project, and how it is designed to affect the city and its users. Together, the texts develop the story of a unified, whole and ''healed'' city area with affordances like cafés and a large market hall ('Torvehal'), with the stated purpose of being a site for cultural and social activities that respects the demographic diversity of the city's population (*Fra Gade til By*; Entasis TBT 5000C [Winning Project Proposal]: 3).

Among the many texts that contribute to the narrative are the

architects' visualized storyworlds, peopled with men, women and children appearing to linger in a place where under current conditions, they would be run over by cars.

3. Prospective narrative

In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette (1980: 216) includes prospective, or 'predictive' narrative among his categories of tense, which represent the temporal position of the narrator in relation to the narrated events. Prospective narrative arises when the narrative act precedes the events narrated. For Herman, the narrative category of tense provides an "orienting perspective point" that affords a particular kind of structure, or "scope" for the history of the storyworld (whether real or imagined) – the extent of what it is possible to know about its past, the relevance of this for further outcomes and its significance for the narrative configuration as a whole (Herman, 2009: 129). Retrospective narration, for example, "accommodates the full scope of a storyworld's history, allowing a narrator to signal connections between earlier and later events" (ibid.).

Clearly, however, a narrator can imagine a **future** story-world and narrative sequence that includes an ending, and thus create a complete narrative configuration that accounts for the imagined understandings of the significance of the sequence– just as one can in retrospect. Yet what distinguishes past and future orientations is the extent to which it is possible for the narrator to assess the status of future narrated events as true or real, certain or even probable – that is, the modality of the narrated.

The latter is what Margolin (1999) accounts for in his model of temporality in narrative. Margolin refers to the narrated events as the nucleus (which corresponds to the *fabula*)[3] and employs three operators that enable receivers to tie the "temporal perspective" to the "mental attitude of an overall narrator" (1999: 143). In the

model, *tense* refers to the temporal position of the nucleus in relation to narrator; *aspect* to "its inner temporal contour" (whether completed or in progress); and *modality* to its "reality status (actual, nonactual, hypothetical, indeterminate, counterfactual, wished for, ordered into being)" (ibid.).

The paradigmatic case of narrative is that of the past tense, the retrospective selecting, organizing and narrating of events that have already occurred. In this paradigm, modality is "factive," in the sense that events are certain or established within the story world (even if fictional) (Margolin 1999: 147-49); its aspectuality is "completive", with events having "run their full course" (Margolin 1999: 142).

In Margolin's model, the operators assume shifting significance according to whether the narrative activity is retrospective, simultaneous or prospective. Such a model is necessary in order to account for the temporal complexities that exist within a single narrative, as well as for the increasing prevalence of simultaneous and prospective literary narratives. As Margolin argues, the consequence of such a model is a shift in the understanding of what constitutes narrative, from the portrayal of "dynamic situations per se" towards an understanding of "the key factors and operations involved in the mental representation (cognitive mapping) of dynamic situations, and the different possible configurations these can take" (1999: 143).

The prospective narrative tells of that which has not yet occurred at speech time: "a prediction, prognosis, scenario, projection, conjecture, wish, plan and the like" (Margolin 1999: 153). Its tense is future; situations are subsequent to narration. Its aspectuality can, as in retrospective narrative, be completive; events can be imagined and narrated to end, because the narrator is positioned outside of them. Yet the operator which takes on greatest force is modality, which is the hypothetical, for example, or the optative (what is wished for) or the deontic (what is projected for reasons of duty/obligation) (Margolin 1999: 142; 153-55). The prospective narrative can be understood to be an expression of the narrator's attitude(s), as what

can be thought of, hoped for or feared, imagined and visualized, but is yet to be realized.

Accordingly, Margolin describes the shift from retrospective to prospective as one

> from factive recounting and commenting on preexistent states and events … to … world projection or mental simulation of possible situations…The deontic and optative modalities which are devoid of impact when the narrative act refers to past situations, gradually come to possess their full force. (1999: 164)

Thus, desires or obligations have bearing on the shape and outcome of the prospective narrative: they motivate and drive it.

