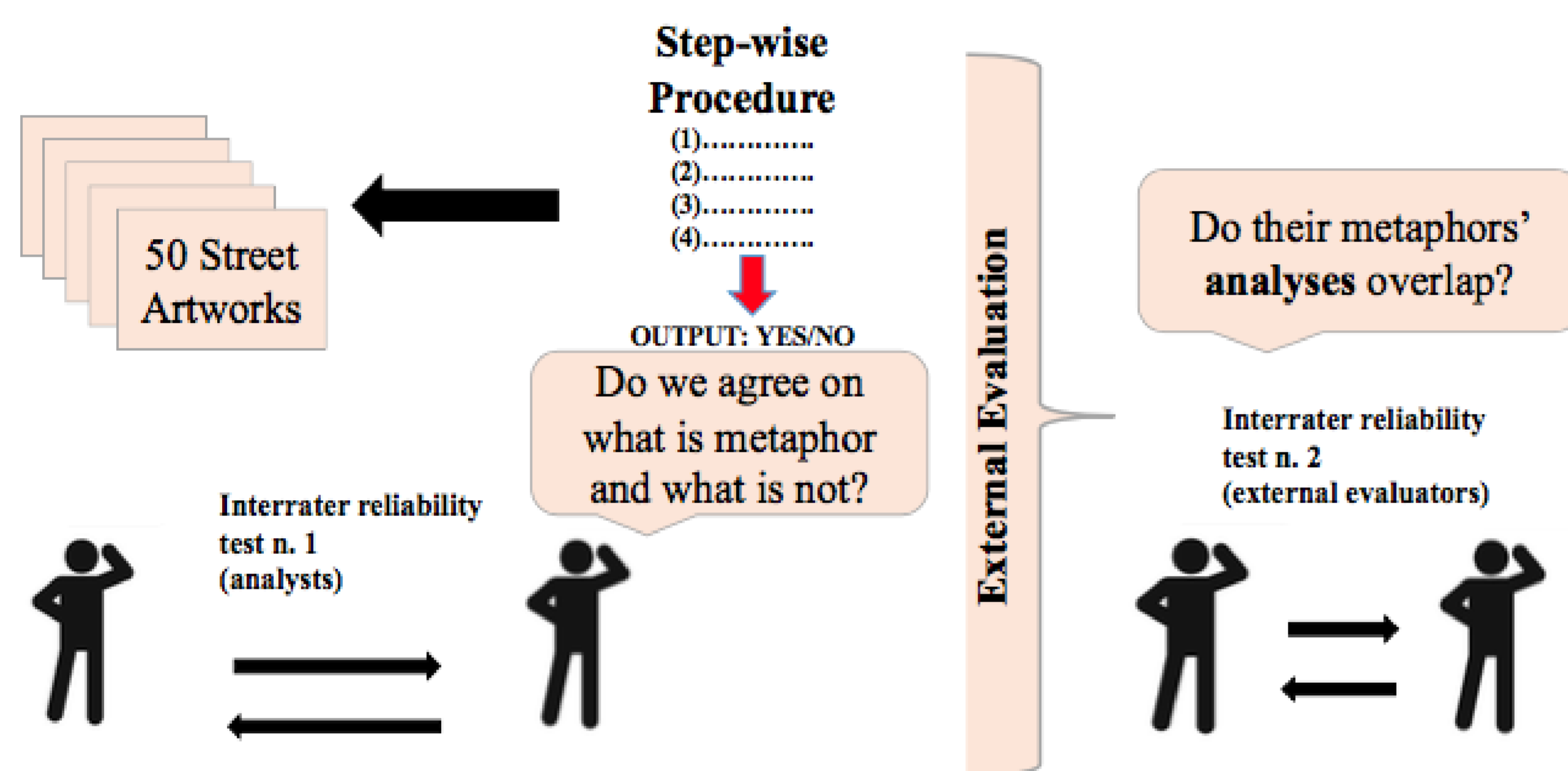# Metaphors on the cross-roads

A cognitive-semiotic framework to the study of street art

LUND UNIVERSITY

Highlights

- **Polysemiotic communication** (combinations of semiotic systems: language, depiction, gesture) vs. **Multimodality** (combinations of sensory modalities: vision, hearing, smell, touch, taste).
- **Metaphor**: an expression in a given semiotic system (or a combination of systems) with (a) at least two different potential interpretations (tension), (b) standing in an iconic relationship with each other, where (c) one interpretation is more relevant in the communicative context, and (d) can be understood in part by comparison with the less relevant interpretation.
- **Step-wise procedure** for the identification and interpretation of polysemiotic/unisemiotic metaphors and other rhetorical figures in street art.

Case Study: research design

Figure 1. A polysemiotic monomodal street artwork.

Figure 2. A unisemiotic monomodal street artwork.

Figure 3. A polysemiotic multimodal street artwork.

Figure 4. A unisemiotic multimodal street artwork.

Results

- Our qualitative and quantitative analyses of 50 Greek street artworks demonstrate that metaphors and other rhetorical figures emerge on the crossroads of several types of knowledge.
- A distinction between metaphorical and non-metaphorical (though still rhetorical) images can be reliably made.
- 32 images from the sample of 50 were identified as metaphorical by the main analysts.
- Metaphorical interpretation is ultimately a matter of situated and socio-culturally-dependent sign use and hence a dynamic process in a specific real-life context.
- The rhetorical understanding of street artworks cannot be explained exclusively based on universal (embodied) experiences without the help of socio-cultural and relevant context-specific components.

Methods (triangulation)

- **1PM: Intuition** (personal judgements provided by analysts and external evaluators).
- **2PM: Empathy** (social interaction among analysts and external evaluators).
- **3PM: Quantification** (quantitative analysis and reliability tests)

References

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