The unrealized future is characterized by potentiality and possibility, rather than actuality. It is, as Margolin writes, "a purely notional construct" that both represents a situation and allows us to "[witness] the process of the semiotic construction of a not-yet situation" (Margolin 1999: 153-4). In other words, prospective narrative depicts not only the storyworld, but the activity of creating it **as construct**.

4. Pictorial narrative

An issue particularly challenging to narratologists is how a static visual image can lead to narrative interpretation, when a fundamental principle of narrative is its temporal progression, both of the narrated events, the *fabula*, and the representation, the *syuzhet*. Not only does the monophase image lack the capacity for narrating a sequence of events (as is possible in verbal text), but it arranges its objects primarily spatially and thus lacks the temporal unfolding of discourses of speech, writing and film (see Ryan 2012; Wolf 2005). Moreover, in the absence of verbal narration, interpretation

bears upon the reading of exteriors such as appearances, facial expressions and bodily positions and upon making inferences about their meanings, including the actions and events in which they are situated (Wolf 2005).

Narratologists have approached still images in different ways. Ryan's (2005: 6-7) distinction between 'a narrative' and 'narrativity'*,* for example, shifts focus from narrative as a construct, explicitly designed to awaken a narrative script in the receiver, to a quality of the image, its narrativity, or power to compel narrative work in the mind of the viewer – work which is inextricably intertwined with the contextual knowledge, personal interests, experiences and interpretive competences that the viewer brings to the viewed image. As Ryan also suggests, the concept of narrativity in visual works resonates with Lessing's (1766/1984) concept of 'the pregnant moment' in the work of art, in which an element within the image stimulates an interpretation of the image within a larger sequence of events preceding it and subsequent to it. In a similar vein, Kafalenos writes that although "a visual representation of a single scene is not a narrative" (2001: 138), it elicits a response similar to that of verbal narrative, as the receiver, drawing on any knowledge of context, constructs a *fabula* around the isolated moment. This is, she says, a "hermeneutic procedure that enables viewers to explore temporal and causal relations among events, and between an isolated moment and prior and subsequent events and states" (ibid: 139).

Conceptualizing 'narrative' in these instances means looking to the reception and cognitive work that takes place in the viewer. The balance of narrative construction is tipped towards the receiver, who must find plausible answers by inferring the temporal sequences and causal connections that the text cannot represent.

It then becomes relevant to ask whether there are elements within the image itself that especially compel narrative readings. As Ryan (2005, 2012), Thomas (2000) and Wolf (2005) among others have argued, the actions depicted as *fabula* can take on the narrative

meaning of unfolding events, particularly if they suggest content which can only make sense if understood to be part of some kind of action. Thus for instance, the depiction in static images of participants in positions that would be unnatural or impossible to hold for any extended period of time can, arguably, suggest transitoriness, movement and/or change. Similarly, images of participants who appear to be stopped in the act of looking at each other, touching each other or moving in directions relative to each other suggest an isolated moment in a more extended scenario of interaction.

4.1 Visual narrative within a social semiotic approach

A social semiotic approach to visual analysis recognizes the narrative potentials in images that themselves lack temporal progression. The approach appropriates and applies to visual images the categories of linguistic analysis used by Hallidayan systemic functional grammar to analyze three textual metafunctions: ideational, or representational meaning; interpersonal meaning, which arises in the relation between viewer and image; and the textual meaning enabled by coherence and cohesiveness of textual units[4] (Halliday 1994; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The generation of narrative meaning in visual images is treated primarily as part of the ideational metafunction, the representation of the world and experience. More specifically, it is understood to be the capacity of images to represent the world "'narratively' – that is, in terms of 'doing' and 'happening'" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 73).

   This way of conceiving narrative proceeds from the assumption that in some cases, a single moment must logically be understood to be part of a temporal sequence. Human or non-human participants can be shown as caught in the act of movement or directing an action towards other participants. The concept of narrative thus becomes broadly defined as unfolding action, and depends upon

the viewer's activity, for example of reading a bodily position as an indication of movement or change of direction that suggests that a narrative change is inevitable or potential. Still images can represent "narrative patterns [that] serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 59).

   According to the same authors, a narrative visual 'proposition' is realized by the presence of a vector (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 59), an invisible arrow imagined by the viewer as emanating from a participant in the image. The arrow constitutes a "visual verb", a metaphorical representation of realized action and transaction: "what in language is realised by verbs is realised in pictures by vectors" (Machin 2007: 164). Thus a vector represents an inferred direction, motion or action which may or may not have a receiver (a 'goal' or 'phenomenon'; see below), with the head of the arrow indicating in which direction and at whom or what or the action is aimed.

   Vectors are unseen, but the participants from which they emanate are not. This is reflected in the terminology, in which 'actor' refers to the "participant from which the vector emanates, or which itself, in whole or in part, forms the vector" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 63). The 'goal' is the "participant to whom or which the action is done, or at whom or which the action is aimed" (ibid: 64). Vectors can indicate action that is transactional, or transitive, and non-transactional, or intransitive (ibid: 63), so that non-transactional action "has no 'goal', is not 'done to' or 'aimed at' anyone or anything" (ibid: 63). Further distinctions are made when vectors represent the act of looking: "when the vector is formed by an eyeline, by the direction of the glance of one or more represented participants, the process is reactional" (ibid: 67). In such cases, actors are termed 'reactors' and goals 'phenomena'. The phenomena themselves may be other narrative scenarios. (2006: 67).

   Kress and van Leeuwen exemplify their narrative analysis through a variety of representations that range from abstract art – for ex-

ample, a modern painting of one square shape tipping towards another of smaller size – to academic diagrams, to more realist images in drawings and photographs. Like Kafalenos, Kress and van Leeuwen recognize the role of contextual knowledge in guiding the viewer's interpretation: ''in 'realist' images [as opposed, say, to abstract art], the context usually makes clear what kind of action the vectors represent'' (2006: 60). Thus the field of possible meanings is widest and least determinate where the coding is abstract or diagrammatic and provides few contextual clues. Such images require a great deal of imaginative gap-filling work, and the meanings can be ''broad, abstract and hence difficult to put into words'' (2006: 61).

5. Narrative interpretation of the renderings

5.1 Reading structures of movement and action encoded in the image

Narrative structures of the kind described by Kress and van Leeuwen are visible in the renderings, with participants situated among the affordances offered by the newly constructed space.

In figure 2, the image presents participants in full figure within a field of vision that includes buildings, other people and objects like the fruit stand. The interpersonal metafunction affects narrative meaning, prompting not a relation of intimacy between viewer and participant, but a spatial distance that renders the reading of individual traits or facial expressions – features that tend to create identification or emotional interest – secondary to the interpretation of what characters **do**.

Participants are shown engaged in activities that seem to absorb their attention and do not require or allow contact with the viewer. Indeed, most participants have their backs turned and seem to be walking away from the viewer. Even the foregrounded participants – the woman at the fruit stand and the man at the coffee stand – are presented obliquely, offered to, rather than demanding contact with, the viewer (on 'offer' and 'demand' see Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 116-24). Participants are thus not shown primarily as objects of interest in themselves, but as the agents of action.

Although motion is stopped by the still image, it is suggested both by bodily positions and vectors. For example, participants shown with one foot forward or with a bended knee on a slightly raised leg are in positions which would be difficult to sustain for any length of time; the persons are thus interpretable as walking. The directionality associated with walking can be visualized through imagined vectors that have a base originating with the participant and pointing forward from there. Several participants are depicted in this manner: for example in figure 2, the man in the dark suit on the far left and the male and female participants at the approximate center. Similarly, the woman at the fruit stand is bending slightly forward from her waist, holding a bag in a lifted position while looking at and handling the apples, so that movement and action are necessary inferences, as is the interpretation of the scene as one of examining, and thinking about buying, fruit.

With many of the participants, it is the non-transactional, but directional, walking that is immediately visible. With other participants, however, especially those who are compositionally foregrounded, action entails **trans**action. A conspicuous feature here is that the goals are non-human artefacts rather than people. At the coffee and fruit stands, for example, it is the stands themselves, rather than the human sellers, that are most clearly visible to viewers.

In figure 3, similar narrative structures are evident. The image presents a participant sitting on the fountain looking at a book, for example, and a child from which a vector emanates towards the pavestones; the viewer is likely to infer actions of reading and examining the pavement, respectively. And while vectors can be

Figure 3. *Thomas B. Thriges Gade, towards fountain (Entasis, architectural firm).*

drawn among the people on the right side of the image, neither in this image are the human goals of these transactions foregrounded.

5.2 Reading narratively through contextual knowledge

The renderings depict people stopped in the acts of walking, shopping, reading, studying the pavement, and so on. These are activities natural to an urban setting, and thus the images' narrativity is not especially pressing. It becomes more urgent, however, when the pictures are read in light of the contextual knowledge that many viewers are likely to possess, namely of the place as it is used currently. This demands reading the scenario as an instant in a larger narrative, in which future constructions are visualized, but can be explained only as the result of transformation over time.

When viewers thus mentally superimpose the future urban space

that is visualized onto their conception of the space as it is currently, two temporalities are joined, and potential meanings arise that differ from the images when read without contextual knowledge.

For example, with knowledge of the current space, as seen in the photograph of figure 1, the image in figure 2 affords other meanings. The familiar bank building and the street of figure 1 persist into the future world, but the entire walking space shown is located where a busy and dangerous thoroughfare is currently. Making sense of the differences between what a viewer sees as a future 'then' and what she knows is the present 'now' requires that she reconcile the simultaneous presence of the 'seen' and the 'known'. The temporal movement from present to future is stimulated by one single image and borne through chiefly spatially, not temporally, arranged elements: buildings, signs, plants and paving stones.

Interpretation thus demands a mental movement between spatial representations that imply different temporalities. This movement in turn implies a set of changes that occur over time, raising the kinds of questions that narrative often seeks to answer, such as: How will 'now' have been transformed into 'then'? What will have happened to the constructions no longer visible? What kinds of affordances are enabled, lost, or gained, by the new constructions that are depicted (but not yet physically realized)?, and so on.

The viewer is called to imagine dramatic departures from what is possible in an area presently dominated by the requisites for passing through. The renderings help along this imaginative work of visualizing by providing a primer for understanding the transformed urban setting before the ground has even been broken.

5.3 Modality cues in narrative interpretation

In addition to heightening narrativity, contextual knowledge of the area in its current state combines with modality cues that are

essential for reading the images as visualizations of the future, inasmuch as they show something other than what is real. These cues are lost on viewers who have no prior knowledge of the area. But for those who do, features of the image itself signal a modality of possibility rather than of actuality, and help viewers interpret accordingly.

5.3.1 Visual modality in social semiotic analysis

Visual features afford means of realizing modality as indicating "how true" the content is represented (van Leeuwen 2005: 160). In social semiotic-based multimodal analysis, modality involves "issues of representation – fact versus fiction, reality versus fantasy, real versus artificial, authentic versus fake" (2005: 160), which are based on criteria that are socially created and negotiated. Verbally, modality is expressed by resources in the form of modal auxiliary verbs, such as *may*, *will*, and *must*, modal adverbs such as *perhaps*, *probably* and *certainly,* modal adjectives and nouns like *probable* and *probability* (van Leeuwen 2005: 162-63; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 155) which express speakers' evaluations of the certainty of utterances. In visual images, modality refers to the degree to which things are represented "as though they are real, as though they actually exist in this way, or as though they do not – as though they are imaginings, fantasies, caricatures, etc." (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 156). Modality is expressed visually through resources indicating increases or decreases in "'as how real' the image should be taken" (van Leeuwen 2005: 166) and include the following gradable modality markers (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 160-63):

(1) *Colour saturation,* a scale running from full colour saturation to the absence of colour; that is, to black and white. […]

(2) *Colour differentiation*, a scale running from a maximally diversified range of colours to monochrome. […]
(3) *Colour modulation*, a scale running from fully modulated colour ... to plain, unmodulated colour. […]
(4) *Contextualization*, a scale running from the absence of background to the most fully articulated and detailed background. […]
(5) *Representation*, a scale running from maximum abstraction to maximum representation of pictorial detail. […]
(6) *Depth*, a scale running from the absence of depth to maximally deep perspective. […]
(7) *Illumination*, a scale running from the fullest representation of the play of light and shade to its absence. […]
(8) *Brightness*, a scale running from a maximum number of different degrees of brightness to just two degrees [such as] black and white, or dark grey and lighter grey.

Consequently, visual truth is not absolute: "[r]eality may be in the eye of the beholder, but the eye has had a cultural training and is located in a social setting and a history" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 158). Evaluations of truth depend upon the purpose of the representation, the needs of the users and conventions of representation as they are constrained by genre and medium. Thus "the modality value of a given configuration depends on the kind of visual truth which is preferred in the given context" (2005:167). To account for this, Kress and van Leeuwen propose four coding orientations of modality, as principles deriving from the needs of specific social groups within specific situations (2006: 165-66). These are: the "naturalistic" modality, typically found in photographs, and relying on the correspondence between the object of representation and how it would be viewed by the naked eye. The "technological" modality evaluates modality on the basis of the representation's effectiveness as a 'blueprint' for the user. The "sensory" orientation of

modality depends upon the ability of the image to awaken sensory responses; and finally the ''abstract'' modality, as in works of art or and science, is evaluated on the basis of its truth to abstract ideas or essential qualities of phenomena. Accordingly, although naturalism is a ''dominant standard'' by which visual realism, and hence visual modality, is judged (2006: 161), abstract representations, too, can have high modality when evaluated according to viewers' expectations and knowledge of conventions of representation.

5.3.2 Modality cues and narrative meanings in the renderings

The photograph in figure 1, as a naturalist representation, has an iconic relation to its object that signals a modality of factuality, of being both 'real' and 'true', resembling what would be visible to a viewer present at the scene.

The non-naturalistic resources used in the renderings do not in themselves make their meanings any less real or true, as modality evaluations are congruous with expectations of the genre (here: 'architectural rendering') and the expected codes of representation. Nevertheless, the techniques of representation **do** play a key role in cueing modality in the renderings. Modality is encoded there by the means through which the rendering draws attention to itself as the ''notional construct'' of prospective narrative through signals of uncertainty and possibility.

In figure 3, these signals are communicated through the varying degrees of detailing and texture: the lack of colour modulation and the contrasts of dark and light suggest smooth and even surfaces in the brickwork of the 'Torvehal,' fountain and pavement. The roughness of the materials and the depth in the grouting between the bricks, which are familiar and expected from viewers' visual and tactile experiences, are not visible, but left to the imagination. At the fountain, it is the lack of colour modulation in particular that creates

the lack of texture and detail. This combines with the lack of play of light, and a brightness that is not strongly differentiated, creating blank, white spaces that stand in place of finished work. Yet the construction takes on a more detailed, finished quality through the suggestion of texture and patterning the further the eye travels into the picture's center and background, and into the storyworld that is depicted there. In this way, both contextualization and depth are articulated. In fact, it is in the background, and thus in the farthest reaches of the storyworld, that objects will appear as most real for the viewer, as this is where many currently existing buildings persist, much in the same way as familiar structures persist in figure 2.

The modality of the hypothetical is also strongly encoded in the female character on the left walking in the direction of the viewer. Her partial transparency, created by the low degree of colour saturation, allows the visibility of the building and objects behind her, which the viewer recognizes as currently existing. The participant suggests someone who is both there and not there: someone imagined, who has not quite come into being, but who is possible. She, like the physical structures around her, expresses the architect's imagined and hoped-for reality. Moreover, together they allow us to witness the generation of the future as a human construct, which is the work of prospective narrative, as Margolin asserts.

Similar modality cues are encoded into figure 2, where articulations of artifice are visible, particularly with respect to colour modulation and its effect on the degree of detail and texture. A telling instance here is the lack of colour saturation and modulation in the mural advertisement on the wall on the left of the image. Because this mural currently exists, these effects of colour saturation give what **is** real a less-than-real quality. Additionally, the illusion of artifice is enhanced by curiosities such as the male actor to the right in the picture who appears to be interacting with an invisible goal, and the Christmas garlands hanging in the background which seem incongruous with the warm-weather apparel of the participants.

5.4 The 'point' of the pictorial narratives

In figures 2 and 3, representations of action serve to show the affordances enabled by the envisioned, constructed space for people who visit there. First and foremost, the prevalence of cars and traffic and the activity of passing through have given way to human, bodied movement. The space is widened and paved for pedestrians, who can walk anywhere and in all directions, in a way not possible when the thoroughfare existed. People can linger and have reasons for spending time here, rather than passing through. If, as has been argued, a space can become a meaningful place through the embodied and social practices and the narrative sense-making afforded by those practices (Simonsen 2004), the pictures serve as a guide to ways of using and finding meaning in the area, when, and if, the 'street' will have become a 'city'.

6. Conclusion

As shown in the preceding analysis and discussion of architects' renderings of visualized urban spaces, the narrative interpretation of still pictures depends on the viewer's ability to infer temporal progression on the basis of static and chiefly spatially arranged elements. In making a distinction between the image's **narrativity** and the viewer's production of **narrative**, narratological concepts reflect this interaction between visual elements in the work and the viewer's cognitive activity. The degree of narrativity – the urgency of a decidedly narrative interpretation – varies from image to image, and can be a function of a number of factors, depending on what is narrated and how: the situation, or content, for example, and/or the viewer's contextual knowledge of that situation, of the purpose of the individual image and of the conventions of representation within a particular pictorial genre.

What a social semiotic approach adds to narratological analysis, as I hope to have shown, is a means for describing and understanding what types of visual cues enhance narrativity, and more specifically, how a logic of time can be encoded in a representation, making a narrative of transformation inferable. It addresses how, for example, on the basis of vectors emanating from still bodily positions of participants, a viewer can understand movement, direction or action. Or how modulations, contrasts and saturations of colour can cue a reading of the image not as real, but rather as a construct of the sender's imagination; in turn, this reading then cues a different temporal context in order to project a future which necessitates a narrative of change.

The analysis also reveals that the emphasis in architectural images like the ones analyzed here is on ways of being, acting and moving among the affordances of a newly created place that are, at the time of narrating, still only visualized. While the images prime viewers for certain ways of using the transformed area, they yield little to work with in terms of what verbal narrative often excels at: conveying the impact of situations, people and places on the individual – what they mean, what they feel like, and what kinds of thoughts and emotional responses they arouse. With these meanings indeterminate, the point of the story is left quite open for the individual viewer to imagine (and possibly also to co-author further) through the activity of prospective narrative.

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Notes

1. Opposition to the plan has, for example, been voiced on websites devoted to the topic, such as odenseomvej.dk [the long way round Odense] and the site for Miljø- og Trafikgruppen i Odense [the Group for Environment and Traffic in Odense] on mto-gruppen.dk.
2. For seminal treatments of transformation as narrative pattern, see Todorov (1968; 1971).
3. A fundamental distinction in narratology is that between the narrated events and the representation of these in the narration. This conceptual pair has been termed variously 'fabula' and 'sjuzet' (Tomashevsky 1925), 'story' and 'plot' (Forster 1927), and 'story' and 'discourse' (Chatman 1978).
4. Halliday's textual metafunction is adapted into the 'compositional' metafunction for the analysis of visual images (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, especially Chapter 6, 174 – 214).

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